



# 6<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Consultation on Refugee Rights Report

20-22 September, 2016  
Bangkok, Thailand

[www.aprrn.info](http://www.aprrn.info)

Asia Pacific  
Refugee Rights  
Network

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*All photos in this report are credited to Alisa Suwanrumpha.*

# 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Asia Pacific Consultation on Refugee Rights (APCRR) is a biennial meeting organised by the Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN). Founded following the 1st Asia Pacific Consultation on Refugee Rights (APCRR1) held in Kuala Lumpur in 2008, APRRN was formed due to the realisation that civil society actors working with and for people in need of protection should collaborate and advance the rights of affected populations. Since then, APCRR has been held in Bangkok (2009, 2010, 2014) and in Seoul (2012).

APCRR serves as a platform for uniting refugee rights practitioners to discuss and strategise about ways to address challenges and share good practices from around the region. The theme for this year's consultation was **'Building on Positive Practices'**. APCRR also serves as the Annual General Meeting for APRRN where members can develop Action Plans which act as blue-prints for APRRN's Strategic Plan for the next four years, and also nominate and elect the Network's Steering Committee. As a regional network that capitalises on diversity of resources and promotes collaboration among different stakeholders, APRRN believes that APCRR has become a unique platform to explore innovative solutions and alternative strategies through extensive, inclusive and open dialogue.

The objectives of this consultation were to:

- Develop stronger relationships amongst APRRN members and help facilitate better collaboration and engagement with key stakeholders
- Identify priority areas/key challenges and strengthen the capacity of members to respond to these challenges
- Address protection challenges in the region through sharing good practices, experiences and innovative strategies

- Strategise about joint actions and campaigns to be taken forward from 2016 to 2018
- Strengthen the structure, governance and decision-making processes of APRRN

APCRR6 was held in Bangkok, Thailand from 20 to 22 September 2016 and brought together 150 participants from 24 countries in the region. This year, participants included APRRN members, external observers from other national and international NGOs, donors, embassies, refugee communities and UN agencies.

APCRR would not have been possible without the generous support from our funders. We would like to thank:



We would also like to thank all volunteers, the photographer (*Alisa Suwanrumpha*) for her contributions as well as the retiring Steering Committee.

## APRRN's growth since APCRR5:

The Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network has grown by 54 members with three additional countries residing in our network since APCRR5 in 2014.



## APRRN'S THREE PILLARS OF ACTIVITIES



APRRN's activities are structured into 3 key areas:

### Joint Advocacy

APRRN aims to advance refugee rights at the national, regional and international levels through bilateral and multilateral negotiations relating to a prospective regional protection framework.

### Capacity Strengthening

Through the year APRRN coordinates trainings and workshops targeted at strengthening the capacity of members to respond to key protection challenges more effectively.

### Resource Sharing & Outreach

APRRN aims to build on the existing work of its members and further strengthen them through improved knowledge sharing throughout the network.

## 2. PROGRAMME

On the first day, APCRR6 consisted of a series of workshops aimed at reaffirming the theme of **'Building on Positive Practices'**. During these thematically diverse workshops, participants had an opportunity to discuss latest updates, positive developments and strategise for joint action.

The Network's governance and financial structures were presented to members and an election for a

new Steering Committee was held during the Annual General Meeting on the second day of the consultation.

On the third day, each of APRRN's Geographic and Thematic Working Groups had a chance to meet in person, to review and reprioritise their respective Action Plans for the next two-year period (2016-2018). Members agreed to form two new Thematic Working Groups, namely on **Youth** and **Regional Protection**.

### Day 1 (Tuesday 20th September)

7.30 - 9.00	Registration
9.00 - 10.30	<p><b>Opening plenary session - Positive Practices in Refugee Protection</b></p> <p><b>Moderator:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arash Bordbar</li> </ul> <p><b>Speakers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dr. Gopal Krishna Siwakoti (INHURED International &amp; Chair of APRRN) &amp; Asmoro Hadiyanto (APRRN Secretary General)</li> <li>Muzafar Ali (Cisarua Learning Centre)</li> <li>Najeeba Wazefadost (Australia National Committee on Refugee Women)</li> <li>Julia Mayerhofer (APRRN Secretariat)</li> <li>Jessica Marsh (Trust Law, Thomson Reuters Foundation)</li> </ul>
10.30 - 11.00	Coffee/Tea break
11.00 - 12.45	<p><b>Workshop 1: Strengthening refugee youth's role in advocacy</b></p> <p><b>Moderator:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rez Gardi</li> </ul> <p><b>Speakers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arash Bordbar</li> <li>Sarah Yahya (Australia Global Refugee Youth Consultation Representatives)</li> <li>Shoaib Muhamad (Kuram Welfare Home)</li> <li>Imtiaz Ali (Pakistan Youth Assembly)</li> <li>Ray Lin (Burma Partnership)</li> <li>Debary Kunoo (KSNG)</li> <li>Daniel Gamboa (New Zealand National Refugee Youth Council)</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Workshop 2: What's next for the Rohingya after the 2015 regional crisis?</b></p> <p><b>Moderator:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lilianne Fan (The Geutanyoe Foundation)</li> </ul> <p><b>Speakers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chris Lewa (The Arakan Project)</li> <li>Hermanto Hasan (The Geutanyoe Foundation)</li> <li>Deepa Nambiar (Asylum Access Malaysia)</li> <li>Puttanee Kangkun (Fortify Rights)</li> <li>Saud Tahir (Socio-Legal Information Centre)</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Workshop 3: Mental health, psychosocial responses and positive practices</b></p> <p><b>Moderator:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Malabika Das</li> </ul> <p><b>Speakers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr Gladston Ashok Xavier (Department of Social Work, Loyola College, Chennai, India)</li> <li>• Dr Lora Friedrich (Director of Mental Health and Psycho-social Programmes, Burma Border Projects)</li> <li>• Dr Wais Aria (Tabish Organisation, Afghanistan)</li> <li>• Ms Jonnet Bernal (Centre for Refugees, Christian Action – Humanitarian Services)</li> </ul>
12.45 - 14.00	<b>Lunch break</b>
14.00 - 15.45	<p><b>Workshop 4: Working with community interpreters</b></p> <p><b>Speaker:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alice Johnson, Cairo Community Interpreter Project (CCIP)</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Workshop 5: Resettlement and alternatives pathways</b></p> <p><b>Moderator:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rez Gardi</li> </ul> <p><b>Speakers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dor Achiek (Settlement Services International)</li> <li>• Tim O'Connor (Refugee Council of Australia)</li> <li>• Brian Barbour (Japan Association for Refugees)</li> <li>• Il Lee (APIL)</li> <li>• Rachel O'Connor (NZ RedCross)</li> <li>• Gul Inanc (Open Universities for Refugees)</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Workshop 6: Engaging with governments - Exploring effective advocacy strategies</b></p> <p><b>Moderator:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daniel Gamboa Salazar (NZNRYC)</li> </ul> <p><b>Speakers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anderson Selvasegaram (SUKA Society)</li> <li>• Lilianne Fan (Geutanyoe Foundation)</li> <li>• Vicki Mau (Red Cross)</li> <li>• Tamara Domicelj (Act for Peace)</li> </ul>
15.45 - 16.15	Coffee break
16.15 - 18.00	<p><b>Workshop 7: Engaging with refugee communities - Recognising and Hearing Diverse Voices</b></p> <p><b>Speakers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linda Bartolomei (Centre for Refugee Research, University of New South Wales)</li> <li>• Najeeba Wazefadost (Australia National Committee on Refugee Women)</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Workshop 8: Discussing livelihoods and labour market opportunities for refugees</b></p> <p><b>Moderator:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alice Nah (Centre for Applied Human Rights, University of York)</li> </ul>

	<b>Speakers:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caroline Stover (Boat People SOS)</li> <li>• Lars Stenger (JRS Indonesia)</li> <li>• Hamsa Vijayaraghavan (The Ara Trust)</li> <li>• William Gois (Migrant Forum Asia)</li> </ul>
	<b>Workshop 9: Open Discussion on post-deportation and post-voluntary return support and monitoring</b> <p><b>Moderator:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Themba Lewis (Rights in Exile)</li> </ul>
<b>Day 2 - General Assembly - For APRRN members only (Wednesday 21st September)</b>	
08.00 - 09.00	<b>Side session:</b> Consultation with APRRN members on the Alternatives / Regional Options Paper prepared by the #LetThemStay coalition (Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce, the Human Rights Law Centre and GetUp!)
09.15 - 10.30	<b>Session 1:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome remarks</li> <li>• Steering Committee Report presented by Dr. Gopal Krishna Siwakoti and Yiombi Thona</li> <li>• Secretariat Report</li> <li>• Governance and Finance Sub-Committee Report</li> <li>• Announcement on election procedures</li> </ul>
10.30 - 11.00	Coffee break
11.00 - 13.00	<b>Session 2:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thematic Working Group proposals</li> <li>• Breakout group discussion on APRRN Strategic Plan</li> </ul>
13.00 - 14.00	Lunch break
14.00 - 15.30	<b>Session 3:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewing and voting on changes to APRRN Constitution</li> </ul>
15.30 - 16.00	Coffee break
16.00 - 17.30	<b>Session 4:</b> Elections
<b>Day 3 - Thematic/Geographic Working Groups (Thursday 22nd September)</b>	
08.30 - 10.15	<b>Legal Aid and Advocacy Working Group</b>
	<b>Youth Working Group</b>
	<b>Statelessness Working Group</b>
10.15 - 10.30	Coffee break
10.30 - 12.15	<b>Regional Protection Working Group</b>
	<b>Immigration Detention Working Group</b>
	<b>Women and Girls At Risk Working Group</b>
12.15 - 13.15	Lunch break
13.15 - 15.00	<b>Southeast Asia</b>
	<b>East Asia</b>
15.00 - 15.15	Coffee break
15.15 - 17.00	<b>South Asia</b>
	<b>Australia, NZ and the Pacific</b>
17.00 - 18.00	<b>Closing</b>

# 3. DESCRIPTION OF SESSIONS

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## Opening Session: Positive Practices in Refugee Protection

Arash Bordbar, a resettled refugee from Australia, moderated this session and welcomed everyone to the APCRR6. The opening session was broken into two parts. The first part aimed to set the tone, while the second part provided a brief overview and explained the structure of the consultation as well as objectives.

Dr Gopal Krishna Siwakoti began by highlighting the establishment of APRRN back in 2008 and how the Network has expanded across the region as well as shown great achievement in the course of less than 8 years. In the global arena the refugee protection space is shrinking, and in terms of safeguarding and promoting refugee rights civil society faces daunting challenges. APRRN is proud of what it has done so far and the benefits have expanded beyond the region. He also thanked all donors, supporters, partners, allies and the APRRN Secretariat. Secondly, Dr Gopal announced his retirement as Chair of APRRN and informed that new leadership will be elected shortly. Next Asmoro Hadiyanto, Secretary General of APRRN welcomed everyone again to APCRR6. On behalf of the Secretariat he expressed gratitude to donors, without whom the consultation would not be possible.

Two keynote speakers then shared their experiences of refugee-led initiatives and highlighted examples of the resiliency of refugees. Muzafar Ali from the [Cisarua Learning Centre](#) thanked APRRN for providing a platform for people who work for the protection and rights of refugee and asylum seekers. Together with other refugees, Muzafar established the Cisarua Learning Centre in Indonesia to provide education for refugee children. Some of the Centre's achievements include a growing library, building the capacity of teachers, online classes, over 100 students and 20 women taking English

classes. He highlighted that women are the backbone of the community and the establishment and maintenance of the school.



**“They (youth) can be the change they want to bring about”.**

Najeeba Wazefadost from the Australian National Committee on Refugee Women then spoke about her own experience as a refugee coming from Afghanistan to Australia by boat. She thanked APRRN for providing such a platform where refugees are able to use their voices to share the stories of those who are not able to due to security reasons. She said that APRRN is a great example of an established platform for the rights of refugees. In Australia an example of a good practice is the mentoring provided by the Refugee Council in New South Wales. That platform has empowered many refugee girls and women to enhance their skills and learn to advocate and lobby for change. Women and girls continue to be left behind, and suffer multiple forms of discrimination and there is insufficient access to help. Service providers do not really know what is required from refugees. It is important for national and international actors to reflect over what can be done to add value to what refugees are already bringing. Refugees are primary agents for their own destiny and their needs to be promotion of self-reliance both in national and international systems. Young people

have important roles to play in shifting the mindset and attitudes of people, and must be part of the development of solutions. She concluded that throughout APCRR6 participants should maintain a positive perspective and use the language of humanity.

Julia Mayerhofer, Deputy Secretary General of APRRN, then provided a brief overview of the Consultation and the structure of the different sessions. This session finished with a presentation by Jessica Marsh ([Trust Law, Thomson Reuters Foundation](#)) who introduced the services and assistance that Trust Law can provide to NGOs.

### Workshop 1: Strengthening the role of refugee youth in advocacy

Young people constitute a great proportion of displaced persons, particularly in the Asia Pacific region. Youth are the driving force behind any community and they are key agents of social change, innovation, and economic change. A third of the population in urban areas are youth and they bring fresh perspective into discussion. To engage youth in consultation helps to promote greater tolerance. We need to highlight the unique qualities that young people can bring to discussions and how other actors can best support youth in their work. This session was designed for youth by youth.

The session started with a review of the Global Refugee Youth Consultations presented by Arash Bordbar and Sarah Yayha, both youth refugees resettled in Australia. Some of the challenges refugee youth experience include access to education, employment, mental health, integration, racism, participation as well as safety and security. The two speakers also spoke about their work in Geneva and their participation in the Global Refugee Youth Consultations held over 3 days. In the course of these consultations, seven core actions were developed:

1. Empower refugee youth through engagement – “with us not for us”
2. Facilitate refugee youth networking and

communication

3. Generate data and evidence on refugee youth to support accountability to youth
4. Develop, recognise and utilise refugee youth capabilities and skills
5. Enable refugee youth as connectors across boundaries
6. Ensure refugee youth focused protection
7. Support refugee youths physical and emotional well being

The core actions are currently being implemented and are both specific and general and address what needs to be improved and what has been missing so far.

Ray Lin (Burma Partnership) and Debary, two young refugees from the Thai Burma border then shared the political context and latest developments on the border, with a focus on voluntary repatriation. A speaker from the Karen Student Network Group shared her challenges in accessing higher education and how that inspired her to volunteer as a teacher for one of the community based organisations (CBOs). Her presentation reiterated the importance of education and the need to focus our advocacy efforts towards the issue.

Shoaib Muhamad (Kuram Welfare Home) & Imtiaz Ali (Pakistan Youth Assembly) shared their experiences in organising youth in national advocacy. Imtiaz Ali introduced the work of the Pakistan Youth Assembly, which aims to educate youth on politics, participation and democracy. The lack of political awareness among youth was an inspiration for the Assembly to be established and at the same time it become a powerful platform to promote dialogue between Pakistan and Afghan youth. Some of the activities of PYA include TV-shows, radio-shows, blogs, community sessions, social media, exchange programmes – all of them targeted to reduce stereotypes. Shoaib Muhamad highlighted the importance of creating bridges to bring youth together. He spoke about sport activities as one approach that has been very effective.

The last speaker, Daniel Gamboa (New Zealand National Refugee Youth Council), shared his personal story of fleeing from Colombia to Ecuador and being resettled in New Zealand. He shared about his experience in establishing the New Zealand National Refugee Youth Council, which is an NGO by young people for young people. The Council was established in 2014 and engages and supports youth as well as advocates for the rights of refugee youth. Daniel shared one of the success stories, where the Ministry of Education has now decided to employ refugee youth as translators in the school system. He also highlighted that they continue to see many challenges and one recent failure was that one of the universities decided not to continue their pre-university programme (free of charge and open for anyone who didn't have qualification for university, but specifically useful for refugee youth) despite advocacy measures from the Council.

In the Q&A session, the moderator introduced three questions to explore:

1. Given all positive practices highlighted in the session what are the current gaps that exist in youth advocacy in the Asia Pacific region?
2. What are the positive practices that you are aware of in your location that could be adapted as possible solutions to these gaps?
3. What else can be done at national regional and international level to strengthen the role of refugee youth in advocacy?

Some of the comments included:

- There are major differences between youth advocacy movements between the countries in Asia-Pacific who are more and less “developed”.
- What advice could be provided to young people who want to start refugee youth networks? Answer: Keep

the focus on working with youth. **“Give control to young people to do what they want”**. Go to the youth instead of asking youth to come to you. It also comes down to: innovation, creativity and technology.

- One of the speakers shared the experience about a project started by Asylum Access Thailand which enabled youth to get together. The group is now conducting an education survey. The focus is on getting an idea about the different communities in Thailand (Pakistan, Vietnam, Syrian, Cambodian) and analysing what the different education possibilities are, how to find ways for those who cannot access education, finding out what their educational backgrounds are and what kind of opportunities exist for youth. **“Everyone used to speak for us but not anymore”**.

### Workshop 2: What's next for Rohingya after the 2015 regional crisis?

APRRN members from across the region shared updates on the current situation in Myanmar and other countries where Rohingya are seeking refuge, namely Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, India and Thailand.

#### Myanmar

Chris Lewa, Director of the Arakan Project, described the current situation for IDPs in Myanmar under the newly-elected NLD-led government. She explained the role of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, which is chaired by form UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, but also the challenges that the Commission is facing, particularly from the Rakhine State parliament and Rakhine nationalist groups. Negative developments in Northern Rakhine State, especially restrictions on freedom of movement and the lack of access to vital health services and hospitals by Rohingya population, should be causes for concern.

## Malaysia

The situation for Rohingya in Malaysia was presented by Deepa Nambiar, Country Director of Asylum Access. Malaysia has been hosting an estimated 100,000 Rohingya refugees for many years, with an additional several hundred arriving by boat last year in the midst of the 'Andaman Sea Crisis'. New arrivals were immediately sent to a detention facility where they were held for 14 months before the majority were released and resettled to a third country. Several hundred other Rohingya remain in immigration detention in Malaysia, which is the most critical issue for the population.

Deepa provided an update about the introduction of a new identity card for registered asylum seekers and refugees issued by UNHCR in Malaysia, and the intention of the Malaysian government to form a joint Task Force to examine registration, risk assessment and legal access to work for refugees. Work rights for Rohingya was one area of opportunity identified by Deepa, as well as opportunities for advocacy with the Malaysian government in line with domestic anti-trafficking in persons legislation and Malaysia's position as a member of the Bali Process.

## Thailand

Puttanee Kangkun from Fortify Rights described three key issues for Rohingya in Thailand since the events of May 2015. Firstly, she provided information about Rohingya who are being held in detention facilities, both immigration detention centres (IDCs) or government-run shelters, and the restrictions on their freedom of movement. She described a 'special agreement' between IOM and UNHCR whereby Rohingya in Thailand may be resettled more quickly than other refugee populations. She added however that resettlement of Rohingya still remains a significant challenge, not least because some people have declined the opportunity for resettlement to a third country because their desire is to reach Malaysia where they have relatives. Since resettlement is always a voluntary action, therefore UNHCR cannot force the process.

Puttanee then explained the status of ongoing trials of people accused of trafficking in persons, connected to the discovery of mass graves and human trafficking camps in Thailand last year. Finally, she offered updates on the Thai government's current policies, in particular towards people recognised as victims of trafficking. In March 2016, the government approved the right of freedom of movement, work, and access to healthcare for victims of trafficking. However, in practice these rights are not being realised because Thailand is concerned about national security and doesn't want to allow people to move freely, which would include release from detention, unless and until there is a viable alternative to detention. Fortify Rights continues to promote dialogue between the Thai government and local NGOs to promote such alternatives.

## Indonesia

Hermanto Hasan, Local Director of the Geutanyoe Foundation described conditions in Aceh for Rohingya since they were rescued and brought to shore by local fishermen, in accordance with the local customary law (adat), but in opposition to directives from the national government. Initially, Indonesia (along with Malaysia) agreed to provide temporary shelter to asylum seekers for up to one year, although Aceh still continues to host several hundred Rohingya refugees.

Hermanto described how, in the days after the arrival of the first Rohingya in May 2015, the local authorities immediately established an 'emergency team' comprised of various government bodies and local NGOs, to set up temporary shelters in two districts. Following that, standard operating procedures (SOPs) were developed, which enabled (amongst other things) Rohingya children to attend local Acehese schools. Earlier this year, MSF (Doctors Without Borders) provided capacity strengthening training to the coastal communities and fishermen in safe and specific search and rescue techniques, in preparation for any future rescue efforts.

Ongoing challenges facing both the Rohingya communities and service providing organisations in Aceh include the inadequate provision of psychosocial support services, divergent cultural and religious practices between the Rohingya and host communities, few viable livelihoods opportunities for Rohingya refugees, and the high number of Rohingya who have voluntarily left Aceh, in efforts to continue their journey (sometime with the assistance of smugglers) to their intended destination, namely Malaysia.

### **India**

Saud Tahir from the Socio-Legal Information Centre (SLIC), described the situation for Rohingya in India, which currently hosts at least 12,000 Rohingya refugees in Delhi and other major cities. Unlike Malaysia and Indonesia, India does provide for the education of all children up to Standard 8 level, in accordance with the country's Right to Education Act. In theory, this should ensure that all Rohingya are receiving an education, however in practice there are significant barriers to the enrollment of Rohingya children in Indian schools. The primary barrier is the dire living conditions that most Rohingya are suffering. Saud explained that most Rohingya in India live in temporary shacks, as they cannot rent property and thus have no proof of residence. Serious water, sanitation and health issues also face Rohingya living in these informal dwellings.

On a more positive note, Saud described how SLIC have been working with UNHCR and the Indian government to try to ensure access to education for all children, and supporting Rohingya to access healthcare through UNHCR's implementation system whereby refugees can access local healthcare providers with the support of interpreters and social workers. There are also positive

developments in India as the government is now issuing long-stay (12 month) visas to some Rohingya refugees, beginning with interpreters. Previously a visa was tied to proof of residence in India (a challenge for Rohingya living in shanty towns to provide), but the government is currently waiving this requirement.

Rohingya in India continue to face barriers to exploring livelihood opportunities aside from manual labour, due to their low levels of education. Further, there are still over 200 Rohingya currently in detention in India as they are unable to prove their identity and after often mistakenly identified by authorities as irregular Bangladeshi migrants. SLIC is working to sensitise the Indian judiciary, as well as free victims of trafficking from detention through bail arrangements. In other positive practices, SLIC has been engaging pro bono lawyers to take up cases to help Rohingya prove their true identity.

### **Bangladesh**

Chris Lewa from the Arakan Project gave the final presentation capturing the situation in Bangladesh, which is currently hosting the largest number of Rohingya refugees in the region - approximately 30,000 registered Rohingya in official refugee camps, and a further 200,000 to 500,000 unregistered Rohingya in unofficial camps and living independently. In early 2016 the Bangladeshi government attempted to carry out a census of the population of Rohingya in Bangladesh, but this was fraught with challenges, not least that many Rohingya did not want to be identified as Rohingya, and that enumerators did not conduct a comprehensive survey of the entire population, rendering the results inaccurate and not reflective of reality. Results are expected to be published in November 2016.

Nevertheless, the census may have provided an opportunity as Rohingya who were recorded as such may

be issued with a card stating that they are recognised by the Bangladeshi government as citizens of Myanmar.

## Discussion

Following the updates, Lilianne Fan, International Director of the Geutanyoe Foundation, moderated a structured discussion on key issues, which included a role that APRRN as a regional network could play in advocating at the national and regional levels. There was discussion around the efficacy of engaging with ASEAN mechanisms to pressure governments at the regional level. In the face of such opposition to the 'local integration' of Rohingya by neighbouring countries, it was felt that re-focusing efforts to address the root causes of the Rohingya's forced migration from Myanmar was important.

Points were also raised about whether our region is prepared for another 'crisis', and what structures or mechanisms have been developed in case of such a situation. A suggestion made was that APRRN members could engage the Advisory Commission and submit information for consideration by the Commission. Finally, there was a suggestion for APRRN members to consider the application of domestic and regional anti-trafficking legislation, in particular the ASEAN Convention Against Trafficking in Persons (Especially Women and Children) which all ASEAN member states have signed, as a way to advocate for and expand protection spaces for Rohingya in the region.

### Workshop 3: Mental health, psychosocial responses and positive practices

This session focused on the specific work undertaken by several APRRN members across the region in mental health. It also provided a space for presenters to discuss their experiences, challenges and positive practices regarding psychosocial care and service provision. Through the four presentations, a platform was created to exchange ideas, forge collaborative practice, strengthen service infrastructure and develop awareness of psychosocial health of displaced persons around Asia.

In the first presentation Dr Lora Friedrich from Burma Border Projects (BBP) highlighted the shift within her own organisation from adult mental health to children's mental health, noting, "It's far easier to raise healthy kids than to fix broken men".

Burma Border Projects currently runs the following programmes, all specifically aimed at children and youth.

1. Psycho-social playgroups – This takes approximately 170 participants per week and is a mixture of collaborative lesson planning with specific psychosocial objectives.
2. Youth mentoring – with teachers nominating leaders in the school, there is a focus on life skill and mental health training before these 'model students' then pass their knowledge onto other vulnerable kids.
3. Child Protection – one of BBP's child protection case workers implements this programme in Burmese and then reports back in English.
4. There is also a specific focus on Burmese history i.e. what it means to be Burmese. Two Karen interns who have the necessary local language skills support this element.

As with other presenters, it was highlighted that limited resources and uncertain funding is a threat to this programme. It was noted that there must be a proactive attempt to secure funding and support this vulnerable group of refugees.

Dr Friedrich further explained the referral network from boarding homes and schools that brings children to BBP. Approximately 50% of referrals have suffered from child sexual assault. As there is only a limited amount of trust with informal Burmese networks and the formal Thai system, things are generally dealt with informally. Often perpetrators will simply provide money in turn for a family's silence regarding abuse. Others simply disappear back across the border to Myanmar.

As with many organisations operating in this region, there

are multiple challenges that exist. Of particular concern is the challenge associated with translation of specific terminology to Burmese i.e. 'confidentiality' translates to 'secret'. This has been addressed through the publication of 'cheat booklets' available in Burmese, English and Karen.

Next Dr Wais Aria from the Tabish Organisation presented his film 'A Ray of Hope', which highlights the challenges in post-conflict Afghanistan, a country dealing with the ever-present challenge of returnees and IDPs. This vulnerable population faces two significant barriers to their successful reintegration into Afghan society – sexual and gender based violence, and associated stigmas.

To address these needs, the Tabish Organisation has a targeted focus on addressing the needs of children and women. This includes offering child friendly spaces, issue specific support groups for children, psychosocial awareness programs and peer-to-peer training. Through the use of an active referral system and using community leaders / volunteers, sustainability is ensured after departure by Tabish.



Dr Ashok Gladston Xavier from Loyola College in India then proceeded to provide an overview of refugee movements between Sri Lanka and India that began in 1987. As at the end of the 2008, there were approximately 104,000

in camps and outside camps in Southern India, with nutrition and suicides being highlighted as two pressing concerns for this population.

To address these issues, supporting organisations created a 'Barefoot Trainers' programme in the late 1990s, a combination of counselling and community-based intervention. The programme trained literate youth in the camps for 8 months to become trainers and supporters regarding 'making informed choices'. Through "house visits", playback theatre and street theatre, a training of the trainers programmes was launched. This resulted in a significant decrease in suicides by 2002.

In 2004, the tsunami affected a number of districts in India. In response, many of the previously trained counsellors travelled to the heavily affected regions to provide counselling. This was recognised by the Indian Government and they assisted in helping refugees to becoming resources.

The fourth speaker was Ms Jonnet Bernal from the Centre for Refugees, at Christian Action in Hong Kong. Operating already for 12 years, the Centre was opened specifically to support the 'third wave of refugees' in Hong Kong and has a specific focus on the treatment of anxiety, depression and PTSD. This is done through such mediums as arts and sport and is heavily reliant on interns and pro-bono health workers. There is also a specific focus on family dynamics and how this relates to drug/alcohol abuse, GBV, youth needs, parenting and health and nutrition.

It was noted that Hong Kong is a particularly challenging environment with many refugees having no access to durable solutions or livelihood opportunities whilst in Hong Kong. To address this need, Christian Action attempts to support basic needs, education/skills training,

and provide psychosocial support. Active efforts are also made to work with the host community to combat stereotypes and discrimination that exists.

The mental health workshop concluded with a presentation by Dr Malabika Das who outlined her research findings from her doctoral thesis in Hong Kong. She noted that there is overwhelming evidence of unaddressed trauma, lack of trauma awareness, inept interpersonal skills and inadequate welfare/medical provisions for refugees in Hong Kong. There is also a lack of understanding and cultural competency, and this is evidenced through rejection rates and re-traumatisation. It is well known that having a sense of purpose plays into mental wellbeing and the policies directed towards refugees in Hong Kong does not support this. In fact it often leads to re-traumatisation, re-victimisation, and ultimately disempowerment. This in turn leads to a holistic deterioration in behavioural, physical and mental health.

It is integral governments promote a service provision that is empathetic, as empathy is intrinsically linked to wellbeing. Through emotional support, trauma informed care and practice, refugees can be supported to highlight their strengths. Moreover, by interviewing in a sensitive manner, refugees can avoid re-traumatisation and instead focus on safety, power, voicing their opinions, cultural competence and healing through relationships.

#### **Workshop 4: Working with community interpreters**

In an interactive workshop, Alice Johnson Director of the Cairo Community Interpreter Project (CCIP) in the Center for Migration and Refugee Studies (CMRS) at the American University in Cairo (AUC), Egypt, engaged workshop participants in discussions about positive practices in community interpreting for refugee-focused civil society organisations.

She started by introducing the work of the CCIP, and

described the ongoing capacity strengthening support that has been offered to organisations across the world in locations as varied as Hong Kong, Thailand, Turkey and Uganda. Alice described the partnership between APRRN and CCIP on a project to strengthening the protection and promotion of human rights of refugees and asylum seekers through training community interpreters and enhancing multilingual access capacity of APRRN's member organisations.

There was very lively debate amongst participants on topics including developing and maintaining interpreter systems, coordination, recruitment and selection of interpreters, on-going assessment and oversight.

Through small group discussions, participants 1) assessed the strengths and challenges within their respective organisations' current interpreting systems, 2) exchanged knowledge and ideas with other participants whose organisations face similar interpreting needs, and 3) identified concrete steps their organisations may take in order to strengthen the capacity of their interpreting systems.

The workshop ended with a focused discussion on ethics, standards of conduct, and interpreter training and linguistic resource development for both interpreters and other organisational staff.

#### **Workshop 5: Resettlement and alternative pathways**

This session started with an overview of the resettlement programmes in New Zealand and Australia. Rachel O'Connor from the New Zealand Red Cross introduced New Zealand's resettlement strategy. The New Zealand government had developed the process in 2010 and has been communicative in its implementation process as well as collaborative with different communities. The cross-government policy has been notably engaging and responsive with receptive actors. The key to the change was a shift to an absolute focus on employment (instead

of a focus on language) and people's aspiration, which is a remarkable development.

Tim O'Connor from the Refugee Council of Australia and Dor Achiek from Settlement Services International (SSI) then introduced Australia's current situation to participants. There continues to be a dichotomy between those who come as resettled refugees and those who seek asylum via boat. Resettlement organisations are contracted by the government and are tasked to meet refugees at the airport and help them set up their daily life. Over the years a strong network of organisations assisting in integration has developed. But changes in government leadership in 2013 brought about a paradigm change in refugee rights. The policy is now to stop the boats, there is a shrinking space for refugees and the immigration department are drafting new draconian laws that forbid those who attempt to arrive by boat from ever coming back to Australia. Furthermore, 30,000 people are currently on bridging visas, and are in general denied basic services. Dor Achiek from SSI shared the number of services available to refugees that are designed to allow refugees to attain independence whilst living in Australian society. Such services include employment services, status resolution services, cultural initiatives, sports teams, business start up support and also a humanitarian settlement service programme. There are also volunteer programmes that provide mentors to refugees and the SSI Foundation funds scholarships for refugees whose financial difficulties inhibit school attendance.

**“Know the community you work with. Know that they are dynamic and changing, and that you need to change with them.”**

Resettlement programmes have recently commenced in Japan and Korea. These are the first countries in Asia

to adopt formal resettlement programs. Il Lee from APIL in South Korea, highlighted that the three-year pilot resettlement programme has only been established recently and each year the system can accept a maximum of 30 refugees. Most of whom come from refugee camps on the Thailand-Burma border. In a comparative study that was conducted it was found that refugees that were provided with education and arrival support adapted better however there are still some barriers to integration and to full independence. The plan is continue with the programme and use it as a case study for successful integration and to highlight that refugees are not a burden. The model could also serve as a precedent for countries in ASEAN to follow.

Brian Barbour from the Japan Association for Refugees introduced Japan's resettlement programme. Japan was the first Asian country to resettle refugees, and its programme. It was developed through a top-down political decision-making system (as opposed to South Korea). A pilot phase was initiated in 2010, which lasted for three years. The maximum number of accepted resettled people was 30 per year, all of whom came from Burmese refugee communities living in Thailand. The programme was extended for another two years and it continues to be in a pilot-phase with the 30 persons per year cap, however urban refugees from Malaysia are now also accepted. The programme is completely centralised and there is a lack of transparency from the government on what the programme really entails. No local municipalities or other organisations are involved and the government does not give funding to any NGOs to provide support to new arrivals.

There was also an exchange programme between the US, Korea and Japan on the issue of social integration (refugees and asylum seekers). NGOs in Japan leveraged

the competitiveness between Japan and Korea by identifying the good and bad things in each country in order for them to influence each other alongside pressure from the US. A report of the project has been produced which identified good practices and recommendations to each country. Some of the good practices of the project include:

- USA: Public/private partnership (government funds but NGOs implement); broad engagement with many different actors; decentralised system.
- Korea: The legislation itself since it is the first independent refugee law in Asia that is being implemented; incredible strong CSO network; a very collaborative approach; active legal aid NGOs; the reception centre.
- Japan: research quality; good CSO leadership; good lawyers group; the employment assistance programmes.

Brian finished by highlighting that Japan and Korea should be prioritised by the US. **“If we are serious with refugee protection in Asia, we need an Asian model, US needs to encourage Korea and Japan to come together and act as a broker”.**

Gul Inanc from Open Universities for Refugees then spoke briefly on alternatives pathways, encouraging the use of student visas and calling on universities to offer education visas for refugees. Education is a recognised human right and by simply staying in school, refugees can be more protected. She further highlighted the potential role that Singapore could play – although the country has not signed the 1951 Refugee Convention there is great enthusiasm for supporting refugees among civil society.

During the Q&A time, the following additional points were highlighted and discussed:

- Student and work visas could be considered as a “4th durable solution”. E.g. in Iran and some other countries refugees are offered student visas.
- Embassies often deny entry visas if refugees are

accepted as students that is because of the “risk” that they will apply for asylum once they arrive to the country.

- A new visa framework could be considered for those seeking to enter a country on a student visa. In that way it would not replace resettlement. Example: Some Canadian universities offer scholarships to students in Malaysia and after they've graduated they are eligible to apply for citizenship.
- There has to be a discussion on how to identify people most in need, especially since resettlement spaces for Asia have reduced. This could be developed into a global template to be taken to Geneva.

Online learning opportunities were also discussed - online programmes can be accessed while working and it can take into account the existing learning status of the student. The positive thing with online diploma programmes is that they bring refugees and other communities together (they become classmates in the virtual world) since they are open for all and benefit everyone. However funding and leadership can be of concern.

### Workshop 6: Engaging with governments – Exploring effective advocacy strategies

This session explored some positive practices from across the region on engaging with governments. Anderson Selvasegaram from SUKA Society in Malaysia provided an overview of advocating and working with governments in a national context. In order to commence their advocacy, SUKA joined with the International Detention Coalition in an effort to develop a more holistic understanding of detention issues and possible alternatives to detention. This was followed by a ‘roadmap’ document on potential engagement with the Malaysian Government.

This engagement was predicated upon two main elements i.e. building relationships and creating leverage with government officials and agencies. Relationships commenced through a series of skill-based training programmes that utilised former influential government

officials. This was followed by a nationwide sensitisation campaign to push the agenda on immigration detention of children. This resulted in the formation of a government working group, a second layer of engagement and interaction with the government.

The presenter concluded his speech with a list of challenges that should be considered when advocating with governments on a national level. This included the difficulty of promoting government ownership, shifting priorities and concerns within government, a fundamental lack of understanding of the issue, and a view that refugees are a 'foreign' issue. Key ways to combat such challenges included; positive messaging, individual officer engagement, targeting government agencies that required the most support, multi-stakeholder engagement across all parts of government, and, consistent and repeated messaging over long periods of time.

The second presenter, Lillian Fan from the Geutanyoe Foundation, then provided an overview of successful engagement with governments at the provincial level i.e. in Aceh, Indonesia. This particularly focussed upon engagement during and after the 'Andaman Boat Crisis'.

Due to the complex history of Indonesia, many of the provincial governments actually hold a substantial amount of autonomy and power. Alongside this strong degree of autonomy, customary law also holds a lot of influence. Known as 'adat', this is officially contained within domestic legislation. It was during the 2015 Andaman Sea Crisis that local fisherman espoused that they were bound by this law. Of the 1807 survivors, all were assisted via spontaneous rescues by fishermen. It wasn't only based on goodwill and compassion, but an obligation towards customary law that they considered

more important than national law. Fishermen used this as a basis to challenge the national law.

In response to this strong support within Aceh, the local government initiated an emergency health response and a subsequent national government task force mandated to manage the humanitarian response of the survivors. Ministers from Jakarta also travelled to Aceh and commenced planning with local organisations as to how they could move the survivors out of the temporary settlements into semi-permanent accommodation. Finally, the government also initiated a process to develop a set of Standard Operating Procedures. This was primarily driven by the Langsa and Aceh governments as an acknowledgement that the current environment is devoid of any other guidelines in this respect. A consortium was developed between the local governments and NGOs, a positive step towards the recognition of refugee rights.

The session's third speaker presented on "Working with the authorities: a Red Cross approach". This discussed the broader approach and role of Red Cross national societies in engaging with governments, and provided examples of members of the Red Cross Asia Pacific Migration Network. The Red Cross and Asia Pacific Migration Network has a coordinated mandate in terms of dealing with asylum seekers. It was noted however that this is an ever-present juggling act, especially with the numerous migration issues that cuts across climate change, labour migration, refugees and asylum seekers. As a network with an auxiliary role to government, the Red Cross is able to fill humanitarian gaps and respond to emergencies and disasters.

Specifically regarding refugees and asylum seekers, the Red Cross primarily advocates around 'humanitarian responsibility', i.e. their obligation to communities. They

also try to engage the highest levels of government. To do this, the Red Cross commences with trying to get access to affected populations. This is followed by direct advocacy, sector mobilisation and direct engagement. Public criticism also occurs when necessary although this can be quite a sensitive endeavour in many contexts. In essence, the biggest focus is on developing a uniform and coherent voice / message to take to decision makers. Whilst this is a long-term approach, it has the greatest potential for concrete changes on the policy and legislative level.

The final presentation - "Joint advocacy: considerations and opportunities" - considered the different modes and understandings of advocacy, reflected upon the merits of engaging members in mutual capacity-strengthening in this area, and posed some questions regarding the challenges and opportunities which confront APRRN as a network in maximising its impact and amplifying expertise.

In this presentation the speaker highlighted some of the challenges of developing a cohesive advocacy strategy, both within a small organisation and across a large network like APRRN. It was highlighted that advocacy across organisations must be complementary and must contribute to a louder common voice. Furthermore, it was noted that advocacy in itself comes with risks and these must be weighed, managed and mitigated as much as possible. The presentation concluded with several questions for discussions, notably; "How do we ensure advocacy is inclusive?", "How is advocacy integrated into all elements of an organisation?", and, "How do we maximise our impact in the different regional and international spheres?"

The session concluded with comments and discussion from the floor on each of the four presentations. Several participants noted that need to work side by side and engage in both civil society processes but also with government processes. Without 'cross-pollination' of the two, messages will remain weak and inefficient. Other

participants also noted that imperative to have refugees advocate for their own issues. Greater efforts must be made to create access for refugees to decision makers so that they can talk about their issues directly.

### Workshop 7: Engaging with refugee communities - Recognising and hearing diverse voices

The purpose this workshop was to share knowledge and experience of strategies which support the genuine engagement of refugee communities with a focus on the active inclusion of refugee women and girls. This workshop provided the opportunity to explore good practices and challenges from the perspective of both humanitarian actors/NGOs from refugee backgrounds and those from non-refugee backgrounds.

The session started with a case study from India presented by Linda Bartolomei from the Centre for Refugee Research at the University of New South Wales in Australia. The project had positive impact pertaining to refugees who do not have residency rights and shared insights into how we actually support refugees to be genuine partners at the table. The project included the Afghan and Somali communities in New Delhi and was supported by the University of New South Wales in Australia, UNHCR and an NGO (Don Bosco.) Some positive elements from the project include:

- Joint trainings involving refugees, UNHCR and NGO Staff to reduce existing power differences
- Extensive skills trainings
- Remuneration equivalent to local NGO staff
- Representation of voices in international fora (e.g. conferences)
- Involvement of refugee women as functional role models

Some refugees chose not to take part in the project due to fears that it would compromise their chances for resettlement - steps were taken to alleviate these fears. As some of the community leaders have been resettled, succession planning became an important point of

discussion throughout the project.

Key learnings from the project included:

- The importance of building trust
- The importance of building women's capacity in leadership roles
- The importance of involving refugees in decision making
- The importance of not just assuming that communities can continue to do things on a voluntary basis forever

Najeeba Wazefadost from the Australian National Committee on Refugee Women (ANCORW) then presented a second case study. She shared her experiences in initiating an English class to teach their own mothers who were denied access to English education. The classroom grew quickly to 30 mothers who had experienced social isolation due to language barriers. In 2011, Najeeba and other women created the "Hazara Women of Australia" as a registered entity in Australia. She also noted the challenges in working with a male dominated society. The most important lesson was to include men in all aspects and educate them on respecting women by advocating freedom of speech and choice. Najeeba then shared her social empowerment project such as the "Cook for Sale" Programme where women were taught to bake muffins and cakes and were provided with opportunities to sell them at events, universities and conferences. With the money from the bake sales, They were able to hire two female driver instructors to teach ten women how to drive. Three of whom went on to get driver licenses and in return they taught the rest of the community how to drive. It was a powerful experience of how one initiative can lead into other initiatives. She also highlighted some of the challenges women and girls face in Afghanistan in accessing education in rural areas. There is a need for more schools and as well as facilities in cities where women can pursue higher education. "Hazara Women of

Australia" has been able to support the cause by arranging accommodation and raising funds for women.

During the Q&A the following issues were discussed: the funding and maintenance of long-term support; the importance of work rights; the need for continued advocacy efforts and the need to educate donors about the context they are working in. Suggestions were made to manage expectations in refugees as well a need to develop contingency plans due to the low resettlement rates in many countries. It is important to consider mental health issues prior to breaking difficult news to refugees regarding resettlement. Lastly the need to look at alternatives to resettlement was discussed and it was expressed that the UNHCR should seek to better collaborate with NGOs on this matter.

### Workshop 8: Discussing livelihoods and labour market opportunities for refugees

Dr Alice Nah, Advisor to APRRN and Lecturer at the Centre for Applied Human Rights, University of York, UK moderated lively discussion on the right to work, economic empowerment and labour market opportunities for asylum seekers and refugees in the region. During the workshop, it was emphasised that the right to earn a living is such an important part of a person's self-determination and in the case of refugees, their survival.

The workshop had three main areas of focus, namely:

1. How is the topic of livelihoods and work rights conceptualised?
2. What are the ways that refugees, civil society, UNHCR, approach this right to work?
3. What are some current opportunities for advocacy?

APRRN members working with organisations in different locales offered their perspectives on the situation in

India, Indonesia, Thailand and particular opportunities that are currently presenting themselves. There was an emphasis on the importance of collaboration amongst stakeholders, specifically with those working on migrant workers' rights and protection.

Hamsa Vijayaraghavan from the Ara Trust spoke of a visa recently introduced by the Indian government which allows refugees the right to work in non-governmental jobs in India.

Caroline Stover, Legal Advocacy Director for Boat People SOS, which provides legal aid and protection services to refugees and asylum seekers in Bangkok explained that although refugees and asylum seekers in Thailand have no right to work, almost all are in fact working in the informal sector. There are few support mechanisms for urban refugees in Thailand, so they must find their own ways to survive and support other family members. However, seeking livelihoods also renders refugees even more vulnerable, for example to arrest and detention whilst travelling to and from a place of work, and to abuse and exploitation by employers.

Caroline highlighted that refugees and labour conditions is a relatively under-researched topic, however BPSOS is starting to explore these issues. She also identified possibly advocacy opportunities following a conference recently hosted by the Regional Support Office of the Bali Process which brought together government representatives, the private sector and CSOs to explore some innovative and creative solutions to creating legitimate pathways to employment for refugees.

Lars Stenger from JRS in Indonesia, also elaborated on the role that business and the private sector can play in responding to forced migration challenges, for example through offering vocational training. In preparation for resettlement in a third country, refugees are often keen to strengthen their skills, which also helps them better integrate into a new community.

William Gois spoke of the focus of Migrant Forum Asia (MFA), a group of migrant worker organisations and trade unions concerned with dimensions of labour migration in the Asian region. The right to work, and labour migration, are currently hot topics of discussion in various international processes, particularly the high-level meetings in New York. Regionally, economic integration and the ASEAN Economic Community have created a lot of discussion about migration and labour flows, bringing into view the relationship between migration and refugees.

### **Workshop 9: Open Discussion on Post-deportation and post-voluntary return support and monitoring**

Over the past few years, the notion of 'voluntary return' has taken on a new meaning. Generally, after denying a person asylum, the traditional view of a receiving country was to 'turn a blind eye' to the rejected applicant. As options for those seeking asylum have become increasingly limited, they are often forced to "choose" to return to their country of origin. With an ever increasing number of forcibly displaced persons, the need for robust and available legal aid has increased. Recognising this need, Rights in Exile has attempted to build a network linking human rights and refugee rights organisations in receiving countries to similar organisations in sending countries so that follow-through of individual cases are possible.

To begin the workshop, participants broke into different small groups to discuss:

- How to develop post deportation monitoring effectively in order to ensure protection of the rejected asylum seeker; and
- How to set up a reporting system so that in those situations when someone is treated badly upon return, this will be documented and reported to the accountable actor.

More specifically, participants discussed four core

elements in detail before reporting back to the larger group. These were:

### **Security and Challenges to post-deportation monitoring**

Participants noted some of the challenges to post-deportation monitoring are:

- The absence of social benefits in the country of return
- Potential loss of land rights for returnees
- For countries with large scale return there is a need for a tripartite solutions
- Returned refugees may have no access to identity documents
- Ex-militants face severe risk and threats
- There is a limited knowledge of any support available to returnees
- In long-lasting application procedures the deported asylum seekers have accumulated resources in the sending country that needs to be brought back with them, e.g. tax returns;
- Corruption in countries of return leaves the deported asylum seeker vulnerable
- Persons suffer intimidation by security forces.

It was noted that the Rights in Exile project is still in very early stages of its development. It does however have a centralised database of individuals and organisations willing to help in cases of deportation and “voluntary return”. Participants noted that there are many practical issues to consider including; confidentiality and safety of monitoring organisations, a more structured approach to monitoring, length of monitoring and international organisations as a form of protection.

### **Coordination**

The second small group highlighted that, when deported, there are also a number of administrative issues (not

necessarily security-related) e.g. tax return process, certificate issuances. It is important to coordinate with organisations in the sending country to support with this service in order to assist the deported asylum seeker.

In order to build these networks of organisations/ individuals willing to monitor and support, it was suggested that there are numerous ways to assist such as to develop an app for smartphones where a list of NGOs/individuals in the country of origin willing to help is provided and developing a ‘deportation checklist’ when a person is returning. It was also noted that there must be greater collaboration with human rights groups, children’s rights organisation, women’s rights organisations, migrant worker’s rights, and land rights organisations. There is often need for additional support and not only legal aid, e.g. access to women protection shelters, financial assistance and health support. The system and structure of assistance when returning back to a country of origin already exists in the migrant worker’s rights sphere so this should be capitalised upon. Faith-based organisations are an additional element of support.

### **Good practices**

Participants noted that it was quite difficult to highlight specific ‘good practices’. However, the closest they could identify was regarding the repatriation of migrant workers. There is a need for differentiation between voluntary repatriation and post-deportation. There are good practice-examples from Australia where there has been 100% success in post-deportation cases. However, in those cases there were no risk for the deported asylum seekers to return to the country of origin and thus success was easier to achieve. Private companies conducted these deportations.

As discussions progressed, the need for early and

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thorough preparation of all clients was also highlighted. The more information clients have on hand prior to a rejection and prior to a deportation then the more likely they will be able to organise a return with safety and dignity. Often deportations happen within 24 hours of being given notice so the information must have been transferred to the client at an earlier stage so that he/she is prepared for whatever may happen. It was noted that many deportees (or voluntary returnees) do not inform caseworkers therefore the information must be received well prior. Also, after being informed of deportation individuals also often face difficulty accessing legal support.

### Monitoring

Throughout these discussions it was suggested that APRRN is a useful mechanism by which to support Rights in Exile and their Post-Deportation Monitoring Network. APRRN could also provide a conduit to connect with other networks and identify partner NGOs in Asian countries.

A common challenge across all monitoring organisations is for them to adequately record information and data. Many of the organisations don't have the experience in providing that type of information and are often busy with the practical issues of receiving deported asylum seekers. It is therefore important to connect with organisations that do more research and reporting. It was noted that partners doesn't necessarily have to be an NGO. An individual who has an interest in the issue can be a great asset.

Finally, it was highlighted that some countries in the region e.g. Laos and China have very difficult operating environments. To monitor deportations to these countries can be very tricky. It was noted that often organisations in these countries will be 'silent' or hidden observers so that they remain under the radar.

### LEGAL AID AND ADVOCACY WORKING GROUP

The session commenced with an overview by the outgoing Chair of the working group's achievements over the past two years and a look at the previous Action Plan 2014-2016. It included capacity strengthening (identifying training needs, identifying trainers on different topics, supporting exchanges between legal aid groups and developing such groups); creation of greater community engagement; enhanced information sharing; advocacy (supporting countries in transition and working with UNHCR in RSD. This was aligned with APRRN's three core pillars of joint advocacy, information sharing, and capacity strengthening.

Following this, the incoming Chair and Deputy Chair outlined some proposed activities for the next two years based upon some preliminary discussions and identified needs. These were:

- Support Taiwan in the progression of their proposed refugee legislation. It was noted that no government or UN agency will engage with Taiwan, however APRRN is well placed to engage and to conduct trainings. It was highlighted that the Taiwan Government would welcome such engagement as in fact this has already commenced. Preliminary engagement has identified needs as: setting up a new RSD-system and building capacity of government officials and civil society actors.
- Develop solutions to the UNHCR's current RSD 'crisis'. UNHCR is currently conducting research and APRRN is positioned well to expand and put recommendations forward based on it.
- Continue to implement the annual Short Course on Refugee Rights and Advocacy. There is a continued high demand from across the region.
- Develop a focus on supporting post-deportation monitoring initiatives.
- Continue to support training for community

interpreters across the region. Whilst often taken for granted, interpreters are essential in order to make our work possible.

Following presentation of proposed activities of the Working Group, the discussion was opened to the wider membership for their suggestions and input. Discussions commenced with an acknowledgement that capacity needs to be built both in terms of national and international law and is an obligation of all members.

One identified need common to all participants was the need for greater information sharing and access to information. The APRRN website can play host to this, whether it be publicly available or through a password protected section of the website. This includes but is not limited to (translated) materials, guidelines and handbooks. These can be tweaked to each national context. Suggestions of materials included:

- Japan's information package on laws and procedures and their self-representation kit
- Asylum Access's self-help kit and good practices material
- Rights in Exile's guidelines and other translated materials that are widely available in numerous languages on their website.

In regards to APRRN's core pillar of work on capacity strengthening, there was a suggestion that trainings and workshops cover multiple issues, not just one specific theme. It was noted that this could be more effective and result in the dispersion of more information.

Discussions then shifted to the need for greater post-deportation support. No such programme has yet been developed in Asia-Pacific region. As APRRN already includes members in countries where rejected asylum

seekers from Thailand are returned to, this would not be a particularly onerous endeavour. It was stressed that this could and should also include individuals that are also 'voluntarily returning'. In addition, it was noted that there are many other thematic organisations such as migrant workers networks that may be able to be incorporated. Furthermore, APRRN could be the right body to develop policy papers at a regional level clearly stating the potential outcomes for individuals that return home.

As discussion progressed, it was noted that APRRN must not work independently. Rather, there is a need to link our work with other human rights networks as many of the issues faced are quite intertwined. For example, documentation of human rights abuses of Rohingya in Rakhine State is often conducted by groups that are not specifically focused on refugee rights. However, their methodology is robust and is a great support in verifying cases. Greater cohesion with groups such as this would be ideal. Other human rights organisations like Protection International and FORUM-Asia when supporting post-deportation monitoring would be useful.

The group also discussed the need to rally around one key advocacy issue and focus efforts in this regard. The two key issues that were noted were the vilification of asylum seekers, and labour exploitation of refugees. It was noted that advocacy around such issues need to be concerted, long-term and backed by extensive research, perhaps engaging the support of an economist. Strategic litigation was also highlighted as an option although members noted that this could be both costly and potentially harmful if it fails.

Finally, APRRN members in attendance discussed the need to better engage with each other, whether that

be through new methods or communication or more effective communication. It was noted that the APRRN website is currently under-utilised and many also noted the GoogleGroups was not particularly effective. Several members suggested an instant messaging group, such 'WhatsApp', although the issue of institutional memory was called into question. Skype and Telegram were suggested as two other modes of communication whereby sensitive communication could be transmitted.

## STATELESSNESS WORKING GROUP

25 members met to share updates on their/their organisation's work, and to discuss the past and future activities of APRRN's Statelessness Working Group (SWG).

Parsu Sharma Luita, former Chair of SWG, starting by giving a review of activities from 2014 to 2016. The main activity was the 'Regional Retreat on Resolving Statelessness in Asia and the Pacific', co-organised by APRRN and UNHCR in partnership with the Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies at Mahidol University in Thailand, held in June 2015. Forty participants including many APRRN members spent two days exploring issues around statelessness in the region, and the role that civil society organisations and individuals can play in addressing statelessness. During the Retreat, it was agreed that a Core Group of individuals would set about developing mechanisms for the establishment of a new regional network dedicated to statelessness, which is now known as the Statelessness Network of the Asia Pacific, or SNAP. APRRN's Statelessness Working Group will continue to collaborate with SNAP, upon its formation, by providing perspectives on addressing statelessness based on the expertise of APRRN's members.

Chris Lewa, the newly-elected Chair of SWG, reviewed the draft Plan of Action for the Working Group for the next two years (2016 to 2018), proposing possible activities which come under APRRN's three Core Pillars of work, namely: i) capacity strengthening, ii) joint advocacy, and iii) resource and knowledge sharing and outreach. It was

suggested that APRRN's SWG might consider organising national or sub-regional level workshops or conferences to raise awareness of statelessness within APRRN's remit of focus, share good practices to resolve the condition of statelessness, consider ways that the SWG can collaborate with other thematic Working Groups (e.g. Immigration Detention, Youth), and discuss joint advocacy strategies. Another activity identified by the group as a priority was developing a section on APRRN's website for resources about statelessness.

## YOUTH WORKING GROUP

As a new Working Group, the youth session broke out into three groups to discuss the Action Plan focused on the three programme areas of APRRN in more-depth. Common themes and priorities identified in the session included:

- The Global Refugee Youth Consultations. These only took place in two countries in Asia (Pakistan and Thailand), and it was felt that there is the need to hold additional consultations elsewhere in the region to understand the concerns of youth, develop joint solutions and also identify capacity strengthening needs of youth in different contexts. It was suggested that youth themselves should run such consultations with the support of the Secretariat and other APRRN members.
- The challenges of those living in camps were also discussed e.g. refugees in the camps on the border between Thailand and Burma can't leave these camps, and is also hard to travel to other provinces. At the same time it is challenging for 'outsiders' to gain access the camps.. The group agreed to explore mechanisms to involve youth in challenging contexts.
- The need for various mapping exercises was discussed, in particular the need to identify and map youth leaders across the region but also within different communities.
- Peer-to-Peer mentorship was a common theme in all discussions. The mapping exercise would help in that regard, as it would identify potential mentors.

- The group agreed to explore the use of technology. It was suggested to look into video projects as a powerful tool to share the voices of refugee youth, especially when access is difficult.
- Access to higher education is one of the biggest concerns shared by youth across the region. The group agreed that advocacy on this must continue and in particular focus on exploring how universities in host/transit countries can provide refugees with study options. It was suggested to start on a small scale, and from the bottom-up in order to understand where advocacy is working well.
- Lastly, it was discussed that the Youth Working Group should engage in advocacy at the international level and should seek to have representatives present at key events such as the High Commissioner's Dialogue in December 2016, and the Annual UNHCR-NGO Consultations in June 2017.

### REGIONAL PROTECTION WORKING GROUP

This is a new Working Group for APRRN and some background and history on the establishment of the Regional Protection Working Group was provided by Tamara Domicelj.

Asia has traditionally been the region which has hosted the largest numbers of refugees in the world, despite not having any regional protection framework. Governments are not taking any significant initiatives to develop such a framework, and to date, discussions are generally focused on combating human trafficking. Although, there is limited space for engagement with CSOs, there is the realisation by many that APRRN is a capable and extraordinary network with strengths in content and expertise as well as a great understanding of key protection gaps and positive practices. However, APRRN had not been particularly proactive in the past. As a result,

there was discussion during APCRR4 in 2012 that APRRN should focus its efforts to develop a Vision for Regional Protection as well as a plan for how to operationalise it. A small group embarked on the process in drafting said plan and consulted with various stakeholders (including UNHCR).

What followed was a more informal discussion on the Working Group itself and potential activities that could be part of it. Common themes includes:

- APRRN should (and can) take the lead in the development of a regional protection mechanism. APRRN should pull governments and other actors into an APRRN set agenda.
- It is important to have a strategic approach to protection and not only be responsive.
- There are positive developments in the region (e.g. emergency transit mechanism in the Philippines, India considering the adoption of a national law, resettlement programmes in East Asia) that we can discuss, share and use to replicate in other contexts.
- There are gaps in research and APRRN would be well placed to identify research areas and then connect to potential researchers or institutions. What is needed is not only academic research but academic research transferrable to practice.
- The need to unpack "protection" was discussed – what does protection actually mean in practice? (e.g. increasing access to RSD and having refugee status does not always result in positive protection).
- Protection training of stakeholders such as immigration officials, lawyers, military and navy personnel was suggested. In Taiwan there is a draft refugee law and a government-led RSD system will likely be developed – this would be a great way for APRRN to be engaged because the UN will not engage (due to political sensitivity).

- There should be some sort of mapping to understand opportunities better at different levels e.g. what is working in terms of dialogue with governments? What are the enablers for that to occur?
- It is important to focus on setting up a functioning Asian model for refugee protection in e.g. Korea and/or Japan. If we can get the rest of the world to care about Korea and Japan and put pressure on these countries to create a good model, it will have a big impact on the region.
- APRRN members should be used to leverage each other - colleagues/partners/academics from other countries in the region are able to say things in public that domestic organisations cannot.
- The focus of the group has to be 'protection from below' because we cannot wait for states to provide protection. We need to share positive practices within our network and create structures that we can replicate across the region.

## IMMIGRATION DETENTION WORKING GROUP

Members of APRRN's Immigration Detention Working Group (IDWG) met to share updates on their/their organisation's work, and to discuss the past and future activities of the IDWG. Vivienne Chew, Chair of IDWG, started by reiterating the strategic priorities of IDWG, being to: (i) end/limit the use of immigration detention; (ii) promote the development and implementation of alternatives to immigration detention; (iii) improve monitoring of, and conditions in, immigration detention centres. An overview was then provided of the key IDWG activities since APCRR5:

- One of the working group's main priorities has been to promote alternatives to immigration detention (ATDs) for children in the 3 target countries of Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand. To this end, national and regional roundtables were held with governments, national human rights commissions, APRRN members, and other stakeholders to explore alternatives for children in all three countries.
- APRRN, in partnership with the International Detention

Coalition (IDC), also visited New Zealand to highlight the potential role the country could play in promoting alternatives for children in Southeast Asia.

- Greater engagement with ASEAN on the issue of immigration detention, including collaboration with Thailand's representation to the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) on the issue of immigration detention of children. APRRN has also engaged with the ASEAN Commission on Women and Children (ACWC) on the implementation of its Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence against Children.

An overview was also provided on some of the key global developments in the past two years around ending the immigration detention of children, as well as upcoming IDWG initiatives in late 2016 and early 2017. Discussions also focused on some of the key detention trends in the region.

Participants were then asked to revisit and update national Action Plans developed for the years 2014-2015; through these Plans, it was then possible to identify opportunities to address key immigration detention issues in their respective countries, including the activities and resources required, as well as strategies to mitigate any potential risks identified. It was agreed that the national Action Plans would assist the Chair and Deputy Chair of IDWG to prioritise the activities for the Working Group over 2016 and 2017, and to seek funding to support members in their national efforts.

## WOMEN AND GIRLS AT RISK WORKING GROUP

To begin discussions, the Chair of the Women and Girls at Risk (WAGAR) Working Group highlighted some achievements and challenges from the past two years and how the WAGAR Working Group can better target its activities for 2016-2018. In 2015 the Working Group conducted advocacy training in Southeast Asia, and also took refugee women to Geneva for the annual UNHCR-NGO Consultations to advocate on their own behalf. In 2016 the Working Group was less active.

Some suggestions for greater engagement by members in attendance included developing partnerships at the regional and international levels, and research.

It was highlighted that funding is quite often cyclical and targeted towards one specific thematic or geographic region at a time. Therefore continued efforts are needed to ensure that the specific concerns of women and girls remain on the agenda.

Participants then broke out into small groups to discuss what they foresaw as potential activities and objectives to focus upon for the next two years which included:

- A Training of trainers module for women and girls in local communities.
- A greater focus on the 'Women, Peace and Security' Agenda – Security Council Resolution 1325. There has been encouragement for nations to develop National Action Plans for 1325 implementation so potentially APRRN could explore gaps across the region.
- Continual sharing of good practices amongst refugee communities.
- Undertake national-level consultations and develop vocational activities for women.
- Explore possible funding opportunities to support women across the region.
- Collect and compile 'women's stories' that can be used as inspiration for others.

Participants noted the need to map the skills and focus of each WAGAR member to identify spaces for complementarity.

Members concluded by noting that raising the voices of refugee women in the region should be a primary concern. A 'digital storytelling' project (short-film) was opined as an activity that would be relatively easy and cost effective and could also be used for advocacy in various forums.

## GEOGRAPHIC WORKING GROUPS



### SOUTH EAST ASIA WORKING GROUP

The South East Asia Working Group (SEAWG) had a lively meeting with more than 30 members participating. The group discussed ideas for activities that could come under APRRN's three Core Pillars of work.

One of the main topics under discussion was the importance of the SEAWG working collaboratively with other Working Groups to ensure synergy between APRRN's cross-cutting areas of work, whilst being mindful not to duplicate activities. The SEAWG agreed that engaging with mechanisms of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) should be a priority in the work plan for the next two years. Specifically, the group felt that since ASEAN mechanisms can be rather overwhelming, an analysis of ASEAN is needed to ensure that advocacy efforts can be strategic, timely and targeted. Members also agreed in the value of multilateral dialogue, for example through opportunities presented via the Asian Dialogue on Forced Migration (aka 'Track 2 Dialogue'), and other spaces for regional dialogue (e.g. via the Regional

Support Office of the Bali Process, or ASEAN Disaster Management Centre).

Regional issues of particular concern to SEAWG members included time for reflection about the 'Andaman Sea crisis' of 2015, and what has been learned about emergency preparedness versus emergency responses in the aftermath. Secondly, the current situation in Myanmar and what the future might hold for those who 'voluntarily repatriate' and how APRRN members can prepare for and respond to this.

Members discussed the benefits of connecting with less common partners in our advocacy efforts, such as 'think tanks' in various ASEAN countries to identify key actors who can enhance APRRN's mission, the media who can help humanise refugees through their reporting and perhaps offer training to APRRN members on media strategies, and the private sector who may be willing to offer their services pro bono whilst simultaneously fulfilling their corporate social responsibility (CRS) obligations.

Lastly, many suggestions were proposed of ways to creatively reach out to the wider public to raise awareness of forced migration issues by using non-threatening and indirect 'soft advocacy' strategies. Examples were shared of activities that took place around the region on the annual World Refugee Day (20 June), for example a Refugee Culture Festival held in Kuala Lumpur, a Refugee Awareness Week held in Singapore, and the annual Bangkok Inter-Cultural Bazaar for urban refugees which is supported by APRRN's Secretariat staff.

## **AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND AND PACIFIC WORKING GROUP**

During this session the draft Action Plan was discussed in further detail. Current outreach and advocacy trips to Australia and New Zealand are:

- APRRN has organised a trip in September 2015 to both Australia and New Zealand – this was an initial trip joined by the APRRN Secretariat, members from

South Asia and Southeast Asia as well as Chair/Deputy Chair of the ANZPWG. The key aim of the trip was to raise awareness of what is happening in the region and also what kind of impact Australian policy has on the region.

- A second and smaller trip was organised to New Zealand only in May 2016 – this trip focused more on the positive role New Zealand could play in the region by supporting the advancement of Alternatives to Detention for children at risk.
- There was an agreement that such the trips are useful as the general awareness among many officials and politicians is low. However it should be more strategic and be focused on specific asks instead of just sharing general information.
- New Zealand still lacks representation in APRRN and engagement needs to be strengthened. Also wider consultations in New Zealand with difference actors in the sector are required.
- There would also be opportunities around New Zealand's role in the ATCR (Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement).
- The Regional Support Office of the Bali Process is another channel that we want to engage with as they are open for proposals on joint projects.

Capacity Strengthening:

- Capacity strengthening should be mutual – many Australian NGOs are keen to be involved in the region and make a contribution.
- Australian NGOs do have expertise and more capacity to support groups in Southeast and South Asia.
- APRRN members could host an Australian NGO but there could also be NGO-2-NGO exchange opportunities. Such opportunities need to be designed so that it is helpful in a two-way direction.

## **SOUTH ASIA WORKING GROUP**

The session commenced with a brief outline of some of the challenges in refugee protection in South Asia followed by an overview of the activities of members of

the working group over the past two years. In the past few years members have organised: 2014 Regional Symposium in Iran, attendance at 2014 SAARC Summit, and, National Roundtable on Refugee Protection in Nepal in 2016. Country updates across the region were as follows:

### **Pakistan**

A national network was formed in 2015 for NGOs specifically working with refugees, resulting in greater cohesion between national organisations. Recently PoR cards have been extended to December 2016 however there is a push to extend for another 2 years.

### **Afghanistan**

A number of workshops were held in Afghanistan under the APRRN banner on refugee protection and peace and handling conflict. There is still ongoing concerns of police harassment, forced returns, internal displacement, and support for returnees. There are also security concerns for the returnee camp on the Afghan / Pakistan border.

### **Sri Lanka**

There are ongoing efforts to find durable solutions and structured return for refugee returnees.

### **India**

There are ongoing concerns and challenges regarding legal counsel for Rohingya. There is also a need to get 'buy-in' from the Immigration Department to sensitise them on refugee issues. There has been some progress for UNHCR in terms of access to jails for RSD purposes although this is still limited. Finally, the issuance of long-term visas are still issued somewhat arbitrarily and are only for Afghans that arrived prior to 2009. The reasons for rejection are also not shared openly and therefore transparency is a constant battle.

### **Bangladesh**

There are significant challenges for climate-affected migrants (including IDPs), particularly from Bangladesh's coastal districts. It was suggested that there is space for APRRN to participate in this discourse. Bangladesh also hosts a large number of Rohingya refugees, also hosted in locations affected by climate change.

### **Nepal**

There are three main groups of refugees in Nepal with very different challenges. Urban refugees, the Bhutanese population in the camps along the border and Tibetan refugees. There are no domestic laws to support any one of these three groups.

Participants then broke into groups to brainstorm actions that could be carried forward over the next two years. These were aligned along APRRN's three core pillars of work. Suggestions along the three core focus areas are as follows:

#### Joint Advocacy:

- Direct advocacy with the Indian Government, Sri Lankan Government and SAARC for a structured repatriation programme for Sri Lankan refugees;
- Further engagement and advocacy targeting SAARC on climate forced migration;
- Develop a position paper to engage the UN discourse regarding the 2018 'Global Compact for safe, orderly and regular migration';
- Continually advocate on addressing xenophobia in the media;
- Continued advocacy with relevant stakeholders on the extension of PoR cards in Pakistan for Afghan refugees;.
- Advocacy for providing identity to Tibetan refugees

that arrived in Nepal post 1989.

#### Capacity Strengthening:

- Public awareness and sensitisation training for the public across specific South Asian nations;
- Training for legal staff across identified South Asia nations;
- Training on the rights of returnees in Afghanistan;
- Explore advocacy options for Identification assistance to persons affected by climate forced migration.

#### Resource sharing and outreach

- Research amongst APRRN members as to cross-border flows of climate induced migration;
- Research into current situation of refugees in border camps in Afghanistan;
- Simplified analysis and overview of government policies towards refugees in the region to be shared with refugee populations;
- Sharing favourable judgements regarding detention in India
- Formal course on Refugee Rights in a South Asian academic institution.

## EAST ASIA WORKING GROUP

### South Korea

- There is a rapid increase of asylum applications (every year it doubles). This is not new arrival but foreigners already in South Korea reapplying. The refugee recognition rate on the other hand is decreasing.
- The government is in the process of amending the Refugee Act, which aims to e.g. accelerate the asylum seeking process and simplify the RSD-process. This will put procedural fairness in question and is problematic because it risks bad and expedient decisions.
- There is an uncertainty about the general public's view of refugees and asylum seekers and there is potential backlash against refugees building up.
- North Korean refugees: They are not counted by UNHCR and no one is monitoring their treatment in South Korea, China or any other transit country. They

are not seen as a protection issue, remain a hidden problem, which is neglected and doesn't get a lot of public attention.

### Japan

- A formal review of the RSD procedure started last year, the focus is on "fake applicants" and an increasing "abuse" of the system (endless cycle of reapplications).
- An "Alternatives to Detention (ATD)" project started in 2012 but only 20 persons have been referred through the project. The criteria for referral seem to be unclear and there is a lack of transparency in general. There are also poor conditions in detention centres with no access to medical care.
- Recognition rate is very low and only around 0,1 %.
- There is an increasing destitution with asylum seekers facing homelessness and poverty.
- Xenophobia is increasing both globally and in Japan. The Minister of Justice campaigned against "abuse" of the system through media and this has increased xenophobia.

### Hong Kong

- There is a new system in place, which is slow and not transparent with a low success rate. There are no durable solutions for the few successful applicants.
- The government is undertaking a comprehensive review, however the frame of the review – removal and enforcement - is very worrying. There is also no transparency and there is a suggestion to introduce an expedited process. This obviously causes concern over procedural fairness.
- The new legislation is supposed to be adopted in 2018 and the fear is that the comprehensive review will inform the law.
- There is a reduction in hours of government provided legal representation and psychosocial support for asylum seekers. There is also lack of access and resources to interpretation or sensitisation of special needs.
- The Immigration Department is leading xenophobia,

describing chain applications as “abuse”.

- There is a lack in competence and sensitivity among government officials.

### Taiwan

- The draft Refugee Bill has passed the second reading and is now in its third reading. It will hopefully be enacted by end of this year. There is concern of what will happen to the cases filed under the old legislation if the new law is passed.
- There is a lack of knowledge in both, government and civil society.
- There is no capacity to host refugees e.g. there are no shelters accessible.
- There is a very small number of NGOs working on refugee issues and there is a need for capacity building.

### Other:

- There is a lack of local partners in Mongolia and mainland China.
- APRRN to develop a strategy on how we can influence mainland China.

### Commonalities identified

- Increasing focus on cracking down on “abuse”, which leads to xenophobia (it is also a global concern).
- There is a backlash against refugees and what is feeding the xenophobia is labels/language used in media and among politicians.
- There is a trend of emerging new laws or reviewing procedures of existing laws – civil society to monitor and inform those procedures.
- Increasing destitution and marginalisation of the refugee population, no legal status, no social welfare.
- There is a decrease in or constant low recognition rates.
- There is a need to build/map other allies.

- There is a lack of competence among authorities (but the low recognition rates depend on policy decisions and not only a lack of competence).
- There is a lack of transparency and serious data gaps.

### Priority actions identified:

#### Advocacy:

- Planned roundtable discussion on ATD in Japan (Japanese members and APRRN and IDC) in October 2016
- Development of a strategy for mainland China
- Low recognition rates: provide evidence that low rates depend on policy decisions and not that rejected asylum seekers are “fake”.
- Engage with the permanent missions in Geneva – preparation is needed in advance so that concrete advocacy points can be put forward.

#### Info-sharing:

- Convening of more meetings to share new developments
- Organise symposiums that may align with key dates and opportunities
- Reach out to ANRIP and map out other CSOs in East Asia that we need to reach out to

#### Capacity Strengthening:

- Training for/with authorities e.g. Taiwan

# 4. NEW STEERING COMMITTEE

## APRRN Steering Committee 2016-2018

Position	Name	Organisation	Country
APRRN Chair	Yiombi Thona	Refuge pNan	South Korea
APRRN Deputy Chair	Lilianne Fan	Geutanyoe Foundation	Indonesia
<b>Geographic Working Groups</b>			
Chair – Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific WG	Parsu Sharma-Luital	Bhutanese Community in Australia	Australia
Deputy Chair – Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific WG	Molly Kennedy	MClASS	New Zealand
Chair – East Asia WG	Victoria Wisniewski Otero	Justice Centre Hong Kong	Hong Kong
Deputy Chair – East Asia WG	Il Lee	APIL	South Korea
Chair – South East Asia WG	Deepa Nambiar	Asylum Access	Malaysia
Deputy Chair – South East Asia WG	Gina Yap	Community and Family Services International	Philippines
Chair – South Asia WG	Ashok Xavier Gladston	OfERR	India
Deputy Chair – South Asia WG	Imran Khan Laghari	Human Rights Alliance	Pakistan
<b>Thematic Working Groups</b>			
Chair – Immigration Detention	Vivienne Chew	International Detention Coalition	Australia
Chair – Statelessness	Chris Lewa	Arakan Project	Thailand
Chair – Women & Girls at Risk	Hina Tabassum	Children and Women Trust	Pakistan
Chair – Youth	Dor Achiek	Settlement Services International	Australia
Chair – Legal Aid and Advocacy	Ali Palh	Rights Now Pakistan	Pakistan
Chair – Regional Protection	Brian Barbour	Japan Association for Refugees	Japan
<b>Non voting members</b>			
Paul Power, Refugee Council of Australia			
Dr. Gopal Krishna Siwakoti, INHURED International, Nepal			
Alice Nah, Centre for Applied Human Rights, UK			

### Thematic Working Groups, Deputy Chairs (not part of the Steering Committee):

Immigration Detention:  
Najeeba Wazefadost, SSI, Australia

Women and Girls at Risk:  
Tenneh Kpaka, ANCORW, Australia

Statelessness:  
Sumitha Kishna, Migration Working Group, Malaysia

Youth:  
Arash Bordbar, MYAN, Australia

Legal aid and advocacy:  
Caroline Stover, Boat People SOS, Thailand

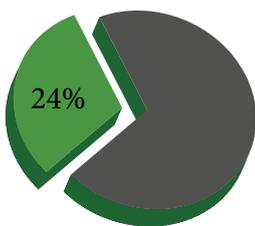
Regional Protection:  
Tamara Domicelj, Act for Peace, Australia

# 5. EVALUATION OF APCRR6

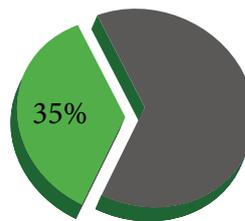
Participants were asked to complete an evaluation form on the consultation. A total of 51 responses were collected with **91% of the responders stating that they would recommend the consultation to colleagues** and 63% reporting the venue, food, accommodation and other logistics chosen by APRRN as great. A summary of the results of that feedback is provided below.

## 1. What sessions/aspects of the consultation did you enjoy the most/find useful? Why?

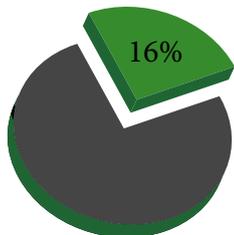
Some attendees commented on how much they enjoyed individual speakers, while some commented on their overall conference experience. Below is a summary of what many conference participants reported as their highlight of the conference:



**24%\* said Day 1** - people enjoyed the workshops because they were highly informative and they allowed for targeted discussion in smaller groups on issues of common concern.



**34% said Working Groups** - Working Groups were focused, had practical networking with like-minded people/organisations, and helped build opportunities to cooperate practically on issues.

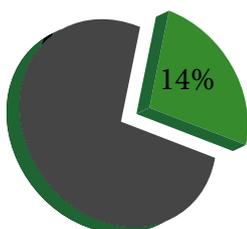


**16% said Youth Sessions** - because it was led, and addressed specific issues in an action based way. The speakers were also fantastic.

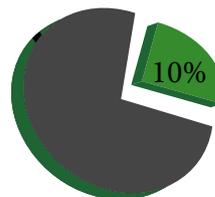
*\*Percentages are not mutually exclusive as responders were allowed to choose more than one reply.*

## 2. What sessions/aspects of the consultation did you dislike the most/find least useful? Why?

Below is a summary of the things that people liked least about the conference:



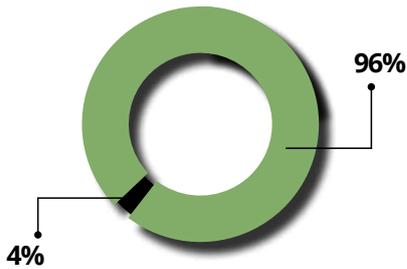
**14% said sessions not solution focused** - some people felt that there was a lot of discussion around where we are now, but that the presenters did not give any solutions for what is required for the future and how to get there.



**10% said a bit rushed** - people felt that it would have been better to have more time for Q&A, as there was too much content within single sessions.

### 3. Would you recommend attending the consultation to colleagues? If so, why? If not, why not?

Responses were overwhelmingly positive.:



**Yes** - 96% of respondents would recommend attending to colleagues

**No** - 4%

### 4. Do you have any comments on the methods and facilitation?

A variety of responses were received, summarised as follows:



**Happy with methods and facilitation** - people believed the conference was generally good. There was much appreciation to the Secretariat for supporting Working Group discussions in the absence of the Chairs or Deputy Chairs.

**Format of discussions** - people suggested more workshops and fewer panel discussions  
**Greater planning** - the structure of discussions during Working Group meetings was slightly confusing and in the beginning, a lot of time was used to determine the objectives of the discussion. This could've been defined and disseminated prior to the meeting.

### 5. Please provide comments on the venue, food, accommodation and other logistical arrangements?

Based on feedback received, participants broadly appreciated the venue, food and accommodation.

Below is a summary:



**Great all** - greater than half of respondents had no issues with the venue, food or accommodation.



**Bad Wi-Fi** - as expected, the poor Wi-Fi was a concern among 18% of the participants who had to rely on connections to complete work in their home countries.



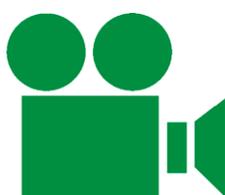
**Informal activities** - a few participants suggested more informal activities, such as cocktails or tourist activities to network in an informal environment.

### 6. Do you have any other comments, suggestions or feedback?

In response to this question, different people commented on different aspects of the conference. Below is a summary of the "other comments" provided by conference participants:



Fabulous conference



Some form of media coverage



Own publications to share



Provide documents earlier