



ASIA PACIFIC FORUM
ADVANCING HUMAN RIGHTS IN OUR REGION

Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions

Performance Review
1 July to 31 December 2010

Introduction

The Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions ('APF') is the regional network of national human rights institutions ('NHRIs') for Asia and the Pacific. The APF is currently comprised of the 17 NHRIs from **Afghanistan, Australia, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, New Zealand, Palestine, Philippines, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand** and **Timor-Leste** which, in total, have more than 130 Commission members and employ more than 3,000 staff. Further information on the APF and its individual members can be obtained from www.asiapacificforum.net.

The APF provides practical assistance and support to its individual member NHRIs to enable them to more effectively undertake their own human rights protection, monitoring, promotion and advocacy. This review covers the APF's activities from 1 July to 31 December 2010 to provide an ongoing measure of its performance. The APF uses a range of quantitative and qualitative tools to evaluate progress in achieving its strategic objectives. This assessment provides an interim half year measure of the APF's performance.

The object of the APF is to protect and promote the human rights of the people of the Asia Pacific region through its member institutions.

SUMMARY

Over the six months from July to December 2010 the APF:

- Continued to communicate effectively and took steps to further enhance communications via existing channels;
- Continued to deliver highly rated training and is now developing an innovative 'virtual learning environment' to increase participation and provide a wide range of resources that will empower members to deliver their own training;
- Provided valued advice on international standards applicable to the establishment and functioning of NHRIs; and
- Undertook advocacy on behalf of APF members in the review of the UN Human Rights Council and the work of the Commission on the Status of Women.

Activities

Strategic objective 1:

Enhance members' institutional capacity to promote and protect human rights

Enhancing members' institutional capacity to discharge their domestic responsibilities.

Indicator: *Training*

The APF implemented a range of institutional capacity development projects on issues such as trafficking, human rights defenders, migrant workers, NHRI-NGO working relationships, Indigenous rights, torture prevention and a 'foundation' course on NHRIs for new staff members. The APF, in partnership with the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), also continued to jointly implement its capacity assessment project. During the reporting period this joint APF-OHCHR-UNDP project was undertaken with the NHRI of Thailand.

The APF undertakes a 'blended' learning approach that combines both 'on-line' and 'face to face' training. Initially the APF contracted an external consultant for the running of the 'on-line' component. However participant feedback indicated dissatisfaction with this service due to limitations associated with the technology. In response the APF developed its own fully customised virtual learning environment (VLE) to enable it to run its own online training which takes into account the technical capacity and needs of its member institutions. This new VLE was piloted from October to December 2010 for a course on torture prevention. Participant's feedback to the pilot has been very positive rating the quality of all elements of the course at 4.2 out of 5. Importantly there has been a very high successful completion rate including for the online component.



Strategic objective 2: Enhance members' communication, cooperation and engagement

Members engaging with each other by effectively communicating and cooperating to develop common positions across the region.

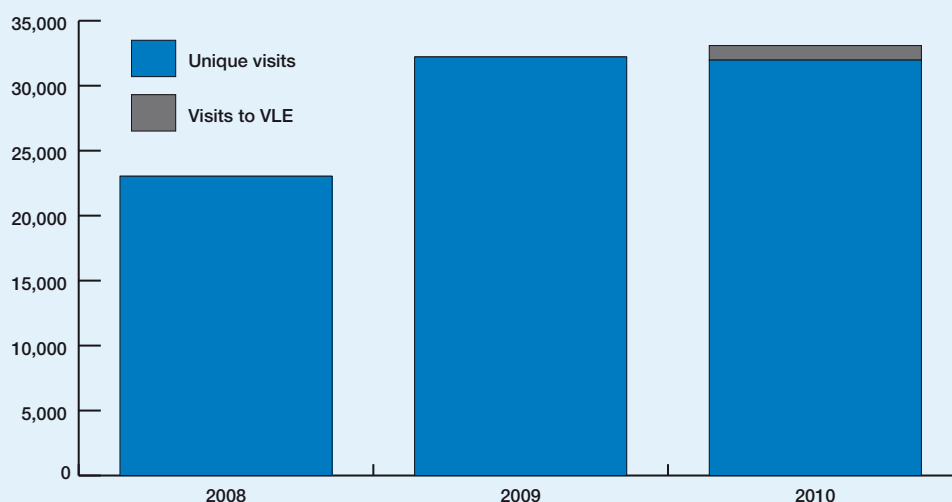
Indicator: *Communication*

Aside from its Annual Forum Council meeting, held in Indonesia in August 2010, the APF employs a number of communication channels to inform members on the role and function of NHRIs and to promote the activities of the APF. A critical channel is the APF website which provides a platform for news broadcasts, downloads of the APF's monthly bulletin, on-line secure networks for APF Senior Executive Officers and the APF's VLE.

In the period 1 July to 31 December 2010, there was an increase in visitors to the APF website by 2.7%. This increase is largely attributable to visits to the VLE during the period of its first online training program. The general trend of usage of the APF website indicates that the APF site continues to be well-utilised by stakeholders, with visitor numbers stabilising after a period of strong growth. However, it also highlights that the current review and redesign of the APF website is timely. The site was initially developed in 2007 and the upgrade will be completed before June 2011. The website upgrade will:

- Organise content in a way that better reflects the needs of different groups of users
- Better reflect the current work and focus of the APF
- Include more and stronger visual elements on the homepage
- Provide more content in languages other English.

Taken together, these features are designed to encourage more return visits from regular users, as well as draw in new visitors (particularly through providing information in other languages). As part of these changes, the APF will also bolster its current approach to stakeholder communication. In addition to the APF Bulletin (11 issues per year), the APF will develop the facility to send out an APF Update to subscribers, providing time-sensitive information about upcoming events, significant policy developments, training programs and employment opportunities. Again, it is anticipated that this approach will provide APF members and stakeholders with relevant and timely information, as well as drive more visitors to the APF site.



Strategic objective 3: Promote compliance with the Paris Principles

Making decision makers in the region aware of the international standards applicable to the establishment and functioning of NHRIs and of deficiencies in domestic legislation.

Indicator: *Advice*

The APF provides advice on the nature, status and accreditation of NHRIs to member institutions, governments and civil society. The APF also provides advice on issues of regional concern and on operational issues such as institutional strengthening, organisational structure, operational procedures and financial resources.

From July to December 2010 the APF provided advice to its member institutions from India, Korea and Jordan on the ICC re-accreditation process. Advice was also provided to the Governments of Mongolia, Philippines and Sri Lanka in relation to the appointment process to NHRIs.

Advice on international standards and the accreditation of NHRIs to the ICC was provided to the recently established NHRIs from Oman and Bangladesh.

Advice in relation to the establishment of NHRIs was provided to the governments of Iraq, Samoa and Vietnam and to UNDP in Cambodia.

The Advisory Council of Jurists recommendations to NHRIs on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity were delivered at the APF Forum Councillor meeting in August 2010.

Strategic objective 4: Engage with regional and international human rights mechanisms

Achieving a greater awareness of and compliance with human rights norms by advocating for members' participation, promoting APF policy positions and more effectively accessing international and regional human rights mechanisms.

Indicator: *Advocacy*

The APF advocates common APF member policy position in both international and regional human rights mechanisms. For example the APF developed policy positions on the United National Human Rights Council review which were adopted by all APF member institutions and subsequently adopted internationally by all NHRIs under the International Coordinating Committee of NHRIs (ICC). In October 2010, the APF and two representatives from its member institutions participated in the first session of the Working Group on the UN Human Right Council review process in Geneva. The representatives advocated the APF and ICC review proposals and were successful in gaining the support of a number of participating States. In December 2010, the APF participated in an Ambassadorial Retreat convened by the UNHRC President in Bangkok to continue advocacy on behalf of NHRIs.

In October 2010 a strategy paper for the advocacy campaign on the independent participation of NHRIs at the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), developed by the APF, was adopted by the ICC at its international conference. During this reporting period APF member NHRIs have acted to implement the strategy by engaging with their Governments on the participation of NHRIs at the CSW.

Strategic objective 5:
Effective, efficient and strategic management of the APF

Achieving an effective strategic and operational direction for the APF.

Indicator: *Strategy*

The APF delivered its planned activities for the six months from 1 July to 31 December 2010 on time and on budget. The APF also worked with its donors to implement the recommendations of a joint donor review to streamline and coordinate donor reporting requirements and timelines. One significant APF administrative change to assist in the coordination of donor reporting was the shifting of the APF's financial year to 1 July – 30 June period, to commence on 1 July 2011. The APF Secretariat has agreed with its external auditors on a management plan for the successful transition between the current and new financial year. All financial and statutory requirements have been fulfilled.

The APF renewed its funding agreements with two of its largest donors and entered into a new Memorandum of Understanding with the National Human Rights Commission of India, providing financial support to the APF for the following five years.

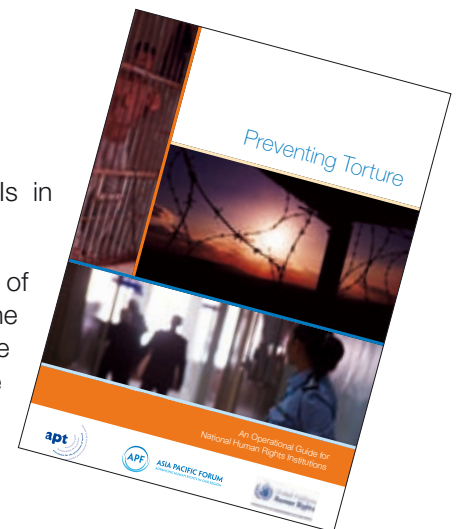
Case study: blended-learning

The APF has begun implementing an innovative approach to training which aims at creating a more in-depth learning experience for participants. This new approach involves a combination of online and face-to-face learning and the use of specially developed text and audio-visual materials is known as “blended-learning”.

PILOT BLENDED-LEARNING COURSE ON TORTURE PREVENTION

In partnership with the Association for the Prevention of Torture, the APF ran a pilot blended-learning course on the role of NHRIs in preventing torture from October to December 2010. The NHRIs of Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Timor-Leste were invited to participate in this sub-regional course. The core elements of the pilot course were:

1. An **online learning course** run from the APF’s newly developed ‘virtual learning environment’ (VLE), designed for the varying technical capacities of the Asia Pacific region. The online course equipped participants with knowledge on international laws, standards and NHRI good practices on the prevention of torture using:
 - Short assignments;
 - Online quizzes;
 - Forum discussions;
 - Scenarios posed by instructors.
2. The APF-APT-OHCHR ‘**Operational Guide** on the Role of NHRIs in Preventing Torture’ and associated DVD resources.
3. A **face-to-face workshop**, hosted by the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia, for 27 of the 30 participants who successfully completed the online course. This participatory learning experience consolidated the learning from the online course, helping participants to further internalise and apply the knowledge gained. Visits to immigration detention centres and a women’s prison built participants’ skills in monitoring places of detention to prevent torture and other ill-treatment.



By the end of the workshop participants had drafted action plans so their NHRIs could implement the knowledge from the blended-learning course and institutionalise preventive monitoring.

4. **Informal mentoring and advice** from course facilitators and networking amongst course participants after the workshop is enabled by APF's VLE. This allows participants to continue to exchange perspectives and to update each other on the implementation of their action plans.

EVALUATION

The participants' indicated that the blended-learning course was successful. The online course (in particular the discussions, assignments, online quizzes, the APF 'Operational Guide' and its associated documentary film) and the workshop were both assessed by the overwhelming majority of participants as being either "excellent" (5 points) or "very good" (4 points). The online course methodology itself also received scores between 4.2 and 4.3 out of 5.

OUTCOMES

There is early indication that the pilot blended-learning course has had a positive impact at the institutional level for the participating institutions. For example the Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines has mainstreamed the recommendations of the plan prepared during the workshop into the Commission's five-year strategic plan. Since sending participants to the course, the Chair of the Malaysian Commission has requested the assistance of the APF with a workshop aimed at encouraging Malaysian officials to ratify the *Convention Against Torture*.