

A road, less travelled...





A ROAD, LESS TRAVELLED...

'the story of gender mainstreaming in ASPBAE'

By
Lalita Ramdas

Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education

Copyright © 2004

Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE)

ASPBAE publications are an integral part of its activities to support, share and learn among practitioners, theoreticians and policy-makers. Therefore the reader is encouraged to use the materials contained herein for reproduction, adaptation and translation worldwide for non-profit educational activities and publications with due acknowledgement to ASPBAE. Your feedback on this publication is invited to help us improve these publications in the future.

For further information, please contact:

ASPBAE Secretariat

c/o MAAPL

9th Floor, Eucharistic Congress Building No. 3

5, Convent Street, Colaba

Mumbai - 400 039, India.

Tel : 91-22-2202 1391 / 2281 6853

Fax: 91-22-2283 2217

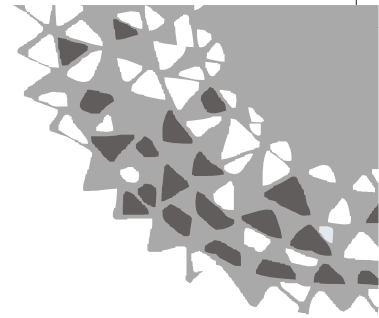
Email: aspbae@vsnl.com

A ROAD LESS TRAVELLED

'the story of gender mainstreaming in ASPBAE'

ISBN 81-278-0010-4

Printed at: Vijay Prints



PREFACE

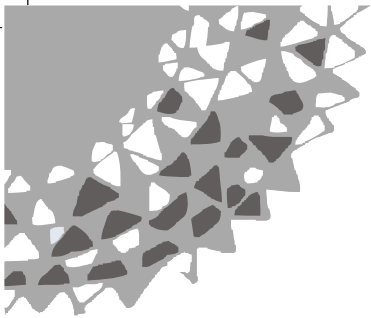
The 40th Anniversary Celebrations of ASPBAE is an opportune moment to document the journey we have travelled over the last forty years. It is also an opportune moment to felicitate those who have brought us to the present and ponder over the lessons learnt that point to the course we must take in the future. We are pleased to present "A Road, Less Travelled.....the story of Gender Mainstreaming in ASPBAE" on the occasion of the 40th Anniversary Celebrations of ASPBAE.

Authored by Lalita Ramdas, witness to and fellow traveler in the long road that ASPBAE has traversed; key player in influencing the processes as they unfolded, this book is an account of how women leaders came to be a significant part of the governance of ASPBAE and gender a central perspective underpinning both its policies and programmes.

Many who have become associated with ASPBAE in more recent years may be surprised to learn that the visibility that women and the issues of gender have in ASPBAE today is not what it had always been. Bringing women into key leadership positions; ensuring better representation of women in decision making; a dedicated thematic programme on education for the empowerment of women and women's leadership building; constituting the Gender Steering Committee to guide and oversee the integration of gender into all policies and programmes of ASPBAE - had all come out of a process of struggle, of negotiating spaces and of sustained effort in keeping on course.

This book records the efforts of a regional organization in mainstreaming gender in its over-all mission and functioning, the external influences that facilitated this process, the debates within various ASPBAE internal forums and platforms where women - and men - advocated for a greater attention to women's issues and argued for institutionalized spaces to represent their perspectives.

Much more needs to be done to deepen our understanding of the process of gender mainstreaming in ASPBAE, to evaluate how "gendered" ASPBAE really is. How deeply are gender perspectives integrated within ASPBAE's thematic programmes and strategic interventions? How has ASPBAE's experience of gender mainstreaming integrated within the experiences of its members? The shift to gender consciousness



is subtle and complex. Spearheaded by ASPBAE's Gender Steering Committee, this book is the first step in documenting the gender mainstreaming process in ASPBAE so valuable lessons will not be lost and the institutional memory strengthened.

Our deepest appreciation to Lalita Ramdas for writing this book despite personal odds. Her deep commitment to gender and equity is the backbone of this effort and an inspiration to many. Our thanks also to Nani Zulminarni, Shaheen Attiqur Rehman, Gordon Ng, Junko Kuninobu, Usa Duongsaa - members of the ASPBAE Gender Steering Committee 2001-2004, for their guidance and support.

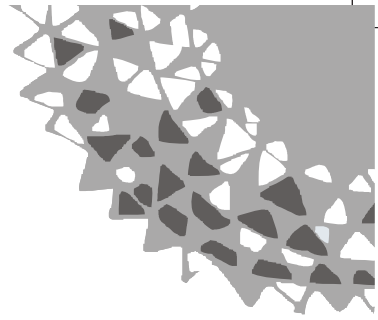
We are especially indebted to the men and women of ASPBAE interviewed for this book: they have played pivotal roles in institutionalizing gender mainstreaming processes within ASPBAE's. We are grateful to them for their stories, their personal accounts of and insights on the events and processes that shaped ASPBAE's gender mainstreaming course. There are many others whose personal stories have not been reflected here - Bess Cruzada, WMK Wijetunga, Om Srivastava, to name a few - we remember them too, and we acknowledge them in our daily persistence to continue what they had began.

And we laud them on this, our 40th anniversary.

Maria Lourdes Almazan - Khan
ASPBAE Secretary General

Nasreen S. Mohammed
ASPBAE Programme Officer

December 2004
Mumbai

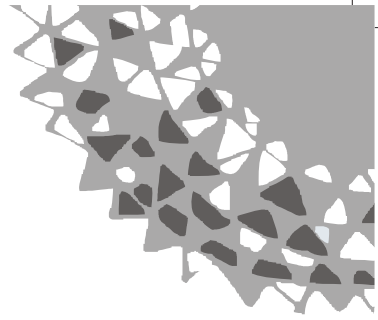


Dedicated to.....

My mother, Dhanam, age 90, who continues to struggle
with issues of gender and equity and who has been
my best teacher in the fight for gender justice.

....Lalita Ramdas





Contents

Prologue

I.	Telling the story-tracing the route	1 - 25
II.	Pushing ahead the spaces and processes	27 - 36
III.	Walking the talk	37 - 51
IV.	Staying the course	53 - 62

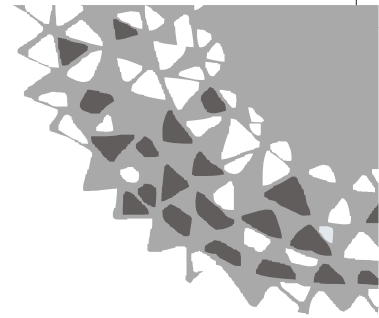
Epilogue

Appendices

Milestones

Persons Interviewed





PROLOGUE

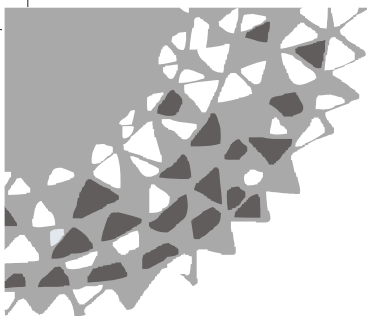
It all began in Sydney, Australia in 1964 - a few people decided to walk together in a new direction, daring to strike out from time honoured pathways and familiar territory into the vast unknown and uncharted territory of adult education. They were putting in place the starting blocks for a kind of educational Olympiad, which would be routed across hamlets and cities in Asia. In the early days of this Bureau, it was the men who took the lead and the women struggled to follow. Then Nairobi happened, and Tagatay, and then Beijing and Darwin, and ASPBAE women found that their feet were no longer bound, that their wings were not clipped. So they took wing and began to fly. Magically they found their way through the forests of illiteracy, climbed the mountains of prejudice and tradition, forded the treacherous streams of ignorance, found their way to Beijing and faced the challenges of the Great Wall of Gender Mainstreaming. The journey is long and winding. It has had its ups and down as we move from Chiang Mai to Ulan Batar, from Bali to Jog Jakarta.

As with any journey - there were unanticipated roadblocks which prevented us from exploring all the byways and little known destinations across ASPBAE, where many colleagues were working against all odds to bring gender centre stage. Given the unique nature of ASPBAE with its complexity of language, culture and communications, our present narrative is thin on experiences from many regions and sub-regions - especially from East Asia and the Pacific.

Inevitably resources did not permit travel, and responses to long distance requests over cyber space, are never really a satisfactory substitute. A future study will have to highlight those stories and case studies and serve to flesh out the nuances and diversity of approaches.

For the present and before we embark on our exploration, a few words to acknowledge the special role played by so many who have helped in making this journey possible.....

- v ASPBAE Executive, the Gender Steering Committee and Maria Khan for believing in the idea and in my ability to 'deliver'!

- 
- ∇ The eager beavers, the navigators and the pioneers who generously spent time recalling how the story happened.....
 - ∇ The ASPBAE Secretariat team - Mumbai. Nasreen - for staying the course; Avelinah for her cheery presence; Santosh for endless cups of his special coffee; and Swati for the special magic which only youth can bring in such abundance....
 - ∇ The Alibag back-up team - Trupti and Manasi for transcribing tapes and patiently digging out vignettes from the past; and Ramu who was on call to help out this technologically challenged woman every time the computer blinked or journeys had to be made into the city.
 - ∇ I must mention the editor, Sudha, and the design and printing team who have worked cheerfully 'under the gun' and met impossible deadlines.
 - ∇ Above all to that community of learners, women in particular, who are still grappling with the challenges of what these terms and concepts - GENDER - MAINSTREAMING - EQUITY actually mean in their day to day realities.....

As we trace the contours of this gender map, we discover new horizons and become stronger in the knowledge that roads will be created when many of us walk together in the same direction.

"I think if I were ever asked to recall a good example of gender mainstreaming it is ASPBAE."
- Suneeta Dhar

Putting this story together has been a challenging and

fulfilling exercise. It has been an uphill task to trace the route. There

are signposts, a sequential and ordered set of documents which provide clues to the journey undertaken by ASPBAE. The milestones through the journey of forty years of adult education have been highlighted. The details of the journey have been described, the ups and downs, the meanderings in priorities, the inclusion of women navigators and women drivers, the clearing of policy road blocks, the blind turns ahead in tackling new problems, the negotiation of hairpin bends of differing opinions, the changing of priorities according to fresh challenges, and finally the waving of the chequered flag at ASPBAE's achievements as we complete forty laps of a track that stretches into an exciting future.

Along this journey, there were several high points and plateaus where varied influences impacted on the original set of goals and manifesto. A part of our story looks at these influences and factors which have enabled this organization to develop resilience and flexibility to build new strengths and have contributed to its ability to transform itself into a forward thinking and intellectually agile organization.

This is a story of the remarkable contributions by individuals who have interacted and touched the very fundamentals of ASPBAE. These individuals are the pathbreakers who were instrumental in setting up the Women's

Programme in ASPBAE and mainstreaming gender at several levels within the organization. The story unfolds itself through personal accounts and

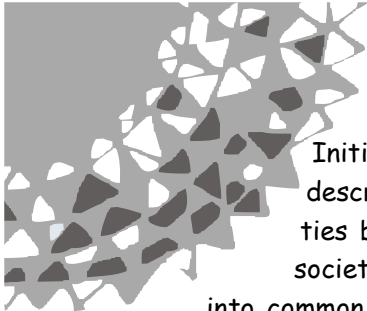
interviews, and documentary material to bring home to the reader an

account of how one organization in the Asia South Pacific has managed to prioritize gender on its agenda, and has continued its efforts to mainstream gender through policy directives at several levels.

"The gender mainstreaming path ASPBAE has undertaken is unique in the sense that it reflects the intertwining of the agendas of the women and men leaders through time. Coming from different but related fields of rural development, literacy work, women's education, trade unions, these leaders brought their own experiences and competencies in shaping the shifts in ASPBAE's route in the last forty years".
- Carol Anonuevo

'Gender Mainstreaming' has become a popular buzzword in both Government and Non Government circles. What does it mean to have a gender perspective?

"A gender perspective means recognizing that women stand at the crossroads between production and reproduction, between economic activity and the care of human beings, and therefore between economic growth and human development. They are those most sensitive to the need for better integration between the two."
- Dawn



Initially, the word 'gender' to describe the structural inequities between male and female in society, had probably not come

into common usage even among feminists. It is useful to remember that it was not only men who were so-called 'gender blind'. The condition was common to many institutions, NGOs included, and was a reflection of the times as much as anything else.

The objective of this exercise is not merely to record the story as an academic exercise, but to provide a living account of a process that is both challenging and complex.

Through this, many of us who have been associated with ASPBAE over several decades, hope to draw out the emerging issues and questions to formulate a vision and plan for the future. It is hoped that this document will not remain a historical review but a document to which many will refer in order to understand problems and possibilities in the ongoing search for Gender Equality, Equity and Justice.

In the quest for benchmarks it is all too easy to fall back on econometrics, technological design and theoretical framework. However, the bottom line is to be able to find a non-threatening, user-friendly template by which small groups tucked away in remote areas and in difficult terrain, without access to computers and matrices, can evolve ways in which to measure whether men and women in their community have been able to negotiate greater equality and justice in their relationships.

This story is telling. It is a story about how people with a vision demonstrated that it is possible to build a solid and sound ideological and theoretical framework for gender mainstreaming. This framework is difficult to dislodge because it has been developed and

nurtured through strong participatory practices which are central to adult education methodology and pedagogy.

As its name suggests, ASPBAE is in essence an organization dedicated to adult learning, and represents a unique, diverse and rich amalgam of people, languages, cultures and religions. Given this vast sea of diversity across geographic and other borders, it is only to be expected that attitudes to and positions on women, and therefore on 'gender', will mean different things to different people.

The leadership within this movement over the years has grappled with the basic question:

How can we move towards a future in which the goals of our work with Women and Gender can start meaning the same thing to more and more of us?

This is the vision and challenge before past and future generations within this organization. We will discuss how we have tried to walk this road.



On the way to school! Girl students in Alibag, India

The Road Ahead

Without Vision We Die

"A vision without action is called a daydream, but then again, action without vision is called a nightmare"

- Jim Sorensen

What was the vision with which ASPBAE was created and how did this vision metamorphose into what it is today?

ASPBAE's vision statement states :

" ASPBAE seeks to build a global order which empowers people, promotes sustainable development and peace, and is committed to the transformative function of adult education, especially to promote the learning and interests of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups".

Adult Education has been recognized as an important vehicle for strengthening people's participation in the development of Asian-Pacific societies. As these societies have sought to transform old structures to meet new challenges, adult education has come to play a central role linking local, national, regional, and international learning initiatives of change, involving a variety of actors and institutions participating in the development processes of the region.

Structurally, this vision and mission has been translated into action through the mechanism of a loosely federated NGO consisting of a diversity of groups and individuals committed to the promotion of adult learning.

How The Journey Began

The Founding Of The Asia South Pacific Bureau Of Adult Education, 1964

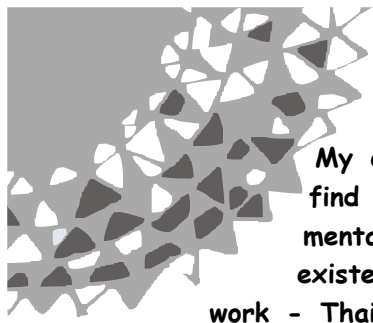
ASPBAE was established in Sydney, Australia on January 30, 1964 by a group of adult educators inspired by the idea of promoting liberal adult education. Among those pioneers was *Chris Duke* who played a major role in nurturing ASPBAE through its formative years. About the early days of ASPBAE, *Chris Duke* recalls that it started in 1964 with leadership provided by *Arnold Hely* and *S. C. Dutta*.

In his typical quiet manner, *Duke reminisces:*

"I'm afraid I'm just an oldish 'bloke' with a distant memory, though with undiminished passion for what ASPBAE stood for and with its modest resources what it did achieve in at least creating the conditions for co-operation and some radical dialogue in those early, I would say heroic and not really conservative, days." - *Chris Duke*

From its inception and till the 1970's, ASPBAE operated mainly as an informal clearinghouse on adult education. Its functions were devoted primarily to the dissemination of information on events and developments related to adult education and on liaising with UNESCO and other international agencies especially in relation to planned workshops and seminars in the Asia-Pacific region.

"By the way", says *Chris*, "in the days I was involved centrally this was neither, a formal university based centre nor was it a relatively conservative organisation.



My efforts were mainly to find and involve both governmental groups where they existed and were doing good work - Thailand being a leading example - and nongovernmental groups as in India and the Philippines. Surprisingly, Freire was as important to Government people in Indonesia and Thailand as to NGO activists in India and the Philippines. Much of the early effort was in creating cross-institutional international networks. Some of the big women's names included *Kasama* in Thailand as well as many others in government, universities and more grass-roots like *Kamla Bhasin* and *Anita Dighe* from India, *Lean Chang Heng* from Malaysia, *Helen Hill* in Australia, and others."

According to *Duke*, things really started moving after negotiations with Bernd Pflug from the Institute of International Cooperation of the German Adult Education

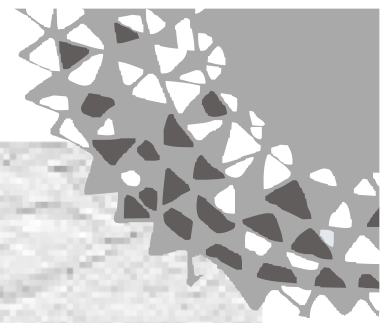
Association (IIZ/DVV). Funds started flowing from Germany. He points out what was unique for the time, that it was left to local people to manage and account for the funds instead of having a German national expatriate run the show.

The question of independent control over funds was as much an important factor in determining radical new directions within ASPBAE, as it was in providing direction and support for critical decisions on Gender Mainstreaming in the years that followed.

A brief look now at the distinct phases in the growth and development of ASPBAE as an organization might help in tracking some of the major decisions and events which enabled the prioritization of women's education, women's' issues and finally in Mainstreaming Gender across the adult learning fraternity in much of the Asia and South Pacific region.



Chris Duke at the ASPBAE - IIZ / DVV 25th Anniversary celebrations, Beijing, 2003



Signposts

Four Phases of Growth in ASPBAE

Phase I:

In the first phase from 1964 to 1977 there was very little access to funds; there were some occasional activities by way of regional meetings or conferences, and a relatively simple goal of bringing together 'adult educators' defined broadly.

Phase III:

It was in the critical third phase, 1987 to 1990 that new structures of decision making were put in place and widespread reflection and consultation initiated. 1991 was a watershed year for ASPBAE; the year of ASPBAE's First General Assembly (GA) convened on December 8-14, 1991 in Tagaytay, Philippines. This event signalled strategic shifts in the formation and function of the then 27 year old regional association for adult education. From an exclusive, one-member per country structure, ASPBAE shifted to a multiple-member structure. The General Assembly mandated a change in the organization's governing structures ensuring greater accountability. The Executive Council was reconstituted to ensure geographic and gender balances and representation of special sectors, such as indigenous people. Members of the Executive were elected by the ASPBAE members. ASPBAE also committed itself to a new mission,

Phase II:

The period from 1977 to 1985 can be designated as the second phase. IIZ-DVV funding enabled a spread of issues and activities into several countries of the region and in creating cross-institutional international networks and getting modes of activity going (seminars, conferences, translations, exchanges of personnel and ideas). Only later was there emphasis on different 'program areas' and 'subjects', including women's empowerment and literacy.

Phase IV:

The period from 1991 to the present, embracing the second, historic General Assembly at Darwin and the third General Assembly in Chiang Mai represents a phase of consolidation as well as of continuing reorganization, which enabled the implementation of the commitment to strategic new directions in several spheres. This is most visible in the area of women's education, literacy and gender, Education for All, and advocacy both regional and global. This is also the period when ASPBAE brought about stronger representation of women on the Executive and played a leading role at the 1995 UN World Conference on Women, Beijing, as also at CONFINTEA, the Fifth International Conference On Adult Education in 1997.



Early Stirrings Of Gender Consciousness

The 70s And The 80s

This story tries:

¹₁₅₇₅₀ to trace the early stirrings of gender consciousness within ASPBAE's core leadership;

¹₁₅₇₅₀ to recall the varied influences which served as the building blocks for creating the mechanisms and generating the will to integrate gender into the 'nuts and bolts' of ASPBAE's mission in the education of adults in the Asian Region.

Reminiscences from some of the key members are both interesting and revealing for all of us who are committed to gender justice through education. They remind us of long forgotten and often tortuous routes we have traversed to get where we have arrived today.

Was the early ASPBAE less bold with regard to several areas and issues especially in the context of women? *Chris Duke's* comments answered this question. In his perspective of how ASPBAE came to such a major role on gender issues, he identifies the main influence as being International Council of Adult Education (ICAE). *Chris* himself played the key role in getting the regional bodies affiliated as 'arms' of ICAE around 1976, for better or worse. Women like *Marg Gayfer* and *Linda Yantz* were instrumental in ensuring recognition for the "women hold up half the sky image".

Carol Anonuevo substantiates this:

"My first encounter with ASPBAE was in 1987 via the ICAE Women's Program. The Women's Program and the Center for Women's Resources (CWR, Philippines) organized an international workshop on popular education among the free trade women workers in the Philippines in 1986 and after that *Lynda Yantz*, who was the coordinator of the Women's Program, invited CWR to take part in the International Seminar in Womens Education in Toronto in 1987. There I met *Kasama Varavarn*, who was working with the Ministry of Education in Thailand and who was invited through the ASPBAE network. Still living under the Marcos dictatorship at the time, I remembered I was a little anxious that ASPBAE's network included governments. I believe that these sentiments were shared by *Lean Chan Heng*, who was working with women workers in Malaysia, who were also undergoing repression."

The dialogue with *Chris Duke* about the genesis of adult educators becoming conscious of gender took place in the seventies, when Nairobi was still a decade away and there were still two decades to go for Beijing! The Declaration of the International Decade for Women was still in the future! The perceptions about the absence of a 'feminist agenda within ASPBAE' according to people like *Chris Duke*, are telling, because they echo the widespread and genuine inability to make the distinction between prioritizing a special emphasis on women or allocating resources for women's literacy, and the far more complex areas represented by a process of putting gender in the center.

Moving Ahead Gender Blind

About ASPBAE in the seventies and eighties, *Duke* had this to say,

"Many of the key figures and leaders were women, and women were very strong in some of the key active countries of ASPBAE, especially in India, Thailand, the Philippines. So, in a sense, getting women involved was not an issue within ASPBAE.

The other factor may have been hesitancy among some Asian colleagues about not taking on the early Western, Betty Frieden and Germaine Greer type of 'women's lib' activity.

Some of this was considered very western (American often) middle class, and perhaps at odds with some of the strident North-South, class, ethnicity and exploitation issues. There were also cultural issues about the treatment of women in other cultures where Western feminism was in danger of being seen as culturally 'superior' and even racist."

Rajesh Tandon was associated for the longest time with the evolution of a more progressive profile for today's ASPBAE and there are many who point to his crucial role in the reforms within ASPBAE during the third and fourth phases referred to above.

The interview with *Rajesh* was a fascinating study in analysis and reflection. Dwelling on his memories of the gradual realization of the real meaning of gender as separate from a women's agenda for the organization, he said,

"It is actually interesting to go back in time to some of those memories. I recall some early events. One was the discourse in adult education, and the other was the

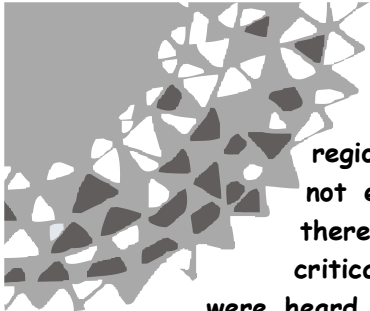
very interesting discussion on gender equality or gender blindness in participatory research, and also looking at a feminist critique of participatory research, which had been published. Neither of these discourses made a sharp gender distinction."

Carol Anonuevo recalls :

Many of my anxieties about ASPBAE were slowly transformed as Lean and I started to work for the ICAE General Assembly in Bangkok, 1990. *Kasama* at that point was the head of the Thai Organizing Committee and I saw for myself the strengths of working with people in government. Meantime, our regular meetings with *Rajesh Tandon, Wijetunga and Budd Hall* gave me a more nuanced understanding of the male leaders of ASPBAE and ICAE. I think the high visibility of women and women's issues in the ICAE General Assembly was largely due to the dynamic women activists. I remember *Lalita* actively mobilizing for women and literacy issues in preparation for the Jomtien EFA meeting. The key network person is *Lynda Yanz*, who was strategic in seeing to it that women were visible and represented in the different ICAE programs as well as the



Former Secretary-General Dr. Wijetunga and Past President Dr. Rajesh Tandon



regional associations. It was not enough that women were there in numbers, it was also critical that women's voices were heard."

Rajesh speaks of other factors which contributed to this awakening on the gender issue which arose when Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) got involved in exploring 'women's ways of learning' sometime in the eighties.

Rajesh recalls the involvement of the late Dame Nita Barrow with the ICAE. She insisted that attention be paid to the issue of maintaining a gender balance within institutional structures. However, it appears that this was not really integrated into any of the organizational discussions regarding ASPBAE until the nineties.

In fact *Rajesh* is quite emphatic, that till 1985/1986 he does not remember making any suggestion about gender. It was more about how you manage your board and how you manage your members.

The story of this journey illuminates these processes in the first two decades of ASPBAE through the eyes and voices of two men, *Chris Duke* and *Rajesh Tandon*, giving additional meaning to the reality of 2004, where two outstanding women, *Usa Duongsaa* and *Maria Khan*, are President and Secretary General respectively.

Whilst recounting the stories of where the gender focus began and the undoubted role of the individuals mentioned, it is also useful to highlight an extraordinarily eventful external environment which influenced the ideas and actions of academics and activists across the world. Some highlights bear recounting:



ASPBAE's first woman President Dr. Usa Duongsaa, Rajesh Tandon and Lalita Ramdas

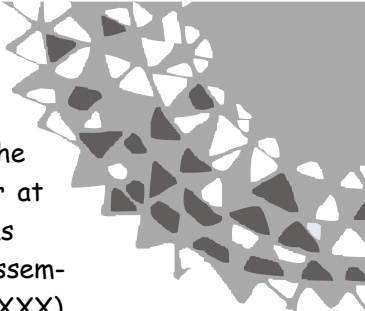
Cross Country Walking

Exploring The External Environment

"The International Women's Year, 1975, the International Conferences held at Mexico City in 1975 and Copenhagen in 1980, and the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace contributed greatly to the process of eliminating obstacles to the improvement of the status of women at the national, regional and international levels. In the early 1970s, efforts to end discrimination against women and to ensure their equal participation in society provided the impetus for most initiatives taken at all of those levels. Those efforts were also inspired by the awareness that women's reproductive and productive roles were closely linked to the political, economic, social, cultural, legal, educational and religious conditions that constrained the advancement of women and that factors intensifying the economic exploitation, marginalization and oppression of women stemmed from chronic inequalities, injustices and exploitative conditions at the family, community, national, sub regional, regional and international levels."

(extract from a UN website)

In 1972, the United Nations General Assembly, in its resolution 3010 (XXVII) proclaimed 1975 as the International Year for Women, to be devoted to intensified action to promote equality between men and women, to ensure the full integration of women in the total development effort and to increase women's contribution to the strengthening of world peace. The World Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Women's Year, was adopted by



the World Conference of the International Women's Year at Mexico City in 1975 and was endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 3520 (XXX). The U N General Assembly, in that resolution, also proclaimed 1976-1985 the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace.

The Nairobi Conference, 1985

A Landmark Event

The Third International Conference on Women was held at Nairobi, Kenya in 1985. The Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women during the period, 1986-2000 were set forth in the Nairobi document. These present concrete measures to overcome the obstacles to the decade's goals and objectives for the advancement of women.

Several leading women from the women's movement in many countries in Asia attended Nairobi. Many of us recall the excitement of knowing that our representatives were organizing a parallel event, since NGOs were not considered seriously by governmental and UN bodies. The feedback, the reports and the dissemination of the message and promise of Nairobi provided a much needed shot in the arm and the fall out from this influenced the work and thinking of several women's groups and NGOs.



Exploring Country Roads

India As One Of Several Focal Points

What was the scenario in India at this point of the journey?

From being a grassroots worker in a small Delhi NGO called ANKUR, Society for Alternatives in Education, I soon found myself deeply involved with the autonomous women's movement with groups like PRIA led by *Rajesh Tandon* and through him with ASPBAE and the ICAE. Along with women like *Suneeta Dhar*, *Anita Dighe*, *Lakshmi Krishnamurthy*, *Kamla Bhasin* and others who were collectively involved with the enormous challenge of bringing a gender perspective into mainstream education and literacy programmes, besides creating feminist awareness at the grassroots level.

This decade was one of intensive activity in the academic and grassroots spheres. The release of a report on the Status of Indian Women by leading academic Dr. *Vina Mazumdar*, (she led the Indian NGO delegation at Nairobi), provided just the right impetus to hundreds of women who were coming together from across the country. Basic issues of human rights, women's rights, violence and all forms of discrimination against women and girls, perpetuated through custom and religion, were addressed at all levels from direct action to policy platforms.

One cannot recall another time when there was such ferment, such concerted and such creative action and discussion around all the core questions affecting the status of women.

During our conversation, *Rajesh Tandon* referred to a meeting of Secretaries of Adult Education Associations, early in the eighties, at Suraj Kund outside Delhi where there was no mention of the gender word. But by the end of the eighties, the women's caucus at the International Literacy Task Force meeting at the same venue that was finalizing the strategies for the Bangkok meeting of the ICAE and the Declaration of International Literacy Year in 1990, produced a document which carried one of the most powerful statements on literacy, women and gender.

From Empowerment To Sensitivity

The Decade Of The Nineties

Thus the extraordinary web of cross linkages enabled gender perspectives to be interwoven into a range of organizational and policy level activities and events.

Rajesh acknowledges that the linkages between literacy and women's empowerment advocated by a number of significant voices were important building blocks that sharpened the focus on gender concerns within ASPBAE. The composition of delegates for the ICAE World Assembly in Bangkok in January 1990 (even of just the Asian Delegates) reflected a dramatic change in the 'gender count' of men and women who participated.

Maria Khan, who has played a major role since 1995-96 in guiding the destiny of ASPBAE, shared some useful insights which should be borne in mind by those of us who tend to assume that being part of a 'progressive', even 'radical' NGO, automatically leads to an increased level of gender sensitivity.

Speaking of her transition from one such NGO in the Philippines to her work in India and with ASPBAE, *Maria* says,

"Like many other developing NGOs they had a completely blind spot for issues of gender and women. Coming from the Philippines where women are highly educated and have held positions of responsibility, I really didn't feel oppressed. I felt that I could not identify with issues of gender inequality; and the NGOs that I was part of, encouraged this almost directly and very much so implicitly in its way of functioning and its policies. So there I was trying to have to understand what all these issues being discussed in the women's program was all about. I was struggling to have to do a job and therefore I had to appreciate it."

Freeways And Speedbreakers

Each of us comes to the issue of gender consciousness through varied, often complex and even personally challenging paths. This has a bearing on the larger question of whether, when and how gender can be

mainstreamed into large organizational and societal structures. For this we will need to revisit some of those byways of personal consciousness in addition to the highways of action, and put together a variety of sources, otherwise disconnected, which have played key roles in bringing the organization to where it is today.

These voices are varied. From 'the personal and political type of testimonies' of *Suneeta Dhar*, *Vasanth Kannabiran*, *Carol Anoneuvo*, *Marivic Raquiza*, *Usa Duongsaa*, (who were clearly 'movement' women) to reflections drawn from very different starting points such as those of *Maria Khan*, *Rajesh Tandon*, *Alastair Crombie*, and *Gigi Francisco*, who brought perspectives from their own very different processes of socialization and professional experience.

The milestones or building blocks mentioned have referred typically to individuals, to institutional and structural mechanisms, and very categorically to external events, national, regional and global. They also include a comprehensive range of documentation and a substantive body of research and publications, both regional and global.



Participants at a Sub-Regional Workshop on Education for HIV/AIDs Prevention



Bays Of Perception

Who Or What Influenced The Gender Agenda In ASPBAE

- $\frac{1}{15750}$ Tagatay - Darwin - Chiang-Mai - Hua Hin - Bali.....
- $\frac{1}{15750}$ the ASPBAE women's programme
- $\frac{1}{15750}$ political will, vision, openness''; courageous leadership
- $\frac{1}{15750}$ determined affirmative action at the Executive,
- $\frac{1}{15750}$ strong women from the Women's Movement
- $\frac{1}{15750}$ sound foundations laid by women like Elizabeth Crusada and Carol Anonuevo
- $\frac{1}{15750}$ Lalita Ramdas an `ASPBAE woman' as President ICAE
- $\frac{1}{15750}$ Usa Duongsaa, an Asian woman, as President of ASPBAE
- $\frac{1}{15750}$ Publications by Srilata Batliwala and Vasanth Kannabiran
- $\frac{1}{15750}$ Beijing Women's Conference, Hairou, and the involvement in the pre-Beijing processes across Asia
- $\frac{1}{15750}$ The link with ICAE and strengthening the relationship with its Gender & Education Office through Celita Eccher
- $\frac{1}{15750}$ Constitutional Amendments and Gender Framework Documents
- $\frac{1}{15750}$ Setting up of the Gender Steering Committee, (GSC)
- $\frac{1}{15750}$ Maria Khan, a woman as Secretary General

Now, we will take a look at some of these events more closely, to unwrap and rewind some of the processes, in order to achieve greater clarity and understanding.

Nairobi 1985, Tagatay 1990, Darwin 1993, Beijing 1995

Highway Highlights And Building Blocks Along The Way

Nairobi, Tagatay, Darwin, and Beijing have been popularly identified by `insiders and outsiders' as places where events of significance took place in the overall assessment of ASPBAE's strategic directions, consolidation and growth. Together with these we must factor, in the process of restructuring of ASPBAE, without which the names mentioned above might have had little if any impact on the substance and directions that ASPBAE was to take.

Navigating these relatively uncharted terrains has yielded a rich harvest of information and connections, some obvious and visible, others hidden and subtle, all of which need to be teased out, pulled together and seen through a different prism which can then illumine the road ahead.

Tagatay: Where It All Began

The Nairobi to Tagatay link has played a critical role in spelling out the priorities for the womens agenda in future decades. Nairobi represented a breakthrough in challenging the domination of governments in deciding policy for women. It was the first time that one could see how effectively NGOs took over

the parallel conference spaces, thus setting the trend for a larger, more visible role for women, outside of the established political parties and state actors.

"The Tagatay Assembly of ASPBAE in December 1990 was a turning point where not only the question of programming, but also of women and their points of view were represented in the commanding mechanism of ASPBAE" - *Suneeta Dhar*

But Before Tagatay Was The Restructuring Of ASPBAE

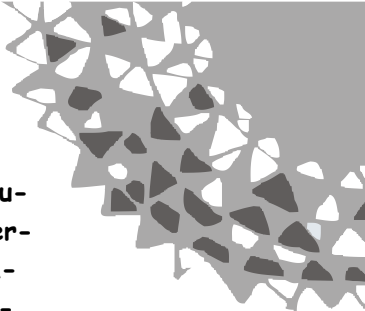
There is a widely held perception that Tagatay heralded an important watershed in the history of ASPBAE. However, Tagatay itself was the culmination of a fascinating process of organizational engineering and architecture. How did Tagatay mark such a major departure in terms of previous policy, and particularly, whilst applying a gender benchmark? Before we embark on this, a quick look at the restructuring of ASPBAE which was an intrinsic part of the buildup to Tagatay.

Structural Changes And Strategic Shifts

By the late eighties, the leadership in ASPBAE had already changed hands from the original crew mentioned by *Chris Duke*. *Rajesh Tandon* was firmly behind the wheel, having taken over as President in 1990.

Maria Khan remembers some key aspects of this strategic shift.....

"There was a strategic shift in direction around 1989-1990. Now the process which propelled ASPBAE to re-think its vision, its mission and its approach, and bring in

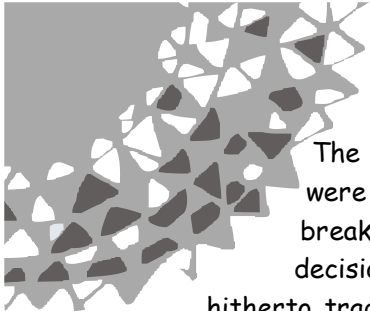


a new set of leaders and players and a new constituency, was introduced externally, at least in organizational terms. This was effected by its association with the International Council for Adult Education, where one of the active members was *Carol Anonuevo* from the region and *Rajesh Tandon* was the Vice President for the Asia Pacific in ICAE. The way things worked, *Rajesh* and *Carol* had to associate with ASPBAE. The interaction set in motion certain processes which made ASPBAE change from what it was to what it is now".

Although it was *Dr. Wijetunga*, the then Secretary General of ASPBAE and *Rajesh Tandon*, the new President, who went into 'overdrive' on the decision to carry out a massive consultation across the region, the actual task was implemented in record time with scarce human resources, and even scarcer financial resources, by *Om Shrivastava* of ASTHA Sansthan, Rajasthan, India.

Putting The Starting Blocks In Place

The template and the building blocks for what followed in Tagatay were thus ably prepared by *Om*, assisted by a team of regional associates and overseen by *Rajesh Tandon* with *Dr. Wijetunge* or 'Wije' as he was popularly known. *Om's* last conversation, an enthusiastic support for the gender study, came through clearly over the telephone, but an interview with him was never to be, as he was a victim of a freak railway accident. This is an unavoidable gap in the process of documenting the different stages of evolution of ASPBAE.



The pre-Tagatay processes were among the most path breaking and visionary sets of decisions that were taken in a hitherto traditional adult education organization. Teams of experienced ASPBAE personnel undertook the daunting task of visiting all key national member organizations across the region, holding consultations, and documenting the voices and views of the region in terms of future direction for ASPBAE. Task Forces were set up on key issues. Their task was to integrate the inputs and feedback from this exercise and bring the findings and recommendations to the ASPBAE Executive and then to the First General Assembly at Tagatay.

"I remember that it was with a great sense of challenge and excitement that I took on responsibility to head the Task Force on Literacy, as part of the restructuring process within ASPBAE. There was a separate Task Force on Women, and we unanimously decided to link more closely with each other, since the concerns of literacy converged with the issues of Empowerment of Women and Women's Education. My own paper for UNESCO on Women and Literacy: a Quest for Justice, was a by product of several of the debates and dialogues that took place at that time

- Lalita

In a report to the ASPBAE Executive made in Chiang Mai, in October 1997, *Maria* elaborates,

"The ASPBAE evaluation was conducted by *Om Shrivastav* in 1988, which was introduced as an idea by *Rajesh* and *Wije*. In my recollection, the issues of the recognition of women's rights were upfront and much stated in the terms of reference of the evaluation.

When finally the results of the evaluation came, when the then Executive of ASPBAE had decided on the outcome of the evaluation to reconstitute ASPBAE, the base from which the new ASPBAE was formed had a strong presence of women's groups. So, at the Tagatay General Assembly where a lot of these agreements were formally adopted and when the new vision and mission of ASPBAE was approved, and codified, there was a very strong presence of women's organizations and a very strong, commitment to gender equality and gender balance."

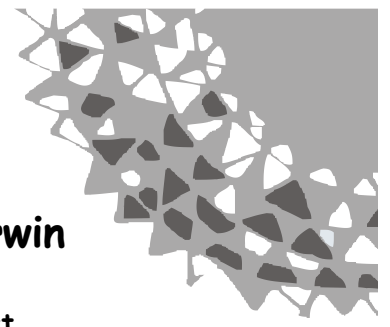
The Road Blocks

The road to Tagatay was not a smooth one. There were difficulties that were faced by the leadership and also by the women's programme. *Dr. Rajesh Tandon*, in his interview, dealt with the road blocks or problem areas that he and others encountered along the way.

"The first period of the 'block', was really the planning period for Tagatay, you remember the Task Forces. The decision makers said that we had no money to spend on this even though I was the President. I said, 'Let us agree to the Task Force, subject to my raising additional money', and they agreed. I had to raise the money, literally and entirely on my personal basis, for the task forces to work and I couldn't see any other way to move the system forward."

But there were more blocks to come, *Rajesh* continues,

"The second time the block popped up was when we were actually in the Tagatay assembly and questions about the leadership were being raised. Not only were



they raised by the people who were new but also by people from whom we least expected opposition. The grand debate for eight hours was because, initially, there was resistance in the then executive to change the composition. Even after accepting the principle of gender balance and representation of minority or indigenous people and new program priorities, there was a clear lack of trust in the motives of the EC, and finally it was only with the selection of three women representatives for the Interim executive - *Sunita, Dorothy and Kamala*, that we were able to move on."

Thus, Tagatay marked a definite turning point both in the popular perception of the participants, and certainly in terms of the formal constitutional and other structures. The road ahead was clearly full of pot holes and speed breakers. And as with any attempt to introduce major changes, there were voices that rang out loud against the change.

Moving From Tagatay To Darwin

"At Tagatay I think what happened was that the momentum of gender equality was established. I think it showed in the rewriting of the constitution. That itself is an extremely powerful mechanism, because very often in most institutions you have a program, you have the people, you have the events but you don't have the structural change. I think there were many debates. There was a question of affirmative action on the one hand and there was a question on gender equal representation in the process of nomination to the executive committee. A transition period was established before the elections."

- *Suneeta Dhar*

If women in the movement were exhilarated, some of the same 'good men' were genuinely puzzled, as they struggled to understand what was going on.



The second General Assembly at Darwin 1996



Navigating To Comprehend

Where are we navigating, wondered *Alastair Crombie*, who four years down the line from Tagatay, was the overall Co-ordinator of the Darwin Assembly. It was clearly a tough call for him to deal with fundamental ideological issues pertaining to women, empowerment and gender.

"I was trying to recall when I became aware of the fact that there was the women's empowerment group and it was then it seemed to me as a kind of remediation movement - women have been left behind so we must have activities to empower women. So it wasn't about gender relations at all, it was something for women, by women and I think men helped outside and somewhat indifferently because we didn't have a place in the women's empowerment program except when we got in the way!"
- *Alastair Crombie*

Laying Tracks: Constitution Change



Former Executive Member of ASPBAE Alistair Crombie

"Being a white Caucasian male, elected by surprise against more senior Australian

women, I think I was gender blind, in the sense that I applied myself to the challenges of running the organization in the way that I knew. Let me try to recollect when we formally changed the constitution. It was Tagatay, where we went to vote, one man, one woman, no if's, no but's.

We could elect two people; one of them had to be a woman and the result would be an ASPBAE executive which symbolized the commitment to gender equity rather than just women being around. In fact, this brought more women into those positions.

When I recall the debate, the constitution seemed to be worded ambiguously. I can't remember it exactly, but it said that out of two from each region, at least one was to be a woman. There was a juicy tension between women who saw that this left out the possibility of there being two women, and people like myself who were actually quite clear that the intention was that we have one of each.
- *Alastair Crombie*

The debates carried on from Tagatay to Darwin! So let us move on to the Darwin experience referred to nostalgically by many as being one more brilliant stepping stone in the slow progression to a gender fair and equitable world within ASPBAE.

Mayhem and Magic in Darwin: December, 1996

Readers are being walked through the key events primarily in order to push the point home that arriving at the moment when Mainstreaming Gender is taken for granted has been a rocky uphill task which absorbed the time and energy of a number of players.



Vasanth Kannabiran from India

For many of us who were in Tagatay and then in Darwin, each experience represented a landmark in taking forward a process which had been set in place over years with careful planning and thought. We could see the continuity and the slow but steady progress towards certain goals.

However, for women like *Vasanth Kannabiran* whose association with ASPBAE began at a later point in time, Darwin had a very powerful impact. She sees it clearly as a defining moment in the struggle to Mainstream Gender.

"I mean if somebody should put a date and the time on significant events along the journey, then for me it's the Darwin General Assembly of 1996. That was the time when gender really moved center-stage and I think that it startled everybody. The women worked as a caucus and the men who were with us worked along side."
- *Vasanth Kannabiran*

There was a strong reaction to the fact that the statements at the opening Plenary of the Darwin Assembly touched superficially on

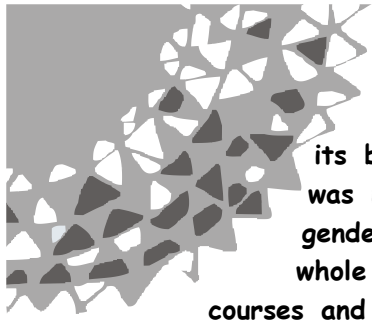
issues such as poverty, of gender inequality, marginalization in society and the need for a radicalized education agenda. The ferment created by this reaction carried on through several days and nights of discussion, organization and found its way into the drafting room. As some of us sat around the table, bleary eyed through lack of sleep, others crowded around us, agitatedly discussing the core issues and why they needed to be incorporated into the Darwin Declaration.

To quote *Vasanth* again,

"There was a big ferment and that ferment was reflected in the whole series of discussions. And there we were suddenly talking about gender training and all the issues of gender. Then came the drafting of the statement. I remember you (Lalita - did you sleep at all? You seem to have spent three days and nights at the drafting table!) were there and all of us were sitting in the room trying to see that the important issues were incorporated into the statement. As we spoke, many important things came up and we began to shape that document in certain ways. We worked for two nights drafting that document and immediately the document became something that was alive and vital. The process of



Suneeta Dhar from India



its becoming alive and vital was not because of only the gender issue, but that the whole issue of alternate discourses and dis-empowered groups was central. And then I began to see the whole thing as a political possibility."

Given that we are talking of the political possibilities of change within an avowedly a-political, education-oriented group such as ASPBAE, it is a useful moment in which to remind ourselves of the philosophy of those who inspired several generations of educators, activists, and even governments, to radically re-examine the basic premise on which adult and popular education could be re-invented. Paolo Freire, was very clear in how he viewed the role of education as enunciated in his classic work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

"Human existence cannot be silent, nor can it be nourished by false words, but only by true words, with which people transform the world. To exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new naming. People are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action reflection."

This then is the 'political possibility' that women like *Vasanth* and several others saw at Darwin, as the drafters synergized all that had been heard, seen and felt, in a new naming, in words, and work which has led to action reflection into the present.

Similar feelings were shared by activist *Marivic Raquiza* from the Philippines, who had joined ASPBAE shortly before Darwin, and who has been a keen observer of the politics and dynamics of gender:

"As far as I am concerned, the formal process of Gender Mainstreaming began when the ASPBAE General Assembly in Darwin mandated its officers to commence such a process. What is interesting though is that during the GA itself, a mini-revolt erupted because some of the women active in the ASPBAE women's program felt that the GA was run quite badly, (for instance, a Caucasian male who was not exactly seen as sympathetic to gender/women's issues), was a constant speaker/facilitator in plenary. In spite of this, or because of it (I'm not sure what the case is), the Gender Mainstreaming process proceeded rather smoothly. But certain dynamics needed to be handled. The more vocal, articulate, and yes, critical women, like *Suneeta Dhar* and *Elizabeth Cruzada*, were not tapped much, in the Gender Mainstreaming process. I sometimes wonder how the Gender Mainstreaming process would have proceeded if there had been more active participation from them."

Eventually the final shape and thrust of the now famous Darwin Declaration was the product of a three all-night sessions by a small intrepid group led by *Murray Thomson* and me, *Lalita Ramdas!* This is the stuff of which dreams and visions are built and it is important to keep the memories alive in some way for future generations to share. A visit to the Darwin Declaration on the ASPBAE website might be a useful exercise. It was in the framing of the vision and mission statement, as well as in the energetic implementation by the empowered agencies such as the executive, the secretariat and the women's program, that a new life and energy became available for Gender Mainstreaming.

The Document emphasizes that the above principles provide the 'backbone' of ASPBAE's gender strategy within its larger

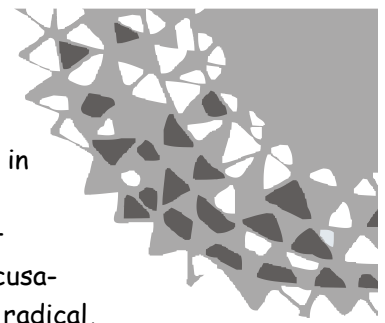
concern about the pervasive power of globalization on every day life and its disempowering effect on workers, indigenous people and women; its aspiration to achieve gender equity in all aspects of work; to evolve a strategy that is informed by and active and deliberate commitment to gender equality; and to strive to promote gender aware policies among partners.

What Darwin achieved in a dramatic way was

to engage with those, who in his words, 'tended to run ahead of the mob' without leaving himself open to accusations of either being too radical, or not radical enough!

Rajesh recollects:

"We saw the post-Darwin scenario, the different realities on gender. If one can



The Darwin Declaration 1996

ASPBAE Reaffirms its commitment to an empowering and transformative education for women in keeping with the resolutions and declarations of the CAIRO, COPENHAGEN, and BEIJING World Conferences.

¹/₁₅₇₅₀ **Calls upon governments to ratify CEDAW: The Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.**

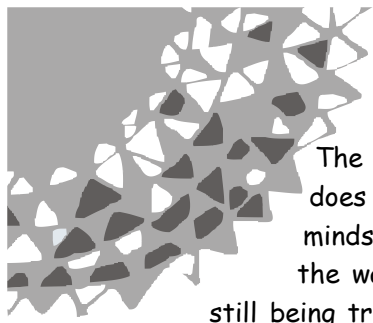
¹/₁₅₇₅₀ **Calls upon UN Bodies, multi lateral agencies and donors to provide adequate resources and other mechanisms necessary to meet the objectives of building a world where equity and justice are guaranteed to women and girls.**

¹/₁₅₇₅₀ **Asserts that environmental education is a life-long learning process, recognizes that ecological problems should be seen and addressed within a socio-economic and cultural context.**

to bring to the forefront many from the regional women's movements who till then had always felt skeptical about the ability of adult education groups to 'deliver' on hard core feminist or gender concerns. In many ways this marked another watershed in the journey to Gender Mainstreaming.

At the same time, it was a road filled with minefields and pitfalls, particularly the challenge of taking along as many people as possible and getting them to sign on to the new ideas and ways of doing things. *Rajesh* sums up his own dilemma in leadership, of how best

summarize it, the people who were working on this agenda advanced their thinking so far ahead that they were running ahead of the mob. In today's world you can find in every country, in every city and in every district, one woman who speaks your language But then someone said, "that is not the way it is going to be in my culture". I said that if we are an adult education organization can we please follow the adult education methodology. Can we make our dream of getting some place consistent with the methodology we use? Can we take an educational stance in this as opposed to issuing dictates?"



The dilemma was real, how does one bring about changes in mindsets, how does one change the ways of doing things, while still being true to some of the principles for which one was trained, that is, the time tested pedagogies of learning as practised in the world of adult education? On the other hand, especially in tradition bound societies with strong underpinnings of patriarchal values, what will it take to persuade families, communities and governments to prioritize girls and women, let alone talk about gender justice and mainstreaming gender? It is within this frame of analysis that the Fourth World Conference of Women in an Asian capital takes on additional significance, and underscores the reason why Beijing is perceived to be of such significance in the development of gender perspectives globally.

The Beijing Conference, 1995

Noeleen Heyzer, Director, UNIFEM was very articulate about how she saw the Beijing Conference:

"It was not so much a conference about women, but a women's conference about the state of the world....."

Beijing was a major milestone, a real boon in many ways, as it provided one of the biggest stimuli to the nascent Women's Movement in Asia. Looking back with the advantage of hindsight, there is no denying the extent to which the Fourth World Conference on Women, played a role in sharpening the focus of diverse players and actors with regard to women, and particularly, to the gender dimension. The very fact of its being held in Asia provided perhaps the greatest boost, not only to organizations and networks like ASPBAE

with their clear gender agendas, but also to other state and non-state actors.

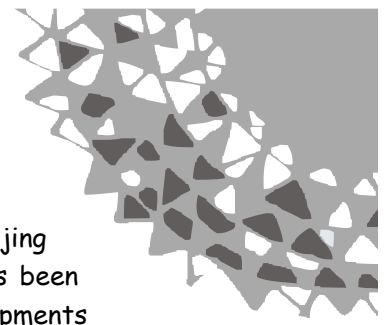
As the years roll by, {and we are close to a decade after Beijing}, one tends to forget the real significance of the Beijing Conference and NGO Forum that took place in September 1995. Between them they formed the biggest United Nations conference to date, and the largest ever gathering of women from all over the world to address the conference themes of Equality, Development and Peace. Gertrude Mongella, Conference



Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995

Secretary-General, presided over the event and its guests included Benazir Bhutto from Pakistan, Gro Harlem Brundtland, Prime Minister of Norway and Hilary Clinton of the United States of America.

The UN Conference took place from September 4 to September 15, 1995 in Beijing, with 17,000 registrants, including 5,000 delegates from 189 member states and the European Union, 4,000 representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and more than 3,200 representatives from the media. The NGO Forum preceded the UN conference, and was held between August 30 and September 8, 1995 in nearby Huairou, with nearly 30,000 people attending.



Many of the women who are key activists within the women's movement in Asia and several from within ASPBAE or related groups, also participated in one or both events. Some, like myself, were also included in the official government delegation to the Beijing Conference!

We would all testify to the fact that the number of pre-Beijing related meetings, discussions, debates and 'prepcoms' were as critical if not more important than the actual meetings themselves. It was in those innumerable smaller events and caucuses that the collective consciousness and the formulation of the feminist and gender agenda were shaped, and this colored the policy and programs of governmental and nongovernmental organizations, the media, and public perception. It was also during these shared experiences and intensive conversations outside of the meeting rooms, that several enduring relationships and networks were forged and which were to impact the work of ASPBAE in the decades to follow.

It is important to keep in mind, as *Maria Khan* points out:

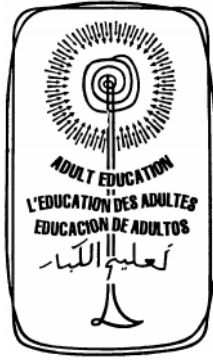
"Beijing happened just five years after Tagatay, so it was the flavor of the month so to speak! Tagatay was 1990, Beijing was 1995, so the preparatory processes were already in place. Beijing was one of the more visible International Conferences. It was a safe issue. It was an issue which attracted funds and attention; this helped in terms of acceptance within ASPBAE of why women's issues ought to be discussed, and this helped in getting the resources required to fund the women's program. So ASPBAE's women's program builds its network around Beijing. This historical conjuncture was on our side and that's how I joined ASPBAE."

Thus, the movement for gender equality the world over, unleashed by the Beijing process in its entirety, has been one of the defining developments of our time. Clearly the interface between the rapidly changing external events had an impact on the paradigm shift from Women's Education and Literacy to gender. Let us examine some of the influences which enabled that shift, especially the international linkages in the world of adult education.

International Council For Adult Education, (ICAE)

Leadership, Patriarchy And The Role of Women

The decade of the Eighties certainly saw the flowering of the International Council of Adult Education, (ICAE). A shared vision of transformative education brought together a team of bright and creative minds from across the world, *Rajesh Tandon* from Asia, *Paul Wangoola* from Africa, '*Pancho*' *vio Grossi* from South America, and *Budd Hall* from North America, in a partnership which was to transform the traditional boundaries and definition of adult education itself. These men were also heading or playing lead roles in the four regional arms of adult education, ASPBAE in Asia; CEEAL in Latin America; AALAE in Africa and ICAE in Canada. These were men who brought with them fiercely independent views and ideologies which challenged all the existing paradigms of adult education theology, bringing into the definition of lifelong and continuing education the challenges to colonization, to militarism and authoritarianism, the rights of peasants and workers and their revolutionary struggles in all the continents they represented.



But these were also men who, at the period under review, in some inexplicable way, were collectively less than sensitive to the dynamics of feminism, gender and the women's movement which was beginning to make waves and was poised to sweep away a whole world of patriarchal structures and forms of organizational behaviour.

Paradoxically, ICAE's internal dynamics, which were often seen to be insensitive to women's legitimate leadership potential, provided exactly the right kind of stimulus to the development of a very powerful women's program and gender identity. This contributed to the movement for gender justice and Gender Mainstreaming in both adult and other education structures the world over.

It was a cocktail of several of these influences, within a broad participatory research and training domain and frame which played a major role in the kind of direction that ASPBAE set for itself at this crucial point in its history. The finest expression of all of these varied and separate trends and streams came together in distilling women's leadership roles from across many regions of the world. In order to put names and faces and identities to several of these players who have featured from time to time in our narrative, we will look briefly at who they were, where they came from, what they did and represented.

Making The Connections

Adult Education As A Training Ground For Capacity Building And Women's Leadership

It was during 1985 and 1995, that several of us from the regions and the regional 'arms' of ICAE found ourselves in key committees taking institutional responsibility on joint projects and ventures with or within ICAE. Some names that come to mind are *Dame Nita Barrow, Pat* from the Caribbean, *Carol Anonuevo, Elizabeth Crusada*, and others from the Philippines, *Helen Moussa and Dina* from the Arab region; *Lalla Ben Barka* from Mali; *Shirley Walters* from South Africa; *Kasama Varavaran, Usa Duongsaa* from Thailand; *Kamla Bhasin, Anita Dighe, Suneeta Dhar, Nighat Said Khan* and myself, *Lalita*, from South Asia; a galaxy from South America, including *Celita Eccher* who later set up the Gender and Education Office of ICAE, and *Linda Yantz, Marg Gayfer, Linzi Manickom* from Canada. We found ourselves straddling several thematic and organizational and geographic boundaries, thus releasing new synergies.

Nita Barrow is perhaps the best known among these names. Already a public figure in Barbados in the Caribbean, which was her home, she was the first woman to become President of the ICAE, Ambassador to the United Nations, and was responsible for single handedly putting feminism and gender concerns on the global agenda, and therefore on the agenda of Adult Education as well.

The Significant Decade 1985-1995

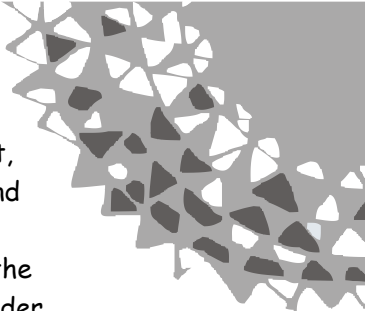
Eager Beavers In The ASPBAE Task Forces

For over a decade, from the mid-eighties, many of the women mentioned above played lead roles in the women's movement within their own countries and regions while also enabling the building of sound gender practice within the institutions where they worked. Many of these developments played a role in determining the contours of ASPBAE's restructuring which was set in motion two years before Tagatay. Several task forces/committees were constituted to look at the strategic new directions for ASPBAE.

Two of the important committees were those looking into policies on women and on literacy and it was the results of the co-ordinated working of both committees which presented the final report. This formed the basis of a powerful articulation of gender and empowerment as being the twin pillars around which future policy in ASPBAE should be framed and which should also be central to all programs in literacy and women's education.

ICAE And Mainstreaming Gender

When I joined the ICAE Executive in January 1990, (elected at the Bangkok General Assembly), a Steering Committee on Gender was already in place, and Carol Anonuevo from ASPBAE was a part of the Task Force on Women. But making these bodies move beyond a certain 'tokenism' has been a long and hard journey.



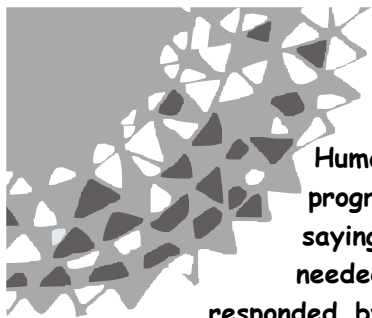
It is pertinent at this point, to share the perceptions and views of someone who had spent several years inside the ICAE and moved up the ladder from being a Programme Officer, editor of the newsletter, and eventually to the position of Executive Director during the turbulent period of 1996-97. *Thuraya Khalil Khoury* is a remarkably perceptive and committed young woman who had this to say in response to my questions on the role of ICAE and the Gender Mainstreaming process.

"As far as gender issues at ICAE are concerned, there is one thing that keeps coming to me and that is the irony that despite ICAE's mission and focus on education, we have failed to educate ourselves and each other on gender issues. I vividly remember some of our European members calling it the "ladies programme" or referring to "a meeting of the ladies" at Executive meetings. It was all treated as something of a joke. And no one ever really took that up. Where the Arab region was concerned, we all knew that no serious work was taking place and I wonder why we let that go!"

-Thuraya Khalil Khoury.

She elaborates further on cultural sensitivity.

"I think that sometimes our "respect" for cultural diversity and the fact that women's issues, feminism, gender all had different meanings to different people, prevented us from being more forceful in addressing the problems within the organization. I don't think we ever took the time to define the issues and the terms that govern any global work on women's issues. When the horrors about the rape of women in Bosnia came to light, I remember calling the coordinator of the



Human Rights Education program, located in Finland, saying that the program needed to take a stand. He responded by saying this was an issue for the "ladies program" to deal with. I know that we had problems with program integration and that this was one of those instances when we lacked clarity on how the programs worked together. But we did not see the gender issues as a concern for the entire organization."

Celita Eccher from Uruguay (REPEM and CEEAL - one of the other new members on the ICAE executive) and I, worked on ways to provide visibility and structure and thus evolved the concept of the Gender and Education (GEO) office of the ICAE which was based in Uruguay. This was also the time when we took other steps to strengthen the ties between the adult education bodies in Latin America and our region, the two regions of the ICAE family with a very powerful focus on women's issues and gender. This had a number of beneficial outcomes, especially the close co-operation and well designed inputs into the Fourth International Conference of Adult Education CONFINTEA , at Hamburg in 1997.

But clearly all of this was not enough and we still had miles to go. Speaking for myself as President of ICAE during those years, I can only endorse what *Thuraya* is saying, that not only was there a strongly divergent position on women and gender, but also on Human Rights, on North South questions and the role of what Adult Education and literacy should prioritize. We lost a critical opportunity, pre- and post-Beijing, to make women's issues a priority. ICAE collectively could not agree upon a global agenda nor a global vision and the work remained fragmented - *Lalita*

In light of the difficulties outlined above, it is all the more creditable that despite all its cultural diversity and traditions and customs, the gender dimension was firmly made a part of policy, of strategy and of the long-term vision within the Asian regional organization.

A Few More Milestones.....

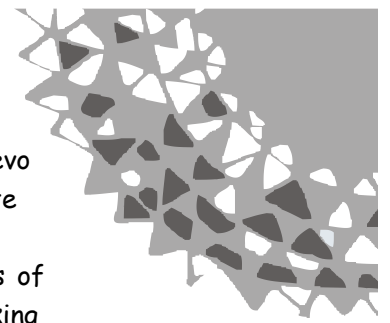
On the whole, the nineties were eventful. There was a visible increase in women's presence and participation. We have powerful memories of the ICAE World Assembly, Bangkok, Thailand held in January 1990, especially the way the Women's Caucus was able to orchestrate protests and raise awareness regarding the choice of Jomtien, a well known sex tourism destination, as the venue for the EFA Conference! (Not that it changed the decisions and Jomtien as the home of EFA has gone into the annals of history!)

The Education for all Conference was held in March, 1990. ICAE and ITFL (International Task Force on Literacy) together provide inputs into the drafting process especially on Gender, Literacy and Women's Empowerment. Some of us as members of the drafting committee were able to ensure some strong language about gender, empowerment and right to learn for women and girls.

As an interesting aside, the Jomtien Conference spanned March 8, International Women's Day. Amazingly, the formal program contained not even a passing reference to the occasion and the day would have gone by with no mention of the significance of Womens Day or womens issues. It was a bunch of us women from a number of the groups present who came together, put up posters, banners, took out an impromptu march and forced an acknowledgement of the date and its relevance! So much for gender blindness!

This period saw a mushrooming of activity in India and South Asia by women's groups. And the setting up of the office for the Co-Ordination Unit For Beijing in New Delhi provided an additional shot in the arm. The preparations for Beijing and the activities of the various NGO groups for the prepcoms were frenetic as was the actual meeting. The cumulative impact was sensational and filtered across all sectors, rural, urban, minorities and marginalized groups, and brought together a new platform of those who continued to work for women's rights' and gender concerns well after Beijing. In separate but

linked moves, Carol Anonuevo joined the Unesco Institute Of Education in Hamburg, bringing to the fore issues of Gender Mainstreaming, linking Asia and the South Pacific with other regions. ASPBAE's women's programme also made a breakthrough in contact with Chinese Women's groups resulting in the historic first ASPBAE Regional Workshop at Guangzhou in 1994. This brings us logically, to taking a closer look at the development of the women's program in ASPBAE and its role in pushing the gender agenda.



Workshop on Women's Education in preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women, Guongzhou, 1994

ASPBAE, like most other networks of its kind, had always had a strong emphasis on women's education and literacy. Over the years, as diverse issues became important and demanded their incorporation into the overall priority list within the organization, migrants' education, occupational health, environment, peace and human rights, citizenship education, new information technologies, all came on to the Adult Education agenda.

From the very early stages of ASPBAE's growth and development there was a strong and symbiotic link between the women's programme and the evolution of gender consciousness which has led to the development of what we call Gender Mainstreaming.

It is not always that there are necessarily convergent views when attempting to reconstruct certain trends spanning a time frame of several decades. However, going by the cumulative evidence gathered from documents, minutes, and personal testimonies, there is a very strong case for arguing that the women's program in ASPBAE has played the lead role in enabling Gender Mainstreaming to happen in an organic, systematic and effective manner.

Maria Khan, who took over as Secretary General of ASPBAE in 1994, shared some interesting observations on this.

Pushing Ahead The Spaces And Processes

"Basically the women's program of ASPBAE pioneered the efforts towards Gender Mainstreaming within ASPBAE. There were discussions as to whether there still

was a case for maintaining the women's program distinct from the Gender Mainstreaming process. This question was resolved both in our own discussions and in practice that the strength of the Gender Mainstreaming process lay in making sure that we had a strong women's, feminist presence within the organization so it was necessary to maintain these as parallel spaces and processes." - *Maria Khan*

Mainstreaming Gender became the important cross cutting concern across all the thematic program areas. This in itself was not an easy transition. It was useful to flag one or two of the events or processes where underlying issues surfaced, or where a particular approach and strategy proved effective in engaging the attention of those who needed to re-think their positions and postures on this critical issue.

We will attempt to track these developments by reviewing four separate and significant events that are the milestones in the journey that put gender in the centre of ASPBAE's thematic programming - Chiang Mai, Hua Hin, Bali and Ulan Bator.



The Chiang Mai Experience

Regional Consultation On Gender Training And Planning Priority Areas For The Women's Education Programme, 1997

During the research for this historical overview of Gender Mainstreaming in ASPBAE, some things stood out very vividly. Despite the passage of time, certain events and experiences had imprinted themselves indelibly on the collective memories of a large number of the players whether they were full timers in ASPBAE, or those who played more peripheral roles such as resource persons and consultants. All of those who had been involved with this workshop, referred to this experience as having made a special impression.

It was also at Chiang Mai that a decision was made to recommend to the Executive Committee to convene a special Gender Mainstreaming Committee that would oversee the Gender Mainstreaming effort within ASPBAE.



Participants at the Regional Consultation on Gender Training and Planning, Chiangmai 1997

Gender And Culture In The Asia - South Pacific Context

Some bold and visionary decisions were taken by the succeeding generations of ASPBAE's leadership which bear highlighting. The important ones were:

- ¹₁₅₇₅₀ the decision to involve key leaders within ASPBAE in regular gender training workshops signalled a clear shift in priorities. Several of those interviewed have emphasised that the experience was a powerful one.
- ¹₁₅₇₅₀ the selection of well-known feminists and academics as resource persons to conduct the training for members of the executive was another decision that had far reaching consequences.

Women like *Vasanth Kannabiran* of ASMITA, a well-known and respected feminist and activist with the women's movement in India and internationally, was initially somewhat skeptical about the seriousness of traditional adult education groups with regard to gender issues. *Vasanth* was invited by ASPBAE as a consultant on gender training shortly before the Beijing Women's Conference in 1995.

In South Asia, the study was commissioned to *Srilata Batliwala*. Her study on "The Concept and Practice of Women's Empowerment in South Asia" in 1994 was a pathbreaking initiative to track all existing mechanisms, programs and initiatives to get a picture of how women across South Asia were empowered through education.

Suneeta Dhar talks about how such publications were used to great effect:

"We used opportunities in all forums to spread the message of gender and empowerment. One was *Srilata's* study, the first of its kind. It was designed as a collaboration with FAO, PRIA and with close interaction with the women's movement. Several consultations were held and various documents studied. This was an important way in which the issues of empowerment and women's education became a part of the articulation of many groups. This continues today and the study is still used by most people. I don't think there is a more significant work on education for women's' empowerment. These processes helped in the mobilization of women's groups and brought them into the adult education process. This was a significant bridging that took place leading to many more groups getting involved in the women's education process. "



Participants at a South Pacific Sub-Regional Workshop

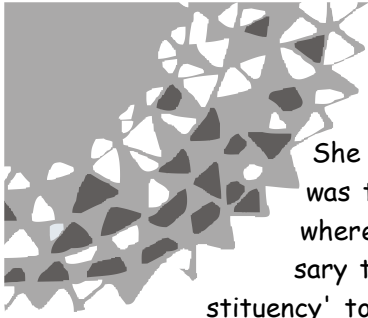
Pit Stops

Between Tagatay 1992 And Darwin 1996: A Time Of Intensive Activity In Training For Women's Empowerment

It was the experience of doing the Study on Education for Women's Empowerment as also of sharing the findings at Darwin and seeing them integrated into future planning and mechanisms, that made Vasanth look more positively at the potential that ASPBAE offered. Her excitement as she recollected her experiences was real and palpable:

"But what happened then, what brought all these pieces together and locked them together was the attention to gender and I think that was what Gender Mainstreaming was all about. Bringing the whole thing together not just separate pieces that had nothing to do with each other, but locking them all together and that's when people like me and a whole lot of others began to feel much more a part of ASPBAE." - *Vasanth*

Detailing her experiences during the series of gender training workshops for ASPBAE members between 1997 and 1999, beginning with the Consultation on Gender Training in Changmai, Vasanth put her finger on something which is perhaps quite special and uniquely ASPBAE in culture, and this has to do with the kind of atmosphere of openness and caring among the group given the extraordinary diversity of individual and national backgrounds.



She recalls how different it was to interact with a group where it was not really necessary to 'fight with your constituency' to get your message across.

That the men present in the ASPBAE gender training workshops were interested in asking questions and contributed to the mutual exploration of new concepts and philosophies which set these apart.

"What I found very nice about the workshop was the fact that everybody who came to the workshop was interested. Till then I had found gender training workshops every where always tended to be a bit hard, for it's almost a fight with your constituency to get your stuff across. But with the ASPBAE gender workshop it has never been like that, it's been very smooth flowing. The men who were present were also asking questions, it has been a kind of mutual exploring." - Vasanth

Vasanth also makes the important point that the diversity of cultures enhanced the depth and seriousness of training exercises for those committed to explore issues and concepts. She highlights the workshop in Bali (1999) on women and violence, where the Bali Declaration was launched. For the purpose of our narrative, it is important to note that the ability to create opportunities to build the links among the tough issues such as sexuality, reproductive rights and violence against women also helped to keep a political perspective to gender in focus rather than prioritize women's education through literacy programmes alone.

Detours And Hairpin Bends

But as we have said before, the journey was not always smooth. Listen to voices like those of Alastair Crombie and others who were candid in putting forward a very different perspective while sharing reflections about the same process.

"At some point we had an Executive Meeting which was preceded by a Gender Mainstreaming workshop, For me it was quite ineffective and I experienced it as rather superficial. It didn't engage with my way of working, and what I recall was that the class cultural defenses were actually more striking. As a man, I became more and more conscious that the women's movement and all the talk of women's empowerment was becoming for many of us counter productive; it was actually creating difficulties and animosities; it was almost threatening."- Alastair (on Chiang Mai, 1997).

Alastair is representative of those men and women, who have had genuine difficulties in understanding gender issues, even while they have shown sensitivity on many other aspects concerning women's issues. These aspects show that the way ASPBAE went about gender concerns was such that it never became confrontationalist. And it is this that *Vasanth* and others have pointed out with appreciation.

For many who are struggling to understand what creates the mind sets and therefore the kind of 'social engineering' required to enable people (both men and women!) to change, it might be useful to listen to a couple of thoughtful responses to this particular concern, since it falls into a space which can be seen both as a building block and as one that can block a process of being

open about gender issues. *Maria Khan* attempts to analyse this process:

"My difficulty then was what I saw as a tendency to assert versus to reach out and convince, a tendency of the women's programme to demand its space, which obviously created ripples and tensions within the organization. Many a debate or a decision making process was almost polarized or seen from an angle which polarized issues around gender lines which I think had a purpose, but which didn't quite help in expanding the circle of the converted. It made the women's program feel good. By sheer stridency for one, and competency not withstanding, it gave them space, but that space was earned not because it was accepted intrinsically within the organization."
- *Maria Khan*

One way or the other, Chiang Mai 1997 was one more important flagpost in the long march, and it was here that concrete recommendations were made to the Executive regarding the road map for Mainstreaming Gender, the actual steps to be put in place, including the decision to build more capacity within ASPBAE's regions by training gender facilitators from across the constituency. The all important question of how to gain 'intrinsic acceptance' at all levels within the organization was identified as a key, continuing concern.

Gender Facilitators Training Hua Hin, Thailand, 1998


Understanding Why And When "Gender" Becomes Threatening!

The workshop at Hua Hin for training gender facilitators was the first in a series of capacity building training events, and was remembered among others by *Chia Mun Onn* whom I interviewed in Singapore in the summer of 2002. He was clearly quite moved by the entire experience.



Participants at the Gender Facilitators Training Workshop, Hua Hin. 1998

"The Gender Facilitators Training Workshop aimed at creating 'gender-awareness' as opposed to 'sex awareness'; the former is a social construct and the assumption is that educational intervention can change the condition. It is not about being born with a penis or a vagina, but what happens after that as one takes on roles and acquires identities in the course of one's lifespan." He adds, "It is difficult for Confucianist societies to do away with the theory of patriarchy: male dominance - female subjugation."
- *Chia Mun onn*



Gigi Francisco, an experienced gender specialist and activist from the Philippines, had been invited to lead this training

workshop in Hua Hin, 1998. Clearly the experience at Hua Hin had given her much food for thought and shed important light on the extreme sensitivity of the entire exercise. As long as the discussion remains within the realm of dealing with 'women's issues', it is relatively acceptable and palatable. But as soon as it is transposed into the more structural framework of social relations, it turns into a threat. This is what Alisatair referred to as "threatening" in his reaction to Chiang Mai.

And *Gigi* goes on to graphically describe other hurdles which needed to be factored in:

"I was invited as external co-facilitator and resource person on gender mainstreaming in 1997. At that time my colleague and I tried to introduce the social relations framework. However I noticed that the groups represented at that particular meeting were more interested on women's issues in and of themselves, rather than in situating women's issues within the context of gender social relations. As far as the context was concerned there seemed to have been a comfortable retreat to the all-encompassing "patriarchal system" without a felt need to interrogate what this means and entails in various sites."- *Gigi Francisco*

She elaborated that the focus on women also provides trade unions and other male dominated organizations the license to accommodate women's issues within their generally gender-blind class-based analyses.

To return to the subtle and yet complex nuances that characterize the spaces between

women's education and empowerment as distinct from gender consciousness, *Gigi* observes with insight,

"There was a subtle resistance to a shift from women to gender. This appeared to be coming from two streams. The first were mixed organizations that did not wish to disturb their work on women in the context of class-based politics (women as victims, women as nurturers, women as partners of men). The others were feminist women who were very much into violence against women and reproductive rights issues. They can be placed into what can be termed the radical feminist stream who are worried about the technicalization of women's issues if shifted to gender; of losing the already won women's safe space to male intrusion and surveillance; and who were critical of development agencies whose funding for women -only activities decreased when a shift to gender occurred."

- *Gigi Francisco*

Looking Through A Gender Lens

Most of the people interviewed have alluded to the real difficulties in making the transition between merely increasing programs and priorities for women, and actually using a 'gender lens' to go deeper into the underlying questions, the socialization within diverse cultures and the challenge of arriving at a common understanding. This becomes especially complex and sensitive while dealing with the bewildering plurality and diversity that ASPBAE represents.

Anyone who has sat through the agonizing process of drafting International Documents knows just how difficult it is to find language

which is acceptable to governmental representatives who come from every possible shade and complexity of social, political and patriarchal codes. All too often those speaking on behalf of governments, take refuge behind the veil of culture, tradition and religion while protecting obscurantist, reactionary and ultra conservative positions with regard to women's rights.

These concerns need careful assessment and thinking by the leadership within ASPBAE as they chart the direction of the next steps in Gender Mainstreaming.

The When, How And Why Of Gender?

Leaders like *Rajesh Tandon* of Participatory Research And Action In Asia (PRIA), and former President of ASPBAE, always alert to the many delicate sensibilities and nuances of handling such a wide cross-section and plurality of peoples and cultures, dwelt on this sensitivity. He referred to an incident in the post Darwin period regarding what he calls the 'different realities on gender'. He speaks frankly on the dangers of " running too fast and ahead of the mob " until there comes a point when someone cries halt and draws on the only weapon they can, which is 'their culture.' When asked, "What would you say has benefited, been enriched or changed because of the whole thrust to gain depth in Gender Mainstreaming?", *Rajesh* replied,

"Let us not forget that ASPBAE's raison d'etre is Adult Education. So we need to be true to ourselves and follow the approaches of adult learning processes. We need to be able to make our dream of getting some place, consistent with the methodology we use, and it would be best for us to follow the Adult Education Methodology."

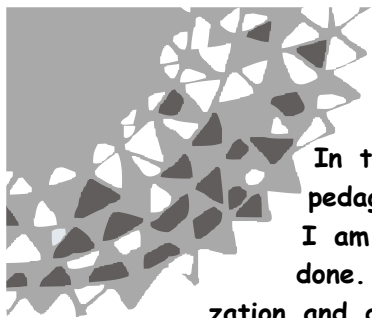
We need to have clarity on what the Adult Education process is all about. We will start from where the learner is. Whatever is the issue, let them think about their reality, analyze the situation, gain exposure from another reality point.

Rajesh Tandon elaborates further:

"In my view, the positive part of Gender Mainstreaming both organizationally and programmatically in ASPBAE has been gender education for women's empowerment as opposed to women's education as a routine part of the program of many member organizations. I think that is positive. Even some traditional literacy programs, worker's programmes and vocational education programs, which were gender blind earlier, have been influenced."



Elizabeth Cruzada from the Philippines



In terms of advancing the pedagogy and methodology, I am not sure much has been done. I feel that systematization and documentation and that sort of analytical work which translates experiences into theory has not been adequately done. For this, a sort of a research agenda is needed."

Some More Milestones

Seoul and Madang, 1998

The pace of the journey quickened and the tempo of activities moved rapidly between

Hua Hin in 1998 and Bali in 1999, addressing several gaps such as the systematization, documentation and translations of experiences into theoretical and policy positions. A number of key decisions which were visionary and would have far-reaching implications for mainstreaming gender within the ASPBAE structure at all levels were put in place.

Bali, 1999

The Bali Workshop on Violence Against Women, was yet another pathbreaking step towards prioritizing gender among several levels of leadership in ASPBAE. It provided a forum for the members of the women's

February 1998, Seoul: Constitution of ASPBAE Gender Steering Committee And The Full Day Meeting Of The Committee In Madang PNG

This phase witnessed:

$\frac{1}{15750}$ The development of a framework for assessing the gender perspective in ASPBAE's programs and also an initial documenting of ASPBAE's strategy for mainstreaming gender

$\frac{1}{15750}$ Preparations for a regional training kit for gender training were put in place

$\frac{1}{15750}$ A new generation of women in ASPBAE took their places in various levels of leadership, thus consolidating the gains of the processes and strategies for change

$\frac{1}{15750}$ Gender based PRA training was designed for literacy and HIV/AIDS education

$\frac{1}{15750}$ Integration of gender in thematic programs was highlighted

$\frac{1}{15750}$ Application of gender benchmarks and indicators to all thematic programs including gender balanced participation

$\frac{1}{15750}$ There was a clear gender focus to the leadership program, whilst also introducing a dedicated 'gender page' in the ASPBAE Newsletter

$\frac{1}{15750}$ A regional program on violence against women in the context of adult learning was launched, thus readying the organization for the next major event at Bali

programme to deepen their understanding and analysis on concepts of 'violence against women'. It recognized that education strategies and programmes for women should be sensitive to the different effects and impacts of 'violence' on the learning needs and situation of women.

But before the journey reaches Mongolia there is an important diversion we must make, namely to understand the levels at which parallel processes within bi-lateral, multi-lateral and other agencies were proceeding to put in place the mechanisms with which to fortify the resolve of millions across the globe.

Keeping Within The Track

A Conceptual Framework On Gender Mainstreaming Within A Feminist Discourse

Traversing new territory requires examining the general principles governing the discipline of Adult Education. The path can be made

clearer by expanding vision. It is necessary to move beyond the single organizational frame of ASPBAE and examine the theoretical constructs around gender which several UN and other agencies have developed in the post-Beijing phase. This will help us to appreciate the policy level decisions within the organization and also to develop some practical benchmarks and indicators for judging the extent to which gender has been mainstreamed into the sinews and bloodstream of ASPBAE.

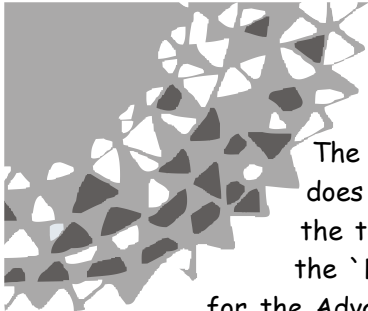
Defining Mainstreaming

Understanding The How And The Why?

At a Rotary Meeting on gender and development in a small town in India, a very puzzled gentleman put his hand up during the discussion. His question was, "Madam, thank you for your excellent talk, but can you please explain to me what you actually mean by gender - surely you must mean sex or 'women', why gender?"



ASPBAE Executive Council Nani Zulminarni from Indonesia, Former ASPBAE Programme Officer Marivic Raquiza from the Philippines, Vasanth Kannanbiran from India at the Gender Steering Committee Meeting in Ulan Bator, Mongolia, 2002



The word 'gender' in fact does not feature in any one of the ten headings listed under the 'Forward Looking Strategies

for the Advancement Of Women,' the main policy document of the Nairobi Conference.

For those of us in the women's movement, for those who were already separating feminist thinking from a purely 'women's issue' agenda, and for those who were using the terminology of gender in the course of their work and writing, it was a time of considerable effort and strategizing around how best to educate or rather re-educate those around us. Many of us have spent several years struggling to ensure that people and policy makers alike are able to differentiate be-

tween 'sex' and 'gender' and to put gender strongly in the center of all policies for women.

We were fighting for an acceptance of the fact that discrimination was primarily a socially created construction, and was strongly legitimized and validated by structures of family and society, education and culture. Today, two decades after Nairobi and almost a decade after Beijing, we can say that we have been successful, to the extent that the language, if not the concepts, have been co-opted globally by governments, the United Nations, and society as a whole. However, the real problems lie in the extent to which this is internalized and integrated into the working of society.

Declaration of the Regional Workshop on Violence Against Women In The Context Of Adult Learning: November 27-30, 1999, Bali, Indonesia

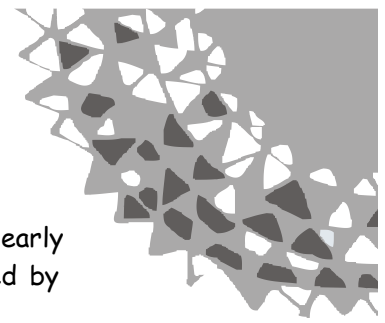
We, adult educators from sixteen (16) countries of the region, realize the need to focus on the pressing issue of violence against women. With increasing globalization, the revolution in information technology, militarization and the rise in religious fundamentalism, newer forms of VAW are emerging. These need to be dealt with appropriately at the conceptual and systemic levels so that such violence is neither perpetuated nor further institutionalized.

We recognize that globalization exacerbates poverty, especially that of women. It erodes their ability to support their families and increases their vulnerability to both sex-trafficking and health-related risks such as HIV/AIDS.

1. The rise in religious fundamentalism and identity politics across the world is played out on women's bodies and their lives with utter disregard to their human rights and their security.
2. Growing tensions within and across borders, which lead to militarization directly affect women's survival making them more vulnerable to gender-specific exploitation

We recognize the need for a consolidated effort to combat these newer forms of VAW and to conceptualize and devise adult-learning strategies to address these issues. These should include participatory research from a woman's perspective with an appreciation of their diversity. We are also gravely concerned about the way development and population control programs have appropriated the language of empowerment without serious commitment to women's rights.

We urge adult educators to integrate an understanding of the many dimensions of violence against women into all aspects of their work with communities.



Several definitions of gender mainstreaming are currently in circulation as also analytical frameworks within which to locate the discourse on gender. The ASPBAE Basic Gender Training Kit uses the Harvard Analytical Framework, a popular, liberal feminist approach based on sex role theory.

As part of this exercise of tracing the evolution of

the gender perspective in ASPBAE

historically, and finding a relatively uncomplicated conceptual framework within which to assess the process, I have selected one, which, coming as it does from the United Nations System, is more likely to find acceptance within the several diverse constituencies represented by the geographic spread of ASPBAE.

Walking The Talk

for Gender Mainstreaming.

The official UNDP policy document in fact states clearly that GM has been endorsed by the Beijing Platform for Action (Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995, paras. 79, 105, 123, 141, 164, 189, 202, 229, 238, 252, 273)

as the approach by which goals under each of its critical areas

of concern are to be achieved:

"...governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes, so that, before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively."

Gender Mainstreaming According To UNDP

"Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality."


Although the why question is still not adequately addressed, let us assume that the momentum generated by Beijing, at both the NGO and Governmental conclaves, created a set of imperatives and urgency which could no longer be evaded or postponed. It is proof enough, if indeed proof were required, that all the years of work, mobilizing, campaigning, planning, researching and confronting were not in vain.



ASPBAE's first woman Secretary General Maria Lourdes Almazan Khan

Why Mainstream Gender?

Many UN Organizations have chosen to use Beijing as their reference point in operationalizing and implementing an agenda



The Strategy on Mainstreaming Gender (UNDP)

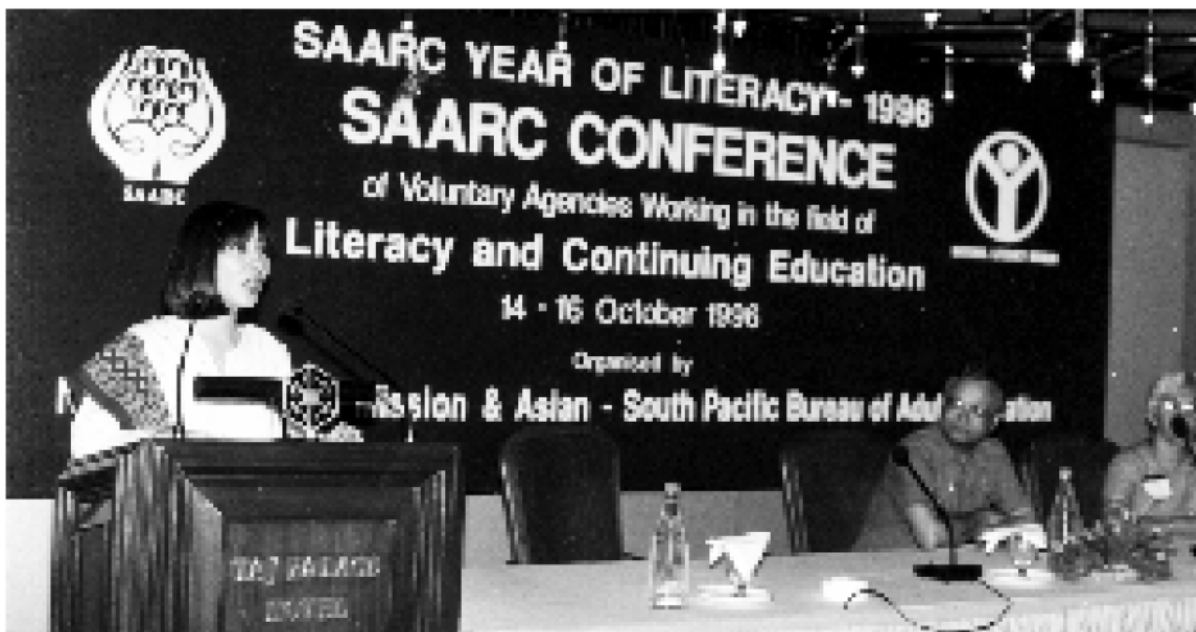
This is perhaps also among the most comprehensive. Perhaps this could serve as a useful point of reference from which to develop a theoretical framework of evaluation and assessment and attempt to assess ASPBAE's own policy and practice, although several groups including UNIFEM and others have done extensive work on this matter.

"Taking account of gender concerns in all policy, programme, administrative and financial activities, and in organisational procedures, thereby contributing to a profound organisational transformation. Specifically, bringing the outcome of socio-economic and policy analysis into all decision-making processes of the organisation, and tracking the outcome. This includes both the core policy decisions of the organisation, and the small every-day decisions of implementation."

These policy level statements and affirmations do not necessarily translate into good or best practice nor do they indicate that we are further along the road to a greatly enhanced level of gender sensitivity or justice. However, they are important indicators and provide useful space within which struggles for vastly improved and qualitatively achievable change can be located. More importantly they are critical policy indicators and benchmarks to measure and influence action by government and non government actors alike.

Why This Assessment Of Gender Mainstreaming Within ASPBAE?

Most groups tend to be content that they have incorporated into their mission statements the commitment to gender equity, justice and mainstreaming. But the journey to get to the point where even a written or verbal commitment to this objective is reached, is itself a long and rocky one. And



Advocacy at South Asia Sub-Regional Conference on Literacy and Continuing Education, New Delhi, 1996

this documentation of the process within ASPBAE hopes to provide guideposts and a road map to those wishing to travel the same path.

In the post Beijing decade, government and non government groups alike scrambled to give shape to the policies articulated in the Beijing Declaration. A number of fairly comprehensive exercises in drafting detailed steps and mechanisms and guidelines towards this end were undertaken by several institutions.

What is the criteria for building a gender equitable organization; what methodologies are useful and appropriate especially in an education based environment; and where does ASPBAE stand within this frame of analysis?

Building A Gender-Equitable Organization

The UNDP Guidance Note on Gender Mainstreaming emphasizes the importance of a "care-based,empowering organization" as a pre-condition for gender mainstreaming to be sustainable. There are very few organizations that satisfy this demanding criteria fully. One point on which there is general agreement is that organizational restructuring and gender mainstreaming must be based on a broad consensus within the organization. The decision should be `marketed' before it is taken, not `sold' afterwards.

Looking at the process which ASPBAE has practised, it has been the principle of `marketing' the entire process of restructuring and gender mainstreaming!

Gender Balance Within The Office

It is recognized that a committed group of women in senior positions is the single most important internal factor in ensuring the success of gender mainstreaming at the organizational level.

Capacity Building

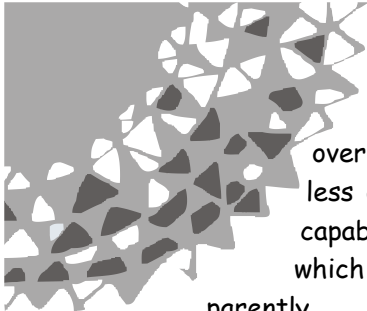
Other critical actions, include allocation of programme resources for women's empowerment and adequate resources for gender mainstreaming.

Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

Space for the expression of disagreement and the resolution of conflict needs to be set up at the outset of the organizational restructuring process. The decisions and actions involved in gender mainstreaming will ultimately affect each person in the organization. They are therefore likely to be controversial. Where gender is the issue, emotions run high, since men and women are reacting from differing standpoints, each sees a different reality.

The process of `gendered' organization development must create an environment conducive to reflection and analysis which goes beyond gender issues. People should be able to identify and own the areas where organizational practice falls short of or contradicts organizational values.

One of the questions which inevitably come up in the course of Gender Mainstreaming in organizations, is whether such a strategy



over-privileges women, regardless of their professional capabilities. This is an issue which must be addressed transparently

A team-based approach can be a central strategy with enormous potential, it can lead to the enhancement of people's capacities to own and take responsibility for their own work. Gender Mainstreaming creates opportunities for women and men at all levels to participate as equals in agenda-setting and decision-making within the organization. A mainstreaming strategy also builds in support for women to move into spaces and roles from which they have hitherto been excluded.

One can with justifiable pride point to the considered policy and enabling decisions which led to the gradual balance of representation within the ASPBAE Executive Council.

Member organizations may be similarly scrutinized.

Women, as much as men, can feel threatened

by the demands of such a process of change. It would be naive to presume that gender biases are the only determining factor in career progression within the organization. It is important to help individuals to examine their own experiences and perceptions of exclusion and privilege, and differentiate between those which stem largely from gender inequality and inequity, and those which reflect differences in competence and performance. The resource implications need to be addressed with funds mobilized for Gender Mainstreaming in order to ensure synergy and maximize impact.

Integration Of Gender Into All Work Areas

Experience in several organizations has demonstrated that despite policy focus on integration of cross-cutting issues and creation of forums for inter-division collaboration and synergy, the various program divisions often continue to function in largely self-contained and water-tight compartments. Often, gender issues are seen in isolation from other developmental concerns such as sustainability,



Members from China during the Seminar on International Co-operation in Adult Education, Beijing 2003

poverty and people's participation. Such a framework leads inevitably to the marginalization of women and women's concerns from the policy discourse within the organization. It is therefore essential to locate gender issues in a larger context, as a critical part of a value-framework which sees empowerment of socially and economically marginalized groups as central sustainable development. But the very fact that an organization such as UNDP chooses to highlight the gaps and the potential areas of conflict, indicates how important process and careful preparation is in the entire exercise of *Mainstreaming Gender*.

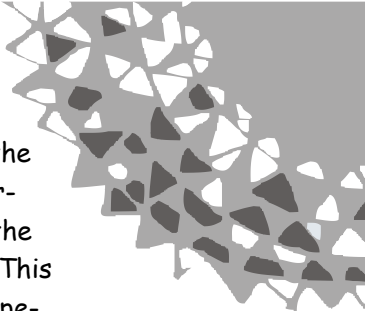
Gender Screening And Gender Lens

UNDP documents and policy on gender also point out the importance of not looking at gender equality in isolation, but to situate it as one of the outcomes of a participatory and open process of program development involving all stakeholders including women. The need for 'gender screening' and the use of a 'gender lens' to look at proposals is certainly important as an immediate intervention strategy.

ASPBAE's practice to put in place trained gender facilitators is in keeping with the overall strategy of building capacity in a gradual, planned manner.

Gender Consultants, Training and Resource Support

Any agency which subscribes to giving gender issues a priority will have to keep a watch on how well gender concerns have been integrated in the planning process and the pro-



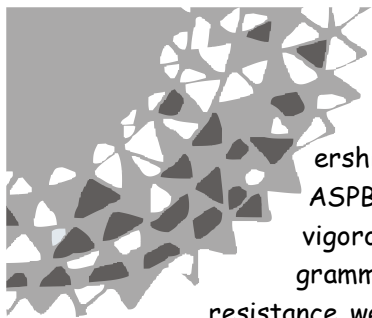
gram content, and also on the manner in which these interventions are played out in the process of implementation. This is easier said than done, especially given the fact that the absence of a pool of appropriate gender expertise at the local level often becomes a justification for sidelining the gender issue. As we try to understand the historical process whereby gender became central in the organizational vision and structure of ASPBAE, it might be useful to do an informal assessment of what were the specific steps that have actually enabled ASPBAE to demonstrate such visible achievements on the road to gender parity.

An Informal "Gender Diagnosis" of ASPBAE Policy And Programme Decisions

Theoretical frameworks are useful in so far as they provide benchmarks, objectively designed and defined, against which institutions may measure their achievements along a gender table. As with all such guarantees on paper it is a matter of requisite 'political will' to actually 'make it happen'. This section delineates the ways in which political will within ASPBAE was created. This is not a rigorous assessment process, that still lies in the future. This exercise is more by way of informal assessments based on conversations and references to existing documents.

Evaluation Of The Women's Programme

By now, with Tagatay, Beijing and Darwin behind a new spirit clearly infused the lead-



ership at several levels within ASPBAE. It was at its most vigorous in the womens programme where rebellion and resistance were both at work!

The then co-ordinator of the ASPBAE Womens Programme, *Elizabeth Crusada*, underscored the following 'gains'.

Gains Of The Women's Programme

¹/₁₅₇₅₀ It provided a regional platform for debate and discussions on conceptual issues relating to gender and education

¹/₁₅₇₅₀ It enabled the building of an extensive network of feminist educators

¹/₁₅₇₅₀ By ASPBAE's participation in the Beijing proceses, it enabled an enhanced profile within the development discourse in the region

¹/₁₅₇₅₀ It also provided significant opportunities for 'leadership building' of women in regional and global settings, be it the Executive Council of ASPBAE or the ICAE

¹/₁₅₇₅₀ Pioneering strategies of integrating in-country work with regional and global initiatives

At the same time the evaluation pointed out that 'Gender Mainstreaming' needed to be operationalized in the programs and functioning of ASPBAE and its member organizations.

Logically this pointed to the decision to work in the direction of taking gender beyond the women's programme

Most important, it highlighted the fact that while the dynamism of the Women's Programme had strongly influenced the thinking and practices in some aspects, it operated essentially in parallel to other programs in ASPBAE.

The debates of gender and education remained largely confined to those involved in the Women's Program. Consequently, there has been limited integration of gender perspectives in the formulation and implementation of other ASPBAE programme areas.'

The same evaluation suggests that while keeping the goal of mainstreaming gender into all levels of ASPBAE remains paramount, there is also a consciousness of the challenges posed by two important dimensions linked to the nature of ASPBAE :

¹/₁₅₇₅₀ ASPBAE as a mixed regional adult education organization.

¹/₁₅₇₅₀ A constituency of a bewilderingly huge diversity and range of member organizations and affiliates

These assessments led to a gender diagnosis and the presentation of the Framework For A Gender Strategy document.

Gender Diagnosis

The first attempt at something approximating to a Gender Diagnosis is found in the report by the Secretary General to the ASPBAE Regional Consultation on Gender Training held at Chiang Mai in October 1997. Till 1991 and Tagatay, the word gender made no appearance in ASPBAE literature, reaffirming the comment made earlier in this document regarding the blurred lines between gender and women's

education which characterized the discourse in so many organizations when it came to the question of women.

It is illuminating to look at the Secretary General's report to the Executive Council.

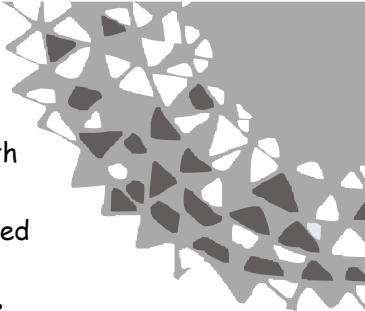
In a detailed account of where ASPBAE stood with regard to gender prior to the First General Assembly, *Maria Khan* refers to some workshops and other activities linked to literacy networks and a Regional Consultation in China in 1988. In the same note she mentions that the term 'gender' itself made an appearance in ASPBAE literature only after Tagatay in 1991 where the concern for gender balance was also enshrined in the amended ASPBAE constitution, and the Assembly itself identified 'women's education for empowerment' as a priority programme area.

The same report proceeds to analyse various data on representation of women in decision making structures of ASPBAE.

Women members averaged only between 8.3 to 11 per cent in the composition the Executive Council during the period 1987 to 1991. This grew to nearly 50 per cent women in 1996 - a dramatic change indeed!

During the same period it was also reported that the participation of women in Executive meetings and at higher leadership levels was uneven.

All round participation of women at Tagatay remained at around 37%, whereas the number jumped to 49 per cent by Darwin!



The Women's Caucus in both Assemblies played a critical role in pushing for a balanced representation as also the commitment to 'affirmative action for women'. Since 1994, (the year that budgeting was systematized in ASPBAE), the Women's Programme ranked either highest or second highest in allocations among different thematic areas.

ASPBAE's budget allocation to the Women's Programme between 1997 and 1999 averaged to 12% of its total programmes allocations which increased to 13% in the year 2002-2003.

Framework For A Gender Strategy: Presentation to Executive Council in Chiang Mai, 1997

In its opening statement, the Gender Strategy Document refers to ASPBAE'S vision of building a global order which empowers people and its commitment to promote the learning of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, thereby providing the rationale for its goal of mainstreaming gender and evolving a 'gender strategy' which will provide the 'ideological and practical framework' for this effort. Item 2.1 of the document, while detailing the 'building bricks' for the attainment of a just and humane society, talks of 'equality in gender relations' and its commitment to ensure that 'an active and deliberate commitment to gender equality will inform its strategy.'



Excerpts From ASPBAE's Gender Framework Document

4.1 ASPBAE is fully aware of the fact that although the need for a gender perspective is widely acknowledged and a commitment to gender equality is generally accepted gender biases are so deeply internalized and emotionally rooted that raising gender issues (except on the scale of atrocities) can cause discomfort and a fear of extremism and radicalism.

4.2 There is a need therefore to work systematically towards building a gender perspective and deepening understanding of gender issues, primarily of power and authority between women and men. ASPBAE will therefore strive to build a vision of a gender just society and will make a systematic effort in deepening and widening the scope of that vision among all members of the ASPBAE community.

4.3 Fundamental to a gender perspective is the perception that gender inequalities are socially constructed and the fact that the processes by which they are constructed are not confined to the household and family but extend across a range of institutions including those that specifically seek to address exclusion and marginalization in society. ASPBAE will therefore attempt to pay attention to the way in which institutions which govern social life operate to produce an unequal distribution of power, resources and responsibilities thus reinforcing and reproducing gender inequality.

5.1 ASPBAE is conscious of the diversity of cultures, communities and social realities across the region as well as of the fact that gender is constructed differently across a spectrum of factors

5.2 ASPBAE is aware that a rapidly globalizing world economy, the resurgence of religious fundamentalism and cultural nationalism, and the sharpening conflict along race, caste, class and communal lines will influence not only material gender inequalities but will shape the construction of gender identities and the articulation of gender issues in the next millennium. This links directly to ASPBAE's concern for building alternative notions of masculinity and femininity that will counter the stereotypes in current usage that negate the diverse and complex realities of everyday existence in a fast changing environment.

5.3 ASPBAE plans to build capacity within its community of adult educators in the region on gender issues. It is expected that gender integration in ASPBAE's work would have reached satisfactory levels by the Third General Assembly.

ASPBAE's Understanding Of The Gender Perspective

Clarity marks ASPBAE's perspective. It prioritizes education for women's empowerment, where gender is a critical component of sustainable development, universalization of education, workers' education for social development and education for peace and human rights. At the same time it builds in the objective of integrating a gender perspective at the highest levels of policy through adult education programmes at all levels.

The Framework Document also refers to some other interesting and fundamental issues connected with the construction of gender:

Gender Steering Committee Meeting, Madang, February 1999

The next set of discussions and decisions took place in Madang, PNG at the first meeting Gender Steering Committee (GSC) which was set up at SEOUL in February 1998. The objectives identified were:

- ¹/₁₅₇₅₀ To review the gender mainstreaming activities of ASPBAE since 1998
- ¹/₁₅₇₅₀ To identify Gender Benchmarks to guide succeeding processes of Gender Mainstreaming across ASPBAE governance and policies
- ¹/₁₅₇₅₀ To define the future work of the GSC in preparation of the Third General Assembly of ASPBAE.

The Madang report of the meeting acknowl-

edged the role of the Hua Hin Workshop in training gender facilitators. A big step was taken in identifying as priority the need to build gender facilitation skills in local languages.

This was a major move towards ensuring that the Gender Mainstreaming effort reached out to the ASPBAE membership at local levels.

The other important decision was to integrate a module on gender awareness concepts within the Leadership Development Program of ASPBAE and to 'mainstream' these within the other priority areas Policy Advocacy and Networking.

Finally, how best to integrate gender awareness into all other thematic areas by customizing its application and to link Gender concepts with the experiences and competence of the facilitators.

The Madang GSC meeting agreed to set certain benchmarks, for monitoring the process of Mainstreaming Gender. Based on the concept note prepared by *Gert Ranjo-Libang* of the Philippines, the group agreed to:

- ¹/₁₅₇₅₀ Prepare specific indicators for each of the strategies such as advocacy, policy research, leadership development, information dissemination and networking
- ¹/₁₅₇₅₀ Develop indicators at a conceptual level of the differential needs of men and women, roles and responsibilities, and access to resources and information in diverse contexts
- ¹/₁₅₇₅₀ Draw up an extensive list of ten indicators on assessing the extent to which Gender Mainstreaming had taken root in the organization.



Following The Gender Road Map

From Madang in the South East Asian Region the action moved to Kathmandu in South Asia, and in the crucial ASPBAE Executive Council (2001 - 2004) Meeting held in Kathmandu, Nepal, February 10-12 2000 the road map of Gender Mainstreaming was further delineated and reaffirmed.

This process of 'tracking' the many dimensions of achieving a successful level of Gender Mainstreaming within ASPBAE has been an absorbing one. As the various pieces of the puzzle have fallen into place, it becomes clear that the leadership has worked to a systematic plan ever since Tagatay and Darwin. There have been few deviations and detours in following the road map that had been identified after Beijing.

Factors which are important to bear in mind include the meticulous attention to details evident in the preparatory notes to the Executive Council, where the preparation of a clear historical background enables both forward thinking and decision making.

In the year 2000, the Executive Council was presented with an almost irrefutable argument for Gender Mainstreaming to go forward, including the encoding of commitment to Gender in the ASPBAE Constitution and the Organisational Norms. It was also demonstrated how effectively cumulative attempts to broaden appreciation of gender perspectives within ASPBAE has created a wide pool of men and women imbued with a greater level of consciousness regarding gender issues. In addition ASPBAE has also piloted innovative gender-sensitive training modules relating to literacy, HIV/AIDS education and women's rights, in local languages.

The Kathmandu discussion note goes on to recommend other strategies on GM with regard to the role of the leadership:

¹₁₅₇₅₀ that Gender Mainstreaming be adopted and pursued as an ASPBAE-wide initiative, involving both men and women (so there was no question of it remaining 'a women's thing'!) Also that the composition of such training include key members of the Executive and the womens programme, in addition to the ASPBAE President and Secretary General

¹₁₅₇₅₀ that the Executive strongly endorses the application and further development of ASPBAE Gender Benchmarks, together with a caveat that the terms of reference for future partners of ASPBAE should explicitly include a commitment to GM efforts within the given programme area, in addition to recommendations on training and capacity building of mixed pools of gender trainers drawn from all the several cluster groups within ASPBAE. This will ensure both horizontal and vertical integration of gender into the organization

¹₁₅₇₅₀ that both Programme and Organisational Benchmarks carry details of how future action is to be designed both at conceptual and activity levels.

In light of the expectations and guidelines set out in the UNDP Gender Mainstreaming Profile which was earlier described, this documentary analysis provides enough evidence of the extent to which ASPBAE as an organization has adhered to an ideal theoretical gender framework .

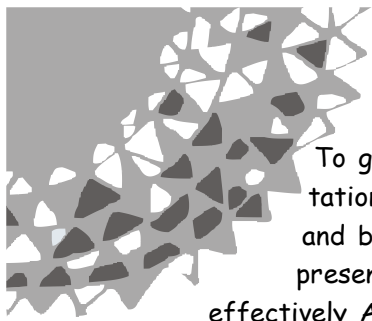
Moving From Ideas To Action and Implementation

An important aspect to notice as we recreate this road map to mainstreaming gender is the amazing geographic sweep which is reflected in the choice of locations and venues for holding ASPBAE events.

Tagatay - Darwin - Chiang Mai - Bali - Seoul - Hua Hin
Kathmandu - Islamabad - Lahore - Dhaka - Colombo
Beijing - Ulan Bator - Taipeh - Madang - Medan.



The names evoke their own charisma, and the destinations virtually straddle the huge diversity, geographic and cultural, of the Asian region.



To get a flavour of implementation strategies on the ground, and before we come to the present and review briefly how effectively ASPBAE has translated and implemented this undoubtedly impressive array of governance related decisions in practice we make an important halt at another place in the lexicon of ASPBAE legend where additional steps on the historic journey to Gender Mainstreaming were created, namely the meeting of the GSC in 2002 at Ulan Bator, Mongolia.

Ulan Bator, 2002: Talking Gender At A Frontier Outpost!

In the fall of 2002, several of us from across Asia and the South Pacific, and one or two from further a-field, traveled long distances to a place which has always resonated in most peoples minds as a place to visit some day. ASPBAE organized the Workshop on Engendering Policies on Learning: Regional Advocacy Training on Education for Women's Empowerment, in Ulan Bator, Mongolia. Ably led by the indefatigable *Baljinyam*, she provided a perfect opportunity for people to meet and interact. International guests had an opportunity to interact with local women's organisations thereby providing a fillip to gender issues with local participants.



Baljinyam from Mongolia, Executive Council Member Junko Koninobu from Japan and Lalita Ramdas

A meeting of the Gender Mainstreaming Committee was also scheduled as part of this event. The decisions taken at these meetings contribute important steps towards where ASPBAE gender policies and implementation find themselves today as ASPBAE approaches its fortieth year of existence.

Four important areas were highlighted:

1. A study on policy imperatives on women's education within ASPBAE
2. Exploring possible lobbying opportunities on Adult Education within the framework of the Global Campaign On Education For All (GCE)
3. Taking forward Gender Mainstreaming
4. Building a peace education initiative

The Mongolia meeting was significant because it also surfaced the all important question of peace building and conflict prevention, an emerging area for ASPBAE. Presentations by practitioners from the region preceded a vigorous discussion and a mandate was created for the leadership to take forward. The emerging focus on peace education, echoes in some basic ways, the call given at Nairobi in 1985 for women to take the lead in peace and development.

Beyond Boundaries

Several concrete policy measures have been put in place by the leadership in ASPBAE over the years in the post Tagatay period. In order to complete our journey to the present, we need to examine ways in which these paper and policy level commitments can be seen in contemporary practice. The examples from around the region, most of which do find detailed mention in the annual reports,

primarily highlight the confidence with which ASPBAE's leadership has taken initiatives to move their commitment to gender and equity.

¹/₁₅₇₅₀ ASPBAE GLOBAL: through interventions in the Global Campaign for Education as part of the millennium commitment to Education For All .

¹/₁₅₇₅₀ ASPBAE REGIONAL: concrete follow up on the policy decision to engender each of the several thematic areas .

¹/₁₅₇₅₀ ASPBAE NATIONAL: by building women's capacity to track policy commitments on girls education and literacy as seen in a case study from India.

We now look at each one of these action areas in some detail.

Gender Dimensions Of EFA

How is ASPBAE instrumental in influencing gender awareness inputs into other areas of activity?

A good example is the campaign on Education for All where ASPBAE plays a key role in partnership with the Global Campaign On Education. A paper entitled *Gender Dimensions of EFA - NGO and CSO Experiences* - synthesizes contributions of NGOs to the EFA 2000 Assessments, and concludes that there is a serious North-South Divide among NGOs and CSOs with regard to perceptions on gender. It calls attention to the 'gender blind' nature of most of the groups working in education where there is a serious lacunae in capacity for gender analysis.

It might be worth noting that the battle to insert a strong gender dimension in the analyses of literacy or basic education goes all the way back to the International Task

Force on Literacy in the nineteen eighties, and even the launch of EFA at Jomtien in 1990. It is logical therefore that ASPBAE has prioritized its inputs and built a presence at regional and international policy events on EFA. The examples quoted below provide a useful show case of the kind of forums where ASPBAE has participated, contributed, and kept the gender focus visible.

South Asia Meeting of Education Ministers on EFA, Islamabad May 2003

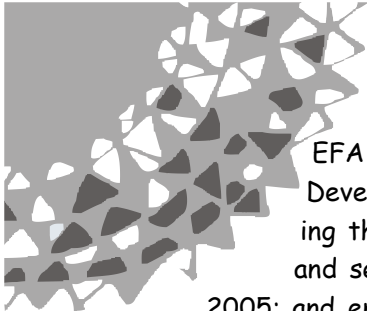
ASPBAE and GCE together drafted a statement on the major educational concerns in the region which was then presented to the ministers by the CSOs present. Quality issues, special focus on girls, greater focus on adult education, and involvement of CSOs were some of the issues highlighted.

UNESCO Working Group on EFA

ASPBAE has been an active member of this, bringing to light issues of gender tracking, equity, and quality, HIV/AIDs education as also action around the literacy decade. There is close interaction with the GCE, calling attention to increased donor commitment and a singular focus to primary education goals of EFA in exclusion of several others.

Strategy Meeting of the United Girls' Education Initiative at Istanbul, Turkey in October 2003

This ten year inter-agency initiative includes among its goals: the mounting of a sustained campaign to improve quality and availability of girls education in support of gender related



EFA goals and the Millenium Development Goals; of narrowing the gender gap in primary and secondary education by

2005; and ensuring that by 2015 boys and girls alike will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. The meeting agreed on a number of key action points with a major focus on gender equity and girls access.

EFA High Level Group Meeting, November 2003, New Delhi, India

ASPBAE representative *Maria Khan* was the CSO speaker in the session on 'Achieving Gender Parities by 2015'. Here the emphasis was on giving immediate attention to gender parity in secondary education; redressing relative neglect of adolescents in the 11-14 age group; emphasizing literacy programmes for women as a means of developing a literate home environment.

Policy Research on Adult Education

Participation in the GCE research "A Fair Chance : Attaining Gender Equality in Basic Education By 2005"

ASPBAE Input into UNESCO Global Monitoring Report on Gender in Education

Paper entitled "EFA in India : Going up the Down Staircase?" This paper argues that the prevailing emphasis on primary education should not detract from provisioning for adult education since it is important to see the two together.

Although there are several other events and collaborations, these serve to illustrate the

increasingly wide range of ASPBAE activities, and the continuity of gender focus through a range of policy, partnership and capacity building exercises and events.

Interweaving Gender Into ASPBAE Thematic Areas

In a note circulated to all lead agency co-ordinators and gender facilitators by the GSC in the period between 2000-2001, they were encouraged to apply the gender benchmarks and indicators in all their areas of programmatic activity.

The lead agency concept was an interesting idea which had been operational in ASPBAE over a period of time and which did enable focused attention to one or other thematic programme since the lead agencies were themselves experienced and often took leadership on one or other specific area of concern within their own regions. ASMITA in Hyderabad, India, was designated lead agency for gender during which time *Vasanth Kannabiran*, as the nodal person from the lead agency, was able to provide direction and conceptual clarity to the organization as a whole.

Nani Zulminari, a long time member of ASPBAE based in Indonesia, has been extremely active in the Women's Programme as also with the Peace and Conflict Resolution thematic. In the course of a long bus ride to visit a field project while in Ulan Batar, Mongolia in 2002, *Nani* reflected at some length on what she saw as the unique experience of mainstreaming gender within ASPBAE. She expressed her appreciation of the way gender had been put explicitly on the ASPBAE agenda, actively supported by men like Rajesh who provided the right kind of leadership in an organization which had been hitherto so totally male dominated.

However, at the same time she also expressed her concerns regarding the sustainability of Gender Mainstreaming in a structure where thematic divisions make it difficult to bring women together on a purely women's or gender platform.

Thoughtful women like *Nani* are looking ahead to a situation where member organizations should jointly take responsibility for the Gender Mainstreaming activity, rather than it being seen as a concern only for the Women's Programme.

This was especially visible in the areas of HIV/AIDS Prevention Education; Citizenship Education, and also in the area of Women in Conflict.

¹₁₅₇₅₀ The application of PRA to training methodologies in HIV/AIDS prevention education at the MEKONG Sub-regional Training Workshop in Hua Hin, Thailand in Oct 1999 was particularly successful. Participants from Laos PDR, Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam have already begun to apply these in their work and more plans are in place to deepen this understanding.

¹₁₅₇₅₀ Similarly the Kathmandu workshop in April 1999 on *Gender Concerns for Women Workers and Occupational Health* explored a number of gender related issues affecting women and workers in South Asia.

¹₁₅₇₅₀ Engendering Citizenship and Governance took strides ahead with a series of workshops held in the South Pacific (PNG). The major focus was on increasing and building capacity for women's participation in governance and public life.

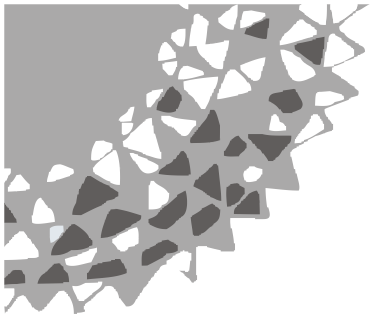
¹₁₅₇₅₀ Peace and Conflict Prevention through Education, a relatively recent addition into the range of ASPBAE's programmes, has

made some useful beginnings through a series of activities, primarily in Indonesia, South Asia and Melanesia in 2002/2003. Much of the energy and support that drives these activities also derives from many who are active in the Womens Programme.

¹₁₅₇₅₀ ASPBAE has also played an active role in Forums like the Asia Social Forum, Hyderabad, India in 2003, and the World Social Forum, Mumbai, India, in 2004 and this has been especially visible in the area of Peace Education and Conflict Prevention. It appears that ASPBAE in its fortieth year of existence has come full circle in taking the lead in implementing the mandate of the Nairobi Conference on women calling for women to take the lead in highlighting the close relationship between the critical issues of both peace, equality, and development.



Nani Zulminarni from Indonesia during a plenary session at the Workshop on Training for Advocacy on Education for Women's Empowerment in Ulan Bator, Mongolia, 2002



Is Mainstreaming Sustainable?

Charting The Way Ahead

Yogyakarta, December 2004 And Beyond

We have seen how ASPBAE, through its governance and governance structures, has carefully built up a culture and an implementation mechanism to ensure gender equity in all its activities and through, to its membership.

The GSC, in its meeting at Lahore in 2001, had identified the 4th General Assembly, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, as a strategic peg and opportunity to evaluate and plan ASPBAE's future efforts in Mainstreaming Gender.

Conceptualised as a "Festival of Learning", this gathering saw the launch of this publication, probably the first of its kind, that traces the historical progress of Gender Mainstreaming in ASPBAE.

Tracing this history of gender has not been a formal assessment process of Gender Mainstreaming within ASPBAE. In order for that to happen, a lot more work lies ahead of the new team that takes office at the 4th General Assembly of 2004.

But already a road map for carrying out a gender diagnosis and assessment has been put in place, according to which there will be a co-ordinated collation of all factual data pertinent to Gender Mainstreaming across ASPBAE, which will in turn be subjected to a more rigorous analysis using agreed instru-

ments and scoring methodology. This activity, has also been mandated by the GSC in 2001, and further underscored by the GSC Meeting held in New Zealand in 2004, will be co-ordinated by the ASPBAE Secretariat along a broad framework and already agreed upon terms of reference.

Staying The Course

It is clear that the Gender Steering Committee intends to stay the course and if possible accelerate the pace in taking the process of GM into the next phase.

Some core aspects of this process have already been identified. They are:

Action Areas For The Next Phase

- 1/15750 Develop gender check lists as regular instruments of monitoring and evaluation**
- 1/15750 Identify a sample group of ASPBAE member organisations in each sub-region to evaluate their GM status**
- 1/15750 Collect information and responses on gender policy and practice within their organizations**
- 1/15750 Determine action plans for 2005-2008 for mainstreaming gender in the organizational culture of ASPBAE and thematic areas**
- 1/15750 Determine action plans for mainstreaming gender in ASPBAE member organizations.**
- 1/15750 Update the ASPBAE's Gender Kit**



Red And Amber Signals On The Onward Journey

As we gaze into the crystal ball of the future, let us look at some concerns highlighted by ASPBAE members, past and present. These provide us with a valuable set of insights, some offered with foresight and others with hindsight!

Questions About Sustainability

Those closely associated with the Women's Programme and the Gender Mainstreaming Agenda have raised a set questions around the issue of sustaining momentum. Basically this has to do with the fundamental contradictions, real or perceived, between a network of less radical adult education groups and other types of civil society or community based groups who have a much clearer political agenda.

By definition ASPBAE is neither a women's group committed to the promotion of Gender Mainstreaming, nor is it an organization with a clear political manifesto where all constituent units and individuals agree to a basic ideological unity as a pre-condition for membership. It is an organization comprised of a diversity of groups and individuals more in the form of a network of disparate groups and associations. This is an area of some anxiety as members bring in their own ideological orientations and priorities, coming together only in so far as a shared belief in the potential of adult education and life long learning.

Can adult education as a discipline, and ASPBAE as a regional network, truly sustain a Freirian model of "education as conscientisation" since this is a pre-requisite

for gender mainstreaming to be carried forward? Will future generations in the movement be guided by the philosophical premise articulated by Richard Schull in his introduction to Freire's classic "Pedagogy of the Oppressed":

"There is no such thing as a neutral educational process. Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it; or it becomes the 'practice of freedom' the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world."

There are some like *Bobby Garcia* who feel there is success in Gender Mainstreaming being enshrined in policies, and the fact that there is a more even distribution in the Executive Committee.



ASPBAE's Incoming President Sandra Morrison from New Zealand

"well at least there is one each."

But again he feels that it is still too heavily focused on women, instead of a diffusion of gender perspectives.

The real challenge to the leadership in the future will be how skillfully they continue to steer this vast, often amorphous mass, towards creating and sustaining the consensus on relevance of Gender Mainstreaming for the organizational vision and mission. Several similar organizations have floundered on the shoals of profoundly differing world views on how much and how far adult education can or should travel down the road to more radical interpretations of learning.

"The challenge for ASPBAE, as I see it, is to come up with an educational response to these manifestations in terms of learning needs, curriculum development and programme evaluation. I believe this is important because it establishes and rein-

forces the credibility of ASPBAE as an international adult education organization. Last but not least, I believe that content and process go hand in hand."

- Chia Mun Onn

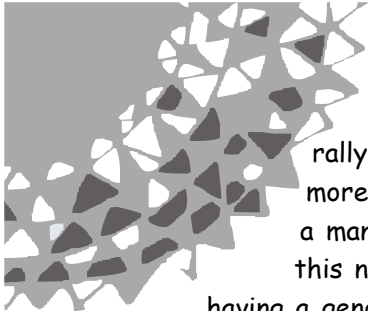
Questions About Sensitivity: Slow Learners On The Gender Curve!

Throughout the several interviews for this document, there has been a uniform stress on the need to retain that special sensitivity towards those who might not be fully persuaded as to the need, the validity, and the pace of moving along towards a 'gendered' agenda.

Given the complex dynamics in the region there is an assumption that women are natu-



Participants at a Workshop on Indigenous Peoples Education



rally less gender blind and more gender sensitive than say a man in a similar position. Is this necessarily true? Is just

having a gender balance in an Executive enough of an enabling mechanism to bring about a gender sensitive organization?

Maria has an interesting answer.

I think if there is one index of whether a Gender Mainstreaming process has actually come in place in ASPBAE and whether it has qualitatively hit someone. I think I'll be a statistic in that. I joined ASPBAE in 1993 as a Program Officer straight from the Philippines, involved in rural development in an NGO, which while supposedly progressive and very advanced in it's ideas about sustainability and empowerment, had, like many other developing NGO's, a completely blind spot for issues of gender and women.

Many of the 'good men' interviewed, strongly spoke to the issue of being respectful of the fact that people, both men and women, were at many different levels along what one might term a gender sensitisation scale or curve. That it was far more important to 'take people along', rather than enforce a particular policy without it being acceptable to the many.

"To me it is quite critical when you get women significantly in leadership positions on an Executive or as a President or heading task forces and so on. The atmosphere and dynamics change. I think that is an important factor but not enough." - *Alastair Crombie*

Alastair concedes that his own awareness about gender issues developed gradually over several years, and it was only later that he began to see that women intuitively tended to

work in more 'horizontal' ways and with far less concern about issues of power and control.

Questions Of Perceptions: 'Mens Ways And Womens Ways'?

Alastair also has much to share on what he sees as 'mens ways and womens ways' of running things, and he refers here specifically to the huge criticism he faced for what women saw as a totally overbearing style of working while in the driving seat. At best he can be termed gender blind. Hearing him articulate these dilemmas in his own words brings the issue alive in all its complexity.

Yes it was at Darwin. I was driven by and very conscious of trying to run the event and manage it as successfully as I was tasked to do. It never occurred to me that I was dominating the space. Now when you ask me, and I nudge my memory, I recall that there were occasions when I was conscious of an odd feeling, an uncomfortable experience. But I put it down to the difference in women's and men's ways of management and not as a gender issue! I have had very good and strong relationships of friendship with many women in the movement, yourself, *Maria*, *Marivic*. However there were times that I did begin to feel uncomfortable when, as a man, I became more and more conscious that the women's movement and all the talk of women's empowerment was actually creating difficulty and animosity, almost threatening the men, as also the existing structures. But I also began to see that we needed to work together more seriously on understanding what gender relations really meant.

- *Alastair*

Questions About Culture And Gender

The women's movement has constantly grappled with the troublesome accusations of trampling on cultural and identity concerns in their anxiety to move ahead on issues of gender and equity. Most efforts to bring in concepts and decisions which will genuinely bring about some change in antiquated anti-women customs and traditions have run into trouble on this account.

For ASPBAE, straddling as it does, such a vast ocean of diversity and complexity, its leadership has to tread a very fine line between respecting concerns of cultural identity and the inevitable clash with the demands of equity and justice be it with regard to gender, ethnicity, race, language or religion.

Rajesh Tandon in his comments on this question during my interview is quite explicit :

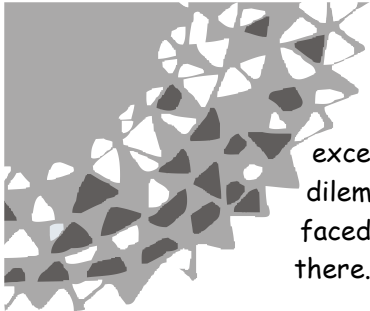
"There is a world out there which can in fact be very different. ASPBAE has to contribute even to that world, not surround itself by the converted. There are several of our long time members about whom one may have an instinctive dislike because they express contrary points of view, but I ask that we listen to what they are saying. They are not talking about themselves, but are certainly talking about the Chinese context; or the context of Islamic culture; or some other similar issue. He may be English speaking but he is talking about that culture/ context and we cannot ignore that. Otherwise the movement won't go very far"

- *Rajesh Tandon*

The vexing question of what approaches or pace of change is appropriate in any given situation is a difficult one for leadership to address. The dialogue reproduced below is an



ASPBAE Members from the South Pacific



excellent example of the real dilemmas which have to be faced in the real world out there.

Joe Madiath of Gram Vikas, a colleague on the Board of an established NGO in India had this to share in the midst of a heated discussion on gender justice and establishing mechanisms by which to both mainstream and assess how gender issues were to be addressed:

" from all sides we have been told that there has to be a gender balance, there has to be equal representation, and so on and so forth. Why isn't anybody willing to understand the realities from where we are coming (a very poor and backward area in one of the poorest states in India). We must also understand that there is a time lag by which people in different locations and groups and communities will follow diverse rates of change. If we are not sensitive, we may end up with what I see happening all around, including in the area where we live, namely that you have a token representative because she happens to be a female, but apart from that brings absolutely nothing by way of contribution."

Carol Anonuevo adds to the debate her own perceptions about how ASPBAE has gone about dealing with gender and power relations :

Unpacking gender relations inevitably involves exposing unequal power relationships between the genders. Gender mainstreaming is often being criticized for being too weak in raising the issue of power. In ASPBAE, I am sure the issue of gender power relations has been raised both formally and informally. What is remarkable from an outsider's perspective is how

dialogue and the refinement of practices after such exchanges is part of ASPBAE's organizational culture. The route ASPBAE has taken is no doubt a smooth one but with the commitment of its leaders and the continuous capacity building to ensure a gender sensitive constituency, it will surely go a long way in empowering women and men." - *Carol*

Perhaps we all need to bear in mind the fact that the real challenge lies in putting into place mechanisms for building capacity on gender as much as with other issues. It is also a fact that very often a gender sensitive male can provide more meaningful inputs than a gender blind woman! So tokenism in gender must be avoided if long term effectiveness is to be ensured.

Questions About Capacity

Building capacity is directly related to sustainability. It derives from the imperative to plan for long term sustainable policies and programmes which will take awareness and commitment to gender issues into the very sinews of the organization.

Marivic Raquiza, who put her experience as gender co-ordinator of a mixed organization in the Philippines to good use when asked to handle gender in ASPBAE, kicks off the set of concerns on capacity by raising questions about the link between gender mainstreaming and issues of sexuality and reproductive rights.

I've always wondered what happens to GM after you've put some basic mechanisms in place. Again speaking from hindsight, one of my recent realizations is that it is difficult to really politicize women's/gender issues without going into reproductive rights/health. Whether we like it or not,

issues of fertility, reproduction and sexuality so much defines what it is to be a woman, especially in a third world setting. As such, I realize that if you don't touch this issue, and only focus on women's learning for economic and political empowerment, then we may not quite be going into the core of what women's issues/concerns are about." - *Marivic Raquiza*

Focus On Leadership

Conversations around leadership were particularly insightful. While looking at the role of leadership it is useful to remember that ASPBAE is not just the Executive and the Secretariat. ASPBAE needs to look at what is happening to all the constituent regions and sub regions to which the ASPBAE's actual programmatic work contributes. As *Rajesh* said,

"There were times when it was a real problem you know the Chinese or Japanese approach vs Filipino or Indian!. They are very distinctly different realities and after Darwin I proposed that it should not just be left to the Secretariat alone as it might not have the same creditability and political clout that it needed in the organization."

Suneeta rightly emphasized the need to adapt to changing conditions:

"Things have changed. Trends around the world, the nature of institutions, so many things that have changed. Within this changed context, leadership will need to assess where education is situated and within that location how gender is articulated and what are the new dimensions of gender inequality. The questions to be asked are how and whether the programme has been able to address the issues of gender and education structurally; whether

equality and representation have been ensured. As you keep articulating you also reach newer constituencies and you learn from other constituencies."

Linked to this is also the dependency on adequate resources being available, and the hope that Gender Mainstreaming will continue to enjoy high priority with funding priorities of donor agencies. *Rajesh* sums up what is possibly the best attitude as far as donors are concerned. He says,

"while resources are important, quite honestly in my years of experience no donor group has as yet been able to demonstrate a clear policy position on gender.

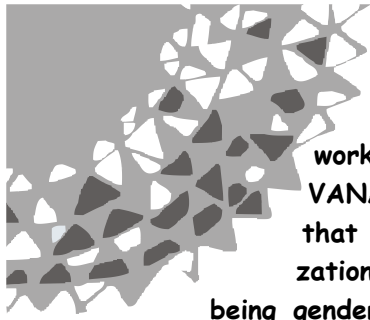
So we must move on - be strong and confident about our own priorities and positions, donor policies notwithstanding - and conscious that they could change according to the `flavour of the month or year"
- *Rajesh*

The Last Lap

Looking Back, Looking Ahead

It is often the last lap which is the toughest and the most demanding. How is the present momentum to be maintained and sustained especially when a crew change is in the offing? While it is true that ASPBAE is relatively more `gender aware' than many, what *Gigi Francisco* says is pertinent:

"I think ASPBAE in general is more gender aware than other networks. Nevertheless, gender politics entails an everyday struggle and one cannot say at any point that a gender aware organization need no longer



work on gender (as if NIR-VANA had been reached!) or that a gender aware organization cannot slide back to being gender unaware. Gender relations are fluid and cannot be guaranteed only by policies or by having gender aware people in"

- *Gigi Francisco*

'Movement people' are well aware that real change in the struggle for social and educational transformation is almost impossible to discern within the span of a working life.

So it is actually quite remarkable that within the space of four decades an organization like ASPBAE has in fact been able to witness and have so many bear witness, to the fact that some remarkable achievements have happened. Had it not been for the demands of this document it might not have been possible for any of us to uncover the "treasure within", to use the title from the study on adult and life long learning by Jaques Delors. Since many of us have been too close to the action, and it has been useful to share the perceptions of those who have been partly insiders and partly outsiders.

Carol Anonuevo has valuable insights: a view on the ASPBAE of today:

"How do I see ASPBAE now? Its leadership is more representative of its constituency and more important, it has ensured that a gender perspective is incorporated in its different programs. No doubt the leadership of ASPBAE is crucial in allowing such a learning process. Moreover, a leadership that has managed to be strategic amidst all this questioning is to be commended."

- *Carol*

Reaffirming the role of the women of ASPBAE, *Carol* says:

"I attribute these strengths to the women and men in the network. ASPBAE has highly committed and competent women, coming from the women's movements, literacy movements, workers movements and from university who have managed to dialogue with each other and unite to bring their strengths to slowly transform ASPBAE to what it is now. " - *Carol*

And in acknowledging the many good men, she says....

"The men of ASPBAE have likewise been receptive to the storm of changes that affected ASPBAE through the years. Instead of being defensive, they took the position of learning from the many questions that have been raised about their power positions." - *Carol*

The comment from *Chia Mun Onn* below reinforces *Carol's* observations.



Carol Medel-Anoneuvo from the UNESCO Institute of Education

"The gender workshop in Chiangmai was another appointment with history, at least for me. It was one of those times you got to tell your stories and be inspired by those of the fraternity. To me, it was a very purpose-affirming process. And suddenly, the heartaches and tussles become so insignificant because you know that somewhere the battle against ignorance and arrogance has been won and people have learnt. You return to the battlefield with the hope of telling your stories when the occasion for sharing comes again. I am sure you share these sentiments!"

- Chia Mun Onn

Be it the leadership, be it the outstanding men and women who contributed, in the only way they knew how, with full and total commitment, integrity and professionalism, or be it an extraordinarily 'happening' external environment in the past two decades, this has been a journey with few parallels. It has been the privilege of this author, who has played with the team in her time, watched from the sidelines, and has remained involved and walking the talk almost for three of the four decades of the existence of this feisty forty year old organisation, to tease out, to analyse and to record the highlights of this adventure.

There were some whom we never managed to either get on tape or on email - women who have played their own quiet and nurturing roles in the Gender Mainstreaming process within ASPBAE. This report would be incomplete without naming *Elizabeth Crusada*, whose soft exterior hid a tough and uncompromising feminist soul and who laid the foundations of gender in ASPBAE; *Junko Kuninobu*, a friend, colleague, fellow traveler, who has traveled the road with ASPBAE for many years and *Usa Duongsaa*, the current president of ASBAE, whose gentle and yet firm hand in

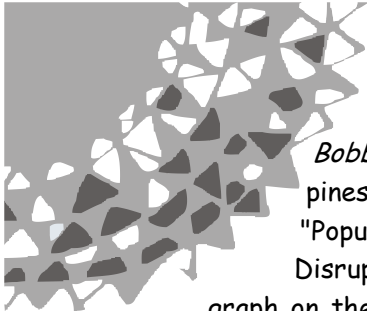
steering the ship of ASPBAE through these winding roads, and stormy waters has been of incomparable importance in this phase. There were several others whom it was not possible to bring into these pages, but who have been supportive from afar.

Shaheen Attiq-ur-Rahman, a member of the Executive and the GSC, based in Lahore, who after several emails requesting inputs had this observation:

"thank God for a *Maria Khan*, without whom Gender Mainstreaming would not have been possible!"

Putting this study together has been both a joy and a frustration. Joy because it brought alive tantalizing pieces of remembered history and conversations which were profound in their telling. Frustration because of the inevitable constraints of time, space, resources which meant there were visits not made, stories not told, inputs not included.

Perhaps there will be more opportunities to write another story, where we look more closely at the way innovation and creativity were used in the act of teaching. And how so many talented men and women have continued to bring in the pedagogies of popular education into the work of adult learning and literacy. If today gender has been mainstreamed to the extent that it has across the ASPBAE web, and with no deep wounds and fissures, the tribute ultimately belongs to the teacher in her little hamlet, who navigates by the stars and her own genius.



Bobbie Garcia from the Philippines, has in his recent book: "Popular Education and Other Disruptions", a wonderful paragraph on the nature of this educator, whom we salute and nurture.

"To arrive at consensual knowledge, the educator must have the right attitude and skills. She must be creative and encouraging, proficient and attentive and know when to lead and when to give way. How to capture this mix, this art of leading and guiding, of drawing out the learners intellectual juices and collective capacities, of assembling common knowledge at the same time sharing her own - this is her challenge. The popular educator is not created overnight. She has to stumble, look back, step forward, grope her way around, honing her craft until she does justice to the principle that education is not done for the people, nor to them, but with them."

And perhaps this is what is meant by using adult education methodology:

**You grieve you learn
You choke you learn
You laugh you learn
You choose you learn
You pray you learn
You ask you learn
You live you learn.**

....."YOU LEARN",
by Alanis Morissette



ASPBAE Executive Council member from Pakistan Shaheen Attiq-ur-Rahman in conversation with Lalita Ramdas

This documentation should have been completed and published much earlier. A strange combination of events and obstacles - part external and part personal - conspired to delay the completion of this work in progress and it might be of some historic interest to walk readers through what was also a period of several critical events in recent times which have served to alter and shape policy at both global and regional and local levels.

Epilogue

September 9/11 2001:- the shocking attack on the twin towers in New York was the first of these unexpected events, and the process of pursuing a study on gender issues in ASPBAE took a very definite backseat. We were pulled into the vortex of shock, horror, and the realization that our world had changed forever in ways that were too profound to imagine. There was a period of silence as groups and individuals began to assess how 9/11 would affect their lives and their work. The following extract from a letter written to all those in leadership positions within ASPBAE, several of those associated with ASPBAE, is an illustration of how mind sets and priorities had shifted with even those most committed to gender concerns suddenly needing to be cajoled and coaxed:

Oct 15 2001 :- "the whole world has been turned topsy turvy - and it appears that we are all engaged in waging different kinds of battles - for sanity, for balance and to keep from being sucked into a possible World War. I am aware that 'Gender Mainstreaming in ASPBAE' is possibly of relatively low priority at this present juncture! But this too is important. And I hope you will still find time to respond to my queries since the deadlines are staring me in the face!

December 2001:- an attack on the Indian Parliament, which in turn led to the year long face-off between the two armies of India and Pakistan, and our worst ever bilateral relations in decades. Most of us activists were caught up in fighting fires in our own backyards, trying to bring sanity, to talk peace in an environment where everyone seemed to be on the edge of madness and ready for war. Tension between Hindus and Muslims in India were increasing. It appeared that gender would have to wait!

December 2001:- Lille, France, for the World Assembly of the Alliance for a United and Peaceful World. The night before a formal presentation to an audience of 1500 persons from around the world, I lost my bearings in an unfamiliar space and tumbled down some 23 steps in pitch blackness. The gods were obviously looking out for me, and although I could have broken my neck, I got away with a black eye, five shaky front teeth and a fractured hand! It did however put me out of action as far as going ahead with the GM document was concerned for a couple of months.

February - March 2002:- a lecture tour to the USA at the invitation of WAND, a women's group originally with a focus on nuclear disarmament. Talks and round tables in over ten US cities, addressing issues of gender, peace, democracy and non-violence in a post 9/11 America, where the War Against Terror had traumatized a people to the point where democracy itself was under assault.

This coincided with the horror of the Godhra tragedy in Gujarat in end February, 2002, followed by the worst genocide against mem-



bers of the Muslim community in India's post Independence history. Women and children were the worst victims of the violence, and the fight for justice continues till today, kept alive by the intrepid band of fearless activists from civil society groups. All regular work was set aside to fight the fires of violence and fundamentalism which threatened to consume the very foundation of India's secular democracy. But the determination to move ahead with the gender study remained unshaken.

August 2002:- members of the ASPBAE executive, and the GSC, together with Carol Medel-Anonuevo approved of the overall content and thrust of the Draft GM Document.

February 2003, new date for Publication:- new deadlines and time lines were agreed upon and we had a clear road map again. However, it was clearly not meant to be. In November I was diagnosed with Breast Cancer, underwent a radical mastectomy in December and was out of action till March 2003. As when trains are delayed on a particular track, other scheduled on-time trains get right of way. Gender had to wait till other prior commitments were met.

September 2003:- Kathmandu:- South Asian meeting on peace education provided an opportunity to agree on re-starting the work on the gender document by drawing up yet more timelines and incorporating new inputs on account of the passage of time.

October 2003:- Doctors find a lesion in the lung and I am diagnosed with TB! More rest, heavy medication, strictly NO WORK! ASPBAE should have found another author to

take over, but in their wisdom, the Executive Council and the GSC now decided to target the GA and the fortieth anniversary of ASPBAE as an appropriate moment to launch a publication recounting the history of GM. And so here we are in October 2004.

July - November 2004:- The final lap! It is feverish re-writing, editing, art work, and all the technical expertise that goes into a production. This too is another chapter in the journey for an author who has written reams but has never published a book! It has meant opportunities to read copiously, to talk to long lost friends, to grapple with technology and the inevitable flood of documentation, to learn to keep the focus unwavering, and to feel good that there are people who believe in your ability to `deliver`.

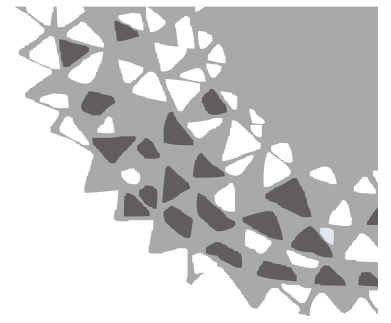
In conclusion, I turn to the words of someone who has reflected deeply on education and philosophy and created his own ways of experimenting with learning - the philosopher J.Krishnamurti from his `Education and Significance of Life 1953:

" In our present civilization we have divided life into so many departments that education has very little meaning, except in learning a particular technique or profession.

To attempt to solve the many problems of existence at their respective levels, separated as they are into various categories, indicates an utter lack of comprehension.

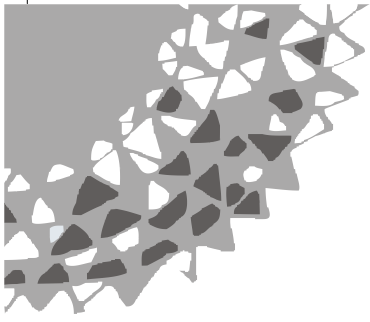
Education should bring about the integration of these separate entities; for without integration, life becomes a series of conflicts and sorrow."

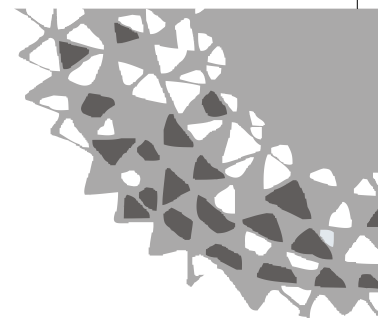
I have tried to show how men and women with a shared vision in one organization, have tried to walk together in this direction. At a moment of history where the worlds most powerful democracy appears to have voted in favour of the forces of reaction, conservatism, and fundamentalism in religion, gender and democratic process, it is more important than ever that those who would walk the road less travelled keep alive their vision and their commitment to keep searching for the answers to the questions that surround us.



ASPBAE's Journey Towards Gender Mainstreaming The Milestones En Route

1987	Framing ASPBAE's Constitution	1999	Constituting the Gender Steering Committee - first full day meeting in Madang, PNG Integration of gender in all thematic programmes and application of gender indicators including gender balanced participation Gender page in ASPBAE Newsletter Preparation of the Regional Kit for Gender Training Launching a regional programme focus on violence against women in the context of adult learning - Regional Workshop in Bali Indonesia Gender Based PRA Trainings for Literacy and HIV/AIDS Education Gender focus to the leadership programme
1992	First General Assembly in Tagaytay Provisions for the representation of women in the GA and EC included in the Constitution Programme focus on education for women's empowerment brought in among other ASPBAE thematic areas		
1993	Regional Consultation to develop a common framework for addressing key issues of education for empowerment of women		
1994	Launching the Regional Study on education for women's empowerment		
1995	Regional Workshop to plan ASPBAE's strategy for participation in the NGO Forum of the World Conference on Women and sharing the results of the regional research study World Conference on Women, Beijing	2000	Third General Assembly in Chiangmai First Woman President of ASPBAE World Conference on Education For All, Dakar, Senegal
1996	Second General Assembly in Darwin Consolidating the achievements of the programme on education for women's empowerment through the publication of the regional study Strong push from members of the women's programme for mainstreaming gender perspectives in ASPBAE	2001	Programme focus on gender and education policy Constituting the second GSC Launching the historical overview of gender mainstreaming in ASPBAE - to document the efforts and experiences of a regional organization
1997	Preparing the first gender diagnosis of ASPBAE Articulating ASPBAE's gender perspective Recommendation to the EC to convene a Gender Mainstreaming Committee Regional Consultation on Gender Training in Chiangmai and planning the priority areas for the women's education programme	2002	Engendering Policies On Learning: Regional Advocacy Training on Education for Women's Empowerment, Ulaan Bator, Mongolia
1998	Further recommendations on initiatives for mainstreaming gender in ASPBAE Gender Facilitators Training Workshop, Hua Hin, Thailand Piloting ASPBAE's Gender Facilitators Training Modules	2003	Launching of process for engendering other thematic areas of ASPBAE - Regional Workshop on Engendering Citizenship Education in Kathmandu Sharpening the advocacy agenda in relation to girls and women's education Focus on girls and women's education on international advocacy platforms
		2004	Fourth General Assembly and ASPBAE's Festival of Learning





PERSONS INTERVIEWED

Alastair Crombie was Vice President for Asia in the International Council of Adult Education (ICAE) and a member of ASPBAE's Executive Council during the years 1996-2000. He has also held the position of Director of the Adult Learning Australia (ALA) through that period. Alastair played a major role in bringing ASPBAE to the forefront in international forums and in forging linkages with its counterparts internationally. He is currently an independent consultant based in Australia.

Carol Medel-Anoneuovo was one of the founders of ASPBAE's Women's Programme. As one of the founders of the women's education programme of the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), she continues to play an active role through its Gender & Education Office. She is currently Gender Specialist at the UNESCO Institute of Education.

Chia Mun-Onn is President of the Singapore Association for Continuing Education. He has been a long standing member of ASPBAE and has been a strong supporter of the thematic programme on New Information Technologies and Adult Learning. Mun Onn has been the gender focal point for this thematic programme.

Chris Duke was Secretary General of ASPBAE during the years 1974 to 1985 - a very important phase of ASPBAE's history during which ASPBAE pioneered the setting up of national associations for adult education, many of which persist even today. He is currently Director, Community & Regional Partnerships at the RMIT University (Bundoora West Campus) in Australia.

Gigi Fransisco from the Philippines is closely associated with the women's network DAWN and is a Board member of Focus on the Global South. She is closely associated with ICAE and its Gender & Education Office and was a faculty member in its recently held Lifelong Learning Advocacy programme in Oslo.

Maria Lourdes Almazan Khan joined ASPBAE as Programme Officer in 1994 and became Secretary-General in 1995, a post she continues to hold to date. It was within her term as Programme Officer assigned to the Women's Programme that the gender mainstreaming process in ASPBAE took shape.



Marivic Raquiza is currently with the Social Watch Philippines. She was ASPBAE's Programme Officer for the period 1995-1998. In this capacity, she played a major role in strengthening the Women's Education Programme and was instrumental in concretizing many of the gender mainstreaming processes within ASPBAE that are institutionalized to date.

Nani Zulminarni has been founder, Director and Board member of PPSW, a women's resource centre in Jakarta, Indonesia. She is currently an Executive Council Member of ASPBAE for the South-East Asia Region.

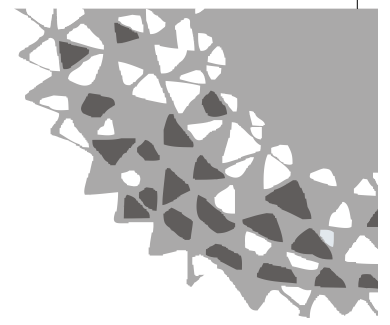
Rajesh Tandon, ASPBAE's President for the years 1991-2000 pioneered the strategic planning process within ASPBAE that set its new course as agreed by the membership in the Tagaytay General Assembly in 1990. As ASPBAE President, he played a crucial role in enhancing the gender mainstreaming process in ASPBAE. He is founder of the NGO Society for Participatory Research in India (PRIA) and is currently its President. Based in New Delhi, Rajesh continues to be a close friend and supporter of ASPBAE.

Shaheen Attiq-ur-Rahman from Pakistan is the South Asia representative on the ASPBAE Executive Council. She has done pioneering work in mobilizing rural families in her home state of Punjab around literacy and post literacy programmes. Shaheen heads a NGO called Bunyad Literacy Council and is based in Lahore Pakistan.

Suneeta Dhar is one of the founders of ASPBAE's Women's Programme and is credited for pioneering its network in South Asia. She is a feminist activist and a very experienced trainer. She currently works for UNIFEM and is based in New Delhi, India.

Thuraya Khalil was Executive Director of ICAE in 1988-89 and an active member of ICAE's Women's Programme. Thuraya is a Lebanese Canadian and is currently an independent consultant based in Canada.

Vasanth Kannanbiran is a feminist activist from India. She strongly allies with the radical feminist women's groups in India and is a strong political advocate for the marginalized Dalits in her home state of Andhra Pradesh. She heads ASMITA a women's organization based in Hyderabad. She has also been associated with Initiatives: Women in Development (IWID, India)



About the Author

Lalita, also known as 'Lolly' , likes to describe herself as a juggler on a tightrope - traversing several worlds and playing many roles.

Feminist, activist, organizer, teacher and learner - her journey has taken her from a sheltered world of privilege into dealing with the challenges of the real world that she has chosen to explore through her work and writing, primarily through education in its broadest definition.

Her real learning she claims, began when she moved to a small village on the Konkan coast of Western India a decade ago, which is where she continues to live and work. She has three daughters, three grandchildren and a husband who has supported all her rebellions!

