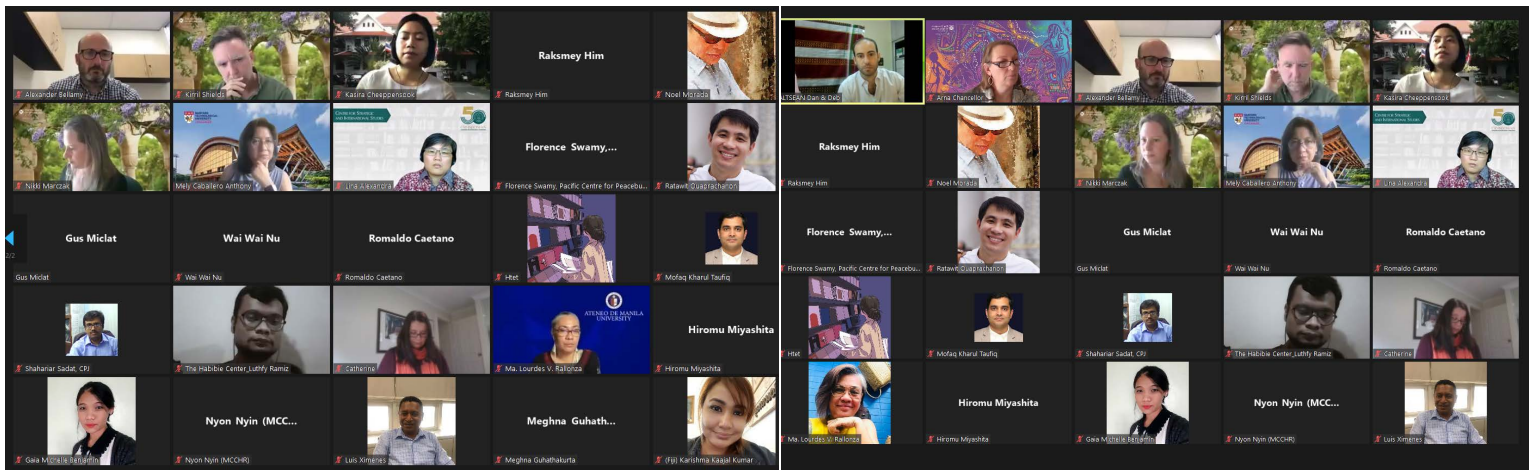


SPOTLIGHT ON R2P



APPAP Fifth Annual Meeting 2021

Executive Summary and Outcomes

On 9 September 2021, the Asia Pacific Partnership for Atrocity Prevention (APPAP) held its fifth annual meeting. The meeting addressed several key features of the partnership, including updates on the working groups for COVID-19, preventing hate speech and incitement, and gender and atrocity prevention. Updates on APPAP's early warning system for gender-based violence, projects on countering hate speech, recent advocacy efforts, and activities of the Youth Core Group on Atrocity Prevention (YCGAP) were also presented. Finally, a new governance structure was posited, to further enhance the work of APPAP members, the working groups, and APR2P, who acts as the secretariat of APPAP. Once again, due to the ongoing pandemic, the meeting was conducted via Zoom.

Welcome Address

This year's meeting was chaired by Prof. Mely Caballero-Anthony from the Centre for Non-Traditional Security, Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. She welcomed the attendees to the meeting, making special mention of the new APPAP members that had joined since the last meeting. As of September 2021, APPAP membership included 31 partners from across the Asia Pacific. What followed was the address by Australia's national R2P Focal Point Mr. Adam McCarthy, delivered on his behalf by Dr. Catherine Hesse-Swain from the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

The address emphasised Australia's continuing focus on stability and resilience within the region during the COVID-19 pandemic, including through its Partnerships for Recovery development response. To that

end, For country situations like at high risk, Australia must have the flexibility to accommodate countries at risk, such as Myanmar and Afghanistan. Therefore, Australia is increasing its efforts on multilateral engagement and channelling humanitarian aid through has shifted away from governments and towards multilateral and non-government partners for recipients of its aid. Dr. Hesse-Swain then highlighted the importance of ASEAN-led regionally-led efforts (such as ASEAN), country participation in the Human Rights Council intersessional meetings, and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in strengthening the implementation of R2P. She emphasised the necessity of Australia's partnerships with non-government organisations and countries in the Asia-Pacific [close spacing]—especially in view of the current pandemic environment which has threatened that is threatening years

of mul-tilateral efforts in furthering gains on human rights. For example, violence against women and girls has increased so much during the pandemic, that the estimated time required to close the gender gap has increased from 99.5 to 135 years, according to the World Economic Forum's 2021 Global Gender Gap Report. As such, a gender responsive post-pandemic plan is required. The report from DFAT also noted that while the pandemic has resulted in persistent disruptions, it may also be a catalyst to fresh viewpoints and approaches..

APPAP Working Groups

COVID-19

Updates on the work of three of APPAP's working groups were given, the first by Dr. Noel Morada, Director of Regional Diplomacy and Capacity Building at APR2P. In June 2021, the COVID-19 working group published a report entitled 'COVID-19 and Implications for Atrocity Prevention: Lessons From East Asia', and followed it up with a subsequent webinar. The report drew its findings from case studies of seven countries: China, Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines, and Singapore. A draft manuscript of this report has been submitted to the journal, Global Responsibility to Protect, for publication, and the suggestion has been made of expanding the analysis to include other case studies, including from the Pacific and up to three more from Southeast Asia. A follow-up webinar is also being considered.

Prevention of Hate Speech and Incitement

Dr. Kirril Shields, APR2P's Atrocity Prevention Grants Coordinator, along with Lina Alexandra of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and Debbie Stothard and Dan Goode from ALTSEAN-Burma, provided updates regarding the prevention of hate speech and incitement. The working group delivered two training courses for APPAP members relating to hate speech, after a previous consensus determined more information about hate speech and incitement, and how it affects atrocity crimes,

was needed. The group also published 'Facebook: Regulating Hate Speech in the Asia Pacific', a report examining Facebook's regulation in Asia Pacific countries, with recommendations for further action. Furthermore, in partnership with Southeast Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief (SEAPFoRB), it delivered Bahasa Indonesia, Burmese, and Thai translations of key international texts on hate speech, such as the Beirut Declaration, the Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors, and the UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech.

The group took questions from participants regarding two apps designed to facilitate education and prevention of hate speech. One is the National Hate Speech Dashboard by CSIS, the other is the Prevention of Hate Speech by ALTSEAN-Burma. The National Hate Speech Dashboard is the first of its kind in Indonesia, using an algorithm to detect trends in hate speech on online platforms against vulnerable communities. The dashboard also allows the working group to map out the social networks and actors who spread or instigate hate speech and incitement.

ALTSEAN-Burma's app, while still in progress, aims to provide a large-scale data set of hate speech trends, by allowing users to report hate speech incidents in multiple languages. As well as a reporting mechanism, the app intends to provide responses, with users able to submit complaints to human rights mechanisms at the national and international level, and access quick response resources in the event of an immediate crisis. ALTSEAN-Burma intends to include a human element with the app, with a dedicated team working to communicate and follow-up with complainants, ensuring a dialogue is established. The app was developed in response to the hate speech training delivered to APPAP members, where it was determined that existing hate speech reporting apps did little to benefit the complainant.

Both of these projects have faced challenges. There are software problems with the National Hate Speech Dashboard, and the algo-

rithm needs to be further refined to more accurately identify hate speech. While technical problems are also a challenge for ALTSEAN-Burma, political disruption in Malaysia, the coup in Myanmar and COVID-19 restrictions are also preventing respondents from accessing the app.

Gender and Atrocity Prevention

Dr. Lourdes Veneracion-Rallonza of APR2P's Philippine Office updated members on the activities of the Gender and Atrocity Prevention Working Group (WG-GAP). A pilot training course was delivered for the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), entitled 'Security Sector Training on Preventing Sexual and Gender-based Atrocity Crimes'. Participants included members of the WG-GAP, 45 members of the AFP, along with APR2P's Director Prof. Alex Bellamy, and Dr. Karen Smith, the then Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General on R2P.

The working group also held a forum in conjunction with the UN Office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, continuing conversations of the relationship between gender and atrocity prevention. and Romaldo Caetano of Belun updated members on the organisation's Incident Data Monitoring of sexual and gender-based violence. The working group plans to publish a report linking atrocity prevention and the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda and recommendations from CEDAW in Southeast Asia, and to hold a summit on gender and atrocity prevention in 2022.

APPAP Small Grants Program

Dr. Kirril Shields provided an update on APPAP's Warning and Response Network for Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, a project part of APPAP's Small Grants Program. APPAP members Belun and Research Initiatives Bangladesh have signed on as partners, with RIB collecting 500 responses in the initial pilot implementation of the project.

APPAP Advocacy

Nikki Marczak, APR2P's Atrocity Prevention Coordinator, updated members on APPAP's recent advocacy, with the group releasing three statements regarding the violence in Myanmar and another regarding human rights violations against Uighurs within Xinjiang.

Youth Core Group on Atrocity Prevention

Mofaq Kharul Taufiq and Nyon Nyin Toh, members of APR2P's Youth Core Group on Atrocity Prevention (YCGAP), updated members on the work of the group. They collaborated with other groups in the region in April 2021 to co-host a webinar on Myanmar: 'Role of Youth in Defending Human Rights Values and Preventing Atrocity Crimes in Myanmar', which followed a statement on Myanmar by the group, released in March. They also joined with the Southeast Asia Young Peacebuilders Organization to participate in the APR2P workshop 'Four Steps Closer to World Peace', which focuses on building resilience and managing stress when working in situations of violence and human rights violations.

YCGAP pivoted towards more local projects in 2021, with youth consultations in Bangladesh, a virtual hate speech training in Indonesia (#Shareitright), and a two-part workshop in Malaysia examining the effects of hate speech on atrocities and to promote mutual respect between communities.

YCGAP was also selected to be a Global Focal Point of Youth for R2P, a working group of the UN-affiliated Major Group for Children and Youth (MGCY). MGCY is mandated by the UN General Assembly to be a self-organised mechanism for young people to engage with UN processes. Gaia Michelle Benjamin and Nyon Nyin Toh, current members of the YCGAP, were chosen as representatives for this Global Focal Point.

Proposal for New Governance Structure

Debbie Stothard of ALTSEAN-Burma proposed the formation of an

Executive Committee which could comprise members of the APR2P Secretariat, working groups and sub-regions. This committee would not replace the roles and workings of the working groups or the Secretariat but give these areas of APPAP a means to converge to make decisions and provide greater communication between the groups.

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