



Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network

Annual Report 2022

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR - Hafsar Tameesuddin

By the end of 2022, the number of refugees in the Asia and the Pacific region increased by 20% to an estimated [6.8 million refugees](#). Over 90 per cent of all refugees in the region are hosted in just three countries: the Islamic Republic of Iran (3.4 million), Pakistan (1.7 million) and Bangladesh (952,400). Throughout the ongoing and deteriorating situations of refugees and forced displacement in the Asia Pacific, local and refugee-led organisations (RLOs) continued to be the first responders to humanitarian needs and human rights violations despite decreasing resources and a shrinking civic space. Throughout 2022, the Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN) doubled its efforts to raise-awareness and advocate to keep urgent and pressing matters on national, regional and global agendas, whilst bringing our members together to respond and ensure refugees and displaced people in the region are not forgotten.



There is an urgent and ongoing need for humanitarian and diplomatic responses to resolve and address forced displacement issues in Afghanistan and Myanmar, including the Rohingya refugee crisis. So far, there has been a lack of serious progress to bring people from Afghanistan to safety. Advocacy and international diplomatic responses remain vitally important to change policies and create opportunities for people displaced from and within Afghanistan to access pathways, mental health support, advice and resources. Meanwhile, the people of Myanmar continue to escape to neighbouring countries where they experience indefinite detention, multiple forms of human rights violations, exploitation and refoulement. After five years of displacement, the protracted situation of Rohingyas remains with limited practical solutions in the camps, host countries and in Myanmar. As a diverse network with members from across the Asia Pacific, APRRN aims to raise awareness and seek commitments from within and outside the region; highlighting the need to embrace and expand options for integration, durable solutions and resettlement, beyond the focus on unrealistic returns to Afghanistan and Myanmar. In 2022, APRRN also supported legal aid providers working in Cox's Bazar and engaged key governments to encourage rescue at sea and safe disembarkation, and advocated for resettlement out of Bangladesh.

In December 2022, APRRN began the journey of transitioning to a co-leadership model through the appointment of two Co-Secretary Generals, including someone with lived experience of forced displacement. Next year, APRRN will develop its new five-year organisational strategy. The change in leadership structure signifies an exciting new chapter in APRRN's development to more meaningfully include the participation and leadership of those with lived experience of displacement. We remain committed to building capacities and providing support to RLOs and RLIs in the region, in collaboration with the Asia Pacific Network of Refugees (APNOR) and other civil society organisations, to ensure the meaningful participation of people with lived experiences in responding to the refugees and forced displacement issues in our region. We hope this annual report will provide insights into our efforts and commitments to promoting and protecting the rights of refugees and people on the move in our region. We look forward to continuing to learn and work with our members and partners in the Asia Pacific region and beyond.

MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY GENERAL - Chris Eades



2022 was a busy and challenging year for APRRN. The two major, protracted refugee crises facing our region, Afghanistan and Myanmar, caused escalating levels of suffering amid inadequate and underfunded regional and international responses.

For those displaced from and within Afghanistan, APRRN has created a series of multilingual resources, including a microsite, identifying legal routes to safety for displaced Afghans and also supported women-led organisations in Afghanistan. APRRN continued its deep engagement in the response to Rohingya displacement from Myanmar through its expert Rohingya Working Group and expanded its work on displacement from Myanmar more widely through research on local and refugee-led responses to displacement on the Thai and Indian borders. APRRN, with its members, has since developed a project to respond to displacement in Northeast India. APRRN also persisted in using all available opportunities to advocate for the

recognition of basic refugee rights in countries of asylum and the creation of safe and legal routes to safety for those unable to secure protection.

APRRN continued to expand its work with refugee-led organisations and initiatives (RLOs and RLIs). In partnership with APRRN member, the Asia Pacific Network of Refugees (APNOR), we designed and delivered a technical skills training program for 20 refugee leaders from across the Asia Pacific aimed at enhancing the knowledge and skills needed to run refugee-staffed organisations in extremely challenging operating contexts. Many components of the course were created and delivered by refugee leaders with firsthand knowledge of organisational and capacity development. APNOR will lead in this work in 2023 and APRRN will continue to create funding partnerships with RLIs.

While it is significant that APRRN employs more Secretariat staff and consultants with lived experience than ever before, and that representation in our governing bodies by people with lived experience is at an all-time high, we can and should be doing more to be reflective of the communities we represent while seeking to transfer greater power to those same communities. With this in mind, the Steering Committee has developed a new model of co-leadership at the Secretary General level where at least one of the two Secretaries General positions will require the lived experience of forced displacement. That will represent a further step in the right direction but there is still far to travel for APRRN as an organisation - and for the wider sector - before we achieve meaningful levels of equity, justice, participation, and leadership. That next part of the journey will begin in 2023 and we will, as ever, be reliant on and led by our members in this new chapter.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chris Eades". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small dot at the end of the last stroke.

Chris Eades, Secretary General

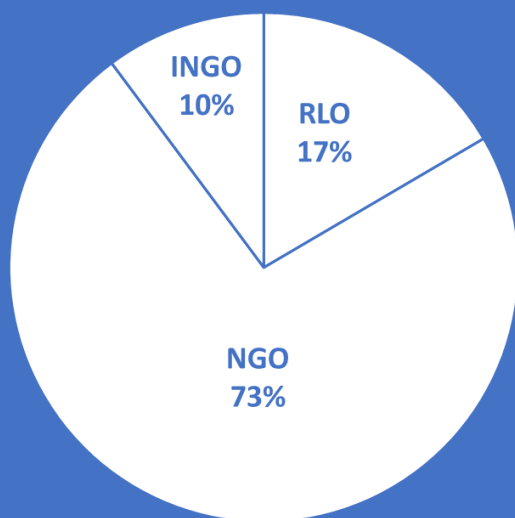
APRRN Overview

The Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN) aims to advance the rights of refugees and those in need of protection in the Asia Pacific region - including refugees, people seeking asylum, torture survivors and complainants, trafficked persons, internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), stateless persons and returnees. Formed in 2008, APRRN is an open and growing network of over 200 individuals and organisations in 28 countries. APRRN bridges the gaps between all types of civil society organisations for joint advocacy and cooperation in realising refugee rights. We create opportunities for information exchange and collaboration that would not otherwise exist, fostering allyship and solidarity in movements for change. APRRN works to create a community of rights activists mutually supporting each other's work to increase impact, effectiveness, and the inclusion of refugees. APRRN strategy for 2018 to 2022 has two goals: (1) Strengthening Legal Frameworks and (2) Increasing Refugee Participation. Our Chair and Deputy Chair are persons with lived refugee experience.

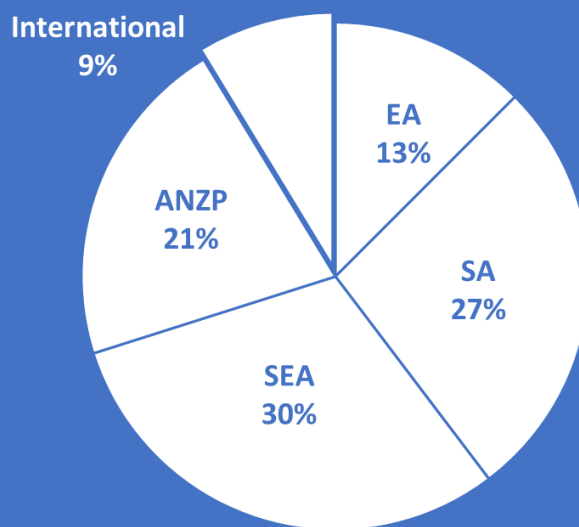
APRRN Membership

During 2022, twelve new members joined APRRN increasing membership to 218 members, including 156 organisational and 62 individual members.

APRRN MEMBERS BY ORGANISATION TYPE



MEMBERS BY REGION



Membership with APRRN is open to all civil society organisations and individuals committed to advocating for the rights of refugees and other people in need of protection in the Asia Pacific region. If you are interested in becoming an individual or organisational member, please visit our [website](#).

Programme Highlights

1. Displacement from and within Afghanistan

The crises in Afghanistan have engendered considerable coordination amongst APRRN members and working groups in response to unfolding events. APRRN has gathered and verified information from local sources and helped coordinate the collective efforts of members to support the sudden rise in Afghans who are internally displaced or seeking protection in neighbouring countries and the wider Asia Pacific region.

Legal Aid and Pathways

Throughout the year, a key focus of APRRN's response to displacement from and within Afghanistan, in partnership with members and non-members, has been the creation and maintenance of multilingual platforms with up-to-date information about the emerging pathways to resettlement, assistance, protection, and durable solutions.

- So far, 1000 people have accessed APRRN's Information on Afghanistan [Facebook page](#) (launched April 2022) and [Microsite](#) (launched October 2022). These platforms were regularly updated with the latest information on legal pathways, education and employment opportunities, migration news and psychosocial support for Afghans in transit.
- A [series of information sheets](#) on legal aid and pathways was published on legal assistance in, and relocation to, France, India, Ireland, Italy, UK and the US. The information sheets aim to help inform Afghans in their decision-making regarding safe and dignified onward movement.
- APRRN Chair, Sitarah Mohammadi, facilitated a [webinar on Access to Asylum for Afghans](#) in Europe, hosted by the Afghan Diaspora Engagement in Europe (ADEE) project run by the Danish Refugee Council, and the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE).
- Rana Refahi also spoke on legal pathways at the [European Conference Diaspora Protection Information for Afghans at risk](#) hosted by the The Afghan Safe Migration project implemented by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and the Mixed Migration Centre Asia (MMC).

Community-Informed Advocacy and Lobbying

APRRN has advocated alongside and on behalf of national NGOs and refugee-led organisations in Afghanistan and neighbouring countries, including giving expert opinion at the [exchange of views on Afghanistan](#) of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (October 2022). APRRN's Afghanistan Consultant, Rana Refahi, addressed the challenges faced by local NGOs and refugee-led initiatives in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran, and met with the Afghanistan Rapporteur to the Council of Europe and other interested Parliamentarians and connected the Council of Europe with APRRN members working on this issue. Following the Taliban's order barring women from working in non-governmental organisations, APRRN met with German and Irish Parliamentarians to promote the exchange of information between government and civil society on these issues and the barriers to implementation (December 2022).

2. Displacement from and within Myanmar

Returning to Myanmar is not a realistic option for refugees under the current circumstances, and APRRN members who were previously located within Myanmar are now mostly operating out of India, Thailand, and other countries.

APRRN commissioned action-oriented research on forced displacement in Myanmar. Members and grassroots groups led by refugees in India and along the Thailand-Myanmar border called for greater coordination to strengthen referral mechanisms and advocacy strategies, particularly in Northeast India where refugee protection systems are weak and underfunded. APRRN also joined several consultation sessions with members and other representatives of local and refugee-led initiatives on the needs and protection concerns of people fleeing Myanmar into Northeast India.

APRRN's Southeast Asia Working Group also held closed-door consultations under the 'Strengthening Protection for Refugees at the Thailand-Myanmar Border' project with local actors and community-based organisations, including the Karen and Karenni communities, on the issues faced by refugees residing in the camps along the Thailand-Myanmar border. A joint consultation [report](#) was produced.

Increasing levels of gender-based violence, and the loss of recent gains on Myanmar women's political empowerment were also a priority concern raised during the research and consultations.

APRRN focused its engagement, advocacy, and coordination in response to displacement from and within Myanmar on two target areas:

- **Gender-based violence and the empowerment of women and girls on the Thailand-Myanmar border.**

APRRN secured resources for the Karen Women's Organization (KWO), a refugee women-led organisation working at the Thailand-Myanmar border to advance protection for women and girls. Over 240 leaders in the camps and their town office took part in refresher training on 'Auto Response Mechanisms and Standard Operating Procedure Guidelines' on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) prevention and response, including coordination, referral, and case management systems.

[KWO](#) works with refugee women and girls across seven camps at the Thailand-Myanmar border, including providing education and capacity strengthening for women leaders to bring about positive change.

- **Strengthening information and coordination channels amongst refugee-led organisations and local civil society in Northeast India, with a particular focus on access to essential services and the legal right to remain in Mizoram and Manipur.**

In India the deteriorating situation of Chin, Rohingya and other refugees from Myanmar remained a major concern, including the stalling of registration and processing of asylum claims, as well as arrest, detention and cases of deportation. In July 2022, APRRN commenced a new project, 'Supporting Humanitarian and Refugee Protection in Asia', to document and address priority concerns and protection challenges faced by refugees from Myanmar in India. In this project, local APRRN members are collaborating through consultations, capacity building, and advocacy. APRRN also played a critical role by raising concerns, suggesting action and improving communication with UNHCR's country and regional offices in follow-up letters and discussions.

3. Rohingya

As the world emerged from restrictions enforced by the global pandemic, APRRN's Rohingya Working Group worked to ensure Rohingya refugees' concerns remained visible, whilst continually working towards the promotion and development of multilateral cooperation and durable solutions for Rohingya refugees through a whole-of-society approach. The Rohingya Working Group also intervened in urgent situations of deportation, violations of human rights of Rohingya in host countries, and during irregular maritime movements and potential boat push backs. APRRN advocated for the meaningful inclusion of Rohingya refugees in consultations and strategies and promoted regular communication and connection with refugee-led organisations in Bangladesh and other host countries.

- APRRN marked the five year remembrance of the mass exodus of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar on 25 August 2017 with the briefing paper '[It's Time to Share Responsibility: The Rohingya Crisis Five Years On](#)', providing a detailed analysis of the situation of Rohingya through a regional, national, and local lens.

“After more than 40 years of persecution, with no solutions in sight, and no clear political leadership, we are all complicit in the ongoing marginalisation of the Rohingya, and we must all begin to accept, and share responsibility if we hope that situation to change,” Hafsar Tameesuddin, Chair of APRRN and a former Rohingya refugee.

- APRRN facilitated a consultation with Rohingya refugees and the Secretary General's Special Envoy on Myanmar. During [the Special Envoy's address](#) days later at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), she referenced and recounted details from the consultation.
- In collaboration with a local NGO in Cox's Bazar, the Young Power in Social Action (YPSA), the Rohingya Working Group held a two-day workshop for Rohingya youth leaders in refugee camps in Cox's Bazar to support their communities in the preparedness, prevention and protection from disasters, such as fire and flooding. The workshop also enhanced coordination in the camps by strengthening relationships between local actors and authorities.
- APRRN co-organised a regional advocacy workshop on Rohingya displacement, and Myanmar humanitarian access, peacebuilding and protection with International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), Asia Displacement Solutions Platform (ADSP) and Protecting Rohingya Refugees in Asia (PRRiA) project partners.
- The Rohingya Working Group, in partnership with [Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust](#) (BLAST), [convened legal practitioners](#) in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh to strengthen access to justice for displaced Rohingya.
- In December 2022, when several boats carrying Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh and Myanmar were in distress, APRRN's Rohingya Working Group Chair, Lilianne Fan, Deputy Chair, Chris Lewa, and APRRN's Secretary General, Chris Eades, engaged in extensive closed-door advocacy with the Malaysian, Indonesian and Thai Governments advocating for safe and predictable disembarkation, respecting international search and rescue zones, and the provision of humanitarian assistance.
- APRRN engaged and advocated in response to deportation attempts, and intervened on local and national levels, including engaging [media outlets](#), to prevent the refoulement of a 14-year old [Rohingya girl](#). The case was eventually referred to the [State Human Rights Commission of Assam](#), which formally requested the Indian Ministry of Home Affairs to bring the girl to her parents in Bangladesh, and not Myanmar.

4. Refugee Leadership and Refugee-Led Advocacy

APRRN has supported refugee-led responses in the Asia Pacific by strengthening the organisational capacities and technical skills of leaders from grassroots Initiatives.

APRRN continued its partnership and support to '[Refugee Women and Girls: Key to the Global Compact](#)', a collaborative action research project supporting the implementation and monitoring of commitments to refugee women and girls in the Global Compact on Refugees. In Malaysia - with the involvement of Tenaganita, Asylum Access, Malaysian Social Research Institute, and the University of Malaya - the project supported eight women groups from seven ethnic communities to upscale capacity and expand their work on gender equality, leadership and SGBV with community members. Several women who were part of this project also shared their analysis and recommendations in national, regional and international fora.

The Asia Pacific Network of Refugees (APNOR) and APRRN jointly designed and launched a Skills Enhancement Training for Refugee Leaders to equip refugee-led initiatives (RLIs) with the foundational tools and skills necessary to manage growing organisations, access funding, and achieve sustainability. 20 participants from 19 RLOs were selected to take part in this pilot through an open application process. The participants came from seven countries across the Asia Pacific region and were originally from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iraq, Myanmar, Pakistan, Somalia, and Yemen. Alongside weekly training sessions, participants were supported to develop procedures and plans to further the sustainability of their own organisations. Through a focus on financial management, governance, and leadership, this project is a key component of continued investment in refugees as leaders and agents of change; enabling them to better access the resources needed to scale their services and advocacy. The course runs until March 2023.

“The course enhanced my financial management skills, including understanding financial regulations and compliance requirements. Overall, attending the course improved our organisation’s operational performance by providing knowledge, skills, and practical tools to manage finances effectively.” Skills Enhancement Training for Refugee Leaders Participant



APRRN’s Youth Working Group published the report, **“Supporting Refugee Youth-Led Organisations in the Asia Pacific”**, following a mapping of nineteen refugee youth organisations, including their current projects, challenges and support needed. Recommendations include facilitating introductions to funders, facilitating mentorship programmes with larger organisations, assisting with capacity building and in identifying strategies and goals, further map and link refugee youth-led organisations and potential mentors.

APRRN and the Bangkok Urban Community Club (BUCC) concluded a year-long language and computer literacy course for adult refugees living in urban areas of Bangkok. The course enabled students to progress at their own pace, and graduates cited that it enhanced their confidence, creativity, and teamwork skills, whilst promoting women’s leadership.

APRRN's third online Short Course on Refugee Rights and Advocacy was joined by 27 refugee advocates from 11 different countries in the Asia Pacific, including 11 persons with lived experience. The course facilitated learning and bridged connections with leading experts and practitioners advancing refugee rights in the region. The introductory-level course provided participants with practical, specialised skills and knowledge for advocacy on refugee rights and has become an important APRRN annual activity. The course incorporated key concepts of intersectionality, gender equality, gender mainstreaming, and gender-responsive approaches and their application in national, regional, and international advocacy mechanisms, and advanced skills towards better-targeted advocacy, based on the issues and priorities identified by the participants.

Some of the key outcomes of the course this year include:

- Knowledge gained about international and national frameworks guiding refugee protection systems and advocacy strategies to advance refugee protection in different contexts.
- Inclusion and increased participation of those limited by their legal status and unable to access travel.
- Increased awareness and understanding on the importance of engaging people with lived refugee experience through meaningful participation, affirming or strengthening refugee leadership in advocacy, programming, and policy design.
- Strengthened understanding of gender, intersectionality, power, and privilege, and how gender and diversity considerations are critical in the process of advocacy development toward gender equality.

5. Shaping narratives on refugees in the Asia Pacific

LGBTIQ+ refugees and asylum seekers in Thailand

APRRN, Equal Asia Foundation, and LGBTIQ+ refugees and persons seeking asylum collaborated on the production of the short documentary '[Not Always Rainbows](#)'. The film aims to amplify the protection needs of LGBTIQ+ refugees and asylum seekers in Thailand, whilst encouraging public empathy and understanding regarding the challenges that displaced LGBTIQ+ people face.

Communities Coming Together in Malaysia

APRRN worked with Parastoo Theatre, a refugee-led theatre organisation in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on a theatre and film screening project, 'Converging Paths', to provide common spaces for inclusion, dialogue and connection between refugees and the host community. Refugee youth involved in the project received training and coaching in technical performance and other skills. Attended by 200 people, the sold-out event was promoted on radio and national news, and profiled refugee women and youth entrepreneurs including [TANMA](#), a federation of four ethnic Myanmar women groups.

APRRN Statements and Joint Statements in 2022

- "APRRN condemns [the refoulement of a Rohingya refugee woman](#) from India and the escalating refoulement risk to other Rohingya refugees in India" (5 April 2022).
- "APRRN calls on the Government of Malaysia to comply with international law and [cease deportation proceedings against UNHCR-recognized refugee](#) Mohammed Khairuzzaman." (15 February 2022).
- "APRRN calls on the Royal Thai Government to comply with its [legal obligations to Uyghur refugees](#)" (22 July 2022).
- "International human rights community [urges Malaysian Government](#) to rethink immigration detention policies and practices" (2 May 2022). Joint statement with the International Detention Coalition, FORUM-ASIA and the ASEAN Parliamentarian on Human Rights (APHR) regarding the 500 Rohingya refugees, who escaped from a detention centre in Sungai Bakap, Malaysia.
- "[Malaysia Must Stop the Planned Deportation of Myanmar Nationals](#) and Allow Those Currently Detained Immediate Access to UNHCR" (24 October 2022).



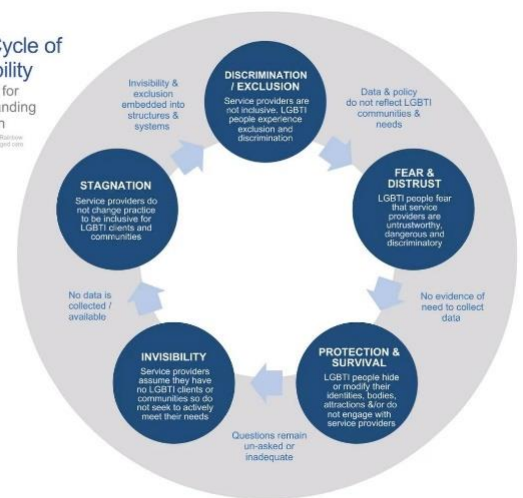
Organisational Development

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

APRRN's Women, Gender and Diversity Working Group planned and facilitated several Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) consultations and training to open supportive spaces for learning and self-reflection in APRRN on intersectionality, inclusion, discrimination, and unconscious bias. Members of the Secretariat, Steering Committee, Board, and Working Groups took part in the discussions of barriers, current practices, priorities, and levels of understanding of gender and diversity within APRRN. Initial findings have provided guidance on how the network can become more accessible to youth, persons with disabilities, and LGBTIQ+ communities, and to shift the prevailing power dynamics, attitudes, and behaviours that act as barriers to achieving APRRN's goals.

The Cycle of Invisibility

A model for understanding exclusion
Adapted from Steve Barlow
LGBTI Rights in Nepal.com



New Website and Membership Portal

In September 2022 APRRN launched its new website, which features improved navigations, to help expand our reach and influence. Main features include our revamped newsletter with advocacy highlights from APRRN and members along with our vacancies and opportunities page.

In October 2022, APRRN launched its membership portal where members can access internal documents, share events and get updates on working group activities. APRRN is currently incorporating more features on the new portal including a funding database to encourage member engagement. We envision the portal as the centre point for member interaction, a place where members can learn more about the inner workings of the network.

Financial Statement for 2022

Income 2022	THB
Grants	18,548,491.81
Donations	1,568,807.99
Membership fees	601,519.86
Interest received	51,105.31
Total Income	20,769,924.97

Expenditures 2022	THB
Programme Expenses	10,601,372.35
Administrative Expenses	11,728,861.67
Total Expenditures	22,330,234.02

Grants	THB
EU-ECHO	316,761.63
Heinrich Böll Stiftung Southeast Asia (HBS)	578,229.56
Rights Action Watch Asia	75,939.03
OAK	2,394,022.12
Open Society Foundations	6,450,600.00
Oxfam	1,736,342.24
Private family foundation	3,648,000.00
SEA Junction	52,700.00
Settlement Services International	892,585.65
Taft	725,147.28
Workers' Rights Consortium	1,678,164.30

APRRN would like to thank our donors for their support in 2022 including:



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Words from Our Supporters

“Our partnership with APRRN has been an inspiring journey. It takes a lot of courage and will to initiate and drive the transformation in leadership that is taking place and to fully live out the value of meaningful participation. I think APRRN is uniquely placed in bringing people together with lived experience and other knowledge and expertise with a shared mission and goal. It’s respectable and encouraging to see such a large organisation daring to reflect critically at its internal structure, policy and practices and challenge to change the system and shift power. There’s much hope and potential for APRRN to forge new partnerships and alliances that would include more underrepresented voices in its network and advocacy work; and be a weaver and wavemaker in the global movement on decolonising aid.” **Joanne Tai, Global Grant Manager, Porticus.**

“As a longstanding member, and a partner since 2017, SSI has supported APRRN’s activities in regional and international advocacy, as well as strengthening the capacity of NGOs. Our partnership with APRRN has enabled us to achieve our goals in supporting refugee-led initiatives in the region and to support member advocacy. In the past year, SSI is proud to have supported APRRN with projects in relation to the ongoing displacement crisis in Afghanistan. APRRN collated and shared relevant information with members on resettlement, protection and advocacy. APRRN was also uniquely placed to support locally-led organisations working with IDPs with seed funding.” **Carmen Ghaly, International Protection Adviser, Settlement Services International (SSI).**

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