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## Message from Outgoing Executive Council (EC) of the Asia Pacific Masters Alumni Association (APMAA)

We are glad to smoothly handover the responsibilities to the new EC. The members of the new EC are dedicated to serve the alumni association. We tried our best to play our role to “promote and protect human rights and democracy in the Asia-Pacific region and throughout the world by supporting activities such as promoting continuing education and creating opportunities for networking not only with other graduates but with the wider community (APMA Constitution, Article 6).

The activities of the association were affected by COVID-19, as almost entire tenure of our EC was during the peak of COVID pandemic. We still tried our best to continue working on activities to achieve the objectives of the association. Some of the major activities of the EC during October 2019 to September 2022 are presented in the next section.

We are committed to serve the association as members of the alumni and will be available to support the new EC and larger alumni and will continue to contribute for the betterment of the association based on our experience. We wish good luck and best wished to the new team.

Congratulations again!

APMAA EC 2019-2022 (Parvez, Mariah, Gianna, Neer, Nisha, Nusrat and Niaz)

## Message from APMAA EC 2022 Team

Firstly, we are thankful to be part of the steering team of the Alumni. As we are new in the journey to lead another two years, we truly hope in this time we can curate spaces within the alumni to best utilize the forces we are in our collective capacity as scholars, activists, and changemakers. We invite anyone from the alumni to imagine with us events and activities that will lead us towards promotion and protection of human rights in the Asia and the Pacific region.

We are guiding ourselves with the intention of realising collective leadership, transparency, collective care, and slow and steady motto. We recognise that it is a difficult time for all of us as defenders of human rights, still living in post covid time, dealing with mental health crises in our societies, with increasing atrocities and scrutiny towards communities demanding for human rights; we are overworked, underfunded and we are still imagining and working towards a better and just future.

In these coming two years, we want to engage ourselves primarily in activities that will help us to strengthen our community of Alumni as a resource hub where we can curate open spaces for our Alumni Community members to co-create and generate knowledge and resources relevant to the human rights movement locally, regionally and globally. We invite ideas and collaborations to strengthen cross-movement solidarity building within the AP region and with global human rights movements. Meanwhile, we are and will continue working to strengthen the relationship of the APMAA community with relevant institutions, stakeholders and movements; And, facilitate policy work, general practices and the smooth functioning of the alumni, to the best of our capacity. We welcome support and engagement from you in all these endeavors.

Thank you, APMAA EC 2022 (Adity, Mahmud, Kedar, Dewi, Ridwan, Louise, Samani)

## Message from Mike Hayes, Program Director IHRP

Dear APMA Alumni,

Many thanks for those of you who are elected to the new Alumni EC. We look forward to working with you all. We also hope the Alumni will continue to keep in touch with the program. For the next year, here are some activities and issues we hope we can work together on:

1. The APMA program has faced (and continues to face) budget cuts so our financial support for this group is currently very limited, but we are open to exploring ways to help the APMAA get funding, especially through the Global Campus HQ.
2. The Alumni survey is a very important part of our feedback to the European Commission funders. The funders will only continue to fund this program if we can document the alumni. We can only do this if you fill out the survey. If we don't get survey responses, the funders may argue there is no evidence of the value of scholarships. As most of you received scholarships, please think of the future generation of students who are applying (like you did years ago) and fill in the survey (the link is shared in the next article by GCA).
3. One of our current students remained in jail in Myanmar. He is released after serving his 2-year term (for essentially doing human rights work). We currently have around 15 Myanmar students studying in the APMA program, many of whom face security concerns, and we may face this situation again. It would be good if the Alumni and the APMA program are prepared for a situation like this and can advocate for their protection quickly if this happens again.
4. We justify this program by saying those who received a scholarship will work on issues of human rights, justice, and peace. This doesn't just mean working for a human rights NGO, but it means ensuring human rights principles are brought into the work you do regardless of the job, whether you're a boss, a teacher, a mother, driver, or anything. Can you reach out to any inactive cohort you studied with, who maybe think they won't keep in touch because they're not human rights defenders, and remind them about APMA, and ask them to stay in touch.



Looking forward to an exciting new year.

Mike Hayes.

Dear APMA Alumni,

Warm greetings from the Global Campus headquarters in Venice! From this little island called Lido, located in the Monastery of San Nicolò, we care for all the alumni who graduated from our 'seven sisters', i.e. the regional hubs of the Global Campus

<https://gchumanrights.org/education/regional-programmes.html>.

We think of all our graduates as part of the Global Campus Alumni, a network of the seven regional alumni associations gathering more than 4,000 experts, activists and professionals spread throughout the world. This network strives to promote interaction among the members and support their development through advice, expertise and networking; strengthen professional relationships, peer-to-peer exchange and links with the Global Campus; and promote the work of the members at regional and international human rights fora.

We have recently opened a call for application for a new coordinator of the Global Campus Alumni. We hope that this new person will enthusiastically pick up the big challenge of connecting the 7 regional alumni associations and create opportunities for them, in cooperation with the Global Campus HQ.

We know very well how busy alumni are, whether they are in established positions, or looking for a new professional challenge. Still, we hope you will support and connect with the new coordinator once she/he will start and donate a little bit of your time to activities the GCA might organize.

We think it would be amazing to feature APMAA alumni stories, for the benefit of the new APMAA students and the overall Global Campus. We'd be happy to help out if you so



wish. Alumni stories will also feature in the next Global Campus Annual Report (see here for the 2020 and 2021 edition) <https://gchumanrights.org/about-us/global-campus-of-human-rights/annual-reports.html>. We'll get in touch with you to get inputs.

We know that the European Union, the main donor of the Global Campus, is very keen to learn about the impact of our 7 regional masters, i.e., you and your fellow alumni!

This is why each year we send out a (boring!) survey (For 2019, 2020 and 2021 batches) (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/JYLL3FW>) to learn how you're doing career-wise. We hope you can understand how crucial this is for us, and how important it is for the EU to know that the Global Campus keeps on making a difference in terms of human rights education worldwide.

Please let us know if you happen to come to Venice. We're very eager to personally know as many alumni as possible!

All the best from the Venice lagoon,

Global Campus of Human Rights

### Profiles of APMAA EC 2022 Team

#### Adity Karki (President)

Ms. Adity Karki is a young feminist human rights practitioner, advocate and a poet from Nepal. She is currently the sitting President at the Asia Pacific Masters Alumni Association (APMAA). Adity is a graduate of the

Masters of Human Rights and Democratisation (MHRD) Asia Pacific Program from 2017-18 Batch. She has been working regionally on women's human rights issues with

resilient community members in Asia and the Pacific. She has worked with human rights organization like Forum Asia, Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD), Women's Fund Asia,

Protection International, and FRIDA The Young Feminist Fund. Participatory grantmaking, climate and environment justice, feminism and law, and creative resource mobilization consulting are her major working areas. Aditya believes art, creativity and freedom of expression go hand in hand in protection of freedom and rights of all, and everywhere.



### Mahmudul Hasan (Secretary)

The current General Secretary of APMAA Executive Council, S M Mahmudul Hasan is working for the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Business Network at Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) in Bangladesh in addition to his affiliation with Sex Workers Network Bangladesh. He is a graduate of



the Masters of Human Rights and Democratisation (MHRD) Asia Pacific Program from the 2017-18 Batch. Although his expertise advances in maternal and child health, local economic development, food and nutrition, he is a strong advocate for freedom of expression and women's rights particularly sex workers' rights. Before joining GAIN, Mahmudul Hasan worked for Swisscontact, Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development, and private organizations during his career in project management, advocacy, and communication.

### Kedar Maharjan (Treasurer)

Being born into a marginalized and poor peasant indigenous family in Kathmandu Valley, Kedar experienced multiple burdens of discrimination as a child and growing adult. Due to these experiences, he vowed to fight against the discrimination and prejudice inflicted on



minority people, communities, caste, and ethnic groups of Nepal by its state and organized social and religious institutions.

As a pioneer activist in sex workers and LGBTIQ peoples' rights, he had accumulated

vast experience in advocating minority for equity and equality. He won multiple scholarships to study in Australia since then he graduated in Medical Science from the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS), Masters in International Public Health and Human Rights, and Democratization in the Asia Pacific from the University of Sydney. In thirty-two years of career, he worked in Dhaka, Bangladesh, Holland, the United States of America, Kathrine and Sydney Australia, Kathmandu, Nepal in various positions to advocate indigenous rights, refugee rights, and people with mental health, LGBTIQ people, and sex workers. He is serving APMAA is a Treasurer in 2022 Executive Council.

## Dewi Ratnawulan (EC Member)

Dewi is working as a Senior gender and Human Rights Adviser at Rapid Asia. Dewi graduated with the second cohort of the Master of Human Rights and Democratization (MHRD), Asia Pacific Program 2011-2012. Dewi is based in Bangkok, Thailand, and has been an international consultant with Rapid Asia since 2010, focusing on gender and human rights. Dewi was involved in the first General Assembly of APMAA in 2014 and served on the first Executive Council (2015-2017) and the Treasure (2017-2019). Currently, Dewi is a member of the

experience with gender and human rights issues, having worked with various NGOs and other human rights organizations since 1992. Particular areas of interest have included community development, human rights, oral history, and gender issues, including women's and children's development.



## Ridwan Al-Makassary (EC Member)



Dr. Ridwan is a permanent lecturer at the Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, Universitas Islam International Indonesia (UIII). He completed his Ph.D. at the Department of Political Science and International Relations, University of Western

Australia (UWA), and MA degrees in Human Rights and Democratization at University of Sydney, Australia, and Mahidol University, Thailand. Dr. Ridwan is an associate researcher at the Centre for Muslim States and Societies (CMSS, UWA), and co-Founder of Lembaga Perdamaian Indonesia (Indonesia Peacebuilding Institute). His research interest includes peace studies, conflict resolution, Muslim politics, interfaith studies, and human rights.

## Louise Suamen (EC Member)

Louise (Loyz) Suamen is a children's rights advocate and a human rights defender from the Philippines. She was part of the APMA 2016-17 batch. She has over a decade of hands-on and grassroots experience working on children's rights from working with local NGOs like Tambayan Center for Children's Rights and Save the Children Philippines. She currently works with Bahay Tuluyan in Manila. Loyz is passionate about children's access to justice, juvenile

justice, accountability of grave child rights violations and the realization of the rights of children in street situations and children affected by the government's anti-illegal drugs campaign.



## Samani Abro (EC Member)



Ms. Samani Abro is a graduate of Master of Human Rights and Democratization (MHRD), Asia Pacific Program 2016-17. She has also done master's in business administration & Mass

Communication; and has a diploma in Social Mobilization. She is working in humanitarian sector since more than a decade now. She takes part in social media campaigns related to social justice issues in Pakistan and she has been quite vocal on human rights issues. She occasionally writes b-logs, columns, articles in 3 different languages.

## The Second Annual Global State of Human Rights Conference

On July 15-16, 2022, the Global Human Rights Campus (GCHR) held the second annual Global State of Human Rights High Level Conference in Venice, Italy. The conference brought together Members of the European Parliament and leaders in the Human Rights field from academia, nongovernmental organizations, and civil society. The conference focused on children's rights with panels on children behind bars, children affected by armed conflict and violence, and youth as drivers of change. Mariah Grant, Asia Pacific Master's Alumni Association General Secretary attended and represented the Asia Pacific region (APMAA) as a discussant on panel two, offering her reflections and posing questions to the panel on children affected by armed conflict and violence.



In this photo, Manfred Nowak, Secretary General of the GCHR, and Heidi Hautala, Vice-President of the European Parliament give closing words to the conference following the final panel from Ghada Krayem, Recipient of the EU Green Skills Award, Farida Amiri, Founder of Peace Friends Afghanistan, and Sebastiano Cognolato, President and Co-Founder of Venice Calls.

## Children's Rights Research Ethics Forum 2022

As part of the education and training on child rights research, the Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies (IHRP), Mahidol University, Thailand is organizing an online international children's rights research ethics forum on Wednesday 29 June 2022. APMAA EC President Parvez Pirzado and a couple of other alumni members attended the session.

This event is one of the activates incorporated through the collaboration among the Global Campus of Human Rights (GC), the Rights Livelihood Foundation (RLF) and the Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies (IHRP), Mahidol University, Thailand.



The goal of this event is to support and improve the knowledge and understanding on ethical issues and standards in academic research and advocacy on children's rights within the Global Campus university network.

This forum is bringing together academics, students and experts to consult on ethical issues while researching and working on/with children. This forum offers an opportunity to learn and share knowledge and critical feedback on research ethics from child rights researchers and scholars. The forum intends to discuss the debates surrounding ethical issues in children rights research, the emerging concept of rights-based research, challenges and benefit of ethical guidelines and gaps in ethical & rights-based training for emerging researchers.

## Children's Rights Research Ethics Conference 2022

The Global Campus of Human Rights (GC), the Rights Livelihood Foundation (RLF) and the Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies (IHRP), Mahidol University Thailand, have been maintaining long term collaboration in improving, extending and supporting academic research and advocacy network on children's rights in Asia and Pacific region. The Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies (IHRP), Mahidol University Thailand organized a Child Rights Research Ethics Conference on 26th July 2022. The conference aimed to bring together academics, students and experts consulting ethical issues while researching and working on/with children. Four APMAA alumni members and several current students of the programme attended the event.



The goal of the Forum was to utilize the feedback to improve their academic research as well as professional practices. This forum offered an opportunity to learn and share knowledge and critical feedback on research ethics from child right researcher within the Global Campus university network.

Following key thematic issues were explored.

- Ethical issues when researching children in humanitarian settings
- Researching especially vulnerable groups of children (e.g. children involved in sexual exploitation, children living on the streets, children in conflict with the law etc.)
- Children's participation in research and how to secure voluntary and meaningful consent
- Capacity building for ethical research of children

## Exploring less usual careers in human rights

The Road Less Traveled is a project of the Human Rights Center from the University of Padova and Global Campus of Human Rights. The project aims at exploring the less usual careers and career paths that are possible after a degree in human rights.

There are no clearly defined career paths, entry points and routes to work with human rights. Opportunities may arise in central and local government bodies, international governmental and non-governmental organisations, academia but also in private companies, media agencies, law firms.

There is a huge variety of roles, including research, communication, advocacy, public relations, fundraising or education. There is also a huge variety of ways to apply the knowledge and values of human rights in all types of work. Some graduates will even create their own paths by creating their own NGOs, initiatives and campaigns.

### Stories of Alumni

APMAA Alumni Frieda Lee received the Max Afford Playwrights' Award for 2022, with her new play *The Bright Side of Bum Town*. The play tells the story of Madeira Cake and her parents Clementine and Bert. Set in a post-Covid-19 recession, it navigates financial and family stress, making it understandable for young audiences.

Judges Andrew Bovell, Glenn Shea and Emma Valente said: "The Bright Side of Bum Town is a captivating and relatable story that explores complex family relationships with humour and theatricality. Frieda's play beautifully captures the experience of displacement and loneliness through the eyes of the wildly ambitious and whip-smart 12-year-old Madeira Cake. Smart, imaginative and visually bold; we the judges, think this play will make an outstanding contribution to the theatre for younger audiences."

With the project 'The Road Less Traveled', we want to broaden the career horizons of prospective students, students and alumni and talk about less explored career opportunities with the people who have taken that less traveled road.



For more information, please visit <https://www.therlt.info/>

Other resources  
<https://gchumanrights.org/>

"I am filled with awe that Andrew Bovell, Emma Valente and Glenn Shea have read my play, let alone liked it." said Frieda. "I am bowled over, blown away and over the moon! Bum Town is very physical and visual. It's silly and fun. To have the opportunity to experiment, play and find all the opportunities and moments that might be there— is all I've ever wanted for it. I wish I could tell Max and Thelma how honoured I am to be receiving their incredible gift. I will treasure it and make the most of it." Frieda is a graduate of Master of Human Rights and Democratisation (MHRD) from 2010-11 batch.

Source: <https://apt.org.au/>.



*APMAA Alumni Frieda Lee received Max Afford Playwrights Award*

## APMAA EC (2019-2022) Progress Report

- Asia Pacific Masters Alumni Association (APMAA) Executive Council (EC) took the charge in October 2019. Upon being elected, the newly formed Executive Council held a strategizing meeting via Zoom and developed a work plan for the year ahead.
- Coordinated with the Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies (IHRP), Mahidol University and Global Campus Alumni (GCA) on regular basis and represented the APMAA at various forums.
- Conducted two General Assemblies in 2020 and 2021.
- Throughout this period, the EC collected written pieces, artwork, and photos for a forthcoming newsletter. During its tenure, four newsletters were published to highlight the amazing work the alumni member are doing.
- Provided two grants for Human Rights Day to carry out activities in relation to promote human rights in the region.
- The EC encouraged members to develop individual country chapters to be led by the alumni at the country / regional level. In some countries the alumni is working together through WhatsApp groups or other informal means of communication. There is still a need for creating formal country chapters for more active engagement of alumni members. These country chapters will assist in building cohesion and community among APMAA members.
- Provided input for the APMAA page on the new GCA website and continue sharing various opportunities at GCA level through the alumni google group.
- Conducted a session to mark 10th anniversary of the program at the University of Sydney with participation from the alumni online. The MHRD / APMAA program was launched in July 2010 at the University of Sydney and the 10-year session was organised at the same location on 24 July 2020. The session was attended by three former Directors of the program and 25 alumni members, including the current and past two Presidents of the alumni association.
- APMAA EC contributed Welcome messages for the booklet designed by the Mahidol University for the 2020-21 and 2021-2022 batches of the program and participated in opening sessions (online) of the new cohorts each year.
- During the General Assembly of 2020, the discussion was made whether to move the APMAA from an association to a more informal network. It was discussed the association with a constitution is too formal and required administrative time and efforts to manage the association. It was decided to

continue as an association and keep discussing the pros and cons of association vs network and make a decision at a later stage.

- Discussion was made on registration of the APMAA. However, due to various restrictions it was not possible to get the association registered. As APMAA is not registered, the bank account is not opened yet and the alumni funds are kept by EC member in their personal accounts.
- It was discussed that there is need of constitutional amendments in APMAA Constitution. However, this should happen if the alumni members decide to continue as an association. If the majority of members decide to move as an informal network, the constitution will not be in effect anymore This decision can be made in the next general assembly.
- Developed alumni data protection report through a subcommittee. The subcommittee led by Sohoon Yi produced a report and shared with the alumni members.
- Represented the APMAA at various forums such as conferences and seminars organized by IHRP and GCA. The reports of three events are published in this newsletter.
- Provided support to the Election Committee to conduct the elections smoothly.
- Handed over the EC to the new team within a month after the election results were announced.

## Update about Saw Lin Htet: Human Rights Defender from Myanmar

Saw Lin Htet is a student of the Asia Pacific Master of Arts in Human Rights and Democratisation (APMA) program. He completed his coursework in 2019 and was in the process of completing field research for his thesis when he was detained by Myanmar's military junta on March 23, 2021. Saw Lin is originally from Kayin State in Myanmar and returned there in 2020 to live with his wife and two children while he completed the important final requirements of his human rights degree.

The global COVID-19 pandemic further delayed Saw Lin's trial and put his life at risk, with the virus killing six of his fellow detainees. Throughout the summer and early fall of 2021, his wife could only send food and medicine but not visit him due to COVID-19 health restrictions. Finally, on 6 October 2021, Saw Lin went to trial, but only his lawyer was allowed in the courtroom. Saw Lin was deprived of seeing his family for over seven months before he was able to see his wife in late October 2021. During this initial reunion, Saw Lin's wife learned that he injured his head and back in an accident and was suffering from low blood pressure. His wife also testified in the court. On 23 November 2021, he was sentenced by the military court to two years with labor in Taung Kalay prison in Hpa An in Kayin State, on charges under 505 (a) of the Penal Code and law and Export and Import law, section 8 (f).

Meanwhile, a group of Saw Lin's classmates, alumni from the Global Campus, students and professors of IHRP at Mahidol University and the network SHAPE-SEA have joined forces on a campaign called #FreeSawLinHtet. The campaign used social media platforms and sent out letters to embassies and relevant human rights mechanisms to amplify the call. Recognising the need for psychosocial support, a group of APMA alumni applied and got emergency grants for Saw Lin and his family. APMAA EC also donated an amount of \$300 from the alumni funds and \$300 through personal donations. Saw Lin was released on 17 November 2022. We the APMAA EC thank all who supported Saw Lin.

APMAA EC Email [contact.apma@gmail.com](mailto:contact.apma@gmail.com)