

## **DTP Alumni Business and Human Rights Network Planning Workshop Bangkok, 12-14 December 2024 Report**

*“These activists, hailing from countries like Nepal, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Taiwan, and Thailand, inspire me deeply. They know exactly where to exert pressure and how to disrupt the operations of multinational corporations, forcing them to listen and act. Their courage and strategic approach are a testament to their resilience.” – Rejimon Kuttappan*

*“The workshop inspires me to involve more meaningfully in building the BHR network in India.” – Gopinath Parakuni*



Participants and facilitators with Australian Embassy Thailand staff.

### **1. Background and Objectives**

Over more than 30 years, Diplomacy Training Program (DTP) has made a significant contribution to regional human rights movements. Its programs are organised with local and regional partners in human rights movements, and with DTP alumni. It has a strong track record training on Business and Human Rights (BHR<sup>1</sup>) in Asia. From 2006 to 2011, DTP ran a dedicated BHR program and from 2011-24 integrated BHR into its migrant workers' and Indigenous Peoples' rights and other programs. These BHR-integrated programs have continued. More recent BHR programs focusing on the Pacific responded to strong interest in climate justice and just transition. Over 600 participants have attended at least one of these BHR-related programs over a period of nearly two decades.

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<sup>1</sup> Some argue that it should be *human rights and business* rather than *business and human rights (BHR)* to affirm the primacy of human rights, but we have applied the more common formulation of BHR.

DTP recognises that the 3,500-plus alumni of DTP courses over the last 34 years contain a potentially powerful network of individuals and organisations committed to promoting and protecting human rights. DTP recognises the current context is very challenging for human rights defenders and human rights movements. DTP also recognises that the context is dynamic – new standards, new issues and new actors. As DTP looks to the future, it is keen to make sure that its capacity building strategies support key human rights movements and complement the work of others. DTP's [first Asia alumni workshop in 2023](#) identified the lack of a regional BHR network and called for this to be a focus for a further DTP alumni workshop.

Business continues to impact individual and community human rights across the region. Asia is the manufacturing centre of the global economy - its garment, electronics and other manufacturing industries produce much of the world's goods. Moreover, Asia produces some of the most important agriculture commodities, such as fish, rice, palm oil and rubber. Migrant workers often work in factories, on vessels and in plantations. They are highly vulnerable and can experience human rights abuses in their migration journeys and the workplace.

Southeast Asian and South Asian economies are also continuing to grow rapidly. The energy, transport and other infrastructure projects they require to promote and sustain economic development can impact human rights adversely. Land is often acquired without consultation or consent of the existing owners, particularly Indigenous Peoples' customary lands. Resettlement often destroys traditional livelihoods and cultures and increases poverty levels and social exclusion. The imperative to decarbonize the global economy is exacerbating some of these local impacts.

Companies can also impact other vulnerable groups in these and other contexts, such as children and persons living with disability. Companies from Japan, Korea and Taiwan are some of the biggest investors in and traders with the region, and are critical parts of the global supply chains. Corporate accountability and consumer movements are growing in these countries and across Asia. In strengthening the movements addressing business and human rights, it is increasingly important to build understanding of dynamic financial sector roles and supply chain maps to identify the most effective or new advocacy strategies.

Accordingly, DTP organised a three-day workshop with some of the alumni of its human rights training programs together with DTP partners – Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) and Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA) - and a small number of key BHR experts including NGO advocates from Japan, Korea and Taiwan.

The purpose of the workshop was to:

- Reflect on DTP BHR training and civil society BHR advocacy in the Asia region.
- Map DTP alumni connections to civil society networks and movements that work to advance BHR in the region.
- Connect Asian DTP alumni to East Asian CSOs working on regional BHR issues.
- Analyse the potential value, purpose and role of a new regional DTP alumni BHR network in supporting civil society BHR advocacy.

- Potentially establish a steering group and identify next steps for a regional DTP alumni BHR network.



Boonthan Verawongse (MFA), Frederic Wilson (AIPP), Prarthana Rao (FORUM-ASIA) and Patrick Earle (DTP) welcome participants.

## 2. Participants<sup>2</sup>

The alumni participants were identified through several means. First, AIPP and MFA suggested invitees. Second, DTP published a call for alumni expressions of interest in participating in the workshop. Third, the DTP organisers identified gaps in the participants and suggested additions. In selecting participants for invitation, DTP took the following criteria into account:

- DTP BHR-related training alumni.
- Gender balance.
- Knowledgeable about BHR frameworks and issues in the Asia region.
- Current or ongoing involvement in BHR policy advocacy in the region.
- An international perspective, rather than domestic or single issues.
- A strong strategic outlook.
- Potential interest in running or supporting a DTP alumni BHR network.

## 3. Workshop Agenda

The workshop agenda was designed to facilitate introductions, share knowledge, map connections and discuss having a network. DTP alumni / participants were asked to facilitate the different sessions. The sessions on each day were as follows:

### *Day 1 - 12 December 2024*

- Introductions – sharing DTP trainings attended and BHR advocacy experience
- Mapping and analysing regional BHR training
- Mapping and analysing regional BHR actors, standards and frameworks

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<sup>2</sup> List of participants can be found attached in Annex A.

### Day 2 – 13 December 2024

- BHR advocacy case studies:
  - Durga Yamphu, LAHURNIP, Nepal
  - Yun Mane, CIPO, Cambodia
  - Imam Shofwan, JATAM, Indonesia
  - Praikadao (Tian) Prueksakasemsuk, Thailand
  - Rashmi Venketesan, India
- BHR movements case studies:
  - Sumitha Krishna, Migrant Workers
  - Frederic Wilson, Indigenous Peoples
  - Prarthana Rao, BHR Movements/Organisations
  - Gopinath Parakuni, BHR Movements
- DFAT-hosted donor and business panel discussion
  - Lucia Pietropaoli, ASEAN-ACT
  - Antiek Wahyu, Bluescope
  - Sanna Leino, SIDA



Yun Mane

### Day 3 – 14 December 2024

- Mapping and analysing BHR networks and movements
- National and regional BHR case studies from East Asia:
  - Shin Young Chung, APIL, Korea
  - Anju Kozono, HRN/BHRRRC, Japan
  - Hsin Hsuan Sun, ERF, Taiwan
- DTP alumni BHR network discussion and planning



Anju Kozono, Shin Young Chung and Hsin Hsuan Sun

## 4. Workshop Outcomes and Participant Evaluations

The agenda, and the approach of short presentations reflecting on experience and current contexts followed by facilitated working group discussions with key questions delivered the hoped for outcomes:

- Strong understanding of the role that DTP BHR training has played in increasing knowledge and capacity to advocate for business respect for human rights
- Increased awareness of civil society networks and movements working on BHR advancement across Asia
- Strengthened connections between DTP alumni and East Asian civil society to create opportunities for wider regional BHR advocacy reflecting regional trade and investment

- Potentially establishing a new DTP alumni regional BHR network to improve awareness of and advocate more effectively for common BHR issues in the region.

The discussions were rich and dynamic, informed by diverse experience and shared commitment.

There was general agreement that any new network should not duplicate existing networks, but that there were clear gaps currently in relation to BHR advocacy and capacity building in the region. These gaps meant that experience was not being shared or developed cumulatively, communities/victims or corporate harms were not aware of avenues of potential remedy, or where they could go for support, different human rights movements and organisations across the region were not collaborating effectively or cross-fertilising experience, there was little coordination of civil society voices on BHR in the forums this may be useful. Linkages between the investor countries, companies and advocates of East Asia and the recipients of investment in South and South-East Asia are underdeveloped. The challenges of climate change, just transition, AI and digital transformation made it more urgent to have more effective networking between experienced BHR advocates and movements of affected communities. The need to include the women's, disability, children's and LGBTI+ movements in future was highlighted. It was agreed that while DTP BHR alumni might form the initial basis of a regional BHR network, it should not be restricted to BHR alumni.

There was a final shared reflection session to end the workshop – in which participants shared personal experiences, their sense of appreciation of others and in some cases their sense of renewed inspiration.

## 5. Next Steps

The participants agreed to set up a Steering Committee to guide next steps towards establishing and maintaining a regional BHR network. A number of the participants agreed to serve on the initial steering committee.

It was agreed that a report would be drafted. This, along with a proposed schedule of activities and initiatives, would be shared with workshop participants.



Reflection session with participants and facilitators.

## Annex A – Participants

	Name	Organisation
1	Anju Kozono	Human Rights Now (HRN)
2	Atittaya Ngampradit	Community Resource Centre (CRC)
3	Aviman Singh Lama	Pravasi Nepali Coordination Committee (PNCC)
4	Boonthan Verawongse	Human Rights and Development Foundation (HRDF)/Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA)
5	Celine Lim	SAVE Rivers, Sarawak, Malaysia
6	Clare Sidoti	DTP
7	Durga Mani Rai	Lawyers Association for Human Rights of Nepalese Indigenous Peoples (LAHURNIP)
8	Frederic Wilson	Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP)
9	Gopinath Parakuni	Cividep-India
10	Hsin Hsuan Sun	Environmental Rights Foundation (ERF)
11	Iman Prihandono	Faculty of Law Universitas Airlangga
12	Imam Shofwan	Jaringan Advokasi Tambang (JATAM)
13	Indriaswati Dyah Saptaningrum	Atma Jaya Catholic University Indonesia
14	Kul Prasad Karki	Pravasi Nepali Coordination Committee (PNCC)
15	Marina Sultana	Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU)
16	Matthew Coghlan	DTP
18	Nukila Evanty	Women Working Group, Civil Society Coalition Against Corona and AMAN Riau
19	Patrick Earle	DTP
20	Pillkyu Hwang	Transnational Human Rights Institute/ Gonggam Human Rights Law Foundation
21	Prakaidao Prueksakasemsuk	Cross Cultural Foundation (CrCF)
22	Prarthana Rao	Forum-Asia
23	Rashmi Venkatesan	National Law School of India University (NLS, Bangalore)

24	Rejimon Kuttappan	MFA/Journalist/India/Forced Labour
25	Riji Joy	Middle East Center for Training and Development
26	Shin Young Chung	Advocates for Public Interest Law (APIL)
27	Siti Badriah	Migrant Care
28	Sor.Rattanamanee Polkla	Community Resource Centre
29	Sotheary Sao	Policy Specialist, Environmentalist and Human Rights Advocate, Cambodia
30	Sumitha Kishna	Our Journey
31	Yun Mane	Cambodia Indigenous Peoples Organization (CIPO)
32	Yuyun Wahyuningrum	ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights

## **Annex B – Evaluations**

DTP shared an evaluation form that asked the following questions. Ten evaluations were completed and received.

### *Part A – Content and process*

Participants selected from a range of responses to the following questions from Strongly agree to Strongly disagree. Written explanations for responses were also requested.

- I have become aware of/am more familiar with DTP’s BHR training and civil society BHR advocacy in Asia
- I have become aware of/am more familiar with DTP alumni connections to civil society networks and movements that have been working to advance BHR in the region
- I have connected with DTP alumni and East Asian CSOs working on BHR
- I have built stronger civil society networks in the region to enable the sharing of information and support on BHR
- I have had an opportunity to discuss establishing a new DTP alumni network on BHR

All Respondents indicated Strongly agree or Agree.

Highlights from participant answers:

- Well-selected participants
- The workshop allowed network diversification
- Case studies were important for understanding and connecting
- The workshop provided a regional view of various BHR activities.

### *Part B – Comments and reflections*

- Did the workshop meet your expectations?
- What was the highlight of the workshop for you?
- Are you interested in establishing and participating in a new Asian civil society network on BHR? Please explain.
- What BHR issues/challenges do you think a new regional BHR network should focus on?
- What BHR issues/challenges do you think a new regional BHR network should focus on?
- How could DTP capacity building and convening support such a network?
- Please share any other comments you may have, including on ways to improve the workshop if we are to repeat?

Highlights from participant answers:

- Workshop offered platform for recognising alumni community
- Important to build friendship and trust to be the basis of a strong network
- Participant-led style was engaging
- Good opportunity for Southeast Asia and South Asia exchange
- Network needs clear goal and plan
- Advocacy can be politically sensitive and needs to be done through partnerships



- A network...
  - should involve victims
  - can rebalance power and resources between perpetrators and victims
  - could link activists and academics
  - would also strengthen the global BHR community
  - can potentially speed up BHR work in the region through sharing information, analysis and capacity building
  - should focus on corporate harm and community remedy; understanding global normative frameworks; relationship building by network activities
  - should be kept to 20 persons to ensure they are fully participating.
- Collaboration between civil society in exporting/importing countries is crucial but there are still barriers to overcome
- Collaboration should be with other Embassies not just the Australian Embassy
- DTP can be an important convenor
- Capacity building...
  - could bring in expertise and experience from wide range of actors
  - helps staying up to date in fast-moving advocacy areas
  - could share more on strategic litigation and campaign strategies, especially using social media
  - for media on BHR will be valuable