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Newsletter

Lifelong Learning & Non-Formal Education in Lao PDR and Southeast Asia



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Dear readers,

Without any doubt: This past year has been one of the most challenging in recent years. On the one hand, there were worries about the infections with the Covid-19 virus which were up to now met both in Cambodia as well as in Lao PDR with promising vaccination rates. And on the other hand, the effects of the measures to mitigate the risks that were brought about by the pandemic had a huge impact on our work and our daily lives in general as well.

Furthermore, the closure of all kinds of educational institutions has significantly affected our lives and those of our children. And these consequences will be far from over once schools reopen, but they will be felt for years to come and they will also be challenges for the future work in the field of adult education. As both in Laos and in Cambodia the non-formal education sector is the closest partner of DVV International, we have to assert that the size of the target group of the non-formal education system will probably increase due to larger drop-out rates in times of online learning which many children are barred from due to a lack of internet access, lack of devices and low educational levels of parents who cannot support their children adequately. This once again also shows the importance of adult education because ultimately educating mothers and fathers also means educating future generations.

Looking at adult education from a broader and more international perspective, we can see two big events at the horizon. In June next year, Germany will celebrate its “Volkshochschultag” – the big conference of all adult education centres in the country which takes place every five to six years and which will also assemble some of the international partners of DVV International from all over the world. And right after that, an even more international and globally relevant event will be on the agenda. The International Conference on Adult Education, CONFITEA, which is organized every twelve to thirteen years by UNESCO, will be staged in Morocco.

Ahead of the CONFITEA conference, many regional and sub-regional conferences have taken place this year that gathered insights from across the globe to pave the way for adult education in the coming decade and to discuss how adult education can address challenges such as the global pandemic, climate change, demographic challenges and the increasing divide between the rich and the poor, both within countries and between countries. One response that will be discussed in detail in next year’s CONFITEA is the topic of citizenship education. Discussions on the promotion of this important part of adult education promise to be fruitful and highly relevant.

Looking ahead at these important gatherings, I sincerely hope that 2022 will be a good year for adult and non-formal education and for education in general, especially in our Southeast Asian region. May there be open schools again and many possibilities to learn to which we can all contribute.

All the best for 2022!

Warm regards
Johann Heilmann
Regional Director

On the Road Towards CONFITEA: Discussing the National GRALE Report of Thailand

Johann Heilmann, DVV International

Practitioners, researchers, politicians and advocates of adult education need room for exchange – also on an international scale. The central event in this regard that includes all UNESCO member states, representatives from civil society, non-governmental organisations and research institutions is the CONFITEA, the International Conference on Adult Education which is organized every twelve to thirteen years by UNESCO. Since the last CONFITEA which took place in Belem in Brazil in 2009, a report, the so-called GRALE (Global Report on Adult Learning and Education) is published every three years in order to measure the achievements and progress of adult education worldwide. The fifth GRALE which will be launched in 2022 will set the basis for discussion at the coming CONFITEA which will be held in Morocco in June next year.

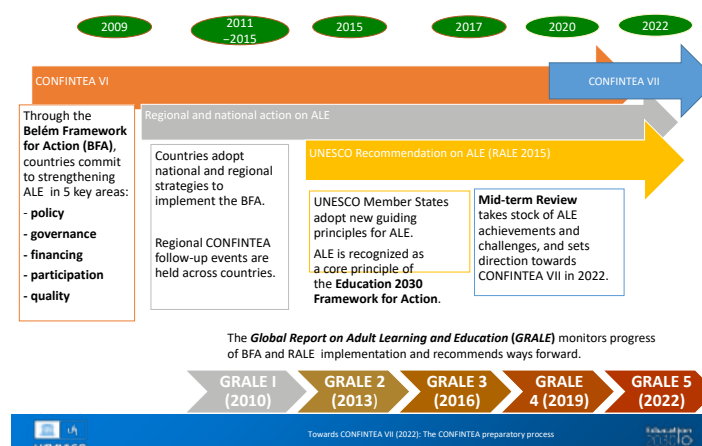
The GRALE is informed by national reports that have been provided to the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) in mid-2021. These reports combine survey data, policy analysis and case studies with sound recommendations and good practices and have usually been composed by representatives from the Ministry of Education in the respective countries. In order to discuss these national reports with a wider community of representatives from research institutions, civil society and the private sector, Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok hosted a session on the results of the Thai national report with support of DVV International within a larger online conference on lifelong learning in early September. The Thai national focal point, Dr. Yotin Somnonont --from the Office of Non-Formal and Informal Education) first presented the achievements of adult education in Thailand. He stressed the long history of this important part of the education sector and he also pointed to the various opportunities provided by

the Thai non-formal education system, especially through the well-established Community Learning Centres (CLCs) that can certainly serve as a blueprint for the further development of CLCs in other Southeast Asian countries as well.

Yet, during the discussion with representatives from civil society it also became evident that not all population groups have yet been fully incorporated into the non-formal education system. Especially ethnic minorities, women, children and the LGBTIQ group are still lacking appropriate educational offers and their situation in terms of access to services has clearly worsened during the time of the pandemic as was explained vividly by Matcha In-Phorn from the Thai organization Sangsan Anakot Yawachon in Chiang Mai, that is working with these marginalized groups.

Cecilia Soriano from DVV International's longstanding partner ASPBAE (Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education) then elaborated on the advocacy work that it is carrying out around the entire CONFITEA process,

Overview: CONFITEA VI to CONFITEA VII



From the Presentation of Angela Owusu-Boampong

thereby giving civil society representatives in adult education a strong voice. Cecilia made her point by saying that adult learning and education with its components of formal, non-formal, and informal learning, can meet the learning needs of vulnerable and marginalised groups to address issues of inequality, discrimination, and exclusion and ensure that 'no one is left behind'. It therefore has to be ensured that the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) envisages participation by governments and societies so that SDGs become a societal movement - the government as a primary duty-bearer, with a 'whole of government' and 'whole of society' approach.

The session further provided space for the provision of expertise from the private sector: Natasak Rodjanapiches, an advisor to the board of Eternity Thailand, an Education Technology company demonstrated how online tools can help in improving standards of distance learning. It will be seen in the future in how far online tools can also benefit disadvantaged communities, but in any case, those are the methods actors in adult learning and education should also put attention to in order to take advantage of innovation.

All in all, the session on the status of adult education in Thailand and the national GRALE report proved to be very meaningful and it is an event which will be followed by various discussion on national and regional level in order to prepare all stakeholders for a fruitful participation in next year's CONFINTEA.

Strengthening the Non-Formal Education Development Centre (NFEDC)

Somchit Phonevilay, NFEDC

Human resource development is very important for every organization whether in the public or the private sector, which is why it should be encouraged and supported. Therefore, the Non-formal Education Development Centre (NFEDC) plays an important role in developing of the entire staff in the non-formal education system in all central provinces and countrywide under the supervision of the Department of Non-Formal Education.

In the past, NFEDC has conducted various skills trainings for NFE staff on topics including gender, soft skills many more. In its three-year strategy plan for 2021-2023, DVV International focusses on strengthening the capacities of NFEDC as a whole. In 2022, an expert will be hired to consult the NFEDC on the basis of the Curriculum institutionALE which is a curriculum that envisages to strengthen adult education institutions as a whole. Originally it was developed by DVV I staff in the Middle East and it has now been translated into Lao by the NFEDC itself. It focusses on topics such as:

1. The main potential and services of the adult learning and education institute
2. Engagement, goals, strategy and management
3. Need assessment of the target group and market
4. Marketing
5. Accessing and participation

6. Cooperation with the qualified facilitator
7. Networking and partnership
8. Creating learning environment
9. Fund raising

In the past year, the NFEDC also conduct research on the possibility using online tools in non-formal education together with an external consultant. On many levels, activities had to be re-designed or postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the center has also produced several important videos that can further be disseminated by the structures of the NFE system and which address urging needs of the target groups in rural and remote areas. The topics of the videos include:

1. The use of Zoom and other online meeting platforms
 2. 10 ways to protect yourself from COVID-19,
 3. Making sandwiches,
 4. Giving advice to parents who want to support their kids in online learning.
- Videos on mathematics and Lao for the grade 12 equivalency programme were equally produced.

For more detail please see:

Website: <https://nfedi.org/>

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/nfedc>

YouTube: ສູນພັດທະນາການສຶກສານອກໂຮງຮຽນ

Integrating Lifelong Learning Contents into the Teacher Education Curriculum at the Faculty of Education, National University of Laos

Souksakhone Sengsouliya
Faculty of Education, National University of Laos

The Faculty of Education, National University of Laos (FED-NUoL) started its collaboration with the Southeast Asian Regional Office of the Adult Education Association of Germany (DVVI) in December 2016. Upon having had several bilateral discussions, both partners (FED-NUoL and DVVI) initiated the integration of lifelong learning concepts into institutions for teacher education. At that time, the project was co-chaired by the leadership of both organizations which included Assoc. Prof. Dr. Athithouthay Chatouphonexay (a former Dean) of FED-NUoL and Mr. Uwe Gartenschlaeger (a former Regional Director) of DVVI. As soon as the project had been approved, FED-NUoL started the process, all faculty members within the faculty in order to review, plan, and determine the concerned procedures.

Updating or adjusting any parts of a curriculum in the Lao educational system is not easy. However, FED-NUoL put all its efforts into the process, through presenting a proposal letter to all concerned parties. As for the rationales, FED-NUoL raised some key references to certify the possibility of integrating lifelong learning concepts into the FED-NUoL's teacher education curriculum. Such references were comprised of 1) The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of UNESCO, especially SDG 4, ensuring the quality of education that focuses on the equality and accountability, as well as the provision of lifelong educational opportunities for all (UNESCO, 2015); 2) The nation's Strategic vision 2030, stressing that Lao PDR has to decrease its people's illiteracy by facilitating lifelong learning activities and upgrading their living conditions (MoES, 2016); 3)

The Laos Educational Law, Article 26, mentioning that lifelong learning is a mix of formal and non-formal education that supports all females and males in lifelong learning thereby contributing to the development of a learning society and to meeting the developmental needs (MoES, 2015); and 4) The National University of Laos' Academic Legislation on the annual update of Subject Contents, permitting to adjust the curriculum structure by up to 25 % (NUoL, 2015). FED-NUoL, eventually was given the permission to integrate lifelong learning contents into FED-NUoL's teacher education curriculum. Then FED-NUoL organized an academic meeting and had all of its faculty members to write up the contents of lifelong learning.



Souksakhone Sengsouliya
PhD student and teacher
of the FED-NUoL



The written contents then served as part of a subject, the so called “Environment and Daily Technology.” Passing all these steps, FED-NUoL began teaching lifelong learning contents in the academic year 2018-2019. Practically, FED-NUoL determined a total of 16 hours for the whole contents which are supposed to be implemented within a one-year period (taught in regular classes). The following year, FED-NUoL had an evaluation, looked at the lessons learnt and adjusted the contents in order to increase their relevance.

FED-NUoL is currently teaching lifelong learning contents in all of its 12 bachelor-degree majors. Likewise, the evaluation revealed that student participants expressed a high level of further needs regarding lifelong learning content. At this point, FED-NUoL, therefore, started to further develop lifelong learning content to be a standalone subject and to then introduce it into all bachelor-degree and master-degree programs in the faculty, as it is now in the process and it is to be accomplished soon.

Referring to the above-mentioned descriptions, FED-NUoL finds this task of integrating lifelong contents into its teacher education curriculum very successful and this accomplishment has a lot of potential for further development of lifelong learning perspectives for partner institutions and related sectors.



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2021

Content in the Module

- **Education for sustainable development**
- **Lifelong Learning**
- **Objectives of Lifelong Learning**
- **Types of Lifelong Learning**
- **Self-directed learning**
- **Soft Skills**

Lifelong Learning through Song composition

Phaivone Nanthavong

Faculty of Education, National University of Laos

In these times of a fast-changing world, education is a crucial driver for development in every single nation; this means that where there is education, a nation can develop. Nowadays, Lao PDR puts great emphasis on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in order to leave the status of a least developed country (LDC).

In order to achieve the SDGs, especially SDG 4 which envisages providing quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all the Faculty of Education (FED) and the Regional Office for Adult Education of Germany (DVV International) agreed on organizing the project “Lifelong Learning through Song Composition Training”. The project consisted of two objectives: (1) to provide students of the National University of Laos with a lecture on the key principles of song composition; (2) to organize a contest and welcome songs of lifelong learning written by the student participants. Another expectation of the project was to offer an opportunity for lifelong learning activities to students, hoping that they would acquire skills for song writing and that these skills might even serve

as a part-time job for them, apart from their main occupation. A song is part of human life, a mental fulfillment and an emotional refreshment. Noticeably, a song is part of human’s living activities as it refers to rhymes in an individual’s singing; it incorporates both human voice and music to cause various feelings such as charm, cheer, excitement and sadness.

The chairmen of this project included Mr. Visian Thongthavy, Vice-Dean of Faculty of Education (NUoL), Dr. Johann Heilmann, Director of the Regional Office, DVV International, together with Mr. Khanthong Inthachack, the National Coordinator for the cooperation of DVV with the FoE. The invited keynote speaker was Mr. Buangeun Xaphouvong, the former Deputy Minister of Information, Culture and Tourism. In the first event, the participants were presented with an overview of song development and the guidelines for song composition. There were crowds of participants who were interested to participate, both faculty members and students alike, in total 95 people. The project was divided into three



Phaivone Nanthavong
a teacher at the
FED-NUoL



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Results	Names of Songs	Name	Department	Year
1	"Mom' motto"	Mr. Mai Phommasone	Educational Administration	3
2	"Leave for education"	Mr. Phongsavanh Khoudaphone	Educational Administration	3
2	"Pleasure in teacher-being"	Mr. Boun Malysithone	History Education	2
3	"Forever learning"	Ms. Souksavanh Chitavangsoe	Lao Language-Literature Education	3
3	"Miss hometown"	Ms. Maikham Phasouk	Lao Language-Literature Education	3

phases: opening & running of the training, inviting songs for the competition, and closing and announcing the results. The opening ceremony was held on April 2, 2021. There was a delay for the other two phases due to the pandemic situation. Until July 2021, the selection process of songs continued and the final results were announced on August 23, 2021 by a selection committee

There were altogether 6 places: 1 place for the 1st winner song, 2 places for the 1st running-up songs, and 3 places for the 2nd running-up songs, as shown in the table.

The 6 songs in the table above were recognised in a final ceremony. The committee's key criteria in the evaluation were the following ones creativity, the reflection of lifelong learning and education, beautiful rhymes, Lao grammar, easy understanding for listeners, the use of sliding words, and

accuracy in song principles. A good song moves its characters; it includes greetings, posing a question, and some comparisons to beautify the whole song.

Having organized this project, it became evident that both faculty members and teachers could draw a lesson from it, especially those individuals who love songs and music as they received a strong motivation, new perspectives, increased imaginary, preservation of heritage in language and songs, as well as a sense of real collaboration. Likewise, without the harmony, cooperation of both financial and non-financial assistance from several parties, this great project would have never taken place. At the end, a sincere appreciation from the authors of this essay is offered to the Faculty of Education (NUoL) and DVV International for their shared responsibility and co-organization of this wonderful event.



Lessons learnt in our first pilot: Transforming Community Learning Centers and Youth Centers into Lifelong Learning Centers

Ean Sochet, DVV International Cambodia

In order to contribute to creating appropriate lifelong learning services, which all people, especially marginalized and disadvantaged groups can access easily and from which they get benefits for the improvement of their livelihoods, DVV International Cambodia has piloted in project of transforming Community Learning Centers (CLCs) and Youth Centers (YC) to become Lifelong Learning Centers (LLLC) within its three-year project (2021-2023) in partnership with the Department of Non-Formal Education (DNFE) and the Department of Youth Resource Management.

At the first stage in early 2021, we started working with four CLCs and one YC. Currently, we are extending our project activities to four more YCs and one further CLC after seeing some productive results in the five previously selected centers. In total, we have worked with 10 centers in our pilot phase now in order to enable all centres to become LLLCs by the year 2023.

Following the concept and procedures stated in the manual on management and operation of LLLCs, we have provided both financial and technical support to every single center based on their needs to run their new project activities including 1) computer lab, 2) small scale agriculture and 3) income generation in addition to their existing non-formal education activities such as literacy classes, soft skill and vocational skill training etc. In this process, we have prioritised capacity building for managers, committee members and core teachers by creating an online learning platform for their soft skills improvement and by providing mentoring and coaching for them at their sites.

As a result, those five centers of the very first stage have increased their digital literacy knowledge and skills. They have arranged their own computer labs

by themselves and most of them have been able to host virtual monthly meetings through Zoom or Google Meet for the entire group. They have been able to use the distance platform for sharing their challenges and best practices and for updating their progress via a telegram group. Besides, they have been able to use social media such as facebook, youtube and google for searching and learning about new techniques of agriculture and income generation. Most of the five centers have been able to grow some vegetables and do fish/chicken raising and to generate income for their centers by selling their agricultural products as well as by improving community services like copying or printing, silk-screening, beauty salon, tailoring and handicraft. They have turned their centers' environment from being a quiet place into large engagement spaces. The students and community youth have recognized the significant change of their centers and helped the centers through their internship. Further community members and outsiders have visited their centers for discussions and further learning and bought some products and services of the centers.

The Sre Knong Community Learning Center is a good example for the success of the pilot. It has become a blueprint for other centers and communities, and it is now a role model as a fast-growing center in terms of leadership, ICT, resource mobilization, creativity, and techniques of gardening and farming as well as income generation. It has inspired other 9 centers to change their mindset and attitude. We selected three local experts from Sre Knong center to join us as Technical Working Group in supporting all other centers.



Project Manager
DVV International
in the Cambodia Office



Implementation of Volunteer Work at Community Learning Centers and Youth Centers

Uy Kea & Ros Keng, Department of Youth Resource Management, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport

The Department of Youth Resource Management of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of Cambodia in cooperation with DVV International established a project on „Using Soft Skills for Youth and Adults.“ This project has created more opportunities for young people to volunteer, gain experience, build personal capacity and participate in social development, as well as to prepare for entry in future employment.

In 2020, the program on “Using soft skills for youth and adults” recruited two youth volunteers in each province to work in ten Community Learning Centers: Phnom Penh, Kandal, Kampot, Kampong Speu, Prey Veng, Kampong Chhnang, Pursat, Battambang, Preah Vihear and Ratanakiri Provinces in order to provide opportunities for

youth volunteers to use their skills in community development programs, expand knowledge, experience, personal life skills, expand friendships, cooperation between friends and others, raise awareness of the importance and benefits of volunteer work for youth, develop a network of volunteers from national to sub-national levels, and link communities, relevant institutions, development partners, and human resource development, and provide opportunities for other youth in the community to participate. The implementation of this project proved successful as the youth volunteers worked diligently and have been praised by the national team, the President of the Community Learning Center and the community itself.



“The Youth Center is a vocational education and training place and a link from education to the job market. School-to-job interaction with the youth center is a priority for youth centers to reduce poverty among young people”

H.E. Sean Borath, Secretary of State of Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport

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Youth project implementation at Community Learning Centers and Youth Centers

In 2021, the project on „Using soft skills for youth and adults“ has been transferred to the full concept of „Implementation of Volunteer Work at Community Learning Centers and Youth Centers“, which was expanded and strengthened to implement the volunteer concept more effectively, with 16 locations in 15 provinces, including: Kandal, Kampong Speu, Kampot, Kampong Chhnang, Takeo, Kampong Cham, Kampong Thom, Prey Veng, Svay Rieng, Pursat, Battambang, Banteay Meanchey, Oddar Meanchey, Preah Vihear and Ratanakiri provinces, which had been implemented for 30 days for young people to participate in internships and gain experience in Community Learning Centers and Youth Centers, and encourage young people to be able to participate in activities that reflect the realities of the community where they live.

The project has the following objectives:

- Provide opportunities for young volunteers to use their time, abilities and skills to participate in the development of Community Learning Centers and Youth Centers
- Support community learning centers and youth centers to provide services to people actively and be ready to transform into lifelong learning centers.

The project on „Implementation of Volunteer Work at Community Learning Centers and Youth Centers“ has the vision to encourage young Cambodians who have free time to use that time as volunteers to gain personal experience and participate in the development of the community where they live and are ready themselves for their future's work. By sending youth volunteers to work at CLCs and YCs, a mechanism is established to facilitate to

support CLCs and YCs in capacity building and to exploit the potential of young people in soft skills, technical skills and IT skills.

As a result, after volunteering at Community Learning Centers and Youth Centers, some youths have gained practical knowledge and have been selected to further work in Youth Centers, some work at public and private institutions, and some others have passed the scholarship exam to study abroad etc.

In 2021, DVV International helped establish Kampong Chhnang Youth Center to become a lifelong learning center, and by the end of 2021, the organization has selected three more youth centers to become lifelong learning centers, including Takeo Provincial Youth Center, Kampong Cham Provincial Youth Center, and Kampong Thom Provincial Youth Center. Currently, the four youth centers are providing some vocational training, such as computer training, tailoring, face make-up, raising fish and growing all kinds of crops.

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of Cambodia strongly believes that this cooperation between the Department of Youth Center and DVV International will provide additional opportunities for young Cambodians to build capacity and participate in building benefits for the communities in which they live. The Department of Youth Center and DVV International are committed to constantly support this work to achieve the vision of the project and policies of the Royal Government of Cambodia.

The digital divide, education, and marginalised youth: Lessons from ASPBAE's Youth-led Action Research (YAR) in the COVID context

Our society has already been divided in many ways – by caste, class, race, sex, gender, and ethnicity, to name a few. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to the fore and deepened another divide- that of technology. People with the privilege of technology access can search and find anything in one-click, but others who do not have this magic wand are left out of the game. In the physical world, people who have fewer resources, limited access, and no agency tend to be pushed to the peripheries, while people at the center relish power. In the current period, similar patterns are being reproduced in the virtual world. With online education as a stark example.

To control the spread of the pandemic, many countries have closed educational institutes and learning shifted to online platforms. The shift was sudden, impromptu, and with no provision for the infrastructure and people's readiness required for this technology-based learning modes. The shutdown of physical schools had many negative consequences. It not only affected the academic progress of students, but also shut access to mid-day meals and safe shelter that students from poorer families were highly reliant on. School shutdowns also took away significant opportunities for socialization with peers which is an integral part of the cognitive and social development of children.

The shutdown of schools and colleges has affected millions of poor students, and evidence suggests that for countries with low learning outcomes, a large number of school dropouts, and insufficient infrastructure, the impact will be far more negative. It simply means that many from marginalized groups are unlikely to return to schools and those who were never in schools to begin with will continue to be excluded from learning opportunities even for foundational skills such as literacy and numeracy.

Given the massive risks to health of social interactions in the face of the COVID 19 pandemic, many governments around the world have resorted to continued school closures or blended approaches to learning. In this context, online education has been promoted as the best alternative - a field dominated by private, for profit players. Data clearly shows that almost half of the world's students face barriers in accessing computers and internet facilities. According to the 2017-2018 National Sample Survey report on education, only 24% of Indian households have an internet facility and more than 36% of schools in India operate without electricity. These disparities become distinctly visible across geographic locations, incomes, and education groups, ethnicities, and people with special needs.

The outcomes of the Youth-led Action Research (YAR) studies (May-July, 2020), facilitated by ASPBAE in nine countries in the Asia Pacific, highlighted the varied forms of discrimination, gaps, and challenges in the education system in the era of COVID-19.

In Mongolia and Bangladesh, researchers reported that many students who could not access online education are left behind and fear to drop out of formal education completely, it will be challenging to bring them back to schools.

Youth researchers from Indonesia shared that students who are living in the remote parts do not have electricity and phone network. It is almost impossible for them to own devices and access internet. Participants added, "students also need to buy internet quota which is expensive, and who buys it does not know how to use internet properly. Teachers only give home assignments and expect parents to monitor and support their children"

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This observation was shared by the researchers in East Timor. They underscored the difficulties of youth especially in rural areas in accessing distance learning opportunities as they do not have access, not only to internet facilities, but also to electricity connections. Even low-tech solutions through radio and television have not been viable for them. The youth researchers have recommended that physical learning materials (books, handouts) are still the most viable medium for teaching and learning in most of the rural areas. For areas where internet connectivity is available, they come at a high price. Access to free internet services will be especially helpful for marginalised youth to access formal and non-formal learning opportunities including information on health and safety and on livelihood opportunities.

Youth researchers from Nepal reported that the pandemic is creating the educational disparities by reducing the opportunities for many of the most vulnerable children, youth, and adults. They added, youths from the middle class family are somehow able to access the e-learning classes however, these classes were reported to be boring and ineffective for the youths. Besides, children from low class families are not able to access these classes and neither the radio and television programs have been effective for them.

In Philippines, researchers described the disparity of education services in private and public schools. They mentioned, “high-paying private schools easily shifted to online-based platforms and digital tools but accessing the online platform have been difficult for most public school pupils and students”. It was noted that for many marginalized children and youth the community learning centers (CLC) are significant support. But many CLCs are either closed and or are running with very little or no financial support. Furthermore, lack of access to online learning has also negatively affected skills development training.

Female youth researchers from rural India argued that access to online education has strong gender barriers. According to their research, girls face more challenges in accessing the internet and



owning devices. One of the YAR researchers shared that, “Only 20% of the girls we interviewed have a smartphone. Even if they have a smartphone, they may or may not have the internet on it due to poor network connectivity in their villages”. She further added, “If this continues for some more time, that is, schools remain closed and online education continues to be the norm, we will remain excluded, and 33% of girls said that they are then likely to drop out of education”. Where on one hand education is advocated as one of the pathways to come out of the intergenerational cycle of poverty and oppression, at the ground level, youth who are living in this challenging environment, are anxious and unsure of their prospects. Furthermore, due to increased expenses, loss of income, and to survive, some poor parents are inclined to marry off girls at a younger age.

Young researchers from Sri Lanka shed light on the perspective of teachers. Teachers are under tremendous pressure - they do not have adequate tools, training, and internet services for digital teaching. Even after many requests and follow up by teachers, the government seems to be indifferent to their plight.

Arising from the outcomes of the study, the YAR youth group drew up a set of recommendations addressed to government, civil society organisations, and other partners to address the deep divides and huge gaps in education and learning access of young people –



- Make higher education free and accessible to everyone and safely restart school and colleges at the earliest, with priority attention to ensuring the health and safety of students and educators.
- Increase scholarships to marginalized youth.
- Promote local education and training, especially at the village level - community learning centers need to be strengthened and sustained.
- Television, radio, and other low-tech tools can be explored to include communities in education.
- Ensure that education is a public good and that the state performs key responsibilities, including ensuring access to an online platforms for all learners and teachers through transformative education systems.
- Complete lockdowns bring untold hardship to people, especially the marginalized. Governments should develop resilient education and development systems, equipped to deal with emergency situations that protect the lives and interests of all its people.
- Teachers need to be equipped with sufficient knowledge and skills on information

technologies and distance education.

- Governments should implement and promote policies that bridge the digital divide and move countries closer to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

The partners in 9 countries produced their research reports and are currently engaged in the dissemination of the research findings and recommendations. Since this form of research is grounded in actions, many of the partners carried parallel local actions and advocacies. In Timor-Leste, for example, the youth researchers' group presented their research to the national Secretary of the State for vocational training and employment where they asked for state budget allocations for youth demands, specifically establishing non-formal education and training opportunities as a Community Learning Center (CLC). In the Philippines, E-Net Philippines and other partners facilitated virtual spaces for youth activism and advocacy. Community youth were actively involved in educational campaigns, relief work, and advocacy activities. Various youth-led campaigns were designed for holding the government accountable and responsible to safeguard citizens' right to food, right to education, and the right to ask questions. Based on the findings and recommendations, youth researchers developed a series of videos, and podcasts, and organized webinars and Facebook live sessions to reach out to the larger youth constituency.

YAR partners are determined to continue these follow-up local actions and inform their policy advocacy work by youth voices from ground realities. ASPBAE is happy to see its youth work forming its own shape and speaking to the realities of the marginalized youth in the region.

This article is taken from the ASPBAE-Ed-Lines-September 2020

Soft Skills - a concept now taken to the provinces

Dalouny Sisoulath, DVV International

Soft Skills (or in Lao also known as social skills) receive high attention from different sectors of society with now a large number of followers wanting to participate in trainings on this very topic. The set-up of the trainings depends on the context of the target group, be they students, youths or officers studying or working at different levels and the involvement of facilitators from community level. Therefore, each soft skills training also has a slightly different content and varies in the methods used. This is simply based on the role and working conditions of the participants.

Each training is further faced with different challenges depending on the area and the target group. Youth groups are generally excited to participate in such kind of activities. Yet it is sometimes not easy for them to cope with the challenges in the trainings as they quickly get deeply involved in the respective activities and they sometimes get frustrated with each other during the sessions; for example, in conflict resolution exercises which divide participants into small groups and create conflict situations, and it can also happen that participants fail to come to an agreement.

Sometimes it takes longer than expected to finish an activity and then our facilitator team is always ready to assist the main facilitator at all times. Furthermore, in some areas of the country the spoken language is not the same as in Vientiane, and it may therefore be necessary to help with translation or more deeply explain or even change some activities because the participants do not understand or cannot participate in the activity due to their tradition and beliefs.

In some areas, the participants work for community development and are therefore already involved in various activities. Therefore, many of them know

each other. In most cases they thus understand the activities of the training well and after the training they can then practice their newly gained skills in their community development work. Furthermore, the participants also shared lessons learned on various topics related to community development. Participants also developed plans to work together in and through soft skills training. One can now witness groups of participants helping each other in solving problems or promoting intersectional work.

Generally, training in local areas takes advantage of activities that focus more on communication and negotiations skills to make participants better understand each other and encourage them to talk more. Using the method of a group discussion and case studies helps participants to easily get involved in activities. At the end of each session, the facilitator presents the theory behind the exercise with an example that further illustrates the concept.

If then trainers and facilitators have prepared a good training plan and act with a good degree of flexibility, the trainings are likely to be successful as can be seen in DVV International's trainings with the Lao Youth Union.



Our Project Manager



Lao Youth Union Trainer practice before training with the target group

Interesting

Important Website in region

www.nfedi.org
www.rda.org.la
www.aspbae.org
www.seameocelll.org

Interesting publications

Adult Education and Development
AED 86 (2019): The good adult educator
AED 85: Role and Impact of Adult Education
AED 84: Inclusion and Diversity
AED 83: Skills and Competencies

International Perspectives in Adult Education

IPE 79(2019): The contribution of adult education to active participatory citizenship
IPE 77: Rethinking adult learning and education - Asia perspectives
IPE 78: Adult education as a key to development - challenges and success factors
IPE 76: Refugees: A challenge for adult education

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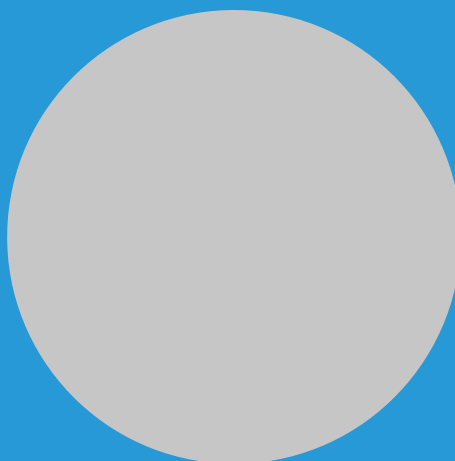
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