

ASIA PACIFIC REFUGEE RIGHTS NETWORK

ASEAN Civil Society Conference

This year the ASEAN Civil Society Conference (ACSC) 2011 was hosted by civil society groups from the 3rd – 5th May, 2011 at Hotel Ciputa in Jakarta. The ACSC was attended by more than 1300 participants from all over ASEAN. Apart from the plenaries, there were more than 45 workshops that were held under 14 thematic groupings.

APRRN & the ACSC

APRRN began engaging with the ACSC process only since 2010. In 2010, APRRN was nominated as the Refugee Focal Point in the SAPA Task Force on Human Rights in ASEAN. As a part of SAPA APRRN, in 2010 along with members such as People's Empowerment Foundation (PEF), the Thai Committee for Refugees (TCR) and SUARAM organized the first workshop on refugees at the APF in Hanoi in 2010. In 2011, APRRN along with members such as the Thai Committee for Refugees (TCR), Asylum Access Thailand, Human Rights Working Group (HRWG) and others organized a refugee and statelessness workshop in Jakarta. The workshop was held on the 4th of May, 2011 and attended by 60 participants. The panel for the workshop consisted of four panelists: Veerawit Tianchainan (TCR), Medhapan Sundaredeja (AAT), Febi Yonesta (LBH Jakarta) and Dr. Enni Soeprapto. The panel was moderated by Anoop Sukumaran.

Veerawit Tianchainan spoke about the master plan on ASEAN connectivity and refugee management as well as the gaps and necessary steps of refugee protection. Febi Yonesta,

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presented on the issue of Indonesian law and refugee protection where he outlined Indonesia's policy on refugees and challenges faced by them. Dr. Enni Soeprapto's presentation was one which weaved various threads from the histories of various countries in the ASEAN, the recent histories of refugees and their travails in the region as well as the policy and political conditions that gave rise to peculiar situations. The panel was followed by a lively discussion. The workshop came up with a number of recommendations for the ACSC drafting committee to consider, some of which were also incorporated in the final statement:

1. Every ASEAN STATE should refrain from repatriating refugees against the principles of non-refoulement, which is a peremptory norm of international law that forbids the expulsion of a refugee into an area where the person might be again subjected to persecution.
2. Provide refugees with the same rights as citizens in keeping with principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
3. Set up clear policies for each type of people in need of protection namely asylum-seekers, refugees, statelessness people, internal displaced persons, economic migrants etc.

4. Provide cross-border aid to support IDPs in areas with a lack of access to humanitarian aid.
5. Encourage non-signatory ASEAN states to sign, ratify, and implement the 1951 Refugee Convention its 1967 protocol and the 1954 Convention on the Status of Stateless persons, as well as the 1961 convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.
6. Recognize children of refugees born in country of asylum through birth registration and birth certificates
7. Encourage ASEAN countries to actively seek alternatives to detention of asylum-seekers, stateless and displaced persons, and refugees.



APRRN workshop at the ACSC

Report on the Asian Refugee Legal Aid Workshop, ARLAN

The process of engagement with the ASEAN is not a smooth process, in fact the ability of civil society to influence ASEAN policy is very incremental. However, even though the ASEAN seems resistant to civil society inputs, the space which was given to NGOs and civil society has increased over the years. Since 2010, refugee rights have been brought to the notice of the ASEAN through APRRN engagement with the ACSC/APF process. We believe continued engagement will result in policy change at the ASEAN.

The full report including the final statement can be downloaded here: [Download](#)

“The process of engagement with the ASEAN is not a smooth one, but we believe that continued engagement with ASEAN will result in policy change.”

The Asian Refugee Legal Aid Network (ARLAN) was launched in June 2010 and aims to enhance the provision of legal aid to refugees in Asia. ARLAN will also develop resources which can be used by legal aid providers in the region. Therefore ARLAN is planning to upload presentations and videos from the workshop to their website. There will also be web-based seminars (with scholars, academics, lawyers) which can also be accessed by non ARLAN members.

The Asian Refugee Legal Aid Network (ARLAN), hosted a four-day legal aid workshop from March 29th to 1st April in Kuala Lumpur. The workshop was attended by more than 40 participants including APRRN members.

More information will follow in the next newsletter.

The 3rd Workshop will be held in Jakarta on September 19th, 2011.

South Asia Working Group Meeting

The South Asia Working Group (SAWG) held a meeting in New Delhi on April, 2011. The agenda included the introduction and presentations of members as well as the discussion of the strategic plan. NGOs which presented included OfERR, OKUP, Inhured, and The Other Media – the presentations helped the participants to familiarize themselves with the work of the Network and get a better picture of the situation in this region.

During the strategic plan session issues discussed included capacity building in issues related to detention, advocacy, refugee law and mental health. It was suggested to organize a workshop on trauma which could be conducted for those providing assistance to refugees and to refugees directly. A white paper/framework on the regional instruments could be drawn up and cover areas such as security, society and politics. A directory with information on refugee rights could also be prepared.

It was also discussed that APRRN needs to work on ways to influence the SAARC and ASEAN groups more effectively. SAPA is a regional human rights institution and therefore it is important to maintain a working relationship with them. SAPA is conducting a parallel meeting to the SAARC meeting in Male and SAWG should make their presence felt in these areas. While putting the cause forward, SAWG is also considering rephrasing the term refugees with statelessness since this is more appealing.



South Asia Working Group Meeting

Staff development

Julia Mayerhofer has joined APRRN as the new Programme Officer in April 2010. Julia is born and raised in Austria – she has been working with refugees on the Thai–Burma border and in Hong Kong over the last years. She also did research on the "Educational Opportunities" for Burmese refugees on the Thai–Burma border.

The secretariat hopes to be more effective and proactive with Julia's presence.

We are extending a warm welcome to Julia and hope she will find the experience at APRRN rewarding. Julia can be contacted at aprrn.officer@gmail.com.

Asia Pacific Consultation on Refugee Rights Report

The Third Asia Pacific Consultation on Refugee Rights (APCRR3) was held in Bangkok at the Bangkok Rama Hotel from 25 to 27 November 2010. APCRR3 was attended by 117 participants from 22 countries. APCRR3 consolidated the commitment of the members to the Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN) to pursue APRRN's principles in vigorously advancing the rights of refugees in the Asia Pacific region. APRRN has been building foundations since it was formed in October 2008 at APCRR1.

A **detailed report** of the APCRR3 can now be downloaded [here](#).

Some of the **presentations** at the APCRR3 can be downloaded from the following links:

Dr. Savitri Taylor: [Possibilities for an Asia Pacific Regional Protection Framework](#)

Paul Power, Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA): [Building national networks for refugee rights](#)

Victor Biak Lian, Chin Human Rights Organization & Euro-Burma Office: [Refugees from Burma](#)

Jack Dunford, Thai-Burma Border Consortium: [Refugees from Burma in the Asia Pacific Region](#)

UNHCR: [Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas](#) and [Regional Approaches to Refugee Protection](#)

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Visit us at:

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More information

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Upcoming events and activities

2011 Refugee Conference: Looking to the Future, learning from the past. A conference to mark 60years of the Refugee Convention

Sydney, Australia, 14 – 17 June 2011

<http://refugeecon2011.arts.unsw.edu.au/>

UNHCR Annual Consultations with NGOs

Geneva, 28 – 30 June 2011

South Asian Detention Workshop

Bangladesh, end of July 2011

East Asia Detention Workshop

TBA, End of August/September 2011

Regional Detention Workshop

Malaysia, early October 2011

ARLAN Workshop

Jakarta, 19 September 2011

Please contact Martin Jones(Lecturer in International Human Rights Law, Centre for Applied Human Rights, University of York) for more information: martindavidjones@gmail.com

East Asia Refugee Mental Health Training

Hong Kong, 9–11 November, 2011

East Asia Sub-Regional Refugee Symposium

Hong Kong, 12 November 2011

World Refugee Day 2011

Joint event with the Thai Committee for Refugees

June 20, 2011

5–7 PM

FCCT Bangkok, Thailand

Programme:

- Launch of the Refugee Freedom Fund
- Launch of the Refugee Studies Programme
- Launch of the campaign of the draft bill of the domestic legislation for refugees in Thailand

