



DIPLOMACY TRAINING PROGRAM

AFFILIATED WITH THE FACULTY OF LAW AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES
A training program for peoples of the Asia-Pacific region

REPORT

**Indigenous Youth, Human Rights and Advocacy Training
Held in partnership with the 2nd International Youth Parliament
Sydney, Australia
13 – 16 July, 2004**

OVERVIEW

From July 13th-16th, 2004 the Diplomacy Training Program (DTP) hosted a human rights and peoples diplomacy training program in Sydney for 31 young people from Indigenous communities around Australia, from the Pacific, Asia and Africa.

This was the first time in recent years that DTP has organised a training program in Sydney. It was also the first program reflecting DTP's renewed focus on working with partners to build the capacity of Indigenous advocates in Australia and the region. For the first time DTP had program participants from Vietnam, China and Sudan.

The participant evaluations were very positive. While the course participants were young, many already occupy leadership roles of great responsibility within their communities. Together they brought to the program a great depth of experience from working on a wide range of human rights issues. It was the opportunity to share these experiences and to learn from one another that again proved to be one of the most popular and valued parts of the program.

The human rights issues these young people work on provide a compelling snapshot of some of the challenges facing our region. For many participants, this program represented their first real exposure to international human rights standards and mechanisms, and their first opportunity to explore how these standards and the values they express can be applied to the issues they are concerned with. The participants returned to their organisations and communities with a new sense of their rights, and of how to work together to realise their human rights and to hold governments and others accountable.

There were a number of highlights of the program, from Linda Burney's remarks at the opening ceremony to Justice Michael Kirby's speech at the official reception, to the visit to the NSW Parliament for the launch of UNDP's Human Development Report and a tour of both houses of the NSW Parliament.

The training program was a joint initiative of DTP and the 2nd International Youth Parliament (IYP) and was the first collaboration between the two organisations. IYP selected the participants and assisted with funding and the development of the program. Particular thanks are owed to Oxfam-Community Aid Abroad, to Danny Gilbert and *The Friends of the Diplomacy Training Program*. Without their generous support the training program would not have been possible. The assistance of Professor Leon Trakman and the Law Faculty of UNSW is also acknowledged.

This report of the training draws on the evaluations of the participants. Further information on the training is available on the DTP Website.

A PARTNERSHIP FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

This training program came about from discussions between DTP and IYP on the need to provide young leaders at the 2nd International Youth Parliament with further training in human rights and advocacy skills.

The 2nd International Youth Parliament brought 300 young people to Sydney from around the world to discuss issues affecting young people in the context of globalisation. Participants were selected on a competitive basis.

With acknowledgement that human rights provide a unifying global agenda for young people at a time of great change in our region and world, it was agreed that DTP would provide a human rights and advocacy training program for 30 of the IYP participants. It was decided to focus the training program on young Indigenous advocates from, or working with, Indigenous communities in Australia and the Asia – Pacific region and that the training program would take place at the end of the Youth Parliament.

THE PARTICIPANTS

There were 31 participants in the program from 13 countries, including Australia. Over 50% (17) of the participants were women. This was the first time that a DTP course has had participants from China, Vietnam and Sudan. They joined other participants from Cambodia, Indonesia, Nepal, India, Pakistan, New Zealand, Canada, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines and from around Australia.

The range of issues that participants worked on was similarly diverse and all had their unique stories. Jose (Toto) from the Philippines has worked for years with his father who is a campaigning journalist and human rights advocate. They use video to document human rights violations against Indigenous communities in Mindanao and training these communities how to use digital video technology as a way to monitor, document and deter violence and intimidation. Jose's father has previously been a trainer on DTP courses. Another participant, Socheata, works with vulnerable garment workers in Phnom Penh and was the interpreter for Hollywood star Minnie Driver when she visited Cambodia to publicise their plight.

Other specific issues participants were working on included: youth employment and access to education in rural and remote areas in Australia and Nepal; conflicts over mining and development on Indigenous lands in the Philippines and Kalimantan (Borneo); environmental issues in PNG; health issues (including HIV/AIDS) in China and India and the situation of refugees in Pakistan. Other topics raised were children's rights, gender discrimination, youth participation in decision making, over representation of young Indigenous people in the criminal justice system and the challenge of gaining recognition for traditional connections of people to land and water.

THE PROGRAM

The challenge of meeting the training needs of such a diverse group was compounded by the need to compress DTP's three week program into four days. This made for a very packed schedule.

The Welcome to Country and Opening Ceremony

There was a formal Welcome to Country from Alan Madden of the local Eora nation, traditional owners of the land that UNSW sits on. Professor Leon Trakman, Dean of

the Faculty of Law then formally welcomed the participants to UNSW and provided some personal insights from a lifetime of learning and teaching law, and witnessing injustice in Rwanda, Malawi and from growing up in South Africa. Emeritus Professor Garth Nettheim, Founding Board Member of the DTP explained how the organisation began and its continuing role and commitment to building the capacity of Indigenous advocates.

The program was then formally opened by Linda Burney MLA, one of Australia's best known Indigenous advocates. Her opening remarks highlighted the challenging environment facing Indigenous advocates in Australia at the present time. Linda explained, partly for the benefit of the international participants, the background and significance of the formal Welcome to Country by traditional owners, of how it reflects a growing recognition of Indigenous cultures, of Indigenous identities and relationships and of Indigenous rights. She noted that this recognition and respect was a world away from her experiences of growing up as a young Indigenous woman in NSW, at the same time as recognising recent setbacks for Indigenous Peoples' rights in Australia.

Linda Burney's speech also reflected on a lifetime of advocacy in different capacities, the need for young advocates to be nurtured, to build on the advances of the past, to have a long term vision, to be persistent, creative and positive and to ensure that they do not forget to look after themselves, as they work for the rights of others.

Identifying the Issues

The formal training program got underway with participants identifying the issues and questions they wanted to explore in the program. High on this list were to learn more about the UN system and where Indigenous Peoples fitted within it, the international human rights framework and Indigenous rights and the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. There were practical questions about how international standards could be applied locally at the grassroots level for example in relation to companies violating land rights and causing environmental destruction. There were also some fundamental questions about how different human rights are balanced, whether some human rights have priority over others and whether there are tensions between communal rights and individual rights. Participants also asked whether all human rights were affordable in poor countries, and about perceived conflicts between human rights and traditional cultures and value systems. There was strong interest to learn about how to access UN mechanisms and the media, and how to generate international awareness, concern and solidarity.

The schedule was designed to address most of these questions, even if the shortness of the time made it difficult to go into each question or issue in the depth that would have been ideal.

Asked at the end of the program to identify the most useful sessions, participant responses included:

All sessions were very good! If I have to narrow it down to one specific session then probably the session on patenting, and also having people like Sarah, Megan and Justice Kirby as great speakers.

The introduction sessions on human rights and international law and internet training course. The former gives me an overall view of these two issues and the latter some important websites and search skills.

*All of them, they were helpful in explaining how things operate in the **real** UN and the **real** world.*

The sessions on corporate accountability and advocacy skills because its related to the work that I am doing in my country and community.

Key principles for effective lobbying. It gave me a whole new idea of how I can be involved in effective lobbying.

I found all the sessions useful for different reasons. Megan Davis - her insights into UN processes. Jacqui Katona – her knowledge on lobbying and passion and determination and especially Dr Pritchard she was the best for her knowledge and her articulation of the topics.

The Trainers and the Training

As is clear from the feedback above, DTP was again very fortunate to have excellent trainers agreeing to share their expertise with participants.

- Five of the nine expert presenters/trainers were women, four of them Indigenous women. Five of the nine expert presenters/trainers were Indigenous people.
- The trainers were a good mix of academic experts and very experienced advocates.
- Four DTP Board Members were among the trainers who donated their time and expertise to the program.

The choice of trainers reflects DTP's approach of mixing solid academic knowledge with the practical experience of seasoned advocates and practitioners. The evaluations of the trainers (provided anonymously by the participants) were overwhelmingly positive.

Dr Sarah Pritchard led the introductory sessions on the international human rights framework, the UN system and the place of Indigenous Peoples rights within that system. This introduction was supplemented with the practical experience of Megan Davis who had recently returned from the most recent session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Populations in New York. As both academic and Indigenous advocate, Megan has closely followed the development of new standards and mechanisms for the promotion and protection of Indigenous Peoples rights in the UN system.

Jacqui Katona then led a session on principles for effective advocacy, based partly on her leadership role in the Mirrar People's successful campaign against the development of a new Uranium mine at Jabiluka. Professor Redmond followed this session with an exploration of the growing literature and emerging standards on the human rights responsibilities of companies.

The Reception

A formal reception for the participants was hosted by Danny Gilbert, Managing Partner of *Gilbert + Tobin* with an inspirational speech given by High Court Judge, the Hon Justice Michael Kirby AC CMG. The speech focussed in particular on one of the most vulnerable and marginalised groups in the region – people living with HIV/AIDS and the urgent need to bring a human rights perspective to responses to the disease.

The speech and following discussion with participants also drew on Justice Kirby's work on Cambodia following the genocide there, his current international advisory work on bio-ethics and involvement in a wide range of human rights issues. He

emphasised the importance of the overarching human rights framework as an expression of our common humanity even as advocates identified with particular issues and causes.

He acknowledged the skills and knowledge of the participants as gifted young leaders and reminded them of their tremendous responsibility to use their special gifts for the benefit of others.

The Field Trip

The following day included a field trip to the NSW Parliament for the launch of UNDP's Human Development Report 2004. The theme of the report "Cultural Liberty in Today's Diverse World" was particularly relevant to the training program with its emphasis on inclusion, the need for policies to recognise and respect difference and on the varying situation of Indigenous Peoples across the world. One of the report's authors, David White, had travelled from New York to speak at the launch, which was chaired by Indira Naidoo. The launch was followed by a tour of both houses of Parliament and a lunch which was hosted by Meredith Burgmann, President of the NSW Legislative Council.

Participant feedback to the visit and launch was generally very positive. Some participants felt there was insufficient recognition of Indigenous peoples and rights in the Parliament, or of the damage done to Indigenous Peoples rights by laws that had been passed there. Some also noted that more preparation and discussion beforehand would have enhanced the experience of the UNDP Report launch and the visit to Parliament.

For most participants this was their first visit to any Parliament and some commented on the level of access and openness and that such a visit to see where key decisions, laws and policies are debated and adopted simply would not be possible in their country.

The Final Day

Participants returned for an afternoon of Internet Training facilitated by DTP Board Member Philip Chung.

The final day of training began with Robynne Quiggin, UNSW Law Faculty graduate and academic at UTS Jumbana House of Learning, taking participants through the emerging international debates on Indigenous Peoples, human rights and the environment. This includes issues around intellectual property rights and commercial patenting of traditional indigenous knowledge, sometimes referred to as bio-piracy.

John Rumbiak, West Papua's best known human rights advocate and Visiting Fellow at Columbia University, then led participants through a session on developing strategies for international advocacy on human rights.

The final afternoon was a lively session focussed on media strategies and skills and included small group work developing media releases on the training program. The trainer was Kirstie Parker, Manager of Media and Communications at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

The media skills workshop was a great way to finish off, Kirstie Parker was very helpful and straightforward, she really know what she was talking about.

THE FEEDBACK

Participant evaluations of the program were sought through two anonymous surveys and by anonymous evaluations of the individual trainers.

Most of the feedback was very positive, and some will be very helpful for improving future programs. Most of the evaluations expressed the wish that the training program was longer. It had been kept deliberately short out of concern that participants would already be exhausted from their IYP experience.

Asked whether and how the training will assist participants, the responses include:

I learned the skills of working with the media, and now I know how to do advocacy nationally and internationally, which will help me to get more support for my projects.

It makes me understand the need to get more training in human rights and development with a human rights based approach. It will assist me in getting direction.

It will assist lobbying, locally, nationally and internationally and provide me with the opportunity to access networks which could assist me.

Yes, in how I can assist in focussed advocacy and in helping the build the capacity of others I work with.

Yes, by learning about how the UN mechanisms function I now better understand how to approach this more strategically.

Asked how the knowledge gained might change their approach to their work, responses included:

I work on access to Anti-Retrovirals for people living with HIV/AIDS, and this knowledge will help me lobby with the government;

Helping me be much more confident when talking to the decision making bodies in my own community;

It has helped me to know that we don't have to take what our government wants to offer. We took on the alcohol plans in Queensland because our government told us to and we didn't know how to fight it.

Our organisation is a human rights organisation with such projects as documenting and filing gender based discrimination cases and a lot more. It has given me technical knowledge and enabled me to be more effective with my work.

This knowledge helps me to support my work and I started to realise that there are many laws concerning the rights of Indigenous People.

In future work with HIV/AIDS threatened groups in remote areas of China, I can pay more attention to what Indigenous People living there really need, considering their customs, religions etc.

Asked how they will share what they have learnt on their return home, the participants responded:

I will talk with media in my community to tell them about this and share with them about what I have learnt through this program;

My team of researchers will be sensitised and use my alumni network for spreading the word;

Community report backs

I will incorporate what I have learnt in the community legal education program that my organisation runs.

Participants also gave useful feedback about how the training program could be improved for the future, and what other issues it could have covered:

More focus on child rights and women's rights work. Develop a panel who knows about other countries as well, not just Australia.

Report writing, Public presentation, how to hold yourself in public/public speaking skills

Sessions on International Trade Law;

More hand outs for each session; more interesting teaching tools such as visual aids, videos, pictures etc

FUNDING

This training program had not been scheduled or budgeted for. The short deadlines meant that DTP could not raise funds in the normal way of individual participant fees/sponsorship. The major financial costs and logistical issues of getting people to and from Sydney had already been met by IYP. This meant DTP had only to meet the costs of food, accommodation, transport and materials and its own administrative and staff costs.

DTP could still only implement the program due to the flexibility of key DTP partners such as Oxfam-CAA, and the increasing level of support from *Friends of the Diplomacy Training Program* which provided the financial independence and security to pursue this initiative.

The UNSW Student Union provided some funding in form of food vouchers for participants. Gilbert + Tobin hosted the reception for the participants with its associated costs. The UNSW Law Faculty helped to meet the costs of the opening and closing ceremony and BBQ and UNSW provided the lecture rooms and internet facilities at no charge.

CONCLUSIONS

The DTP/IYP collaboration on this program was very worthwhile. DTP staff found it to be a very complementary partnership. All of us at DTP felt fortunate to have been involved in the program, to have learnt more about the challenges that young advocates are facing in the region and to have spent some time with an inspiring, and sometimes challenging, group of young people from Africa, Asia, Australia and the Pacific. From this perspective it was a tremendously rewarding experience for all involved.

This program connected DTP to a very impressive group of young people who clearly have tremendous leadership potential in their communities and countries. The participants benefited from the training program and the knowledge and skills of

excellent presenters and trainers, as well as from the time spent exploring human rights issues with each other.

This rare opportunity to provide these young leaders with knowledge and skills for human rights advocacy early in their careers was well taken. DTP has 31 more alumni, 31 more people who have benefited from an opportunity to explore how to apply human rights and to develop links with others.

It is to be hoped that at least some of these new alumni will be able to participate in future DTP programs, whether as participants focussing on particular issues of concern, or as trainers and resource people, bringing back to others their experiences and knowledge. DTP will establish an **e-group** to facilitate ongoing communication between the participants.

DTP will explore the possibility of follow-up collaborations with the organisers of the IYP, and to actively seek other opportunities for similar collaborations where it can add significant value to an existing initiative.

DTP needs to:

- Improve its funding base so that it can respond to such opportunities adequately, in addition to fulfilling its existing schedule of training programs.
- Seek additional resources to develop new training materials, hand-outs and resources.
- Develop its capacity for following-up programs to assess impact and offer support to alumni.

In the meantime DTP continues to receive positive feedback about the course from participants and trainers, including information and examples on how the training program has been implemented and looks forward to working more with its new alumni in Australia and the region.