

## **REPORT ON 11<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL HUMAN RIGHTS AND PEOPLES' DIPLOMACY PROGRAM**

*The 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Human Rights and Peoples' Diplomacy Training Program was held at Rangsit Campus, Thammasat University, Bangkok from 26 February to 16 March 2001, in partnership with Forum Asia and the Law Faculty of Thammasat University.*

Both partnerships worked well, with each emphasising their desire to continue the relationship, Forum Asia proposing a much closer liaison in relation to capacity building in the region and Thammasat Law Faculty offering to host the Annual Program again next year.

### **Preparatory Logistics**

Closing date for applications was 10 October with some 38 participants being selected at that time using the criteria approved by the Board. Selected participants were as follows:

Australian indigenous – 3,  
Bangladesh – 2 (both Chittagong Hill Tracts)  
Burma – 7 (two based in Bangladesh and 5 based in Thailand),  
Cambodia – 2, Philippines – 2,  
East Timor – 2,  
India – 3 (1 being from Chittagong Hill Tracts),  
Indonesia – 2 (1 being from Aceh),  
Nepal – 3,  
Pakistan – 1,  
Sri Lanka – 4,  
Thailand – 2,  
Tibet – 1,  
Fiji – 2,  
PNG – 1 (Bougainville),  
Solomon Islands – 1.

Selection was completed by 30 October when applicants were notified. Extensive support was then given to applicants, including endorsement letters to potential funders and for visa applications and detailed advice on potential funders that might be approached. Advice was tailored to be appropriate to each participant. Contact with selected participants increased from weekly to 3-4 times a week during the period from November to February. DTP also approached potential Australian donor organisations and were successful in obtaining sponsorship from Austcare for 2 places, Uniting Church for 1 place and Community Aid Abroad for 3 sets of fees and travel expenses for one, and the Myer Foundation for 2 participants' travel expenses.

### ***In-training logistics***

The training was held on the Rangsit campus of Thammasat University, around 40 kms from Bangkok city, originally built as the site of the 1998 Asian Games. Having venue, accommodation, food, email access and other facilities all within walking distance is always a great bonus. On this occasion we were able to appreciate this

easy access and owe thanks to Thammasat Law Faculty for facilitating our negotiations in relation to all facilities. Rangsit's distance from the commercial and entertainment life of Bangkok was both a disadvantage (participants felt cut off from the life of the city) and a bonus (it required the participants to make their own entertainment).

### Venue

The training room itself was roomy, light and air conditioned. We were provided with an additional room next to the venue, which acted as the headquarters for administrative staff from DTP and Forum-Asia. We were provided with fax, phone, computer and printer by the Law Faculty, which were essential for adequate support of the program. Dependence on commercial photocopying at the university centre, was the major drawback of the facilities available, mainly because of the unreliability of the times of opening. This caused difficulties on many occasions, but staff worked around this, as it was the only available solution.

### Accommodation and Food

Accommodation was within walking distance from the training venue and the main eating-place for breakfast, lunch and sometimes dinner. The residential units were excellent, allowing for one person per room in each two-bedroom unit. Each unit included a sitting room, shower, toilet and a number of verandas.

We were also fortunate to have the services of an excellent, patient chef who catered for breakfast, lunch, morning tea and afternoon tea. For three weeks, he graciously provided us with good food and service. Participants were given a per diem for purchase of the evening meal, allowing them to make their own choices as to what and where they ate, which reduced the chance of criticism of the food provided. The value of good accommodation and food arrangements for keeping participants happy over a 3-week program cannot be overemphasised.

### Staffing

It needs to always be remembered, that the 3 week course puts an enormous strain on staff attending, who are basically on-duty 7 days a week for 3 weeks. Providing some time for staff to 'escape', relax and 'let off steam' is essential. On this occasion, Radhika Withana-Arachchi, Ami Latona, Pornpen (Noi) Khongkachonkiet and Thippawan (Mam) Maidee provided service to the Program above and beyond the call of duty, being always polite, efficient and helpful to participants and trainers alike, and providing magnificent support to the Director.

**Recommendation 1:** Always factor in 'off time' for staff, where there is no chance of any intrusion of work issues.

## **B. Participants**

### ***List of participants involved in training***

The following is the breakdown of participants from the various regions of the Asia-Pacific. For extended biographical information please see appendix 1.

Australian indigenous – 3

Bangladesh – 2 (both Chittagong Hill Tracts)

Burma – 5 (2 based in Bangladesh and 3 based in Thailand)

Cambodia – 2  
Philippines – 2  
East Timor – 1  
India – 3 (1 being from Chittagong Hill Tracts),  
Indonesia – 2 (1 being from Aceh)  
Nepal – 1  
Pakistan – 1  
Sri Lanka – 1  
Thailand – 2  
Solomon Islands – 1

### ***Issues arising relating to participants***

A key issue, with diplomatic implications for DTP, Forum Asia and Thammasat University, was the disappearance of a Burma student, with a Bangladesh passport at the end of the third week of the program, the concern being that she would stay illegally in Thailand. The problem was anticipated by the Director, who involved senior Forum Asia staff in counselling of the participant during the program. The 24-year-old participant had come to Thailand prior to the course and married without her parents' permission. Unfortunately, the matter was exacerbated by the student's employee in Bangladesh, who, for various reasons, drew the matter to the attention of the Thai authorities. Fortunately, as a result of our preparation, we were able to advise the authorities that the participant's visa was granted without the use of the DTP letter of introduction, so that Thailand had not granted her access because of DTP or our partners. We were also able to advise that we understood that the participant had left Thailand for Cambodia.

Sexism of male students arose as an issue for some women participants early in the course, particularly in relation to one male participant, and male behaviour after drinking was also a matter of concern in the first week. It was addressed in a women-only session, which resulted in solidarity support being developed amongst the women, and by the attention of the problem being drawn to the men, who addressed the issue amongst themselves in a more informal manner. Unfortunately, there were no male staff members during the duration of the course from DTP, Forum Asia or Thammasat University. Participants also found the women's issues sessions, by Dr. Malee Pruepongswalee, a strong Thai feminist, an important opportunity to progress this issue.

**Recommendation 2:** Inclusion of a full-time male staff support person from DTP or our partner is desirable from a pastoral point of view.

Overall, participants were helpful, supportive of one another, good humoured, patient, very diplomatic and a happy group who bonded happily and enjoyed themselves.

### **C. Curriculum**

The program attempts to cover a wide range of information in a very short amount of time and with the assumption of limited prior knowledge of the subject areas. The curriculum basically resembles past training sessions and has consolidated on the innovations introduced during and after the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Training in Darwin, 2000. Topics covered for the first time last year such as globalisation and internet training were again included in this year's program, along with the inclusion of an addition session on international financial institutions, recommended in last year's report following requests by participants. Trainers such as Clarence Dias and Basil

Fernando gave a stronger emphasis to the practical nature of advocacy from their experience, which was appreciated by students. There were also some additional topics covered which reflected the partner organization's (Forum Asia) input such as a talk by the managing editor of The Nation, discussion of international diplomacy by a senior member of the Thai ministry of foreign affairs, discussion of the Thai elections and the Thai Human Rights Commission. The foreign affairs bureaucrat was excellent, and the other topics were of varying interest to participants. On many occasions, examples and issues used by trainers reflected Thai issues, given the trainers used and the location of the training, but this did not interfere in the delivery of core information. For outline of program please see Training Schedule, appendix 2

One key convention that probably needs further treatment in the Program is the Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishments (CAT). Helping participants to access this Convention is important, given issues faced by many countries in the region.

As well, the development of the International Criminal Court (ICC) needs to be noted and once the 60-state ratification is reached and brings it into force, more material on it will be necessary.

**Recommendation 3:** Consideration should be given to the inclusion of a session in the curriculum focusing on the Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishments (and a Manual chapter on the same topic should be included in this year's update of the Manual).

**Recommendation 4:** Ensure that reference is made to the development of the ICC and its future potential, during the course, possibly in a session on the Convention against Torture or on International Humanitarian Law, (and include a chapter in the Manual on International Criminal Law, which discusses the ICC).

## **D. Field trips**

### ***Course related field trips***

There were five field trips at this year's training of both program-related and more recreational-related forms. The first of these course-related field trips in the first week of training was only finalised after the course had begun. Thanks are due to Michael O'Flaherty, Asia Pacific Adviser to the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mrs Mary Robinson, for facilitating both a meeting with the High Commissioner and a visit to the 9<sup>th</sup> Workshop on Regional Cooperation for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Asia Pacific. The meeting with the High Commissioner was part of her consultation with NGOs who were accredited to the Workshop.

Participants prepared for this meeting the night before by developing a submission to the High Commissioner. Two participants (elected that night to represent all DTP participants) presented the submission to her, which called on her office to examine the human rights issues, identified in the document (See appendix [inset number] as well as presenting her with a small gift.

This field trip served as an invaluable learning exercise both in terms of the preparation of the submission, but also as an opportunity to demystify the protocols and procedures and the intimidating aspects of such meetings for beginners. Participants were able to see the venue of the meeting (its grandeur concomitant with

the *realpolitik* present at such high level UN meetings) and the protocols used to conduct and participate in the meetings (such as diplomatic speech etc).

Our second field trip relating to the course was a visit to the Forum Asia office in the second week, so that participants could observe and talk with people involved in an important regional NGO, which has 29 member organisations from 10 countries in the Asian region. Forum Asia executive officers were very welcoming and informative in their presentations to participants and provided several publication resources to participants in addition to their useful discussions of NGO activity, organization etc. The presentation was a useful description of how Forum Asia had spawned other organisations from its activities and how it could serve its member groups with high level research, training and advocacy. Several staff spoke in depth about the projects they were working on in areas such as Burma, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and India.

### ***Recreational field trips***

Several field trips were organised for the weekends in order to allow participants to visit Bangkok and to allow for participants interaction outside the training. On the first weekend, a trip to Chutachuk markets allowed participants to spend the afternoon browsing and shopping at one of the largest markets in Bangkok. On the second Saturday of the training a boat trip was organised to take participants to the old ruined capital of Thailand (Ayutthia), which is now an historical park. This, not only provided for a rich cultural experience of Thai history and culture, but was also beneficial for group interaction, particular singing contributions on the boat trip! A further recreation field trip, the evening of the Forum Asia visit, was a Thai cultural festival in Bangkok in a popular Bangkok park (Lumpini Park). This was both an enjoyable social activity for the participants in an informal setting and a rich and diverse cultural experience of various regions of Thailand represented at the festival.

In all these field trips, we were fortunate to have the assistance of our two Forum Asia colleagues who organised vans for transport, advised on logistics and acted as translators and general guides for participants and DTP staff unfamiliar with the local language.

### **E. Training material**

Much of the training material organised by DTP was photocopied and sent to Thailand prior to the training, but there was also additional material that was supplied during the training.

The primary training material consisted of copies of all the major treaties being discussed during the course, as well as addition UN material, such as declarations on human rights defenders and Indigenous people. In addition, treaties not being discussed, but considered important were also given out (such as the ICC Statute, genocide convention etc). Other material consisted of information booklets of the World Trade Organisation, as well as hand outs on international financial institutions, regional human rights mechanism and booklets on the status of ratification of all international human rights instruments in force (as well as the ICC). Forum Asia also provided much additional material in the form of their publications on a wide range of issues.

Trainers also brought along their own material, which was duly photocopied and provided to students. All the material DTP and trainers provided has been kept and archived in folders, stored in the DTP office.

## **F. Training manual**

As in previous years, a training Manual was also provided intended for use after the training as a reference tool that covers the topic areas examined during the training. Most of the chapters used in for the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual training manual were again re-used with updates made where necessary. The presentation was greatly improved by Radhika giving it an improved professional touch.

Two additional chapters were added on Children's Rights and International Financial Institutions. The Children's Rights chapter was unable to be produced by the person commissioned to do the work and was put together by Radhika. She provided it as a provisional chapter, keeping in mind that a new chapter would replace it, when an appropriate person would be approached.

During the course, it became clear that there is also room for modification of the International Humanitarian Law chapter, which at present overly focusses on laws relating to international conflict, and not to civil conflict. The reality faced by DTP participants (and the world at large) is that they are dealing with internal civil conflict, not international conflict, and the chapter should better reflect this. Prof Vitit Muntabhorn would be an excellent author, if he was able to give the time.

As well, chapters on the Torture Convention; Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; and International Criminal Law, including the ICC, are needed to complete the coverage of the main Conventions and to keep up to date with the important developments in this area.

In addition there is also the possibility of commissioning a further chapter, on International Peacekeeping to mirror the session already undertaken in the training and which is missing in the current manual. Jose Campino, who has delivered this session for some years, has offered to comment on a draft, if it can be supplied to him.

**Recommendation 5:** A prominent author for the Children's Rights chapter should be found and commissioned to re-write the chapter.

**Recommendation 6:** The current author on the chapter on International Humanitarian Law should be asked to re-focus the chapter on the laws relating to civil conflicts; or a new author found and given similar instructions.

**Recommendation 7:** Three new authors should be found to write new chapters on the Torture Convention, on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and on International Criminal Law, including the International Criminal Court.

**Recommendation 8:** A new chapter on international peacekeeping should be added to the manual to mirror the session already done. To be completed with the assistance of Jose Campino.

While we continue to see room for improvement, it also needs to be said that the current Manual proved itself to be an excellent summary tool of the program. The Director appreciated being able to confidently refer participants to the relevant chapters during a final overview session, and show them how each issue covered could be reviewed in the Manual.

## **G. Trainers**

We were very fortunate this year to again have the usual DTP trainers who give of their time so generously and are always most appreciated by participants, as well as a new mix of overseas and local trainers.

The 29 trainers for the DTP training in Bangkok were:

- ◆ Mr. Jose Campino, Office of Political Affairs, United Nations, New York
- ◆ Dr. Sarah Pritchard, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Law, UNSW, Sydney
- ◆ Dr. Clarence Dias, Director, International Centre for Law in Development, New York
- ◆ Mr. Basil Fernando, Executive Director, Asian Human Rights Commission, Hong Kong
- ◆ Mr Michael O'Flaherty, Asia Pacific Advisor to the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Geneva
- ◆ Mr. Philip Chung, Austlii, Sydney
- ◆ Ms Siobhan McCann, representing Austlii, now with Gilbert and Tobin Lawyers, Sydney
- ◆ Dr Chaiwat Satha-Anand, Faculty of Political Science, Thammasat University, Bangkok
- ◆ Mr Aung Myo Ming, Director, Human Rights Institute of Burma, Burma
- ◆ Ms Theresa Limpin, Co-ordinator, Asian Regional Resources Centre for Human Rights Education
- ◆ Ms Srisuk Thaiaree, Executive Director, National Council for Children and Youth Development, Bangkok
- ◆ Ms Sudarat Sereewat, Secretary General, Colation to Fight Against Child Exploitation (FACE), Bangkok
- ◆ Professor Suriya Noppannid, Faculty of Law, Thammasat University, Bangkok
- ◆ Dr Jumpot Saisoonthorn, Faculty of Law, Thammasat University, Bangkok
- ◆ Dr Amnat Wongbandit, Faculty of Law, Thammasat University, Bangkok
- ◆ Mr Tyler Giannini, Director, EarthRights International, Bangkok
- ◆ Team from Focus on the Global South, Bangkok
- ◆ Dr Prasit Aekaputra, Faculty of Law, Thammasat University, Bangkok
- ◆ Mr. Charivat Santrputra, Office of International Organization, Foreign Ministry of Thailand, Bangkok
- ◆ Mr Kavi Chongkittavarn, Managing Editor, The Nation Newspaper, Bangkok
- ◆ Debbie Stothard, Director, Altsean-Burma Network, Forum Asia, Bangkok
- ◆ Ms Chalida Tajaroensuk, Program Coordinator, Forum Asia
- ◆ Mr Stephen Beeby, Forum Asia, Bangkok
- ◆ Ms Evelyn Balais-Serrano, consultant, Forum Asia, Bangkok
- ◆ Ms Malee Pruekpongsawalee, Faculty of Law, Thammasat University, Bangkok
- ◆ Assoc Prof Jaran Dhitlapichai, Chairperson, Union of Civil Liberties, Bangkok
- ◆ Dr Gotham Arya, Commissioner, Election Commission of Thailand, Bangkok
- ◆ Professor Vitit Muntabhorn, Faculty of Law, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok
- ◆ Joan Staples, Executive Director, DTP

For fuller biographical details of trainers please see appendix 3.

## **H. Program and trainer evaluations**

## ***General***

Evaluations consisted of both informal and formal assessment. The opportunity for informal assessment was provided for within the schedule, whereby at the beginning of each morning session participants could discuss with each other and DTP organisers, issues arising from the previous day.

There was a formal evaluation of the overall program, given to participants to answer on the final day of the training, after the end of the role-play. We asked that on this occasion all the participants answer the questionnaire before they leave the training venue in order to ensure that we got the maximum number of responses.

At the end of each day formal evaluation questionnaires were given to participants to evaluate the trainers who had presented that day. Participants were asked to return the answered questionnaire on the next day. In the case of trainers taking multiple sessions they were evaluated only at the end of their last session, for their performance in general across sessions.

Both the end of program and trainer evaluation questionnaires had two sections: multiple choice where respondents were given 5 nominal choices (Excellent, good, average, poor, very poor) to rate their response to each question. There was also a section of short answer questions in both questionnaire forms, where participants were given greater freedom to comment.

Please see Appendix 4 and 5 for samples of both evaluation forms.

## ***Explanation of statistical methodology***

As the range of possible answers in the multiple choice section were qualitative rather than quantitative each possible response option was assigned a scale value from 1-5 in the analysis stage (Excellent (5), good (4), average (3), poor (2), very poor (1), not applicable (no value)). The responses to the multiple-choice questions could then be translated into a meaningful quantitative analysis, allowing for the calculation of means. The response to both questionnaire forms is organised into groups of information indicating number of respondents for each option within each question; and the percentage out of the total responses overall that each of those responses represented within each question. Percentages were assigned to each response merely as a prima facie indication of the distribution of responses. While valuable for this initial purpose they are a crude measurement instrument and can be quite distorting of the information, especially when the respondents pool is small as was the case here. This is why the more representative, number of responses (N) measurement was used, which also allows for the calculation of response means.

The most serious impediment to any comprehensive evaluation of the results is the variation on the total number of respondents, which in the case of trainer evaluations varies greatly. As such a comparison of means across trainers is impossible on a meaningful statistical basis. The number of respondents also affects the value of percentages and interpretation of mean values (i.e. as an average figure representative of the respondent pool). In light of this an important caveat is that when reading the quantitative data, particularly the means, confidence in the statistical meaningfulness of the amount can only be exercised when the total number of respondents is well over half the total number of participants (25).

The statistical analysis of the evaluation responses to the trainer evaluations and the end of program overall evaluation is compiled on summative tables and graphs.



Please refer to appendix 6 for overall program evaluation statistics.

Please refer to appendix 7 for trainer evaluations.

A cumulative summary of the written comments made in the short answer sections of both questionnaires have been compiled and shall also be discussed in the summary section. Please see appendix 8 and 9 for both these summaries.

### ***Summary of results***

#### Overall Evaluation: End of Training Program Evaluation

Across the substantive questions (Q1-10 non logistical questions) the answers from respondents consistently scored in the excellent to good range, with mean values between 4 (good) and 5 (excellent).

On all the important questions relating to interest generated by course, coherence, knowledge provided and skills learnt all answers rated close to excellent in the good to excellent range. Trainer-participant interaction is also rated highly in the same range, which suggests that, the participants appreciate the Socratic method of teaching emphasised in DTP training methodology. This is also reflected in the comments and evaluations of trainers. (See below).

Despite these generally excellent results, there were two poor responses, one to questions on the role-play and one on the field trip. In rating the role-play one respondent rated the activity as poor. While no explanation in the short answer section was provided (there was provision in the questionnaire to comment on the least useful session), a comment by another participant regarding more warning and preparation for the role-play (in the section on suggestions for improving the program) may hint at the reason for the poor rating.

In addition one respondent to the question on the field trips rated the activity poorly. This may be due to the question asked: which related to the non-recreational field trips and included a reference to a field trip not undertaken (to the Foreign Correspondents Club), and omitted reference to field trips taken (High Commissioner meeting). As the questionnaire was devised and written in Sydney prior to leaving in Bangkok and because it was not modified when circumstances changed in Bangkok, the question being asked did not accurately assess the field trips.

**Recommendation 9:** Revert to the practice of printing the final version of the end-of-program evaluation in the week it is needed, in order to incorporate any possible changes during the delivery of the course. This allows the questions to reflect what really happens and provide for a more accurate assessment.

It needs to be stressed that despite all this, the mean response to both questions was still in the good to excellent range

In relation to logistical support for participants before and during training, DTP was evaluated to be providing good to excellent support. Prior to the training DTP's efforts in assisting to get a visa and a general assessment of the DTP support was found to be close to excellent. Our efforts in assisting with fundraising, which consisted of a package of information and a letter of endorsement by the DTP, were also provided. In relation to fundraising assistance DTP was rated in the average-good range with the majority of respondents (who found it applicable) rating it good to excellent. It is difficult to assess why this was not useful for the remainder,

although it needs to be stressed that the success of the information given is contingent on applicants following the instructions and reading the material provided to them, which in the case of those who were successful was the case. There may be room to examine the advice given or perhaps the instructions to participants as to what to do with all the material provided. However it may also be the case that there will always be a small number of participants who for whatever reason do not use the information we have provided to assist them in seeking funds and are unsuccessful or partly successful and thus rate our assistance to them as being less than adequate.

In-training facilities and assistance was also on the whole, pleasingly rated as good to excellent.

The sessions judged most useful were on UN human rights treaty mechanisms, international law, women's rights, children's rights, media strategies and the role-play. The least useful sessions were judged to be indigenous rights, refugee rights, WTO session, globalisation and human rights. This is reflected in the trainer evaluations, which reflect average-poor ratings for trainers of these sessions. (Discussed more extensively below). Though it needs to be pointed out that there were some sessions like the internet training which were rated as useful sessions despite the trainers only receiving, on the whole average ratings.

Overall the best aspects of the program according to the responses were the knowledge and exposure to new information, practical skills learnt, sharing experiences with others, meeting people with diverse backgrounds and making new friends. This is also reflected in more extended comments (found in appendix 8), for example:

“The opportunity to learn and share with other participants from other countries further deepening our understanding and appreciating of the many issues and concerns; diversity in culture”

“Country reports would have to be one of the highlights of the program. Personally it was a life –enriching experience that I can not get from a textbook.”

Many useful suggestions were made in relation to the question on how the training program can be improved including among the list, attention to the long hours students are expected to attend, the training material, type of activities. As the list is quite long and many of the comments worth discussing and incorporating please see the section below on “Discussion of improvements suggested by participants”.

Finally, in relation to the difficulty of the program, participants acknowledged that the program was tough and the material to be grappled with very overwhelming. We understand that especially in the first week, but also throughout the program, participants are being introduced to material that is conceptually very demanding: public international law, international human rights law, international humanitarian law, UN treaty mechanisms, the various treaty bodies. Indeed, even the practical sessions such as advocacy and lobbying are overwhelming, in that for some it is the first time they have been taught to sell their cause in such a sophisticated way. It is essential to engage with such material, which is so fundamental to the work of the participants, and, while it is tough and demanding, it is also enriching, providing for new ways of attacking old problems. Despite the difficulty of these topics, they were the ones that were consistently rated as the most useful sessions by participants, which is testament enough to their value despite their demanding nature. Indeed, on seeing the international and regional systems of human rights either for the first time

or in a new, often realistic and more sophisticated way than before the training, participants leave energised for new and exciting work. Nothing sums this up better than the words of one participant writing on the degree of difficulty of the program:

“I am absolutely overwhelmed with the dimension of the program. It has provided an incredible knowledge base on international law and its relevance to human rights. I now know that I will consider human rights issues from a different perspective. This was a life enhancing experience. Very honoured to participate.”

### Trainer Evaluations

In addition to evaluating the overall program each trainer was individually assessed in relation to various criteria such as clear presentation, coherence, knowledge provided and so on. In the assessment of DTP staff present during the training program, we saw many distinguished presenters who were able to effectively, and at times inspiringly communicate the ideas of their respective topics in an informative, inclusive and meaningful way. This seems to be borne out in the evaluations of trainers by participants, who reflected our own personally held evaluations.

Several trainers rated in the excellent to good range. From this group it is clear that participants appreciate presentations that are clear, coherent, have a high level of specialist knowledge imparted, like the use of additional teaching aids such as overheads, videos etc and like the trainer being inclusive of participants. The standout trainer according to the evaluations of the participants was Dr Sarah Pritchard.

Trainers who consistently rated in the average to poor range (the lowest range in the spread of evaluations) all lacked key features: clarity, coherence, knowledge provided, and interest generated by the presentation. The qualification of some trainers was also raised in the suggestions for improving the program in the end of training evaluation, which cited the selection of properly qualified trainers. Together they suggest that the key issue for trainer selection should be competence in the area of presentation: regardless of the prestige of the individual in other areas, they must be suited to the task at hand.

As well, the use of DTP’s practical methodology is not always reflected in trainer presentations. Trainer guidelines for presentation detailing this methodology and offering assistance were provided to our partners and discussed with them on a number of occasions. Not only did our partners provide the guidelines to the trainers, but in many cases we also supplied them direct as well. Some, trainers were excellent in reflecting this; others showed little appreciation of the information.

From the evaluations provided by the participants and our own observations it is clear that the ideal presenter is one who not only has the necessary knowledge, paces his/her presentation, is coherent and clear, but is also able to communicate the difficult concepts of their discipline in a practically relevant way that relates to the lives and works of the participants. This more than anything is the criteria for success for a trainer, and most importantly for effective learning by participants.

### ***Discussion of improvements suggested by participants***

There were many interesting recommendations suggested by participants that need to be explored (for full list see appendix 8, question 4). These recommendations can be broken down into three groups:

## 1. Course related suggestions

Suggestions for improvement in this category included requests for more learning from the experiences of participants; more group work and activities; warning participants before training about final role play so that they are more prepared and enthusiastic; country reports incorporated into the formal sessions and held early on to help participants learn about each other; livelier afternoon sessions due to the long demanding days and the usual slow period of concentration during this period; reconsideration of the long hours participants are expected to meet.

In relation to more group work, this is entirely dependent on the prerogative of the trainer. While we can strongly recommend to trainers through the guidelines we send to incorporate such activities, it will always be dependent on the trainer's style and their flexibility in adopting teaching styles that may perhaps be foreign to them.

With regards to warning of role-play, this is given in a description and overview of the schedule given in the first week. There may be some merit in emphasising more strongly to participants, that it will in a practical way, pull together much of the course, but this has always been done to some degree.

In relation to shifting country reports to the first item on the schedule, this would be very difficult to achieve. To include them as part of the daily program would take up an enormous slice of the schedule. Educationally, the Director feels it is appropriate to begin the course with the most demanding material, that is, the important sessions on the UN Human rights system and public international law. However, the role of country reports probably needs to be re-evaluated. In the past, they have been looked on as an incentive for participants to prepare themselves by refreshing their national perspective on human rights. Participants verbally indicated at this training that they preferred presentations that were not an overview of the country, as they already had some sense of this. They expressed a preference for hearing what was unique about the individual participant's role or work in human rights in their country. Country reports are also the main factor leading to 12 hour, or longer, days, yet many participants rate them as highlights. Ideally, reports that give a very brief overview of national issues, but which then give a dynamic presentation of the place of the presenter in that picture would be ideal. How to include country reports, but avoid 12 hour days will probably continue to involve compromise, while the course continues to be of the same duration.

As to getting to know participants' backgrounds, this is covered in the participant biographies given to all participants on the first day, in addition to the ice breaking exercises and other activities for group interaction and sharing. More informal time together is always appreciated and the value of a common room for informal socialising cannot be overemphasised. Unfortunately, we have been unable to provide such a common room at each of the last two Annual Training.

The issues of length of program, long days and organization of training sessions are important factors that are always at the forefront of planning concerns. Previous assessments by participants have suggested that senior managers find it hard to leave their work for training session any longer than currently offered. The issue of scheduling dynamic presenters in the afternoon is a worthy suggestion, but very difficult to implement given that we rarely know the style of the most of the trainers.

**Recommendation 10:** Selection criteria for choosing of trainers and advice to trainers on DTP teaching technique should be continually reviewed. Although style

should not outweigh technical competence, it should be a determining factor that should guide DTP and partner organizations in the selection of trainers.

**Recommendation 11:** A review of the role of country reports may be worthwhile.

**Recommendation 12:** Endeavour to include an informal common room for socialising at the venue.

**Recommendation 13:** Continual review of the schedule should continue, trying to limit where possible 12-hour training days, without compromising program content and inclusion of country reports.

## 2. Trainer related suggestions

Suggestions mentioned here included the use of more visual material by trainers; interaction of the best trainers with participants for longer periods, and trainers should be briefed on the background of participants.

It is hard to see how current DTP procedures can be improved in this area. Much emphasis is placed on the guidelines currently given to trainers on methodology, as is discussed elsewhere. Trainers are also sent biographical information compiled by DTP on each participant. In relation to the latter, each description is around a paragraph in length, so as not to overburden busy trainers, though enough information that they are able to get a basic understanding of the participants' backgrounds. We encourage them to read this information to get an understanding of their audience and it is up to them to do so. Security issues need to always be borne in mind in compiling such descriptions of participants.

There is not much else we can do except provide trainers with information and hope they hear our suggestions.

As to the issue of on-going engagement of the best trainers during training, this is difficult as our trainers are very busy people who can only afford, on most occasions a few days away from their work; and given that we do not pay trainers, it would be asking too much of them to stay around longer than the agreed time that they have been commissioned for. In addition, because of the very full and tight schedule of sessions it is difficult to get good trainers back to do more on the session topic they are teaching, without compromising coverage of other topic areas. There is some room for flexibility, however, this is minimal. In Bangkok, a few trainers were kind enough to stay on for longer than the session time they had been asked to do, and there was room in the schedule for this. However trainers staying on longer than their allotted time is always contingent on there being time (so as not to compromise other topic areas) and the amount of flexibility in the schedule.

**Recommendation 14:** Continue emphasis in the briefing to trainers on the need for participatory teaching such as group work activity and games; and on the use of teaching aids such as overheads, videos and other material.

## 3. Group interaction

Suggestions regarding group interaction included such things as: more games to get groups mixing and name cards on tables for all participants during session time.

With regards to group mixing there are several activities and field trips set aside that aid in assisting group interaction. On the first night there was ice-breaking games

designed to achieve just that aim. It may be that more of those games and activities are needed, though it needs to be understood that the dynamic of group interaction is partly dependent on the participants themselves. Some years, students may be overly gregarious and extroverted, and other years may be a group of more introverted participants.

With regards to the suggestion for more identifiers for participants this is a good idea. While participants do have nametags they do not all wear them, and in any case in large rooms they may not be able to see everyone's tags. There is some value in having identifying information on tables where participants sit with name and country information, which is not only helpful for participants but also trainers.

**Recommendation 15:** Creation of identifiers to be used on tables during session with information about participant including name and country displayed. To avoid the same fate as nametags, which are often forgotten when taken back to participant rooms, identifiers would be kept in the training room for use the next day.

## **I. Partner organizations**

### ***Forum Asia***

The Asian Forum of Human Rights and Development (Forum-Asia) was one of our principle partners during the training. They provided two full-time staff members who assisted in the day-to-day running and planning of scheduled events and sessions, as well as assisting in matters relating to housekeeping and money. They provided excellent support in setting up the office room next to the training venue and providing us with a computer, a laptop and printer. They were also very helpful, in assisting with negotiations for organising transport, logistics and other matters that required competence in the Thai. They were also responsible for organising a number of the trainers to the sessions, which they did efficiently and reliably.

Forum Asia were also the gracious hosts of DTP participants who travelled to their office in Bangkok city to see the working of a regional NGO and to consult with some of the Forum Asia staff and executive. In general, DTP had a good working partnership with colleagues from Forum Asia and, although the senior staff of the organisation were not able to be present for most of the training, the Director felt well supported by them, and appreciated the dedication of two full-time Forum Asia staff to the program.

### ***Faculty of Law, Thammasat University***

In addition to Forum Asia, we were fortunate to have the co-operation of the Faculty of Law, Thammasat University, who assisted DTP in office infrastructural support such as phones, faxes, computer, etc, as well as providing an on-site daily van driver who was able to meet our requirements for transport around the campus and around Bangkok. The Faculty was also home to several trainers who gave their time to us. In addition, the Faculty provided excellent venues for our final dinner and for the certificate presentation ceremony and arranged for the attendance of Dr. Naris Chaiyasutr, Rector of Thammasat University as the opening speaker at the Program. In particular, the personal support of the Dean, Dr Phanom Aiumprayoon, for DTP and for our work was critical in providing such good facilities for the Program. In addition, the liaison of Dr Amnat Wongbandit was much appreciated in organising the practical arrangements in relation to attendance of trainers, development of the program, and distribution of information to Thammasat trainers.