

14th Annual Human Rights & Peoples' Diplomacy Training Program in cooperation with the Asian Regional Resources Centre for Human Rights Education (ARRC), Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (Forum Asia) and the Human Rights Office of Mahidol University

**Bangkok, Thailand
2-20 February 2004**

Report

Executive Summary:

The Diplomacy Training Program's 14th Annual Regional Human Rights Defenders Training Program took place in Bangkok from 2-20th February 2004.

For the first time in seven years His Excellency José Ramos-Horta, the Founder and Patron of the Diplomacy Training Program opened the 2004 event. This year was also the first time His Excellency has attended the annual training program since becoming Foreign Minister of East Timor. His presence and opening address was a particular inspiration to the participants, a very personal illustration of the change that advocates can bring about by working with others and of the growing influence of what he called *global civil society*.

This report draws on the comments and anonymous evaluations of the participants. It is divided into three sections: *Section 1 – The Background to the Training Program*. *Section 2 – The Training Program*; *Section 3 – Looking Forward*. Attached is the final training schedule of the 2004 Program.

The 2004 program brought together 24 participants from Fiji, Indonesia and West Papua, Burma, Mongolia, Sri Lanka, India, Indigenous Australia, Papua New Guinea, Pakistan, Palestine, Cambodia, Thailand, the Philippines and Abkhazia. As a result of the generosity of individual financial supporters in Australia, the Diplomacy Training Program was able to subsidise five of the participants through the program. The Diplomacy Training Program assisted many of the others to raise the course fee from a wide range of NGOs and Foundations.

Many of the participants at the 14th Annual Training course face a disturbing range of human rights violations and challenges, including political killings, "disappearances", torture, poverty, caste and gender based violence and discrimination. In often dangerous and difficult circumstances they monitor these human rights violations, whilst working with child labourers and street children, Dalit

and indigenous communities, the rural poor, refugees in border camps and others to build peace in communities riven by conflict.

The willingness of participants to share their experiences, perspectives and skills made a major contribution to the success of the 2004 training. The participants generated an atmosphere of mutual respect and support over the three weeks and this atmosphere was commented on by a number of the trainers.

Once again, the Diplomacy Training Program is indebted to the many excellent trainers who generously gave their time and expertise. The trainers came from near and far, from NGOs and from governments, from the UN and the media. Some travelled at their own expense and many generously donated their modest honorarium back to the Diplomacy Training Program. Some made themselves available at very short notice and operated in great toleration of technical difficulties.

This year the program sought to retain the key elements of previous annual training programs, at the same time as introducing important new content on emerging human rights challenges. Anonymous participant evaluations of the trainers were overwhelmingly positive, as were the evaluations of the training schedule.

The 2004 training program was conducted in partnership with the Asian Regional Resources Centre for Human Rights Education (ARRC), Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (Forum Asia) and the Human Rights Office of Mahidol University, Thailand. Mahidol was the new academic partner for the Diplomacy Training Program this year.

The partnerships reflect the Diplomacy Training Program's commitment to working closely with others in the region, to drawing on the best available local and international expertise and experience and to ensuring that its training programs are culturally appropriate and reflect the experiences and challenges of the region.

The 14th Annual Program could not have taken place, and many participants could not have participated, without the generous support of many different funding organisations. The Diplomacy Training Program would like to acknowledge with appreciation the following organisations: Caritas (Australia); Caritas (New Zealand); Oxfam Community Aid Abroad; National Council of Churches Australia; Rio-Tinto Aboriginal Foundation; Bread for the World; Asia Foundation; Ford Foundation; Forum Asia; Earth Rights International.

1. Background to the Training Program:

Advertising for participants to join the 2004 Annual Program began in mid 2003 through the Diplomacy Training Program Website (www.dtp.unsw.edu) and NGO networks. There were over 90 applications from people working for their

communities and human rights across the region. The majority of applications were from men.

Diplomacy Training Program staff made an initial round of selections and the successful applicants were informed and encouraged to seek funding to cover the course fee and other costs. It is unfortunate that successful applicants from East Timor, Fiji, Pakistan, Bangladesh, the Philippines, Laos and Vietnam were unable to attend because neither they, nor the Diplomacy Training Program, were able to source funding for them. For the first time participants were sent a *Training Needs Analysis* form to complete prior to the training in addition to the training needs analysis prepared and distributed for the Internet training.

The successful applicants represented a wide range of countries, cultures, and religions in the region. They also represented a cross section of many of the human rights challenges confronting individuals and communities in the region – from those working at the grassroots with vulnerable and marginalised communities to those working in national leadership positions.

The gaps between the rich and poor in the Asia-Pacific region continue to grow. This is increasing the marginalisation and exclusion of particularly vulnerable communities, including those belonging to particular castes, and indigenous communities. Where poor communities occupy resource rich areas, conflict over development and access to resources can lead to intimidation, forced displacement, extra-judicial executions, torture and deaths in custody.

In Sri Lanka and other countries of the region affected by armed conflict, many of those working on issues of peace, poverty and development have the daily challenge of working in areas under the control of different armed forces that operate in a climate of impunity. Conflict and repression in the region also result in refugee flows and internal displacement of populations. The Burmese refugee community in Thailand is feeling particularly vulnerable at present with Thai government curbs on political activity and uncertainty about the possibility of large-scale forcible returns to Burma. The renewed and intense conflict in Aceh is also creating new refugees.

A lack of control over resources, development processes, and inequitable sharing of the benefits of development fuels grievances and conflict in many countries in the region, notably Indonesia and India. Recognition of the relationship between human rights and development, and increasing effective participation in development processes, are significant human rights challenges in the region.

In Thailand, where the training took place, NGOs and some media commentators are increasingly concerned by the Thai government's approach to human rights issues, including police killings of approximately 2000 suspected drug dealers in

2003, growing civil conflict with the minority Muslim community in the South and open hostility to the operation of some NGOs.

In the lead-up to, and during the training program, there was considerable speculation about the prospects for political and human rights progress in Burma. International pressure for positive change, will grow as 2006 approaches. Burma is scheduled to host the ASEAN Forum in October 2006 and this means is likely to mean a new focus for advocacy of human rights over the coming years.

The invasion of Iraq and continuing conflict there, along with the focus on the “War on Terror”, and the challenges these pose to the United Nations, multilateral action and the rule of law, were also part of the background to the program and made for lively discussions throughout the three weeks.

2. The Training Program

2.1 The Opening Ceremony. The Opening Ceremony was held at the Ambassador Hotel and was chaired by longstanding Diplomacy Training Program Board Member, Dr Sarah Pritchard. There were brief opening remarks from Dr Gotham Arya of Forum Asia, Theresa Limpin of ARRC, Dr Mike Hayes of Mahidol and Patrick Earle of the Diplomacy Training Program before the keynote address from His Excellency, José é Ramos-Horta.

Dr Gotham Arya talked about the collaboration between Forum Asia and the Diplomacy Training Program as a very practical example of the North-South cooperation that was so vital in rising to human rights challenges of the region. In his opening address José Ramos Horta emphasized the importance of commitment, patience, flexibility and being in a position to take advantage of opportunities when they arise. Joséé Ramos-Horta’s speech in particular provided participants with an inspirational opening to the training program.

2.2 The Participants. Over the period of the training there were 25 participants at the training from across the Asia-Pacific region and from Palestine and Abkhazia. Regrettably one of the participants had to be asked to leave before the end of the program as a result of inappropriate behaviour.

Considerable effort was made by Diplomacy Training Program staff to ensure equal gender representation, with priority for funding assistance going to women applicants. In the end 10 of the 24 participants were women. There was a good balance of ages from younger to more experienced advocates.

The diversity of backgrounds and issues being worked on by participants are challenges for trainers who have to decide where to pitch training. However, it proves a very positive experience for participants, enabling the sharing of

experiences and perspectives and the development of a broader view of the human rights challenges of the region. Over the course of the program a number of the trainers commented on the atmosphere of mutual respect and support shown for each other by the participants.

The feedback from the participant evaluations on the usefulness of the training was very positive and constructive (see below).

2.3 The Schedule. The schedule for the 2004 training was developed in consultation with the Diplomacy Training Program's partners and again emphasised participatory methodologies – including exercises and role-plays. This year new content was introduced on corporate accountability and human rights, the human rights approach to development, National Human Rights Institutions and the Asia-Pacific Forum, the Migrant Workers Convention, and the Right to Housing. There was also an increased emphasis on children's rights.

Even as the number of human rights training programs in the Asia-Pacific region has grown, the Diplomacy Training Program has remained unusual in its mix of international and human rights law, its focus on how the UN system works in practice and the development of advocacy and negotiation skills.

The first session, “what are human rights”, was merged with subsequent sessions because the opening ceremony was longer than scheduled. In the evaluations one participant commented on this as a negative.

There were two course related field trips – one to a theatre group that uses drama to educate on human rights and the other to an old housing community facing eviction in Bangkok. The field trip to the *Pom Mahakan* community facing eviction made a particular impact on participants.

There were also two cultural field trips organised by the Diplomacy Training Program – a visit to the Grand Palace and boat trip, and a visit to the ancient capital of Ayodha.

At a late stage of the program, it was a bonus to have Clarence Dias, from the Diplomacy Training Program's International Advisory Committee to participate in the role-play, and consolidate some key principles. Clarence also delivered a brief address at the closing ceremony and presented the participants' certificates. He was assisted in this by Annelyn, a Diplomacy Training Program alumni from 1991 and currently active on Burma issues. Somchai Homloar from Forum Asia also attended the closing ceremony and delivered a short address.

The major role-play on the Commission of Human Rights at the end of the training was again very popular with participants. It works very well as a way of consolidating many of the key learning points of the whole program. There was

some feedback that the preparations for the role-play could have been better and that it was a mistake to interrupt the exercise with some initial feedback and evaluation.

2.4 Additional activities: As an optional extra, participants were offered one-on-one media training by an experienced journalist, Larry Jagan of the BBC. Eight participants took up the offer and did interviews to camera, which were then reviewed with Larry. The feedback from this training was very positive.

Outside of the schedule there were presentations from *James Gomez* of Friedrich Naumann Stiftung on the Internet and advocacy, from documentary maker *Jeannie Hallacy* on HIV/AIDS issues and different ways for NGOs to work with video and the media, and a visit to an Indigenous people's organisation in Bangkok. Two evening visits to the Foreign Correspondent's Club in Bangkok were arranged for participants – one for the launch of a photo exhibition and panel discussion on people trafficking on the Thai-Cambodia border and the other a speech by *Gareth Evans*, Executive Director of the International Crisis Group on the theme of sovereignty and humanitarian intervention post-Iraq.

In addition, the participants showed videos and made presentations on their own situations to interested participants in a room that was made available for this purpose. Participants organised a wonderful solidarity evening in the last week of the training – with folk songs and dances from the different countries of the region.

2.5 The Trainers. The Diplomacy Training Program is committed to getting the best people available on any issue. The program is also committed to working closely with its partners, to reflecting local expertise and to ensuring regional and gender balance in both participants and trainers. Apart from members of the Board, who give so generously of their time to come to the trainings, the Diplomacy Training Program has a regular core group of trainers, some of whom have participated for many years.

As new issues are included in the schedule, there is clearly the challenge of seeking the best available trainers to cover these. Mahidol Human Rights Office was particularly helpful in identifying resources this year. Rea A. Chiongson, Programme Officer with International Women's Rights Action Watch-Asia Pacific, Scott Leckie, Executive Director of the Geneva based Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) and William Gois, Executive Director of Migrant Forum Asia were among the new trainers this year.

2.6 Training Materials. All participants received the Diplomacy Training Program Manual. There were significant new commissioned chapters in the 2004 Manual on the Migrant Workers Convention, Corporate Accountability and Human Rights, the WTO, Trade and Human Rights, The World Bank and the Human Rights Approach

to Development. For the first time participants received copies of all available trainer presentations on a CD-ROM at the end of the training.

3. Looking Forward – Conclusions

3.1 The Partnerships. The Diplomacy Training Program is very grateful to its partners. Forum Asia was represented at the Opening Ceremony by Dr Gothom Arya, and at the closing ceremony by Somchai Homloar. Both spoke of the value they place on the partnership with the Program. Forum Asia offered considerable help with both the opening ceremony and advice on program and participants.

ARRC undertook most of the logistical arrangements in relation to the training not undertaken by the Diplomacy Training Program. An ARRC staff member was subsidised to attend the training and was available for logistical support. ARRC was an excellent partner throughout the training. They did more than was required to help out at various times and were a constant source of useful advice. ARRC organised the closing ceremony and assisted in the organisation of the solidarity night.

The Human Rights Office at Mahidol also proved to be a very valuable partner this year. They were very flexible and helpful and ready to offer suggestions in relation to particular trainers and to facilitate contact between the Diplomacy Training Program and the academics and trainers that they use on their courses.

It is hoped that it will be possible to collaborate again on future programs, even with the 2005 Annual Training moving away from Bangkok.

3.2 Participant Evaluations. Participants were asked to complete evaluation forms on the individual trainers. The main purpose of the individual trainer evaluations is to enable the Diplomacy Training Program to evaluate participant perceptions of individual trainers, so that it can make informed choices about whether to use particular trainers again and to enable it to brief these trainers on any areas where they might be able to adjust their content and style. Most trainers performed very strongly with evaluations in the good to excellent categories.

Additional forms used for collating overall evaluations were also distributed to participants. These evaluations sought feedback on the program, on individual trainers and on how the training would be applied to participants' work. There was also a feedback session where participants were able to discuss what was good and what could be different or improved. This feedback can now be used for planning future programs.

Feedback about the program and its usefulness to the work of participants was generally very positive. Comments on the length, content and scope of the

program are, however, contradictory. Some felt that the schedule was too packed to allow digestion, and that the schedule should be longer, while others felt that the training could have been condensed into a week or two weeks. Some felt that the content was a bit repetitive in places. Some highlighted sessions that they felt could have been dropped, while others highlighted these same sessions as the most useful.

All the evaluations indicate that this was a very successful and well-received training program. Following are some quotes from the evaluations:

The training will give me direction in my work and tools to implement. I will also be able to develop more targeted and strategic plans

The training will not only assist but also will be one of the foundational pillars for me to become a good and effective human rights defender because of the knowledge I have gained from this training.

Greater knowledge of how to articulate human rights issues to the uninitiated and uninformed and practical tools with which to lobby government and the UN

Human rights campaign(ing) or lobbying, strategic planning (was) a very useful session because (it gave me) knowledge on planning a particular case to work on effectively

The mix of input sessions, participatory activities, field trips and other inputs, knowing that we could take a comprehensive pack of useful material away to factor into future work, mixing and sharing experiences, case studies with everyone.

Acquiring of new skills and tools. Eg. Lobbying techniques, speaking manners, use of resources, seeking support (cross states), use of mass media.

Some of the strategies were very useful, particularly for the UN mechanisms (I have already used national level mechanisms) and learning the main strategies of lobbying and advocacy – that way struggling in a legal way.

Using relevant bodies to advance issues; staying focused on the objective and dealing with the right office-bearers; the use of various UN mechanisms.

To continue to build my experiences in this field with a comprehensive view of human rights and related conventions and mechanisms. To train my team members with this comprehensive view who in turn will create awareness of children's rights to the public.

The inputs from the program sessions and the informal relationship building will help with networking later and will inform program planning and evaluation in my organisation.

We keep a report of each training session attended by our delegation. I would like to share my Diplomacy Training Program report with other indigenous women from my community while organizing leadership training seminars and women empowering workshops.

Many people that I work with have difficulty articulating effectively just how their human rights have been denied. The knowledge and skills I will be able to share with them from the training will help a great deal.

3.3 Schedule: There is clearly a tension between including new subject areas and identifying what existing subject areas should be dropped. The use of training needs analysis this year was a positive step forward. The Diplomacy Training Program practices will need to continue to evolve to reflect best practice and changing needs. This is also important in an environment where donor agencies are increasingly scrutinising training programs and their impact.

Useful suggestions from participants include scheduling the first field trip for the first week of the training and sending basic reading material to participants prior to the training. A strong desire for more and longer opportunities for participants to share information about their country situations came through in the participant evaluations.

3.4 Trainers/Resource people. While it is important that the best possible resource people be selected for each topic, consideration needs to be given to cultural diversity and gender balance over the duration of the program.

3.5 Evaluation and Documentation. The way that the Diplomacy Training Program evaluates its training programs should continue to be reviewed and developed. There was an increase in the number of evaluation forms that participants were asked to fill in. The Diplomacy Training Program will seek to consult with other training organisations over best practice in relation to training and training impact evaluation.

There is also a need to find a way to better document the work, challenges and stories of participants. These express most eloquently the contribution that the Diplomacy Training Program makes to human rights in the region. The program will find new ways to more effectively communicate their personal stories to its supporters.

3.6 Alumni. With the conclusion of this event, the Diplomacy Training Program has another 24 alumni. All of them expressed an interest in continuing contact with the program. Diplomacy Training Program alumni are a tremendously valuable resource for the program and for each other. The Diplomacy Training Program will prioritise efforts to develop communication with and between its new and old alumni through its website and electronic communication in particular.

3.7 Financial. The funds provided by Australian *Friends of the Diplomacy Training Program* enabled the Diplomacy Training Program to subsidise a number of participants. However, an enormous amount of staff time is involved in raising small individual amounts of money to enable participants to attend. Inevitably this takes away from staff available for other tasks connected with the training itself and the development of The Program. Lack of certainty about funding also makes it difficult to plan properly and to fund the travel and participation of the best available trainers.

There is a need to change the funding model for the annual training in 2005 and in subsequent years. In future, the aim will be to raise the core costs of the training in the form of grants and to supplement this income with donations and a number of additional funded places – possibly sponsored by specific NGOs. This funding model would enable the Diplomacy Training Program to have some funding security. Aid agencies and foundations will be approached as early as possible with a view to securing funding for the 2005 Annual Program.

3.8 15th Annual Training 2005. José Ramos-Horta has invited the Diplomacy Training Program to hold the 2005 annual training program in East Timor. The Board has accepted this invitation with great thanks. Given the association of the program with the human rights issues facing the East Timorese, and José's pivotal role in the establishment of the Diplomacy Training Program, the invitation to East Timor is seen as a form of "coming home".