



ATENEO DE MANILA UNIVERSITY

School of Social Sciences  
Department of Political Science

**SPOTLIGHT**  
ON THE 2019  
APPAP WORKING  
GROUP ON GENDER  
AND ATROCITY  
PREVENTION

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The Asia Pacific Partnership for Atrocity Prevention (APPAP) Working Group on Gender and Atrocity Prevention (WG-GAP) held its second general meeting in Dili, Timor Leste, on 27 February 2019, followed by a Roundtable Discussion with Stakeholders on 28 February, and a Peer-to-Peer learning activity on 01 March 2019.

Belun, a member of the Working Group, served as the local host for the activities. The WG-GAP meeting was convened by the co-chairs, Dr Sarah Teitt of the Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (APR2P), The University of Queensland, and Dr Ma. Lourdes Veneracion-Rallonza of the Department of Political Science, Ateneo de Manila University, with the support of Belun's Director Mr Luis Ximenes and gender expert Ms Maria Marilia da Costa.

The APPAP WG-GAP members in attendance also included representatives from: ALTSEAN-Burma Network (Ms Debbie Stothard), Research Initiatives Bangladesh (RIB) (Dr Meghna Guhathakurta), Asian Muslim Action Network (AMAN) Indonesia (Ms Dwi Rubiyanti Kholifah), and the Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies at Singapore's Nanyang Technological University (Dr Tamara Nair).

The first two days of the three-day program comprised of a closed-door strategic planning session, a half-day public roundtable with leading Timor Leste gender experts, a briefing on Timor Leste's experience in gender-responsive transitional justice and a visit to the Chega! Museum. The third day entailed a peer-to-peer learning session on Belun's Early Warning, Early Response (EWER) system, which included a site visit to a local community that is implementing the said system. The community visit enabled Working Group members to directly hear from local stakeholders about how the EWER system works in practice.

# I. WORKING GROUP SECOND ANNUAL MEETING AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

## DAY 1:

### APPAP WORKING GROUP MEETING STRATEGIES AND PLAN OF ACTION

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The first day of the program provided an opportunity for members of the WG-GAP to discuss priorities and formulate a strategic Plan of Action to guide their work. Given the diversity in the group's geographic and thematic expertise, the meeting was designed to provide an opportunity for all members of the Working Group to assess what they understand to be the most salient challenges and pathways to tackling pervasive sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in the region.

Dr. Teitt facilitated the first session, which was based on the background paper she drafted for the Working Group that: (1) provided an overview of gender-based atrocity crimes according to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and relevant gender jurisprudence; (2) utilised the UN Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes as a basis for mapping out what a gender-based atrocity prevention agenda entails; and (3) identified some of the most prevalent risk factors in the region that point to a need for more strategic and targeted gender-based atrocity prevention efforts in the Asia Pacific. WG-GAP members offered suggestions for further strengthening the paper, particularly in relation to targeting specific challenges in the Asia Pacific region, namely:

1. the marginalisation of women from leadership and decision-making;
2. troubling signs of an increase in gender discriminatory practices, for example increased reports of polygamy and child marriage;
3. various typologies of SGBV that are sometimes overlooked, such as child slavery; and
4. pervasive gender stereotypes, both secular and non-secular, which dominate many of the region's political and social perceptions of women, and contribute to violence against them.

Dr Veneracion-Rallonza facilitated the second session, which focused on a strategy brief she drafted for the meeting on ASEAN's role in advancing gender-based atrocity prevention. She stressed the difference between a strategy brief and a policy brief—although education is key to both, a strategy brief is geared specifically at analysing entry points and pathways for engaging with ASEAN institutions and leaders. For this reason, she highlighted the importance of grafting initiatives onto existing priorities, and suggested that the Working Group should consider how its work might fit with ASEAN's high-level interest in preventing violent extremism.

The group discussion then centred on ASEAN's current commitments on preventing SGBV. APPAP members discussed how gendered violence could, and should, garner more social, press, and political attention. Education of all sectors was cited as an important catalyst to change. Dr Veneracion-Rallonza gave as an example the number of women killed by landmines while farming or collecting water in various Southeast Asian countries but whose deaths are not publicised locally, nationally or even internationally. Hence fatalities and maiming continues without concerted prevention strategies.

This discussion featured numerous case studies in the Southeast Asian region, and each APPAP member participant cited examples of ongoing gendered violence and the perpetuation of myths related to gender. A key point raised by Dr Meghna Guhathakurta was that distinctions need be drawn between counter terrorism and atrocity prevention, and that any drafted Plan of Action needs to be atrocity prevention focussed. Counter terrorism— or the prevention of violent extremism— is not necessarily focussed on the same social problems and exists within a different sphere of political influence.

The background paper drafted by Dr Teitt and the strategy brief drafted by Dr Veneracion-Rallonza served as bases for discussion. The afternoon session entailed an interactive workshop to devise a Plan of Action to foster proactive and ongoing initiatives led by APPAP members. Working Group members were each asked to identify three examples or priorities regarding: (1) the most pressing gaps/risks; (2) existing capacities/good practice; (3) crosscutting issues; (4) monitoring, advocacy, and capacity building opportunities.

Regarding gaps, some of the key points raised during the workshop included the following:

- A key gap/underlying risk is a lack of gender mainstreaming and women's representation in peace and security matters in the region.
- The increasing influence of religious law over civil law, and the shrinking of freedom of expression and civic spaces in the region is exacerbating gender discrimination and bias, and presenting a heightened risk of SGBV.
- There is a need for greater knowledge about early stage, upstream prevention measures that can help address underlying risk factors.
- At the same time, the most pressing issue is that regional leaders have proven unable or unwilling to take meaningful late stage preventive action to address well-documented SGBV atrocities—such as the situation in Myanmar.
- There is too little attention paid to the role of the private sector in encouraging or enabling SGBV as a means to clear land, control or intimidate communities, and more needs to be done to address the political economy of SGBV in the region.
- Participants pointed to many examples where the police and military are complicit in widespread SGBV, and there is a manifest lack of accountability for SGBV within state institutions in the region.

For key capacities and examples of good practice, the Working Group noted the following:

- The active participation of women in mediation, conflict resolution, and inter-community dialogue has proven effective in diffusing local and regional tensions.
- Civil society organisations and networks, particularly those working on Women, Peace

and Security, women's rights and gender empowerment, are a key capacity to raise awareness of violations, provide early warning, and support survivors.

- Existing capacities include groups that regularly monitor human rights violations at the regional and national levels—there should be efforts to raise awareness and knowledge of risk factors and early signs of widespread or systematic SGV in existing mechanisms

The group identified the following crosscutting issues/concerns:

- The value of systematically documenting incidence of SGBV to fill gaps in data and knowledge.
- The need to ensure that the focus is not just on violence against women but on gender violence in general, including SGBV against men and boys as well as LGBTQI individuals and communities.
- No prevention strategy is complete unless it has a purposive focus on addressing the way inequality exacerbates gender divisions and gives rise to gender violence.
- The role of social media (both bad and good—in inciting SGBV, and as a potential resource for advocacy).
- The enduring challenges posed by the ASEAN of policy of “non-interference” for human rights and atrocity prevention.

Lastly, the discussion shifted to monitoring, advocacy and capacity building centred on what entry points exist, and what specific action or activities the Working Group should undertake. The key question presented by Dr Teitt was whether the Working Group thought it was important to focus on broad, region-wide initiatives, or focus on specific situations or sectors. The group identified four priorities for monitoring violations, enhancing advocacy and capacity building, including programmes aimed at:

- the security sector,
- human rights defenders,
- the private sector,
- youth, and
- media.

Based on this discussion, the Working Group examined how they might organise these ideas into a draft action plan. The Working Group agreed to focus on five key initiatives that reflect the expertise of its members:

(1) network building; (2) training/capacity building; (3) advocacy/outreach; (4) monitoring and documentation for early warning; and (5) research on crosscutting issues. The Plan of Action the Working Group endorsed is captured in the following table:

**TABLE 1. APPAP WG-GAP PLAN OF ACTION**

ACTIVITY/GOAL	SHORT TERM TARGET	MEDIUM TERM TARGET	LONG-TERM TARGET
<i>STRENGTHEN AND EXPAND THE APPAP GENDER NETWORK</i>	Expand Working Group membership, geographic representation and specific area expertise (e.g. transitional justice, Security Sector Reform, interfaith dialogue)	Build partnerships/connections with organisations working on cross-cutting issues	Create an established network of actors/organisations in the Asia Pacific working on SGBV atrocity prevention
<i>TRAINING/CAPACITY BUILDING</i>	Develop a training package on SGBV Atrocity prevention, with linkages to WPS/PVE/SDG/ CEDAW (30)	Deliver targeted training to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Human rights defenders/grassroots organisations</li> <li>• ASEAN (ACWC/AIPR/AICHR)</li> <li>• APCR/AIPA</li> <li>• Media Influencers</li> <li>• Religious leaders</li> <li>• Private Sector</li> <li>• Security Sector</li> <li>• NHRI/HRIs</li> </ul>	Develop a Mobile Training Institute for Atrocity prevention, with key expertise on gender and atrocity prevention
<i>ADVOCACY/OUTREACH</i>	Employ targeted advocacy on implementing WPS/ CEDAW 30  Compose issue statements on crisis situations, with recommendations for action	Develop a regional strategy for establishing a Regional Action Plan on SGBV atrocity prevention, with a focus on implementing WPS and CEDAW 30  Build national and regional constituencies supporting the action plan	Create a Regional Action Plan on SGBV atrocity prevention, with a focus on implementing WPS and CEDAW 30



ACTIVITY/GOAL	SHORT TERM TARGET	MEDIUM TERM TARGET	LONG-TERM TARGET
<i>MONITORING/ DOCUMENTATION FOR EWER</i>	For APPAP to develop an EW monitoring capability, linked to and with the aim of strengthening existing mechanisms/initiatives	Continue with ongoing monitoring/documentation	Establish EWER capacity in the region
<i>RESEARCH</i>	<p>Finalise the background report on Gender-based Atrocity Prevention in the Asia Pacific</p> <p>Conduct research on SGBV Atrocity Prevention and Implementing WPS/ CEDAW 30 in Asia Pacific</p> <p>Review of existing early warning systems, how they integrate gender analysis and opportunities/ their entry points for improving/ any prospects for upscaling these existing systems</p>	<p>“Review of review” of human right instruments and mechanisms re: SGBV: What recommendations have states implemented from UPR, CEDAW, CRC, CRPD processes; what responses to individual complaints mechanisms have been made, etc.</p>	TBD on an ongoing basis



At the end of the meeting, Dr Kirril Shields, APPAP Small Grants Coordinator at the Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, briefed the Working Group on a new APPAP small grants scheme that would enable the Working Group to support two pilot projects in 2019. The group discussed this initiative and welcomed members to submit a short synopsis of proposed projects that the group would endorse via email ballot following the meeting. The group workshopped a number of initial ideas and examined the potential and limitations of those pilot projects proposed. A group decision was made to advance two of the project proposals, and those two projects were invited to submit a more formal application following the Timor Leste meeting.



## DAY 2: PUBLIC ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION WITH LOCAL GENDER EXPERTS

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The second day of the programme entailed a public roundtable titled “Building Capacity to Prevent Gender-based Atrocity Crimes: Lessons from Timor Leste, Priorities for the Asia Pacific Region”, which was organised by Belun and sponsored by the Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect. The aim of the roundtable was to provide an opportunity for the APPAP WG-GAP members to engage and share expertise with local gender experts. 58 participated, representing 30 organisations from across civil society, UN, government and media outlets.

Following brief welcome remarks by Mr Luis Ximenes, Director of Belun, and Dr Lourdes Veneracion-Rallonza, Co-Chair of the APPAP Gender Working Group, Mr Hugo Fernandes, Executive Director, National Commission of Reception, Truth and Reconciliation-(CHEGA!) began the proceedings. Mr Fernandes gave an overview of the terrible history of rape and sexual violence in Timor-Leste, noting that the legacy of sexual slavery and harassment still proliferates. Women remain a vulnerable group.

Mr Fernandes also reflected that although Timor Leste has developed a National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security that sets a target for eliminating gender-based violence by 2025, Timor Leste is some way from realising this aspiration. One problem, he noted, was a lack of discussion in Timor Leste about past crimes. After 12 years of independence, no policy is in place that addresses survivors of past atrocities. The consequences of the failure to adequately address SGBV are manifold, and Mr Fernandes stressed that SGBV has a lasting impact on the person, family, community and society.

Following Mr Fernandes, the Honourable Ms Maria José da Fonseca Monteiro de Jesus, Secretary of State for Equality and Inclusion, delivered keynote opening comments. Ms Fonseca stressed that the Timor Leste government is working to empower women and to “enhance knowledge of women of their rights, how they can protect themselves, how to continue

advocating for their rights, and making sure all citizens are aware of women’s rights.” Ms Fonseca highlighted strides Timor Leste has made toward advancing gender parity in many sectors, but she also noted the ongoing problem of gender crimes in both the city and in rural areas. She commended the roundtable discussion and highlighted the importance of discussions that delve into Timor Leste’s past and for drawing Timorese experts into discussions of ongoing problems in the Southeast Asia region.

The ensuing first half of the programme featured brief presentations on the experience of Timor Leste in relation to tackling SGBV, followed by a broader group discussion and a question-and-answer session. The presentations included:

- *SGBV Prevention through Timor Leste’s Transitional Justice Processes*, by Mr Hugo Fernandes, Executive Director, National Commission of Reception, Truth and Reconciliation-(CHEGA!)
- *Integrating SGBV in Early Warning and Early Response Systems in Timor Leste*, by Ms Maria Marilia Oliveira Da Costa, Chief of Party for Civil Society Monitoring of Security Sector Development/Monitoring Electoral Violence through the Early Warning, Early Response Program, Belun.
- *SGBV Prevention through Implementing Women, Peace and Security in Timor-Leste*, by Ms Camille Wauters, Programme Specialist of Women, Peace and Security, UN Women Timor-Leste
- *Situation of Survivors of Sexual Violence in Timor-Leste*, by Ms Manuela Leong, Director of NGO ACbit

The presentations intended to ground the discussion that followed, which focussed on ongoing challenges in Timor Leste and lessons that might be drawn from its experience. The discussion centred on some of the findings on SGBV discussed in the CHEGA! Report, which Mr Fernandes' presentation indicated took four main forms: rape, sexual slavery, sexual torture, and sexual harassment. The report also found that women were targeted because they were involved directly in acts of resistance or operations against the regime, or because they were viewed as a proxy or "alternate" for people who had been involved in this context. Participants highlighted that even though Timor Leste has adopted a national action plan on Women, Peace and Security, it does not have a specific policy for survivors of past crimes. As Mr Fernandes highlighted, there is no official analysis of the number of people who continue to suffer the effects of SGBV, what the consequences of violations are, specifically in relation to the marginalisation and discrimination of women in the family and community, and the lack of women's representation in institutions. Furthermore, evidence from the Chega! Report reveals a culture of impunity for those who committed gender and sexual-based crimes in the country, past and present. Many participants commented that Timor Leste continues to struggle in realising vital components of gender justice: compensation for past violations, setting measures in place to stop the continuation of violence, and ensuring there is no recurrence in the future.

Nevertheless, the roundtable discussion also affirmed the importance of the Chega! Report and the role of Chega! in introducing a national curriculum on civic education in schools which, for the first time, also included content on human rights and history. Civil society organisations are also leading important initiatives that could be held as examples of good practice in the region, including Belun's work in monitoring violence and signs of escalation, and ACBit's role in conducting participatory action research to communicate the Chega! findings and help empower local women to understand and realise their rights.

The second half of the roundtable featured presentations by members of the APPAP Working Group to share with the experts of Timor Leste and the efforts they are undertaking to tackle SGBV in the region, as well as some of the challenges they are confronting. Ms Debbie Stothard, Coordinator of ALSTSEAN-Burma, focused on the challenges of addressing mass SGBV in the Myanmar context. Ms Stothard shared examples of the creative ways in which young women human rights defenders and

peacebuilders are advocating for protection and accountability in Myanmar in the face of largescale SGBV against the Rohingya population— which is part of a genocidal strategy of the state. Dr Meghna Guhathakurta, Executive Director, Research Initiatives Bangladesh, spoke about the challenges of supporting survivors of SGBV in Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh, which hosts a large population of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar. Dr Guhathakurta stressed that a major shortfall is psychological counselling services for survivors, and ongoing threats that women and girls face in refugee settings even after they have fled violence. Ms Dwi Rubiyanti Kholifah, Director of Asian Muslim Action Network-Indonesia, focused on the rise of hate speech, intolerance and violence in the context of Indonesia's elections, and the impact that this has on women's rights and security. Ms Kholifah stressed in particular that this is not a problem unique to only Indonesia and that there are wider problems in the region with regard to the public and cyber bullying, rising intimidation, harassment and intolerance, and a shrinking civic space. Dr Lourdes Veneracion-Rallonza discussed, in turn, recent efforts in the Philippines to prevent gender-based atrocities and the linkage to the Philippine government's implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda. She noted in particular the importance of integrating gender training and women's active participation in the security sector. A practical example of this in action was the Philippine army's decision to deploy "hijab troopers", a group of 102 women from the Armed Forces wearing hijabs, to provide psychosocial services to predominantly Muslim residents displaced by the ISIS-inspired siege of the city of Marawi in 2017. Finally, Dr Tamara Nair, Research Fellow at the Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, delivered a presentation on the headway that is being made at the regional level in integrating gender in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. While the focus is primarily on natural disasters, Dr Nair highlighted a number of avenues where capacities for disaster resilience, preparedness and response could be developed in relation to human-induced disasters.

The presentations prompted a number of questions from Timorese participants, who welcomed the opportunity to discuss the ongoing challenges to addressing SGBV with the APPAP Working group. Particularly, questions on how they resonate with Timor Leste's own experience and some of the strategies adopted from across the region to prevent such violations, support survivors, and promote justice and accountability,



After the roundtable, the Chega! Museum hosted a group visit from the Working Group. The visit provided an opportunity to listen to a more in depth discussion from Mr Hugo Fernandes, on the gender provisions in the Chega! Report, a multivolume final report for the Timor-Leste Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation. It was created following the nation's independence from first Portugal and then Indonesia. The Working Group sought insights from Mr Fernandes on other transitional justice processes in the region, particularly in the Philippines. Following the briefing, Mr Fernandes provided the Working Group a guided tour of the Chega! Museum and explained to them its archival processes.

## DAY 3: PEER-TO-PEER LEARNING ACTIVITIES

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The final day of the programme included a peer-to-peer learning activity led by the local host organisation, Belun. Belun hosted the Working Group at its headquarters in Dili, where Ms Maria Marilia Oliveira Da Costa gave an in-depth overview introduction into Belun's EWER system, including the methodology they use and the areas they operate. This provided an opportunity to better understand the EWER system, including talking to specific challenges in various municipalities in Timor Leste.

Afterward, Belun facilitated a group visit to the province of Liquica, Timor Leste, where local officials and police, alongside village representatives gave examples of how the EWER system is implemented in practice as a means of preventing and monitoring sexual and gender-based violence. The discussion centred on community efforts to monitor gender and sexual-based violence, with representatives of the police and local government informing the Working Group of the effectiveness of the system, and how both are using EWER to help prevent gender violence in the province of Liquica.

## FOLLOW UP: PILOT PROJECT ENDORSEMENT

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Following the Working Group meeting, Dr Kirril Shields received the two pilot project applications as proposed by members of the group. The first was from Research Initiatives Bangladesh, who proposed an interactive theatre piece centred on testimony collected in the refugee camps of Cox's Bazaar, with a particular focus on women, agency, and sexual-violence in the camps. The proposal was titled "Prevention of SGBV Through Using Interactive Theatre: Rohingyas in Bangladesh", which aimed to have at least one theatre performance by local theatre activists, to document the process, and to produce resources and knowledge that could later be utilised by APPAP members.

The second pilot project was from Timor Leste's Belun titled "Women, Peace and Security through Women's Participation and Decision Making", and proposed to utilise Belun's EWER system to monitor and respond

to gender and sexual-violence in Baukau, Covalima, Oekusi and Dili municipalities. This would then lead to a community-level group discussion as part of the Belun's Conflict Prevention Response Network (CPRN), followed by workshops for the representatives of women groups, community representatives, non-government organisations, media, government members, and academic institutions in each municipality. The workshop proposed to help participants better understand the impact of violence related to gender-based and domestic violence in the country.

The APPAP Working Group endorsed both projects via email ballot following the Timor Leste meeting, and both pilot projects have since made much progress towards fulfilling their project's goals.



## II. OPERATIONALIZING APPAP WG-GAP PLANS

On 26 to 27 August 2019, the WG-GAP will conduct the pilot-run of the Human Rights Defenders' Training on Preventing Sexual and Gender-based Atrocity Crimes (SGBAC). The two-day basic training will convene human rights defenders from Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, and Timor Leste.

At the end of the training, the participants are expected to have: (1) understood the context and conduct of SGBAC; (2) mapped out structural and direct risk factors as well as early warning protocols to prevent the commission of SGBAC; and (3) understood how to advocate for effective early response through leveraging national, regional and international human rights mechanisms and processes. The WG-GAP members themselves will serve as lecturers/resource persons for the training.

Lastly, drawing from the WG-GAP Strategy Brief drafted by Dr Veneracion-Rallonza and in light of engaging with the ASEAN, the following activities have also been scheduled:

- Participation of Dr. Veneracion-Rallonza in the "Regional Symposium on Implementing Women, Peace and Security Agenda in ASEAN" on 22 - 23 August 2019 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia hosted by the Ministry of Women's Affairs of the Royal Government of Cambodia in collaboration with the ASEAN Secretariat (ASEC), the ASEAN Committee on Women (ACW), the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC) and with support from the ASEAN-USAID Partnership for Regional Optimization within the Political Security and Socio-Cultural Communities (ASEAN-USAID PROSPECT).
- Organisation of the APR2P-Philippine Office and Gender and Atrocity Prevention Programme of a Side Event during the "Senior Officials Conference on Gender Mainstreaming in the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC) Sectoral Bodies" on 11 to 13 September 2019 in Manila, Philippines. The Side Event entitled "Operationalising the ASEAN Joint Statement on Women, Peace and Security: An Initial Intersectoral Dialogue on the Prevention of Sexual and Gender-based Atrocity Crimes", targets the participation of the ACWC, ACW, ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR), and AIPR ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (AIPR) and aims to:
  - ◊ raise awareness on sexual and gender-based atrocity crimes as a distinctive violation of women's human rights in crisis situations;
  - ◊ provide space to understand the contextual risk factors to the occurrence of sexual and gender-based atrocity crimes, including radicalization and extremist ideologies; and
  - ◊ allow for an entry point to explore ASEAN inter-sectoral response (i.e. ACWC, AICHR, and AIPR) to sexual and gender-based atrocity crimes within the frame of the ASEAN Joint Statement on Women, Peace and Security.

Dr. Karen Smith, Special Adviser to the Secretary General on the, Responsibility to Protect, United Nations, keynotes both the main and side events.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS


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For subsequent activities of the WG-GAP, it was decided that the 2020 meeting and other events for the year will be hosted by AMAN-Indonesia. It was also agreed upon that, beginning 2020, the co-chair shall now be on a rotation basis, meaning the host institution shall be the co-chair for a given year.


In this regard, Ms Ruby Kholifa of AMAN-Indonesia shall be the co-chair of the WG-GAP for 2020, along with Dr. Veneracion-Rallonza. Both will be working together as regards the theme of a round-table discussion, field learning visit, and the third annual meeting of the WG-GAP.

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