ABA ROLI - ‘STRENGTHENING ASEAN’S HUMAN RIGHTS SYSTEM’
Program Update - September 2012

PAST ACTIVITIES

Regional Kick-Off Meeting (RKOM)

The Regional Kick-Off Meeting (RKOM) took place December 4-5, 2011 in Bali, Indonesia. It marked the launch of the American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative (ABA ROLI)'s 3-year program ‘Strengthening ASEAN's Human Rights System'.

In collaboration with the Human Rights Working Group (HRWG), the RKOM successfully brought together more than 70 civil society leaders and lawyers from Southeast Asia region to have an exchange of views with the representatives of the ASEAN’s Human Rights Mechanisms, namely the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and the ASEAN Commission on Women and Children (ACWC).

Legal Advocacy Training

One of this program’s objectives is to strengthen the capacity of Southeast Asia lawyers in advocating for the settlement of human rights violations in the region.

In achieving this objective, LBH Jakarta and ABA ROLI have organized two legal advocacy trainings:

Pilot Training

The Pilot training was organized on May 4-6, 2012 in Jakarta with 10 Indonesian lawyers from LBH regional offices, the Indonesian Human Rights Committee for Social Justice (IHCS), Public Interest Lawyer Network (PIL-Net), Indonesia, LBH Masyarakat, Kontras, and PBHI.

The Pilot training aimed at testing the training curriculum developed by LBH Jakarta and ABA ROLI. Based on the participants’ evaluation, the curriculum was revised to give greater focus on the core themes of legal advocacy and ASEAN as well as international human rights systems.

Indonesian Training

The training was organized on July 25-28, 2012 in Bali, Indonesia. 17 Southeast Asian lawyers attended the two-and-a-half-day training. Three lawyers from Timor Leste also participated and enriched the exchange of experiences of human rights legal advocacy in their respective countries.

The training focused on three main components, namely 1) Understanding human rights in ASEAN countries; 2) Human rights remedies; and 3) Legal advocacy and social movement.
NGO Forum

On September 10-11, 2012 in Manila, Philippines, ABA ROLI together with Forum-Asia, SAPA Task Force on ASEAN and Human Rights (SAPA TF-AHR), Task Force Detainees of the Philippines (TFDP), and the Philippines Alliance for Human Rights Advocates (PAHRA) co-organized the Civil Society Forum on ASEAN Human Rights Declaration. This open Forum was held immediately prior to the formal CSO-AICHR consultation on September 12-13.

This meeting aimed to serve as a platform for dialogue, cooperation and coordination among civil society and lawyers in ASEAN on the drafting process and content of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration.

In addition, civil society and lawyers also developed common strategies for strengthening the independence, effectiveness and accountability of AICHR. For example, regarding the selection process of the new AICHR representatives, civil society and lawyers urged the holding of national public consultations in every ASEAN country and not simply a unilateral appointment by the Government.

A written submission to the AICHR was made by 62 representatives of civil society and the legal profession who came together at the meeting. They welcomed the effort of the AICHR to consult with civil society but expressed disappointment that several organizations continued to be barred from participating in the AICHR-CSO formal consultations. The AICHR was urged to ensure transparency, broad participation, and equal access for civil society in ASEAN.

Regarding the Draft ASEAN Human Rights Declaration (AHRD), civil society underlined that the human rights protections contained in the Declaration should not be lower than those contained in international human rights laws and standards.

Online Platform

Currently, ABA ROLI and Forum-Asia are developing a website that will centralize information about the ASEAN human rights system, and to encourage the sharing of advocacy strategies and best practices among lawyers and civil society. The website will support regional legal advocacy efforts directed toward strengthening ASEAN’s human rights system and allow long-distance networking amongst users via an online forum.

Regional Legal Advocacy Training: ASEAN Human Rights System

As a follow-up on the legal advocacy training held in Bali, ABA ROLI together with LBH Jakarta and the Malaysian Bar Council will organize the first regional training on November 22-25, 2012 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Small Grant Awards

ABA ROLI’s small grants scheme will support the implementation of advocacy initiatives directed toward strengthening ASEAN’s human rights system.

ABA ROLI has given the first award to the Mekong Lawyers’ Network (MLN) and the Earth Rights International (ERI) to support their advocacy on business and human rights, which is one of the priority issues of the AICHR.

SCHEDULE


PARTNERS