

SPOTLIGHT ON R2P



APPAP Second Annual Meeting Bangkok 2018

Executive Summary

The second annual meeting of the Asia Pacific Partnership for Atrocity Prevention (APPAP) was held in Bangkok on the Siam Anantara, Bangkok, Thailand on the 22nd of August 2018.

The partnership, which has grown from 14 to 19 member organisations in the last 12 months, discussed the challenges, goals, and achievements of APPAP. The landscape of atrocity prevention in the region was reviewed against the backdrop of current challenges, such as crises in Myanmar, North Korea and the Philippines. The achievements in the area of atrocity prevention were highlighted, as well as key opportunities for further work, for example, ASEANs current commitment to the 'culture of prevention'. Two key working groups ('Atrocity Prevention Awareness Raising' and 'Gender and Atrocity Prevention') presented

their work over the last 12 months, and their recommendations for future action .

Progress Towards R2P Atrocity Prevention Landscape

It was agreed that the crisis in Myanmar as a situation that illustrates the challenges still faced by the region. Complacency was identified as a key challenge to preventing atrocity crime. That is, that civil society has known for many years that the situation in Myanmar meant there was a risk of atrocity crime—indeed ALT-SEAN put out a report more than a decade ago identifying it as a slow burning genocide—but no preventative action was taken. It was argued that ASEAN has been unable to act to prevent, or to hold those responsible for atrocity crimes to account, in the region because of its non-interference and consensus frame-

works, which present an ongoing challenge. The panel informed the room that secret workshops—or 'hot advocacy'—is now being undertaken by civil society within Myanmar to introduce a framework of analysis for atrocity crime. It was reported that, through this work, it was found that addressing risk factors for atrocity is compatible with local law, presenting an opportunity for real change.

Another theme across the panel was the threats faced by democracy and democratic institutions within the region, particularly to freedom of speech. It was argued that there was a critical need to rebuild fundamental democratic governance structures that have been eroded in the past five years. The strategy suggested was to lobby individual parliamentarians.

Opportunities and strategies for atrocity prevention in the region were identified by the panel. For

example, the opportunity to use the language of ‘culture of prevention’ which has been adopted by ASEAN as a channel to further advance R2P and overcome the challenges of consensus decision making. The panellists called for members to look at what is being done outside the R2P framework (e.g. rule of law, accountability). They argued that these are all part of the fundamental infrastructures needed for atrocity prevention, and that progress can be made outside of the R2P framework. The power of social media and youth advocates was discussed as a strategy to increase awareness. There were also calls for the need to use transitional peace processes for durable peace following atrocity in the region, and the need to integrate R2P into local contexts (e.g. through ‘P2P R2P’).

APPAP Working Group on Atrocity Prevention Awareness Raising

During this session, the APPAP working group on atrocity prevention awareness raising presented its initial work and findings in the form of a report that was distributed to all APPAP members. The working group met twice before the meeting to discuss strategies and have devised five recommendations to be considered as a priority for APPAP in 2018-19. It is important to note that the working group decided to focus on South-East Asia initially, though it indicated they would include South Asia and the Pacific in future iterations.

The first recommendation discussed was capacity building for domestic stakeholders. The report identified strategies for engaging on the ground with various stakeholders, and highlighted that it is not enough for states to just rhetorically commit to R2P. They must commit to implementation as well. This can be supported through processes like national dialogues (e.g. in Jakarta) and engaging with faith-based organisations. The goal being to build domestic constituencies of R2P champions to bring the commitments made at regional meetings ‘back home’.



The second recommendation was engaging with ASEAN mechanisms (e.g. APIR). As was discussed in the previous panel, there is an opportunity to link atrocity prevention with ASEAN’s declaration on the culture of prevention. The report highlighted that this ‘mainstreaming of the culture of prevention’ presents opportunities for medium and long-term engagement with ASEAN.

The third recommendation was to establish a formal resource and support mechanism in the region. This would provide complementary support for activities already underway in the region (e.g. Young South Asian Initiative). Linking these projects to atrocity prevention agenda presents an opportunity to expand the influence of the group without the need to establish new programs.

The fourth recommendation was a strategy for media engagement to raise awareness of R2P and atrocity prevention. The report included an action plan for building public awareness of atrocity crime that goes beyond agreement and statements at the national or regional level. It also called, specifically, for more media practitioner engagement in civil society (e.g. that they be present at the next APPAP annual meeting). A suggestion from the audience was to include the South East Asia Press Alliance in the next meeting, as an

example of a regional media network.

The final recommendation was for APPAP partner institutions to develop a statement of commitment. As part of APPAP’s commitment to raising awareness of R2P and atrocity crimes, the working group recommended this be developed within the next 18-24 months.

APPAP Working Group on Gender and Atrocity Prevention

The APPAP working group on gender and atrocity prevention presented its initial work and findings. When devising its recommendations, this newly established working group was guided by the following key questions: how might we define what is included in gender and atrocity prevention; what are the organisations best placed to strengthen prevention measures, and; how can APPAP support prevention in the area of gender? The group emphasised that gender is not an afterthought but is a non-negotiable that must be ‘front, back, and centre, if atrocity prevention is really taken seriously’.

In devising a framework for what sexual and gender-based violence protection in the Asia Pacific might look like, the working group took into account five criteria that apply



The APR2P Centre acknowledges work undertaken drafting this document by meeting rapporteur University of Queensland RHD Student Ms Josie Hornung.

to the region: relatively weak early warning strategies, an unaccountable security sector, impunity in past sexual and gender-based violence crimes, weak legal frameworks for protecting women's physical integrity rights, and the absence or marginalisation of women and gender provisions from peace agreements. The working group also used current academic research to inform how to approach sexual and gender-based violence in the region.

The working group presented five recommendations.

1. Tools for gender sensitive early warning and prevention should be enhanced.
2. Programs addressing sexual exploitation and abuse of women and girls in the security sector should be developed.
3. Impunity must be addressed and accountability for sexual and gender-based violence promoted.
4. Mechanisms to address gender discrimination and inequality must be strengthened to better protect women's rights (in particular, women's physical integrity rights).
5. The role of women as agents of atrocity prevention be strengthened and that relevant elements of the 'Women Peace, and Security' agenda be incorporated into atrocity prevention strategies and policies.

Recognising that this list of recommendations was extensive and ambitious, the working group identified three priorities. The first was to review relevant research to identify entry points. The second was to build capacity through developing training packages on gender-based atrocity prevention. The third was to engage

in strategic advocacy (for example through engaging ACWC on women peace and security in the region). The group will also look at the intersections between R2P and WPS, PVE and CEDAW in the region, to identify how to relate their agendas to R2P.

The working group reported that their next meeting will be held in November, where the background report and concept note will be completed. The group committed to developing a training package on gender-based atrocity prevention, as well as a plan for strategic engagement with ACWC within the next twelve months.

The Future

The APPAP members agreed to strengthen the partnership by:

- Appointing an APPAP Chair to lead the partnership's external engagement.
- Establishing a small executive committee to.
- Continuing to encourage growth
- Articulating common positions through joint statements.
- Conducting annual training on atrocity prevention for APPAP members
- Continuing the work of the working groups and begin practical implementation of their recommendations

It was agreed that the 2019 APPAP meeting would be held in Jakarta, hosted by the Habibie Centre. In 2020, the Partnership will convene in Manila, hosted by Ateneo de Manila University.

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