Report: Regional Thematic Consultation on Education in the Post-2015 Development Agenda
The Asia-Pacific Perspective
(28 February – 01 March 2013, Bangkok, Thailand)
Contents

Introduction 2

Methodology (The Processes) 4

The Asia-Pacific Context 9

Presentation Overview 10

Theme 1 - Equitable and Inclusive Access to and Participation in Learning 16

Theme 2 - Quality of Learning 18

Theme 3 - Global Citizenship, Skills and Competencies for Life and Work 20

Theme 4 - Governance, Financing and Partnership/Cooperation 22

Overview of Education in the Post-2015 Development Agenda 25

Outcomes and Recommendations – Outcome Document 27

Concluding Remarks 35
Introduction
As 2015 fast approaches the international community is in the process of taking stock and reflecting on progress made towards a post-2015 development agenda, as a global commitment towards human development beyond targets set for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education For All (EFA). The world is changing; new development challenges are emerging, while others still remain unresolved in many countries in the region.

UNESCO Bangkok, in its role as the Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, commenced work early in 2012 on stimulating region-wide reflections and consultations on the future of education, as well as the post-2015 agenda. The first regional high-level expert meeting on the future of education, ‘Towards EFA 2015 and Beyond – Shaping a New Vision of Education’ took place in Bangkok, in May 2012, with support from UNICEF and from the Korean National Commission for UNESCO. This meeting was the starting point for much of the regional work, pursued jointly by all partners and stakeholders. A main finding highlighted the fact that learning should be one of the areas of emphasis in shaping future education goals and strategies.

The second regional high-level expert meeting on the future of education ‘Beyond 2015 – Rethinking Learning in a Changing World’ was organised in Bangkok on 26 – 28 November 2012, with support from the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. The meeting discussed cutting-edge insights on learning from the perspectives of educationalists, learning scientists and economists as well as learning requirements for the future. It developed recommendations on possible responses to these requirements and what may be necessary to build effective learning systems from a lifelong learning perspective, as well as in view of the post-2015 agenda.

Building on these events UNESCO Bangkok, UNICEF EAPRO and UNICEF ROSA co-organized the Regional Thematic Consultation on Education in the Post-2015 Development Agenda, in Bangkok, Thailand on 28 February and 1 March 2013, in partnership with non-governmental and civil society organisations. Other regional thematic consultations on education have taken place in Africa, Latin America and the Arab States as part of the 11 thematic consultations planned by United Nations Development Group (UNDG). This regional thematic consultation provided an important opportunity for the Asia-Pacific region to present its rich perspectives on education for the future within the global debate.

The objectives of the consultation were to foster broad based, open and inclusive dialogues, crucially with civil society partners and youth, to help define the post-2015 development agenda. In this context the regional thematic consultation addressed the following aims:
• Take stock and exchange information on regional and national processes of consultation and dialogue on education in the post-2015 agenda.
• Identify areas of key importance for education and learning for the future in the region.
• Discuss how to best articulate and position education as a critical part of the post-2015 development agenda.
• Formulate recommendations on education for the future as well as in the post-2015 development framework.

Importantly, the outcomes and recommendations from this consultation will feed into the Global Thematic Consultation on Education scheduled to take place in March 2013 in Dakar, Senegal and will also feed into further discussions within the UN towards developing the possible contours of the post-2015 development agenda.

Over two days a diverse range of stakeholders from across the Asia-Pacific region, including government representatives, civil society organisations, regional networks and young people, shared ideas and opinions on education in the post-2015 development agenda and developed recommendations on what should be key components of such an agenda as regards education. In the build-up to this event participants undertook preparatory consultations in their countries and across their networks. Not only have these helped participants to engage communities at the grassroots level with education issues of regional and global importance, but crucially this has also facilitated the formulation of constructive ideas and opinions which were debated throughout the consultation. The regional thematic consultation thus not only provided a platform for government representatives, international, regional and national organisations, as well as youth representatives to discuss their findings, but also involved stakeholders at the grassroots level to make their voices heard. What follows are the collective voices, innovative solutions and creative outcomes of the Asia-Pacific region.
Methodology (The Processes)

The Global Process

Contextualising the international debates and consultations currently taking place regarding the post-2015 development agenda is extremely important, particularly as this enables us to understand how education fits within current approaches.

At the global level, three work-streams within the UN are currently involved in the post-2015 development agenda:

1) The High-Level Panel of 26 eminent persons nominated by the UN Secretary General.
2) The Open Working Group of 30 members decided by the Rio+20 Conference to set up Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
3) The UN Task Team on the Post-2015 Development Agenda (UNTT) comprising more than 60 UN agencies and international institutions.

UNTT was set up in 2011 by the UN Secretary General and produced a report providing a vision for a development agenda beyond 2015: ‘Realizing the future we want for All’ (June 2012). This vision is based on:

1) Three core values: human rights, equality and sustainability.
2) Four key dimensions: (1) inclusive social development; (2) inclusive economic development; (3) environmental sustainability; and (4) peace and security.
3) That basic education is seen both as a right and as a condition, enabling factor and foundation for inclusive economic development and transformative growth.

The UNDG is leading a “global conversation”:

1) Supporting currently 74 (up to a 100 in total) national consultations on post-2015 agenda.
2) Conducting thematic consultations on 11 topics, including education co-led by UNESCO and UNICEF.
3) Providing the worldwewant2015.org web-platform for a global online conversation.

The Preparatory Consultation Process in the Asia-Pacific

In preparation for the regional thematic consultation on education in the Asia-Pacific, participants were invited to undertake a prior consultation within their network or organisation. The purpose of this preparatory consultation was to take a bottom-up approach
and to involve as many relevant stakeholders as possible of each network or organisation so that their views could be best reflected and represented in the regional thematic consultation.

This crucially facilitated the formulation of diverse views and opinions of stakeholders on the main issues and challenges in education, and also identified key areas of education policy in the future and direction of the post-2015 development agenda. The guiding themes, discussion directions and overall framework of preparatory discussions are below.

1. General discussion areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes/Topics</th>
<th>Possible Discussion Directions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Key issues and challenges in education in your context.</td>
<td>• What are the most important issues and challenges in education?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Key areas of emphasis for education in the future in light of past trends in your context.</td>
<td>• What are the causes of these issues and challenges?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What options and strategies can help address them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Key areas of emphasis for education in the future in light of past trends in your context.</td>
<td>• What are the emerging priorities for educational development and cooperation in your context?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Priority areas for education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes/Topics</th>
<th>Possible Discussion Directions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Equitable and Inclusive Access to and Participation in Learning.</td>
<td>• How can equitable access to education be ensured?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Quality of Learning.</td>
<td>• What group(s) in the region do you think should be given more attention in the future? Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Skills and Competencies for Life and Work.</td>
<td>• How can we ensure that children and youth complete at least basic education?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What do you think are the main factors for learning of good quality?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How could quality learning and teaching be ensured?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What skills and competencies do you think young people and adults need for life and work in the future?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- Governance, Financing and Partnership/Cooperation.

- What aspects of governance and management should be further strengthened?
- What are the main issues in terms of domestic financial resources?
- How can public-private partnerships be enhanced to support education development? How can international cooperation for national education development be improved?

### 3. Recommendations for education in the post-2015 development agenda

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes/Topics</th>
<th>Possible Discussion Directions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education in the post-2015 development agenda.</td>
<td>• What key areas of education should be included in a post-2015 development agenda?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What should be the role of education in the overall post-2015 development agenda?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants representing their network or organisation were asked to prepare a brief paper summarising outcomes of their preparatory consultation and some were also invited to present their preparatory consultation outcomes at the regional thematic consultation.
The Regional Thematic Consultation in the Asia-Pacific

The regional thematic consultation provided a platform for sharing and discussing ideas and opinions on education in the post-2015 development agenda and came up with a collective voice from the Asia-Pacific to contribute to the overall global series of discussions and debates. It is envisaged the Asia-Pacific region will play a pivotal role and have a significant impact on education in the post-2015 development agenda. This is not only due to the significant population size, number of countries and cultural diversity represented, but also due to the genuine consultative approach that has been adopted.

The regional thematic consultation was structured into three main parts: firstly, introductory presentations and outcomes from previous consultations on education beyond 2015; secondly, discussion and development of recommendations on thematic priority areas for education; and thirdly, formulation of recommendations for priority education areas and how best to position education in the post-2015 development agenda.

Introductory and summary presentations contextualised the main debates surrounding MDGs, EFA and SDGs in the lead up to 2015. Key report findings were presented from the previous two High-level Expert Meetings on Education Beyond 2015, recommendations on the post-2015 education agenda from the 13th Regional Meeting of National EFA Coordinators: The Big Push, as well as a position paper on post-2015 in South Asia from the National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA). In addition, summary presentations from participants who conducted preparatory consultations in their countries and across their networks included; VSO International, World Vision International, Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE), ATD Fourth World, Youth Representatives from Sri Lanka, Council of Pacific Education (COPE), Education International, National Campaign for Education (NCE Nepal), NGO Education Partnership (NEP Cambodia), Plan International, Right to Education Forum, Save the Children and SIL International. All presentations made at the regional thematic consultation are available online:


These presentations gave a flavour of the education challenges and priority areas facing participants from across the Asia-Pacific region and led the consultation into its central activity of genuine consultation and debate within the four thematic discussion areas, namely; equitable and inclusive access to and participation in learning; quality of learning; global citizenship, skills and competencies for life and work; governance, financing and partnership/cooperation. Following rich and extensive debate, summary presentations from the four thematic groups were made in plenary, highlighting the main education priorities and key recommendations identified by each respective group.
In order to effectively consolidate views to represent the diversity of the Asia-Pacific region, a drafting committee was convened (composed of representatives from governments, civil society organisations, youth, teachers’ unions, and academics) to formulate participants’ views, ideas and recommendations into a representative and informative outcome document to feed into the global debate. This outcome document was discussed, amended and approved by participants in the final session of the regional thematic consultation.
The Asia-Pacific Context
The importance of regional inputs from the Asia-Pacific is to be seen against the backdrop of its great diversity and significant overall population. These two aspects alone illustrate the development challenges and opportunities this region represents.

The Asia-Pacific is characterised by rapid and dynamic economic growth, a growing number of middle income countries, innovation and technological advances. However, these overall economic trends belie vast disparities between and within countries and economic growth has not always resulted in equivalent increases in living standards in all countries. Trends show that these gaps are widening, rather than narrowing, and are compounded by a diversity of challenges such as demographic change with vast youth bulges in some contexts and rapidly aging populations in others, increased labour mobility and migration, environmental degradation and natural disasters, the continuing presence of conflict in parts of the region.

While education is central to many Asia-Pacific countries’ development approaches and noticeable achievements have been made, significant challenges remain. There are vast disparities between and within countries specifically concerning access to schooling, equity and quality of education and in resulting levels of learning achievement. People from war-torn zones, remote communities, ethnic minorities and women and girls still face difficulties accessing education and there are large numbers of out-of-school children. Despite considerable progress to improve youth and adult literacy, the region still contains the largest number of illiterate adults of any region in the world. An increasing number of countries in the region have already reached middle-income or high-income status and are faced with education issues beyond the EFA and MDG agendas. These include equitable and inclusive access to and participation in learning, quality of learning, global citizenship, skills and competencies for life and work, governance, financing and partnership/cooperation should all feature prominently among education goals and strategies of any future post-2015 development agenda.

These factors were central to thematic discussions and formed a crucial component from which outcomes and recommendations have been based.
Presentation Overview
Below are the key highlights and salient points from presentations of previous consultations on education post-2015 and preparatory consultations, made on the first day of the regional thematic consultation.

Report of the recommendations on the post-2015 education agenda from the 13th Regional Meeting of National EFA Coordinators: The Big Push

- It is not enough to only look at sectors (i.e. primary, secondary & tertiary), in the post-2015 development agenda, but there is a need to take a sector wide approach. There is also a need to look at the many disparities that exist, including rural-urban gaps, marginalised and disadvantaged populations, multi-linguistic groups, migrant children and gender differences.

- Two main topics were highlighted: access and quality. Referring to access and inclusion, it was suggested Information Communication Technologies (ICT) could be used to close gaps of urban-rural divide, and also to improve learning. Regarding quality, it was suggested learning should be made into a separate goal.

- Teachers are the key to the post-2015 education agenda and, as such, should be well-supported, including in areas of ICT.

- National curricula are crucial and should recognise components of non-cognitive skills.¹

- Although education is going through a process of decentralisation, capacity building at the grassroots level continues to be important and requires greater attention.

- Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) should be linked to formal education systems as the basis for primary education, including 1 year of pre-primary schooling, and should be considered in education for the future.

¹ There is an on-going debate around the term ‘non-cognitive skills’. Alternative terms have been suggested, including ‘21st century skills’, ‘non-academic skills’, ‘higher-order skills’, ‘transversal skills’ and ‘transferable skills’. In the absence of an agreement on a different term, ‘non-cognitive skills’ will be used in this document to refer to skills that are non-academic and include communication skills, inter-personal skills, creative thinking, entrepreneurship and global/responsible citizenship skills.
Summary Reports of Outcomes of Preparatory Consultations by Representatives of NGOs, Teachers’ Unions and Youth

VSO International
- VSO conducted fifteen consultations in five countries targeted at disadvantaged groups including rural groups, migrant and refugee communities who often face difficulty in communications due to linguistic barriers.
- Three key priorities emerged from initial consultations:
  - Focus on inclusion – for all to be able to read and write, and for youth to gain employment skills.
  - Valuing teachers – An education agenda should focus on teachers as a key stakeholder to improve the quality of education. Learning of children is most important, starting with ECCE.
  - Right to education – rights-based framework for the disadvantaged groups. Students, parents and all other relevant stakeholders need to know and realise rights.
- VSO also made a compelling video presentation (available online at http://youtu.be/S76Kxh7tEKw) documenting the preparatory consultation process in action, at grassroots level.

World Vision International (Youth Representative)

Access:
- Insufficient policies and finances to help disadvantaged children access education.
- Distinct lack of educational counselling in many communities; which especially affects those who are not in schools.

Quality:
- Lack of relevance of what is taught; what is learnt in school is not easily applied and used in real life.
- Learning standards between rural and urban areas are not consistent.

Inclusiveness:
- Schools do not sufficiently consider the views of parents and communities.
- All stakeholders need to come together to work towards developing education.
World Vision International (Official Representative)

- World Vision’s work has focused on improving children’s participation and learning outcomes. Partnerships have been established with SIL International to promote multi-lingual education, and Save the Children globally.
- Consultations took place in eighteen countries and two main areas of focus emerged: 1) the professionalization of teachers, and 2) resource material contextualisation, in partnership with other organisations.
- Regarding sustainability, there is a greater need to mobilise the community in order that they support education processes and take ownership.

ASPBAE

- ASPBAE is a regional umbrella membership-based organisation composed of practitioners and national education legislators.
- Both learners’ and teachers’ rights should be ensured.
- When talking about quality multi-lingual education must be included, as well as non-cognitive skills.
- Teachers need to be at the centre of recommendations and used to restore integrity to the teaching profession.
- Substantial investment in education is required, this does not only mean in terms of financing, but also political and civil society support in areas of policy, planning, implementation and management.

ATD Fourth World

- Humiliation and discrimination at schools affects students’ confidence and their ability to learn effectively.
- There are unforeseen costs in education, even though it is meant to be ‘free’.
- Scholarships should be awarded to children regardless of locality and learning ability.
- Extreme poverty has a mutilating effect on education as it takes a toll on children’s ability to learn.

Youth Representative from Sri Lanka

- Thematic discussions & consultations with youth took place based on their needs in Sri Lanka regarding education beyond 2015.
- A ‘National Youth Action Plan for Education’ will be produced after the consultation.
- Education and employment are the most important factors for young people.
- Education needs to be student-centred and designed to empower youth.
- Soft skills and competencies should be taught from primary level.
• A key priority should be decentralising decision making to committees, composed of multiple and relevant stakeholders.

**Council of Pacific Education**
• Students and teachers are in difficult situations around the Asia-Pacific; education gives people a chance to escape the vicious cycle of poverty through education.
• Many students are not learning, therefore the question was raised: what are we doing to improve the quality of teachers?
• A further question was put to participants regarding how to connect curricula to real life needs.
• Discussion should look through the eyes of children and align an education agenda to their needs.

**Education International (EI)**
• The right to education should be at the core of an education framework.
• EI is against the privatisation and commercialisation of education.
• Teachers are often blamed for the lack of learning outcomes, but this is not a fair accusation, as education is multi-dimensional and a holistic approach should be taken.
• Currently, too much attention is focused on the narrow activity of testing literacy and numeracy, there needs to be a wider approach to education.

**National Campaign for Education (NCE Nepal)**
• Preparatory consultations brought together many stakeholders including; teachers, youth, Dalit’, Muslims and minority populations.
• Mapping of out-of-school children remains an issue to be worked on and resolved.
• Parents are taking children out of school; they deem the knowledge and skills learnt in schools to be irrelevant.
• Access and gender parity have improved, but there are still marginalised children in Nepal.

**NGO Education Partnership (NEP Cambodia)**
• There is a need to increase the number of teachers who use learner-centred instruction and are able to deal with students from various backgrounds with different learning difficulties, regardless of location.
• There is also a need to provide official recognition of non-formal education learning levels.
• The private sector should be involved in non-formal education to provide greater variety of programmes.

**Plan International**

• Eleven countries were involved in the preparatory consultation process, with focus on ECCE and community-based learning.
• Growth, plurality and inequity are all features of education in the Asia-Pacific region.
• Regarding ECCE, there is an overall need to increase the role of parents and specifically improve support to parents for at-risk children.
• When investing in ECCE, systematic career development for teachers is crucial.
• Policy support and public investment is needed to implement ECCE effectively.
• Economic growth should translate into improved services for ECCES.

**Right to Education Forum**

• Many children are still not benefitting from the formal education system.
• At the same time, people cannot rely on the private sector to fulfil the responsibilities of the state, thus there should be improved mechanisms of accountability to ensure all service providers are held to account.
• It is not just a question about retention, but also completion of schooling.
• Of one point two million teachers – not all are contractual, many require teacher training.
• In India, high dropout rates are a problem, with only 16% qualifying for higher education.
• Pupil-teacher ratios need to be addressed; it is not uncommon for two teachers to often be teaching more than one hundred children.
• Students have different profiles; education therefore should address children who come from diverse backgrounds.

**Save the Children**

• Has undertaken a global consultation, including its Asia-Pacific representatives.
• Their publication has been produced based on their findings – focused on learning and equity.
• Indicators for targets can potentially include: the gap between learning outcomes of richest and poorest quintiles, completion rates, etc.
SIL International

- Many people study in a language they do not understand. They are therefore disadvantaged and unable to access appropriate education.
- It was highlighted that of the two thousand three hundred languages in Asia only one hundred are used as the medium of instruction in schools.
- It was also noted that Japan and Korea do not have a problem with language in schools, but other countries face challenges in language policies in education.

Summary report of process and position paper on post 2015 in South Asia

Two key highlights were:

- Children should not suffer as one agenda moves over to the next.
- Children have multiple identities; therefore we need to provide holistic solutions.
Thematic Overview and Priority Areas
The following discussion points and priority areas identified across the four thematic groups represent the organic views and opinions of participants at the consultation. These have then been formalised by the drafting committee within the official outcome document.

Theme 1 – Equitable and Inclusive Access to and Participation in Learning
Introduction
Significant progress towards universal enrolment at the primary level has been made across the region in the past decade and many countries have either reached or are close to reaching EFA goal 2 and MDG 2. However, there are still significant disparities between and within countries. In some, the expansion of access to primary education remains a priority due to the large number of out-of-school children. Disparities in enrolment are mostly due to inequities based on gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity, language, and location. In addition, interventions in many developing countries in the region still place more emphasis on increasing initial access and participation rather than on retention and progress through the school system.

At the same time, progress towards EFA Goal 2 in the region has pointed to a shift in priorities. Countries which are close to achieving universal primary education are now shifting their focus towards remaining ‘unreached’ or ‘marginalised’ groups. Moreover, attention is now focused on expanding access to lower and upper secondary education. Many countries are aiming for universal basic education, expanding the coverage of compulsory education to include lower secondary level and, increasingly, upper secondary education. Countries also face an increased demand for secondary and higher levels of education, as well as greater access to pre-primary education. Accounting for this context, equitable and increased access to, as well as participation in education remains a pressing issue in the region.

Guidance Questions
Thematic group one discussed, debated, and prioritised areas for consideration by the regional thematic consultation drafting committee. The questions below formed suggested guidance for this session and were facilitated by regional thematic consultation organisers.

- What are the main obstacles to equitable access to quality basic education in your country or context?
- How can we ensure that children and youth complete at least basic education?
- How should equitable access to and participation in education for out-of-school youth and illiterate adults be improved?
What levels of education should the post-2015 development agenda focus on? Should it be expanded beyond the primary school level to become more holistic and comprehensive encompassing all levels (ECCE, basic, secondary and tertiary)?

What are the priority areas relating to equitable access to education (e.g. equity, access to all levels of education, through all delivery mechanisms, formal and non-formal education) which should be included in a post-2015 development agenda?

Discussion Overview
A wide ranging and multifaceted discussion took place covering the suggested guidance questions and addressed prevalent issues from a rights based perspective. Ensuring equitable, inclusive access and quality learning for all, at all levels, was reiterated throughout. Reaching marginalised children and mainstreaming access within systems featured prominently. Particular focus was placed on children living in poverty; those disadvantaged through disability or who require special needs, children discriminated due to gender blind approaches and those missed by formal education systems. Creating enabling conditions for the provision of free and compulsory primary education was emphasised as an important priority area. The importance of expanding alternative pathways to education and learning for children, who cannot access formal schooling due to a variety of reasons, was also highlighted.

Priority Areas
- Governments have an obligation to provide free and compulsory primary education.
- There is a need to think beyond primary education towards the provision of equitable access to all other levels of education (ECCE, primary, secondary, tertiary).
- Access to secondary and higher education is increasingly important for specialised skill development in the labour market, as well as development of local communities.
- Disadvantaged, discriminated and marginalised groups must be identified and incorporated within inclusive education systems.
- Education systems should go beyond an either/or situation. Multiple learning pathways, multiple entry points and re-entry points can help capture those that are missed by formal schooling, at all ages and at all levels.
- Early childhood learning is crucial in building strong foundations at an early age. These should be supported by effective and well thought policies to guarantee provisions.
- The role of parents and families is an important factor in early childhood learning and should be actively encouraged.
- Schools should be centres of learning or learning hubs within communities. In this context they should be resourced to provide learning to the community and create mutually beneficial relationships across sectors, such as health and social services.
Theme 2 – Quality of Learning

Introduction
EFA Goal 6 aims at improving all aspects of the quality of education and achieving measurable learning outcomes. Yet, traditional focus on the provision of education and training has tended to neglect the results of education in terms of effective and relevant learning. This recognition led to a shift in international discourse from an emphasis on ‘schooling’ to ‘learning’, from ‘completion of schooling’ to ‘acquisition of learning and learning outcomes’ and from ‘time-bound learning’ to ‘outcomes-based learning’. Quality education and learning should therefore be one of the core constructs for future development policy priorities. Another notable development has been the increasing recognition of ‘non-cognitive’, ‘transversal’ or ‘21st Century’ skills and competencies such as; critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, and learning to live together. These are important aspects of quality learning which strongly contribute to long-term academic success, social and emotional well-being of the individual, as well as economic development.

Quality is a complex concept that must be defined in relation to the context in which it is applied. Learning is understood as the focus of quality of education. The quality of an educational process is determined by a number of different factors, such as curricula, language of tuition, availability of qualified teachers, materials and learning conditions in school, at home and in society.

Guidance Questions
Thematic group two discussed, debated and prioritised areas for consideration by the regional thematic consultation drafting committee. The questions below formed suggested guidance for this session and were facilitated by regional thematic consultation organisers.

- What are the main obstacles to quality education and learning in your country or context?
- What are the building blocks of quality education and effective learning you think are most important and require further strengthening e.g. curricula, teachers, textbooks and assessment? How should they be improved?
- What specific actions should be taken to ensure quality teaching and learning for all? What specific measure should be taken for the most marginalised groups (girls/women, minorities, persons with disabilities, refugees/internally displaced persons)?
- What are the priority areas in quality education and learning (e.g. curricula, teacher training, pedagogical approaches, learning materials, ICT in education, etc.) which should be included in a post-2015 development agenda?
Discussion Overview
A rich and focused discussion took place covering the suggested guidance questions and highlighted the obstacles to quality learning, building blocks required, actions needed and priority areas to be taken forward regarding education in the post-2015 development agenda. The group emphasised the notable changes and differences that have taken place between the 20\textsuperscript{th} and 21\textsuperscript{st} Centuries, and recognised that putting students in the classroom is only the beginning, what they learn in school is most important. Discussions highlighted the importance of teachers and specifically how to improve learning through more effective teacher training and development. The importance of taking a holistic system wide approach was a recurrent theme and should be designed to encourage improved learning. This should not only be used to increase the number of individuals entering the labour market, but crucially as a form of liberation, providing individuals with essential lifelong skills. Discussions further emphasised the need for human rights to be recognised and realised, language policies to balance the demands of all stakeholders, new technologies to be used innovatively to support lifelong learning and adequate funding made available to realise the quality of education.

Priority Areas
- A system wide and holistic approach is required that considers a multitude of building blocks. Flexible systems are required to address different learning needs, contextualised for learners with diverse profiles, as well as local and global necessities. There is much disparity in teaching pedagogy as teachers still have hierarchical structures in their mind and lack holistic approaches.
- Focus on ECCE is fundamental; ignoring this can lead to future disparities. A holistic approach to early childhood development would serve future generations well.
- Teaching and teachers should be central to learning, teaching students to learn how to learn must be facilitated.
- There is a need to look deeper into teacher education and ensure that teacher training equips teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to improve learning. Teacher training institutes do not always recognise exactly what is important or what should be prioritised.
- Curricula development is crucial; this is also not always recognised by teacher training institutes. A key question is “what learning experiences do students need?”. Curricula should be developed based on this answer, potentially incorporating non-cognitive skills.
- Learning materials should be contextualised and relevant.
- Participatory and community based involvement should be maximised to improve management, monitoring and assessment of learning processes and outcomes. Parents and family should be encouraged to participate in their child’s future.
Theme 3 – Global Citizenship, Skills and Competencies for Life and Work

Introduction
Increasingly, governments are recognising the need to take a wider perspective on learning outcomes (beyond those measured by current learning assessment tests) such as skills, competencies, attitudes and values that are required for young people and adults to live in and be able to adapt to an interconnected and rapidly changing world. How life and development challenges faced by individuals and societies alike can be tackled will depend on the availability and level of skilled human resources equipped with not only content knowledge, but also generic skills and application competencies. Based on solid foundation skills learned in basic education, today’s learners are required to acquire further skills, including critical thinking, creative and problem solving skills, collaboration, media literacy, intercultural understanding and respect for diversity. In addition, increased attention is paid to the acquisition of broader life skills. There are great variations in the definition of life-skills, but in general they include psycho-social skills, income-generation skills, entrepreneurship and livelihood development, healthy behaviours and risk reduction for HIV prevention.

The role of education in preparing young people and adults for “global citizenship” has also taken on increased importance. This recognition is echoed in a number of recent initiatives, including the launch of the UN Secretary General’s Global Education First Initiative (GEFI) in 2012, which upholds fostering global citizenship as one of its three key priorities. Global citizenship education ultimately aims to prepare young people and adults to participate actively and responsibly in their communities and in the global sphere more generally. Skills, competencies, values and attitudes such as respect for cultural diversity, tolerance, empathy, communication, conflict resolution and environmental awareness are vital aspects of global citizenship and as such, should be valued additions in a post-2015 development agenda.

Guidance Questions
Thematic group three discussed, debated and prioritised areas for consideration by the regional thematic consultation drafting committee. The questions below formed suggested guidance for this session and were facilitated by regional thematic consultation organisers.

- What are the key challenges in your context or country in relation to skills training for young men and women?
- What skills and competencies do you think young people and adults need to acquire more in order to cope with the future challenges in their life and work?
• How can education and training systems be strengthened in order to take into account the current and emerging challenges, such as technological advances, globalisation, sustainable livelihoods as well as changes in the demand for skills and jobs?
• In what ways can education concretely prepare young people and adults for global citizenship?
• What are the priority areas relating to skills and competencies for life and work (e.g. generic skills, vocational skills, life skills, transversal skills, global citizenship) which should be included in a post-2015 development agenda?

Discussion Overview
Detailed and vibrant discussions took place between participants covering the range of topics, outlined in guidance questions. Debate included the context of emerging and strengthening knowledge-based economies, where primary and even lower secondary school graduates are not well prepared to cope with the changing economic and social development trends. Views were exchanged on the need for continued learning and acquisition of transversal competencies and appropriate specialised skills through various learning opportunities. Rapid changes taking place in an increasingly globalised world, with interdependent economies and education systems were acknowledged, and these require facilitation through innovative pathways between education streams and transitions between education and work. The group also recognised the importance and value of 21st Century skills, including the use of ICT in a globalised world.

Priority Areas
• Individuals must be able to move between systems of formal and non-formal education, between schools and work, or vice versa. The importance of a system that enables these forms of transition is crucial.
• Provisions should not only be made for general, technical and vocational skills, but also non-cognitive skills through formal or non-formal channels.
• The importance of global citizenship should not be understated with respect to education in the post-2015 development agenda. This is a valued component of learning, which enables children, young people and adults alike to be active and responsible citizens in an increasingly globalised world.
• Global values and attitudes should be recognised within responsible and global citizenship, such as embracing diversity, non-discrimination, empathy, communication, conflict resolution and environmental awareness.
• Broader life skills (psycho-social, entrepreneurial and healthy behavioural skills, etc.) should be promoted alongside traditional values and knowledge.
• Policy makers must be mindful of the issues that contribute to regional youth unemployment and significant adult under-employment. Policies must equip young people and adults with necessary skills and competencies for work and life.

Theme 4 – Governance, Financing and Partnership/Cooperation

Introduction
Education has been at the forefront of wider public sector reform debates, and includes aspects of governance, financing and partnerships. Much of the discussion has centred on establishing more transparent, accountable and participatory systems for delivering services, incorporating more effective approaches towards management, financing and cooperation in education. Education governance is concerned with the way policies are negotiated, decisions made, priorities defined, programmes implemented and progress monitored. Governance is also linked to resource planning and allocation, as well as the purpose and how partners coordinate to achieve education policy. Good governance is necessary to strengthen participatory and accountable education systems, to reduce inequalities in access to education and quality of learning, in addition to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of policy implementation. Most governance reform policies and initiatives are developed based on the conviction that moving decision-making away from central government and closer to where services are delivered will lead to changes in incentive structures. This in turn should make education services more responsive to the needs of the communities they serve.

Guidance Questions
Thematic group four discussed, debated and prioritised areas for consideration by the regional thematic consultation drafting committee. The questions below formed suggested guidance for this session and were facilitated by regional thematic consultation organisers.

• What are the main challenges in terms of financing of education (i.e. allocation and use of financial resources) in your context or country?
• Which measures of governance have proved to be effective in your context or country? Which should be strengthened?
• How can public-private partnerships or state-non-state partnerships be strengthened to support education development?
• What are the priority areas relating to governance, financing and partnerships which should be addressed in the post-2015 development agenda?
Discussion Overview
Complex and thorough discussions took place covering the suggested guidance questions. Group participants discussed the challenge that no single policy, or panacea, exists for good governance. Each country should therefore develop its own education reforms and strategies; appropriate to national and local contexts. These should be undertaken through inclusive and participatory approaches that specifically address the traditionally ‘hard to reach’ and disadvantaged in society. Participants further shared their wealth of regional experience on how education policymakers and practitioners can further address global changes and challenges. Issues of budget allocations, financial decentralisation, school management choices and the integration of education planning with wider socio-economic development strategies in education policy were debated. Participants explored the role of non-state actors in the delivery and financing of education services, the responsibility of state institutions to do better with the resources they are given, and the use of public-private partnerships to support and complement formal state approaches to education improvement. The importance of accountability, transparency and inclusive processes were reiterated throughout.

Priority Areas
- The primary obligation to provide education remains with governments and this is non-negotiable.
- Governance is a cross cutting issue and essential to produce transparent and accountable education systems. This has significant implications in addressing education challenges, while improving the effectiveness of policy implications.
- Decentralised mechanisms for independent verification of government data and grievance redress systems are critical for accountability and transparency.
- Accountability frameworks are required at all levels (from schools to central ministries), incorporating citizen participation in areas of planning and monitoring.
- Alternative stakeholders (private foundations and communities) should form partnerships to complement the delivery of education with governments. The partnerships should align to national priorities and policies.
- Institutionalised formal mechanisms of governance should be established and structured to ensure effective accountability, transparency and inclusiveness within education systems from national to local levels.
- Legal arrangements and ethical standards should be established and aligned with international norms and practices. Clear and progressive domestic investment targets should be identified to support these arrangements.
- The post-2015 development agenda should indicate a fixed percentage of financial revenue as a benchmark for governments to achieve. International aid commitments should be honoured.
• Innovative sources of funding should be encouraged to support government provision of education, incorporating not-for-profit education services and private-public partnerships within integrated systems.
Overview of Education in the Post-2015 Development Agenda

The penultimate session of the regional thematic consultation introduced participants to the potential structure and framework within which education may be positioned in a post-2015 development agenda. It provided an opportunity for more abstract and visionary debate in order to address a further 10 – 15 years of strategic thinking, goals and targets. As such participants were encouraged to think creatively, go beyond thematic areas previously discussed and consider how the Asia-Pacific context can be best represented alongside others. Below are the salient points raised by participants for further consideration.

- Post-2015 will be a new era, this brings with it a variety of challenges and therefore education will need to respond to these challenges in different, creative, but still relevant ways. Education must feature prominently in a post-2015 development agenda.
- Thematic discussions have captured a transformative and inclusive approach towards education; this reflects the regions need to respond to new and old challenges alike.
- Despite a desire to address needs universally, efforts should remain focused on the hard to reach, disadvantaged, marginalised, and socially excluded.
- Previous discussions have identified many synergies between themes; challenges can therefore be tackled through holistic, sector-wide and systematic approaches.
- In a constantly changing region, increased migration has specifically created more barriers to education. The role of regional entities, such as ASEAN, should be explored regarding responsibility in making progress on cross-border issues and collaboration (bi-lateral and multi-lateral discussions and initiatives).
- MDGs have traditionally focused too much on what the international community can do for others, but not enough on what youth can do for themselves. Both global and local citizenship needs to empower youth to face their future.
- Education in the future development agenda must be fully participatory and stated explicitly. Previously EFA goals stipulated citizenship, but MDGs did not. The new agenda must also recognise full participation of all stakeholders including CSOs, NGOs, and youth.
- Goals should be applicable and relevant to all countries, such as global citizenship, values and quality. Targets, however, can be differentiated for countries based on their specific context.
- Accountability, transparency and efficacy must be incorporated throughout education systems to institutionalise best practice and ultimately improve education outcomes.
The Asia-Pacific is characterised by regionally specific issues; it is the most rapidly growing region economically, yet still has the most number of illiterate people in the world. Regional growth is unequal and this in turn undermines equity. Climate change and natural disasters have had an increased effect. Furthermore, the region is characterised by significant gender disparity, massive youth bulges and aging populations. This range of complex factors suggests a universal post-2015 development agenda must be truly comprehensive, yet flexible enough to accommodate diverse global and regional challenges.

An education specific agenda should converge with all education goals in the post-2015 development agenda. These should be guided by principles of equity, human rights and sustainable development. Quality learning for all should be an overarching, universal goal. Disparity reduction must be monitored and aligned with suitable targets.
Outcomes and Recommendations – Outcome Document

A vital component of the regional thematic consultation was the development of the outcome document below. Due to the dedicated efforts of organisers, participants and drafting committee members, the diverse contexts, views and opinions of participants have been captured in this representative and consultative document. This Asia-Pacific outcome document will be taken forward to the Global Meeting of the Thematic Consultation on Education in the Post-2015 Development Agenda, Dhaka, Senegal on 18 – 19 March, 2013 to provide a platform from which the Asia-Pacific voice can be heard. The outcomes and recommendations will also feed into further discussions within the UN towards developing the possible contours of the post-2015 development agenda.

The following document was agreed by participants on the second day of the regional thematic consultation, 01 March, 2013.

Education in the Post-2015 Development Agenda
Regional Thematic Consultation in the Asia-Pacific

28 February and 1 March 2013, Bangkok, Thailand

OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

BACKGROUND

This regional thematic consultation on education in the post-2015 development agenda (referred to as “the Consultation” thereafter), held on 28th February – 1st March 2013 in Bangkok, Thailand, was co-organized by UNESCO Bangkok (Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education), the UNICEF Regional Office for East Asia and the Pacific (EAPRO), and the UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA) in partnership with civil society organizations. It brought together over 120 stakeholders from the Asia-Pacific region, including representatives from governments, non-governmental organizations (international, regional, national and local), universities and academia, teachers’ unions, organizations representing persons with disabilities, and youth organizations.

This Consultation was convened to develop a collective voice from the region regarding education priorities for a post-2015 development agenda and, as an immediate result, to contribute to the debate of the global thematic consultation on education taking place in Dakar, Senegal in March 2013. The outcomes and recommendations of the Consultation will also feed into further discussions within the UN towards developing the possible contours of the post-2015 development agenda.
CONTEXT

The importance of the regional inputs from the Asia-Pacific region is to be seen against the backdrop of its great diversity and the large size of its population. These two aspects alone illustrate the development challenges and opportunities this region represents.

The Asia-Pacific is also characterized by rapid and dynamic economic growth, a growing number of middle income countries, innovation and technological advances. However, these overall economic trends belie vast disparities between and within countries and economic growth has not necessarily resulted in equivalent increases in living standards in all countries. Trends show that these gaps are widening, rather than narrowing, and are compounded by a diversity of challenges such as demographic change with huge youth bulges in some contexts and a rapidly aging population in others, increased labour mobility and migration, environmental degradation and natural disasters and continuing presence of conflicts in parts of the region.

As concerns education, remarkable progress has been made in improving access across all levels of education. However, there are persistent disparities among and within countries including access to schooling, equity and quality of education and levels of learning achievement. In particular, considerable progress has been made to improve youth and adult literacy, but is still inadequate to meet needs in Asia-Pacific countries. Indeed, the Asia-Pacific contains the largest number of illiterate adults of any region in the world. Concomitantly, most countries have now also become increasingly concerned with improving the quality of education, increasing access to post-basic education and to skills development.

VISION AND PRINCIPLES

The Consultation reaffirmed that education is a basic human right for every person, a public good for all societies, an essential condition for human fulfilment, sustainable development, peace and democracy, and an important vehicle for global citizenship.

The Consultation recognized that the Education for All (EFA) goals and the education-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are yet to be achieved in many countries. At the same time, the depth and scope of how education is linked to a post-2015 development agenda need to go beyond current goals. In this view, the emphasis of education policy and reform needs to go beyond the provision of academic knowledge and skills often confined to economic growth, to promote education’s central role in forging more just, peaceful, democratic, tolerant, resilient, transformative and inclusive societies and in providing people with the understanding, competencies and values they need to resolve many challenges that our societies and economies are facing.

The Consultation acknowledged the outcomes of the two Asia-Pacific regional high-level expert meetings on the future of education and learning in May and November 2012 respectively which recommended a new, fresh and comprehensive look at education, with learning restored as the core concern in all aspects of education. It also acknowledged the outcomes of the “13th Regional Meeting of National EFA Coordinators: The Big Push” held on 26-27 February 2013 and
other research findings which testify to the need to rethink and reorient education towards a stronger emphasis on quality learning for all.

The Consultation **acknowledged** that many changes have occurred in the “state of the world” since the advent of both the EFA goals and the MDGs – each with a clear impact for education. In the Asia-Pacific region, the main considerations are its rapid socio-economic development, widening disparities, demographic changes and environmental challenges as detailed above. These changes require that sustainable development, broadly defined to cover social, economic, environmental, and cultural issues, should be upheld more than ever as a key principle in promoting inclusive and equitable societies in the future.

The Consultation **highlighted** that the root causes of disparities, not only in terms of access to quality education but also of learning outcomes, should be seriously addressed and need to feature prominently across all education-related goals, targets and indicators in the future development agenda. The eventual aim is to eradicate all forms of exclusion, marginalization and discrimination in education, based on differences in age, gender, wealth, ethnicity, caste, nationality, religion, language, displacement, geographical location, disability, culture, citizenship status, socio-economic background and health conditions. In this view, it was recommended that disparity reduction targets should be included in any post-2015 development agenda.

The Consultation **asserted** the obligation of governments to ensure equitable learning opportunities for all, at least at the basic education level, and underlined the importance of genuine partnerships - between government and various stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector, parents, school administrators, teachers, children, young people, organizations representing marginalized groups including persons with disabilities and the wider community - around national education policies and priorities, with a clear definition and understanding of respective roles and responsibilities.

The Consultation **underscored** the need for clear, concise and measurable targets to ensure and monitor the achievement of equitable access to education, the quality of learning, values underlying global citizenship, skills needed for life and work, as well as progress in governance, financing and partnerships.

The Consultation **emphasized** that quality learning for all should be the unifying umbrella theme for national education policy reforms and the future global development agenda. Learning is a continuous process throughout all levels of education, from early childhood care and education to higher education to vocational training, and is acquired through various delivery modes, from a lifelong and “life-wide” learning perspective. In this view, lifelong learning should be considered a key, guiding principle in education.
RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the above, the Consultation made the following recommendations:

A. Equitable and Inclusive Access to and Participation in Learning

1. Equitable and inclusive access to quality learning should be ensured for all (children, youth and adults), at all levels of education according to country contexts and priorities. It is the obligation of governments to provide at least free and compulsory basic education for all. Attention should be paid to reaching gender equality in education and to mainstream children with special needs. Policies guaranteeing educational provision need to begin with early childhood care and education and go beyond primary schooling. Early childhood care and education plays a crucial role in building strong foundations for learning. Primary education provides the foundational skills for further learning such as literacy and numeracy. Post-primary education, at the crossroads of learning and life, is increasingly a minimum requirement for people’s empowerment for a decent life and work. Higher education is crucial not only for the formation of specialised skills and capacities required for knowledge economies, research and innovation, but also for the development of the communities in which they serve.

2. Those who missed formal schooling and lack foundational skills such as basic literacy and numeracy should be given special attention in the post-2015 development agenda. While there should be a strong effort to bring these groups back to school, alternative pathways to quality learning should be supported and recognized. Multiple learning pathways and multiple entry points and re-entry points at all ages and at all educational levels should be provided.

3. Building learning cities and communities is a dream within reach. Education reforms should aim to transform schools into learning hubs. This requires the education sector to engage and work with other sectors.

4. Education systems should reflect and welcome the diversity of the social fabric and aim to achieve social cohesion by doing so. Therefore, education systems should be able to cater to multiple needs and circumstances by promoting flexibility and respect for diversity so as to achieve minimum, essential core standards of quality and achievement and a maximum level of inclusiveness.

B. Quality of Learning

1. Key factors of quality learning are effectiveness and relevance, and quality learning must be an area of key emphasis in education beyond 2015.

2. Quality teachers are central to quality learning, right from the early childhood stage and onwards. Quality learning requires a professional, committed teaching force which is able to respond to diverse learning needs and is supported by
effective and safe learning environments and competent school leadership and is underpinned by pioneering findings of scientific research on learning. Safe and inclusive learning environments are of particular importance for girls and marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities. Appropriate systems and policies are needed concerning teacher pre- and in-service training, recruitment, certification, deployment, professional development, career advancement, accountability, remuneration, as well as their working environment and conditions of service.

3. Attention should also be paid to appropriate curricula and teaching/learning processes which enable the achievement of meaningful and relevant learning outcomes including ‘non-cognitive’\(^2\) skills and competencies.

4. The potential and innovative use of new technologies by teachers and students to support lifelong and “life-wide” learning should also be fully tapped, including improving learning of low performers.

5. The future education agenda should encourage a systems approach to quality learning, which involves reasoned consideration of all building blocks, not merely selected ones, and of learning in education policy reforms. The principle question in this endeavour is: “What do students deserve as a learning experience and what subjects should be taught to develop all-round personalities?” Improved learning requires a more holistic attention to sustainable development, cultural diversity, human rights education, gender equality, peace education, the use of the mother tongue in education, the learning of other languages including sign language, international languages, and traditional knowledge.

6. It also requires a proper participatory monitoring and assessment system that evaluates learning processes and outcomes. This includes current formative and summative forms of learning assessment. Ways to measure not only academic performance but also other outcomes such as critical thinking, innovation, flexibility cooperation, need to be developed. Increasingly, assessment should be for learning, not just of learning.

---

\(^2\) There is an on-going debate around the term ‘non-cognitive skills’. Alternative terms have been suggested, including ‘21st century skills’, ‘non-academic skills’, ‘higher-order skills’, ‘transversal skills’ and ‘transferable skills’. In the absence of an agreement on a different term, ‘non-cognitive skills’ will be used in this document to refer to skills that are non-academic and include communication skills, inter-personal skills, creative thinking, entrepreneurship and global/responsible citizenship skills.
C. Global Citizenship, Skills and Competencies for Life and Work

1. Responsible and global citizenship should become an important theme for education in the post-2015 development agenda. Education systems should enable all children, young people and adults to participate actively and responsibly in their communities and in the increasingly interconnected and globalizing world. Values and attitudes such as embracing diversity, non-discrimination, empathy, communication, conflict resolution, and environmental awareness are vital aspects of responsible and global citizenship.

2. The future increasingly requires that people acquire those skills and competencies required to be more creative and innovative, able to adapt to and assimilate change and able to continue learning. Those ‘non-cognitive’ skills are rarely measured by current assessments and examinations. Broader life skills should also be promoted, which in general include psycho-social skills, income-generation skills, entrepreneurship and sustainable livelihoods, and healthy behaviours and skills to prevent unwanted pregnancies and HIV. There is also an increasing need for traditional knowledge and skills.

3. The need for people (youth, adults, and especially women and persons with disabilities) to acquire relevant technical and vocational skills combined with necessary ‘non-cognitive’ skills for a decent life and work in a rapidly changing world should be fully reflected in the post-2015 development agenda.

4. Education systems should be revisited and reoriented to facilitate pathways between different education streams and the transition from school to work, and even from work to school, while allowing for the acquisition of an appropriate mix of generic and vocational skills.

D. Governance, Financing and Partnership/Cooperation

1. Governance is a cross-cutting theme for education and development beyond 2015. Responsible and participatory governance is required to strengthen transparent and accountable education systems; to reduce and eventually eliminate corruption, malpractice, and inequalities in access to quality learning; and to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of policy implementation.

2. Accountability frameworks need to be put in place at all levels, from school to the national level. Structured spaces for citizen participation, including that of youth, need to be created for planning, and monitoring in the education system as means for enhanced systemic transparency and accountability. Mechanisms for independent verification of government data and grievance redress mechanisms are critical.
3. The primary obligation to deliver education by governments is non-negotiable. However, partnerships with all stakeholders, including private foundations and communities are critical, and they will be most effective if their missions and work priorities are aligned with and contribute to government priorities.

4. Legal arrangements and ethical standards should be established to strengthen the commitments of governments and their implementation should be actualized in terms of allocating appropriate budget for education. To this end, the post-2015 development agenda should indicate a fixed percentage of fiscal revenue as a benchmark for governments to achieve. Clear and progressive targets for domestic investment in education, including early childhood care and education programmes, technical vocational education and training (TVET) and non-formal education, to meet the international benchmarks of 6 per cent of GNP should be set and its full utilisation ensured, while the development partners will endeavour to respect their previous commitment to deliver on the promise of 0.7 per cent of the GNP for official development aid (ODA). Innovative sources of financing which support the government provision of education should be sought. In addition, appropriate systemic reforms to ensure financial transparency and earmarked allocations for marginalized communities should be promoted.

5. Education reform and strategies in each country should be reflective of national and local contexts, aiming to reach out to all people, especially the disadvantaged. In this light, a sustained equitable share of the education budget should be allocated to the alternative education pathways catering to them. Any alternative provision of education should not compromise the quality of learning.

6. Partnerships should include all stakeholders who can contribute to the common goal of education for all. While partnerships for education are important, it is the primary obligation of governments to provide education as a basic right. Stronger regulatory frameworks for the private sector need to be put in place where private players are currently significant providers.

7. Meaningful participation of learners, communities, and civil society in education governance should go beyond intermittent consultation, and should be institutionalised in formal mechanisms from the national level down to the school level.
E. Possible scenarios and options on how to best articulate and position education in a post-2015 development agenda

1. Education should feature prominently in the post-2015 development agenda given its direct relevance to the achievement of all the other development goals.
2. There should be an education-specific agenda which should be in convergence with all education goals in the post-2015 development agenda.
3. The post-2015 development agenda on education should be guided by an overall vision and underlying principles of equity, human rights and importantly sustainable development. Quality learning for all should be an overarching, universally relevant goal, with possibility of flexible adaptation in terms of target setting at national and local levels. In order to ensure that education goals contribute to narrowing disparities within a country, it is crucial to set targets for – and systematically monitor - disparity reduction.
4. A sector-wide and holistic approach should be taken to develop education in the post-2015 education framework.
5. Education should be linked to all other development challenges, such as education and governance, education and economic/industrial development, education and innovation, and education and culture.
6. Country situations will change and evolve, and the post-2015 development framework needs to be flexible enough to adapt to the changes, including the possible advent of conflict or natural disaster.
7. The goal for education in the post-2015 development agenda could embrace the key aspects encapsulated in the discussions of the Consultation and stated as follows: ‘To guarantee equitable opportunities for all to participate in transformative quality learning at all levels aiming to provide the knowledge, skills, competencies and values vital to achieve inclusive and sustainable development’.
**Concluding Remarks**

The Regional Thematic Consultation on Education in the Post-2015 Development Agenda has been a significant meeting which brought together diverse and representative participants from across the Asia-Pacific region. Participants have discussed and considered the multitude of education challenges facing the region and formulated outcomes/recommendations relevant to not only the Asia-Pacific, but also a changing world. Despite the variety of contexts and different challenges represented across the region, it is a remarkable feat that common ground has been found on key issues. It is also important to recognise the significance the region places on education and although differences of opinions will always exist, this consultation has provided a unique opportunity to collect diverse views, identify commonalities and represent them on the global stage.

Crucially, this consultation has put forward an Asia-Pacific perspective of education in the post-2015 development agenda. This is the culmination of the collective intelligence of participants, and those they represent, which will feed into the Global Thematic Consultation on Education in the Post-2015 Development Agenda in Dhaka, as well as wider post-2015 debates. Organisations and individual representatives from across civil society, including youth, marginalised, disadvantaged and socially excluded voices have been given a platform to express their views in this consultation. The consultation has followed a genuine, structured consultative process, which has not only engaged representatives at the consultation in Bangkok, but importantly reached voices from local communities and regional networks through preparatory consultations. Throughout all stages participants were encouraged to have these contributions at the forefront of their minds, in order to formulate the most relevant and effective outcomes/recommendations.

Beyond the formal outcomes and direct impact of the consultation, it is also important to understand the indirect consequences of what has been achieved. Through this collaborative and consultative process, the overall debate has been enriched and advanced. Discussions have been initiated and thought processes ignited across a range of sectors, involving a variety of stakeholders and at many different levels. Awareness has been raised on the key education issues in a post-2015 context, but significantly, expectations have also been raised. In the lead up to 2015, decision makers now have a responsibility to recognise and incorporate the education outcomes of the region into a post-2015 development agenda.

As a final thought and without re-stating the detailed findings from this report, it is worth reiterating the starting point of the region which suggested an overall goal for education in the post-2015 development agenda:
“To guarantee equitable opportunities for all to participate in transformative quality learning at all levels aiming to provide the knowledge, skills, competencies and values vital to achieve inclusive and sustainable development.”

Many thanks must go to the participants of this consultation for engaging the subject matter so enthusiastically and constructively, to the organisers and volunteers for facilitating such a successful event, and to those often unheard voices which we hope have been accurately represented over the two days of discussions.