



***Human Rights and Equal  
Opportunity Commission***  
*humanrights.gov.au*

**REGIONAL CO-OPERATION ACTIVITIES**

**THE HUMAN RIGHTS AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION**

**12<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting**

**Monday 24 September – Friday 28 September 2007**

**Sydney, Australia**

## **SUMMARY OF HREOC REGIONAL CO-OPERATION ACTIVITIES (July 2006-August 2007)**

### ***HREOC's International Function***

While the role and functions of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC), as set out in legislation, are primarily directed towards human rights issues within Australia, HREOC undertakes an international education and training role, with a specific focus on agencies in the Asia Pacific region.

In 2006-07, as in past years, most of this has taken the form of technical cooperation programs with other countries. These programs, which are based around sharing knowledge and expertise, are generally delivered through the framework of the Australian Government's development cooperation program administered by the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID). This international technical cooperation work is externally funded (not from HREOC's core budget which is devoted to fulfilling its domestic mandate).

### ***China-Australia Human Rights Technical Cooperation Program***

HREOC's most substantial international program involvement is with the China-Australia Human Rights Technical Cooperation Program (HRTC), which is an integral part of Australia's annual inter-governmental Dialogue on Human Rights with China. HREOC participates in dialogue meetings and attended the 2007 dialogue in July in Beijing.

The HRTC program encompasses three principal themes: protection of the rights of women and children; protection of ethnic minority rights; and reform of the legal system.

The program aims to provide an important information base of human rights principles, ideas and strategies which can be drawn upon in the development of Chinese policies and practices. The program includes activities conducted in both China and Australia. Each activity in the program is implemented as a cooperative venture between HREOC and particular Chinese organisations. Some selected examples of activities implemented in the 2006-07 HRTC Program are given below.

- In October 2006 a seminar on Implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) was held in Urumqi, Xinjiang Autonomous Region. The seminar aimed to assist the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other agencies from the People's Republic of China (PRC) in implementing the recommendations of the United Nations ICESCR Committee following its consideration of China's first periodic report under that treaty.
- In November 2006 a Model United Nations was held in Chengdu, Sichuan Province, in cooperation with the United Nations Association.

The activity simulated the proceedings of the UN Human Rights Council in the debate and adoption of resolutions on selected human rights issues.

- In December 2006 a seminar on the system of 'people's assessors' in China's courts was held in Haikou, Hainan Province. The seminar, conducted in cooperation with the National Judges' College of China, aimed to encourage the application of human rights principles in the development of the people's assessor system.
- In December 2006 a delegation from the Penitentiary Administration Bureau in the Ministry of Public Security visited Australia to study measures for protecting and promoting the rights of juvenile and female detainees.
- In February 2007 two officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs arrived in Australia to undertake postgraduate studies in human rights at the University of Melbourne.
- In March 2007 a delegation from the Supreme People's Procuratorate undertook a study visit to examine Australian measures for combating corrupt conduct by government officials.
- In March 2007 a delegation comprising officials from the Ministry of Justice and the Department of Justice of the Tibet Autonomous Region undertook a study visit to Australia. The focus of the visit was on measures to ensure the successful reintegration of prisoners into society following their release.
- In April 2007 a seminar on the Protection of the Rights of Juveniles in the Criminal Justice System was held in Nanjing, Jiangsu Province. The seminar, held in cooperation with the Supreme People's Procuratorate, examined human rights based approaches to the administration of juvenile justice, with particular emphasis of restorative justice and diversionary programs.
- In April 2007 a Juvenile Justice Seminar was held in Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, in cooperation with the Supreme People's Court. The seminar focused on protection of the rights of juveniles in the criminal justice system, including the role of children's courts.
- In March 2007 a Women's Law Workshop was held in Haikou, Hainan Province. The workshop, held in cooperation with the All-China Women's Federation, focused on implementation of China's Law on Protection of the Rights and Interests of Women. The workshop canvassed strategies for applying principles of human rights and gender equality into the implementation of the law.
- In April 2007 a Penitentiary Administration Seminar was held in Nanjing, Jiangsu Province. The seminar, held in cooperation with the Ministry of Public Security built on the December 2006 study visit to Australia and engaged a larger group of penitentiary officials in

discussion of human rights protection in the treatment of female and juvenile detainees.

- A human rights public education initiative was implemented in cooperation with the United Nations Association of China during the first half of 2007. This activity involved a national competition on human rights knowledge conducted through the national media in China.
- Two training programs on Human Rights and Family Planning were conducted during 2006-07 in cooperation with the National Population and Family Planning Commission. The training programs were held in Nanchang, Jiangxi Province in October 2006 and in Kunming, Yunnan Province, in March 2007. The training focused on measures for protecting and promoting human rights in the delivery of family planning and reproductive health services.

### ***Vietnam-Australia Human Rights Technical Cooperation Program***

HREOC also participates in the annual Australia-Vietnam Dialogue on International Organisations and Legal Issues, including Human Rights. The Commission attended the 2007 Dialogue held in Hanoi in April 2007.

A program of human rights technical cooperation with Vietnam was established as part of the dialogue and commenced in late 2006. The HRTC program with Vietnam focuses on four areas: access to justice; dissemination of information about legal rights and obligations; the rights of women; and raising awareness of international human rights treaty obligations. HRTC activities implemented in 2006-07 included the following:

- In October 2006 a delegation led by the Supreme People's Court of Vietnam undertook a two-week study visit to Australia. The 10 member delegation examined Australian laws, procedures and practices for promoting access to justice through court processes and in the legal system generally;
- In January 2007 a Seminar on International Human Rights Treaties was held in Hanoi. This activity was conducted in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The seminar examined the content of human rights treaties to which Vietnam is a party as well as practical measures for compliance with treaty obligations;
- In April 2007 a Seminar on Dissemination of Legal Information was held in Hanoi, in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice. The seminar provided capacity building for the ministry in its role of disseminating information to government officials and the general population about legal rights and responsibilities under Vietnamese law;

- In May 2007 a Train-the Trainer Workshop was held in Hanoi in cooperation with the Vietnam Women's Union. The theme was enhancing awareness of women's rights, and the activity aimed to strengthen the training and advocacy skills of local women's union staff; and
- In June 2007 a further Seminar on International Human Rights Treaties was conducted with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This seminar was held in Da Nang and provided training for government officials in the central provinces.

### ***Laos-Australia Human Rights Dialogue***

HREOC participated in the Laos-Australia Human Rights Dialogue meeting, held in Vientiane in October 2006.

### ***International Staff Exchanges***

Between 29 January 2007 and 9 February 2007 a senior lawyer from the legal section and a senior staff member from the complaints handling section participated in a staff exchange program with the National Human Rights Commission of India ('NHRC'). They met with a number of senior staff members of NHRC including the Joint Secretary of the Commission Ms Aruna Sharma, NHRC members and the Acting Chairman of the Commission Justice Patil. The HREOC staff also observed proceedings of the Full Commission and attended a NHRC hearing. They sat in on a hearing at the High Court of Delhi and the Supreme Court of Punjab.

The HREOC staff members met several non-government agencies working in human rights, including Mr Ravi Nair, Director of the South Asia Human Rights Documentation Centre and officers of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees. The NHRC also arranged for visits to other agencies such as the National Commission for Women, the National Commission for Minorities, National Commission for Scheduled Castes, the State Human Rights Commission of Punjab and Tihar Jail.

The exchange provided a valuable opportunity to learn about human rights issues in India and the role that the NHRC plays in the protection of these rights. The exchange encouraged the staff members to reflect upon HREOC's own practice by comparing the similarities and differences in the work of the NHRC and of HREOC.

### ***International Training and Consultation***

In mid 2006 the HREOC's Complaint Handling Section (CHS) was awarded a tender by the Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions to provide training for staff of the National Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM). This project was conducted as part of the Asia

Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institution's Professional Development Program which aims to provide staff of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) with training in core skill areas. The three-day course was developed in consultation with SUHAKAM to reflect the Malaysian legal context and relevant human rights issues. The training took place in Kuala Lumpur from 15 - 17 November 2006 and 23 staff from SUHAKAM attended the program. The CHS has conducted similar training for National Human Rights Institutions in Sri-Lanka, Thailand, Mongolia and the Philippines.

In early 2007 the Hong Kong Equal Opportunities Commission requested that HREOC's CHS develop and present training for its staff to assist them prepare for the introduction of race discrimination legislation in Hong Kong. The training was conducted in Hong Kong from 16 - 20 July 2007. The course focused on providing knowledge and skills relevant to the efficient and effective investigation and resolution of race discrimination complaints including skills related to effective communication and dispute resolution in cross cultural contexts.

### ***International visitors***

In addition to formal programs of bilateral technical cooperation, the Commission frequently receives international visitors and participates in meetings with representatives of organisations concerned with human rights. A summary of these meetings is given below.

- In July 2006 HREOC hosted a meeting with a delegation led by the Deputy Chairperson of the Vietnam Women's Union, Madame Nguyen Thi Thanh Hoa.
- In October 2006 the Commission met with the Vice-President of Vietnam Madame Truong My Hoa during her visit to Canberra.
- In October 2006 the Sex Discrimination Commissioner Pru Goward met with two political party General-Secretaries from Papua New Guinea, Ms Joyce Grant, Secretary-General, of the National Alliance (part of the governing coalition) and Ms Monica Hasimani, Secretary-General, PNG Greens Party. The women had been in Australia undertaking the Political Party Development Course conducted by the Centre of Democratic Institutions at the Australian National University with other political party leaders from South East Asia and the South Pacific. The visit to the Commission was organised by the federal Office for Women.
- In February 2007 the Sex and Age Discrimination Unit met with a 12 member delegation of Women Trade Union leaders from Japan. The Japan International Labour Foundation (JILAF) sent International Exchange Teams consisting of women trade union leaders of RENGO (Japanese Trade Union Confederation) in order to promote

international cooperation by exchanging views on labour, economic, social and gender equality issues.

- In May 2007 the Commission hosted a meeting with a delegation led by the Minister responsible for China's National Population and Family Planning Commission, Mr Zhang Weiqing.
- In June 2007 the Commission hosted a meeting with a delegation led by the Vice-President of the All-China Women's Federation, Madame Huang Qingyi.

### ***Hosting the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Asia Pacific Forum***

HREOC is hosting the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Asia Pacific Forum (APF) in Sydney from 24 to 27 September 2007.

As in previous years, there are several meetings held during this period. The meeting program is structured as follows:

- Day 1: Senior Executive Officers' Meeting
- Day 2: Forum Councillors' Annual General Meeting
- Days 3 and 4: Open Plenary Sessions
- Day 5 (optional): briefing sessions at HREOC

As the host institution, HREOC:

- chairs the meeting;
- hosts evening events for the meeting delegates;
- coordinates and stages the Opening Ceremony and dinner; and
- hosts briefing sessions for the ACJ and APF members at HREOC

HREOC staff have worked in close consultation with the APF secretariat over the last twelve months to assist in planning the logistics for the meeting and developing the meeting agenda.