ASPBAE
Asia South Pacific Association
for Basic and Adult Education

From the Margins to the Center: Youth Informing the

FUTURES OF EDUCATION

A report compiled by **ASPBAE**

![ASPBAE logo - Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education]

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Acknowledgements

This regional report is a compilation of the country consultations documented by the following six participating ASPBAE members, in partnership with the youth groups they have engaged and consulted with, to inform this forward-looking process for education:

1. Abhivyakti Media for Development, India

2. All for Education, Mongolia
   - Newly graduates and deaf students of the National College of Education
   - Hanoi Queer

3. National Campaign for Education, Nepal
   - NCE Nepal District Coordination Committee Parsa
   - NCE Nepal District Coordination Committee Palpa
   - NCE Nepal District Coordination Committee Parba
   - Dukuchhap Peace Centre

4. Civil Society Network for Education Reforms, E-Net Philippines, Philippines
   - Kabataan Kontra Kahirapan (KKK)
   - Polytechnic University of the Philippines Students' Party for Equality and Advancement of Knowledge (PUP SPEAK)
   - Safe Cities Youth Theater Advocacy Group (SCYTAG)
   - Singkamas Youth Organization (SYO)
   - Youth for Nationalism and Democracy (YND)

5. Coalition for Educational Development, Sri Lanka
   - Environment and Community Development Information Centre (ECDIC), Rathnapura District

6. Civil Society Education Partnership, Timor-Leste
   - Many Hands One Nation (MAHON) Foundationn

Sincere thanks and congratulations to our ASPBAE members and all the youth researchers for their active participation and input in this process which not only tackles the present reality but also puts forward possible solutions and recommendations to uphold education as a human right and make it accessible and inclusive for everyone.

Introduction

THINKING FUTURES

Futures of Education is a UNESCO initiative that aims to collectively work towards meaningful futures of knowledge, learning, and structures of education. The initiative incorporates diverse perspectives, collaborative action, and innovative engagement with thinking about learning, beginning from the present and for the future. It brings conversations on education among individuals, networks, and organisations to one global platform.

The premise of the initiative is that education is fundamentally transformative, not just for people but also for effective governance and planetary sustainability.

In the transversal approach, education is understood to grant vision and perspective to people, policy, and the planet. This framework is reflected in the United Nations' 2030 Sustainable Development Goals that foregrounded education for meaningful reshaping of the future, and is continuing the spirit of UNESCO's report Rethinking Education: Towards a global common good? (2015). Futures of Education focuses on the diversity in contemporary perspectives that would manifest into multiple imaginations of the future. Based on the idea that Futures Literacy is important for a more proactive engagement in the building of the future, the initiative aims to deliberately imagine informed and sustainable futures.

This opens up the possibility for change away from undesirable futures, active healing of existing systems, and purposive action towards desirable futures.

Advancement in research and innovation in information and communication technologies, artificial intelligence, and machine learning have transformed how learning is understood and knowledge is disseminated. Educational technology has accelerated change in everyday life across the globe, with newer forms of communication and wider reach, making its presence inevitable today. The resultant shifts, however, also continuously raise ethical and social concerns because of the widening digital gaps, uneven development, and glaring technology-based inequalities in access to education.

THE COVID-19 CRISIS

The Covid-19 global pandemic and its resultant challenges to everyday life, work, education, and health have significantly exacerbated and altered existing structures. With resources and energies being redirected to manage health and other adversity, education is one of the areas that continue to be struck by the effects of the pandemic.

The drastic fall in the number of enrolled learners since the pandemic; lack of access to digital education with varying levels of exclusions based on gender and other forms of marginalization; increasing privatisation of education and the simultaneous neglect of public education, are some of the weak points in the preceding systems that have surfaced in exacerbated ways. The inevitability of technology in education has been realized at an accelerated pace since the global pandemic.

Digital education has taken the place of several forms of formal and non-traditional ways of learning, leaving a trail of growing absence of critical skills among learners in virtual education spaces. While schools have been moved to home spaces, learning has been faced with other adverse effects of the pandemic like unemployment, hunger, child marriage, and poor mental and physical health conditions.

The impact of these shifts in education is further experienced in differential ways among learners from different communities and social locations.

The urgency at this juncture is in the sensitive engagement with the conditions of the present but also in the reimagination of the future of education. Bolstering the resilience emerging as a response to the pandemic and the ongoing efforts to build inclusive structures are important entry points into the discussions on education.

This would involve listening to the voices from the ground, rethinking ethics and policy related to education and technological innovation in the field, humanizing the notion of progress in education, and building partnerships across institutions. In this context, youth and learner voices have been given precedence in the reimagination of the education systems.

They are often left out in the collective thinking and re-thinking about education. But they have a lot to offer from their journeys in learning. ASPBAE's youth-led action research in education done in 2020 reveals that effective change is continuous, collective, and contextual.

New skills required to cope with changing global markets are understood to be incomplete without being able to live fruitful everyday lives. Similarly, educational technology is being embraced by contemporary learners, but with anxiety about the growing gap between innovation and access.
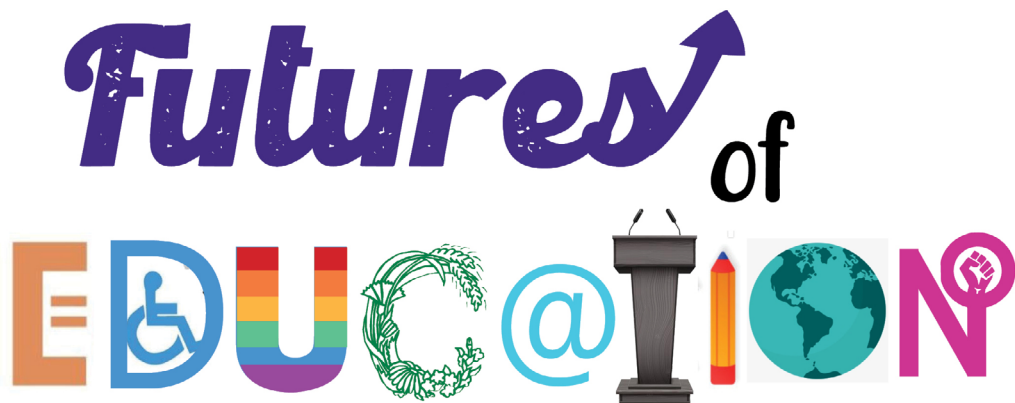
ASPBAE'S COMMITMENT TO
TRANSFORMATIVE FUTURES OF EDUCATION

The Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE) affirms and works for the right of every individual to quality education and recognises the fundamental role of education and lifelong learning as key drivers of sustainable development.

It is also strongly committed to fostering the role of the youth in informing the education agenda at the global, regional and national levels. Through its work with its members, ASPBAE has been able to connect with and support youth groups and young people from diverse marginalised communities in various countries in the Asia Pacific region.

Within ASPBAE, the thinking around futures of literacy started in 2015 during ASPBAE's 50th anniversary celebration. While reflecting on its role in education as a CSO regional network, it analysed the current and emerging contexts and role of education. Further in September

2015, ASPBAE members participated in UNESCO-Bangkok's Workshop, *Rethinking Education Through Imagining Future Scenarios*, and conducted the same conversations within their organisations. Beyond the confines of schools and working with dynamic communities, these conversations inspired a lot of rethinking amongst ASPBAE members who participated in the workshop. Part of the discussions was on transforming education towards enabling marginalised communities to anticipate and act on future contexts.

When the Futures of Education started to gain more attention in 2019, ASPBAE actively participated in the discussions within the Global Campaign for Education (GCE), International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), and UNESCO, building on its previous rethinking on education systems with members.

ASPBAE's Youth-led Action Research (YAR) is an approach to build capacities of marginalised youth to lead and conduct research in their communities, devise youth agenda, and define the education they want. It also aims to inform advocacy efforts and lessons and good practices on how to better involve youth and sensitise education programmes to the learning needs of the marginalised youth.

Under the programme, the youth members had researched the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on marginalised youth, the findings of which are published in the report Youth-led Action Research on the Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Marginalised Youth (2021).

The Report elaborates the impact of the pandemic on the youth from diverse marginalised communities of the Asia-Pacific region. It reverberates youth voices who express concerns over the growing distance between their education and their lives and their anxieties about being excluded from learning opportunities and capacity building.

As part of its commitment for an intergenerational voice to inform its work, ASPBAE brings in diverse youth perspectives into the Futures of Education discussions keeping in mind the changes in society and imagining suitable futures for and with young people. It collaborated with its members and the marginalised youth to identify gaps and issues learners experience in their education journey. ASPBAE considers planning and action at this juncture pertinent to revitalise frameworks, rethink access and transformations in education and act towards renewed futures. This opportunity to collaborate with ASPBAE members is seen as part of the effort to imagine and work for collective and inclusive futures of education.

Objective

The conversations on the Futures of Education with the youth partners were held between December 2020 and March 2021, in the form of creatively designed workshops. Based on the COVID-19 pandemic-related health precautions and state protocols, these workshops were held in-person and in online spaces.

The objectives of the workshops were to envision the education system for 2050; anticipate its probable issues and concerns; collectively aspire for purposeful and inclusive education; and explore possible actions to achieve these imagined futures for education. This also entailed addressing contemporary issues and anxieties of the youth in education as well as their aspirations – be it access, fulfilment, or application of knowledge and skills. The exercise intends to give space for youth and learners' voices in the formal engagement with education.

Seldom included in education policy and decision-making processes, ASPBAE members engaged youth on their experiences with education, their views on education, and what they aspire for in future learning systems. In each of the local contexts, youth from diverse marginalised communities have expressed how they engage with contemporary systems of education. While pointing to significant gaps in the current contexts, they have also charted out intentional paths towards an inclusive and meaningful learning. The synergy of the experiences of the youth belonging to

marginalised communities is understood to be useful to imagine futures that were at risk of being excluded in formal and structural engagement with education.

The ASPBAE member partners for this initiative are Abhivyakti Media for Development (India), E-Net Philippines (Philippines), National Campaign for Education (Nepal), Coalition for Educational Development (Sri Lanka), Vietnam Association for Education for All (Vietnam), and Civil Society Education Partnership (Timor-Leste). This report, funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), will be disseminated in partnership with UNESCO-Bangkok. This builds on the broader ASPBAE Youth-led Action Research (YAR) and youth constituency building initiatives that have been supported by SDC.

The Report begins with an elaboration of creative workshop engagements then proceeds with a brief lay out of prominent issues that young people face in their contemporary journeys of education. These issues are understood as starting points for the imagination of better futures of education, along with the concerns that the youth anticipate. The last section includes pertinent recommendations from the workshops, for possible actions to achieve the envisioned futures. The Report is rich with youth narratives, perspectives and creative articulation as a result of collective thinking about the futures of learning.

> **Safe spaces and focussed interventions for the recognition of the needs and concerns of youth from marginalised communities would enable a stress-free environment of learning and exchange. "**

Workshops for
Collective Ideation

Youth members of ASPBAE conducted workshops to reach out to and build spaces for exchange with young people. These workshops were organised in six countries of the Asia Pacific region namely - Timor-Leste, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Philippines, India, and Vietnam, between December 2020 to March 2021.

Despite some level of mobility restrictions imposed on account of the COVID-19 pandemic, young people were able to convene face-to-face and creatively exchange their aspirations and ideas, with the exception of Timor-Leste where the workshop was held virtually through the Zoom platform.

Each country was represented by youth from marginalised communities and brought forward perspectives from their local contexts. The workshop in Sri Lanka entitled 'Shaping the Futures of Education' brought together 23 young people from the LGBTQI+ community. Most of the participants had completed secondary and tertiary education, some unemployed, while others work in the service sector.

The meeting in Nepal consisted of 18 youth leaders from four out of the seven provinces of Nepal who have been associated with ASPBAE. The workshop in India consisted of 17 girls and 5 boys from tribal communities across five villages in the state of Maharashtra. Youth partners in Vietnam were able to conduct multiple workshops with youth from the deaf and the LGBTQI+ community from Hanoi and its neighbouring areas. Owing to the

restrictions and health protocols from the pandemic, the face-to-face workshop in the Philippines had limited participation of 12 young people from diverse youth organisations, LGBTQI+ community, some of whom were enrolled learners, some were out-of-school youth and the others were single / student-parents.

The online meeting in Timor-Leste was attended by 30 participants from 13 municipalities of the country, most of whom were young researchers associated with ASPBAE and members of the Marginalized Youth Forum, a group established by the national education coalitions, Civil Society Education Partnership in (CSEP), that advocates for the issues of marginalised youth. This youth forum was one of the outcomes of the Youth-led Action Research (YAR) initiative in Timor-Leste.

The workshops were creatively designed to accommodate the expression of the multitude of contexts and imaginations of the youth. In acknowledging the role of art for greater inclusion, the youth partners of ASPBAE used illustrations, clay mouldings, theatre, songs, poetry, games, role-play along with panel discussions, and focus group discussions as the medium of exchange in the workshops. This was also done to effectively capture and document a blend of negative social experiences with positive ones, aspirations with issues, and possible actions owing to identified gaps in education.

SRI LANKA

23 young people from the LGBTQ Community

The workshop in Sri Lanka was organised for one entire day by the partner organisation Coalition for Education Development (CED).

The participants in the workshop included 23 young people from the LGBTQ community from the Rathnapura district of Sri Lanka. These participants, primarily between the ages of 21-32 years, had diverse experience with formal education, both as learners and as members of the LGBTQ community.

The session was designed to use art as a medium of expressing youth experiences and was moderated by an artist and an educator. The participants found that using art as a tool to voice their experiences was not just comforable but also effective since symbols, colors and lines were more useful to share about life stories that would otherwise not have formal language for.

The workshop was divided into three sessions
- the **first session** dealt with positive and negative experiences of the participants in thor education journeys;
- the **second session** entailed developing storylines from the discussions of the first session, to think of possible ways of understanding a situation;
- the **last session** the participants showcased posters on 'Education Expectations', that they developed through the workshop.

TIMOR-LESTE

21 youth representative from 12 Municipalities of Timor-Leste

A virtual meeting was organised by ASPBAE's partner organisation Civil Society Education Partnership (CSEP) and the Marginalized Youth Forum (MYF). The youth-led discussion focussed on highlighting voices of young people from marginalised communities in the context of education and encouraged collective thinking about the futures of education in Timor-Leste. There were 21 youth representatives from 12 municipalities of Timor- Leste.

Members from each municipality presented their reflections and recommendations on issues pertaining to education at the interface of diverse marginalizations in Timor-Leste. These discussions were aided with hand-drawn posters, games and individual write-ups.
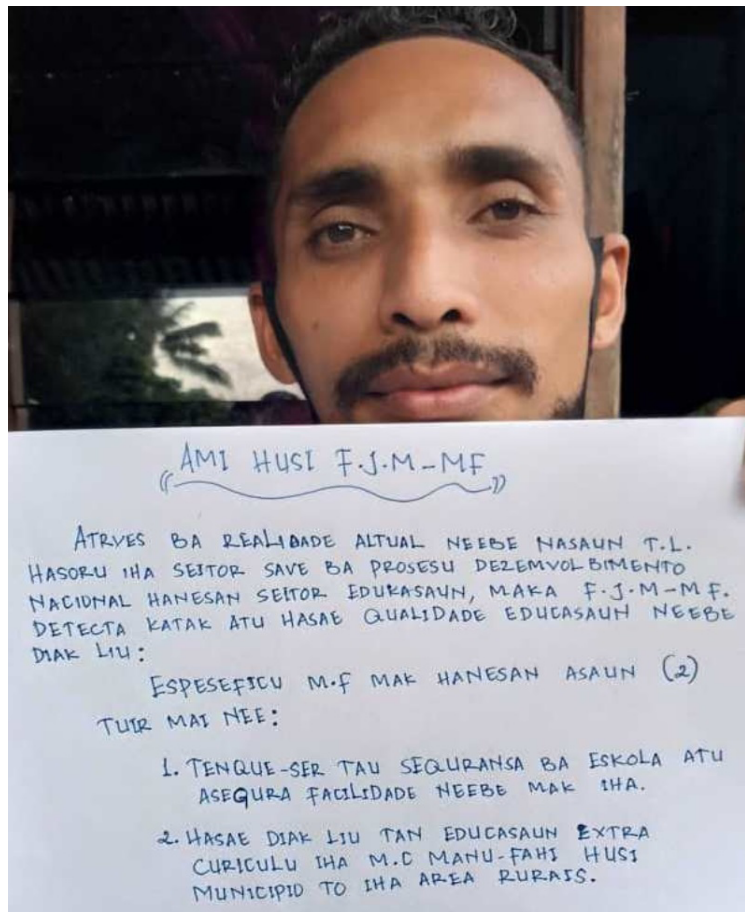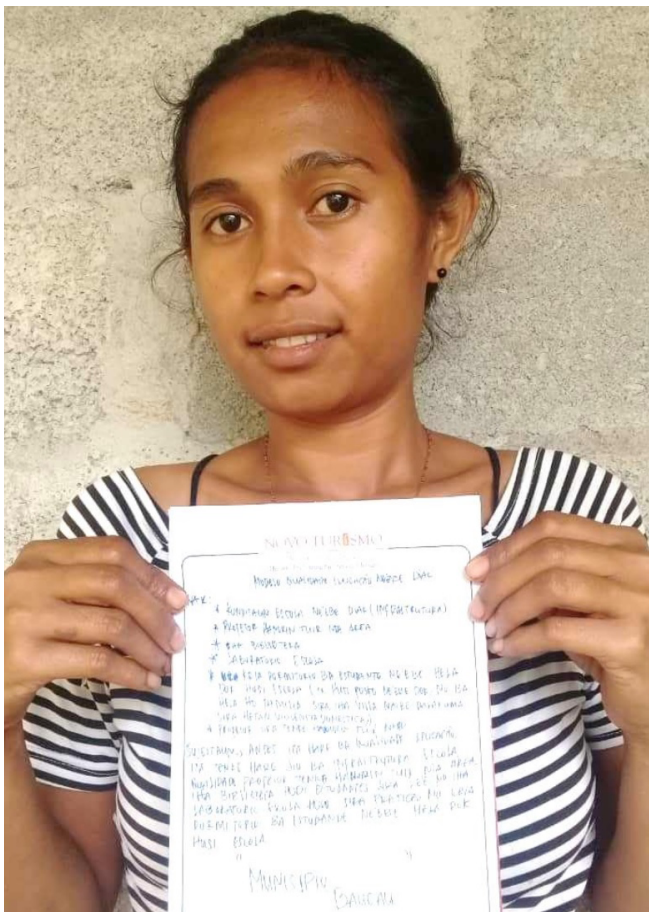
PHILIPPINES

'Draw it! How's 2020 for you?'

The workshop in the Philippines was a mix of art, games and discussions. The Youth for Nationalism and Democracy, Singkamas Youth Organisation, Safe Cities Youth Theatre Advocacy Group and Students' Party for Equality and Advancement of Knowledge from the Polytechnic University of the Philippines came together for a one-day long workshop to creatively engage with experiences of young learners from marginalised communities. The art component of the workshop was titled, 'Draw it! How's 2020 for you?' where the participants creatively drew out how they experienced the pandemic and its overwhelming effects on their education.

The next part of the workshop was a game titled, 'The Futures of Education' where the participants were divided into groups and played it in three rounds. Each round addressed questions pertaining to education to allow for discussion and presentation of perspectives and ideas.

INDIA

The involvement of youth, known as Shodhinis, from rural communities

The workshop in India was held in two parts, organised by the organisation Abhivyakti Media for Development.

The first part was discussion with a youth group belonging to a rural area and a youth group from an urban setting. The youth from the rural group, also known as Shodhinis, have been involved in ASPBAE's YAR project and have been engaging with the lives of girls and young women in the region. This exchange largely brought together voices and experiences from the field.

The second session of the workshop in India, involved drawing a bird using the outline of one's hand. The eyes, wings and voice of the bird were used as metaphors to initiate discussion about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the perspectives, aspirations and rights of youth. All the participants were later divided into 3 groups giving them themes of Perspective, Aspirations and Voice to present their stories and recommend support and resources that would help them cope with the effects of this pandemic.

NEPAL

'Futures of Education from the youth lens'

The workshop in Nepal titled 'Futures of Education from the youth lens' was organised by the National Campaign of Education (NCE - Nepal).

The participants of the workshop were young leaders and researchers from the youth constituency and the YAR program. The session was designed to collect youth vision for meaningful education.

Each participant presented barriers that learners face in their communities. This included narratives of poverty, child marriage and child labor, that young people are subjected to. Art, photographs, case studies, theatre and poetry were used to bring these diverse perspectives forward

VIETNAM

The session with the Hanoi Queer group and deaf student

In Vietnam, the workshop took place in three sessions with the title, 'The Future of Education'. In collaboration with partner organisation Vietnam Association for Education for All (VAEFA), the workshop had participants from different provinces and cities of Vietnam. This allowed for perspectives from diverse sections of Vietnam, in the discussion on experiences and recommendations on education systems of Vietnam.

The organisers of the workshop identified two groups as having disadvantages in their engagement with the education system - the Hanoi Queer, and deaf students from the National College of Education.

The session with the Hanoi Queer group included role play, clay modelling and story telling to find ways to communicate the diverse

perspectives of the participants. Role play was found to be very effective for the session, especially in trying to identify with different people in different contexts, think about empathy, duty and power that individuals possess in everyday settings of educational spaces.

In another session, the deaf students of the National College of Education conducted group discussions about common issues that they face in the realm of education. These were collated into a creative poster.

Visual representation of these experiences in the form of a poster was shared to be effective in seeing patterns of good and bad experiences, and possible ways for improving everyday experiences in spaces of education.

Reflecting on
Current Contexts

A conversation on the future always begins with an assessment of the present. The workshops reflected on the status of contemporary education systems as experienced by young people. This allowed for a contextual understanding on the nature and and access to education from the perspectives of marginalised youth.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing issues and revealed several gaps in the education system. The accelerated use of technology for digital learning has left many behind, reflecting social, economic, and regional marginalisations.

Youth in the Philippines noted that many young people were not able to enrol for formal education in the academic year 2020-2021. Those who managed to enrol for online classes experienced difficulties including lack of gadgets, internet connectivity, and shifting academic modules and timelines. Further, the loss of employment among parents of young people has forced them to face challenges like hunger and drained emergency funds.

A stark divide between urban and rural education spaces gets foregrounded, especially in conversations on access to education. The workshop in India articulated that while poor quality internet speed can impede learning among urban learners, often digital education doesn't even reach rural areas. This was also

> "Attending classes during the pandemic is difficult as young people are struggling physically, mentally, and financially. The new normal led to a greater urgency to address overdue struggles in our education systems, such as lack of funding for educational institutions, livable wages for teachers and professors, and adaptability to learning requirements.
>
> Most college students are not ready to attend online and modular classes. Adding to these problems is the unjustifiable increase in tuition fees and miscellaneous fees while students attend online classes from their homes."
>
> **- Voices from the workshop in the Philippines**

reflected in the perspectives from Timor-Leste that highlighted lack of opportunity, facility, and inclusion in education for marginalised communities in rural areas. The youth in Sri Lanka discussed that the LGBTQI+ community in the country not only experience social and cultural discrimina tions but also endure the criminalisation of same-sex relations by the Sri Lankan penal code. It was shared that the youth from the community experience bullying and harassment, leading to stress and anxiety hindering their ability to study.

"

The need for deliberate action towards making digital infrastructure accessible, free, inclusive and equitable "

- Youth from India during consultation workshop, 2021

Often, this also results in students missing out on classes or even staying out-of-school. LGBTQI+ youth experienced discrimination through the course of their education journey, with little or no support from teachers, peers, and parents, pushing them into isolation in schools and from society. Everyday experiences of discrimination were noted from discriminatory infrastructure to the lack of sensitivity in the mechanisms of the education system. They have noted that the gendering of spaces like toilets and hostels makes them feel excluded and uncomfortable.

Discussions across the workshops reveal the pertinent roles that teachers can play to improve the education system and the gaps in capacitating them. Either the teachers are

An illustration from the Sri Lankan workshop depicting a story of discrimination by a teacher. The drawing shows the teacher advising students against befriending a student who is identified as a girl who desires other girls.

not equipped to adapt to changes like using technology for online learning, or are unwilling to adapt to changing times such as the need to teach and mainstream sex education in school curriculums.

> **"We really need vivid and intuitive digital applications for sign language, that explains words and terminologies in sign language with illustration."**
>
> **- Voices from the Vietnam workshop**

Deaf students from Vietnam highlighted the issue of non-availability of trained teachers and interpreters to support them to pursue higher education. While lack of knowledge and skills are a problem, the reticence among teachers and administrators in the education system has proven to be a major deterrent for marginalised youth, especially those with disabilities.

They have also noted the limitation of the usage of speaking language and lack of sign language in imparting education, especially in subjects like literature. They see the need for greater visual resources like images and videos to explore subjects and promote the expansion of their vocabulary that might otherwise be difficult for the group.

Along with teachers, they express that both parents and caregivers must also be sensitised to grant greater autonomy to youth with disabilities. They assert that teachers and caregivers alike must listen, motivate and energize them to learn and empower themselves instead of imposing their decisions on them. They have also noted the limitation of the usage of speaking language and lack of sign language in imparting education, especially in subjects like literature.
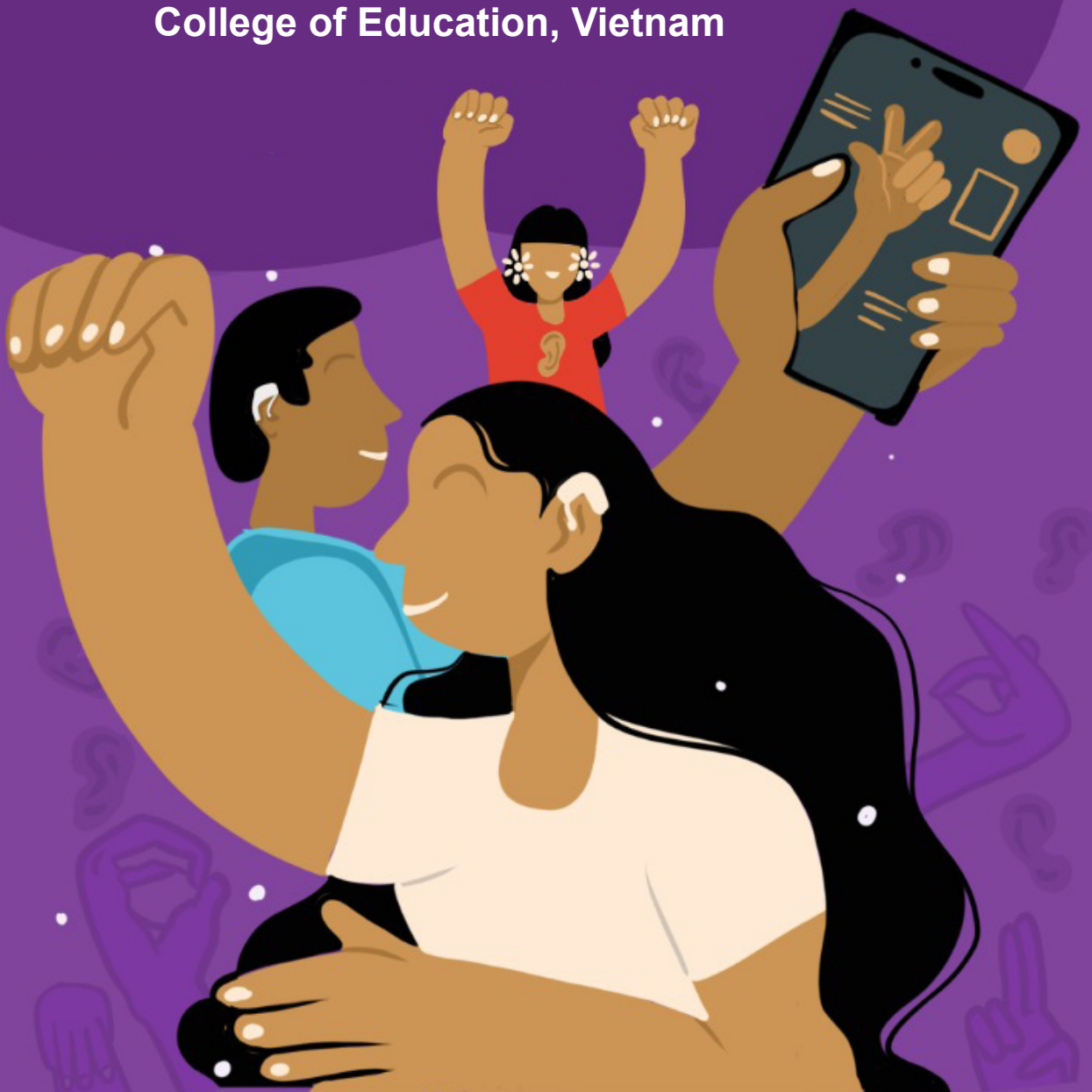
"

We really need a vivid and intuitive dictionary for sign language, preferably in the form of a software so that students, especially the ones from primary school, can learn and understand new words easily. "

- Deaf student from The National College of Education, Vietnam

They see the need for greater visual resources like images and videos to explore subjects and promote the expansion of their vocabulary that might otherwise be difficult for the group.

The privatisation of education is an increasing concern among the youth. The worry is that the financial burden caused by school fees and out-of-pocket expenditures will deepen inequalities in education. Shifts in education to create a universal and uniform curriculum is a major concern of the youth. The knowledge that is disconnected from lived realities often discourages youth to continue pursuing their education. Moreover, there is an anxiety about the loss of local languages and knowledge systems in the promotion of these universal curriculum.

NO TO WESTERN-CENTRIC EDUCATION!

A group from the Philippines workshop discussed the curriculum currently being offered in the formal education system. They stressed that it does not reflect nor improve the everyday life of the Filipino people. Instead, it only equips students with the skills required to work abroad. With the implementation of the K-12 education program based on the standards of western education, it serves the interests of foreign businesses instead of addressing

> **"We must work on changing our education system into one that would prioritize the Filipino people's advancement and that would leave no one behind."**
>
> **- Perspective from the Philippines workshop**

Learners also expressed the pressure of the competition that is imposed upon them by education institutions and families. This often leads to a greater focus on high-achieving students and neglecting students who may not perform as per expectation - making learning an unpleasant and stressful experience for students from both groups.

> **"Excellent students with a mark of 9-10 are placed in the first rows of the table and close to teachers, the students with a mark of 7-8 are arranged in the middle rows and the students with poor performance (mark from 2 to 5) are set in the last and isolated places in the class"**
>
> **- Voices from the Vietnam workshop**
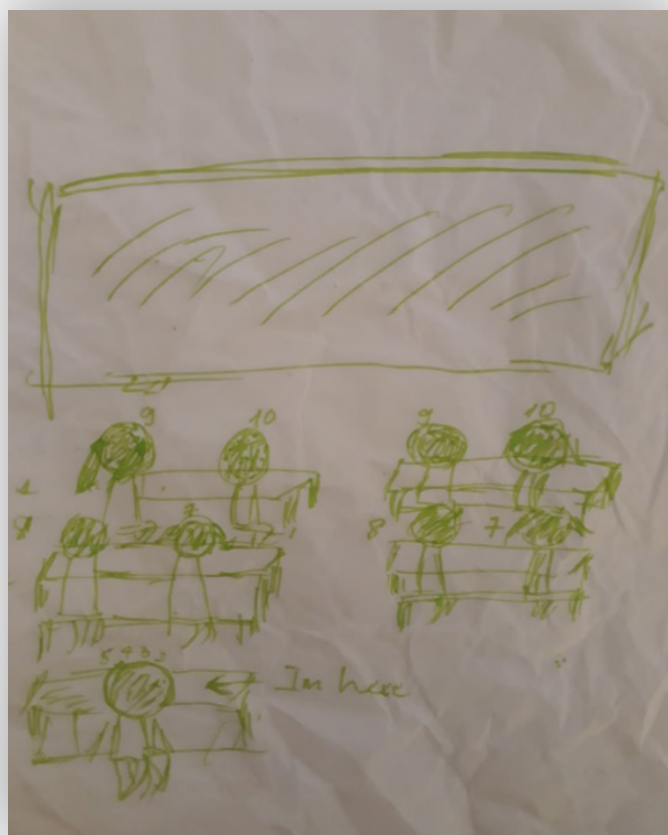
The Hanoi Queer youth from the Vietnam workshop depict how students with poor performance are seated in the classroom.

The skewed priorities of governments is another concern that young people have discussed. The youth in Timor-Leste remarked that the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports has established five community learning centres for 13 municipalities, of which only two are active. Young people from the Philippines are concerned that the state prioritises militarisation over supporting the education of young people, especially out-of-school youth.

EDUCATION IS NOT A WAR

A group in the Philippine workshop shared that indigenous people from the Lumad communities in the Philippines often endure attacks and neglect from the state. Lumad students in Bakwit (evacuation) school discussed how the Armed Forces have been demolishing schools in the indigenous area, even forcing parents to participate in the demolition process under the threat of facing false charges and arrest if they don't cooperate.

The concerns expressed by the various groups of young people ranged from structural problems of access to lived realities of discrimination. The youth participants have questioned the skewed priorities and implementations -like privatisation of education, unequal digital learning, undermining of local cultures with modern education, discrimination in education, and highlighted areas of revision, reconstruction and restoration in their education systems.

"The Education for the Lumad Youth is designed for the needs of the Lumad people. Their curriculum design follows the interdisciplinary approach, with Agriculture at the core, to uplift their economic condition. However, their nationalist, scientific, and mass-oriented education is being demonised by state police and military (PNP, AFP, and NTF-ELCAC) because the community fights for their right to ancestral lands. Knowing all this, it is our duty to call for the recognition of Bakwit (Evacuation) Schools' legitimacy.

The citizens must protect the academic freedom of campuses by barring the entry of armed forces and to penalize any forms of repression and harassment from any entities or institution."

- Voices from the Philippines workshop

Aspirations for

Better Futures

The reflections on the experience of education among marginalised youth were intended to identify possibilities for the future. The diverse imagination of the futures of education reveals that young people ascribe the potential of education not just for their individual growth but for the collective development of communities. This section aims to bring together some of these key aspirations for education in 2050, as expressed by young people in the workshops.

EDUCATION AS A HUMAN RIGHT AND NOT A PRIVILEGE

There is a strong emphasis on the need for equal access to education and lifelong learning in the discussions across the workshops. Irrespective of the divide based on class, age, gender, socio-cultural conditions, or geographic location, education is imagined to be barrier-free and accessible to all. The youth expect the education system to move away from the path of commercialisation and privatisation that it has been increasingly taking. Instead, it should stay within the road-map towards equitable, inclusive, and free public education. "We study to learn and not to pay," assert the participants of the Philippines workshop. Further, this equitable education is imagined not just for the youth but also for adults who may want to continue learning or

avail of previously missed opportunities for education.

An illustration titled 'Paradise of Equity', from the Sri Lankan workshop. Here they imagine an equitable socio-educational structure that would require a strong and inclusive legal system to materialise.

INCREASED FINANCING OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

The youth expressed their hope for effective education policies concretely implemented by local and central governments. The hope is for greater financing of free, inclusive, and quality public education. There is also emphasis made on shifting priorities in the planning and implementation of interventions by the state to promote education as a right and work towards its provisioning through increased funding, training of teachers, and capacity development of the youth.

"
We study to learn and not to pay "

- Youth participant from E-NET workshop, Philippines

The poster is made by a group from the Philippines workshop while discussing the vision for education in 2050. It highlights the need for greater state responsibility, proactive community action and reallocation of funds towards education.

LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND - ACCESSIBLE TECHNOLOGY

Poster made during Indian workshop, where youth expressed the possibility of technology in futures of education.

The youth expressed their awareness of the prominence of technology in the future. However, the aspirations for technology-based learning have come closer since the pandemic-induced rapid shift to digital education. There is a mixed response to this idea - where on one hand modernisation and digitisation of education seem promising for knowledge dissemination among marginalised communities, on the other hand, there is a concern about the replication of historical and contemporary inequalities to these modern structures.

A group from the workshop in India enacted a panel discussion called 'Google Goggle' among characters as seen popularly on television news. These characters included a student leader, an educator, and a parliament member.

Filled with humor, the discussion among the characters was about how a new device called 'Google Goggle' is considered to be a revolutionary step towards modernising education. However, some of the questions raised during the role-play were - is this modern technology available to all?

With technological innovation advancing at a much faster rate than the systems of dissemination and support, would focusing only on technology be enough to ensure progress in inclusive education? How can new forms of learning be accessible to even those who cannot afford it?

- Perspective from workshop with youth in India

**" Education should
be barrier-free and
accessible to all "**

- Youth from Timor-Leste during
consultation workshop, 2021

The use of digital learning and ICT was expressed as a map for a sustainable path for education to reach marginalised communities. While digital futures may appear inevitable, the youth emphasised the need for deliberate action towards making digital infrastructure accessible, free, inclusive, and equitable. Smart software and devices that are sensitive to the changing needs of youth with disabilities are some proposed roles that digital technologies can fulfil. This way no one will be left behind in digital learning.

STRESS-FREE LEARNING

The education system is imagined to be more inclusive by 2050. This would entail comprehensive awareness of differences in the curriculum, among teachers, administration,

and sensitive learning environments. Safe spaces and focused interventions for the recognition of the needs and concerns of youth from marginalised communities would enable a stress-free environment of learning and exchange. This would also motivate students to continue learning and provide productive opportunities for young people irrespective of their marginalities. These interventions, however, are also deemed necessary at the structural and societal level to secure the protection and growth of young people from marginalised communities.

CONTEXTUALISED LEARNING

The youth expressed hope for greater contextualised learning in future education frameworks. "Future education should focus on

An illustration, by a group from Sri Lanka, highlighting the need for a more robust mental health support system. The group notes that mental health support services are especially important for LGBTQI+ youth, their family members and educators, to create inclusive and harmonious learning spaces.
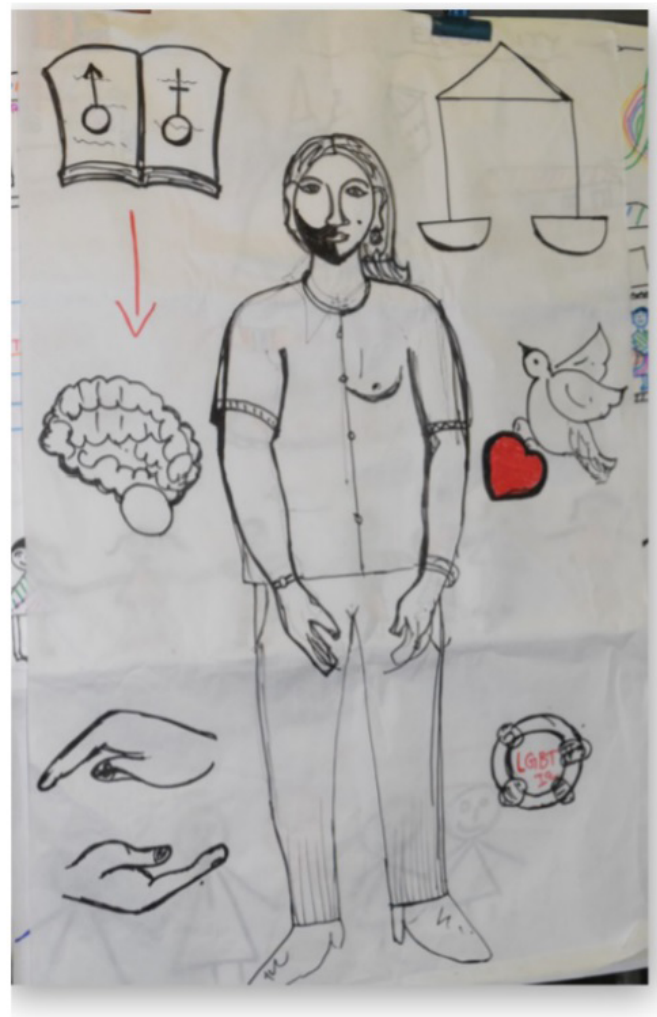
inherent capabilities of the student and not be based on grading and certification", as expressed by the youth of the workshop from Nepal. This personalisation of education is imagined in multiple ways. Firstly, there is an aspiration for education to reflect the strengths and identities of the youth and the diversities of their context. Education that is sensitive to context and inclusive of cultures would allow for relatable learning and sustenance of valuable local knowledge systems.

Thirdly, young people called for the renewal of education curriculum to include more outdoor and extracurricular activities that allow for collective learning. Inclusive learning systems, like the Alternative Learning System (ALS) in the Philippines, are imagined to create an education ecosystem, where knowledge is connected with nature, community, environment, and societal participation for sustainable futures.

An illustration from the Sri Lankan workshop laying out what the participants expect from a sensitive education structure. They imagine learning environments to have a well-equipped infrastructure, informed facilitators, and social acceptance of young people from diverse identity locations. For this, they propose dialogues on diversity at school and community levels, along with programs to educate school management towards inclusive education spaces.

Secondly, education is imagined to foster creativity, innovation, and application in society. While accommodating learning needs across diverse groups of learners and students, a non-traditional curriculum would prepare the youth to be informed members and voters in society.

An illustration by a group from Sri Lanka expressing how future education systems should be empowering and imparting skills. Focusing on LGBTIQ youth in the country they note, "the education system could pay more attention to LGBTIQ students and their needs. They also would like to have a legally protected, rights-based socio-educational structures/models in the near future."

" **"**

Future education should focus on inherent capabilities of the student and not entirely based on grading and certification "

- Youth from Nepal during consultation workshop, 2021

Concerns about
The Futures

Along with aspirations for better education in the future, the youth also expressed apprehensions regarding some paths that the education system has taken.

As described earlier, there is an ambivalence regarding the deployment of technology in education and the efficacy of digital learning, especially among youth from marginalised communities.

The complexity of the problem was especially reflected in the play performed by a group during the workshop in India. The play included a character of a local shaman and a few followers who were concerned about the shifts in the education system and the impact it had on their children.

Set in the future, the followers seek help from the shaman to care for the mental distress that digital learning has caused their children; depleted ommunication skills in the absence of peer interaction; inability to harmonise in the community because of the universal syllabus that is disconnected from the contexts of their lived realities.

The problems posed by the followers of the shaman in the play indicate the issues that the youth have anticipated with future education in their contexts.

Adverse effects of technology and uniform education in the future of in-person communication, expression of the youth, and erasure of local languages have been a recurring concern in the workshops. There is an anticipation of disconnection of the youth from their community contexts leading to skewed social relations instead of promoting civic participation.

Finally, discussions across the workshops amplified the importance of public education. Commercialisation and privatisation of education are expected to deepen the gaps in access and may push learners to drop out of the education system due to non-affordability of not just the fees but also additional expenditure towards supporting resources to make learning possible.
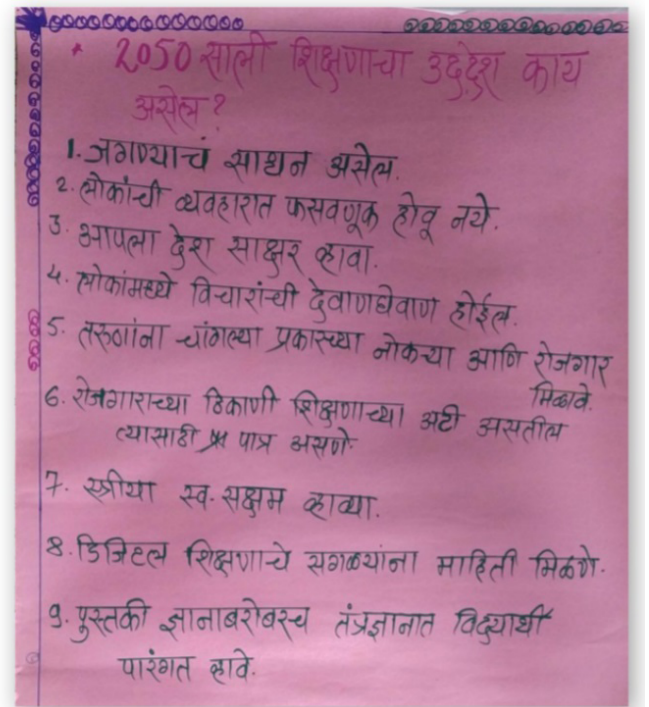
Vision statements from Indian youth on 'Futures of Education', listed down in one of their regional language - 'Marathi'.

Recommendations for

Futures of Education

To develop comprehensive pathways to reach the envisioned futures, the youth have presented possible interventions and actions that can be implemented to bridge the discussed gaps in the education system.

Some of these key recommendations include:

■ **ESTABLISH** networks for marginalised youth members to ensure a space for them to express and help address context-specific issues. This would expand the landscapes of education towards building an ecosystem for local communities.
For instance, the Marginalised Youth Forum was formed in Timor-Leste to advocate for marginalised youth concerns. Similarly, youth leaders from Nepal's National Campaign for Education (NCE) were able to convince schools to provide regular and nutritious mid-day meals to the students

■ **ORGANIZE** more capacity-building programs for learners and training facilities for upgrading the skills of teachers.

■ **SUPPORT** the education of students and learners with disabilities by ensuring availability of financing and other resources which will guarantee their access to education – this should include greater funding for Sign Language interpreters to support Deaf students. Related videos can be accessed here.

■ **ENGAGE** with the youth for a more sensitive understanding of their experiences with the education system. This would involve identifying everyday markers of discrimination like restrictive gendered spaces and uniforms, and rethinking equitable education in a more comprehensive manner. Also, providing the space and language for care and support – this can include provisioning of education in sign language; free and accessible care centres for mental health with trained professionals.

■ **STRENGTHEN** public education within a lifelong learning system through effective planning, increased budget and partnership with non-governmental organisations to broaden the reach of the system. Governments must ensure effective education policies and sustained education programs appropriate for out-of-school youth.

■ **PROVIDE** financial support from the state towards identification of differential learning needs of marginalised youth to support their education aspirations. This can be organised at the central or federal level as well as local and community level.

■ **GRANT** financial support from the state towards identification of differential learning needs of marginalised youth to support their education aspirations. This can be organised at the central or federal level as well local and community level.

■ **ENSURE** equity and inclusion in digital platforms and online education while making sure that learners and communities of learners are continually communicating with each other and not working in isolation.

■ **ALLOCATE** sufficient funding for research, respecting and rewarding the work of scientists and researchers to encourage them to continue working in their countries.

■ **INCULCATE** non-formal and community based learning to formal institutions to provide engaging and dynamic learning spaces for diverse young people.

■ **EXPAND** frameworks of education to include creative and reflective processes that make learning enjoyable, engaging and stress-free.

■ **CREATE** an ecosystem of support in the community that promotes the culture of inclusion, respect and recognition of abilities of diverse youth.

SUPPORT the **education of students and learners with disabilities**

ALLOCATE **sufficient funding for research, respecting and rewarding the work of scientists and researchers**

PROMOTE **public education with effective planning, increased budget, and partnership with non-governmental organizations to** increase the reach of the system.

STRENGTHEN **non formal and community based learning with formal institutions**

CREATE an **ecosystem of support** in the community that promotes the culture of inclusion, respect, and recognition of different abilities of diverse youth.

ESTABLISH **networks for marginalised youth members**

ENSURE **equity and inclusion in digital platforms and online education**

Build education that **promotes respect for diversity and inculcates compassion**

EXPAND frameworks of education to **include creative and reflective processes**

ORGANISE **more capacity building programs**

PROVIDE **financial support from the state**

GRANT **free, accessible and inclusive learning**

Conclusion

ASPBAE's conversations with the youth on aspirations for better futures began with assessments of contextual experiences of the youth on their journeys in education. Marking the gaps and deficiencies in the system informed context-based recommendations towards working for better futures. The issues that the youth have shared during the workshops reflected their call for a free, inclusive, and quality public education with knowledge systems that are organic to communities. This way, education can be imagined as motivating, instead of an economic burden, finding potential for civic participation, creativity, and innovation. With the increasing presence of technology in learning, education is imagined with broader landscapes that can reach farther margins, instead of deepening divides among communities. For the realisation of these aspirations, the youth put forward recommendations that could serve as starting points for working towards achieving them. Both aspirations and recommendations reflect collective futures, with interactive learning and knowledge systems that purposefully engage with the realities of learners.

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ASPBAE members-partners for
Futures of Education

Abhivyakti Media For Development
Facilitating Media and Communication Since 1987

Abhivyakti Media for Development (India) is a media organisation founded and run by young media activists. It works with marginalised communities, grassroot community-based groups and civil society organisations. Since its establishment in 1987, Abhivyakti has been strengthening the voices of the voiceless through diverse media like video, photography, audio, publications, and many other forms. It believes in the significance of the intrinsic knowledge and lived experiences of marginalised communities for socio-political action towards development and democracy. It is located in Nashik, India.

Civil Society Education Partnership (CSEP Timor-Leste) is a national coalition established in 2017 by five (5) local CSOs led by or representing marginalized youth, women, and those working at the grassroot level. Its membership has now increased in numbers consisting of local and grassroots CSOs strongly working on education and development issues throughout the country, including those led by and representing youth, people with disabilities and teachers. CSEP's advocacy work for the right to education and SDG4 is pursued through its research, monitoring, policy and budget advocacy and strategic engagements at national and international platforms for education and development. CSEP is a member of ASPBAE and the Global Campaign for Education (GCE).

CED Sri Lanka
Quality Education For All

The Coalition for Education Development (CED) is a consortium of organizations involved in the education sector at national, provincial and local levels in Sri Lanka. Its network has 57 organisations actively engaged in the field. Since its inception in 2004, CED has committed to steering civil society participation as a vital part in the achievement of goals and targets of EFA, MDG, and SDG declarations. To pursue its objectives, the coalition is involved in awareness-raising, capacity-building, research and advocacy work.

The Civil Society Network for Education Reforms or E-Net Philippines is a network of civil society organizations engaged in policy advocacy and partnerships for education reforms. Since 2000, it has been committed to expanding and strengthening civil society participation in reforming the Philippine education system and in developing alternative learning systems with a special concern for the marginalised, excluded, and vulnerable sectors (MEVS). E-Net Philippines has been the CSO partner of the government in the implementation and monitoring of the Education For All campaign.

The National Campaign for Education Nepal (NCE Nepal) is a national network of 409 member organizations that include I/NGOs, teacher organisations, journalists and community organisations, working to strengthen the public education system in Nepal. It works to ensure the educational rights of children and adults that are provisioned in the constitution. Established in 2003 as Nepal chapter of Global Campaign for Education (GCE), NCE Nepal has been engaged in the education campaign through research, capacity enhancement initiatives, community mobilization and networking.

Envisioning a society where equitable, inclusive and quality education is guaranteed to all, VAEFA was established in 2009 from the Global Action Week for Education (GAW) campaign in Vietnam with the support of NGOs and local CSO members of the GAW Working Group and Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF) partners including, amongst others, the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) and ASPBAE. VAEFA has been an active member of GCE since 2009 and ASPBAE since 2011. VAEFA aims to become a strong platform to civil society organisations in Vietnam to pursue policy and budget advocacy for inclusive, gender-responsive and equitable quality education for all by engaging with the government in the formulation and implementation of Vietnam Education Strategic Development Plan (ESDP) in accordance with SDG4 agenda.