

In this edition

- *APMA comes into being*
- *APMA Elects its first ever Executive Council*
- *The Vera Chirwa Award*
- *Global Campus Alumni Meeting & E.MA General Assembly 2014*
- *APMA Alumnus publishes his new book on Islamic Neo Fundamentalism in Jakarta*
- *Women's Rights in the Digital Age in Bangladesh*
- *Human Rights Film Festival in Pakistan*
- *Lesson learned from the Constituent Assembly's elections in Nepal*
- *In Conversation with Alumnus from Myanmar*
- *APMA's small acts to support Nepal relief and recovery*
- *Through the camera lens*

APMA comes into being

By: Mariah Grant



From 3-5 May 2014 the inaugural General Assembly of Alumni from the Master of Human Rights and Democratisation Asia Pacific (MHRD) was held in Bangkok, Thailand at the Hotel ibis Siam. In December 2013, then Alumni Coordinator Niaz Ahmed formed a working group of volunteers to plan and execute the General Assembly. The Alumni gathering was the culmination of five months hard work carried out by this working group of 12 MHRD graduates from the first three cohorts.

The working group also represented the diversity of MHRD graduates by bringing together Alumni from Pakistan, Bangladesh, the Philippines, Fiji, USA, Sri Lanka, India, and Australia. Given that these Alumni came from and were based in a range of countries, all planning took place using Skype and email correspondence.

Ultimately, 13 Alumni from all graduated cohorts attended the General Assembly in Bangkok including, Vasuki Jeyasankar, Ravi Prakash Vyas, Bun Souseila, Chaw Ei Win Zaw, Parvez Pirzado, Mariah Grant, Keerthi Pinnawala, Nalin Hewawasam, Zubaida Mannan, Niaz Ahmed, Siripa Anuntawong, Hnin Wut Yee, and Dewi Ratrawulan. Alumni and General Assembly working group members Annie Boud, Hassan Nasir, and Ilana Burness and recent MHRD graduate Ogo (Otgonchuluun Erdene) joined in via Skype.

Throughout the first day of the event on Saturday 3 May attendees introduced themselves to one another, some meeting for the first time and others getting

reacquainted with former classmates. Niaz also led a meeting to review the programme structure for the following day which included a presentation of the proposed Alumni association constitution to be developed further and voted on by those in attendance.

The majority of the following day, May 4, was dedicated to the proposed Alumni association's Governance Structure and Statutes developed into a working constitution. All of this required discussion and approval from the Alumni General Assembly in attendance in-person and remotely.

The day ended with the preliminary drafting of the constitution and the preparation of a strategic planning document with the first year's action points. With this, the newly created Asia Pacific Masters Alumni for human rights and democratization (APMA) came into being.

APMA Showcase event

Following the General Assembly in Bangkok, the APMA held a public event attended by current students of the MHRD programme at Mahidol University, including MD. Abu Bakar Siddique, Mukhtiar Ali, Aarti Sachdev, and Allain Fonte, as well as Professors Mike Hayes and Matthew Mullen. During this open event Alumni gave presentations on topics related to their fields of study or work in human rights and democratisation. Mariah Grant presented on "Anti-trafficking in Persons Framework: Challenges in Monitoring and Evaluation", Nalin Hewawasam presented on "Different Angles, Dimensions, and the Ratio of Vulnerability in Trafficking of Persons", and Sokseila Bun presented on "Children's Rights: Building a Standard Juvenile Justice System in Cambodia under the Best Interest of the Child Principle". A screening was then held of the award winning Al-Jazeera English documentary "Made in Bangladesh". MHRD Alumni Reza Lenin from Bangladesh was a researcher, fixer, and field producer on the documentary that investigated working conditions within the garment sector in Bangladesh. Throughout the day Alumni enjoyed the artwork of Vasuki Jeyasankar which was displayed in an exhibition at the meeting venue.

Upon completing the Alumni presentations and film screening a formal signing of the APMA constitution was held.

Mariah Grant is a graduate of MHRD Cohort 1 (2010-2011). She is also a member of APMA's Executive Council.



Highlighting rights of the Child in West Papua

By: Dewi Ratnawulan

To celebrate the International Human Rights Day, children from Aspen Community, Sorong, Papua, danced, sang, played music, and embraced their culture with the theme, "Let's hear what children say".

The activities were organised by Bunga Papua, (Aspaga Communities) with support from APMA and MHRD alumni from Indonesia. Attended by more than 200 member of communities, the celebration is also as a campaign on children's rights about respecting the views of the child. In order to know what is actually in the interest of the child it is logical to listen to him or her. "Love us, protect us and accompany us to learn, provide us a good education" are slogans on the posters reflecting the views of children about their rights.

The organiser also distributed the leaflet about how to avoid violence on children to the audience and passerby.

Dewi Ratnawulan is a graduate of MHRD Cohort 2 (2011-2011). She is also a member of APMA's Executive Council.



APMA Elects its first ever Executive Council

By: Parvez Pirzado, Ahmad Saleem and Chaw Ei

The first ever election of the “Asia Pacific Masters Alumni for Human Rights and Democratisation (APMA)” was conducted in June 2014. As per APMA's constitution a three member committee was required to conduct the election of the alumni. The committee was made up of Alumni volunteers, Ahmed Saleem, Chaw Ei, and Parvez Pirzado.

In this role, committee announced the call for nominations to the APMA's following Executive Council positions: President, General Secretary, Treasurer and four Executive Members.

Concurrent to the candidate nomination, a voters' registration process began. To be eligible for voting and candidacy the following criteria was used: “the voter must be a current member of the Alumni (must be a graduate of the MHRD programme or have completed all academic requirements for graduation). The election was conducted online by using “Survey Monkey”. Out of the total 37 registered members, 28 voted representing a 76 per cent voter turnout.

With this, the APMA had its Executive Council which has tenure of two years.

Parvez Pirzado is a graduate of MHRD Cohort 1 (2010-2012) and currently works with USAID in Pakistan. Ahmad Saleem is graduate of MHRD Cohort 3 (2012-13) whereas Chaw Ei graduated from Cohort 1(2010-2011).

First Elected Executive Council of APMA



Niaz Ahmed Kandhir
President



Ravi Prakash Vyas
General Secretary



Keerthi Pinnawala
Treasurer



Ilana Harriet Burness
Executive Member



Hassan Nasir Mirbahar
Executive Member



Mariah Elizabeth Grant
Executive Member



Dewi Ratnawulan
Executive Member

The Vera Chirwa Award

By: Romola Adeola

It is with pleasure that I contribute to this edition of your newsletter. I am indeed very grateful to Niaz and Hassan and to the members of the Asia-Pacific Alumni Programme. In 2006, on the occasion of the Centre for Human Rights being awarded the UNESCO Prize for human rights education, the Vera Chirwa Award was instituted. It was thought needful to recognise alumni of the Masters in Human Rights and Democratisation in Africa (HRDA) who have made positive contributions to human rights in Africa.



Vira Chirwa

The Vera Chirwa Award recognises alumni of the HRDA Masters who have made significant contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights on the African continent. The Award is named after Madam Vera Chirwa, a Malawian human rights activist who with her husband, Orton Chirwa, fought for human rights and democracy in Malawi.

Vera and Orton Chirwa had led the Malawi Freedom Movement in exile after they fell out with the dictatorship of Hastings Kamuzu Banda, shortly after Malawi attained independence in 1964. They were abducted from Zambia by Malawian security agents on Christmas Eve 1981. After an unfair trial before a traditional court they were sentenced to death. When Vera Chirwa asked the Magistrate what she was accused of, he answered: "Nothing, but you are a culprit!" The treatment that the Chirwas received in prison contributed to Orton Chirwa's death. They were tortured, often kept in leg irons, and they received inadequate food and medical attention when needed.

Although they were in the same prison, Vera was allowed to see her husband only once, shortly before his death. She was not allowed to attend his funeral. The struggle for human rights and democracy was met with violent repression. In 1993, President Banda started to give in to international pressure, and Vera Chirwa was released. A new constitution was adopted, which allowed for multi-party democracy. Vera Chirwa established herself as a leading voice for human rights in Malawi and started a human rights NGO called Malawi Centre for Advice, Research and Education on Rights (CARER).

She became a member of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in 1999 and served as its Rapporteur on Prisons and Conditions of Detention in Africa. She retired from the African Commission in 2005, but remains a human rights champion in her home country, across the continent and the globe. Vera Chirwa serves as an inspiration to human rights advocate in Africa. The **Vera Chirwa Human Rights Prize** was instituted in recognition of her personal sacrifice and singular contribution to the struggle for human rights in Africa.

Since inception, 10 alumni of the HRDA Masters have won the award. This year, the Vera Chirwa Award was presented to Ms Leda Hasila Limann who in 2003 completed the HRDA Masters. Leda Hasila Limann was born in Geneva in 1973 to the family of a Ghanaian diplomat while in Geneva.

Her father went on to become the President of Ghana in 1979 and although the life of a President's daughter came with pomp and pageantry, Leda's family taught her differently.

Her parents instilled the virtue that life was not all roses and that it was important to live a life of sacrifice and consider the haves-not in the society! Leda went on to emulate that life of sacrifice in pursuit of social development. The 2014 Vera Chirwa Award was presented to Leda in recognition of her contribution to fostering peace and unity in Darfur and South Sudan and also for her contribution to the edification of people through Christian ministry, personal leadership and financial support.

Romola Adeola is graduate of African Masters in Human Right and Democratisation (HRDA). She is also the president of HRD Alumni.



Leda Hasila Limann, one of the recipients of the Vera Chirwa Award

Global Campus Alumni Meeting & E.MA General Assembly 2014

By: Annabel Boud

Friday 16th May & Saturday 17th May, 2014

EU Commission, Building Breydal, & Universite Libre de Bruxelles (ULB). Brussels

The second annual meeting of the Global Campus Alumni (GCA) took place at the European Commission in Brussels on Friday 16 May 2014.

The meeting was scheduled as part of a larger two-day event organised by the E.MA Alumni (European Masters Alumni) programme incorporating their annual General Assembly as well as various opportunities for members across the alumni associations to interact. Delegates from all six Global Campus Alumni associations were present, the newly established APMA programme was formally represented by Niaz Ahmed.

Professor Horst Fischer, Chair of the Global Campus and Jean-Louis Ville, Head of Unit at EuropeAid's Governance, Democracy, Gender and Human Rights Unit welcomed participants to Brussels and launched a full day of presentations from GCA representatives and a panel discussion on the *Human Rights Based Approach to Development* with contribution from organisations such as Amnesty, EEAS and DEVCO as well as the GCA representatives.

The afternoon was concluded with 'speed mentoring' sessions which enabled those alumni in senior or established careers to advise those starting out, or thinking of a change in career, with advice on how they have shaped fulfilling careers in the Human Rights sector.

After a merry evening out in the heart of the European quarter of Brussels, day two of the event commenced at the Universite Libre de Bruxelles (ULB). Though this day concentrated on the business of the E.MA association it did provide further opportunity to discuss the GCA in context and to look towards the future of both associations.

A poster session on strategies to strengthen the alumni associations was particularly insightful.

The day concluded with the launch of the 'Migrants Matter' campaign (<http://migrants-matter.blogspot.co.uk>) created by 2013/2014 current students of the E.MA programme. The following day, GCA representatives and E.MA Alumni members went to cheer up the current students at Brussels Marathon, where students were running "create awareness about migrant workers' rights".

During the GCA representatives' meeting, attendees decided that the organizational structure of the GCA will be formalised through registration as a non-profit organization in Brussels. Since E.MA Alumni takes the lead on connecting with GCA representatives, this association was given the

mandate to look after the management and organisation in the interim period.

The date and location of the 2015 GCA Meeting will be communicated to all members and as many as possible are encouraged to attend to ensure the breadth of knowledge and experience across the global partnership continues.

Since the event in May, the newly MENA regional Masters programme has brought the number of programmes to seven:



Participants of the GCA event

- *Master of Human Rights & Democratisation in Asia and Pacific Regional Program*
- *European Master's Degree in Human Rights and Democratisation*
- *LLM/MPhil (Human Rights & Democratisation in Africa)*
- *European Regional Master's Degree in Democracy and Human Rights in South East Europe*
- *Regional Master's Programme on Human Rights and Democratisation for Latin America and the Caribbean*
- *Human Rights and Democratization in Eastern Partnership Countries*
- *MENA Regional Master between Morocco, Tunisia, Palestine, Lebanon & Italy*

For further information:

<http://www.emalumniassociation.org/>

[Http://www.eiuc.org/education/global-campus-regional-masters/news-detail/items/gc-alumni-meeting-and-ema-general-assembly.html](http://www.eiuc.org/education/global-campus-regional-masters/news-detail/items/gc-alumni-meeting-and-ema-general-assembly.html)

Annabel Boud is a graduate of MHRD Cohort 2 (2011-2012). She currently works for the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK

APMA Alumnus publishes his new book on Islamic Neo Fundamentalism in Jakarta

By: Ridwan

My observations and discussion with colleagues of Islamic moderate groups in Indonesia led to a worrying discovery that several office mosques have become a channel of voicing and preaching radical ideas, such as promoting Islamic caliphate and rejecting democracy. My book focuses on the infiltration of radical Islam in the office mosque which has become a major concern among the moderate groups.

information. It didn't attract a rigorous response from the office mosques primarily because of the fact that it was published in English.

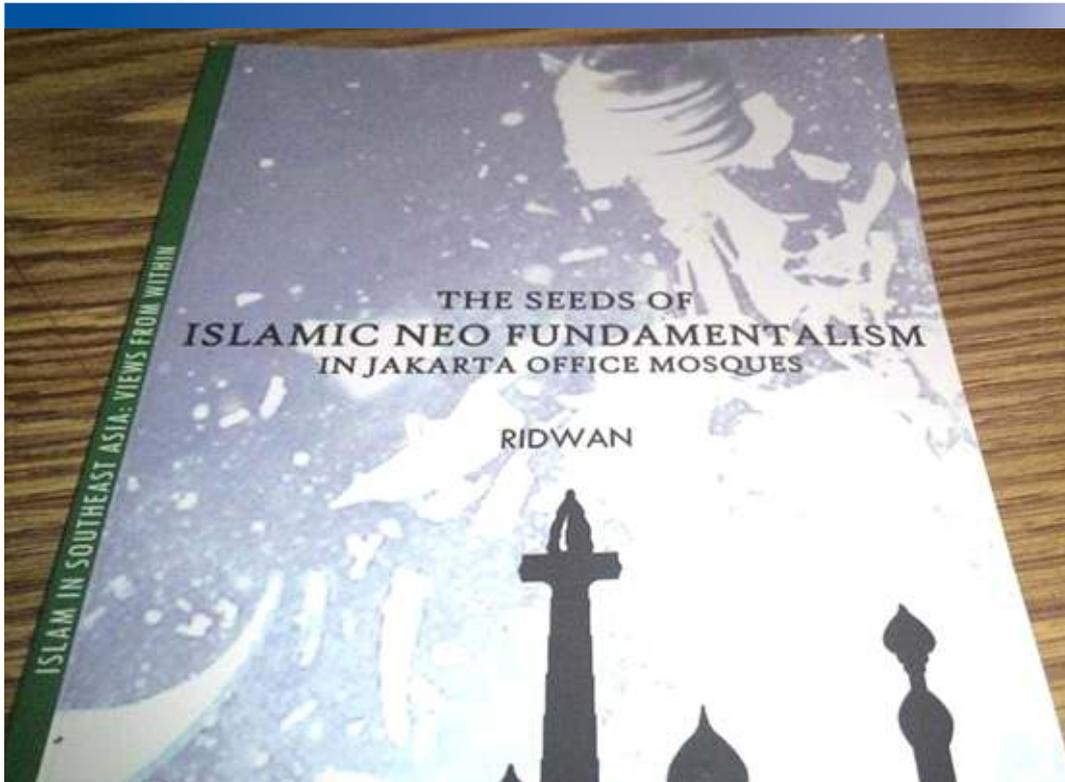
Indonesia has been facing the problem of radicalism since the Reformation Era 1998. Besides Indonesia, the issue of radicalisation has become severe in some other parts of South East Asia like Deep-South Thailand and

Mindanao, Philippines. The findings of this research can be used as a foundation for the similar studies in the region. I have not discussed the influence of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) toward young Muslims in this book.

Writing this book has contributed immensely towards my personal learning goals. It has given me the insight and knowledge about the phenomenon of neo-fundamentalism in Indonesia. Based on the findings of my book, I am planning to conduct a research on "Transnational Islam in Papua and its impact toward peace and

human rights" as part of my PhD dissertation. Until I get a scholarship to pursue that, I will continue my work as young peacebuilder and religious leader dedicated to interfaith understanding, harmony and sustainable peace in Papua. As a member of National Interfaith Network, my objective is to contribute towards building a society where people, regardless of their religion and ethnicity, can live in harmony.

Ridwan is a lecturer at the International Relations Department of The faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Science and Technology of Jayapura, and University of YAPIS and STIMIK Jayapura, Papua. He has worked for the Centre for the Study of Religion and Culture (CSRC) UIN Siarif Hidayatullah Jakarta. He is an MHRD alumnus of 2011-12 session. He is currently running a Non-Government Organization for peace named Papua Peace and Development Action Institute.



I was interested in digging into this phenomenon further for a better understanding of the problem and, also to present some recommendations to minimize the risks posed by this situation. I was fortunate to secure the funding for this project from The Association of Muslim Action Network (AMAN) in Bangkok under their program called AMAN Research Fellow.

My next concern was to conduct my research and observation in a manner which does not draw any confrontation with the mosque managers. I established my initial contact carefully and built their confidence on me as a religious scholar gradually before I could start any conversation on Neo Fundamentalism.

Recommendations are directed to the relevant authorities like the ministry of religious affairs to take this issue seriously and deal with it urgently. I have also shared the summary of this book with various recognised scholarly journals to share and disseminate the

Women's Rights in the Digital Age in Bangladesh

By: Rezaur Rahman Lenin

On the eve of International Women's Day, 8 March 2015, Law Life Culture, Faculty of Law, Eastern University and Asia Pacific Masters Alumni for Human Rights and Democratisation (APMA) jointly arranged a Public Dialogue at the Eastern University, Dhaka. Formally called 'Women's Rights Debates in the Digital Age: Let's Picture it in Bangladesh', the programme title and concepts also coincided with the theme of this year's International Women's Day, which is the clarion call of the UN Women's Beijing+20 campaign "Empowering Women, Empowering Humanity: Picture it!". The programme reflected how the use of digitised communication and social media among 'Young Bangladeshi Women' can be situated and assessed in the present political context of Bangladesh. It is also important to note that this event had been made possible where there are only a few 'digital haves', therefore, these following conversations and analysis are not fully inclusive.

Md. Abu Bakar Siddique, Lecturer at the Faculty of Law, Eastern University as well as APMA alum, welcomed the guests and audience to this seminar. More than 160 persons including three MHRD alumni and a prospective student, as well as academics, rights activists, lawyers, and human rights professionals attended the discussion session and spoke about contemporary issues of women's rights in the digital hemisphere.

Addressing as keynote speaker, Ms. Hana Shams Ahmed, a writer and activist of International Chittagong Hill Tracks Commission, emphasised the salient features of social media and the role of women in establishing Digital Bangladesh. She underscored how the term 'technology' is still regarded as the domain of men. From her point of view, the usage of social media is still regarded as the luxurious option in the society, for which, the urban and middle class women in the country are lagging behind.

Afterwards, the open discussion was presided by Dr. Borhan Uddin Khan, Professor and Chairman, Department of Law, University of Dhaka and Advisor of the Faculty of Law, Eastern University. Dr. Sadeka Halim, Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Dhaka; Dr. Shahnaz Huda, Professor,



Department of Law, University of Dhaka.; Ms. Chaumtoli Huq, Senior Research Fellow, The American Institute for Bangladesh Studies (AIBS) and Ms. Tasaffy Hossain, Freelance Advocate for Human and Gender rights and founder of the VDAY Dhaka were among other distinguished discussants.

Participants and organisers also acknowledged the serious need for comprehensive applied research to assess the emerging and crucial issues for women in digital space and how the use of ICT can both open up new possibilities for activism and agency. The potential themes which were highlighted for further research include: 'civic participation of Women and ICT access'; 'Women's empowerment and digital divide'; 'Identity and representational politics'; 'free speech and online censorship in public sphere'; the debates between 'communication surveillance vs. right to privacy' and last but not least 'tolerance vs. aggressiveness' in acknowledging the potential of young women's use of Information and Communication technology (ICTs) and seeking to assess its effects in realistic ways.

In his closing remarks, Mr. Rezaur Rahman Lenin, the Executive Director of Law Life Culture (LLC) and member of APMA called for multidisciplinary actions to respect and protect women's rights and aspired to move further development of the society.

Rezaur Rahman Lenin is member of APMA and completed his MHRD in 2013-14. The event was partially funded by APMA.



Human Rights Film Festival in Pakistan

By: Niaz Ahmed Kandhir

On 13 December 2014 in Islamabad, Pakistan Six human rights films covering topics including, rights of minorities, labor rights, tribal clashes, women in police force and rights of transgender communities were screened at a “Human Rights Film Festival”.

The festival was arranged by Asia Pacific Masters Alumni for Human Rights and Democratisation (APMA) in collaboration with Riphah Institute Media Sciences and Riphah Institute of Public Policy.

The festival Director Dr. Rashid Aftab of Riphah Institute of Public Policy said that the Riphah University and its various institutes were open for collaboration with civil society institutions as it can bring academia and practice together. “Films are effective means of promotion and protection of human rights and visual arts can bring life to abstract ideas of human rights” he said.

APMA President Niaz Ahmed said that alumni initiatives were important tools to transfer benefits of academic programmes to the next generations. “Each year on human rights day, we bring together graduates of the programme from Pakistan to present our work to wider audience, so that we can expand our network and find new collaborators” he said. Niaz noted that this was the first human rights film festival arranged by alumni and it will be arranged annually.

The selection of films was a combination of those produced with contributions of the alumni as well as by renowned filmmakers, including Oscar winner Sharmeen Obaid.

The films shown included:

“**The Tribal Trouble**”, a documentary about consequences of tribal conflicts in North Sindh. It is based on a research study with the similar title “The Tribal Trouble: Economic, Social and Cultural Impact of Conflicts in North Sindh”. MHRD alum from 2011-12 Hassan Nasir Mirbahar was the lead researcher for this documentary.

The “**Invisible Democrats**”, is a documentary exposing the discrimination inflicted on the transgender community of Pakistan, who are largely unrepresented in leadership, exploited, ignored and looked down upon in society. This documentary is directed by MHRD student (2014-15) Nisar Ahmed.

“**Humaira: The Game Changer**” was directed by Oscar-winning filmmaker Sharmeen Obaid- Chinoy as part of the CHIME FOR CHANGE campaign. In her second film for CHIME, Ms. Obaid-Chinoy chose to focus on 27-year-old education advocate, Humaira Bachal. Ms. Bachal's story was first told in “Humaira: The Dream Catcher”, which reflected on Humaira's path to building her “Dream Model Street School” in the slums of Karachi, Pakistan, where education for girls is a taboo and the literacy rate among girls is only 15 percent.

“Made in Bangladesh” is an award winning documentary produced by Al-Jazeera English. It is based on investigation regarding factory fires in Bangladesh. Al-Jazeera investigated if retailers like Walmart and GAP know where their clothes are being made. In November 2012, a fire at the Tazreen Fashions factory in Bangladesh killed at least 112 people. “Made in Bangladesh” has won a number of international awards including Peabody Award, J F Kennedy Award and Emmy Award. MHRD alum (2013-14) from Bangladesh Reza ur Rahman assisted Al-Jazeera team as researcher, field producer and fixer.

“Women's Role in Security and Justice” is documentary that highlights the peacebuilding efforts of women in Khyber Pakthunkhwa, a predominantly male dominated society.

“Mutasareen” was awarded first prize by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) under the category of films on minority rights. It was made by contestants from Islamia University Bahawalpur. This was produced as part of a videography contest for university and College Students (in Punjab) as an advocacy campaign on the themes of democratic development and the rights of women, children and minorities.

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Rezaur Rahman Lenin speaking with audience in Pakistan over Skype from Bangladesh

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Niaz Ahmed Kandhir is a graduate of MHRD Cohort 1 (2010-2011). He is currently President of APMA's Executive Council.

Opinion Piece

Lesson learned from the Constituent Assembly's elections in Nepal

By: Sushila Karki

Nepalese people have experienced two elections subsequently in the year 2008 and 2013. The 2008 election emerged as an end of the autocratic regime, the drafting of the constitution (as mentioned under the Interim Constitution of 2007), together with the formation of federal state addressing the peace process in Nepal. Unfortunately, Constituent Assembly (CA) could not promulgate the new constitution as desired even though the formation of the assembly was correct.

The entire tenure of the CA was seen consisting of political turmoil with four unstable governments. With the every change of the government, people of Nepal could not see the government working for aspirations of the people and for national interests. Even after the extensions of the CA for fourth time which was considered to be economically unaffordable for the country like Nepal, the assembly was again extended for another three months. But, at the end on 24th May 2012, the Supreme Court of Nepal ruled a further extension as "unconstitutional and a fresh mandate was necessary".

On 28th May, Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, the then Prime Minister declared dissolution of assembly and appointed himself as head of caretaker government until next election on 22 Nov 2013. The demise of the assembly without drafting of the constitution proved that the political parties worked not in favour of national interest. This was actually not the failure of the political process, but in reality the failure of political parties and their leadership who actually could not arrive in common consensus after four years of wrangling and extensions of the CA term.

There was no any other way out than holding the election to seek fresh mandate from the people, who were in great turmoil and confused since last four years. Additionally, the new constitution must be written incorporating the principle of democracy, protection of the inalienable rights of the individuals, national reconciliation and national sovereignty. Nepalese people have cast the vote again for second time and provided fresh mandate to constituent assembly on 19 Nov 2013. After almost a year of the election, development of the consensus among the political parties is still stagnated. As the final deadline of the drafting of the constitution on January 22 was approaching our political parties were still struggling for consensus and could not come to consensus for a long time.

The history shows, until 2007 Nepal has undergone through absolute autocracy to dynastic regimes namely the Rana,

Malla and most recently the Shah Dynasty and acquired its political legacy. The people of Nepal were under a strict "Panchayat regime" until the deposing of the last king of the nation, King Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah. After the royal coup in 1960, which abolished the democratically elected parliament, King Mahendra and his son King Birendra (from 1972) ruled Nepal with absolute authority under the guise of a "panchayat democracy". Eventually the autocratic power's exclusion of the people from the governance system and absence of recognition of democracy led the country to the outbreak of the 1990 revolution in Nepal. It is said that this brought the "dream of democracy for each and every citizen of Nepal to be free and rule by them. The preamble of the constitution established the people of the country as sovereign and the governance system under the constitution was based upon the popular will of the people.

However, the 1990 constitution also came under criticism, the first on the drafting process which came to be widely criticised for its exclusivity. The preamble defines Nepal as a Hindu Kingdom. The Constitution Drafting Commission also received submissions from the public, the vast majority concerning ethnic, linguistic and religious issues, but it neither publicly acknowledged nor incorporated. Secondly, the constitution failed to stabilise the relations between the monarchy and democratic political forces. King Birendra hence used the constitution as a means of acquiring substantive power as executive head of the State (International Crisis Group Report 2006). The political leaders during this time showed no intention to intervene and remained quiet. Due to this scenario the CPN Maoist in 1995 declared war against the tyranny and centralised power of the government.

The war continued for almost more than a decade that took away lives of people including maoist combatants, security forces. Later, 12-points agreement between the big political parties Nepali Congress, CPN-UML and CPN-Maoist brought the end of war leading to a peace process. One among the 12-points agreement was the formation of inclusive government with ethnical, lingual representation. Hence, the norms of the first election after people's war in 2007 were none other than addressing the national interests forming a consensus government with inclusivity. In 2008 election, the people of Nepal elected CPN-Maoist as biggest political party with the hope that their mandate would be of national interest. However, the biggest political parties failed to work for the national interests and could not form consensus government

and draft the constitution.

On 19 Nov 2013, the second election of the CA was held that took quite a long after the dissolutions of first CA on 28 May 2012. The political parties could not agree on a power sharing arrangement to administer new election. The solution came in March 2013 with a formation of non-party government of bureaucrats, led by Chief Justice Hon'ble Khil Raj Regmi to continue both political and peace process. The act was hugely condemned by various sectors on the basis of fundamental principles of constitution i.e. separation of the power between judiciary and executive. At last election was held following the same rules as mentioned under Interim Constitution of 2007, that includes First Past The Post (FPTP), Proportional Representation (PR).

However, the result of this year election was major turn over in Nepalese political history. The biggest parties of the 2008 elections defeated in most constituencies and succeed to place themselves in third position whereas, many senior leaders of Congress and the UML, who has lost in the 2008, were elected in this election. The outcomes was quite predictable as the first tenure of constituent assembly under biggest winning party's leadership has already been dissolved.

In a nutshell, both the constituent assembly elections are actually huge lesson learned to all political parties in Nepal. Nepalese people with huge hopes and aspirations supported the political party in 2008 election who were raising the voice of voiceless, ensuring the participation of all and working for the national interest. As this constituent assembly could not work for the people, for the nation, people sought for fresh mandate and follow the legacy of the nation. Point to be noted in all these situations people of Nepal always demand for inclusivity, ensuring equal and meaningful participation which can never be possible without consensus government. If the current government do not work for the national interest there might be chances of huge crisis in Nepal.

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In 2008 election, the people of Nepal elected CPN- Maoist as biggest political party with the hope that their mandate would be of national interest. However, the biggest political parties failed to work for the national interests and could not form consensus government and draft the constitution.

On 19 Nov 2013, the second election of the CA was held that took quite a long after the dissolutions of the first CA on 28 May 2012. The political parties could not agree on a power sharing arrangement to administer new election.

The solution came in March 2013 with a formation of non-party government of bureaucrats, led by Chief Justice Honourable Khil Raj Regmi to continue both political and peace process. The act was hugely condemned by various sectors on the basis of fundamental principles of constitution i.e. separation of the power between judiciary and executive. At last election was held following the same rules as mentioned under Interim Constitution of 2007, that includes First Past The Post (FPTP) and Proportional Representation (PR).

However, the result of this year election was major turn over in Nepalese political history. The biggest parties of the 2008 elections defeated in most constituencies and succeed to place themselves in third position whereas, many senior leaders of Congress and the UML, who has lost in the 2008, were elected in this election. The outcomes was quite predictable as the first tenure of constituent assembly under biggest winning party's leadership has already been dissolved.

In a nutshell, both the constituent assembly elections are actually huge lesson learned to all political parties in Nepal. Nepalese people with huge hopes and aspirations supported the political party in 2008 election who were raising the voice of voiceless, ensuring the participation of all and working for the national interest.

As this constituent assembly could not work for the people, for the nation, people sought for fresh mandate and follow the legacy of the nation. Point to be noted in all these situations people of Nepal always demand for inclusivity, ensuring equal and meaningful participation which can never be possible without consensus government. If the current government did not work for the national interest there might be chances of huge crisis in Nepal.

Sushila Karki is a graduate of MHRD Cohort 4 (2013-2014). She practices law in Nepal.

In Conversation with Alumnus from Myanmar

Aung Myo Oo, also known with his short and cool name KO A!, graduated as part of 2011-12 cohort of MHRD. He comes from Arakan state in Myanmar. Before joining MHRD, he did his undergrad study at Mahidol University's International College in Thailand from 2007 through 2010. As part of MHRD, he went to University of Colombo Sri Lanka for his second semester. He did his internship at Center for Poverty Analysis and wrote a scholarly paper on 'Nexus between Migration and Poverty in Sri Lanka'. He talked to Hassan Nasir Mirbahar about his post MHRD work.

HNM: Tell us what have you been doing after finishing your Master in Human Rights and Democratisation?

Ko A: It was an exciting time when I came back to Myanmar after 5 years. The country had just opened its door to outside world and there were many things to do for the people like me. A civil discourse was initiated around the importance of rule of law, civil society development, election, land issues, economic development and many other issues. I first got a job as a policy officer at Food Security Working Group and later moved to International Republican Institute as a programme officer, my current employer.

HNM: What are your responsibilities as a program officer at IRI?

KO: At IRI, our major focus is the capacity building of Myanmar's political parties regarding organizational structure and campaign management. I facilitate the training sessions and do interpretation.

HNM: How have the studies under MHRD helped you in advancing your career?

KO A: MHRD is proven to be a giant leap towards enhancing my knowledge and transforming my worldview. I grew up as a nationalist in a remote part of Myanmar and MHRD taught me to see things from varying perspectives. This helps me to communicate and connect better with different people. A lot of the times, I can understand outside perspectives and want to interpret those perspectives in Myanmar's context.

This helps me work well with both foreign and local partners. I am now working for an international organization but I always try to consider local context.

HNM: Did your internship help you to prepare for the career ahead of you? In what ways?

KO A: Internship placement was yet another intellectually

stimulating experience. I interned at Center for Poverty Analysis, a research organisation. Their professionalism was of the highest standards. I learnt what a democratic organisational structure and culture feels like and how it empowers its stakeholders through an open communication.

The organisation also emphasised on the personal and professional growth of its team members. All of us enjoyed enough opportunities to learn and excel in one



thematic area. I focused on migration and if I stayed there longer, I could have become an expert on migration issues.

HNM: What's up on the personal front? I heard you got married.

KO A: Yes, I got married last year and we were blessed a baby boy in December 2014, exciting times!.

HNM: Any shout-outs (message) to any of your MHRD friends?

I reckon people join MHRD for different reasons. I met many hard-core human rights practitioners as well as I made friends with those who focused on research. I joined MHRD to add philosophical spices to my knowledge foundation but it also helped me to be a better practitioner. I shall always remain thankful to my professors and my friends from MHRD for sharing their knowledge and experiences. This was one of the most well spent years of my life.

APMA's small acts to support Nepal relief and recovery

Following the devastating earthquake on 25 April 2015 in Nepal, the APMA members started work to support the relief and recovery efforts. Many of the APMA members contacted Nepal-based alumni by email and social media to determine ways to help. The Executive Council set up a small fund of 1200 Euros to contribute to any urgent needs of those on the ground. Others initiated small fund raising activities including:

Building Back Better Nepal with Solar Power

by: Sushila Karki, Cohort 3

The Alternative Energy Promotion Centre (APEC), a government institution in Nepal has estimated 239 Micro Hydro Power plants (that provided decentralised renewable energy) were damaged, with many completely shut down, during and following the earthquakes. This left 60,713 households in 11 districts of Nepal without access to electricity. To respond, Sushila and her colleagues partnered with Gham Power Nepal and Helambu Education Livelihood Programme in Sindhupalchowk to provide and install solar panels.

To support this initiative Direct Bank Account donations can be made to:

- o Name of Bank: Mega Bank Nepal Limited
- o Account No. 0050010105867
- o Swift Code: MBNLNPKA
- o Branch: Kathmandu

In the initial phase, the team has managed to install solar panels in five schools outside Kathmandu valley and more teams are on the ground to install them in five more schools.

Home-made cakes worth 300 kg of rice

by: Otgonchuluun Erdene



My friend and I baked sponge and chocolate cakes to auction off at three meetings of Amnesty International Mongolia including the All Members' meeting on 28 May 2015 celebrating the birthday of Amnesty International. The total proceeds worth MNT 261,000.00 (USD 110) were handed over to the Nepalese delegation at the International Council Meeting (Dublin) in August 2015.

They say 'sharing is caring' in Asia. So what can USD 110 be translated into? It is worth 3 CGI sheets to help our Nepali

friends during the monsoon season or 300 kilograms of rice, one of the major food staples in Nepal.

I would call on whoever reads my fund-raising story, please continue donating/raising funds for people of Nepal, as well as to its infrastructure and world heritage sites. There are no such notions as 'little and a little'. Everyone and everything matters!

Otgonchuluun Erdene is graduate of MHRD Cohort 3 (2012-2013). She is currently based in Mongolia



Through the camera lens

By: Hugh Tuckfield & Natalia (Nellie) Lebau

In 2014, MHRD graduate Hugh Tuckfield (2012-'13) and his wife, Nellie LeBeau Tuckfield, lived and worked in Nepal and Bangladesh researching and documenting the lives of individuals in protracted refugee and stateless situations. Hugh's background is in law and economics; his MHRD dissertation examined the influence of United States anti-human trafficking legislation on Nepal.

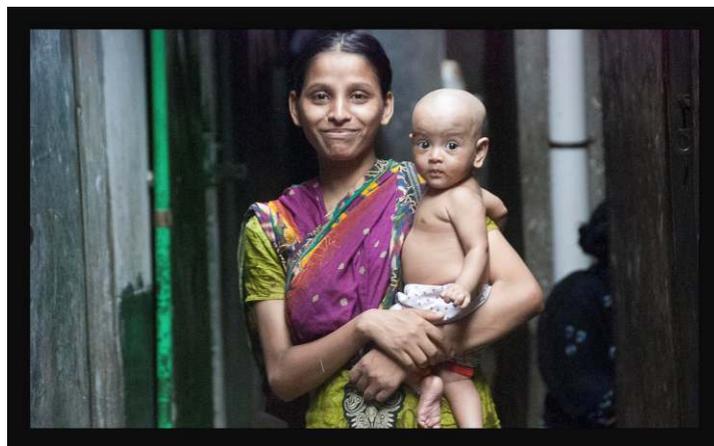
He is presently a PhD student in the University's Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences studying protracted refugee situations in Nepal and Bangladesh. Whilst in Nepal, Hugh was a visiting lecturer at the Kathmandu School of Law and served as a consultant to the UN and several national and international NGOs. Nellie has developed human rights empowerment, education, and conflict resolution programmes alongside at-risk communities in several countries, with an emphasis on displacement and shelter.

Hugh and Nellie also worked on anti human trafficking projects targeting orphanages and children's homes in Nepal, and engaged in advocacy for the rights of urban refugees in Nepal seeking resettlement in Australia. In 2014 they travelled to Dhaka, Bangladesh to research and document the lives of Dhaka's climate change refugees and the stranded Pakistanis in Camp Geneva.

An estimated seven million people, representing 40 per cent of Dhaka's total population, live in the overcrowded slums, riverbanks, parks and train stations of the city. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) and UN Habitat have estimated that 70 per cent of these seven million residents have arrived in Dhaka as a consequence of climate change. Floods, droughts, sea-rise, and cyclones throughout Bangladesh ruin livelihoods and force a vast migration into the city.

Those without shelter are the pavement dwellers of Dhaka, working as rickshaw drivers, vegetable sellers, in

garment factories, and as recyclers. There is no official Bangladesh state policy to address the lack of housing in Dhaka, yet over 400,000 individuals arrive in Dhaka every year seeking housing, and work, as well as refuge.



Many of the Stranded Pakistanis of Bangladesh supported West Pakistan during the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971. After their defeat, almost one million of the Urdu speakers remained stranded in Bangladesh and placed in camps; most prevented from entering Pakistan, leaving Bangladesh, or receiving Bangladesh statehood. 45 years later, these Stranded Pakistanis lack the practical or legal right to access work, education, health care, or participate in any life outside the camps, despite a recent ruling that grants a percentage of them statehood. Hugh explains:

“Many photographs we saw of refugees, including the climate refugees and Stranded Pakistanis in Dhaka are high-contrast, black and white images that have the potential to magnify and emphasize the perception of suffering, which can dehumanize the subjects of the photographs and neglect other aspects of their true identity.

This can create a disconnect between the viewer of the image and the victims of human rights violations. When we were in Dhaka we observed individuals with identities that expressed resilience and determination in the face of adversity, a deep faith in humanity and hope that their lives would change for the better, and we wanted to share that with others”.

Hugh Tuckfield is a graduate of MHRD Cohort 3 (2012-2013). He is currently a PhD candidate at University of Sydney Australia. Natalia is development practitioner with expertise in human rights, education and conflict resolution.



Vote of Thanks

(Pern) of cohort 2, for taking on the role of logistics coordination, arranging the meeting and accommodation Assembly possible and successful: First and foremost, Mariah Grant, of cohort 1, and Siripa Anuntawong venue, coordination with Mahidol University and, with strong support from Niaz Ahmed, budget oversight. Following members of the Alumni deserve special thanks for providing invaluable support in making General

- Ravi Prakash Vyas, also of cohort 2, for planning the framework for the working group
- Mary Ann Manja Bayang, Ilana Burness, and Adam Breasly, all of cohort 3 as well as Keerthi Pinnawala, of cohort 1, for assisting with the creation of the General Assembly agenda and structure.
- Julius Garcia Matibag, cohort 2, and S.M. Atia Naznin and Palwasha Khan, both of cohort 3, provided support and input on logistical aspects on location, date, and outreach to Alumni.
- Hassan Nasir and Annie Boud, both of cohort 2, for developing governance structure and draft constitution of the APMA.
- Last but not the least, Niaz Ahmed for his leadership in steering the entire processes and providing support to all members. Without his initiative, the APMA would not have come into being.

About APMA

APMA Alumni is an emerging forum of graduates/students of the Master of Human Rights and Democratisation (Asia Pacific). MHRD is Asia Pacific's premier regional degree in human rights and democratisation offered by the University of Sydney, in conjunction with Gadjah Mada University (Indonesia), Kathmandu School of Law (Nepal), Mahidol University (Thailand) and the University of Colombo (Sri Lanka). This unique degree offers students the opportunity to study both at the internationally renowned University of Sydney and one of the four selected universities in the Asia Pacific with particular expertise in human rights and democratisation.

The aim of the programme is to develop the capacity of advocates working in the field of human rights and democratisation in the Asia Pacific region so that they may be better equipped to advocate for, promote awareness of and encourage respect for human rights and democratic principles, both across the region and within their local communities.

APMA Alumni is a payback initiative by the beneficiaries of the programme to further the objectives of this degree as envisaged by the partner universities. The aim of the Alumni Association is to build a network of human rights and democratisation practitioners as well as academics from the Asia Pacific region. APMA Alumni envisages itself to grow as a vibrant global organisation representing human rights and democratisation defenders, researchers and practitioners.

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