

ASIA

On October 12-14, 2004, The Fund for Peace and the Institute for Strategic and Development Studies brought together civil society representatives from throughout Southeast Asia to discuss the role of civil society in protecting civilians threatened by armed conflict.

The workshop, which was convened in Manila, opened with a discussion of how the principles put forth in the *Responsibility to Protect* report might apply in the context of Southeast Asia. In particular, the chairs pushed participants to consider regionally-specific scenarios that met the threshold for outside military intervention for human protection purposes outlined in the report and how the region would react if the host government refused to uphold its responsibility to protect civilians.

Participants struggled to reconcile a growing acknowledgement of the need to protect civilians in conflict areas with a deep concern over the dangers of unleashing outside military intervention. Two main points were made:

- Military interventions often fail and cause more damage than they prevent; and
- Powerful countries frequently ignore rules and guidelines for military intervention.

Hence, the context for the discussion of criteria guiding military intervention was the inability of the international community to enforce existing guidelines surrounding the use of force. In short, how will the international community ensure that guidelines are respected and followed by countries that intervene?

The group held that military intervention, even to protect civilians, could not be separated from national security calculations. Since September 11, 2001 the issue of humanitarian intervention has been muddled and must be considered alongside other interventions. The ongoing violence in Afghanistan and Iraq has led to a loss of confidence in the ability of military interventions to protect the lives of civilians. Nevertheless, the group conceded the value of the concept of *The Responsibility to Protect* and that concept's commitment to protecting civilians in conflict zones.

The topic of military intervention to protect civilians has received greater attention in the region in recent years. Examples were given of meetings between policy think tanks and government officials to discuss the topic. In each case, government officials expressed resentment over the potential intrusion on state sovereignty implied in the *Responsibility to Protect* report. But now, given the greater attention being paid by outside actors to internal conflicts, especially in fragile states, there is a more realistic understanding that intervention in a multilateral context is a better alternative than, and may prevent, unilateralism. This is especially relevant in intense conflict areas or when there is a compelling humanitarian need to resolve conflict quickly and avoid more bloodshed and loss of lives.

Participants argued that while Southeast Asians are hesitant to accept the concept of military intervention in its entirety, increased discussion of the topic has produced a realization that, if states failed to protect their people, responsibility shifts to the international community to protect them. Nonetheless, participants were extremely skeptical of outside interference and quick to remind the

group that not all military interventions are geared towards protection of civilians.

Against such skepticism, participants emphasized certain principles present in *The Responsibility to Protect* report would improve the chances of a legitimate intervention:

- The intention of the intervening forces must be made clear from the very beginning of the intervention. This would enable observers to assess whether the intervention achieved its intent.
- With respect to timing, interventions should come before intensification of a conflict. Otherwise, it may be too late.

It was noted that military intervention for the protection of human life was experienced in the region, particularly in the case of East Timor. Participants maintained, however, that because the mission took place only after Indonesia gave its consent, that it should be considered as a traditional peacekeeping operation. Thus, participants argued against using the term “military intervention” because it might be misunderstood. This term is often taken to mean “changing a regime.” It was therefore suggested that the term “peacekeeping” be used instead of “military intervention.” Furthermore, many in the region emphasize that the objective of peacekeeping operations is to establish peace and not engage in combat, which limits outside action when a peace agreement has not been achieved or armed spoilers continue to target civilians. It was also stressed that the UN framework for the use of force was applied in the cases of East Timor and Cambodia. And as a result, the peacekeeping forces in Southeast Asia operated under the authority of the UN.

According to participants, the question: “Is the *Responsibility to Protect* viewed as a regional norm in Southeast Asia?” highlights the importance of raising people’s consciousness about issues of civilian protection. It also promotes norms that make governments accept and realize their responsibility to protect vulnerable groups. States and societies must consciously think of their responsibility to protect women and children. In

the ASEAN region, the norm that has been ingrained in the region is non-interference. However, the 1997 Asian financial crisis led to the increasing awareness among countries in the region that what happens in neighboring countries matters to them. Thus, there was a proposal to change the norm from non-interference to “flexible engagement” or “enhanced interaction.” However, it is still questionable whether this idea has the support of governments in the region.

The Role of Civil Society

Participants were highly aware that the *Responsibility to Protect* means more than military intervention to protect civilians: as such, much of the discussion focused on the broader spectrum of conflict management and peacebuilding. In this context, participants gave the following examples of how civil society in Southeast Asia might address ongoing and potential conflict:

- Monitor and publicize massive violations of human rights and monitor international and regional responses;
- Advocate for the protection of civilians throughout the region;
- Participate directly in peace-making and peacebuilding in conflict areas;
- Analyze and address the root causes of conflicts to make outside interventions more holistic in approach;
- Provide non-military services and humanitarian assistance in conflict areas;
- Ensure that local perspectives in conflict areas are amplified and not neglected in the intervention process;
- Work with governments to prevent conflict;
- Work with civil society networks at the regional and international level to alert the international community regarding conflicts; and
- Build and strengthen human security norms in the region, such as banning land mines, encouraging a respect for human rights, etc.

Participants also made observations on the character of civil society groups in the region, identified threats to peace and stability for their country and the region, discussed the challenges

that civil society organizations (CSOs) face, and outlined what they have done to address regional threats.

Character of Civil Society in the Region

This discussion provided a window on the uneven nature and structure of civil society in the region. Differences can be assessed by the amount of political space allowed for civil society to operate in each country as well as in the level of engagement between CSOs by governments on policies. Participants noted that civil society is more developed in Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines. With respect to countries such as Singapore and Malaysia, participants spoke of those governments' ability to provide goods and services to the populations, thus minimizing the role of civil society organizations in this regard. In other countries, such as Vietnam, Cambodia, and to a much greater extent Burma, governments view civil society as a threat to regime stability. As a result, the presence and impact of civil society on the policy-making process is limited.

To participants, civil society organizations in the region have worked on a number of different issues that reflect the kind of challenges faced by their constituencies. Some civil society organizations work on poverty alleviation, economic development and the environment; others are locally-based actors that promote accountability and transparency. This type of work has reached a level of maturation such that, to some extent, civil society is able to engage government and international financial institutions on selected, mainly developmental, issues. Despite greater consultation with civil society on development discussions, governments in the region still conceive of security along traditional lines, focusing on state security. This translates into little attention paid to human security issues and a low level of engagement with civil society organizations in the realm of security.

Throughout the meetings, participants distinguished between two general types of nongovernmental actors: those involved in Track II and Track III activities. This system of classification breaks down in the following manner with respect to the

relationship among certain actors and the policy-making process. Track I activities consist of meetings of government officials and inter-governmental organizations; the outputs of these meetings are policies and do not involve civil society. Track II activities include think tanks, government officials (in their private capacities), business and media. Initially, civil society organizations were not included in Track II because of the resistance of some civil society groups to engage governments and vice versa. Track II institutions participate in policy dialogues but government officials who are engaged in this level do so in their private capacities. Track II does not produce official policy but provides indirect input to policy making. Track III activities involve non-governmental organizations and other civil society organizations at the grassroots level. Throughout the discussion, the group returned to the need to link more effectively these three types of activities and actors together.

Participants recognized that established lines of communication among Tracks I, II and III institutions are lacking. In some ASEAN countries, civil society organizations are weak or do not exist at all. Hence, there is a need to support civil society groups where they are fragile through networking and the transfer of learning and resources. Moreover, the group agreed that civil society groups can no longer rely on confrontational tactics – for some the “traditional approach” – in their dealing with government actors. Track III actors should engage Tracks I and II to get their agenda to official channels and influence policy making. At the same time, Track II actors have an important role to play, serving as the link facilitating interaction between Tracks I and III.

In general, civil society organizations in the Southeast Asian region have done extensive work in the area of promoting and protecting the rights of vulnerable groups, particularly at the grassroots level. However, their main challenge continues to be delivering their message to governments as well as to the general public. At the same time, some governments in the region are reluctant to engage community-based groups. Despite these difficulties, and in order to achieve their goal of contributing to

the protection of civilians, civil society organizations must continue to engage governments. In some countries within the region, there is also the perception that Track II groups are too closely linked to governments and this has hampered their efforts to work with local communities and grassroots actors.

Examples of mechanisms by which a better understanding among these actors may be achieved include the ASEAN People's Assembly (APA) process and the ASEAN-ISIS Colloquium on Human Rights.¹ Regional initiatives such as these should be intensified. However, an observation was made that, thus far, the APA process has tended to involve mostly Tracks II and III actors. Hence, in order to increase the utility of the APA process as a venue for discussion and sharing of views among governments, policy institutions and grass roots groups, more government officials must be brought into the process. In addition, more sustainable and systematic communication channels among these three sets of actors must be put in place to bridge differences among them. In relation to the general public, efforts must also be exerted to improve the public's awareness and understanding of the processes within ASEAN as well as the ASEAN-ISIS. This can be done through seminars and other information-sharing initiatives.

In the case of the Philippines, there are already many civil society organizations working on regional human rights and security issues and they are likewise well-represented in local and national planning bodies. Dialogue and consultations between government and civil society actors have been formalized and institutionalized through national and local legislation. As such, CSOs can voice their concerns directly to the national government and its officials. However, there is a need for Tracks II and III actors in the Philippines to reach out to the international community, specifically by strengthening their networking with other organizations in the region and beyond.

The discussion on the capacity of civil society organizations in the region included challenges that civil society organizations face in obtaining financial support and how this affects their work. On the

whole, participants stressed the importance of identifying potential donors who will support such initiatives with resources, and, importantly, sharing this information. In addition, participants made the following points:

- Regional self-reliance must be achieved to avoid over-dependence on resources provided by donor institutions. Participants argued that civil society groups should be accountable, but not beholden, to donor institutions.
- Resources provided by donor institutions should be spent on improving civil society capacities. This includes skills training and assistance in developing human capital rather than only financial support.
- The region's CSOs should push for access to financial support from the ASEAN Foundation Fund.
- Civil society groups should improve their knowledge of available financial resources and the relevant funding processes. This would require CSOs to be more proactive in looking for funding opportunities, rather than waiting for donor institutions to request proposals.
- CSOs should examine the potential for partnerships with the business sector and, if possible without losing autonomy, government agencies.
- Funders are looking for partners whose work is perceived to be "cutting edge" or "state of the art." While participants were clear not to advocate that CSOs constantly shift their work to reflect prevailing preferences, there was a feeling that CSOs should strive to utilize innovative approaches in their research, advocacy and dissemination efforts.

Threats to Peace and Security

Participants were hesitant to acknowledge that the problem of failing states plagued Southeast Asia to the degree that it affects other regions of the world. The priorities of the region, it was argued, rather

lay in improving human rights and addressing the challenges of developing economies. The region does generally enjoy peace, it was argued, but the question of stability is less certain. Some countries experience political instability emanating from gaps created by economic development policies. Since security is viewed in a comprehensive manner, other threats to the region include food insecurity, conflict over scarce resources, environmental degradation, and SARS, bird flu and similar worldwide epidemics.

Some participants said that, from the “traditional” Southeast Asian perspective, threats emanate from internal matters, mostly issues relating to national economic development. To avoid military intervention, governments must be able respond to the needs of the people, and must assume the primary responsibility of looking into their internal affairs. To prevent conflict, one has to look into threats and problems from within, as these might threaten the state. Certain countries in the region also suffer from fears of outside attempts to influence (or even change) the government.

In the Southeast Asian context, stability is seen as deriving from strong states that are resilient, a core principle of ASEAN. Participants noted that this strengthening of the state, however, must be coupled with an empowering of civil society which should be ensured the proper space to act through respect for the rule of law. If this happened, then the threat of instability would come from a breakdown of state and society relations and the abuse, by either side, of the rule of law. Such tensions can be exacerbated by the gap created by uneven economic development, which highlights the importance in post-conflict societies of addressing the issues of justice and rule of law.

Challenges and Obstacles to Civil Society in Pursuing Their Issues in the Region

According to participants, the biggest challenge for them has proven to be expanding the channels of communication between civil society and national governments. Communication between civil society and government is impeded by a mutual lack of trust. In some instances, civil society organizations

are even seen by government as provocateurs and troublemakers. Therefore, confidence building activities must be initiated to bridge this gap.

On the role of government, participants recommended policy-makers to engage civil society. In this regard, there should also be recognition on the part of civil society that government does have the primary responsibility for public welfare and thus civil society must be ready to collaborate with government. Civil society as a whole should also do more to coordinate its own messages.

Participants expressed dissatisfaction that ASEAN has not yet accredited more than a small number of NGOs working on peace issues. Most of the NGOs accredited by ASEAN are professional or trade associations (e.g. cosmetic company groups, dental associations, etc.).

Citizens may not be aware of what is happening in other countries in the region. In some instances, they may know the issue, but the question is whether they want to do something about it. Two examples related to Malaysia demonstrate different reactions. Participants argued that incidences involving Islam would incite Malaysia’s involvement. On the other hand, Malaysia was unwilling to address the situation in the Indonesian province of Aceh and treated Acehenese refugees in Malaysia as illegal immigrants.

Impact of Conflict on Vulnerable Groups

Participants shared their views on the matter of vulnerable groups as well as their actual experiences in working with women and children caught in conflict situations. Participants also discussed the situation of refugees displaced by conflict situations both within and beyond national borders and the impact of conflict on youth. Participants also examined how internal conflict affects the lives of indigenous peoples.

Across the region, vulnerable groups have been and continue to be adversely affected by various forms of internal conflict. In Cambodia for instance, women and children often lack access to formal

education and they usually belong to the poorest sectors of society. Women in particular are prohibited from going to school and this translates in to their inability to support the schooling of their children. Thus, they end up being victims of prostitution and/or human trafficking. Additionally, participants noted that children are put to work against their will in rice fields.

Burmese women refugees in particular live in dire circumstances because there are no refugee camps for them. Their plight must be brought to the attention of the governments of the region. Moreover, there is a tendency for governments in the region to view women and children as adjuncts of armed combatants. Women and children belonging to minority groups are targeted in conflict situations. A continuing challenge for those working with women and children and other vulnerable groups in the region is how to raise public awareness regarding this issue and bring this matter to the agenda of national governments. Civil society groups working with women and children also witness a certain gender-blindness and ethnic bias in the official policies of governments towards groups involved in conflict situations. For this reason, a special focus on women and children involved in and affected by conflict situations is needed to improve their condition.

At the regional level, the fact that there are thousands of young people who are victims of human trafficking is evidence that national governments and/or regional bodies have not addressed this issue effectively. Few governments have taken up the issue and there is insufficient information regarding the routes taken by human traffickers as well as the exact number of those involved in trafficking. There is a lack of research to provide support for policy proposals to resolve the problem. In this regard, civil society initiatives may focus on conducting more research to determine the magnitude of the problem as well as to promote a comprehensive policy-making approach on the matter.

Various Philippine NGOs have embarked on nationwide initiatives that seek to bring issues concerning women and children to the attention of

the government as well as the general public. This is an issue that can be addressed through increased coordination and networking among regional groups that will provide opportunities for information sharing. This is vital as it will allow people in one country to know what is going on in other countries. Channels of communication do exist in different countries, but the existence of these channels is not enough to ensure that the voices of women and their children are heard by the proper authorities. Whether such channels of communication are available on a nationwide basis or whether they only exist in urban areas, is an important concern.

This issue is also related to the absence of representation in government of women and children advocates (particularly in legislatures). For women to have adequate channels of communication to articulate their needs and those of their children, they must have sufficient representation in the formal institutions of government.

Some participants noted that governments are not aware of the unique impact of conflict on women. This may be due in part to the influence of the church and religious beliefs/practices, which serve to worsen an already grave situation. Participants spoke of the need to challenge some institutions in society that hamper efforts to resolve issues concerning vulnerable groups.

In addition to gender-related concerns, it is also necessary to give attention to ethnic issues, particularly in light of the violations of ethnic rights in the region. Also, there is the possibility that post-conflict reconstruction efforts and policies may conflict with the traditional values of ethnic and other minority groups in a country. If this conflict of values is not adequately addressed, it is unlikely that reconstruction initiatives will succeed.

The work of civil society organizations in handling potential crises involving illegal migrant workers in Malaysia could serve as a model. The orderly repatriation of Indonesian workers was made possible by coordination among government and NGOs.

Within ASEAN, one way to address the issue of child soldiers is to ensure the enforcement of international conventions agreed to by governments in the region, particularly those that have to do with the promotion and protection of women's and children's rights. Through these agreements, governments of ASEAN countries can be made more accountable.

Some participants, however, voiced the need to use caution and advised that a less confrontational approach must be taken in addressing the issue of child soldiers so that civil society avoids stepping into the sensitive issue of ASEAN's non-interference policy. A first step is for governments in the region to recognize the existence of child soldiers. Another approach is to provide space for regional discussions on the matter. Here, emphasis may be placed on using regional Track II mechanisms and the ASEAN People's Assembly (APA) process to bring the issue to the attention and the agenda of national governments.

Another approach taken by some civil society organizations on the issue child soldiers is to engage rebel groups that are involved in conflicts and frame the practice within the context of international humanitarian laws. One problem, however, is that there has been a tendency for national laws to treat child soldiers as criminals. Further, it is difficult to enforce national laws and international conventions because most rebel groups do not recognize the authority and legitimacy of states and governments.

On a positive note, there is a World Bank program that seeks to break the cycle of children of armed combatants becoming combatants themselves or the widows of those killed in conflict situations also taking up arms eventually. Women and children and other vulnerable groups must be viewed not only as victims of conflict situations but also as stakeholders in such conflicts. Many examples exist within the region wherein women as stakeholders actively participated in setting up peace zones, organizing themselves, conducting training, engaging in peace negotiations, and advocating for an end conflict situations.

Participants also discussed the need to address the problem of persons injured by landmines. While some ASEAN countries have ratified the Ottawa Landmine Convention, there continue to be many landmine victims in the region. The problem is that, despite governments' ratification of this convention, they have not fully committed themselves to clearing mines in their territories and providing assistance to victims of landmines. Civil society groups, participants concluded, should embark on continuous lobbying work to pressure governments that have ratified the convention to commit fully to the document as well as get more Southeast Asian governments to be a party to the UN Convention on Landmines.

ASEAN, ASEAN+3 (China, Japan and Korea) and the ASEAN Regional Forum

ASEAN is an organization of governments that focuses on political and economic activities. Political problems among member countries are addressed through bilateral and diplomatic means. In the past 37 years, ASEAN has prevented inter-state conflict from taking place between its members.² ASEAN has also been cooperating well in the economic field. Although there are still a lot of things to do, such as harmonizing rules and establishing a currency union, ASEAN has become a free trade area and is on its way to becoming a common market.

ASEAN has made considerable achievements when it comes to improving the relations and understanding among ASEAN member states. However, it is important for ASEAN to define the direction that it will take in the future to address the questions of protecting civilians, internal conflicts and becoming more responsive to civil society. In this respect, it is important for ASEAN to look at the experiences of other regional and international institutions and learn from them.

At present, the role of ASEAN as well as of ASEAN + 3 and ARF in protecting civilians and responding to internal conflicts is vague.³ ASEAN's principle of non-intervention prevents it from playing a significant role in protecting civilians. The general perception is that ASEAN has the

tendency to protect governments rather than civilians. If the principle of non-intervention is not modified, then ASEAN will not achieve anything in this area.

In relation to this, participants were critical of the lack of development with respect to the proposed ASEAN Human Rights Commission. This mechanism has been advocated for the past ten years by Track II and Track III institutions but the prospects for the establishment of such an institution are still not clear. ASEAN should define its agenda on human rights to be responsive to the need to protect civilians, participants said.

ASEAN states tend to prefer a “passive” stance when it comes to confronting other member states on issues of human rights violations or internal conflict. For example, in the East Timor case, there was hesitation on the part of the Philippine government to take an active stance on the issue because Indonesia might be offended.

It also seems that ASEAN has a credibility problem, especially with regard to Burma. ASEAN is generally perceived as an organization of “golfing buddies” or a “boys club”. Moreover, the so-called “ASEAN way” of dealing with regional issues through gentle pressure behind closed doors is simply not enough. Participants expressed the need, in light of norms promoting the protection of civilians, to examine this ASEAN approach. Another important criticism was the fact that ASEAN lacks high level officials to champion issues relating to increased participation of civil society groups in ASEAN processes.

Even more so than ASEAN, the newer organizations of ASEAN + 3 and the ASEAN Regional Forum are still young institutions. Their focus is far from resolving political conflicts. Moreover, the problems confronting these three institutions are basically the same. At present, the objective of ASEAN + 3 is economic cooperation and it will take some time before it will be able to deal with the topic of protecting citizens. The process of building an East Asian community is a long-term goal for ASEAN + 3 and it has started through economic cooperation.

ASEAN, ASEAN + 3 and ARF are not effective at all in addressing internal conflicts because they are not prepared to do so. Although these organizations address inter-state conflicts, they do not necessarily deal with the resolution of issues and the transformation of conflicts. ASEAN is still re-thinking its role, especially after the 1997 Asian financial crisis. In terms of institutionalization, ASEAN remains weak because it is not yet well-organized. Even when there are areas of agreement among governments, these organizations usually only issue declarations and fall short on concrete actions. Bureaucratic capacity is weak and, at this point, ASEAN plays a role only at the level of coordination.

The ability of ASEAN to work with civil society is also plagued by several problems. One is that civil society organizations that work with ASEAN are tagged as “co-opted” by the larger civil society community. However, in order for ASEAN to be effective and for civil society groups to place their interests on ASEAN’s official agenda, these sectors must work together. Thus far, ASEAN, ASEAN + 3 and ARF have not been responsive to civil society demands. For this reason, civil society groups hold ‘parallel meetings’ alongside the official meetings of these organizations but they achieve minimal results due to limited exposure.

Ultimately, participants argued that focusing civil society efforts on the regional level will, for the near term, produce few results. Hence, civil society groups often focus on the national level. In relation to this, it was noted that civil society groups could engage their respective governments through the National Secretariat of ASEAN so that their agenda could be brought to the organization through official national channels.

In discussing the role of ASEAN, participants pointed out that the organization can, in the future, be encouraged to focus on peacekeeping and peace building. For example, it can serve as a third party institution to monitor the implementation of peace agreements. Furthermore, for ASEAN to be effective, it must take a stand on issues such as the human rights situation in Burma. In addressing the various conflicts in the region, the purpose of

ASEAN should be clarified. To do this, ASEAN needs to re-think its position on non-interference as its guiding principle.

How Can Civil Society Work More Effectively to Protect Civilians?

Workshop participants identified as a primary problem the lack of trust and confidence among government actors (Track I), think tanks (Track II) and grassroots organizations (Track III). In some cases, think tanks that work closely with governments are viewed by grass-roots organizations as co-opted by the government. In other cases, think tanks regard grass roots organizations as overly confrontational in their activities and lacking in expertise in policy-making matters and security issues. These tensions serve to hinder cooperation between Track II and Track III actors and limit the opportunity for those actors that frequently have access to information in conflict zones to provide information to those actors who shape government and ASEAN policy. Hence, the first step in strengthening civil society's ability to protect civilians is to improve the relations among these three sets of actors.

Some participants highlighted the cultural elements at work in the region's political institutions. ASEAN, it was stated, has always taken on a consensual approach to policy-making and that approach is unlikely to change in the near future. Taking this into consideration, CSOs might consider creative strategies to push ASEAN to take up various issues and put them on its agenda so that civil society's causes may finally find their way to governments' agendas.

Participants argued that the think tanks of ASEAN-ISIS are favorably situated to play the role of bridging the span between governments and grassroots organizations. Given that Track II mechanisms in the region such as ASEAN-ISIS are expected to take the lead in communicating the people's agenda to policy-makers, it is imperative on their part to build their capacity to lobby and persuade governments to understand issues from an alternative perspective. And despite efforts on the part of grassroots organizations to

maintain their independence from state institutions, they must also work in cooperation with governments to affect policy.

The group concluded that grass roots organizations should identify those channels of communication which can be used to engage policy-makers, including legislators/parliamentarians. This requires, in some instances, that civil society organizations develop greater understanding of the policy-making processes of their governments. Gaining such skills would provide a way to build civil society capacity. Language training would also allow civil society organizations to communicate their agenda to regional and international networks.

Recommendations for grassroots organizations included using the signing of international declarations and conventions as a point of leverage for them to engage governments and hold them accountable to fulfill their international obligations on issues related to the protection of civilians. Regional forums such as ASEAN and the Asia-Europe (ASEM) summits and meetings provide official documents that can be used to help civil society organizations identify areas which may be newly opened to pressure.

In addition, individual government officials who support increased attention to the protection of civilians should be enlisted to champion the agenda of grass roots organizations. Advocacy organizations should lobby governments to post particular officials to ASEAN who are sympathetic to their causes. Participants also noted that some ASEAN member countries have taken the lead in certain issues areas (e.g. Indonesia in relation to security issues, the Philippines on human rights) and that civil society organizations should target these governments.

The ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Organization (AIPO) was also identified as a forum that could allow grass roots organizations to communicate with national legislatures. ASEAN's Eminent Persons Group and Troika provide another way for grassroots organizations garner more influence over policy.

More attention to the role of the media, national and international, should be given in order to amplify the message of civil society organizations, particularly in cases in which the media calls attention to the early warning signals in potential conflict areas.

An annual calendar of activities involving Tracks II and III actors should be created in order to inform all those concerned about on-going or scheduled activities that are relevant to their respective work. This initiative will also help civil society organizations to adequately prepare for their participation in any of the relevant events.

Civil society organizations that have developed conflict mediation skills should partner with Track II organizations to provide training to government officials. This would provide opportunities to make personal connections and to shape the mindsets of decision-makers.

The issue of capacity-building should include attention paid to improving the accountability of civil society organizations. Participants recommended that these organizations take steps to improve the management of their work operations, particularly in terms of financial management. Towards this end, closer partnerships between CSOs and business schools should be pursued. Such partnerships could help CSOs develop better management of their finances as well as auditing. One example is the case of the Asian Institute of Management (AIM) in the Philippines, which has been working closely with NGOs in order to develop financial capacities.

Due to their critical role in the promotion and protection of people's rights, CSOs must work to strengthen their research capacity, particularly by incorporating an interdisciplinary approach in their work. Sometimes, it is the political dynamics and competition over funding within the CSO community itself that hamper information-sharing activities and prevents them from working cooperatively with each other.

The working partnership between civil society organizations and universities, particularly in the

area of research and information-dissemination, should be strengthened through more exchanges and interaction between these actors. Such partnerships should take place at the national, regional, and international levels. Policy-focused organizations must continuously engage people at the grassroots level. Focus must be put on building trust in order to improve their ability to generate information from the public.

Thus far, differences in the values of research institutions and advocacy organizations have hampered attempts to work together. NGOs and other grassroots organizations tend to hold that advocacy is more important than academic research. Based on this experience, it was suggested that, instead of viewing the issue as an either-or question, research and advocacy should instead be viewed as being complementary and should be made to feed into each other. On the part of research think tanks, there must be a recognition that advocacy is as important as the need to improve their research capacity. Research groups must also consciously undertake less narrow and more integrative studies and make efforts to interlink their work with those of other organizations dealing with related issues.

Contributing to Humanitarian Interventions

Civil society organizations can play a positive and significant role, contributing to the effectiveness of humanitarian military operations in several ways. Participants cited the case of Thai NGOs that have been working for a long time in East Timor and Aceh. These groups were involved in information sharing activities and conducted briefings on the situation in these conflict areas for the benefit of the military peacekeepers and other government officials trying to establish law and order. Civil society organizations can also provide training for peacekeepers to develop cultural sensitivities and provide background to particular conflicts.

Civil society can provide information and identify populations that need relief and rehabilitation. They can also be directly involved in relief operations by serving as the local partners of international institutions and facilitating the entry of international

humanitarian groups and donors. CSOs may also advocate continuity of development assistance to conflict areas and serve as monitors for how project funds are utilized.

Recommendations

Capacity-building

- In order to be able to identify areas where capacity building for civil society organizations is necessary, there needs to be a comprehensive map of CSOs in the region, which would include a classification of CSOs depending on their orientations and activities and an inventory of current capabilities.
- CSOs should develop technical expertise in early warning, alerts, and pre-conflict mitigating options as well as post-conflict, election-related activities and reconstruction and relief operations. If centers with expertise in these areas already exist, CSOs should form partnerships.
- CSOs should develop greater capacity for conflict analysis and research. CSOs must contribute to the field of conflict analysis so that the findings reflect reality on the ground. Academic institutions should help CSOs to be more systematic in their analysis and to develop lessons learned and best practices from their experiences. Skills training can be offered from research institutions to grassroots organizations.
- Grassroots organizations provide data that may be difficult for academics to obtain. Both should work together rather than one exploiting the work of the other. Grassroots organizations can actively help academics define a common research agenda, and academics can help CSOs do more rigorous conflict analysis.
- CSOs should continue to develop tools and techniques relevant to constructive policy advocacy in order to communicate more effectively their messages to governments. CSOs should enter into policy dialogues to get the attention of governments in the region.
- Human rights organizations have been successfully networking throughout the region. Networking of CSOs engaged in the area of *The Responsibility to Protect* should build on these existing networks.
- Scholarship/exchange programs with other countries' civil society organizations should be developed so that personnel can improve or gain the skills outlined above.
- Links among local groups, the United Nations and civil society must be established. CSOs should brief UN missions on the local cultural, historical and political dynamics when peacekeeping missions are contemplated and taking place.
- CSOs should seek to familiarize themselves with previous humanitarian interventions by examining the literature and official reports documenting UN experiences.

Communication

- ASEAN-ISIS should share information about humanitarian intervention and other related matters with CSOs; CSOs should also reach out to ASEAN-ISIS for such information. ASEAN-ISIS is currently engaged in two such programs: the ASEAN-ISIS Colloquium on Human Rights and the ASEAN People's Assembly. In another example, ISDS produced three volumes as the research output of the Development and Security in Southeast Asia (DSSEA) project where academics documented human security from the grassroots perspective.
- CSOs should work with research institutions so that research projects include policy advocacy components. Advocacy should also be done by academic institutions, NGOs and policy institutions together. This would involve some active lobbying, publication of findings and public campaigns.
- The sharing of information should be made a priority, especially among grassroots

organizations and between grassroots organizations and Track II actors. One example was given of the Indonesian Human Rights Monitor sharing its human rights documents with other CSOs and universities in the region. Such sharing should utilize web-based resources, and organizations with greater resources should undertake to provide the foundational inputs.

- Channels should be created that would allow the immediate communication of urgent information to networks that influence government and regional policies.
- There is a need to have smaller and continuous forums aside from the ASEAN Peoples Assembly that serve as a venue for exchanges between Tracks II and III.
- Establishing links with ASEAN desk officers in their respective foreign ministries and national legislatures is important for civil society groups.
- Civil society organizations should work to increase the role of ASEAN's Eminent Persons Group (EPG) or create such a mechanism to bridge the efforts of government and civil society. EPG can potentially serve as mediator, providing good offices, and could be part of an early warning system.

ENDNOTES:

¹ For information the ASEAN People's Assembly see http://www.aseanpeoplesassembly.net/conf_info.htm and the Colloquium on Human Rights is an annual meeting of regional and international experts to discuss the impact of ASEAN efforts to improve human rights in Southeast Asia.

² Vietnam joined in 1995; Burma and Laos joined in 1997. Cambodia became a member in 1999.

³ ASEAN PLUS THREE ASEAN invited China, Japan and Korea to participate in the Second ASEAN Informal Summit in Kuala Lumpur in 1997. The ASEAN+3 process was further strengthened in 1999 with the issuance of a *Joint Statement on East Asia Cooperation* by the ASEAN+3 leaders. The statement committed the thirteen countries to strengthening cooperation and collaboration in the areas of economics and finance. <http://www.aseansummit2001.org.bn/org/as2001/asean+3.doc> The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) was created in 1994. It draws together twenty-three countries that have an impact on, or are involved in, the security of the Asia Pacific Region. ARF membership comprises the ten member states of ASEAN as well as Australia, Canada, China, the European Union, India, Japan, Mongolia, New Zealand, North Korea, Papua New Guinea, Russia, South Korea and the United States. <http://www.dfat.gov.au/arf/arfintro.html>