

Draft Concept Note, Objectives and Program

Asia Pacific Regional Dialogue on Decolonising Education Financing

31 May 2023 | 2:00 - 4:30 PM Manila Time

Registration Link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZApf-irrDgoH9TdWKd2nSiuxSpcl5m7DJG>

The Asia Pacific region is facing a significant education financing gap, which is limiting access to quality education for many students. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on education financing in the region, with many countries facing reduced budgets and increased pressure, contraction of the economy, sharp falls in government revenues, narrowing fiscal space, increasing debt servicing, and declining ODA.

According to the Education Finance Watch report ([2022](#)), bilateral donors decreased their aid earmarked for education by USD 349 million from 2019 to 2020. Over a decade, the share of earmarked aid to education has declined and remained way below the required resources to cover the financing gap to meet the SDG 4 targets. Overall, aid has remained at about 0.3% of the donor countries' gross national income (GNI) over the last 15 years, which falls short of the internationally agreed 0.7% of the GNI that should be devoted to aid.

Debt servicing has also become an even more serious concern, especially for heavily indebted countries that face competing challenges in allocating limited resources to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and fund quality public services. The alarming costs of debt servicing have increased significantly relative to national public expenditures on essential services. UNCTAD reports that countries are spending more on debt servicing than on health care and education ([2023](#)). Developing countries will be paying almost USD 1 trillion in debt-servicing in the period of 2020-2021 ([ActionAid, 2021](#)).

Just as significant, resources are lost in illicit funding flows, tax avoidance, corporate tax holidays, and other incentive packages that only benefit big businesses. The Tax Justice Network ([2021](#)) reported that countries are losing a total of USD 483 billion in tax a year to global tax abuse committed by multinational corporations and wealthy individuals. This is composed of USD 312 billion lost due to cross-border corporate tax abuse and USD 171 billion due to offshore tax abuse by wealthy individuals. Lower-income countries continue to suffer, losing the largest share of current tax revenues, which could have contributed to the provision of public services.

Education financing has been a core advocacy of ASPBAE since the EFA campaign period and into the SDGs. ASPBAE and national education coalition members have been actively and consistently engaging in the annual Global Action Week for Education (GAWE) since its inception. The GAWE 2023 is a key moment for the education movement in which members of the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) and education stakeholders highlight one area of the agenda of Education For All and carry out targeted advocacy and campaigning efforts together.

With the slogan "Investing in a Just World: Decolonising Education Financing Now," the 2023 GAWE will galvanise attention and action towards the Transforming Education Summit (TES) finance agenda and Financing Call to Action on Investing More, More Equitably and More

Efficiently in Education. Recognising that Sustainable Development Goal 4 will not be realised by 2030 without a significant and well-targeted increase in financing, it is critical that we look into enduring structures of “power dynamics between national governments and international donors, lenders and financial institutions.”

Decolonising education financing involves reimagining and challenging the ways in which education systems are being funded and by whom. This means moving away from the dominant top-down financing model and instead empowering local communities to have more control over how funds are allocated. This will involve advocating for a more equitable distribution of resources and funding so that all learners, especially marginalised ones, can access quality education. This will also entail lobbying for funds that will put in place education reforms that recognise local/indigenous wisdom and knowledge systems and diverse learning systems.

The TES Finance Agenda makes clear that, to finance education, urgent actions must be taken to expand tax-to-GDP ratios through progressive tax reforms and international action for tax justice, demand renegotiation or cancellation wherever countries spending more on servicing debt than financing education and other essential services, enhance domestic resource mobilisation, and eliminate austerity policies, all while striving to reach the share of public expenditure on education towards the international benchmarks of at least 4-6% of GDP and/or 15-20% of public expenditure.

The Asia Pacific Regional Dialogue on Decolonising Education Financing, therefore, aims to:

- To assess the current scenario of education financing in the Asia Pacific region and share the country contexts, challenges, and recommendations in addressing the education financing gap in select countries in the region
- To increase awareness and facilitate dialogue among civil society organisations, youth, government, and academics, on the challenges and opportunities in decolonising and increasing education financing in the region
- To amplify the GAWE demands and mobilise actions to prioritise education financing to support the development of policies and practices that promote equitable access to education for all learners

Key questions to be examined:

- What are some concrete actions that the government can take to prioritize increased financing for education, including progressive actions on debt and aid effectiveness, among others? How can we ensure that education financing and aid initiatives are accountable and transparent and that they are responsive to local needs and priorities as well as promote diversity in education?
- What is the context of education financing in the country? What role can civil society, local ownership, and agency play in shaping education financing systems and aid initiatives, and how can we support them to engage in these efforts?

- What approaches can be taken to address issues of gender and equity in education financing and aid, and how can we ensure that marginalized groups, including youth, are included and supported?
- How is the current financing of education systems perpetuating colonial power relations? How do power dynamics shape education financing, aid and trade relationships, and how can we shift power to local communities to better support their needs and priorities? How can we actively work to undo these harmful legacies?

Proposed Agenda	
2:00- 2:05 PM	Welcome, Objectives, Program
2:05- 2:10 PM	Opening Remarks
2:10- 2:20 PM	Overview of the Education Financing in the Asia Pacific Region: Current Scenario
2:20- 2:35 PM	Decolonising Education Financing in the Asia Pacific Region: Challenges and Opportunities
2:35- 2:50 PM	Increasing and Strengthening Education Spending from the Government Perspective
2:50- 3:00 PM	Decolonising Education Systems and Financing from the Academe's Perspective
3:00- 3:05 PM	Break
3:05- 3:20 PM	Sharing of Country Contexts and Experiences from CED Sri Lanka and KOBLE-VANGO (7 minutes each)
3:20- 3:30 PM	Youth Perspective on Decolonizing Education Financing from NCE Nepal (7 minutes)
3:30- 4:00 PM	Open Forum
4:10- 4:20 PM	Synthesis and Closing