



DIPLOMACY TRAINING

Report on the DTP 11th Annual Human Rights and Peoples' Diplomacy Training Program

26th February – 16th March 2001

The 11th Annual Human Rights and People's Diplomacy Training Program was held at Rangsit Campus Thammasat University, Bangkok Thailand, from 26 February to 16 March 2001, in partnership with Forum Asia and the Law Faculty of Thammasat University. Twenty-six participants attended the training, representing 15 countries from the Asia-Pacific region.

For this year's training, DTP received 70 full applications, which provided a good pool from which to choose participants, according to our pre-determined selection criteria which aims to select active human rights defenders from credible NGOs within the region, include a geographical and gender balance, two positive recommendations etc.

With regards to gender, balance this year's group was slightly skewed with the number of men outnumbering women (11 women, 15 men) because of success in funding by more men. With regards to geographical balance we had a good representation of Asian countries in the region with participants from: Australia (Indigenous) (3), Bangladesh (2), Burma (5), Cambodia (2), Philippines (2), East Timor (1), India (2), Indonesia (1 from Aceh) (2), Nepal (1), Pakistan (1), Sri Lanka (1), Thailand (2), and Solomon Islands (1). The Pacific was not targeted strongly because a specific program had just been held. Overall, participants were helpful and supportive of one another and a happy group who bonded well and enjoyed themselves.

The training was held on the Rangsit campus of Thammasat University, about 40 kms from Bangkok city. The facilities on campus were generally excellent. Having the training venue, accommodation, food e-mail/computing and other faculties within walking distance was a great bonus. There was two DTP staff (Joan and Radhika) in addition to Ami Latona, who was a volunteer working for DTP. The 3-week course demands a lot of all staff, who work to ensure the efficient and smooth running of the program. We were fortunate to form an excellent working team, who worked and relaxed well together and supported each other throughout the three weeks. In addition, we were extremely fortunate to have the services of Ami Latona, whose fluency in Thai was crucial to our ability to get things done. Her language skills and local knowledge avoided much stress and delay; and her good humour under stress was also a great bonus to DTP.

The training program provided resembled past DTP curricula, covering public international law, international human rights law, UN human rights agencies and procedures, UN role in security and peacekeeping, regional human rights organizations, and globalisation; and practical sessions on lobbying, using the media, strategic advocacy and internet training. In addition, this year a new session was introduced on international financial institutions. Some of the sessions organised by our partner, Forum Asia, reflected the location of our training with sessions on the Thai elections, a talk by the managing editor of The Nation, and an address by a senior member of the Thai foreign ministry. The training culminated in a role-play designed as a practical exercise on some of the knowledge on international human rights law and UN agencies and skills in lobbying and advocacy learnt throughout the training. This year's role-play was a simulation of a session in the Human Rights Commission looking at the fictional problem of human rights abuses in the "Ferdinand Islands". The Convention Against

Torture, and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment has been identified as a topic to be included in future Annual trainings.

In addition, participants had an opportunity to share their stories and information about their country in the nightly country reports, which were rated highly by respondents in the final questionnaire. Informal sharing was also assisted by the various field trips that we organised with Forum Asia and Thammasat. There were five field trips in all, some formal others more recreational. One notable field trip was a meeting with Mary Robinson, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, at the ninth UN Workshop on Regional Cooperation in the Asia Pacific on human rights mechanisms, also held in Bangkok at the same time. We were fortunate to have the assistance of Michael O'Flaherty of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights who was instrumental in Mrs Robinson meeting the participants and in giving them an opportunity observe such a high level meeting.

An extensive array of training material was used to supplement the learning during sessions (such as relevant international treaties, information booklets etc) as well as training material supplied by the trainers themselves. As in previous years, a training manual was also provided, intended for use as a reference tool and covering the topics taught during training. Two new chapters were added to the manual - on Children's Rights and International Financial Institutions. New chapters that have been identified for inclusion are on Torture; Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; International Criminal Law; and International Peacekeeping; and amongst those needing improvement, International Humanitarian Law.

In Bangkok, we had 26 trainers including our usual distinguished DTP trainers such as Sarah Pritchard (Board member), Basil Fernando, Clarence Dias, and Jose Campino, in addition to a new mix of overseas and local (Thai) trainers. We were very fortunate to have the services of all who gave their time generously to the participants.

The program was evaluated in both informal and formal assessment. The opportunity for informal assessment was provided for within the schedule, whereby at the beginning of each morning participants could discuss with each other and DTP organisers, issues arising from the previous day. A formal questionnaire was given to participants to fill in on the final day of the training, after the end of the role-play. This evaluation also allowed for free responses on the best and worst sessions and suggestions for improvement of the program.. Overall, respondents rated the training program as being good to excellent (57% excellent, 44% good).

Overall, the 11th Annual Program was very successful. Procedures and systems for selection of participants, preparation and delivery of program, and working with partners were successful. All DTP staff, both those who attended and those who remained in the office are to be commended for the outstanding effort and solid planning responsible for minimising problems and ensuring that delivery was as smooth as possible.

The evaluation was useful and important future improvements for continuing post-program evaluation are now being developed. The Program can demonstrate a dynamic, continuing evolution to meet new needs and new circumstances in human rights internationally and in the region.