

SPOTLIGHT ON R2P



APPAP Fourth Annual Meeting 2020

Executive Summary and Outcomes

On 9 September 2020, the fourth annual meeting of the Asia Pacific Partnership on Atrocity Prevention (APPAP) was held. The meeting was co-hosted by the Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (APR2P) at the University of Queensland and the APR2P Philippines Office at Ateneo de Manila University. The meeting facilitated dialogue on R2P in the Asia-Pacific region, with a strong focus on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the risks of atrocity crime. While APPAP annual meetings would usually be held in person in the region, this year the meeting was held online, and in shortened form, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keynote speakers

Dr Ma. Lourdes Veneracion-Raltonza, Centre Director of the Philippines office chaired the meeting, officially welcoming special guests, existing APPAP partners, and several new members who had joined APPAP since the 2019 meeting held in Jakarta.

Dr Catherine Hesse-Swain from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade presented an address on behalf of Australia's National R2P Focal Point, Mr Adam McCarthy, discussing the COVID-19 pandemic and the implications for human rights protection, specifically the heightened risk of atrocity crime and the threat to peace and security presented by the pandemic. Dr Hesse-Swain also detailed the Australian government's revised development policy in light of COVID-19, with a focus on partnerships for recovery and protecting vulnerable groups, including women and girls.

Working Groups

Updates on the achievements and continuing work of APPAP working groups were provided by Dr Noel Morada and Dr Kirril Shields of APR2P, and Dr Veneracion-Raltonza.

Due to the increasing relevance of the COVID -19 pandemic with regards to human rights protection, an APPAP Working Group was established earlier this year. Dr Morada detailed the working group's plan to conduct a case study analysis of

several countries in the region, especially their responses to the pandemic. The study will identify the key strengths and weaknesses of these responses, focusing on how vulnerable groups, such as refugees and minorities, are protected or exposed to risk. The initial draft and case study workshops are planned for October, followed by an online webinar which will report the preliminary findings of the case studies.

Dr Shields delivered the update on APPAP's Prevention of Hate Speech and Incitement to Commit Atrocity Crimes Working Group. Following the second meeting of the group in Jakarta last year, members reached a consensus that more knowledge about hate speech was required in order to progress their work. In response, Dr Shields has proposed a series of online training workshops that will address the complexities of hate speech and hate speech prevention. The workshops will cover topics such as 'Defining Hate Speech', 'Hate Speech vs Freedom of Speech' and 'Best Practice Approaches to Preventing Hate Speech' and are planned for November. It is expected that working group

members will utilise the learnings from this training to further inform their agenda.

Finally, Dr Veneracion-Rallonzo summarised the work undertaken by the Gender and Atrocity Prevention Working Group since the meeting in Jakarta last year. She highlighted the human rights defenders training on preventing sexual and gender-based atrocity crimes that took place last year; the side event to the APSC conference which covered the operationalization of the ASEAN Joint Statement on Women, Peace and Security; as well as the webinar series on women, peace and security during COVID-19, which was held in July 2020. Additionally, Dr Veneracion-Rallonzo delivered an update on the working group's plan for 2020-21, which includes an on line training course specifically developed for the security sector on the prevention of sexual and gender based atrocity crimes, which will be delivered in the Philippines.

APPAP Small Grants Program

Dr Kirril Shields provided an update on the two projects currently being undertaken through the APPAP Small Grants Program. The first project involves the development of an early warning/early response software program, to be piloted in Bangladesh, Timor Leste and Indonesia. The second project involves the development of a hate speech app aimed at youth. The app is currently a work in progress and has an expected launch date of December.

Youth Forum

The APR2P Youth Core Group on Atrocity Prevention (YCGAP) presented to APPAP on its activities since forming in August 2019. YCGAP representatives, Md. Mofaq Kharul (Taufiq) and Ms Toh Nyon Nyin, reiterated the vision of the group to strengthen grassroots youth advocacy on atrocity prevention and R2P. They provided an update on information sharing between group members on topics such as the Rohingya crisis, the political situation in Fiji as well as COVID-19 and its impact on youth. YCGAP also co-hosted a webinar on the role of young people in lead-

ing peace and security for International Youth Day, and has strengthened its networks within the UN and YPS spaces. In the last year the group has been building their social media presence to mobilise youth, share knowledge, experience and activities, and conduct outreach. Their plan for 2020-21 involves conducting country-specific consultation projects to inform future work, supported by APR2P.

Report from Secretariat

Ms Nikki Marczak from APR2P delivered the report from the Secretariat on the consultation process conducted with members of APPAP in early 2020. The consultations involved discussions on priority issues, APPAP governance, training needs and communication/promotional work. The report highlighted four main priorities: COVID-19 and the impact on atrocity prevention; racism, hate speech and attacks on minorities; the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar; and security sector governance. The report also identified suggestions on further training to be provided by APPAP, including entry level training on R2P and atrocity prevention directed towards members of the community such as students and journalists, as well as more advanced, specialised training for APPAP members.

Governance and Strategic Planning

Discussion was held among APPAP members on its role and strategic direction, strategies to galvanise government support on R2P, as well as engagement with other key stakeholders. A taskforce was established to look at governance issues, chaired by Debbie Stothard from Altsean. Two new working groups were formed: one on transitional justice; and another to focus on APPAP advocacy.

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