



Concept Note **[DRAFT as of 8/10/2024]**

**ASEAN+3 REGIONAL LEARNING CITIES CONFERENCE**  
**OCTOBER 29–30 2024**  
**BANGKOK, THAILAND**

The **UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC)**, coordinated by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), serves as a dynamic, policy-driven platform facilitating the international exchange of effective strategies and practices among cities committed to lifelong learning.

The GNLC's current membership spans 356 cities across 79 countries. In Asia-Pacific, South-East Asia currently has 19 UNESCO Learning Cities, while East Asia countries of China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea collectively already belong to an extensive regional network of 70.<sup>[1]</sup> Such networks afford countless opportunities for contextual, regional exchange and member-cities mutual development.

With this in mind, the UNESCO Regional Office in Bangkok (UNESCO Bangkok) together with the Program Management Unit on Area Based Development (PMU A) of Thailand's Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation are delighted to be hosting the **ASEAN+3 Regional Learning Cities Conference, which will be the first such gathering dedicated to Learning Cities in South-East Asia**. This Conference, to be held from 29 through 30 October, in Bangkok, aims to be an invaluable opportunity for cities in the region to learn from the experiences of their regional counterparts, thus providing insights into how to accelerate their own progress in fostering lifelong learning and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the Education 2030 Agenda – particularly SDG 4: Quality Education, and SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities.

Thailand's approach to the Learning City concept, while aligned with UNESCO's broader principles, showcases strategies and initiatives that reflect the country's unique cultural, social and economic contexts.<sup>[2]</sup> This reflects both national and local commitments to fostering a culture of lifelong learning and the building of inclusive and sustainable cities through joint partnerships led by the PMU A, UNESCO Bangkok, the Equitable Education Fund (EEF) Thailand, the Ministry of Education, Bangkok Learning City, Thailand Knowledge Park (TK Park) and the Office of Knowledge Management and Development (OKMD).

## **BACKGROUND**

With the majority of the world's population increasingly residing in urban areas, cities are pivotal in ensuring the right to education and lifelong learning for all. Cities are essential in promoting lifelong learning by connecting educational, training, and cultural institutions; engaging diverse stakeholders such as government, civil society and businesses; and creating environments where citizens can apply their learning to everyday life and build their own learning journeys throughout life.

In South-East Asia, the region is experiencing rapid urbanization and socio-economic transformation, creating a pressing need for lifelong learning to empower citizens to navigate the complexities of the twenty-first century. These challenges range from the urgent issue of climate change to the rapid advancements in artificial intelligence (AI). There is therefore a growing momentum for cities to take a leadership role in addressing inequalities and expanding access to lifelong learning. This is evidenced, for instance, by the recent addition

of 11 South-East Asian cities, joining those in China and the Republic of Korea, to the UNESCO GNLC in February 2024.

While the ASEAN+3 Conference has for its immediate objective the fostering of a dynamic regional network, it nevertheless has international ramifications. At the international level, the Conference will play a crucial role in contributing to joint efforts among cities driving the global agenda, such as in reinforcing upcoming related initiatives of this year, such as the following:

- **World Cities Day**, 31 October, themed ‘Youth leading climate and local action for cities’, which will emphasize the pivotal role of young people in shaping sustainable urban futures
- **Twelfth Session of the World Urban Forum (WUF12)**, convened by UN-Habitat in Cairo, Egypt, from 4 through 8 November, under the theme ‘It all starts at home: local actions for sustainable cities and communities.’ This forum highlights the importance of local action in achieving the SDGs and addressing global challenges
- **Sixth International Conference on Learning Cities (ICLC 6)**, taking place in the UNESCO Learning City of Jubail, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, from 3 through 5 December, with the theme ‘Learning cities at the forefront of climate action’, which will showcase the critical role of Learning Cities in combating climate change

#### CONFERENCE OBJECTIVES

- *Strengthen the capacity* of South-East Asian cities through knowledge sharing among UNESCO Learning Cities in South-East Asia and ‘Plus 3’ countries of ASEAN Member States plus Japan, the People’s Republic of China, and the Republic of Korea
- *Identify and disseminate* good practices in national and local government policies in advancing Learning Cities and innovative initiatives at the city level in the context of South-East Asian cities
- *Enhance the capacity* of the Thai Learning City Network to foster collaboration at the regional level
- *Establish a sustainable platform* for ongoing dialogue and partnerships among UNESCO Learning Cities and other cities actively promoting lifelong learning in South-East Asia

#### EXPECTED OUTCOMES:

- Learning Cities in South-East Asia as well as East Asia will implement innovative and sustainable actions in promoting lifelong learning for all through the Learning City approach
- ASEAN Regional Learning City Network to be established to foster mutual collaboration among cities in the region in building vibrant learning societies

#### EXPECTED PARTICIPANTS:

Approximately 200 onsite participants including:

- Representatives from UNESCO Learning Cities and interested cities in Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam
- Mayors and/or senior government officials promoting UNESCO Learning Cities in the Plus 3 countries of China, Japan and the Republic of Korea
- National and local Thai networks of 39 cities, including the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation, the Equitable Education Fund of Thailand and the Ministry of Education, with experts and researchers on Learning Cities and lifelong learning
- Representatives from international organizations including UNESCO, UN Habitat, UNDP and NGOs

The organizer will provide the nominated international participants with a round-trip Economy-class air ticket, accommodation, meals, and terminal fares. The details of the logistical arrangements will be provided in the general information note.

The main language of the conference will be English with simultaneous translation in Thai.

**VENUE:**

[InterContinental Bangkok Hotel](#)

973 Phloen Chit Road, Lumpini, Pathum Wan, Bangkok 10330, Thailand

**CONTACT:**

Rika Yorozu

Programme Specialist, Education Section

UNESCO Regional Office in Bangkok

[r.yorozu@unesco.org](mailto:r.yorozu@unesco.org)

Sowirin Chuanprapun

Project Officer, Education Section

UNESCO Regional Office in Bangkok

[s.chuanprapun@unesco.org](mailto:s.chuanprapun@unesco.org)



## PROVISIONAL AGENDA

### 28 October 2024

Arrival of international participants and registration

### 29 October 2024

Time	Details
8.30 – 9.00	<b>Registration</b>
9.00 – 9.05 Plenary	<b>Purpose and goals of the Conference</b> <b>By Dr. Kitti Satjawattana</b> Director, Program Management Unit on Area Based Development (PMU A), Thailand
9.05 – 9.25	<b>Welcoming remarks</b> <b>By Mr. Chatchai Promlert</b> Chairman of the Board Program Management Unit on Area-Based Development (PMU A) <b>By Ms. Soohyun Kim</b> Regional Director, UNESCO Regional Office in Bangkok (UNESCO Bangkok) <b>By Deputy Permanent Secretary for Education</b> Ministry of Education (TBC)
9.25 – 9.35	<b>Opening remark</b> <b>By Prof. Supachai Pathumnakul, Ph.D.</b> Permanent Secretary of the ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation
9.35 – 9.45	<b>Research Plans and Thailand's Learning City initiative</b> <b>By Assoc. Prof. Dr. Patamawadee Pochanukul (TBC)</b> Director, Thailand Science Research and Innovation (TSRI)
9.45 – 10.05	<b>Award of token of appreciation for new UNESCO Global Network of Learning City members ceremony</b> <b>Group photo</b>
10.05 – 10.30	<b>Special Lecture on Global Trends on Learning Cities</b> <b>By Mr. Raul Valdes Cotera</b> Team Leader, Skills throughout life, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL)
10.30 – 11.00 Press interview at the VIP Room	<b>Press Interview</b> – Interview VIPs  <b>Coffee break</b>
11.00 – 12.30	<b>Presentation of the driving force of the Learning Cities by</b> <b>1. Mr. Nalongxay Myvpadith</b> Deputy Director General, Department of Housing and Urban Planning, Ministry of Public Works and Transport (MPWT) of Lao PDR, as the Chair of the ASEAN Smart Cities Network <b>2. Associate Professor Dr. Poon Thiengburanatham</b>

	Deputy Director of Program Management Unit on Area Based Development (PMU A) <b>3. City Representative of the Learning City from the Republic of Korea (TBC)</b>  <b>Q&amp;A session (30 mins)</b>	
12.30 – 13.30	Lunch break	
13.30 – 15.00	<b>Parallel session 1: Fun and Inclusive Learning Spaces for All (four cities - TBD)</b>  Q&A (30 mins)  <b>Moderator: OKMD and TK Park</b> are expected to summarize the joint actions and potential cooperation in the future to outline the common spirit <sup>[3]</sup>	<b>Parallel session 2: LNOB in learning city initiatives (four cities - TBD)</b>  Q&A (30 mins)  <b>Moderator: EEF</b> is expected to summarize the joint actions and potential cooperation in the future to outline the common spirit
15.00 – 15.15	<b>Coffee Break</b>	
15.15 – 16.45	<b>Parallel session 3: Leadership for learning city (four cities - TBD)</b>  Q&A (30 mins)  <b>Moderator: Thai Ministry of Education</b> is expected to summarize the joint actions and potential cooperation in the future to outline the common spirit	<b>Parallel session 4: Citizen-led learning and action for smart and green city development (four cities - TBD)</b>  Q&A (30 mins)  <b>Moderator: UN Habitat</b> is expected to summarize the joint actions and potential cooperation in the future to outline the common spirit
17.00 – 17.50 High-level closed-door session	<b>Report back from the Parallel Sessions by</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Dr. Mario R. Delos Reyes</b>, Professor &amp; Former Dean, Professorial Lecturer &amp; Director, PASCAL Centre Asia-Pacific, University of the Philippines, School of Urban and Regional Planning</li> <li><b>Mr. Gunawan Zakk</b>i, National Professional Officer, UNESCO Jakarta Office</li> </ol> <b>Discussion on joint collaboration and next steps</b> <b>Moderators:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Ms. Duriya Amatavivat</b>, Director, SEAMEO Regional Centre for Sufficiency Economy Philosophy for Sustainability (SEAMEO SEPS)</li> <li><b>Dr. Rika Yoro</b>zu, Education Programme Specialist, UNESCO Bangkok</li> </ol>	
18.00 – 20.00	<b>Dinner Reception</b> <b>Cultural Performances by Learning Cities/Creative Cities in Thailand</b>	

**30 October 2024**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Details</b>
8.30 – 9.00	<b>Registration</b>
9.00 – 9.30	<b>Keynote speech: Learning City of the Future</b> <b>By Dr. Rita Padawangi</b> Associate Professor of Sociology Centre for University Core, Singapore University of Social Sciences
9.30 – 10.00	<b>Driving the “Thailand Learning City Platform”</b> <b>By Dr. Silaporn Buasai</b> Chairperson of the Advisory Committee Thailand Academy for Area Collaboration, Innovation and Transformation (TACIT) of Program Management Unit on Area Based Development (PMU A)
10.00 – 10.30	<b>Coffee break</b>
10.30 – 11.30	<b>Announcement of the joint action plan of the ASEAN Learning Cities Network</b> <b>By Associate Professor Dr. Poon Thiengburanatham</b> Deputy Director of Program Management Unit on Area Based Development (PMU A)  <b>Announcement of the Sixth International Conference on Learning Cities (ICLC 6) at Jubail, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia</b>  <b>Closing and Group Photo</b>
11.30 – 12.30	<b>Lunch break</b>
12.30 – 18.00	<b>Study visits to the Bangkok Learning City</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Khlong Toei District or Pathumwan District (EEF)</li><li>- Talat Noi (Bangkok)</li><li>- Luenrit Community (PMU A)</li></ul>

**31 October 2024**

Departure of international participants

## **Thailand Learning Cities Partner Organizations**

### **Program Management Unit on Area Based Development (PMU A), Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation**

The Program Management Unit on Area Based Development (PMU A) allocates research and innovation funds for area-based development and community or local development. Its objectives are to improve the living conditions and quality of life of the people, while enhancing the competitiveness of new entrepreneurs, small businesses, small and medium enterprises, community enterprises, and social enterprises at the local level. This is achieved through the management and administration of research projects funded by the Science, Research, and Innovation Promotion Fund.

### **UNESCO Regional Office in Bangkok**

The UNESCO Regional Office in Bangkok (UNESCO Bangkok) stands ready to support countries across the region in developing Learning Cities, aligning with the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning's Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC) and SDG 4. This initiative contributes to the broader goal of promoting lifelong learning as a key driver for sustainable urban development. The support provided by UNESCO Bangkok involves facilitating the exchange of experiences, knowledge, and best practices among member cities to address education disparities, while promoting lifelong learning for all.

### **Thailand Science Research and Innovation (TSRI)**

Thailand Science Research and Innovation (TSRI) was founded to ensure effective application of the strategic policies and plans for science, research, and innovation, as well as efficient monitoring and evaluation operation. TSRI aims to promote, support, and advance the national research and innovation system in science, technologies, social sciences, humanities, and interdisciplinary fields. These will help create a body of knowledge; develop public policies; and promote the applications of research and innovation for utilisation in the economy and society for balanced and sustainable developments.

### **Office of National Higher Education Science Research and Innovation Policy Council (NXPO)**

The Office of National Higher Education Science Research and Innovation Policy Council (NXPO) is an autonomous public agency affiliated to the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation. NXPO serves as the secretariat of the National Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation Policy Council (Policy Council) and is, therefore, responsible for facilitating the Policy Council in formulating, deploying and monitoring national policy addressing higher education, science, research and innovation under the guidance and instruction of the Policy Council. To effectively deploy the policy, NXPO is in charge of designing strategies and measures, proposing law and regulation amendments, and establishing, maintaining and allowing public access of integrated databases of higher education, science, research and innovation.

### **The Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation**

The Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation, with the reason for the announcement being that with higher education, science, research and innovation as an important mechanism for developing the country to grow in a stable, prosperous and sustainable way in order to support the changes in the world that will occur in the future. Teaching, research and innovation in science, technology and science together, and to ensure cooperation in the performance of duties between higher education institutions and research institutions in a direction consistent with the national strategy, plans and policies of national development, it is necessary to enact this Act, in order to meet the country's mobility through the creation of an innovation-based economy and preparing the Thai people to support important challenges in the 21 century, also improves the authority and administration by organizing the interrelated government departments into one work group so that the system can be adjusted to work together. In accordance with the goals and directions of bureaucratic reforms in order to benefit the nation and the people as a whole.

### **Ministry of Education Thailand**

The Ministry of Education Thailand, through the Department of Learning Encouragement (DOLE), formerly known as the Office of the Non-Formal and Informal Education (ONIE), adheres to the mission of reducing educational disparities in Thai society. The transition to the Department of Learning Encouragement aimed at providing the greatest long-term benefits to the Thai people. DOLE remains committed to promoting lifelong learning for people of all ages, ensuring that learning initiative reaches the communities that need it most. By offering essential support and resources, DOLE fosters continuous community education, skills development and lifelong learning across the nation.

### [Equitable Education Fund \(EEF\)](#)

The Equitable Education Fund (EEF) Thailand was established under the Equitable Education Act 2018. The objective of the Act is to provide financial support for children and youth who are in greatest need, and reduce educational inequality by forming partnerships with different groups and conducting systematic research to support and develop teachers' effectiveness. EEF works with Thailand's provinces to reach 670,000 children aged between 3–17 years old who are out of school and face multiple challenges; to develop effective strategies at the provincial level in 15 provinces; and to enable stakeholders at the provincial level to collaborate and implement education interventions to reach out-of-school children.

### [Bangkok City](#)

In its ongoing efforts to promote 'Learning for Life, Opportunities for All', Bangkok City joined the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC) in early 2024. As part of this initiative, the new Bangkok Learning City aims to enhance childhood care and education, compulsory education, skills development, and lifelong learning opportunities for all its residents. This initiative reflects the capital city's commitment to fostering an inclusive and equitable learning environment that benefits Thai citizens across all stages of life.

### [Office of Knowledge Management and Development \(OKMD\)](#)

The Office of Knowledge Management and Development (OKMD) serves as a model organization in knowledge management, aimed at expanding opportunities for Thai people of all ages to access innovative learning and new knowledge. By staying aligned with the latest technological trends, OKMD supports lifelong learning, ensuring that individuals are equipped with the skills and information they need to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

### [Thailand Knowledge Park \(TK Park\)](#)

Thailand Knowledge Park (TK Park) was founded as a prototype of a knowledge hub for children and the public for their pursuit of knowledge. Aiming to respond to the lifelong pursuit of knowledge and lifelong learning, the 'Living Library' is fully equipped with books and media resources. With *ongoing*, *diverse*, and *respond to need* reading activities and learning workshops, TK Park has become a crucial ingredient in thousands of children's and adolescent's learning experience, a powerful force driving Thailand to become a real 'learning society'.

<sup>[1]</sup> As of July 2024, UNESCO Learning Cities in South-East Asia are distributed across Indonesia (1), Malaysia (1), the Philippines (2), Thailand (10), and Viet Nam (5), while there are a total of 70 UNESCO Learning Cities in China (12), Japan (2), and the Republic of Korea (56).

<sup>[2]</sup> The seven strategies planned to be implemented in addition to the ongoing cities' initiatives include the national Learning City Network and Forum, Learning Evaluation and Strategic Research, Database and Study, Learning City Week, Learning City Award, Learning City Academy, and Lifelong Learning Booster Programmes.

<sup>[3]</sup> Experts and partners, including the Ministry of Education Thailand, EEF, OKMD, ASEAN Secretariat, ASEM-LLL Hub, and the UN Habitat/UNDP, will be invited as moderators.