Reflexions on the effectiveness of partnerships – past and future - to promote education for all in Asia and the Pacific

SYMPOSIUM RATIONALE

This symposium will generate discussions around the role of partnerships in general and at different levels – global, regional and country. It will help reflect on how the EFA movement engaged in the global agenda alongside other, sometimes competing mechanisms, not least the Millennium Development Goals and to reflect on efforts to avoid such dualism in the post 2015 agenda. It will also generate discussion around the implications of the expanded focus on all countries in the post 2015 compared to the binary distinction of donor and recipient countries which tended to characterise the development paradigm in since 2000, not least since some countries are now both. It will explore examples of effective South-South collaboration and how we should work collectively to address inequalities in middle income and wealthier countries. It will also discuss what the critical themes should be for development partners and governments in future with a specific focus on Asia and the Pacific and its sub-regions. Areas like migration and conflict and natural disasters are much more on the agenda than they were in 2000. We will discuss how new regional partnerships, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) will play a greater role and how the existing EFA-TWG or its replacement can interact with such bodies more systematically in future and what the focus of this regional co-ordination mechanism will be in terms of capacity development, knowledge management, partnerships and evidence based advocacy.

SYMPOSIUM PAPERS

Paper 1 – Effectiveness of Partnership for Development – Partnerships for Education for All in Asia-Pacific

Malisa Santigul
UNESCO Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education
m.santigul@unesco.org

Cecilia (Thea) Soriano
Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE)
thea.aspbae@gmail.com

Jim Ackers
UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office
jackers@unicef.org

Min Bahudur Bista
UNESCO Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education
m.bista@unesco.org
Paper 2 – Advancing multi-sector engagement on ECD: The case of Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood (ARNEC)

Evelyn D. Santiago  
Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood (ARNEC)  
evelyn.santiago@arnec.net

Divya Lata  
Plan International (Steering Committee Member of ARNEC)  
Divya.Lata@plan-international.org


Eunwoo Kim  
UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office  
ewkim@unicef.org

Chemba Raghavan  
UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office  
craghavan@unicef.org
ABSTRACT

This paper reflects on lessons learned and the way forward in a huge region where the EFA partnership has been active. The Asia and Pacific Technical Working Group for EFA was established to ensure a coherent approach towards achieving its goals. It is co-chaired by UNESCO Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education (Bangkok) and UNICEF (EAPRO) and includes key civil society organisations (e.g. Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education and the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization). The TWG collaborates with three very active regional networks which support evidence-based advocacy and partnerships around ECD, gender (UNGEI) and mother tongue-based multilingual education. Key achievements include support to EFA reviews, joint advocacy (e.g., Global Action Week, regional launches of GMR, joint statements) and facilitation of the post-2015 discourse, including the first regional conference on Post 2015 (APREC August 2014), which generated the Bangkok Statement on regional education priorities. The group is evaluating its fitness for purpose for post 2015. Key questions include: should membership be broadened to include other sectors; should greater focus be given to sub-regions; how should the group react to the broadening of the equity focus to middle income and wealthier countries and shifts in the donor landscape, do we need additional thematic groups? Discussions will also include changing communication modalities and how to connect the group to new coordination mechanisms globally and on the ground. Evidence will be drawn from key conference discussions, minutes of key meetings and an external evaluation commissioned by the group.
2 INTRODUCTION

With the forthcoming adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the UN summit in September 2015, effective and efficient partnerships are again seen as a priority in support of the new education agenda and achievement of SDG 4. In preparing for the next education agenda, lessons can be drawn from existing partnerships in Education for All (EFA) and the education-related MDGs. This paper aims to examine the effectiveness of partnerships for education development at the regional level, and to a lesser extent at sub-regional and national levels. The paper was written by three key partners in the EFA TWG – from UNESCO, UNICEF, ASPABAE and reflects the internal perspectives of representatives of these three agencies. It attempts to not only describe but also analyse key factors – positive and negative and to identify what the authors see as critical factors for the partnership in the past but also going forward. The paper examines the composition, functions and role of the EFA TWG in terms of its strengths, weaknesses, achievements and challenges. The paper concludes with recommendations for regional partnerships for education development and the next education agenda.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 Partnerships for education development in Asia-Pacific

According to McQuaid (2009), for partnerships in the development context to be effective, certain conditions must be met. There should be a common goal and vision; trust; adequate funding and logistical challenges will need to be addressed, not least when huge geographic areas are concerned. Apart from the key factors identified by McQuaid above we hypothesize that a number of critical factors may affected EFA co-ordination in Asia and the Pacific. These are as follows: positional status of the co-chairs – UNESCO as lead EFA Co-ordinator and UNICEF as co-convenor; the willingness of other members to accept this continuous co-leadership rather than opt for a rotational model; the fact that both UN agencies have regional offices in Bangkok (UNICEF also has other regional offices covering Asia Pacific); continuity of funding for core activities - not least convening countries around EFA and post-2015 agendas; linkages between the TWG and sub-regional and country groups through UNICEF’s country presence and UNESCO’s network of national commissions; linkages between this over-arching TWG and other key thematic groups focus on: language of instruction, early childhood development and gender and education; the quality of inter-personal relationships between key leaders and actors over time cannot be over-stated; last but by no means least the importance of representation within the group of civil society as a driving force in EFA in Asia and Pacific should not be understated. ASPABAE, Action Aid, SIL and Plan International have all had a critical role to play in supporting the credibility of the EFA TWG in Asia and the Pacific. Civil society organizations have engaged in transnational advocacy to re-scale their activity and create more links at the international level, “in parallel to the increasing role of international organizations in the framing of national education policies (Bainton 2009, Gaventa and Mayo 2009 quoted in Verger and Novelli, 2012.)

4 PARTNERSHIPS IN EDUCATION IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

4.1 Overview of the Asia-Pacific region

In 2014, the population of Asia-Pacific reached 4.3 billion people, which is 60% of the world’s population (ESCAP, 2014); the region hosts the two most populous countries in the world, China
(1.4 billion people) and India (1.25 billion people). The region is geographically vast and culturally diverse, and is home to over 3,000 languages. The proportion of people within the most economically active age band is increasing, with nearly 3 billion people aged between 15 and 64 years. The economy in the region has been steadily growing and is expected to continue with healthy labour markets and increasing integration (IMF, 2014). While the youth population has been an important driver of economic development in many countries, other aspects to consider are the rise of emerging economies such as China and India and the ageing population. The population of elderly persons (65 years and older) from 1990 to 2014 nearly doubled to 330 million (ESCAP, 2014). Another noticeable trend is rapid urbanization. The region is also one of the most affected by natural disasters in the world, with high levels of seismic activity and the increasing impact of global warming. There is also a high incidence of human conflict in some countries and migration is an increasing challenge. This, along with demographic changes is linked to changes in the labour market, and to education development (UNESCO, 2015).

4.2 The relevance of EFA in Asia-Pacific

When the EFA goals were launched in 2000, although countries in Asia-Pacific were at different stages of socio-economic and education development EFA became a commonly accepted framework for national dialogue between governments and their citizens, international development agencies and civil society organizations (CSOs) and was perceived as valuable to countries’ socio-economic development needs (UNESCO, 2015). Countries produced regular EFA reports and elements were evident in their national education development frameworks and plans. In other regions this has not been the case and commitment to the MDG appears to have diminished support for a broader approach to education for all.

Priorities in education development evolved in Asia-Pacific, accompanied by new and restructured mechanisms and organizations including Education Above All (EAA) and the EFA Fast-Track Initiative (EFA-FTI) now the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). GPE now reaches 14 countries but is yet to engage in the TWG and had no regional representation in Bangkok. The donor landscape has also changed with new donors emerging and traditional donors sometimes shifting their focus away from Middle Income Countries. The governments of China, Japan, Malaysia and the Republic of Korea continue to expand their contributions. In recent years, Asia-Pacific has seen a shift of focus from access and UPE to equity, learning and the quality issues as well as emergent concerns, including global citizenship and sustainable development. These developments call for more cross-sectoral engagement in the next education agenda.

4.3 A history of EFA coordination and partnerships in Asia-Pacific

Calls for the strengthening of synergies and partnerships for education development have been consistently strong with any new education agenda from Jomtien to Dakar to Incheon. The Dakar Framework for Action, adopted in 2000, included partnerships as one of three priority areas, stating that: “The Dakar Framework is a collective commitment to action. Governments have an obligation to ensure that EFA goals and targets are reached and sustained. This is a responsibility that will be met most effectively through broad-based partnerships within countries, supported by cooperation with regional and international agencies and institutions.” (UNESCO, 2000, p. 8). At this time the Asia-Pacific EFA coordination arrangement was established to promote and coordinate EFA activities in the region.

Page 5
UKFIET 2015 Conference Symposium
EFA partnerships formed at four levels: regional, sub-regional, national and sub-national. Some were led by UN agencies, some by intergovernmental bodies, and some by CSOs and their respective coalitions. These partnerships have been endogenous\(^1\), strategic, loose, formal and informal, involving partners that cover differing geographical scales and target audiences. Unlike in other regions such coordination mechanisms also existed before Jomtien. In 1987, UNESCO launched the Asia-Pacific Programme of Education for All (APPEAL) to promote basic education for all in the region. APPEAL was expanded after 2000 to include the promotion of the six EFA goals.

The TWG on EFA for Asia-Pacific was established in 2000 as a platform for information sharing and networking and a coordination mechanism to support the six EFA goals and the MDGs. It has since evolved into a mechanism that supports joint regional activities and projects with a broadened membership. The TWG is linked to the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM)\(^2\) - a UN wide inter-agency platform that is mandated by ECOSOC in Resolution 1998/46. The TWG on EFA reports through the Secretariat in UNESCO Bangkok to the UN ESCAP regional coordination mechanism. Figure 1 below shows how the TWG on EFA is a part of broader coordination mechanisms.

In Asia-Pacific, there is robust participation of civil society at the regional level. The Dakar process created the space for CSO participation in the global EFA architecture, alongside UNESCO’s reform of the Collective Consultation for NGOs on EFA (CCNGO-EFA) which brought a wider reach to include practitioners, right to education campaigners, and activists from the different global regions. The UNESCO CCNGO-EFA 2015 report said that “one of the most dramatic changes within EFA-focused civil society since 2000 has been the increase in its collaboration and coordination” (Moriarty, 2015). In Asia-Pacific, the regional networks and international NGOs in the TWG served as a bridge between the region and members in countries by: providing pertinent information on EFA from the regional level for effective engagements of governments; collecting evidence or information or policy recommendations from the countries to inform regional discussions, capacity development and supporting the participation of national CSOs in regional platforms.

UNESCO has ensured strong internal co-ordination between its Bangkok office and UNESCO HQ through engagement of senior regional staff in global meetings and vice-versa, including the High-Level Group on EFA and the Working Group on EFA, and EFA preparation processes. The regional TWG on EFA regularly reports to UNESCO HQ (EFA Coordination Unit). Conversely, global initiatives and developments on EFA are shared with the regional TWG on EFA.

---

\(^1\) According to Ronald W. McQuaid (2000), an endogenously focused partnership would seek only to maximize the efficient use of existing resources and the synergy between these resources, as opposed to exogenous partnerships that seek to attract extra resources from outside the partnership.

\(^2\) The RCM was established to improve coordination among the work programmes of United Nations entities at the regional level. The RCM is chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General and convened by the Executive Secretary of ESCAP. The RCM works by consensus and promotes increased cooperation and collaboration among UN entities and their development partners in addressing regional development issues. The RCM consists of two tiers: (1) executive-level meetings to interpret and implement policy-level consensus on opportunities for increased regional cooperation and (2) Thematic Working Groups to promote improved regional cooperation on specific operational and programmatic issues.
At the sub-regional level, entities such as the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), Pacific Education Forum, Central Asian Republics and Kazakhstan (CARK) Education Forum, and the South Asia EFA Forum have served at times as platforms for sub-regional dialogue and collaboration on EFA. Over time, entities such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) have also been supportive. These sub-regional entities provide direct links to ministries of education and sub-regional issues.
At the country level, governments appointed national EFA coordinators. These are senior officials in the ministries of education in all Member States. Responsibilities range from coordinating and facilitating EFA processes in countries to planning and monitoring. The TWG also collaborates with UNESCO in organizing the annual regional meeting of National EFA Coordinators. Perhaps most importantly the EFA coordination links with national education sector working groups (ESWGs) in specific countries, namely Cambodia, Lao PDR, Nepal and Thailand. However linking SWAPs and EFA coordination have been a serious challenge for the EFA movement globally.

Civil society organizations and international NGOs, like ASPBAE translate their regional engagement into country engagements through collaborating with 14 national education coalitions to engage their respective EFA coordinators. These coalitions address a range of policy issues - education budgets, gender equity, adult literacy and education, legal rights, governance, education financing and strengthening of public systems. National coalitions, to varying degrees collaborate with their respective EFA Coordinators during regional meetings of national EFA coordinators organized by UNESCO Bangkok.

The above provides some insights on partnerships across the region and linkages with global, sub-regional and national mechanisms. We will now analyse the characteristics and functions of the TWG, its achievements and challenges, and lessons learned, with a view towards informing future coordination mechanisms for Education 2030.

5 A CLOSER LOOK AT THE THEMATIC WORKING GROUP ON EFA IN ASIA-PACIFIC AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE GROUP POST-2015

5.1 The composition and diversity of the TWG on EFA

The TWG on EFA is steered through a coordinating committee of the UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, the UNICEF Regional Offices, the International Labour Organization (ILO), and the UN Economic and Social Commission of Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). The TWG is co-chaired by UNESCO and UNICEF, with UNESCO serving as Secretariat. While the TWG on EFA operates according to agreed TORs and reports to the RCM, the group also functions as an organizational network based on less formal relationships between actors who convene regularly to share information and collaborate on EFA-related activities.

TWG members are from UN agencies, CSOs and academia and include independent experts. Regional and sub-regional entities such as SEAMEO are represented. Although all there are no barriers to membership for donor agencies and private companies, none are as yet represented. The group has expanded over time to include new organizations such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM), British Council and FHI360. Certain members of the TWG on EFA are also members of other TWGs under the RCM, such as the TWG on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (TWG-GEEW).

The Multilingual Education Working Group, UNGEI and the Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Child hood (ARNEC) regularly report to the TWG. These EFA flagships also share their workplans with the EFA TWG and have helped provide a substantive core to regional work around EFA.
5.2 The mandate, functions and processes of the TWG on EFA

The goal of the TWG on EFA is to support the achievement of the six EFA goals in UN Member States across the Asia-Pacific region by 2015. Key functions are information sharing, including disseminating good practices, establishing priorities for cooperation and joint projects. Other functions include assisting countries and national EFA Forums/Task Forces to build new partnerships, coordination with the inter-agency task force on the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development and with other regional TWGs in the UN system. In view of its broad range of functions, the TWG on EFA does not have a work plan.

Much of the TWG’s work has centred on UPE, but there has been a shift in focus over recent years towards issues like inclusive education and quality. Group members frequently collaborate on short-term projects, ranging from advocacy to capacity development, research and publications. The fact that members share information on their workplans probably contributes significantly to the amount of joint work agreed.

Although the TWG meets three to four times a year communication continues through email and the EFA webpage, hosted by UNESCO. In the past a quarterly EFA e-newsletter was also distributed. While online communication channels give opportunities to members who are not based in Bangkok to engage the issue of physical distance probably affects the focus of the group. It was for this reason that the UNICEF Regional Education Adviser for South Asia participated directly in the latest TWG on EFA meeting which focussed on deliberations on the Post 2015 agenda and the desire of South Asia to learn from SEAMEO’s success as a sub-regional organisation.

5.3 The agenda and tasks of the TWG on EFA

The TWG supports Member States on a range of EFA related matters, not least the regular monitoring of EFA progress in the region. It supported the Asia-Pacific Regional Education Conference (APREC) held in 2014 which led to the first regional vision of education post-2015 (see The Bangkok Statement). The TWG on EFA has succeeded in bringing together relevant actors within the region and in influencing national agendas. It has also allowed the pooling of resources so that larger joint projects in both scope and geographic reach can be undertaken. A global assessment of the EFA architecture is underway, as well as a regional assessment of the EFA architecture in Asia-Pacific to more rigorously examine the effectiveness of the EFA coordination mechanisms.

6 IMPACT OF THE TWG ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EFA IN ASIA-PACIFIC

6.1 Achievements

6.1.1 Facilitation of the implementation of EFA between global, regional and national levels

In terms of frequency of meetings the TWG appears to have been a key mechanism for information exchange and networking. To date, there have been 39 meetings.

---

3 The TWG on EFA initially covered the East and Southeast Asia sub-regions, but has since expanded, to cover the entire Asia-Pacific region, covering countries in East, South-East and South Asia, and to some extent Central Asia and the Pacific.
6.1.2 Strengthened partnerships/synergy leading to joint advocacy work on EFA, mobilization of resources and generation of knowledge

The TWG appears to have strengthened partnerships amongst UN agencies, CSOs, academics and independent experts, leading to a range of joint EFA work, including launches of EFA Global Monitoring Reports and Global Action Week advocacy events that report on EFA progress in Asia-Pacific. Members of the TWG have also worked together as peer reviewers for publications such as the Asia-Pacific End-of-Decade Notes on EFA, the national EFA 2015 review reports prepared by Member States and the 2015 regional EFA synthesis report and have also collaborated on advocacy materials and joint statements for international UN days.

The formation of the sub-working groups has strengthened partnerships in thematic areas. The Multilingual Education (MLE) Working Group for example, raised substantial funds among its partners and held successful International Conferences on Language, Education and MDGs. The EAP UNGEI has also formed working groups focusing on marginalization and school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) to strengthen partnerships in these areas. Moreover, these collaborative initiatives have achieved complementarity and avoided duplication of effort reinforcing the respective group’s effectiveness and legitimacy in each thematic area.

6.1.3 Capacity development of National EFA Coordinators and Planning Officers

The TWG has provided capacity development to Member States in undertaking EFA activities. At venues such as the Regional Meeting of National EFA Coordinators and the technical meetings on the national EFA 2015 reviews. TWG members have also served as resource persons.

6.1.4 Regional M&E of EFA progress (MDA, national EFA 2015 reviews)

The TWG played an advisory role throughout the Asia-Pacific EFA Mid-Decade Assessment (MDA) and Mid-Term Policy Review processes in 2006-2008, the regional end-of-decade EFA assessment in 2010, and the national EFA 2015 reviews in 2014. The MDA process contributed to strengthening linkages between national and EFA goals, elevating the issue of disparities and marginalization in EFA in regional and national agendas. Similarly, when Member States conducted national EFA 2015 reviews, the TWG provided technical support together with review panels composed of UNESCO, UN partners and CSOs. TWG members also mobilized counterparts at the national level to support Member States.

The TWG ensured multi-stakeholder engagement in documenting the EFA milestones in the region and the institutionalisation of civil society in this process. Regional meetings ensured dialogue between government and civil society who analysed EFA progress and strategies together. Regional platforms organized by the TWG also served opportunities for partnership building between government delegates, UN agencies and CSOs and led to regional programmes to address the needs of out-of-school children and youth and mother tongue multilingual education.

4 This is a series of six publications co-published by UNESCO and UNICEF: Asia-Pacific End of Decade Notes on EFA Goal 1: Early Childhood Care and Education; EFA Goal 2: Universal Primary Education; EFA Goal 3: Life Skills and Lifelong Learning; EFA Goal 4: Youth and Adult Literacy; EFA Goal 5: Gender Equality; and EFA Goal 6: Quality Education.
6.1.5 Joint agenda setting

Since 2012, TWG members participated in consultations and discussions on education post-2015, providing inputs to the formulation of the post-2015 education goals. Most recently, the TWG on EFA reviewed and provided inputs to the national EFA 2015 review reports which served as a basis for the sub-regional group discussions on EFA in Asia-Pacific and the drafting of the Bangkok Statement at the APREC in August 2014. Serving under the capacities of their respective organizations, TWG members were also part of the drafting group that prepared the Bangkok Statement which was ultimately endorsed by Ministers of Education, UN agencies, CSOs and representatives from the private sector at APREC. This statement has since contributed to global discussions and decisions on education post-2015.

6.2 Key Factors of Success

A combination of factors has contributed to the continuation and achievements of the TWG on EFA. Personal commitment at the highest levels of both UNESCO and UNICEF have helped convene partners around major EFA activities in the region, and encouraged partnerships in Member States thereby keeping the EFA agenda and groups alive. UNICEF’s financial and technical involvement has complemented UNESCO’s strong technical expertise in its Bangkok and HQ offices. Also a number of important regional meetings and activities were made possible with financial and technical contributions from other partners and donors including the governments of Japan and Thailand.

CSO commitment to EFA has ensured the dynamic participation of CSOs such as ActionAid and ASPBAE, in the TWG, as well as in regional consultations and expert meetings concerning EFA and Education 2030. In the education post 2015 processes, ASPBAE sat in the EFA Steering Committee and UNESCO-CCNGO as regional representative, working directly with national education coalitions. The national education coalitions held national and grassroots education consultations on education post 2015 and took forward the discussions at APREC in defining the education for the future with respective governments in the run up to the World Education Forum 2015. Similarly, advocacy for inclusive education taken on by Save the Children and Plan International was integrated in the strategic advocacy of their global and country offices, therefore ensuring long-term commitment to the agenda of the TWG on EFA. Within the global-regional-national dynamics of participation/partnerships, the crucial role of the TWG on EFA had been to bring together Member States, UN agencies and UN partners such as CSOs to debate and agree on a collective/multi-stakeholder education agenda and ways forward for the region – especially as it has now emerged as an economic growth centre amidst realities of economic inequity. APREC was an important milestone in this respect.

6.3 Challenges

6.3.1 Parallel education agendas and waning commitment to EFA

Although the EFA goals were adopted by the international community in April 2000, shortly afterwards when the UN MDGs were adopted in September 2000, much of the attention shifted to the MDGs. As a result, from 2000 to 2015, much of the activity relating to EFA in Asia-Pacific took place with the limited involvement of the other EFA co-convenors (UNDP, UNFPA and the World Bank). UNDP, UNFPA and the World Bank are not active members of the EFA TWG. Having two
parallel agendas has compromised the collective commitment of the global community in terms of education.

6.3.2 Resource constraints

Despite resource constraints, UNESCO and UNICEF both accorded a high priority to EFA coordination work, with UNESCO having a dedicated EFA team while UNICEF’s education team also provided technical support. EFA work. While there has been some continuity of funding closer examination of the activities carried out by the group indicate that limited financial and human resources constrained the scope and depth of work. Many of the collaborative projects carried out by the TWG on EFA has been somewhat short-term and ad hoc. Although reporting through the TWG on EFA has reduced duplication of activities between partners, resource constraints have restricted the capacities of partners to work together to expand their reach.

6.3.3 Lack of clear operational instructions and strategy

The EFA and MDGs came without clear operational instructions for the regional level, thereby making organizing efforts dependent upon the unique vision and goals of the leadership and management team in place at the given time.

6.3.4 Narrowing of the agenda and its effect on the TWG on EFA

The composition of the TWG on EFA has been influenced by the prioritization amongst the EFA goals. Although six EFA goals were established in 2000, EFA Goal 2 on UPE has received the most attention and investment from governments and international development organizations. As such, the holistic nature of EFA and the lifelong perspective were compromised. The international aid discourse focused more on fixing participation rates in basic education than on the EFA goals.

6.3.5 Weak accountability

EFA is a collective political commitment, not an international law. As such, EFA is not a legal obligation for States, and thus, the EFA agenda cannot hold States legally accountable. Rather the Dakar Framework for Action led to agreement around key principles. Likewise, the TWG is not a body that can be held accountable for its actions. Participation in the TWG on EFA is essentially voluntary with high turnover and many inactive members.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

The TWG on EFA has had some success as has been noted. However for its influence to be enhanced the following considerations are being discussed:

1. The TWG should be more inclusive and include: all the WEF 2015 co-convenors, sub-regional bodies, the private sector and representatives of other sectors whose work supports education, e.g. social protection, finance, child protection, etc. The TWG already advocates for a holistic approach to ECD and there are plans to start a new TWG for Disabilities, whose focus would include but go beyond inclusive education.

2. Roles and responsibilities in the TWG should be better defined, including the role division and relationships. Realistic objectives, linked to outputs, performance indicators and targets
should be clearly defined. A work plan may be useful for the group as it addresses a broadened education agenda. A more robust monitoring and evaluation system should be put in place to ensure more effective monitoring of the single education agenda after 2015.

3. The TWG should go beyond information sharing and aim to be more visionary and innovative. Its knowledge leadership role could be enhanced through greater linkages with academia and the commissioning of research around emergent trends. As Education 2030 strongly addresses equity and lifelong learning, it is necessary to bring in data generated by CSOs through their citizens’ education surveys, community case studies and research on the situation of unreach populations.

4. While the regional platforms have been significant for dialogue, the TWG on EFA should recommend institutionalized processes whereby governments hold regular and meaningful consultations with CSOs at the country level.

5. With the broader education agenda that includes education in emergencies and global citizenship, the TWG on EFA together with inter-governmental agencies will have to play a strong role in facilitating collaborative work amongst Members States on regional education targets such as education for refugees and migrant workers.

8 CONCLUSION

The drivers behind why a partnership is sustained in one region but fails to take root or be sustained in another are complex. A mix of factors are involved. But the prospects of enhanced partnerships post 2015 are perhaps better than they were in 2000 when the world agreed to support two agendas – the highly focussed MDG agenda and the much broader one of EFA. This should favour the development of new partnerships in all regions of the world. At the same time the Asia-Pacific partnership may provide some inspiration for other regions. Clearly its success has been predicated on a number of key factors including co-location of key partners, technical expertise, the will to share key information and work increasingly together around joint initiatives and co-authorship and co-convening. While funding for convening EFA has been a major constraint, not least in recent years, UNICEF has played a key role in helping UNESCO ensure that certain key events did hold.

Beyond UNESCO and UNICEF, the TWG platform should bring the entire group of co-conveners of the World Education Forum 2030. Likewise, the partnership should be inclusive enough to bring key regional and sub-regional players, including the private sector. It will also be increasingly important to engage in emergent issues in Asia-Pacific to enhance the relevance of the TWG in future and also the capacity of the region through an enhanced focus on promoting intra-regional development and development across the sub-regions that together form Asia-Pacific. One key consideration will be whether there is greater focus at the sub-regional level as Asia and the Pacific is simply so large.

9 REFERENCES


UNESCO Bangkok (n.d.) TWG on EFA - RCM reports.


1 ABSTRACT

This paper discusses how partnerships around early childhood development (ECD) have evolved in Asia and the Pacific in tune with the enhanced policy focus on holistic ECD, compared to the narrower focus of Early Childhood Education (ECE). The Asia Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood (ARNEC) aims to build partnerships across sectors and different disciplines and institutions in the region to advance the agenda on and investment in ECD.

Conceptualized by three founding partners, UNICEF, UNESCO and Plan International following deliberations of the Asia-Pacific ECD Policy Reviews in 2006 and shaped by a small, dedicated steering committee of individuals working with the government, in academic institutions and civil society organizations from the region, ARNEC has become one of the largest networks for ECD covering 47 countries with 1,700 individual members and 15 institutional members.

One great example of outcomes generated through ARNEC’s platform of partnership is the East Asia Pacific-Early Child Development Scale, developed with technical leadership of the University of Hong Kong and financial support of UNICEF and the Open Society Foundations. The scales will equip stakeholders across the region with a common measurement tool that can assess the holistic developmental progress of children age 3 to 5 years. Other interesting developments include a new working group on ECD and peace-building, which aims to strengthen the regional community of practice and document good practices on ECD and Peace-building. The paper draws upon these and other examples to demonstrate the power of partnerships in advancing holistic ECD in the region.
2 INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to demonstrate how a regional network/partnership like ARNEC is able to facilitate significant initiatives on ECD. It covers the evolution of ARNEC as a network followed by an outline of some of its key achievements. The analysis goes on to identify key factors that enabled ARNEC to successfully provide a platform for ECD policy discussion and knowledge generation through evidence-based research and documentation of good practices. Challenges and lessons learned in partnerships are identified leading to some recommendations on the way forward. This paper largely draws from review of existing documents such as reports, advocacy materials, research studies and other documents published by ARNEC.

3 THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGIONAL NETWORK FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD (ARNEC)

History of ARNEC. The concept of ARNEC emerged from the Joint UNESCO-UNICEF Early Childhood Policy Review Project (2006-2008). Under this project, multi-disciplinary teams composed of researchers and government personnel from eight countries came together and found that despite considerable development of early childhood policy, few countries had a comprehensive policy to address the diverse needs of young children throughout the country. They found that relevant policies were uncoordinated and fragmented and where there were gaps in policy, gaps in implementation followed. One challenge identified was the weak link between research and policy, or more specifically, the lack of national evidence or use of it to influence policy. Another challenge was the absence of a platform to facilitate the use of research for policy. The final challenge noted was the lack of an adequate mechanism to bring together various actors, especially those across diverse sectors, to collaborate on efforts to promote holistic development of all young children. This absence was critical given the multi-disciplinary nature of development in early childhood. In such a context, ARNEC was established to build strong partnerships across sectors and different disciplines, organisations, agencies and institutions in the Asia-Pacific region to advance the priority on and investment in early childhood.

Key Partners and Core team. ARNEC was initially supported by the three founding members: UNICEF, UNESCO and Plan International. Later on, additional core team members joined: the Open Society Foundation, Save the Children and ChildFund International. In partnership with these agencies, ARNEC has worked on significant initiatives contributing to its goal of realizing holistic ECD policies, increased ECD resources, strengthened national ECD systems and an improved knowledge-base on ECD in the Asia-Pacific Region.

Organisational Structure. ARNEC draws its membership from over 1700 individuals coming from multilateral organizations, academic institutions, international NGOs and government agencies. ARNEC operates through a Secretariat which facilitates planning, development and implementation of the work plan. It was temporarily based at the UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office, Thailand from 2008-2009. In May 2009, SEED Institute was appointed to host the Secretariat on a three year basis and ARNEC was incorporated as a legal independent entity in Singapore on 14 January 2010. Since 2010, the Secretariat has been operating there. In December 2013 the hosting arrangement with SEED ended and ARNEC set up an independent office in 2014.

See more on http://www.arnec.net/about-us/
ARNEC currently has three members on the Board of Directors who provide leadership to ARNEC and set strategic aims, ensuring that the necessary resources are in place for ARNEC to meet its objectives.

ARNEC is also guided by 15 Steering Committee members coming from multiple backgrounds including early learning and primary education, teacher’s education, and health and nutrition. The Steering Committee includes eleven (11) early childhood experts from countries in the region (9 representing respective sub-regions and 2 from Friends of ARNEC) who are selected to serve a term of two years, and four (4) representatives from Core Team organisations.

Five elected members of the Steering Committee form the Executive Committee and provide strategic guidance on and oversight of the Secretariat.

4 KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

In outlining key achievements of the Network, one has to go back to its reason of existence (mission) and the results it had set for itself. ARNEC has a written impact and outcome statements as adopted by the Steering Committee in its November 2011 meeting:

VISION
The development potential of the young child is realized with support from families, communities and states in all member countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

IMPACT
The Asia and Pacific region has holistic ECD policies, increased resources, strengthened national ECD systems and improved knowledge base on ECD.

OUTCOMES

- By 2015, the Asia-Pacific region will have established a stronger and more dynamic ECD community that contributes to holistic national ECD policies.
- By 2015, a holistic and inclusive ECD agenda is articulated, disseminated and adopted in the Asia-Pacific region.
- By 2015, the ECD knowledge-base specific to the Asia-Pacific region is enhanced.
- By 2015, the Asia-Pacific ECD experiences increasingly influence the global ECD agenda.

In late 2012, ARNEC commissioned an external evaluation to inform ARNEC’s future programmatic, governance, and management directions. The evaluation was meant to reinforce the capacity of the network to achieve its expected outcomes as planned by 2015. The evaluation noted that the establishment of ARNEC as a functioning network was an important achievement of the first four years of implementation. The governance and implementation mechanisms put in place ensured that the network was guided by a members’ based Steering Committee, and supported by a well-functioning Secretariat. Programmatically, the evaluation noted that ARNEC made good progress in achieving results in two areas: (i) establishing a more dynamic ECD community; and (ii) an enhanced ECD knowledge base. It was also noted that outcomes related to advocacy for holistic and inclusive ECD and influencing the global agenda were stated in broad terms, hence very difficult to assess clear progress (ARNEC 2012 Evaluation Report). The evaluation also provided key recommendations related to (i) governance structure and decision-making mechanisms; (ii) more
active engagement of organizational and individual members; (iii) strengthening national-level linkages; (iv) strengthening advocacy; and (v) implementing a fund-raising strategy.

In preparation of this paper, ARNEC further reflected on its performance over the past 7 years and identified what it was able to contribute in improving ECD in the Region. These achievements have largely emerged in areas related to advocacy, knowledge generation, as well as providing platforms for sharing and learning amongst members. More significantly, ARNEC has become a trusted resource in the ECD community not only in the Asia-Pacific Region but beyond the region.

4.1 Strengthened Advocacy for ECD

ARNEC has developed a set of evidence-based advocacy messages adopted to the context of specific key challenges in Asia and Pacific Region:

- The Early Years: Ensuring a Child’s Right from the Start
- ECCD Begins at Home: Caring for Children in a Nurturing and Stimulating Environment
- Quality Early Childhood Matters: Making a Critical Investment for a Country’s Future
- Inclusive ECCD for All: Valuing and Respecting the Unique Needs of Every Child
- Integrated ECCD: Working Towards a Seamless Early Childhood System

These five advocacy messages also shape ARNEC’s research themes and other materials for publication. ARNEC seized every opportunity to advocate at all levels: national, regional and global. The regional ECD Conference organised by ARNEC annually serves as a strong platform for policy advocacy. Every year, ARNEC invites key policy makers, ECD advocates, researchers and practitioners from the region to share and discuss country experiences on ECD policy and practice.

For example, in 2014, in its regional conference entitled “ECD on the global agenda: Building partnership for sustainability and harmony” ARNEC brought together a total of over 400 delegates hailing from over 40 different countries in Manila. Approximately 200 were local participants, while 200 were international participants, including over 30 senior government officials from different countries in the region. Countries such as Cambodia, Pakistan, Nepal, and India shared their newly developed/amended national early childhood policies/policy frameworks.

The annual conferences not only serve as effective platforms for sharing new developments but have also been utilized to introduce stakeholders in new initiatives to the state of play in early years’ policy and programming. For example, the Open Society Foundations initiated its work on supporting the Government of Bhutan to advance ECD by inviting a small group from the Royal Education Council to the annual conference in Singapore in 2009 to catalyse their engagement with ECD concepts, processes, trends, challenges and resources.

More recently, ARNEC has been very active in ensuring that ECD is placed on the post-2015 global development agenda. In recognition that a comprehensive approach to ensuring that every child not only survives but also thrives was missing from Millennium Development Goals, ARNEC positioned itself as an active agent in advocating for inclusion of holistic and inclusive ECD as a

---

priority in the post-2015 global development agenda (ARNEC Post 2015 Briefing, December 2013). Some of the work that it has undertaken in support of this advocacy includes the following:

- Publication of ARNEC’s White Paper: “Promoting Holistic Development of Young Children: An imperative for the advancement of nations in Asia-Pacific”, which has been disseminated widely at post-MDG events and was translated into Chinese, Korean, Russian and Khmer.
- Actively worked with global partners such as the Consultative Group on ECD regarding the consultation processes for strengthening ECD within the new Sustainable Development Goals framework.
- Strongly advocated for the Global Petition for ECD in Asia-Pacific region, which was presented to the UN Secretary General at the Open Working Group Discussions in June 2014; Eighteen (18) Asia-Pacific member countries participated in the Global Petition.

From October 22-24, 2015, ARNEC will hold its Regional ECD Conference in Beijing, China with the theme “The Transformative Power of ECD for Equitable Development”. The Conference will be graced by no less than the UN Secretary General Ban-Ki Moon and will be participated in by Ministers from different countries who are expected to share their ECD policies and how they would be supporting ECD in the context of the Post-2015 SDGs.

4.2 Enhanced Regional ECD Knowledge-base

ARNEC consistently built a solid evidence-base to support ECD policy development and programming in the Region. It commissioned and facilitated analysis and a synthesis of regional ECD evidence and research, identified priority areas for further learning and supported strategic research activities.

**Development of the Regional ECD Scale.** With support from UNICEF and OSF, ARNEC has been working with Hong Kong University on the East Asia and Pacific ECD Scales Development (EAP-ECDS) to measure holistic development of young children aged 3-5. The Scale has been validated in six countries: Cambodia, China, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste and Vanuatu.

The 85-item Scale was administered to representative samples of children, ranging from 3-5 years of age, in six countries in the local language. The analyses indicate that The EAP-ECDS are valid and reliable measures of developmental functioning of children in the East Asia Pacific Regions. Older children performed better than younger children in all domains of the Scales and participation in early childhood programmes had a significant positive effect on the EAP-ECDS. Findings suggest that efforts should be exerted to decrease urban-rural gaps in early child development and caregivers should be provided education and support to encourage them to be more involved in the early development of their wards.

With countries’ planned utilization of the Scale, good ECD data can be generated which can help in further policy change, improved programmes, and implementation processes. ARNEC plans to establish a mechanism by which countries who would want to use the Scale can be provided with technical support on its administration and data analysis.

---

8 See EAP ECD Country Briefs at http://www.arnec.net/activities/
Deepening our understanding of the link between ECD and Peacebuilding in the Region. ARNEC in 2013 established a Working Group on ECD and Peacebuilding with UNICEF-EAPRO and Plan International taking leadership. The Working Group brings together experts, research professionals, and practitioners to explore and promote the added value of ECD on peacebuilding/social cohesion activities and, reciprocally, the added value of peacebuilding on ECD interventions.

In 2014, ARNEC embarked on a research initiative with IoE UK “Early Childhood and Peacebuilding in the Asia-Pacific Region: A Literature Review to inform regional research agenda”9. This is essentially a review of available literature around early childhood and peacebuilding. The research presented key findings that served as basis of the working group on developing key activities to be pursued to further advance this regional agenda.

Currently, the working group is focusing on conducting national-level surveys which aim to generate different perspectives on ECD and peacebuilding, gathering voices from the field; development of advocacy materials on ECD and PB; reviewing/developing a regional curriculum framework on ECD and PB and piloting in selected countries; and scoping of good practices of ECD and PB programmes.

Documentation of Noteworthy Practices. Every year, ARNEC engages research fellows to work on the documentation of noteworthy ECD practices in the Region following a certain theme. This initiative highlights noteworthy ECD practices that are not yet widely known but could contribute to developing evidence-base on effective provision of ECD services within this region.

This year, ARNEC is working with a team of researchers based at Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD) to document case studies of selected ECD programmes from across the region that cater to and address unique needs and circumstances of young children and families across diverse communities. Eight cases are being documented covering Nepal, Bhutan, India, Cambodia, Indonesia, Pakistan and Philippines. These cases not only document child outcomes but also family and community outcomes associated with early childhood programmes, in order to assess scalability and potential sustainability. These noteworthy practices are widely shared in regional conferences and other events.

Documentation of Innovative Pedagogical Approaches. With support from UNESCO and UNICEF, ARNEC is also embarking this year on an important initiative that will document various innovative pedagogical approaches and tools used in diverse pre-primary/early childhood care and education settings in Asia and the Pacific region in the forms of reports and videos. The initiative aims to contribute to the improved equity and quality of ECCE in Asia and the Pacific through: a) increasing the political commitment of the Asia-Pacific countries to quality ECCE; and b) providing early childhood teachers and teacher educators with access to tools to integrate effective and innovative pedagogies in teaching and learning practices. The initiative will also include the development of a web-based guidebook on integrating innovative pedagogies into pre-primary teaching and learning, which includes examples and multimedia tools.

4.3 Improved platforms for connecting, learning and sharing amongst members

ARNEC provides a good platform for its members to connect, learn and share in multiple ways.

---

**Web-based learning portal for ECD.** ARNEC continues to improve on its website to make it more useful to its members. ARNEC website aims to serve its members and beyond as the most comprehensive source and communication platform about early childhood issues in the Asia-Pacific. With support from its Country Coordinators, ARNEC successfully developed ECD Country profiles with basic ECD data using key indicators from each of the 47 Countries in the region. ARNEC continues exploring options for using social media into its online communication efforts to connect people with different resources and further networks. This year, ARNEC works with UNICEF on developing a regional dashboard for ECD building on the country profiles.

**Webinars are also held as another way of discussing ECD issues in the Region.** For this year, ARNEC managed to cover topics such as (i) ECD and Peacebuilding; (ii) Health and Nutrition in ECD; (iii) ECD in Emergencies; (iv) Early Brain development; (v) Toxic stress; and (vi) Play: a response to life. Webinars are followed by e-discussions which allow participants to explore specific points related to the topic.

**ARNEC Connections.** ECD Professional are provided with the opportunity to share their research findings, field experiences and unique initiatives from the region that will benefit the ECD community. ARNEC Connections is an annual publication featuring unique experiences from around the region to create a unified regional platform.

5. **KEY SUCCESS FACTORS: What enables ARNEC to function effectively?**

As we try to identify factors which led to the successful functioning of ARNEC, it is good to go back to some conceptual issues related to partnerships and examine how these are reflected in the case of ARNEC as a regional network.

The term ‘partnership’ is widely defined in various literature. McQuaid (2009) indicates that partnership “covers a multi-dimensional continuum of widely differing concepts and practices and is used to describe a variety of types of relationship in a myriad of circumstances and locations.” Mohiddin (as cited in Bailey, F & Dolan, A, 2011) refers to partnership as the ‘highest stage of working relationship between different people brought together by commitment to common objectives, bonded by long experience of working together, and sustained by subscription to common visions’. According to Fowler (as cited in Bailey, F & Dolan, A, 2011), ‘authentic’ partnership is typically associated with characteristics such as long-term, shared responsibility, reciprocal obligation, equality, mutuality and balance of power. McQuaid (2009) articulates a number of benefits associated with partnership and inter-agency cooperation. These include sharing of knowledge and expertise; pooling of resources; building capacity in organizations and communities; and facilitating innovations from different approaches and experiences.

Literature about partnerships and networks indicates that success of partnerships is based on a variety of factors. McQuaid (2009) however noted that a number of recurring features can be identified in successful partnerships: (i) a clear strategic focus; (ii) strategic leadership and support; (iii) importance of trust, organisations and people in partnerships; (iv) a shared capacity for cooperation and mutualism; (v) incentives and symbiotic inter-dependency; (vi) organisational complementarity and co-terminosity; and (vii) outcome-oriented procedures.

The above insights from existing literature show that partnership is generally regarded as a strategy towards achieving shared goal and objectives where each member is expected to provide its share.
of resources, be it in terms of skills, time and funding. With this basic understanding of how partnership works, the following section outlines some of the success factors that enabled ARNEC to function as a network, most of these resonate with what have been identified above.

**Clearly shared objective.** As indicated in the initial part of this paper, ARNEC emerged from the Joint UNICEF-UNESCO Early Childhood Policy Review Project (2006-2008) where countries found that relevant policies were uncoordinated and fragmented and where there were gaps in policy, gaps in implementation followed. As such, the proposal emerged to establish a regional network whose primary goal would be to share knowledge of effective policies and practices related to early childhood for the benefit of all countries in the region. The founding members of ARNEC had a very clear common agenda in establishing and supporting the network that will act as a convenor or facilitator for ECD stakeholders to come together and learn from each other’s experiences and contribute to a better ECD policy environment and holistic programming. One clear objective of the founding agencies was to elevate ECD for it to become a key government priority, as well as to bring other partners, including civil society organizations.

**Sustained leadership and support of its key partners and core team members.** Since its inception, ARNEC benefitted from the strong support of UNICEF, UNESCO and Plan International. Its partnership base later expanded to include other organizations such as the Open Society Foundation, Save the Children and ChildFund who all have ECD on top of their priorities. These partner agencies have been supporting ARNEC’s regional conferences, documentation of good practices, conduct of key thematic researches and surveys, among others. These joint activities are defined on an annual basis resulting to a joint work plan which allows all parties to define priority activities and identify areas for resource leveraging. Sustained institutional support from key partners not only in terms of financial support but technical as well has been pivotal to ARNEC’s success as a network for ECD.

**Shared knowledge and expertise.** ARNEC also forges technical partnerships with universities and research institutions like University of Hong Kong, Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD) and the Institute of Education, University of London, for specific technical research activities, ensuring these research activities are done with rigour. This is critical as knowledge-generation is a key function of ARNEC.

**Evolving governance mechanisms.** The governance structure of ARNEC was defined based on the evolving needs of the network. This governance structure with committed and dedicated Board of Directors, Steering Committee and Executive Committee has been very helpful in ensuring ARNEC functions effectively. ARNEC’s Board of Directors as well as its Steering Committee members are volunteers who provide strategic guidance in ARNEC operations and decision-making. They also extend expertise to ARNEC in different ways: (i) serving as advisors or review panel to some projects; (ii) representing ARNEC in significant fora and conferences; (iii) leading or being part of various technical working groups; and (iv) reviewing and editing articles or papers for publications.

**Support from its institutional and individual members.** The 15 Friends of ARNEC coming from different categories: national/regional NGOs, research centers and Universities, Association of ECD

---

10 Galli Galli Sim Sim, India, Comparative Education Research Centre, University of Hong Kong, Association for Early Childhood Educators, Singapore, ICF International, National Association of Early Childhood Care and Education, Malaysia, South Asian Forum for Education Development, Korea Institute of Child Care and Education, Korea, Knowledge Universe, Singapore, Institute of Child and Human Development Limited (ICHD), Bangladesh, Krousar Yoeung
Professionals and Foundations also bring wealth of experience to ARNEC as they participate in key activities and even in decision-making of ARNEC. Individual membership of ARNEC also continues to grow. ARNEC has also formalised and established Country Coordinators (country focal points) in order to strengthen linkages between the regional network platform and national level actors.

**Effective functioning of the Secretariat.** Albeit limited staffing, the Secretariat is able to provide extensive support in coordination, networking and representation. It continues to manage the highly dynamic operations with multiple demands and activities happening at the same time.

5 CHALLENGES

Having outlined some of ARNEC’s achievement and what factors have contributed to its effective functioning as a network, it also had challenges that need to be addressed.

First is **its financial sustainability.** Currently, the source of funding largely comes from its key partners and core team members. This funding is limited, short-term and very project-specific. There is a need to aggressively look for other sources of funding to be able to expand ARNEC’s reach and undertake activities that are more long-term and strategic in nature. Moreover, some of the new instruments for developmental financing are narrowly target oriented and not very responsive to platforms and structures that generate outcomes by emergent processes of critical engagement and the joint determination of desired results and their conditionalities. In the emerging architecture of developmental financing it will be important to find mechanisms to support open spaces that not only generate new ideas but also forge new alignments of stakeholders and structures to challenge current thinking.

Second is the need to work further on addressing gaps related to a **holistic early childhood development and promoting equity.** ARNEC has been consistently advocating for holistic ECD and has developed advocacy materials and facilitated sharing of country level experiences on integrated ECD policy and program practices. Challenges remain however in many areas. As articulated in a white paper developed by ARNEC in 2013, “sector-based services for children tend to provide fragmented support while the provision of integrated services that attempt to address all aspects of development during early childhood is insufficient”. More specific issues relate to (i) lack of holistically-designed ECD policies which will allow for effective multi-sectoral coordination; (ii) access to quality ECD services especially in the underserved communities in rural areas, and for children from families of low socio-economic background and children with disabilities; (iii) lack of holistic interventions with programs for infants and toddlers often limited to their physical health and nutrition with little attention paid to early stimulation and early learning while interventions for children aged 4-8 years usually emphasise academic subjects while neglecting health, nutrition and social emotional aspects; and (iv) appropriateness of early childhood curriculum in many preschools based on their age and development stage and mostly conducted in a language that is not children’s mother tongue (ARNEC 2013, White Paper).

The third is **limited country-level linkages.** ARNEC’s linkage to country-level networks and agencies needs strengthening. Doing so will provide better chances for regional advocacy initiatives,
messages and activities to be translated into country-level changes. Related to this is the need to have a more robust dissemination strategy for the various knowledge products that ARNEC produces in the Region. There is a need to monitor how these products are being used and how these are contributing to changes both at the policy and quality of ECD programming in the countries. To this end, the role and composition of ARNEC country coordinators may need to be reviewed.

6 WAY FORWARD

Given the strengths and challenges of ARNEC as a network, there is a need to further take stock and assess how ARNEC can more effectively add value to ECD in the Region. With the launching of the post 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) this September, it is timely that ARNEC defines how it can strategically play a role in ensuring that countries are supported on how the ECD related goals and targets can be achieved.

As ECD is anchored on the different development goals including but not limited to poverty reduction, health and nutrition, quality education and lifelong learning, gender equality and peaceful and inclusive societies, this presents an opportunity for integration but planning, coordination and monitoring will be a challenge. ARNEC can play a strategic role in providing a platform for stronger regional coordination.

Goal 17 of the agenda for sustainable development highlights that global partnership is critical to the achievement of the ambitious goals and targets by 2030. The final text of the SDG outcome document indicates the need for multi-stakeholder partnerships to support the achievement of the sustainable development goals in all countries, in particular developing countries. The document also indicates the importance of effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships (TRANSFORMING OUR WORLD: THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/). ARNEC as a regional network needs to continue to facilitate partnerships for holistic ECD in the Region in support of the new global development agenda.

One critical area that would need attention is supporting countries in getting reliable data on ECD, against which country progress can be measured. In the adoption of SDGs, ARNEC can assist countries in data collection, benchmarking and analysis. ARNEC can also support countries to develop national framework/guidance for SDG implementation specifically on goals related to ECD which will encompass planning, implementation, financing, monitoring and evaluation.

In conclusion, ARNEC has seen a good deal of success in delivering its set objectives, supported by the different partners and members comprising the network. The biggest area of success is probably on knowledge-generation which is very critical to both ECD policy formulation and programming work. ARNEC serves as an excellent resource to ECD professionals, organizations and governments as they work on ensuring holistic development for all children in Asia and the Pacific. ARNEC has some good elements to share when it comes to building regional networks and partnerships. It is a good example of how different agencies with different mandates and priorities can collaborate and work together to pursue shared interests and goals around early childhood. ARNEC is able to demonstrate important ingredients to enable other partnerships to work, these being: common vision and clearly defined goals supported by strategic leadership and shared resources from partners; a committed and dedicated governing body and Secretariat, plus a strong membership
base which continue to affirm ARNEC’s relevance as a network. Its continued relevance will be defined as it embarks this year on a comprehensive review which will feed into its strategic visioning/planning for the next 5 years. This planned review will look at how ARNEC as a partnership model can continue to evolve and bring in more value in pursuing a holistic ECD in the Region within the context of the post 2015 global development agenda.

7 REFERENCES


ARNEC Various Annual Reports. http://www.arnec.net/arnec-publications/reports/


Paper 3 - Effectiveness of Partnership for Development, a Case Study on the East Asia and Pacific United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative (EAP UNGEI)

1 ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the achievements and challenges experienced by the East Asia and Pacific United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative (EAP UNGEI) and how understandings of gender and priorities around gender in the region have evolved over time with and through the EAP UNGEI, especially focusing on successful factors on the EAP UNGEI partnership in promoting gender equality in education in the region.

UNGEI is a multi-stakeholder partnership launched by the Secretary-General in April 2000 at the World Education Forum (WEF) in Dakar. UNGEI aims to improve the quality and availability of girls’ education in support of global gender-related goals to achieve universal primary education and to promote gender equality and empower women. UNGEI aims to enhance gender equality in education in the region through policy advocacy; sharing best practice, information and data; and building partnerships.

The EAP UNGEI is based in Bangkok, Thailand. It is a network of experts and organizations promoting the right to education and gender equality for all in the region co-chaired by UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (UNICEF EAPRO) and UNESCO Bangkok.

This paper will examine and identify key factors in the effectiveness of partnerships for development, illustrated by the EAP UNGEI based on a desk review of literature on partnerships and internal documents and survey of the UNGEI. The paper will also introduce emerging issues in the region and discuss how gender is likely to be addressed globally post 2015.
2 INTRODUCTION

As the eighth Millennium Development Goal (MDG), “partnership for development” demonstrates, partnership has become one of the major strategies to address the complex and multifaceted issues in international development. UN agencies, CSOs, NGOs, governments, and donors form partnerships to increase the impact of their technical cooperation in addressing common goals. In education, global commitments were made by 164 governments to Education for All (EFA) goals during the World Education Forum (WEF) at Dakar in April 2000, where the UNGEI partnership – the first in education – was launched.

This paper aims to identify key factors in the effectiveness of partnerships for development, illustrated by the East Asia and Pacific UNGEI (EAP UNGEI), a regional network launched in May 2002. It is based on a desk review of literature on partnerships and internal documents of UNGEI at the regional and the global level, in addition to qualitative analyses of a survey circulated to the EAP UNGEI members. The paper first explores existing theories on the types of and success factors for partnerships. Secondly, the paper examines the EAP UNGEI and analyses its strengths and weaknesses. Achievements and challenges of the network are highlighted, followed by a discussion on emerging regional issues and lessons learnt. Finally, the paper concludes with recommendations on strategic partnerships for achieving the post 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 Partnership for Development

In international development, ‘partnership’ is a widely used strategy to tackle challenging intersectional global issues such as poverty, gender equality, and human rights. The concept of partnership for development has evolved over the past years. For example, when the MDGs were developed in 2000, the concept of ‘partnership’ in the eighth goal was largely about addressing specific challenges affecting the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). In 2002, the UN International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey laid out an approach to operationalise the notion of ‘partnership,’ introducing partnership between Nation States and multilateral-bilateral partners. In 2005, the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness provided a series of specific implementation measures holding donors and partners accountable for development results. In 2008, the Accra Agenda for Action introduced the concept of inclusive partnerships, where all partners - donors, foundations and civil society - participate fully. In 2011, the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-Operation called for a modernised, deepened, and broadened co-operation involving state and non-state actors to “forge a new global development partnership that embraces diversity and recognises the distinct roles that all stakeholders,” while welcoming South-South co-operation as well as the contributions of civil society organisations and private actors (Aid Effectiveness, OECD). The landscape of partnership for development has evidently evolved, adapting to changing global contexts, over the past decade.

The literature provides a variety of definitions on partnership, covering a “multi-dimensional continuum of widely different concepts and practices and is used to describe a variety of types of relationship in a myriad of circumstances and locations” (McQuaid, 2009, p. 2). Marianne Beisheim notes that partnerships are differentiated mostly on the basis of their goals, and describes three types of partnerships (Table 1). The first is knowledge partnerships, which function as learning platforms, passing on knowledge of different expertise. Standard-setting partnerships are the
second type that draw up “voluntary standards in areas not yet subject to binding goals and regulations,” often resulting in a code of conduct. The last type is the service partnerships, which focus on initiating and realising projects designed to implement development goals (Beisheim, 2012, p. 12). Defining different types of partnerships helps to understand specific factors that contribute to the success of a partnership. Nevertheless, despite the different types of partnerships, she identifies a few key success factors that remain the same across all types of partnerships.

Table 1. The three types of partnerships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partnerships</th>
<th>Function as learning platforms (i.e. EAP UNGEI)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Partnerships</td>
<td>Draw up voluntary standards in areas yet subject to binding goals and regulations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard-setting</td>
<td>Initiate and realise projects designed to implement development goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnerships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Partnerships are regarded effective only when there is an added-value to the partnership. Each member may have an incentive but also risks in participating in partnerships, and partnerships can be sustained only when each member’s opportunities outweigh the risks. Pieter Glasbergen argues that ‘collaborative advantage’ occurs only when involved parties gain “real advantage from collaboration, something has to be achieved that could not have been achieved by any one of the partners acting alone, but is in their interest” (Glasbergen, 2011, p.5). Thus, the partnership’s success depends on “how well the partners’ interests and intentions dovetail with the goal of the partnership, and on how well their resources complement each other” (Beisheim, 2012).

Acquiring collaborative advantage for the members requires strategic structure and composition of the membership. For example, for standard-setting partnerships, all affected bodies of the standard should be presented, while the decision-making body consists of a smaller number of members. In knowledge partnerships, having expert partners is crucial, while in service partnerships, having members with financial resources and members with expertise for project implementation is important. Although different types of partnerships require different types of members, the importance of the composition of the members remains true to all types of partnerships.

Additionally, diverse types of resources provided by the partners are key success factors. Successful partnerships demand leadership, financial resources as well as commitment to drive the initiative. Different partners may contribute in different ways, and this needs to be recognised and respected within the partnership. A secretariat may be established to provide leadership for the initiative, with efficient and flexible decision-making process and an established monitoring and evaluation mechanism. It is crucial for the secretariat to manage communications within the partnership, to ensure that the partnership’s objectives and outcomes are agreed and achieved through transparent and extensive discussions. Such a communication culture and recognised roles for all partners assist in providing a basis of trust between organisations and between individuals in partnerships: a key success factor for partnerships (McQuaid, 2009). Collaborative interaction is constructive and takes place in an atmosphere of mutual trust, adding value for all parties involved (Glasbergen, 2011). While internal governance is important for a successful partnership, capacity
of individual members also is a major success factor. The organisations as well as individual representatives in the partnerships should have both the authority and flexibility to engage in mutual decision-making and resource sharing (McQuaid, 2009). Based on these studies, it is clear that the EAP UNGEI is primarily a knowledge partnership, although sometimes it may support the development of smaller service partnerships. This paper will further examine the EAP UNGEI’s partnership and explore success factors as well as weakness of the network.

4 THE EAST ASIA AND PACIFIC UNITED NATIONS GIRLS’ EDUCATION INITIATIVE

4.1 The East Asia and Pacific Regional Context

The East Asia and Pacific (EAP) region encompasses one-third of the world’s population and more than one-quarter of the world’s children. The region possesses a stunning variety in geography, culture and political and economic systems and significant diversity can be seen within countries in terms of wealth, ethnicity and language, and diversity in provision of education. While some countries have achieved the MDGs, many have not. Significant, sometimes widening, disparities both between and within countries, in enrolment, retention, progression, and learning outcomes, often on the basis of gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity, language, geographical location, and disability continue to exist. Demand for post-basic education and pre-primary education is rapidly increasing. The quality of teachers is highly variable across the region. Real or perceived disconnections between what is taught in school and what is needed for effective participation in the rapidly changing world is an emerging challenge. A lack of long-term commitment to sustained and well-resourced actions for education, and poor and opaque governance of education are also persistent challenges in the region (2015 Asia-Pacific Regional EFA Report).

Although there is a notable progress in narrowing the gender gap, disaggregated data reveal that each country faces different types of challenges. For example, as Table 2 shows, although girls continue to be disadvantaged in primary education in some countries, a “reverse gender gap” is becoming apparent in the relative underachievement of boys, especially in lower secondary in some countries (SOWC, 2015). A recent desk review reveals that boys sometimes feel that education is not relevant to their futures, while girls continue to bear the burden of adolescent pregnancy, domestic work, sibling care and early marriage. Issues such as discrimination in the classroom, physical and sexual violence and classroom materials that promote negative gender stereotypes must be addressed to ensure all children have access to the same high quality education and learning (EAP UNGEI, 2012).
It is also noteworthy that while the GPI gives an indication of the overall situation for girls and boys in a country, it can mask disparities within countries. In-depth gender analyses highlight pockets of disadvantage, often having a differential effect on either girls or boys in remote and rural areas and among ethnic and linguistic minority communities as Figure 1 shows (GMR 2010 reaching the marginalised, and DMR).

**Table 2. Gender Parity Index (GPI) for Gross-Enrolment Ratio of Primary and Secondary School Participation for Countries in the Region**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries that have not achieved gender parity at primary level in terms of Girls disadvantaged in:</th>
<th>Boys disadvantaged in:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>Kiribati 1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lao PDR 0.94</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papua New Guinea 0.92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solomon Islands 0.96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timor Leste 0.95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries that have not achieved gender parity at lower secondary level in terms of Girls disadvantaged in:</th>
<th>Boys disadvantaged in:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia 0.90*</td>
<td>Fiji 1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lao PDR 0.93</td>
<td>Mongolia 1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myanmar 1.04</td>
<td>Philippines 1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiribati</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samoa 1.12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand 1.06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanuatu 1.04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Data refer to years or periods other than those specified in the column heading (2009-2013) SOWC, 2015

4.2 History of the EAP UNGEI

UNGEI aims to improve the quality and availability of girls’ education in support of the gender-related global goals. In 2012, the global and the EAP UNGEI underwent a formal evaluation: overall
positive, the evaluation identified specific ways forward. Following the evaluations, in 2013, UNGEI launched a global consultation to identify and confirm a relevant and targeted policy advocacy agenda. The UNGEI advocacy priorities identified are: enhanced focus on marginalised and excluded groups; reduction/elimination of School-Related Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV); improved learning outcomes for girls; and increased number of girls transitioning to secondary education/accessing post-primary opportunities.

The EAP UNGEI was established to respond to specific needs in the region to strengthen gender perspectives in education; to improve education sector planning; and to address multi-sectoral challenges relating to meaningful participation of both boys and girls in education. Based on the global UNGEI Policy advocacy agenda, the EAP UNGEI also identified priority areas: To address *regionally relevant education and related* issues including violence, disabilities, migration, disasters, etc., the EAP UNGEI initiated two new working groups to take forward two of the global key areas of the UNGEI, SRGBV and Marginalisation.

### 4.3 Membership structure and management of communications

As noted in the literature, the composition and roles of members play a major role in the success of the partnership, and thus, it is worthwhile to first look into the structure of the EAP UNGEI.

The UNGEI partnership is based on rather stable financial resources, as both global and regional UNGEI have a Secretariat hosted by UNICEF. In EAP, the Secretariat consists of three staff – the Chair, the Working Group Coordinator, and the Communications Officer at UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (EAPRO). UNESCO Bangkok is the Co-Chair of the EAP UNGEI. All members of the Secretariat have other roles within their own organisations, and often times these roles are linked to the EAP UNGEI work. For example, the EAP UNGEI Chair is also the Education Specialist for Gender in UNICEF EAPRO. Even though the network is co-chaired by UN agencies, membership is open. Individual experts are welcome to join the network, but the majority of the members represent different types of organisations. Types of organisations that the members represent do not differ in importance within the network, although each member and the represented organisation may contribute differently depending on the type of organisation and availability of financial or technical resources. Sometimes individual members who joined the network with one organisation move to another organisation and continue to be engaged to the EAP UNGEI in their new capacities.

The EAP UNGEI Secretariat develops and implements a workplan in collaboration with partners. Members begin to exchange ideas on the coming year’s workplan during the third quarter, and the Secretariat prepares a draft workplan with an indicative budget to be shared and reviewed with the members during the last meeting of the year. In the first meeting of the year, the new workplan is endorsed and shared as a living document. This collaborative process allows for representatives in the network to discuss the EAP UNGEI activities and bring in the perspective of the member organisations to the network, resulting in a workplan agreed and implemented by all key members with specific monitoring indicators to track progress. Regular quarterly meetings also serve to enhance partnership and also to monitor the network’s work progress, where members discuss key issues and upcoming events, request for support, and share general updates from their organisations. Additionally, the two working groups develop and implement specific workplans
related to SRGBV and marginalisation. Members report on their activities and progress against these specific workplans, ensuring alignment with the broader EAP UNGEI workplan.

### 4.4 Different roles of members

It is important to note that partners in the EAP UNGEI represent distinctive roles in the partnership, noted previously as a success factor. Some members provide leadership under a specific theme, while others provide entry points or platforms for both advocacy and implementation.

The EAP UNGEI Secretariat provides overall coordination, technical leadership and quality assurance of the network, while working to engage the global UNGEI at the regional level and vice versa. UNICEF provides human resources and financial resources to UNGEI both at the global and regional level, contributing to stability of the network. Strong partnerships at the country level which can help promote government buy-in are critical to ensuring acceptance and sustainability of the EAP UNGEI’s work in the region. The EAP UNGEI is able to promote gender equality in education at a country level through UNICEF Country Offices and partners who have strong presence at the field level. Often there is already a bond of trust and agreements between country governments and core partners of the UNGEI, which puts these partners in a strategic position to effectively play this role. Partnerships at the regional level translating to partnerships at the country level ensures that gender issues are addressed at the country level as well.

Other partners play a significant role as well: UNESCO Bangkok, which co-chairs the EAP UNGEI, provides a comparative advantage by keeping the network in the loop of some of the key global policy dialogues related to the EAP UNGEI’s work. It also engages governments at the country level and organises regional level policy fora, where the EAP UNGEI can reinforce its priority on gender equality in education. Similarly, ILO provides leadership in addressing child labour, while IOM provides leadership in addressing migrant issues. UNWomen and the Secretary-General’s UNiTE to End Violence against Women (UNiTE) campaign ensure that the violence against girls and women, often a barrier that girls face in accessing education, is addressed.

CSO members are often instrumental in collecting evidence and stories from the field and implementing pilot projects. For example, through the EAP UNGEI newsletter, CSOs such as Aide et Action and the Stakeholder Partnerships for Education and Lifelong Learning (SPELL) provide stories from the field. Plan International conducted and shared findings from the field and from multi-country research. New and emerging research, (e.g. on SRGBV in the region), was introduced by the EAP UNGEI which resulted in calls for action to governments. The Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE) and ActionAid are two very active CSO partners who often represent the regional CSO voice at global platforms such as the WEF held in Incheon, 2015. Key advocacy priorities identified by UNGEI are regularly introduced into workplans by UN agencies and reinforced by the CSO members, strengthening visibility and alignment to address gender issues. Individual members who may not be associated with a certain organisation also make meaningful contributions to the network, either by providing support as Editorial Board members or as experts conducting research and/or webinars.

The distinctive roles of the more active members, with flexibility for new and less-active members to participate as appropriate, are key factors in the sustainability of the network. It is important to note that these roles were not ‘assigned’ to each members, but have rather naturally evolved as
each member organisation has continued to engage with the network in the capacity that works for them, cementing trust between members over time.

5 ACHIEVEMENTS

In November 2012 the Lao PDR Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), UNICEF Lao PDR and the EAP UNGEI organised a capacity-building workshop for members of the Lao PDR Inclusive Education Centre, which included a plenary presentation by Plan International addressing barriers to girls’ education in Lao PDR. To continue strengthening their partnership with the Lao PDR Inclusive Education Network and UNICEF Lao PDR, as well as to provide support to further the Inclusive Education Network’s agenda on gender equality and inclusive education, the EAP UNGEI supported the formation of a Technical Working Group to strengthen gender mainstreaming in education. A White Paper produced by the EAP UNGEI highlighted gender in education issues in Lao PDR, the benefits of gender analyses, and presented learnings from national level UNGEI networks in Nepal and Uganda. Recommendations from the White Paper contributed to the establishment of the Gender, Inclusion, and Disability Technical Working Group (GID-TWG) within the education sector, following a Ministerial Decree 1042, dated 21 March, 2014, which gave the MoES the appropriate mandate to establish the GID-TWG. Currently, the GID-TWG is co-chaired by the MoES and a CSO (Plan Lao), a unique partnership with a dedicated Gender Advisor for the TWG, who provides periodic reports to the EAP UNGEI and Plan Lao. The EAP UNGEI was instrumental in the establishment of the GID-TWG, contributing to enhancing gender equality in education.

On the International Day of the Girl Child, networks (UNiTE, UNGEI) and agencies in the Asia-Pacific called for action to address SRGVBV in the region. The theme of the day, “Empowering Adolescent Girls: Ending the Cycle of Violence”, spoke directly to the issues at the core of gender violence in schools – gender discrimination, gender inequality and harmful gender and social norms. Additionally, these networks launched a social media campaign to mobilize policy-makers, the education sector and youth as well as to invite discussion and action on this blight to the region’s education systems. The principles underlying the campaign were captured in an infographic, which explains SRGVBV and how it threatens our children’s futures. The infographic was shared widely to raise awareness of school-related violence, and to join the efforts to build communities where all children can pursue their fundamental rights to an education in a safe environment. Partners in the EAP UNGEI and the Secretary-General’s UNiTE campaign also work together to ensure that students have the best possible opportunity to acquire the knowledge, skills and resources they need to reach their potential in a safe, nurturing environment. This includes working to promote gender equality, non-violence and acceptance. Additionally, the EAP UNGEI enhanced better understanding of issues around gender equality in education with the following recent publications: Report on EAP Regional Forum on Gender Equality in Education (2014), Girls, Disabilities and School Education in the East Asia Pacific Region (2014), SRGVBV in the Asia-Pacific Region (2014), Why are Boys Underperforming in Education? Gender Analysis of Four Asia-Pacific Countries (2012), Evidence-Based Advocacy for Gender in Education (2010). The EAP UNGEI biannual Newsletter also provides a platform for the members to share best practices.

6 CHALLENGES

Collaboration and trust between members noted in the literature are key success factors for the EAP UNGEI. However, one weakness observed is that such a partnership largely depends on personalities, willingness and interest of the members. Furthermore, since leadership has a major
impact on the organisational culture as well as the stability of the network with its financial and human resources, change in the leadership may affect the network negatively. Sustained financing is also likely to be a challenge: Although members share costs, it is usually done based on projects rather than through a central level fiscal arrangement, which makes the network more vulnerable and dependent on the resources provided by the host agency. Another challenge is that the time-spent on network management is often regarded as add-on, or only a smaller part of the agenda of the host agency, whereas effective partnership management requires resources, extensive time commitments and professionalism, especially given the diversity of the members.

The current Secretariat has made conscious efforts to expand and reach out to non-UN organisations, to adequately address complex and fast-changing issues around gender in education in the region. While the diversity of the network is a plus, competing priorities and procedures among the partner organisations may result in conflict in priorities among the member agencies. Different procedures and regulations of the member organisations especially in terms of copyrights of knowledge and communications products require vigilant management. The member organisations sometimes work in silos, not understanding the intricacies of partnership management, and the Secretariat needs to ensure that member organisations work in partnership where and when the partnership brings added-value. Needless to say, being able to manage different requirements of the members and dynamics between the members is key for effective partnerships.

In order to successfully address these challenges, the EAP UNGEI Secretariat was reconstituted with three staff members with specific roles. The Chair is responsible for providing overall vision and guidance for the network and communications, and interactions at the policy level. The Chair also secures funding for the EAP UNGEI activities within the entire gender in education budget at UNICEF EAPRO. The Communications Officer ensures that all communications for the EAP UNGEI network are shared in timely fashion and meet requirements of the EAP UNGEI and UNICEF, the host organisation. The Working Group Coordinator works closely with the members on SRGBV and marginalisation, enhancing timely implementation of the workplan around these two global priorities in the region. With this structure, the EAP UNGEI Secretariat is able to promote stability of the network and active participation of the members. According to an ongoing online survey for the EAP UNGEI members, 9 out of 10 respondents replied that the EAP UNGEI Secretariat’s current leadership and structure contribute strongly to the success of the network (EAP UNGEI survey, 2015).

7 EMERGING ISSUES

Emerging issues for the EAP UNGEI can be categorized in two: governance issues and thematic issues. In terms of regional averages, the EAP remains on track to meet the MDG2 target on universal primary education. Gross Enrolment in primary school has risen to 117 per cent in 2012 from 39.1 per cent in 1999 (EFA GMR 2015). Although girls and women continue to be directly or indirectly excluded from high quality education, according to an EAP UNGEI’s research, boys are disadvantaged in some settings, with decreasing enrolment, attendance and achievement. Many boys leave school early and fewer are continuing on to higher levels of education, suggesting that the education system is not meeting the basic requirement of many boys. Underlying gender expectations can impact both sexes, but girls do often face multiple layers of barriers in education such as adolescent pregnancy and early marriage. For both girls and boys, successful transitions
from primary to secondary education and from school to work is a key in achieving equity in education.

In this region, education marginalisation among the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex (LGBTI) community also is an emerging issue. According to a 2013 study of bullying and violence on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) in Thailand, more than half of LGBT students in the study reported having been bullied within the past month because of their SOGI. 25 per cent of those that did not self-identify as LGBT also had been bullied because they had been seen to be LGBT. This confirms other research suggesting that it is the perception of same-sex attraction or of transgender identity that puts people at risk (Mahidol University, Plan International, UNESCO, 2014).

As the international community prepares for the post-2015, the landscape of global agenda and partnerships is changing. Continuing impact of the UNGEI network on achievement of the SDGs is foreseen, especially given that UNGEI has already served as an effective flagship for girls’ education under the EFA goals that are closely linked to the MDGs. Furthermore, the EAP UNGEI is well equipped to contribute to discussions on emerging issues in the region. Although the partnerships established through the EAP UNGEI network in the region are most likely to remain, the specific organisation and structure of the partnerships after the MDGs is likely to change depending on who will lead efforts for gender equality and education at the global level.

In the region, as Figure 2 shows, a number of regional organisations exist with different constructions of memberships and priorities. Although these organisations’ focus may not explicitly be education, some are increasingly recognising the importance of education, especially in relation to the labour market and attempt to address equity in education issues at a regional level. As a regional network promoting gender equality in education, it will be strategic to ensure that EAP UNGEI is well aligned with these regional networks.

8 LESSONS LEARNT AND WAY FORWARD

Reflecting on the experiences of the EAP UNGEI, a few key factors that contribute to its success emerge.
First, it is crucial to identify what exactly the partnership attempts to accomplish and what added-value the partnership brings to its members. In order to do this, the network should have clear goals and strategies, so the interested organisations can clearly see collaborative advantages of becoming a member. For example, according to the ongoing EAP UNGEI survey, knowledge sharing and receiving and sharing technical expertise are identified as the areas that members find the network most useful, followed by advocacy around issues prioritised by the member organisation (EAP UNGEI Survey, 2015). This corresponds to UNGEI’s three strategies to promote gender equality in education: policy advocacy; sharing best practices, information and data; and building partnerships (EAP UNGEI workplan 2015).

Secondly, the composition of the membership needs to be strategic for achieving desired goals of the network. The EAP UNGEI initially started as a network for UN agencies only but expanded its membership as it recognised that the network can provide a platform for collaboration between the different actors at the policy and the field level. The membership should be rather flexible, letting members to participate in specific activities that coincides with the member organisation’s priorities only. This flexibility makes the network more approachable to the members, although it is important to have core members who participate in most of the network’s major events and meetings.

Third, the leadership of the network is vital in managing the partnership, especially if the partnership is consisted of diverse members with different priorities. The leadership should also be supported in providing vision, judgement, and stability to the network with either providing or establishing mechanism for financial and human resources allocated for the network.

Good governance is also a key, where the members feel that the leadership ensures transparent and participatory decision-making processes and that each member is valued regardless of the type of the organisation they represent.

---

**Figure 3:** Key factors for successful partnerships based on the EAP UNGEI experience
In conclusion, reflecting on the EAP UNGEI’s experience and a broad overview of success factors for partnerships, several key ingredients that contribute to a successful partnership seem to be: a flexible and strategic membership under a strong leadership that provided stability for the partnership with resources and good governance, yielding collaborative advantages for the members to achieve common goals, as shown in Figure 3. With this in mind, the EAP UNGEI aims to continue to build effective partnerships for gender equality in education in the East Asia and Pacific region, tackling complex issues that may arise in the post-2015 context. Going forward, the partnership is focused on strengthening the network to focus on more country level initiatives; enhancing the gender lens in disaggregated data collection and analysis; developing and consolidating a joint monitoring plan with a clear “Who does what” and; promoting inter-regional cooperation on best practices.

9 REFERENCES


Bullying targeting secondary school students who are or are perceived to be transgender or same-sex attracted: Types, prevalence, impact, motivation and preventive measures in 5 provinces of Thailand. (2015). Bangkok. Retrieved from http://Bullying targeting secondary school students who are or are perceived to be transgender or same-sex attracted: Types, prevalence, impact, motivation and preventive measures in 5 provinces of Thailand


