What is ASPBAE?

ASPBAE is a regional association of more than 200 organisations and individuals working to promote formal and non-formal basic and adult education. Members include NGOs, community organisations, government agencies, universities, trade unions, indigenous peoples, women's organisations, the media and other institutions of civil society across the Asia-Pacific region.

ASPBAE is recognized and supported by DFAT. It plays a key role in promoting interest and action in relation to these areas:

- organising dialogues and learning exchanges;
- initiating research;
- developing a resource database on adult learning;
- conducting training;
- lobbying and policy advocacy.


The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

The United Nations developed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 2000-2014 to focus international development efforts. These are soon to be replaced by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs will be confirmed at the UN General Assembly in September 2015 and before that they will be debated and amended at the World Education Forum in Korea in May 2015.

The MDG education goal was "To achieve universal primary education". The post-2015 proposed SDG was agreed on during the Global Education Meeting (GEM) held in Muscat, Oman in May 2014 and is:

“Goal 4: Ensure equitable and inclusive quality education and lifelong learning for all by 2030”


This goal specifically includes post-secondary education and the aim of the event was to contribute to the development of specific advocacy messages from an Australian context to contribute to regional and global policy debates in the lead up to September 2015.

The keynote speaker says the wording of the Muscat Agreement is not a foregone conclusion and made two important points:

- The wording of the goal is critical as it translates directly into international and national government policies and funding. He advised that many stakeholders will want to replace “ensure” with “promote” because it entails a very different level of outcome and reporting.
- Whereas the MDG was written for developing nations and only they had to report to the UN on outcomes, the proposed SDG will require developed nations to act and report. This means there will be a much more contested discussion of the wording by the governments of developed nations.

There are many associated issues about, for example, the definition of the target group/s (who is ‘all’? Are any groups prioritised e.g. those of working age?), the nature of the learning (will learning with employment outcomes be prioritised?), what outcomes would be measured and how they would be measured.

Recommendations

ASPBAE would like relevant Australian organisations to raise the profile of the issues in their spheres of activity and to actively participate in the discussions before and during the World Education Forum in Korea in May 2015. They suggested that organisations could:
• articulate our view of what is meant by the proposed SDG 4 and how this might translate concretely to the Australian adult literacy context, including (for example) in rural areas, for Indigenous people and for older people

• actively advocate to the Australian government at local, state and federal organisations to influence the wording of SDG Goal 4. Have a dialogue with our own government and ensure they know the views of civil society organisations well in advance

• support the Australian Coalition for Education and Development (ACED) as a representative at the WEF Korea talks and/or send own representative as part of the Australian National Delegation

• consider what indicators might be developed to measure achievements in several years’ time

• collaborate with sister organisations in our region e.g. NZ, Pacific nations to build shared understanding and consensus.