



CASE STUDY

YOUTH-LED ACTION RESEARCH ON THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON MARGINALIZED YOUTH

“WE LEARN FROM MEETING PEOPLE. FACING ISSUES, PUSHING OUR AGENDA, LEARNING NEW CONCEPTS AND ENGAGING WITH COMMUNITIES, THAT IS WHY WE FEEL CONFIDENT IN OUR WORK,”

Bodio, young researcher from Mongolia.

“WE LEARNT THAT MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS ARE PSYCHOSOCIAL, SO WE CAN CONTEXTUALIZE THE IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC BETTER. WE NOW KNOW HOW TO BETTER SUPPORT VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ABUSE AND FRIENDS WHO MIGHT EXPERIENCE MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES. WE LEARNT HOW TO RESPOND BUT NOT TO DIAGNOSE BECAUSE WE ARE NOT EXPERTS,”

Evi, young researcher from Indonesia.



The project 'Youth-led Action Research' (YAR) engaged youth in documenting the impact of the pandemic on the marginalized youth in the Asia and South-Pacific region, focusing specifically on mental health issues of the youth during the COVID-19 pandemic.



The aim was to develop capacities of youth in Asia and the South-Pacific to engage in action research, aimed at building the capacities of marginalized youth to lead and conduct research in their communities and generate perspectives on education programs and strategies for their benefit.



The YAR initiative was led by Asia South-Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE) and rolled out in collaboration with members in 9 countries across the region: India, Indonesia, Nepal, Mongolia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Timor Leste, Tajikistan and Vietnam.

THE COVID-19 CONTEXT

With any emergency, it is critical to reassess and implement new strategies in developing preparedness responses that provide people access to information and guide their decisions in protecting the health and well-being of themselves and their communities. The COVID-19 pandemic placed young people and youth-led organizations at the forefront as they tackled response challenges.

The Youth-led Action Research (YAR) initiative was successful in harnessing the potential of marginalized youths'

participation through meaningful ways. This included finding solutions and recommending actions that secured access to education and learning opportunities. The Asia Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education's (ASPBAE) project on the COVID-19 response resulted in powerful youth-led actions in multiple countries. ASPBAE coordinated the involvement of youth-oriented organizations and networks in leading and conducting research for the prevention, preparation, and response to future public health emergencies.

THE INTERVENTION

The ASPBAE consists of 264 civil society organizations, including 31 countries with individual members in the Asia Pacific region that support youth and promote their right to education. The Youth-led Action Research was undertaken to provide space for marginalized young people in diverse communities and to collectively share the impact of COVID-19 on their lives. To promote this effort, ASPBAE collaborated with 9 member countries and supported youth-led research work at a national level and local-level activities such as relief work, awareness camps, and psychosocial support. Due to the increased COVID-19 restrictions and mandated lockdowns, workshops and training were shifted to an online space, thus providing youth with access to knowledge and tools to conduct the youth-led action research remotely.

The youth-led initiative provided a platform for its members to mobilize and empower diverse youth groups to effectively communicate their right to quality and inclusive education. The YAR initiative encouraged youth participation and leadership in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals and other decision-making processes to impact education at the local, national, regional, and global levels.

The YAR initiative was youth-led and has provided a space for members to increase their skill set within the area of research and design. It has also created opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills such as developing data collection methods and analyses. YAR members, youth groups and organizations were readily available to lend their support through guidance and youth consultations.



Photo: Youth from Philippines meeting to conduct YAR study while also sharing a meal and providing peer psychosocial support. (Credit: ASPBAE (Asia South-Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education))

OUTCOME & RESULTS

As a result of the training and learning materials developed by ASPBAE and member organizations, young researchers confidently articulated their demands when engaging with government and community leaders. They engaged with stakeholders to implement their recommendations and encouraged national educational coalitions and NGOs to become inclusive to young voices within their organizations.

The YAR initiative provided resources and promoted participatory, intersectional, and youth-led approaches and processes in governance. By instilling the universal principle of Leave No One Behind, new perspectives of marginalized youth were supported to inform education policies and programs.

MEETING CHALLENGES

A main challenge faced by youth researchers was access to technology, which further isolated marginalized youth from engaging with their communities and member organizations. The initiative addressed this challenge by providing physical spaces with access to the internet and adequate digital infrastructure to accommodate groups to attend online training sessions. Even after the project, young people continued to use these spaces for

dialogue, to conduct regular meetings for their advocacy work, and to discuss strategies for community engagement among their peers.

Another challenge faced by the group during the pandemic was meeting their extended networks and stakeholders. But over time, they came up with innovative ways to overcome this and to maintain the necessary relationships with them.

KEY LESSONS

The importance of youth voices in policy intervention and state collaboration was an important takeaway from the practice. The youth had a unique opportunity to be trained in conducting research, while others were involved in youth-led evidence-based advocacy.

Another key takeaway of the YAR partners was collaboration with the youth institutions of local governments to develop programs to support girls and youth from marginalized communities. For example, YAR partners in India led discussions focusing on gender-based discrimination and the status of girls within the village. This further developed into meetings among all members of the village including families, teachers, and the local governing body.

Similarly, YAR's partner from Timor-Leste built strong relationships with

local and national-level authorities, presented their research findings and recommendations to the Ministry of Education, and requested them to integrate the recommendations into their programs.

Not least, to support young girls that leave their municipality due to marriage, partners in Nepal institutionalized youth-led work, creating constituencies across municipalities. Youth members had the opportunity to share their experiences with newcomers and could allow for ease of access to the youth-led spaces if they were to shift districts.

The practice has shown that if youth are involved in the governance of their communities, they will actively participate and create space for all types of groups to share, discuss and contribute to – including for women and elders.

For further information about this case study, you can contact the project team via email: aspbae@gmail.com

You can also find out more by visiting the organization's websites: [Asia South-Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education \(ASPBAE\)](http://Asia South-Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE))

Collective Service - For a Community-Led Response

The Collective Service, a strategic partnership between UNICEF, IFRC, and WHO, with the support of GOARN enables collaboration between a wide range of organizations to increase the scale and quality of community engagement approaches in public health emergencies and other crises. Find out more: <https://www.rcce-collective.net>

This document forms part of a collection of 7 case studies, and has been selected by the Youth Engagement Subgroup YES! of the Collective Service (UNICEF, WHO, IFRC, GOARN) as an initiative of UNICEF, UNAIDS, and the Collective Helpdesk with the support of UN WOMEN and the Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action, as part of an open call for good practices to document, analyze, and promote youth engagement and youth leadership across countries and regions.