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# Newsletter

## Lifelong Learning and Non-formal Education in Lao PDR and Southeast Asia



No2.2016

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## Editorial

Dear Readers,

It is always exciting to recognize that the non-formal community is real global! In our daily work here in the Regional Office we enjoy a lot of exchange with colleagues from different parts of Lao PDR, the Region, from other parts of Asia and the world beyond. This issue of the Newsletter will share a few of these regional and global experiences:

From Lao PDR, our latest intern Ms Carolin Koerner will share her experiences and thoughts in a very personal and lively way.

From the region, Ms Soda (NEP Cambodia) introduces a new EU-funded project, which aims at increasing the capacities for advocacy for Lifelong Learning on the national and regional level. Another article will inform about a regional workshop on Soft Skills in non-formal education: In an ever faster changing, highly competitive world, it becomes more and more essential not to limit education to the so called 'hard skills', like reading, writing of vocational skills, but enable all kind of learners to take reflected decisions, work in a team or perform leadership. The last, but not least, short notice in this section will describe a fundraising workshop at SEAMEO CELLL, Ho Chi Minh City.

Two articles are focusing on an Asian perspective: Dr Rajesh Tandon of PRIA, India, reflects on the role of Civil Society in the Education Sector, as a critical friend to governments and the private sector. Information will be given as well about the last Board meeting of our Asian network ASPBAE, which took place in freezing Mongolia in February.

Finally, one text is dedicated to the Manifest for Adult Education, the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) published last year. We thought it might be a valuable contribution to the discussion on why we are promoting non-formal education in the 21st century.

Going through all these materials, I would like to share one question with you, which attracts me for a longer time: What is the correct term for what we are doing?

- Is it non-form education? This is the most common answer in our region - but some of us are working in equivalency programs and for skills diploma, which I think are parts of the formal education. And, at least for me, non-formal education has a slightly negative connotation, it sounds a bit like the second best.
- Is it Lifelong Learning? But Lifelong Learning includes all parts of the education system, pre-school, primary and secondary school, university, vocational training and non-formal education.
- Or is it popular education? That is, how our friends from Latin America call our sector. However, it seems to me too unknown in our region and linked to a specific concept, which is not shared by all cultures.
- Or should we reflect on a term, used in Europe and Africa, calling our sector 'Youth and Adult Education? For me, that sounds good – but I am, of course a European!

Enjoy reading!

Yours sincerely,

*Uwe Gartenschlaeger*

Regional Director

DVV International, Southeast Asia



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## Civil Society and Inclusive Education: Lessons from Asia-Pacific

Rajesh Tandon, Founder-President, PRIA-Participatory Research in Asia

Speech at the Launching EU Project: Tackling the Implementation Gap in Education Reform; Mobilizing Civil Society

*(This brief write-up is based on the keynote address given by Dr Rajesh Tandon, Founder-President of PRIA, India at the Kick-off event of European Union project on "Tackling the Implementation Gap in Education Reform: Mobilising Civil Society", jointly organised by DVV International and NGO Education Partnership Cambodia at Phnom Penh, Cambodia on March 03, 2016).*

In 20<sup>th</sup> century, discussions on the meanings and roles of civil society have acquired considerable significance worldwide.

Practitioners and scholars define civil society in many different ways. I relate this concept to 'individual and collective initiatives for common public good' (Tandon, 2002). This meaning implies that many different public issues can be focused upon by several different forms of actions construed to be civil society. In many societies (like Cambodia), several traditional forms of association have existed and continue to play active roles. A prominent modern form of association at community level are Self-Help Groups (SHGs) (Bandyopadhyay & Khus, 2012).

Of course, intermediary NGOs bring resources (informational, financial, political) and expertise to address some aspect of public good (like primary education). In addition, networks and coalitions of civil society actors can become a platform for sharing knowledge and planning collective advocacy actions (Tandon & Mohanty, 2003).

In this sense, civil society can play several important roles in promoting inclusive education in Cambodia. Such roles are on both 'demand' and 'supply' side of development. Social mobilisation of excluded families to demand quality education for children is a critical function for civil society in this regard. Creating practical and locally appropriate innovations in schools and centres is another such role that civil society can pilot. On the supply side, building capacity amongst providers of education—teachers, supervisors—is an important contribution. Civil society actions to ensure transparency and accountability of educational services can be invaluable (PRIA, 2010).



When is civil society effective? Several conditions need to be met, like

- Civil society is rooted in local and national contexts
  - Its leadership is committed to equity and justice
  - It brings relevant technical expertise in inclusive education
  - It engages critically with government agencies, both working in partnership, and maintaining autonomy of analysis and action

In promotion of inclusive education in Cambodia, therefore, civil society can undertake several concrete actions. Raising awareness for quality education and strengthening the voice of excluded families is one such action. Building and convening platforms for multi-stakeholder dialogues is another. Many a times, facilitating conversations between education providers (like teachers) and local communities can trigger several innovations to address gaps in educational access and quality. Civil society can play important role by systematising practical field knowledge and sharing it regularly with various stake-holders (Tandon & Bandyopadhyay, 2003).

PRIA would be happy to further support Cambodian civil society in this project of great relevance for educational improvements in Cambodia.

### References:

- *Voluntary action, civil society and the state* by Rajesh Tandon, Mosaic books, 2002.
- *Changing Civil Society in Cambodia: In Search of Relevance* by Kaustuv Kanti Bandyopadhyay and Thida Khus, 2012, PRIA
- *Does Civil Society Matter?: Governance in contemporary India* Edited by Rajesh Tandon and Ranjita Mohanty: Sage, 2003
- *Programme to Enhance Capacity for Social Accountability*, 2010, PRIA
- *Capacity Building of Southern NGOs: Lessons from IFCB* by Rajesh Tandon and Kaustuv Kanti Bandyopadhyay, 2003, PRIA.

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## A great place to discover! My Laotian Internship Experience...

*Carolin Koerner*, Intern in DVV International Regional Office in Vientiane Lao PDR

In September 2015 I came to Laos for a four month internship at the DVV International Regional Office for South and Southeast Asia in Vientiane. Although four months seem like a short time (which it is), I covered a lot of ground and gained a lot of new insights. This was not only because it was my first stay in a so-called developing country, but mainly because DVV International is a great place to discover and learn a lot about development cooperation.

This report aims to share some of my experiences and thoughts which came up during my stay in Laos. Most of them are not completely elaborated and I don't feel qualified to make any judgements – they are simply personal observations about my settlement into a different culture and my work with Lao colleagues and partners.

As a regional office, the focus of work is more on the implementing level, where DVV International works on the macro-, meso-, and micro level. Yet, thanks to the visit of the funding officer from our headquarter, I also learned a lot about different funding channels in the German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), how organizations fight for budgets and could thereby link theoretical knowledge from my studies with the “real world” of work.

Next to the daily office work as the writing of a funding application, relaunching the website and the general support of the team, especially a trip to our target villages in Nong and Sepon district, the exchange with Uwe and meeting and working with my Lao colleagues and our Lao partners enriched my stay a lot. I started to understand what “development cooperation” actually is about, what chances and challenges the daily work in such a context entails, and – for me most important- also to critically reflect the different practices of development cooperation.

Working in a Lao team and with Lao partners was very enriching, though sometimes also challenging. It took me some time to understand Lao language – not in a literal sense – but their way of communication: indirect, without direct critic or questioning but reading between the lines as a crucial method to understand the message. And it was even more important (trying) to adapt to their way of talking and asking in order to be polite and let them keep up appearances. It was – especially at the beginning – not always easy for me to find out whether a statement was simply a statement or contained a hidden request, but my colleagues helped me a lot to find my way into Lao culture.

As it was the first time for me to work in adult education (and education in development in general) it was interesting for me to recognize the challenges an organization like DVV International meets by working on enhancing the level of education in a country and encouraging people to learn.

Back home in Germany, when I was a little school girl and I didn't want to go to school, my mum used to tell me, that I “should be happy and grateful that I have the possibility to go to school, the children in Africa would love to go to school.” Despite the fact that this sentence is completely politically incorrect, it made me assuming that to improve the literacy/ numeracy rate in developing countries, it would be enough to build a school and all kids would be happily going there without further problems.

Of course, and my internship surely proved me that, it is not as easy as this. Drop-out rates show that building a school is not enough: often, schools are too far away or parents have not enough money to send their children to school; teachers are not well enough trained to impart information and pupils stop listening, as they get bored; and they, or their families, do not see the benefits of educating their children and need them/see them as better off by helping in the household or on the field.

In adult education, these challenges are even more important as adults cannot be forced to go to school. Especially missing awareness of the benefits of education and the insufficient training of teachers constitute major challenges. Thus, addressing these challenges is a big issue at the work of DVV International: A major project, which started in December, aims to improve the training – especially in the methodological field – of trainers for adults. As mentioned earlier, (relatively) good educated teachers are very important to make lessons interesting and to transfer information. If the adult students get bored or cannot comprehend what the teacher is saying or do not see a benefit, they stop visiting the courses.



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To improve the teaching skills in non-formal education in Laos, DVV International uses the snowball principle. During two years, 25 teachers (or other people who work in the field of adult education) from all over Laos are trained and introduced to methods which make classes more interesting for adults. After a number of

workshops, the trained teachers are going back in their provinces and train other trainers. In this sense, a great number of facilitators shall be trained and non-formal education be improved on all levels. Moreover, the second big challenge is the missing awareness of the benefits of education.

Before coming to Laos, for me as a European, it was un-understandable how people cannot want to learn how to read and write. However, a three day trip to Nong and Sepon made me understand well why people don't see a benefit in reading and writing. Working all day hard on the field, there is simply only very little need for literacy in their lives. Yet, this does not mean that there is no interest in learning.

But it means that it is important to focus on more practical subjects, on topics people can integrate in their daily life – like health topics, agricultural training or basic vocational training. And this means to work closely with their local community and let them decide what they want to learn. To ensure an interest of the villagers in the topics, the subjects of courses are not initially decided, but the communities are encouraged to come up their own ideas; DVV International then supports them in the implementation. Raising awareness and improving methodical skills of teachers are not the only challenges in adult education, and by far not the only challenges I met during my stay in Laos.

Working here, I learned a lot about development cooperation, but also about a different country and a different culture. Laos and the Lao people become dear to me and thus, I hope to have the chance to come back soon.



Attending the Training on Using Concept of Soft Skills for Non-formal Education

## SEAMEO CELLL Organized Fundraising and Proposal Writing Workshop

On 7-8 March 2016, SEAMEO CELLL organized the workshop “Fundraising and Proposal Writing”. Attending the workshop were 28 participants from different organisations, and institutions including the Department of Education and Training, Universities, High Schools, Education Centres, NGOs, private companies.

Mr Uwe Gartenschlaeger, Regional Director, DVV International Regional Office South and Southeast Asia, and Mr Nazaret Nazaretyan, Coordinator and Course trainer of DVV International were the workshop trainers. DVV is the largest Institute for Adult Education in Germany and is a success story of effective fundraising; Central Government funding accounts for only 13.9% of its annual operating budget, the rest being from fundraising activities. The trainers shared practical knowledge, and experience in conducting fundraising activities as well as writing grant proposals.

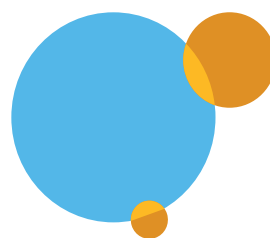
Through the workshop, the participants gained a better understanding of fundraising strategies, method of fundraising, structure of a proposal and how to write a well-formed proposal.

\*Picture&Text from Seomeo Celll



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## Manifesto for Adult Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century



For many people, youth and adult education is still an unknown terminology. Even in Europe, where it has a long tradition, there is still the need to re-define it from time to time. Below, you can find a short reminder published by the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA). The document tries to define, what Adult Education is in Europe in the 21st Century. Although some of the things might be not appropriate for Asia, we think it is an interesting reflection.

Adult education has a role to play when it comes to:

### 1. Active citizenship, democracy & participation



People who participate in adult education have more trust in the political system, participate more in society, by voting, by volunteering or taking active roles in communities.

### 2. Life skills for individuals



Adult learners feel healthier, lead healthier lifestyles, build new social networks and experience improved well-being.

### 3. Social cohesion, equity and equality



Adult education provides many opportunities to equalize societies on a larger scale and to create economic growth.

### 4. Employment and digitalization



Workplace learning is one of the key drivers for adults' participation in lifelong learning. Adult education can also help in closing the digital gap.

### 5. Migration and demographic change



Civic education and intercultural learning can create integration-friendly cultures. Language and basic skills training will enable migrants to become active citizens. Learning seniors are more active, volunteer more, work longer and are healthier.

### 6. Sustainability



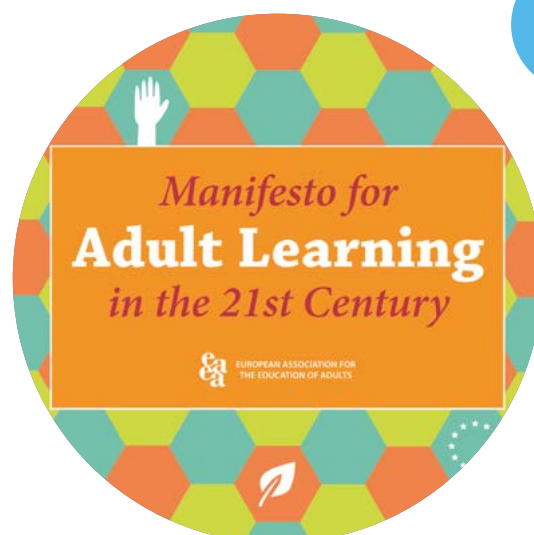
European citizens need information and innovative spaces to develop new lifestyles, new projects, and new approaches. Adult education can help provide the information, the debate spaces and enable the creativity.

### 7. European policies



Adult education contributes to main European strategies in the field of growth, employment, innovation, equity, social cohesion, active citizenship, poverty reduction, climate change, internal market, migration, peace and more.

The whole EAEA Manifesto can be downloaded at <http://www.eaea.org/en/policy-advocacy/manifesto-for-adult-learning-in-the-21st-century.html>



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## Tackling the Implementation Gap in Education Reform; Mobilizing Civil Society

*Thai Soda, NEP Cambodia*

NGO Education Partnership (NEP) in cooperation with Deutscher-Volkshochschul-Verbandes e.V. (DVV) International has been funded by the European Union

Delegation in Cambodia (89.98% and BMZ(German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development)

under the project "Tackling the Implementation Gap in Education Reform, Mobilizing Civil Society" with a total budget of 798, 542 Euro.

This 3-year project aims to improve educational services in Cambodia through stronger civil society engagement in policy dialogue and implementation monitoring.



dialogue and decision-making through a strong flow of information from the sub-national networks to the national network. Capacity building support, coaching and training will be provided to the 22 exiting provincial education sector working group network in the first year of the project. In the subsequent years, sub-grants will support local initiatives based on newly development skills, with a final phase for local networks to share their results and learning and contribute to the skills development of others networks. At the same time, NEP will engage members in thematic learning networks, development new policy position statements, and undertaking research and analysis.

To launch the project, a kick-off event has been organized on Thursday 3rd March at Cambodiana Hotel, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, with 107 participants (40 females) from CSOs NEP members, the provincial Education Sector Working Group members (35 from provinces), development partners, international key note speaker from PRIA and representatives from the Ministry of Education Youth and Sport. The kick-off event was a very successful and fruitful ceremony with main state and non-state actors working in education and the quality of education and inclusiveness are the main priorities recognized by His Excellency Lim Sothea, General Director of General Department of Policy and Planning of Ministry of Education Youth and Sport.

Progress has been made in educational reform in Cambodia over the past decade but it has been detected that there is an implementation gap between national policy and grassroots implementation. Challenges are still faced in terms of access, quality and accountability.

In response to these challenges, the project aims to strengthen sub-national civil society mechanisms and capacity in the field of education and to mobilize local civil society organizations (CSO) to monitor, track and bring about improvements in service delivery (specific objective 1). The project also seeks to develop further and expand the activity of the national network of CSOs active in the field of education, aligned to multi-sectoral CSO development. (Specific objective 2)

It is also set to increase the capacity of the CSOs in monitoring local service delivery and educational policy implementation. Based on these local research findings, CSOs will be empowered to participate effectively in policy

This EU project will increase opportunities for civil society to monitor implementation of the education sector to improve education services for students across Cambodia. Mr. Uwe Gartenschlaeger said that based on the historical influence of the NEP



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network and 5 years of strong cooperation with DVV International, it became clear that such a project could help tackle the education gap and accelerate policy implementation, make happen that decision taken at the national level has been appropriately implemented at the village.

Mr. Alain Vandersmissen, Chargé d'Affaires from the European Union Delegation in Cambodia affirmed that quality education is a driver of strong development, economic growth, and the fight against poverty. Civil society Organisations have an important role in accompanying the reform of the education sector and monitoring implementation at the school level.

To achieve this objective, some key activities will be implemented such as: capacity building for CSOs to monitor the local implementation of education services, capacity building for sub-national networks (P-ESWG) to ensure effective and inclusive advocacy, provision of sub-grants for community level research and local advocacy, conducting PETS and public financial monitoring activities and production of CSO position statements and strengthening existing thematic sub-networks and international learning exchange from Philippines on effective advocacy.

## The ASPBAE Executive Council (EC) and staff were in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

ASPBAE's Executive Council (EC) and staff meet in Ulaanbaatar to review ASPBAE's activities and achievements in 2015 and agree on plans for 2016. This was a significant meeting in many ways. First, it was a space to discuss and plan for ASPBAE's 7<sup>th</sup> General Assembly coming up in December 2016. Second, it was an opportunity to take stock of the newly agreed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and discuss the opportunities and challenges the education community faces, especially related to adult education and lifelong learning in the education goal (SDG4). And third, it was the last Executive Council meeting for several of its EC members as their two 4-year terms on the Board come to an end this year.

The EC meeting followed the review of ASPBAE's Training for Transformation programme (17 February 2016), and the Policy Forum on Lifelong Learning (18 February 2016) held in Ulaanbaatar and co-organised by ASPBAE and the Mongolian Education Alliance. The gathering of the Board and staff was an opportunity to reflect on these 2 events and to report and plan for activities in 2016 in accordance with ASPBAE's core strategies – leadership and capacity building; policy advocacy; building strategic partnerships; and institutional strengthening. Cognisant of the Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF) Phase 2 end in early 2016, the ASPBAE staff and Executive discussed lessons from this period of work to inform planning for the next Phase.

ASPBAE's Executive Council and staff were also given an exposure to Mongolian culture which included a visit to the national museum, a musical feast of traditional songs and dances, Mongolian food, and last but certainly not the least, the Mongolian winter of temperatures as low as -31 degrees Celsius! The next Executive Council meeting will welcome new Board members, including a new President and new representatives from South and Central Asia, Southeast Asia, East Asia, and the South Pacific.



ASPBAE Executive Council and Staff meeting at the temperature -31 degree Celsius in Mongolia



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## What is Soft Skills?

*Dalouny Sisoulath*

DVV International  
in Vientiane, Lao PDR

Many of us hear about soft skills, it seems strange if we just translate the term to Lao directly we will not understand the right meaning of “Soft Skills”: personal attributes that enable someone to interact effectively and harmoniously with other people or we can say this soft skills help us to work more effective. Soft Skills are basis personal competencies which can be improved and encouraged in variance field such as diligence, active at work, management skills like responsibility, problem solving, and creativity.

Generally, we recognize only hard skills or technical skills for work; in reality the hard skills would not be enough for work because hard skills we can find it everywhere, presently many organizations need not only hard skills but most of them select people with soft skills also. Hard skills give you a chance but soft skills will help you to change that chance for success. Persons who have soft skills have more chance to improve themselves; the believe in the capacity for change make live better for promotion then the person who have only hard skills, for example the engineers will be able to influence the investors or the supervisors to consider the project offered is good for the organization.

When we attend the training sometimes we also see some lessons of the soft skills such as leadership, decision making, teamwork, effective communications, negotiation, conflict management, influencing, and time management. Examples below will describe some of the soft skills.

Effective communication is important for everyone, we have to pay attention to send or receive communication, concentrate to speak or listen, summarize the point to make others understand what you want to express, these will help avoiding misunderstanding and conflict. Good communications will help to reduce the conflict and also understand each other. Listening is the key to all effective communications, listening to find the point of communications and try to take the topic by using the question what, where, who, when, why and how (5W1H).



**Decision making:** we need to know the way to go and there will be many ways to take you to the goal. The decision making is the step to solve the problem which would include considering the issue, alternative way to solve issues and decide the best solution by using key principles and the reasons. All in all we also need to think about advantages and disadvantages.

Conflict management is a normal issue that happens in organizations, to solve the conflict not only in negative way, but in the other side it also help to improve the personnel, encourage people to understand each other and improve idea, creativity and work performance, which depends on appropriate conflict management.

There are many aspects for a successful organization and it is not difficult to improve but to be successful you must know yourself, know your ability and select the work refer to your ability to get to know your strength and weakness, in order to improve yourself for work and life. In the future soft skills will be the important part of work because working nowadays we need more communication, especially with foreigners, different cultures. We need to learn not only working together but we also need to accept the different culture. Learn to be strong on the point, negotiation and adaptation by being the part of the team, find the weakness and try to change; appropriate react on criticism and improve our time management.

## Interesting

### Important Website in region

[www.aspbae.org](http://www.aspbae.org)

[www.pria.org](http://www.pria.org)

[www.seameocell.org](http://www.seameocell.org)

### Interesting publications

Adult Education and Development

AED 79: Networking - Rio + 20 - Lifelong Learning

AED 80: Post 2015

AED 81: Communities

AED 82: Global Citizenship Education

### International Perspectives in Adult Education

IPE 70: Research and Development in Adult Learning and Education in Hungary

IPE 71: Adult education in an interconnected world

IPE 72: 1914-2014-Remembering the past to live the present and shape the future

IPE 73: Digital Adult Education - A Key to Global Development?

Published by DVV International in cooperation with partners in Lao PDR, Cambodia, South and South East Asia.

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Voice Rising - access via [www.icae2.org](http://www.icae2.org)

Education Policy Matters - via [www.unescobkk.org](http://www.unescobkk.org)

### New Publication

Impact Report 2009-2015

Newsletter: Lifelong Learning and Non-formal Education in Lao PDR and Southeast Asia

Sharing for Learning in Lao PDR: DVV International Engaged in Lifelong Learning for Sustainable Development in Asia Pacific

Education and life long learning for Sustainable Development: Asia Pacific Consultation

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