



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

Building Resilience for Human Rights and Democracy Movements

Workshop on Sharing Lessons and Building Collaboration in Capacity and Movement Building

Concept Note for Workshop – Bangkok, May 2025 (TBC)

1. Proposal:

[The Diplomacy Training Program \(DTP\)](#) and its partners are proposing to organise an Asia regional workshop on Sharing Lessons and Building Collaboration in Human Rights Capacity and Movement Building. The workshop will provide a space to reflect on lessons learned from over three decades of capacity building on advocacy for human rights in Asia, to facilitate more strategic collaboration on human rights education and advocacy training and to minimise duplication in our collective efforts to support human rights in the region.

The workshop is a timely response to the closing civil society spaces and the rise in authoritarianism globally, and the suspension of much US funding support for human rights and democracy programs.

The workshop will bring together 20-25 representatives of human rights and democracy organisations and movements in Asia, including DTP alumni and trainers from the last 30 years.

2. Summary:

For over 35 years DTP has worked with key partners to develop and deliver practical human rights training to over 3500 civil society advocates across Asia. DTP believes the current rise in authoritarianism, democracy backsliding, and challenges to human rights and democracy require a strategic response from organisations and individuals involved in capacity building and training. The recent changes in US administration policy on support for human rights and democracy adds urgency.

Human rights and democracy are interlinked and interdependent. Both depend on active and informed participation, and active civil society organisations CSOs. CSOs across Asia have formed movements to promote and claim human rights, women's rights, the rights of migrant workers, the rights of persons with disability, Indigenous peoples rights, LGTBQIA +, anti-corruption, the environment and climate change. These interlinked movements represent shared aspirations for dignity and justice.

Human rights education and training and capacity building on advocacy are important ways that these movements for human rights and democracy invest in their own resilience, regeneration and effectiveness.



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This workshop will bring together some of those who have been most closely involved in training and capacity building on human rights advocacy/education and in Asia over recent years. It will seek input from those that cannot attend in person.

This proposed workshop responds to recent developments in the regional and global context. It recognises the value in;

- sharing experience and lessons learned from over three decades of human rights training and capacity building.
- developing collaboration between movements so that strategies and limited resources have most impact.
- minimising duplication of efforts between movements and organisations with shared objectives.

This workshop will bring together organisations and individuals who have been deeply involved in trainings and capacity building on human rights advocacy/education in Asia.

It will provide an opportunity to share current activities and strategies, to share lessons learned and different methodologies, and to discuss future priorities and plans in knowledge and skills-building.

It will lay the ground for greater cooperation, coordination and complementarity in capacity building strategies and programs to meet the needs and challenges of human rights and democracy movements in the region.

3. Brief Background and Context:

Over the last 35 plus years human rights and democracy movements in Asia have had transformative impacts nationally, regionally and globally. Movements and networks have grown on women's human rights, the rights of migrant workers, the rights of Indigenous Peoples, of persons with a disability, and of LGBT+ individuals and communities. There are also regional networks focused on democracy, abolition of the death penalty, torture, and "disappearances", corruption, free elections and corporate accountability, and the environment.

Academic study of human rights has grown, with undergraduate, graduate and PhD programs now available in Asia, and networks of academic specialists in human rights have been established at national and regional levels.

These diverse movements for human rights and human rights education are indicative of the richness of human rights movements in the region. Simultaneously there is a risk that the necessary focus on specific challenges may have resulted in a "siloing" of human rights advocacy, and a weakening of knowledge, understanding, support and promotion of the broader human rights framework.



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Knowledge and understanding of the broader human rights framework is important to understanding of intersectionality and the building of solidarity. It can also facilitate great collaboration and complementarity of strategies and activities.

Across the region recent years have seen significant reversals for human rights and democracy. Democracy and human rights movements in Asia face increasingly authoritarian governments and growing restrictions on civil society space. Some of these reverses have been attributed to the role of social media and the rise in disinformation/misinformation that have contributed to the targeting of minorities and revisionist histories of past authoritarian regimes and democracy struggles. The 2nd Trump Presidency has resulted in significant resource cuts organisations working to protect and promote human rights and democracy in Asia.

Globally, the multilateral system is facing its greatest challenge for over 80 years calling into question established strategies for seeking accountability and solidarity and ending impunity.

4. Some Key Questions for Human Rights Capacity Building

The workshop/session will explore some of the following questions:

- After 30 years plus years of human rights education/advocacy programming, what (if any) is the value in human rights training – especially given the crisis of multilateralism and growing authoritarianism, populism and Trump?
- What is the role of human rights training in building movements/next generation of leaders?
- How can training and capacity building initiatives assist with intergenerational transfer of knowledge and relationships?
- Who should be prioritised for human rights education/advocacy training?
- How can human rights education and training better counter misinformation/disinformation spread through social media?
- How can human rights training be used to strengthen solidarity and linkages between different movements?
- What models of training/capacity building are currently being invested in by different movements?
- Are there models of capacity building/training within different movements that have proved particularly effective? Mentoring? Alumni Networks?
- What are the key knowledge and skills needs and challenges for human rights capacity building in Asia? Who should be targeted?
- What is the role of universities/master's programs on human rights in relation to movement building/wider HRE efforts?
- Is there methodology that can be used to measure impact/guide programs?
- How can better collaboration be built among those investing in developing and delivering human rights training/training for human rights defenders?
- What are the options for building collaboration in capacity building/ensuring complementarity of strategies and initiatives



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5. Workshop Participants

It is proposed that DTP and its partners invite 20-25 participants, including:

- Representatives of key regional partners/regional movements – FA/MFA/AIPP/APWLD/ANFREL/APHR
- Experienced practitioners/trainers including DTP alumni

6. Workshop Outcomes

A short mapping/background paper/survey will be prepared to inform the workshop. The workshop will take place over 2-3 days and will aim to have the following outcomes:

- Increased awareness of human rights/democracy capacity building in the region
- Sharing of methodologies and approaches/lessons learned
- Valuable reflections on the range of approaches to capacity building on human rights/advocacy/democracy will be documented
- Recommendations for more impactful and strategic capacity building in support of human rights and democracy in Asia
- Increased networking/collaboration for human rights training in Asia
- The establishment of a network of organisations and individuals involved in capacity building to facilitate ongoing collaboration.
- A workshop report with recommendations

7. Background on The Diplomacy Training Program (DTP)

Since its establishment in 1990, DTP has pioneered the concept of “peoples’ diplomacy”, recognising the role of committed individuals working for human rights and justice across Asia and the Pacific. DTP’s work in support of human rights movements and courageous individuals has won awards in Australia and internationally. DTP’s partners are critical to its impact and strategies. They include Asian Forum on Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA), Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA), Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) and Pacific Islands Association of NGOs (PIANGO) – and more recently Asia Democracy Network (ADN).

DTP’s 3500 plus alumni include a former Foreign Minister/Cabinet Ministers, ambassadors, serving and former human rights commissioners and thousands of individuals working on a diverse range of human rights issues in virtually every country in Asia and the Pacific. DTP alumni work on a diverse range of urgent and long-term human rights challenges. They have decades of experience and have valuable insights.

For further information please contact:

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