



**SPECIAL**

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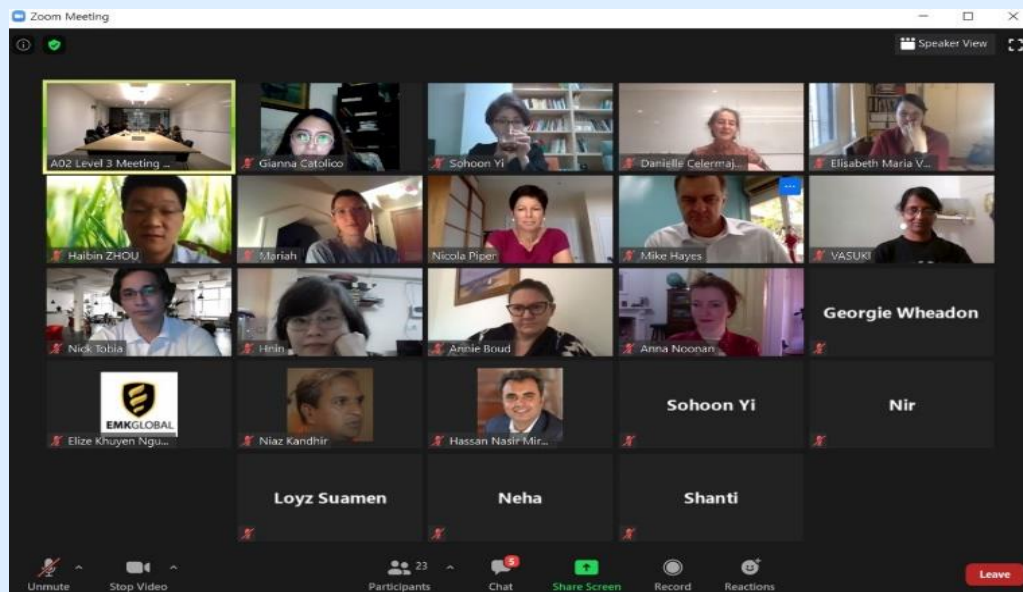
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## MHRD to APMA: 10 Years and Counting

By **Dr. Danielle Celermajer & Parvez Pirzado**

The Master of Human Rights and Democratisation (Asia Pacific) was launched in July 2010 with an unprecedented support of EUR 1.5 million grant to the University of Sydney from the European Union. The program was designed to develop the capacity of emerging leaders in the Asia Pacific region to conduct original, impactful, and rigorous research on human rights and democratisation, as well as to work as critical and effective advocates. With the University of Sydney as the lead, working in partnership with four partner universities in Thailand, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Indonesia, the program allowed all students to study in two countries, as well as to interact with fellow students coming from all across the region – from mainland China through to the Solomon Islands. In 2016, Mahidol University in Thailand took over as the lead partner, but Sydney has retained a keen interest.

On July 24, 2020, the Asia Pacific Masters Alumni Association (APMAA) organized a 10-year anniversary event, bringing together alumni from around the region and the world to speak about where the degree has taken them.



**Editor's Note:** We are delighted to share with you this 10-year Anniversary Special Edition of the APMAA Newsletter. The articles published here under the 'Remarks' section are excerpts from the statements delivered by the former and current Program Directors of the Master of Human Rights and Democratisation (MHRD) Program at the online event organized on July 24, 2020 to celebrate the 10-year anniversary of the launch of the program. The write-ups under the 'Stories of Alumni' section are the compilations of the stories shared by APMAA members on how the program shaped their lives and career.

What we know about the trajectories of the 200 plus alumni members is that they have, as we had hoped, moved into a broad range of fields in academia and beyond. They are currently working in national human rights commissions, research organizations, and NGOs. Some are undertaking doctoral programs and some having completed PhDs are now human rights and democracy academics across the region. They work on different aspects of human rights protection – modern slavery, gender-based violence, human rights education, and so on; refugee rights, democratisation, and peace initiatives. At the 10-year anniversary event, some of the members shared their stories. Here are a few examples.



Niaz Nadim is the founding President of the APMAA and has been working in the field of democratisation and advocacy with various organizations, currently with WaterAid. Niaz also initiated an annual Languages and Literature Festival in Islamabad. Annie Boud, the second President of APMAA is currently Head of Policy at the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK and is also undertaking doctoral research at Cambridge University, synthesizing theories of justice and applying them to aid-funded scholarship programs within the UN SDG Framework. After completing his Masters, Haibin Zhou took up a position on disability rights with the ILO in China and then created a social enterprise to build greater employment opportunities for people with disability in China. Nick Tobia is currently undertaking doctoral research at the University of Otago New Zealand focusing on democratic political procedures and peace agreements. Vasuki Jeyasankar is an artist who works with communities in the East of Sri Lanka on women’s rights. Sohoon Yi completed doctoral studies at the University of Sydney and is currently Assistant Professor at Kyungpook National University in South Korea. Mariah Grant, the current General Secretary of APMAA, is working as the Director of Research, Organizing and Advocacy for the Sex Workers Project (SWP) at the Urban Justice Center in Washington DC. Sushila Karki is working in policy development and governance sectors at the University of Technology, Sydney. Parvez Pirzado, the sitting President of APMAA, is undertaking doctoral research on human rights education in Pakistani schools at the University of Technology, Sydney. Laura McManus is the head of Human rights with the Woolworths group in Australia and responsible for ensuring that all forms of slavery are removed from supply chains.

The program and the alumni association demonstrate what can happen when universities invest in innovative programs and provide the intellectual resources and opportunities for people who are passionate about a field to learn together and flourish. Reflecting on the program, the founding director, Professor Danelle Celermajer remarked: “What I did not anticipate - until we received our first applications - was that the people who would come into this program would bring with them not only a profound commitment to human rights issues, but also a tremendous openness to the world, to the task before us and to each other.”

*Dr. Danielle Celermajer is a Professor at the University of Sydney, Australia and Parvez Pirzado is the President of APMAA.*

## An Experiment with Each Other on Learning Together

By **Dr. Danielle Celermajer**

I would like to commence by acknowledging that those of us in this room are on the land and waters of the Gadigal people of the Eora nation. I pay my respect to elders past, present, and emerging and thank them for their care of the world that has gifted it to us. We note that the University of Sydney is in the unceded land of the traditional custodians.

Welcome everyone across distances.

Thank you especially to Parvez, President of the Alumni association for organizing this event.



When we were given the opportunity to develop a MHRD across this region, what we recognized was that this was a rare and precious moment to think about what human rights education might look like.

There is a great deal that I could say here, but I want to point to three dimensions of what we saw as most important:

1. That human rights and democratization were not taught as dogmas or ready-made answers to social problems, but as open-ended frameworks that people in this program were themselves responsible for transforming and creating in relation to the injustices and forms of violence that they confronted in their worlds;
2. That, in the spirit of the principles of Human Rights Education, human rights principles needed to inform how we learned together. In other words, we needed to experiment with each other on what it means to learn together with respect and permeability even as we remain present to our being a highly diverse community.
3. That we wanted to nurture our students' strategic acuity, capacity to understand the political, social, cultural and economic dynamics that sustain human rights violations and those that can shift them, and their creativity.

So, these were amongst my aspirations.

What I did not anticipate - until we received our first applications - was that the people who would come into this program would bring with them not only a profound commitment to human rights issues, but also a tremendous openness to the world, to the task before us and to each other.

I did not anticipate how much we would learn from you about what a community of learning actually feels like – the importance of meals cooked together, of journeying together, of holding each other through the times when things are working and when they are not.

When I was a baby undergraduate, I did an internship in a community development project and will never forget something that one of the leaders of the program said. She said that a leader understands that when they take their arm out of the bucket of water, there is more room.

In other words, when you step aside, what flourishes is greater than what was present when you were there.

I've been gifted with the friendship of many people who were in this program and have seen the way that the water has flowed over the many buckets that are the worlds of your practice.

Today is an occasion to share these flows of creativity with each other. May you make an ocean as vast as the ones that keep us apart today.

*Dr. Danielle Celermajer is the founding Program Director of the MHRD Program at the University of Sydney, Australia.*



## Treasuring the Classroom Exchanges and Fieldtrips

By Dr. Nicola Piper



I am sending my well-wishes from the south of England. 10 years have passed and the MHRD alumni community has grown considerably. It is a great pleasure to keep receiving news from MHRD graduates - as well as colleagues/staff - about everyone's educational and professional pathways as well as other life changing events (weddings, parenthood, migration).

I thoroughly enjoyed my time as director and although we encountered numerous crises – the biggest of which the earthquake that struck Nepal in 2015 – they do not quite compare to the challenges posed by COVID-19 to a program whose essential principle is that of exchange; and not just of ideas and knowledge shared in classroom situations which can be put online. But as anyone knows who engages in ethnographic fieldwork type of research, being in places teaches one so much more about cultures, history, institutions, politics, etc. Being “in situ” is so vital for gaining a deeper, rounded understanding and making connections. I treasured the classroom exchanges I had with various cohorts tremendously, but equally valuable were the opportunities to participate in intensive modules offered by KSL in Nepal and by Mahidol University which involved fieldtrips and visits to a number of sites. Going off campus at Sydney University to see other areas of the city and maybe have conversations with newcomer immigrants or observe the world go by in a cafe would have also generated additional knowledge. And for those who had the opportunity to participate in Global Campus activities in Venice, meeting students from other parts of the world, would have also been a fantastic experience. Geographic mobility and going to places matters. Zoom does not replace any of this. Global lockdown has put brakes on all that. Hopefully for not too much longer.

COVID-19 has also demonstrated that the broad themes of the MHRD program – human rights and democratisation – are as relevant as ever, and under enormous strain. The pandemic has brought to the fore economic and political tensions that have been looming on the horizon for some time. Be it fake news, political expediency, attacks on multilateralism and the rise in economic nationalism are all signs of the time and have been amplified by the pandemic. Human and labour rights defenders are under attack, migrants and refugees used as convenient scapegoats, solidarity is crumbling. This was not meant to be so. Adopted by the United Nations (UN) in 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals envision a global justice regime encompassing the interconnections of economic equity, health and environment within “a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity” tackling marginalization and exclusion as per its motto “leave no one behind”.

But every crisis is also an opportunity – and one can only hope that COVID-19 is a wakeup call to take the SDGs seriously, to move the climate change action forward, to work towards universal health care targets, and so on. Our work is cut out for us.

I wish you all the very best and look forward to receiving more news.

*Dr. Nicola Piper is the former Program Director of the MHRD Program at the University of Sydney, Australia.*

## The Alumni and Success of MHRD |

By Dr. Mikes Hayes



With the MHRD program, some things have changed while some things have remained the same. It is important that we recognize that the foundations of this program from Sydney were very strong. It was really well set up

at the start. We have Dany and everyone there to thank for that. When we took over four years ago, it was an easy task for us to take over. There have been a couple of changes like the whole program in terms of being part of the Global Campus. In the past years, we established the Global Campus as a legal body in Italy. Seven different programs are growing in strength. Slowly there is more and more interaction between those programs. Hopefully, it is going to be more of a global program. But, there are always challenges. Particularly, with the current travel restrictions and so on.

10 years ago, human rights in university was a novel subject. Particularly in the region, there weren't that many programs there. But in 10 years, there have been real growths in terms of the presence and the role of the university in human rights education. Part of it is down to our alumni because we have a number of alumni either doing PhDs or going on to be lecturers in different places. We have more connections with universities and it is one of the successes of what we have done with this program.

It has been a bad time for human rights past three or four years particularly in the region. If you are from the Philippines, you are really suffering there. Thailand has not been too good. We have issues going on in Cambodia, Vietnam, China, India. It has been a bad time for human rights for a number of reasons. But, it's also good to see there is much more of a positive reaction against that. This is again when the alumni played a role. That States just cannot start taking away rights because there is a more trained, more active cohort, which we contributed too as well.

While it is bad, there are hints that things are going to be getting better in the future.

The whole success of the program really comes down to the alumni and what they do and so the alumni is really important. It is important because it tells us - do we know that we are doing the right thing? It is important because it also shows us what they do and how we can contribute to that. It is also important in terms of protection and promotion of human rights. We have now 225 graduates out doing interesting things whether they teach or are working for the government or working in their own local NGO. It is good that Parvez is getting this network going because we want to have an idea about where they work, what their interest is, what they are doing and it also helps us in terms of the funding and all the kind of promotion of the program as well. There is nothing to prove this is a good program than showing the kind of alumni and what they do.

We are trying to work more with universities, human rights educators out of Timor Leste, the National University of Timor Leste in terms of human rights education. We are doing some work in Taiwan and Myanmar Universities. We are looking at bringing more universities into the network. We are also trying to look at increasing the amount of publication, the amount of our presence whether it is on media or social media.

In terms of how the Global Campus is working, one of their big areas now is in child rights. You may have seen the opportunity for PhD scholarship for studying child rights. There is this kind of renewed interest or support for more research on child rights in the region. That is an important topic and of interest and hopefully, some of you can benefit from that. It is really good to see old faces from the Sydney times.

*Dr. Mike Hayes is the APMA Program Director at the Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies in Mahidol University, Thailand.*

## A Community Created in the Classroom of MHRD | By Dr. Susan Banki



I want to start with a bit of confession. Until four years ago, until this program started, I, unbelievably naïvely, despite having read Hannah Arendt, despite Dany (Dr. Danielle Celermajer) being one of my closest

friends, had very smug feelings that the kind of things I taught about would not happen in the country of my birth. The awakening that I have had has been deeply painful. I believe it has made me a better educator, also a more deeply cynical person.

I am even more impressed now than I was at the time that I met you all. I saw that many of you from the region were fighting courageous fights and did not despair. You came to do a program without despair. You had lived under the kinds of governmental structures that I am now new to, as an American - and you did not despair. I am humbled to be a citizen of a country that is now that way – a country that is to me unrecognizable. I know this is a day about talking about Asia Pacific Masters of Human Rights and Democratisation but I wanted to bring that personal perspective in. I am deeply changed for it - potentially for the worst. I have a hard time not to despair. And yet, today I do not despair. I see the work that you are all doing. I could not agree more with Lizzy (Dr. Elisabeth Valiente-Riedl), you have become teachers, you make it worthwhile. The reason I've always loved teaching is to pass on what little knowledge I have and to see how much more that has grown, how much that has blossomed. It's potentially the first hopeful thing that I have seen in the last several months, I mean at this point. So, I salute you all.

I wanted to say there are some things that remain the same. Being in this room, the zoom room is similar to have been being in a room at the MHRD. At the same time, there can be lighthearted laughter and deep thinking, there can be confrontational ideas and deep

perfection among the people in that room and that is because of the sense of community that was created in the MHRD. And here I cannot help but tip my hat to Dany, my colleague and friend.

I went to a small liberal college in the United States where the kind of community that occurred in the MHRD is natural. When I came to the University of Sydney, I naturally assumed it would be the same. And how rudely awoken I was to discover that in fact it's not like that at most universities, particularly in Australia, particularly today. So, the sense of community that Dany began and which I hope Lizzy and I and Anna and I'm sure Mike (Dr. Mike Hayes) as well have tried to create is not momentum. It is not something that was naturally there. It is something that was created in order to make sure that these contacts remained. I have not seen it at the University of Sydney in any other way. I am sad about that. To me, it is intuitive that you would create a community in the classroom. What even does it mean to learn? What does it mean to be a human if you don't have it? I mean I have been reading a lot of pedagogy of care and how important that is and that's something that I am proud to be a teacher from this cohort in which all of us as instructors practiced a pedagogy of care without even thinking about.

Finally, I would like to say that I have a little bit of hope because of those connections created in that community, in that pedagogy of care. Those are the connections that will create the change that we all hope for. We would like to believe that you don't need those connections as levers for change but we have to be realistic that they are useful and that is why an alumni organization that strengthens and reinforces those connections is so incredibly valuable.

I am honored to be a part of this and I am honored to be asked to speak. You have my deepest respect at this time. Thank you for bringing me hope. We all need it very much right now.

*Dr. Susan Banki is the former Program Director of the MHRD Program at the University of Sydney, Australia.*

### The D in MHRD: Reflections on Democracy 10 Years Since | By Nick Tobia



Does democracy still belong alongside human rights? After major shifts in democratic outcomes towards populism and confrontational politics in the decade following the

establishment of the MHRD program, this contribution to the alumni newsletter reflects on the coherence of human rights with democracy, and key themes in class discussions in the early years of the program.

When I joined the Masters in Human Rights and Democratisation program in 2010, no one doubted the coherence of the name of the program. Democracies - as opposed to non-democracies - beget human rights protection; upholding human rights necessitates the cultivation of democracies. Of course, the core pillars of liberalism are inculcated in professionals such as ourselves: human rights, democracy, and consensus-seeking. This manner of thinking is expressed in how, back then, I would conflate the concept of democracy with liberal democracy. Were they not the same thing?

In the ensuing decade, it had gradually become apparent that these were not. The major shift in democratic discourse that distinguishes this past decade is the so-called 'rise of populism' headlined by caricatures like Trump, Duterte, Bolsonaro, Widodo, and Modi. Of course, populism does not exist only in exotic places. It is also a distinctly European phenomenon, with characters such as Le Pen, Farage, a number of Dutch and Austrian politicians, and mass movements such as Swedish Democrats and Alternative for Deutschland. And the outstanding character of democracy now, wherever we look, is in its confrontational politics.

Many commentators lament the 'decline' of democracy into vicious domestic politics in recent years, but very few acknowledge that all of these caricatures are products of democratic elections and minister over actual democracies. If there is a decline, it is in the belief that democracies must possess values that aim to transcend partisanship, such as coalitionism, consensus, and the universality of human rights. How did we get to this kind of democracy? Were there clues back in Sydney in 2010 that may have signaled these events?

On this subject, our lessons from MHRD are as memorable and they are instructive. July 2010, the start of the MHRD program, was a time of critical discussions Dany and Kieran's classes on the aftermath of the North Africa Arab Spring, an example of attempts at grassroots democratization. The bulk of discussions centered on minimized international interventionism, the subordinate role of the US, the emergence of a French-led coalition, female leadership in Hillary Clinton, and the ethical conundrum of arming insurgents/revolutionaries. An unusual facet of Arab Spring representative of the era, however, was the role of Facebook in triggering mass democratization movements. At that time, Facebook was celebrated as a democratizing force. In our critiques of the Arab Spring, we were skeptical of the democratizing efficacy of human rights internationalism and interventionism in that setting, yet we were wholly uncertain of the efficacy of Facebook, social media, and the free internet.

Meanwhile, our course on Democratisation with Adrian and Michelle provided another level of discussion. Apart from intragroup cohesion, intergroup bridging, they viewed societies' collective identities and their groupings as building blocks of civil society and civic movements. Did Facebook facilitate bridging? Is Facebook a unifying force? No one yet fully understood the impact of smartphones and social media on mobilizing differing collective identities.



Parallel to this skepticism and uncertainty, the MHRD scholars introduced me to the subject of agonistics - or conflictual democratic politics. Joash, a member of our first cohort, advanced the idea that collective identities were just as prone to bridging as they were to be in conflict with other collectives. Genuine democracies possessed these inherent antagonisms and were far from benign and harmonious societies. And still, we had no idea yet about the impending impact of technology, social media, smartphones, and the internet on these democratic antagonisms.

Looking back to 2010, I would say that while we may not have known it at the time, many of the building blocks of our current understanding of democracy had been flashed to us in Sydney, and the connections between them with human rights would unfold in the decade that followed. By the time we had set out to our partner universities in January 2011, we were a year away from Obama using hyper-targeted Facebook ads to reach his voters in 2012, a methodology that makes us shudder today. We were four years away from Cambridge Analytica, then a reputable technology firm, unleashing a country-level social media experiment on unsuspecting countries like the Philippines in 2015. We were five years away from detecting without understanding highly charged politics on social media, the emergence of modern iterations of 'fake news' on the internet and the astounding electoral victories of populist personalities would surface soon after. All of the public hostility towards human rights that attends our current democratic politics had coincided with the ubiquity of smartphones, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, WeChat, Telegram, WhatsApp, Viber, Messenger, and other forms of social media and dark social platforms. The internet has changed us, the trite saying goes, and it certainly has changed the pluralism of views on democracy and human rights.

Back in 2010, the playbook to control Facebook-led revolutions prescribed choking access to the internet. We now know how ham-fisted and unimaginative that was because today, political participation on the

internet and social media had pluralized beyond Tahir Square activists and Obama supporters. All sorts of collective identities are online, liberal, and otherwise. And rather than bridging themselves to other collectives online, everyone, including nefarious governments, troll armies, PR firms, and political parties, have as much the ability to advocate for cohesion as they do to sow divisiveness and discord, including discord over the value of human rights. If there was any doubt whether Facebook was a democratizing, unifying force, we know now that it is certainly a democratic platform for all including anti-liberal, anti-bridging, anti-human rights, and hostile discourse.

There was a time that the Arab Spring was held out to be a possible Huntington-esque 'Fourth Wave' of democratization that, for one reason or another, did not materialize. We need to come to terms perhaps with the reality that the apparent fourth wave that DID occur was not transformations of non-democracies to democracies, but transformations of liberal democracies to illiberal ones. In other words, we have returned to the plain competitive and conflictual sense of democracy. The more that liberalism is undermined in current democracies through hostile politics, the more that human rights will be endangered. Perhaps the lesson to be had in this era of hostility and politically-charged democracies is that human rights discourse remains coherent with contemporary democracy only if human rights advocates - behaving as its own collective identity - take a political stand in the most adversarial sense to promote and defend human rights and reject human rights abuses promoted other collectives in our democracies. Otherwise, the time may have come to simply distance human rights from democracy.

*Nick Tobia is an MHRD graduate from the first cohort of 2010-2011.*





### From Field Research to Research and Advocacy Director | By Mariah Grant



Over the past six weeks I have been applying for and then offered the role, Director of Research, Organizing and Advocacy for the Sex Workers Project (SWP) at the Urban Justice Center. It is interesting

timing as it lines up with the 10-year anniversary of the Master of Human Rights and Democratization (MHRD) program. I was in the first MHRD cohort, and over the past 10 years since I started studying, I have noted how great an impact the program has had on me personally and in my career. Today, I thought I would talk a bit more about this impact.

As some background for everyone I don't know – I am from the United States but in undergrad I studied abroad in Cambodia, Tunisia, and Jordan, and traveled in South America. When I was nearing graduation, I got an email from the university I was studying at in the US informing me about the MHRD program. I had studied human rights and international studies in undergrad and was very interested in moving away from the US again, so the program was a perfect fit.

Since I was from the US, I was not eligible for the EU scholarship, instead I paid my way through the program. My fellow MHRD colleagues who I studied with may recall my absence from a lot of the social gatherings, since I worked as a bartender throughout the Sydney term and would usually go from class to work. Though during the second semester, I was based at Mahidol University in Thailand and did not work. I really appreciated this opportunity to spend more time with classmates. It was also in Thailand where I made connections with local organizations that would play a

critical role in my future work and preparing for a career in human rights.

Following the guidance of the then dissertation field research professor, Dr. Elisabeth Valiente-Riedl (Lissy), I decided to research methods NGOs in the anti-trafficking field use to assess the human rights impact of their work or the impact of anti-trafficking legislation. During a class at Mahidol, a presenter from the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW) spoke about feminist participatory action research and evaluation methods in anti-trafficking. I was able to stay in contact with this presenter and ended up doing my research with GAATW. I also made a contact with the sex worker rights and sex worker-led organization EMPOWER Foundation and managed to do additional research with them. With EMPOWER, I looked specifically at their efforts to assess the 2008 Thai anti-trafficking law and its impact on migrant sex workers.

Upon graduating from the MHRD program, I felt I wanted to continue building ties with my cohort who studied at other universities in the second term as well as the students who came along in later cohorts. So, when I moved back to Thailand in 2014 to start an internship with GAATW, I helped to organize the first General Assembly of the MHRD alumni, which would become the Asia Pacific Masters Alumni (APMA) Association. I have greatly enjoyed the opportunity to continue getting to know and build bonds with MHRD alumni. From my internship with GAATW I took on a research consultancy with the organization. As would become important to securing my current job, I got to know staff at the Sex Workers Project, since they are a member organization of GAATW. Following my time at GAATW, I spent another year and a half in Thailand working as a consultant with various organizations, including a role as the Outreach and

Recruitment Coordinator for the Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies at Mahidol University.

In 2015 while working at the International Organization for Migrations (IOM) Regional Office for Asia Pacific in Bangkok, I decided I wanted to move from program and policy development to direct service provision. In spring 2016 I moved to Greece to work on Lesbos and then near the border with Northern Macedonia helping to support individuals and families making the journey to seek protection, many coming from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Iran. When my visa ran out, I decided to move back to the US. At that point it was the 2016 US presidential election and I was worried about what the outcome might be.

Since late 2016 I have worked as a Case Manager with the US Office of Refugee Resettlement helping to place children who have come across the US/Mexico border with their family in the US. I then worked coordinating the Human Trafficking Expert Consultant Network for the US Department of State. And now, as mentioned earlier, I am about to start my new role with the Sex Workers Project. In my interviews for this current position I was asked why I wanted to work with the organization, this gave me a chance to reflect on my prior field research in Thailand, working with GAATW and EMPOWER Foundation – learning directly from the people impacted by anti-trafficking policies and laws – hearing from them about how they wanted to shape the world to better protect their and their community's rights – it felt like I was coming full circle, to be able to take their guidance and further put it into action.

*Mariah Grant is an MHRD graduate from the first cohort of 2010-2011.*

## A Social Justice Approach to Access to Higher Education | By Annie Boud



For those that don't know me, I am an Australian who came to the MHRD at the University of Sydney after living in Fiji for some years. I was attracted to the MHRD both for the unique experience of the second semester but also because I really needed some more advanced skills to try and

further what I was doing in my professional career in education for development.

Whilst some of the more technical aspects of human rights law I still struggle to get my head around today, in the MHRD I was really able to draw out the themes that I was really interested in, those related to social justice, equity, and a human-rights based approach to development.

After my second semester in Sri Lanka I moved to the UK and took up a role with the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission (CSC), the UK government's development aid scholarship program for higher education. I currently head up policy for the CSC as the Program Manager leading on governance, strategic partnerships and access, equity, and inclusion.

In my role, I have been able to use the skills learned in the MHRD to leverage the CSC to become a more rights-based program. I run streams of work on gender, refugees, disability and, until COVID-19, I was about to launch a new program focusing on girls' education.

In 2019, I commenced my PhD at the University of Cambridge under Professor Pauline Rose. My PhD research looks broadly at the 'leave no one behind' principles of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and how the principles relate to the target of

increased funding to international scholarship program. My research involves synthesizing theories of justice and applying them to aid-funded scholarship programs within the UN SDG Framework.

The main empirical piece of my research explores, through a capabilities-lens, the experience of East-African refugees in accessing Commonwealth Scholarships. I have managed a partnership with the Windle Educational Trust in Uganda and Kenya for some years and it is students that have come through this route to study in the UK who are my research participants.

This research is being undertaken within a transformative paradigm. What I'm hoping to achieve, and what I am well positioned to achieve, is a shift in focus for development aid-funded scholarship programs to have equity, access, and inclusion really at their heart – matching up to the rhetoric on development made by aid donors and upholding the values that I learned undertaking the MHRD.

I really wouldn't be in the position I am today without the Master's program. It was a wonderful experience, I have made some amazing friends and been challenged intellectually in a way that has really enabled me to thrive in the environment I'm now in, working for a UK aid program and studying at Cambridge – neither of which is without its challenges!

*Annie Boud is an MHRD graduate from the 2011-12 Batch and a former President of APMAA (2016-19)*

## MHRD Journey and Beyond | By Sushila Karki



I am excited to celebrate the 10-year anniversary of Asia Pacific Masters Alumni-MHRD to APMA with all my classmates and professors. My special thanks to Dany, Susan, Nicola, Anna, Georgie, Lissy, lecturers, professors, and all partner universities for their tireless work. And I cannot thank enough the Executive Committee, past and present, volunteering to connect alumni together.

For those who don't know me, I am originally from Nepal and currently based in Sydney. I am working at the University of Technology, Sydney as a Governance Officer. Since completing my degree in 2014, I have been working as a researcher and in policy development sectors. Recently, I moved to the governance sector as policy-making has always been my area of interest.

The MHRD program has been a very interesting and learning experience for me. I met beautiful people - my classmates from the Asia Pacific region with an abundance of knowledge and experiences in advocacy, human rights sectors and the fantastic Director Nicola Piper, who was always there to answer all kinds of our silly questions, thanks Nicola!

When I recall my time back in 2013, before starting the course, I had just graduated from university with my law degree in criminal law and justice. I was starting my baby steps in legal practice and also teaching. I know both are challenging careers to pursue, but I was exploring my options. Did I like practicing law? Yes, I did; did I enjoy it? I am not sure. That was one of the reasons why I decided to expand my knowledge beyond law degree and apply for the Master of Human Rights and Democratisation program. I did my first semester at the University of Sydney and second semester at the University of Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Cross-university experience is one of the other appealing factors of this course. Discourse in critical

human rights issues, democracy, and socio-legal research had helped me to gain skills ready for my career development. A simulation of the UN Human Rights Council which was part of our assessment with Dinesh had introduced me with the practicality of the UN reporting mechanism and I learned report writing from the session too. In the past majority of my work was related to report writing for UN bodies and I would say this session definitely helped me to learn report writing skills. I will never forget the intensive session from Susan Banki on Right to Food, chipotle exercise and yes, needless to mention, a session with Anim Steele is one of the valuable sessions that changed my whole perception of food security - our role to ensure sustainable food are worth learning from them. If I keep on sharing my experiences, there are a lot of examples that I can share about the program and from the University of Colombo. Studying at the University of Colombo in the Faculty of law is another lifetime experience one can achieve.

Getting this degree has shaped my career in the advocacy and policy development sector. I do my consultancy with women and children related issues. Recently I did the research for academics in UTS regarding the Feminist perspective - menstruation and right to hygiene focusing South Asia. We reviewed government policy and laws for the right to hygiene during menstruation and submitted a policy paper for the government of Nepal. I have been volunteering schools in Nepal to support children during the pandemic, i.e., teaching them to make their own masks, webinars to maintain hygiene. And all this would not have been possible without the knowledge and experience that I received from the MHRD program. I would like to thank everyone once again who are directly and indirectly involved in the program.

Stay safe – use mask and maintain hygiene for you and your community!

*Sushila Karki is an MHRD graduate from the 2013-14 Cohort.*



### GCA Brochure on Child Rights

The Global Campus Alumni (GCA) has recently published the Brochure: “Together for Children Rights” with the main objective of showing the expertise of the alumni network and the impact they have on children’s rights in many corners of the world, connecting alumni to the great GCA alumni community.

More info  <http://bit.ly/GCAAlumniBrochure>







Nick Tobia, MHRD batch 2010-2011, led a team of five Filipinos to two awards at the 2020 NASA COVID-19 Space Apps Data Challenge. NASA holds annual global competitions to promote the use of satellite data in solutions to human problems. In May 2020, NASA responded to the pandemic by conducting a special data challenge aimed at using satellite data in coronavirus solutions.

"The use of big data analytics is a growing trend in the development sector," Nick said. "Social impact data challenges are essentially large-scale, crowd-sourced ideation processes for solving human problems."

Through the social impact data analytics firm, Cirrolytix, Nick's team fielded a global solution called GIDEON (or Global Impact Detection from Emitted Light, Onset of COVID-19, and Nitrogen Dioxide).

The purpose of GIDEON is to identify countries that are reactivating their economies in the pandemic while managing both coronavirus infections and air pollution. It combines night light and nitrogen dioxide data from satellites, human mobility data from Google, infection data from Johns Hopkins University, and news data from the internet all into an integrative

dashboard to provide policymakers with a risk-sustainability measure of each country, allowing users to identify those countries with the best practices for sustaining the economy, health, and environment of their constituents.

"Health, mobility, and economic rights are some of the most affected dimensions of human rights in this pandemic," Nick said. "Enabling decisionmakers through all available data to make smart choices about these dimensions ultimately contribute to human rights protection."

Against a field of over 1,400 solutions, GIDEON is one of the six global winners, taking the prize for Best Use of Data. Moreover, GIDEON won one of the three prizes for the Euro Data Cube Award, a grant award for the solutions that have the most potential to be scaled up.



### APMAA General Assembly

The General Assembly of Asia Pacific Masters Alumni Association (APMAA) was held online via Zoom on August 9, 2020. The Executive Council (EC) presented the progress since taking over in October 2019 and presented plans for the next six months. A discussion was held on some important points such as constitutional amendments, the formation of a committee on protection of alumni data and establishment of country chapters. The update on the session to mark 10 years of the program held at the University of Sydney was also shared.

### Call for Contributions: GC Human Rights Preparedness Blog

To play a bold and reflective role in developing and promoting a rights-based approach to pandemics and other emergencies, the Global Campus of Human Rights—a consortium of more than 100 universities from across the world—is harnessing its multiregional and multidisciplinary approach, resources and outreach in order to offer a resource of enduring value, GC Human Rights Preparedness.

Our title, Human Rights Preparedness, is a dual invitation: it invites contributors (i) to explain the ways in which protecting, respecting and fulfilling human rights, as we understand them today, is vital in meeting the challenges of pandemics and other emergencies, or (ii) to imagine how human rights could be better prepared for such challenges.

We invite all members and friends of the Global Campus network—faculty, researchers, practitioners and experts, institutional partners, alumni and students—to contribute to this important new initiative.

More details about contributions to the GC Human Rights Preparedness can be found at the following link:  
<https://bit.ly/2GcybDQ>

