ABA ROLI - ‘STRENGTHENING ASEAN’S HUMAN RIGHTS SYSTEM’
Program Update – March 2013

ACTIVITIES: SEP 2012-MAR 2013

Regional Training: ‘Strengthening ASEAN’s Human Rights System through Legal Advocacy’

Since our last newsletter in September 2012, ABA ROLI and LBH Jakarta have held two more regional trainings, in November 2012 in Kuala Lumpur and another in Manila in February 2013. These last two trainings involved some 40 lawyers representing all 10 ASEAN Member States.

After each training LBH Jakarta and ABA ROLI conducted an evaluation and make adjustments to the training activities and schedule. As a result, there has been a steady improvement in the training flow and content. Each event also provided us with new regional contacts who assist in identifying quality participants for future trainings.

The revised training schedule is now as follows:

Day One: Getting to know one another and the human rights context of the different ASEAN countries.

Day Two: Sharing of legal advocacy techniques, the United Nations, Regional and ASEAN Human Rights Systems.

Day Three: Developing effective regional advocacy networks and collaboration.

At the February 2013 training in Manila, 9 out of 10 ASEAN countries were represented. We were also honored by the involvement of the Philippines Representative to the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR), Ambassador Manalo, the Director of the Ateneo Human Rights Center, Arpee Santiago, and an expert on the Inter-American human rights system, Christina Cerna, as resource persons.

LBH Jakarta and ABA ROLI are currently working with the Cross Cultural Foundation to hold the last regional training in Bangkok. A national-level training for Indonesian lawyers will be held in July 2013.

Small Grant Awards

Training participants are eligible to apply for small grants to carry out initiatives aimed ASEAN’s human rights system. There are 8 small grants available.

The first award went to the Mekong Lawyers’ Network (MLN) to prepare a submission to AICHR on business and human rights in the Mekong region.

The second grant went to the Women’s Legal Bureau (WLB) to hold three workshops on ASEAN, its human rights institutions and how CSOs can engage with the Philippines Government on ASEAN issues.

The third grant has been given to the Legal Aid Center for the Press (LBH Pers) in Jakarta to carry out advocacy surrounding International Press Freedom Day on 3 May 2013. The campaign will include the preparation of a submission to AICHR and the ASEAN Secretary General on the unsolved murder case of an Indonesian journalist Udin in 1996.

NGO Forums

NGO Forums are events where lawyers and non-government organizations working on human rights issues in ASEAN come together to undertake discussions, plan activities or prepare submissions in relation to the ASEAN human rights system.

Consultations with the Technical Working Group (TWG)

This program is supported by a TWG of senior Indonesian lawyers and human rights defenders. The TWG provides guidance on program activities and training materials. Consultations occurred with TWG members in November and December 2012. TWG members have provided input on activities which has been worked into the program workplan by:

1. Engaging more with ASEAN on Women and Children’s issues;
2. Utilizing the JARI network to engage on migrant worker issues;
3. Actively using a mailing list to keep in touch with lawyers attending the regional trainings and maintain the network.

No NGO Forums were held between October 2012 and March 2013. However, ABA ROLI has committed to supporting two NGO Forums in 2013:
1. A meeting of 20 human rights defenders to prepare a submission on AICHR’s Review of its Terms of Reference (ToR) and discuss the use of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration (AHRD). The event will be hosted by FORUM-ASIA.

2. A conference on media freedom that will be organized by the Media Legal Defense Southeast Asia (MLD SEA) network in November 2013. This conference will bring together some 70 lawyers and human rights defenders around Southeast Asia to discuss freedom of expression in Southeast Asia. A half day of this three-day event will consider how the AICHR and the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration can be used to promote freedom of expression.

Online Platform

ABA ROLI and FORUM-ASIA are developing an online platform/ website to centralize information about the ASEAN human rights institutions and human rights issues in Southeast Asia. The website will include the following information:

- Background on ASEAN;
- Information for CSOs wanting to engage with ASEAN on human rights issues;
- ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR): History, structure, mandate and work;
- ASEAN Commission on the Rights of Women and Child (ACWC): History, structure, mandate and work;
- ASEAN Committee on Migrant Workers (ACMW): History, structure, mandate and work;
- A Registry of organizations working on human rights in Southeast Asia;
- Events and News.

It is hoped that this website will facilitate long-distance networking between human rights defenders and lawyers in Southeast Asia.

The home page design and most of the webpage content has been finalized.

Applied Skills Meetings

Applied Skills Meetings aim to develop the skills and knowledge involved that human rights defenders and lawyers require to engage in regional human rights advocacy.

From 22-23 March 2013, LBH Jakarta, TIFA Foundation and ABA ROLI collaborated to host a meeting of members of the Advocacy Network for the Revision of the Law on the Protection and Placement of Migrant Workers (JARI). One of the Malaysian participants in the second regional advocacy training attended this workshop and shared information about legal aid for migrant workers in Malaysia. The lessons learned from the Malaysian experience will help inform revision of the Indonesian bill.