

Practice of Human Rights Education in Thailand and Bangladesh*

Asian Institute for Human Rights and Center for Human Rights Studies

THE ASIAN INSTITUTE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (AIHR) works towards strengthening the theory and practice of human rights activism, facilitating linkages between academics and activists and contributing to a continuous process of action and reflection.

As part of its mandate, AIHR has conducted human rights learning programs and dialogues at regional and national levels. These learning programs have included annual study sessions on human rights held in Thailand and Bangladesh, courses on economic, social and cultural rights, workshops on monitoring human rights violations and dialogues on issues of shared concerns. AIHR has also produced publications to assist activists in doing human rights work and to enable them to reflect on theory and concepts.

In the course of its work, AIHR felt the need to enhance its understanding of existing practices of human rights education in Bangladesh and Thailand and initiated a research project on the subject. The research project has the objective of understanding the nature of the different human rights education initiatives and of reflecting on the ways by which human rights education within the countries could be further strengthened. AIHR focused on these two countries as it had been conducting learning programs in these countries in collaboration with local partners.

The research was conducted through internet-based documentary research and face-to-face interview with activists and organization representatives. The findings of the interviews were presented in dialogues held among practitioners for reflection and discussion. The Dhaka-based Center for Human Rights Studies collaborated with AIHR in doing the research in Bangladesh.

This article is a documentation of the findings of the research. It presents the practices of human rights groups in Bangladesh and Thailand. It

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also presents the challenges faced by the groups in their work and some recommendations for strengthening the practice of human rights education.

Human Rights Education Practice in Thailand and Bangladesh

This study covers organizations that may not consider their work as human rights education work. They are considered appropriate organizations for this study because the nature of their work contributes to the creation of processes and spaces for human rights learning. See Annex B for the profile of the participating organizations.

The findings of the research have been analyzed using three models in order to describe the nature of the initiatives, to explain the dimensions of human rights learning and to reflect on how human rights learning can be further strengthened.

Value Awareness Model

This model describes initiatives that seek to develop critical consciousness among people on issues concerning human rights. These initiatives also seek to develop the sense of responsibility that every person should have towards others in society.

Enhancing individual consciousness on issues

The Kabfai Community Theatre in Thailand, *Manab Adhikar Natya Parishad* (Human Rights Theatre Council) and Bangladesh Institute of Theatre Arts (BITA) use the medium of theater to initiate dialogues with communities and create consciousness about human rights issues.

Kabfai, which has been facilitating community reflection on corporal punishment in school, sex work, impact of violence on the lives of women, believes that the medium of theater affects the people at the intellectual level and also at the emotional level – the head and the heart. As a technique to elicit audience participation, the performance of a drama is stopped at strategic points of the story and questions are posed to the audience on how they feel about the situation depicted in the story, what they think should have been done, what their opinion is, etc. This dialogue helps break barriers and encourages the audience to ponder on the issues, to voice their thoughts and to collectively reflect upon their attitudes and perceptions.

The process of identifying issues and developing the theater script also generates learning. As shared by BITA, in the course of having trainings, workshops and meetings in the communities, a team of volunteers is created. Facilitators from BITA engage in a dialogue with the team and identify the issues. Different dimensions of an identified issue are discussed, a story around the issue is developed and the script is written. During the performance of the drama, the team helps to facilitate dialogue with the community on the identified issue and also on other issues and concerns. Both BITA and the Human Rights Theatre Council have used this strategy to raise consciousness about issues regarding gender discrimination and violence against women within communities in Bangladesh.

Facilitating experiential learning

The Songkhla Forum tries to create social consciousness so that it can contribute to building a participatory democracy in Thailand. It primarily focuses on the youth. Its work is based on the premise that each individual has responsibilities towards the society and has the ability to take actions that can help bring positive changes in society. In order to exercise this agency, people need to strengthen their critical thinking, to communicate their views and thoughts, to collaborate with others in society and to be creative in their approaches. The Forum tries to strengthen the capacity of the youth to do so by providing them with the space and the resources to take initiatives that can make a difference in their local communities. In order to assist the youth to achieve all this, the Forum also provides them with knowledge inputs and skill development training.

The Thai Volunteer Service provides fellowships to new law graduates to work with social organizations for a period of one year. It believes that such opportunities would help in expanding the horizons of the young graduates, exposing them to social issues and concerns and creating in them a sense of social consciousness, which would guide them in their professional and personal lives in the future.

In 2008, AIHR initiated a pilot project called “Court Watch” with law faculties of different universities in Thailand. The objective of the program was to enhance understanding about human rights issues among law students and activists through the prism of fair trial principles. Under the program, law students came together to learn about human rights, access to justice and fair trial principles; after which they visited the courts, observed

different trials and documented their observations. A national seminar was organized where the law students presented their observations to law academics, human rights lawyers, activists, community leaders and members of the judiciary. During the seminar, senior lawyers, prosecutors and judges shared their thoughts and views on the findings of the law students. Through this process of dialogue, discussions were held on access to justice issues and the practice of fair trial principles in Thailand. Also, issues for further research were identified that became the subject of study in the next cycle of the project. The program opened up opportunities for the Law Faculties to develop linkages with the judiciary and facilitate a process by which law students could learn about the practice of human rights.

With the objective of facilitating learning from different country contexts, AIHR has also been supporting learning programs involving cross border exchanges among practitioners from different countries.

Creating consciousness of being subject of rights

The Bangladesh State does not recognize the indigenous identity of the people living in the Chittagong Hill Tract region. A national forum for indigenous people, called the Bangladesh Adivasi Forum, seeks to strengthen the promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples in Bangladesh. Apart from monitoring violations of rights and doing advocacy with the State, a significant focus of its activities is on raising consciousness among the indigenous peoples that they are subject of rights, that discriminatory practices against them are wrong and that they have power to take action to claim their rights. The Forum also strives to bridge the gap between indigenous peoples and others in society. The Forum, through meetings, dialogues, consultations, and other initiatives, tries to promote indigenous ways of life, their culture and their aspirations and remove the biases and prejudices existing in society against indigenous peoples.¹

The Muslim Attorney Center (MAC) works on access to justice issues in the Muslim dominant southernmost provinces of Thailand where an armed conflict has been ongoing for many years. Around 2005, with an increase in insurgent attacks, the State responded with the enforcement of strict laws such as the Emergency Decree and the imposition of Martial Law. Many persons suspected of being involved in the insurgency were arrested. Information about torture, disappearances and extra-judicial killings circulated but people were not filing any formal complaints. In this context,

the MAC, with support from other national organizations such as the Cross Cultural Foundation, organized many informal meetings at the village level to discuss the legal rights of the people, the limits of state power and the mechanisms for accessing justice. The villagers, who held to the general belief that any misfortune that befell them was because of fate, became aware of the fact that they had rights under law and that they could take action against wrongs and claim justice from State institutions. Slowly, the attitude of villagers changed and MAC started receiving complaints about arrests, tortures, disappearances, killings, etc.

Raising public awareness

There are also initiatives that seek to enhance awareness among people on issues of public importance.

The Community Network for Social and Political Reform, which has a network in different parts of Thailand, has been engaged in raising consciousness among the public on environmental issues such as the adverse impacts of mining projects. It has also launched a campaign against the state policy to promote mangrove forests as tourist destinations. It has stressed instead the need to give equal importance to protecting the spiritual and cultural life of the ethnic Moken fisherfolk living in these forests.

Similarly, the *Bangladesh Paribesh Andolan* (BAPA, the Bangladesh Environmental Movement) initiates campaigns on a wide range of issues – such as protecting playgrounds in the city of Dhaka, cleaning rivers, deforestation and climate change.

Amnesty International Thailand, tries to create awareness among the Thai people on global human rights issues through its regular newsletters, workshops with university students and film shows.

Prachatai in Thailand is a media group that produces web-based newspapers in Thai and English languages. It seeks to provide the public with news and information about problems, concerns, activities and accomplishments of local communities, social movements and organizations. It shares the voices of social activists and practitioners by conducting interviews with them. It does so by publishing statements and campaign materials of local, national and international organizations. It also reports on news regarding human rights and social justice.

Some sex workers associated with the Empower Foundation in Thailand decided to pool their experience and resources to create a bar (“Can-Do”

bar) owned by sex workers for sex workers. They initiated a community fund to support sex workers who contribute to the fund. Other than being a place for hanging out, the bar also offers the opportunity to create a working model of an entertainment place with just, safe and fair conditions for bar staff and bar workers. It also helps in public education and tries to promote respect towards sex-workers.

Accountability Model

Initiatives under this model include those that aim at enforcing rights and seeking accountability with respect to human rights violations. The avenues for seeking accountability are many: the media, independent mechanisms such as the National Human Rights Commission, courts of justice and international human rights mechanisms. Human rights learning focuses on building the capacity of members of the community, activists, and professionals to seek accountability for human rights violations.

Promoting legal awareness among vulnerable communities

Many times, people in the communities do not report violations of rights because they are unaware of their legal entitlements or they do not have knowledge about the procedure and mechanisms to file complaints.

The Center for Protection and Revival of the Local Community Rights (CPRLCR) works with ethnic communities in northern Thailand and helps the communities to access justice. The ethnic communities live in or make a living out of forests and many of them do not have any legal documents regarding the land they cultivate and live on. Most of their problems relate to land disputes with forest authorities. In working with these communities, CPRLCR starts helping them become conscious of the idea that because of their history of living harmoniously with the forests, they have rights to live in the forestland and that they have rights to protect their dignity. As the villagers become conscious of their agency, CPRLCR helps them understand the laws that regulate the use of forestland, reflect on the objectives of such laws and the interests the laws seek to protect. CPRLCR also helps them to understand how they can use the existing laws to secure protection of their rights. Based on these learnings, CPRLCR helps them identify strategies that may be effective in addressing their problems and supports them in the implementation of such strategies. The strategies include organizing village-level meetings, focused group discussions, community mappings,

workshops, etc. Community mapping is an interesting tool that facilitates people's better understanding of their own community. In this exercise, the members of the community are encouraged to pool together all relevant information about the community – the history of the community, the number of families, the number of men, women and children and their ages, the ethnicity, the status of their nationality, the land area used for residential and cultivation purposes, the boundaries of such land, status of the land (whether or not the land falls within the protected area of forests), their practice of land usage, the nearest school, etc. Such mapping exercise helps the community members to come together as a collective and gain more confidence in themselves as a collective. It also helps them to collect information that they can use in their interaction with the authorities and in their advocacy efforts.

In Bangladesh, organizations such as BLAST (Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust) are also engaged in legal empowerment of the people. Through the continuous activities of organizing “courtyard” meetings at the village level, legal fairs in universities, receiving complaints through their legal aid cells, etc., the organization identifies issues that are of concern to the communities, such as rights of garment workers, domestic violence, divorce and dowry. Once issues are identified, trainings and workshops are held with people in the communities in order to make them become aware of their rights under the law.

Building capacity of paralegals

Most organizations engaged in legal empowerment of communities believe that the communities themselves should have the confidence to engage with law enforcement agencies. Thus CPRLCR, MAC, Human Rights and Development Foundation (HRDF) and MAP Foundation in Thailand and BLAST in Bangladesh have tried to create teams of paralegals within the communities. The paralegals act as the bridge between the community and the legal aid group, whose office is often situated at a distance from the community. The paralegals receive complaints from the communities, document the complaints, assist the lawyers in doing the initial fact-finding, and provide support and assistance to the people to access state institutions (police, courts or administrative agencies).

In southern Thailand, in collaboration with other organizations, MAC set up a network of paralegals, known as the Southern Paralegal Advocacy

Network (SPAN). This network comprising of volunteers from different communities, plays a very significant role in conducting legal awareness activities at the community level, receiving complaints and doing fact-finding and documentation. As the paralegals are drawn from the communities, people trust them and share information with them; people in the communities may not do this with outsiders.

HRDF, which primarily works with migrant labor in Thailand, has been successful in building paralegal teams within migrant communities. With the assistance of paralegals, HRDF is able to reach out to the migrant population, to know their problems, to provide them with legal knowledge, to help them to organize campaigns, to gather information for effective advocacy, and to provide legal assistance where necessary.

“High heel lawyers” are sex workers who have been provided legal training by Empower Foundation, an organization working with sex workers in Thailand. Armed with legal knowledge and skills, these paralegals are able to provide first-hand assistance to colleagues when needed.

Building capacity of activists and professionals

In order to seek accountability from authorities, there should be effective fact-finding, documentation, reporting and filing of legal petitions. Many organizations under the accountability model focus on building capacities of practitioners so that they can do their human rights work effectively.

The Cross Cultural Foundation in Thailand, in collaboration with international organizations, has held training workshops on torture with the purpose of strengthening the skills of activists and lawyers in doing fact-finding and documentation on torture. The results of the fact-finding and documentation have helped in compiling the shadow report on the implementation of the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Similarly, the Foundation for Women has been strengthening the capacity of women’s groups to monitor the implementation in Thailand of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) in Bangladesh regularly organizes workshops on human rights to strengthen the knowledge of activists on human rights law and principles. Organizations from different parts of Bangladesh seek its assistance in conducting capacity-building training sessions for their staff. Ask has been publishing resource materials that assist practitioners

in their work – such as a resource book on public interest litigation and a manual on the role and powers of the National Human Rights Commission of Bangladesh and the procedures for submitting complaints to it. BLAST in Bangladesh also produces resource materials in simple language, not only to make people become aware of their rights, but also to provide information on how to exercise such rights.

The Human Rights Lawyers Association in Thailand organizes workshops for young lawyers to enable them to strengthen their lawyering skills and integrate human rights principles into their legal analysis and argumentation.

The Human Rights and Peace Information Center does advocacy work on the adverse impacts of mining in the northeast region of Thailand. It organizes workshops with the villagers to enable them to understand the existing laws and policies in relation to mining and to provide them with frameworks to identify the different stakeholders involved, the negative impacts of mining and the ways the villagers can address such problems. It also helps the villagers to develop their capacity to document the ways in which mining operations adversely affect the lives of the people and to send written petitions to state authorities.

In Thailand, the 2007 Computer Crimes Act has raised issues about freedom of speech and expression. By organizing research projects, dialogues and expert group meetings, I-law has played an important role in de-mystifying the law on computer crimes and the ways in which it has been used to restrict the right to freedom of speech and expression.

In Bangladesh, the Right to Information Act, 2009 was enacted without any concerted campaign by civil society organizations. Thus when the law came into force, people were not aware of its importance. Nagorik Uddyog, in collaboration with regional organizations played an important role in creating awareness about the law, its scope and ambit and the ways in which it could be used to promote and protect rights. Through interactive mediums such as theater, dialogue, community-level meeting, it simplified the contents of the law and also facilitated activists to learn how they could use it strategically to seek accountability from State authorities.

The Asian Institute for Human Rights (AIHR), in collaboration with universities and civil society organizations, has been organizing annual study sessions in Bangladesh,² Myanmar³ and Thailand.⁴ The study sessions aim to strengthen the knowledge and skills of learners and to provide them with a

framework that can help them make human rights work more effective. Staff from civil society organizations, government agencies, independent institutions and activists have attended these study sessions. AIHR has also been producing resource materials in the local languages to assist practitioners in their human rights work. Such resource materials include handbooks on the linkages between democracy, the rule of law and human rights, fact-finding and documentation, monitoring courts and trials, human rights norms and standards, and human rights mechanisms.

Monitoring State obligations

Nineteen Bangladeshi organizations⁵ formed in 2007 a coalition called the Human Rights Forum and submitted a joint stakeholders report to the Human Rights Council (HRC) during the first Universal Periodic Review (UPR)⁶ of the human rights record of Bangladesh in 2009. Under the UPR system, the HRC issues a set of recommendations, based on a review of the various reports submitted before it, to the State regarding the steps it should take in order to comply with its human rights obligations. From 2009, the Human Rights Forum has been engaged in a continuous process of monitoring the steps taken by the State with regard to the HRC recommendations. It has done so by issuing periodic report cards and reports⁷ and doing advocacy with different government ministries as well as independent agencies such as the National Human Rights Commission of Bangladesh.

Transformation Model

This model covers initiatives that help groups change the status quo vis a vis economic capabilities, increase the ability to shape the conditions that govern their lives, raise the capability to participate in decision making, etc.

Increasing economic security

The Upland Holistic Development Project (UHDP) is an organization based in the Golden Triangle area in Chiangrai (Thailand). The ethnic people living in the area traditionally practice swidden agriculture. Their access to forests was however subsequently limited that forced them to stop this practice, and eventually led to hardship and poverty. The fact that many of them lack Thai citizenship exacerbates their problems. UHDP supports them in developing sustainable models of upland farming, such as raising livestock, fish farming, vegetable gardens and multiple cropping, thereby help-

ing them ensure their food security. Such support has contributed towards economic empowerment of the people. Economic empowerment has enabled the people to recognize their capacity to decide and act on their own (so-called agency). They have now started engaging with social movements such as the land reform movement in Thailand in order to bring changes in society and in their lives.

Forming coalitions, building alliances

The Northern Development Foundation in Thailand has been helping farmers to come together as a network, share their experiences of farming and land use and develop local and sustainable approaches to natural resource management. The Foundation together with the Northern Farmers Network helped to set up community learning centers, thereby creating a space where farmers and communities can share and learn from each other's experiences. The farmers come to these learning centers to discuss how they as communities can secure legal recognition of their rights to manage natural resources. The Northern Development Foundation and the Northern Farmers Network are also part of the Peoples Movement for a Just Society (P-Move), the collective of social movements in Thailand, and actively participate in the campaigns on reform of the land management system in Thailand.

Organizations in Thailand such as the Violet Home, M-Plus Foundation and Anjaree are working with LGBTQ⁸ people and have helped in the creation of spaces for them to come together for caring, sharing and learning. These organizations have become pivotal in voicing the concerns of LGBTQ communities and in establishing their rights.

The Women for Peace Network⁹ is a collective of women in the southernmost provinces of Thailand. The collective was formed during the period when incidences of violence in the provinces were high and many families lost their male income-earning members. The network was first set up to enable women to cope with the loss of their husbands by sharing their grief and drawing strength from each other. Gradually, as the women became stronger from within, they reached out to help others in society. Today, they have a voice in dialogues and discussions on issues of justice and peace-building.

The Mekong River Group in Thailand helps to build a sense of community among the people through the processes of collective learning. It helps communities conduct participatory research on issues concerning their way

of life – such as changes in the fish species in the Mekong river over periods of time, local fishing tools and equipment, their uses, etc. The objective of the research is to mobilize the people as communities and facilitate a process of learning about the eco-system where they live, the factors that impact such ecology, the impact of such changes in their lives and livelihoods, their traditional practices and to put their minds together about how they could be more effective in their work and practices. Information gathered from discussions, dialogues and field visits are compiled and shared among the communities for their views and inputs. Community radio is also used to disseminate information and initiate discussions among the people. In addition, the Mekong group works with schools in the area and organizes camps for young students on topics such as nature and eco-systems, local culture and customary practices, the need for conservation of the environment and the role of the youth in society.

Shaping the meaning of rights

Small and marginal farmers in Bangladesh started the *Nayakrishi Andolan* (New Agricultural Movement) in response to agricultural policies of the State that encouraged mono-cropping using high yielding varieties of seeds, chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Farmers who adopted such practices received incentives from the State such as subsidized fertilizers, pesticides and irrigation facilities. However, small and marginal farmers, particularly women farmers, felt that such agricultural policy impacted upon their rights to decide what to produce and how to produce it. Poor farmers could not afford to purchase chemical inputs. There was also a growing awareness that use of pesticides killed birds and fishes, and poisoned plants and shrubs around the fields; this means that the use of pesticides had adverse impact on the environment that had sustained their livelihood. It was in response to the negative environmental impact that the new agricultural movement was started. The farming communities developed ten basic rules¹⁰ of bio-diversity-based ecological agriculture to achieve sovereignty over growing food, seeds and knowledge practices. Thus the movement helped in developing an effective approach to counter the development plans that put emphasis on modern agricultural methods. Today, *Nayakrishi Andolan* is part of global movements that are seeking to expand the meaning of the right to food to also include the right to food sovereignty.

Similarly, Nature Care in Thailand has been facilitating communities closely connected with forests to look “inward” and to draw on their traditional wisdom and knowledge to find out ways in which communities could themselves address issues concerning their lives and livelihood, such as building a water management system to provide relief to the drought-prone areas in northeastern Thailand.

In consideration of the right to education as a basic human right, the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues has suggested that States should provide for culturally appropriate education for indigenous peoples **so as to help them conserve their unique cultures, values and languages.**¹¹ IMPECT, an association of indigenous peoples in Thailand, has been working with local communities to develop culturally appropriate educational curriculums. **The formal education system in Thailand does not include learning about indigenous ways of life and culture.** The indigenous groups in Thailand fear that with the passing away of older generations, knowledge and resources would be lost forever. IMPECT rose to these challenges and worked with community elders to develop **an alternative education system** that enabled children and youth from ethnic communities to learn about their identities, cultures, ways of life and traditions. As a result of these interventions, the Mowakhi Community School was established and has become an inspiration for other indigenous groups in Thailand. Thus, the initiative helped develop a model for culturally appropriate education that can be adopted by the State.¹²

In Thailand, the Human Settlement Foundation together with the Four Region Slum Network advocates the right to housing. In order to ensure secured housing for the poor, it negotiated with the State authorities on long-term leases over urban land owned by the railway authorities. They also held dialogues with the Bangkok Metropolitan Authority (BMA) on how the communities living beside canals could play a strong role in their conservation. These dialogues caused the BMA to stop the eviction of people living along canals and opened opportunities for communities to obtain long-term leases over the land. In these ways, the organizations helped realize the right to housing recognized in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

The Thailand Disability Foundation has been instrumental in giving visibility to the rights of people living with disabilities. It has been working very

closely with the State in developing standards, policies and programs that address the needs of the differently-abled people.

Similarly, the Foundation for Older Persons Development in Thailand works towards enhancing older people's access to rights and entitlements. At the local level, it has been collaborating with the Health Care Department and Tambon Administrative Authorities and has set up systems of extending health care services to elderly persons in vulnerable communities.

The Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) in Bangladesh has worked very closely with the State with regard to developing a national policy on education.

Claiming spaces in decision-making

In recent years, the peoples' movements in Bangladesh focusing on natural resources issues (such as open pit coal mining project in Phulbari, leasing out of gas fields in the Bay of Bengal, the coal-fired power plant near Sunderbans [the world's largest mangrove forest]) have helped raise discussions on the concept of development. Civil society platforms such as the National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Ports have helped through their research studies to demystify the environmental and social impact studies conducted for the projects. They have also raised questions about the terms of agreements regarding the projects, which allow the investing companies to export most of the mined resources, and have raised questions about "who gains and who loses" from such projects. These research studies provided support to the actions launched by the people. As a result of these actions, the State has had to reconsider its decisions and take heed of the voices of the people.

In Bangladesh, *Nijera Kori* has played a leading role in the empowerment of landless people so that they can play a role in decision-making processes affecting their lives. Through dialogues, training sessions and workshops, the organization helps people to become conscious of themselves as subject of rights and helps build collectives of the landless. Critical analysis of issues and collective reflection on how to overcome their marginalization have helped the landless in participating in meetings with authorities and articulating their views with confidence.¹³

The Dalit¹⁴ people constitute one of the marginalized communities in Bangladesh. Already suffering social exclusion, the 2011 official population census did not recognize "Dalits" as a distinct group. This recognition is im-

portant for the Dalit people because only when the State recognizes their existence that it (State) would be open to suggestions on how to eliminate the discrimination against them. *Nagorik Uddyog* helped the Dalit communities in Bangladesh to come together and create a national platform – Bangladesh Dalit and Excluded Rights Movement (BDERM). BDERM organized the first national conference on Dalit issues in 2009. It was a milestone event because the issues of Dalit communities gained visibility in the national media for the first time. BDERM continues to work for the empowerment of Dalit communities, raises public awareness against discrimination and advocates with the policy makers to take steps to address discrimination in society.¹⁵

The Emergency Decree, the Martial Law Act, and the Internal Security Act have given extra-ordinary powers to the law enforcement agencies in southern Thailand since 2005 to arrest and detain persons suspected of involvement in the conflict. The enforcement of these laws lowered the protection available to persons with regard to their rights and liberties. The Cross Cultural Foundation based in Bangkok, together with the Muslim Attorney Center, the SPAN paralegal network and other local organizations engaged in fact-finding and documentation of cases involving arrests and detention related to these laws. They monitored the problems faced by people during detention under the special laws and also observed trial proceedings in courts. Based on such documentation, the groups held dialogues with law academics, senior practicing lawyers, judges, officials of the justice ministry as well as law enforcement officers and discussed ways in which rights protection available to the people could be strengthened. Over the years, the groups have been successful in introducing changes to rules and regulations of the law enforcement agencies and making them more sensitive towards the rights of the people.

Similarly, groups working to promote and protect the rights of migrant workers have through their education and monitoring activities been able to create the space for advocacy with the State on law and policy issues. An example is the campaign in northern Thailand on the rights of migrants to drive motorcycles. Under the existing laws, because of reasons of national security, migrant people could not apply for driving licenses or secure legal ownership of motorbikes they purchase. The Human Rights and Development Foundation and its allies conducted fact-finding and research on the issue. It documented search and seizure operations undertaken by the police in migrant neighborhoods and the adverse impact of the regula-

tions on the lives of the people. Based on such information, it launched a campaign that highlighted the impact of the laws and policies on the rights of migrant workers. Armed with information, it also initiated dialogues with different state agencies including the agencies responsible for protecting national security. As a result of these different meetings and initiatives, the Department of Land Transport gave a commitment to amend its rules and ensure that migrant workers could get legal ownership of their motorbikes. Also, the organizations were able to convince the agencies that issuing licenses to migrant workers would not endanger national security, and the rules were changed accordingly.

The M-Plus Foundation and its network provide another experience based on their sustained advocacy efforts including strategic litigation in the administrative court. They were able to change the practice of labeling a transgender person “mentally ill” while being discharged from compulsory military service. It was a significant decision of the military that reaffirmed the rights and dignity of transgender people.

Law-based organizations such as BLAST and ASK in Bangladesh have also used the tool of strategic litigation to bring human rights and public concern issues before the courts. Through strategic litigation they have been able to clarify the rules of criminal procedure that have helped strengthen protection against torture, set standards of working conditions in the garment industry, set standards to address sexual harassment in work places, etc.

In Bangladesh, the Union *Parishads* or Councils (the smallest rural administrative and local government units) have budget allocation for development work. In most cases, the Council members adopt the plan for spending the budget without consulting the people. ActionAid Bangladesh tried to introduce changes in the practice. To begin with, it initiated discussions with the Council members on the value and importance of participatory budgeting and motivated them to open up their processes of budget making to people’s participation. Consequently, ten Union Councils organized consultations with the local people to identify their concerns and needs. The consultations include dialogue with the people who identify their priority concerns, incorporation of the priorities expressed by the people in the first draft budget plan, printing and circulation of the draft budget plan among the people to get their inputs, and adoption of the budget plan in a public forum. During the public forum, the stakeholders discuss how the bud-

get plan will be implemented. Such a process makes people become more conscious of their rights and enables them to participate meaningfully in decision-making processes affecting their lives.¹⁶

ENLAWTHAI Foundation (EnLAW) in Thailand provides legal aid and assistance to protect the rights, livelihood and health of local communities affected by industrial pollution. When seventy-two provinces in Thailand were in the process of making town plans, EnLAW worked with a network of civil society organizations and town planning academics to create awareness about rights and existing environmental laws and standards. Workshops were held with communities on how they could promote and protect their community rights. A manual was drafted on the rights of the people to determine their town plans. This process helped create a space for the people to revisit the existing laws on town planning and to advocate for reforms to ensure more protection of community rights.

Synthesis

Establishing a society that supports a culture of human rights involves dynamic and continuously evolving processes through which individuals, society and the State gradually develop relationships that are respectful of human rights values and norms. These processes of change happen incrementally as States and different interest groups respond to actors and factors at domestic and global levels. But change may not necessarily promote and protect human rights, and instead violate them. Such change can be negative when measured in terms of human rights. However, even in such cases, the change unleashes forces that align and mobilize together and in the process create momentum for transforming existing power relations. This process of moving forward and backward is a natural and ongoing one, not necessarily a linear progression. It appears to be the only true way by which State and society can reach the point of full internalization of human rights norms and standards.

Human rights learning initiatives seek to influence this process of change by facilitating transformation of power dynamics at different levels.

The initiatives under the value model have helped to develop “power within.” When directed at the larger society, they have helped to facilitate reflection on social issues and in generating awareness about rights and duties. In the context of vulnerable or marginalized groups, the initiatives have

helped in enhancing individual consciousness and the sense of agency. As groups gained “power within” they became able to build alliances and to challenge marginalization, exclusion and abuse (‘power with’¹⁷ and ‘power to’¹⁸). Such challenges have been in different forms; by questioning negative social attitudes and biases, by seeking accountability from the State, by claiming spaces for working alongside the State in establishing systems for rights protection and by developing new models or norms of operation that seek to expand the contours of rights – even if they would not be in the interest of dominant groups at national and international levels.

Challenges

In this context, what are the challenges faced by groups in their human rights learning work? Some questions and issues raised during the interviews and dialogues in Bangladesh and Thailand were:

- *Integrating democracy education and human rights learning, where is the balance?*

One question that has been often asked in Thailand is, why are there no human rights groups focusing on the issue of democracy?

While democracy is the subtext of human rights work, it is a fact that human rights groups do not overtly engage with democracy activism. One reason could be that the term democracy is too broad and usually means different things to different people. Further, groups who are engaged in democracy work tend to be perceived as “particularly political.” On the other hand, in order to strengthen promotion and protection of human rights, human rights groups have to engage with the structures of power – regardless of political color or ideology.

For these reasons, human rights groups “appear” to be steering away from “democracy work” or “democracy education.” However, as seen in this report, the practice of human rights is linked with the process of “democratization.”

So, the question before us is, how much of democracy education should be part of human rights learning?

- *How do you make the laws “real”?*

Though rights are recognized in the Constitution, it is basically the statutory laws that determine the exercise and enjoyment of rights. People working on the ground see the law as they are applied – they are at the receiving end of “the law.” For them, laws appear to be instruments that can control their lives and determine their status, yet, not take into consideration, the reality of their lives.

The challenge for human rights activists and lawyers is to make these laws “real.”

What kinds of learning process are needed to ensure that existing laws are in conformance with international human rights obligations of the State? In what ways can human rights learning strengthen the implementation and enforcement of existing laws?

- *Be issue specific or be cross-cutting in nature and scope?*

One concern that was shared in the course of this research was that human rights education work has become very specific in its scope and content. Usually, **social groups organize learning programs** according to their interest areas for the purpose of achieving a specific end, such as strengthening knowledge and skills for fact-finding and documentation for the purpose of monitoring a pattern of violations, or raising consciousness around an issue for the purpose of mobilizing people for direct action.

At the same time, there is also the need for programs that facilitate learning on cross cutting issues among activists and for programs that reach out to the larger society and facilitate reflection among them on issues of social concern.

The advantage of thematic specificity is the **existence of concrete rationale** for the activities and the possibility of measuring results. On the other hand, cross-cutting initiatives expose the human rights education group (operating under the constraint of scarce resources) to the risk of finding itself “everywhere and at the same time nowhere.”

- *Learning about the “How” of human rights work*

Further, there is need to facilitate more learning on the “how” of promoting and protecting rights. Human rights groups have by

and large adopted the “naming and shaming” strategy, i.e., collecting information about violations and publicizing them with the purpose of embarrassing the State into taking steps to comply with its obligations. Social movements on the other hand adopt strategies of direct action, such as protests, in order to put pressure on governments. While such strategies have yielded results in the past, there have been changes in the contexts as well, such as reversals in the process of democratization, the emergence of strong governments and the pursuit of neo-liberal economic policies.

There is a need for reflection on how human rights theory can be applied in these evolving contexts and identify appropriate strategies for protection of human rights.

Recommendations

Given these challenges, how can human rights education groups strengthen their work? We offer some suggestions:

- *Linking human rights praxis with the rule of law, the rule-of-law-based systems and democracy*

It is the rule of law that provides the basic conditions for ensuring respect for human rights. There is a **need to promote reflection** on these conditions to facilitate understanding of the political structure of the State and the context within which human rights work takes place.

In addition, there is also a need to understand democracy in terms of how it is “experienced” and “lived” by citizens. Often, people understand democracy and human rights as separate fields of study and practice. However, they are closely linked to each other, as democracy is also about developing a collective vision for society, about processes of collective decision-making, about limits on the power of the majority, about processes of creating compromises and arriving at “win-win” solutions among competing interest groups. If democracy is understood in these terms, then human rights groups through their work try to create the space for active citizenship, influence decision-making and monitor the exercise of power. These processes of engagement are not smooth and often

activists are confronted with challenges about how to engage with the political powers. There is also a need to remember that the road to democracy is never a linear progression, nor is human rights work.

Human rights education needs to create the space for dialogue and discussion on such issues.

- *Need for equal focus on economic, social and cultural rights and civil and political rights*

Human rights are indivisible and interdependent. However, in practice, there are more campaigns and advocacy by human rights groups on civil and political rights that have dimensions of the rule of law, such as arbitrary detention, torture, freedom of expression, extra-judicial killings, etc. On the other hand, it is the social movements which mobilize around issues of economic, social and cultural rights such as access to natural resources, participation in decision-making over management and control of natural resources, harm suffered by development projects, issues of eviction, or issues of land reform. There are not many human rights campaigns on issues such as social security, education, health, etc. Such legitimate needs often are responded to by governments through populist policies and hand-outs to attract votes with possible negative consequences on long-term economic and social conditions.

Articulating these issues in the rights framework would help in creating understanding about what should be the role of the State towards its citizens. For example, what are the obligations of the State with respect to ensuring that **everyone in society has equal access** to education, health care or employment opportunities? What are its obligations towards ensuring social security for the vulnerable sections in society, such as the elderly? What is its obligation to ensure that the pursuit of development and economic growth do not take place at the cost of the rights of some sections in society?

Thus, human rights education needs to give civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights equal focus.

- *Need to strengthen learning about strategies*

As discussed earlier, there is a need to strengthen learning about strategies that can be used for the promotion and protection of human rights. Such learning can occur in different ways.

SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis of ongoing work can help groups to reflect critically upon their work: what is the context of their work? What are the strengths and weaknesses **of the strategies used by them?** **What kind of opportunities** does the context present? What are some of the threats against them? Such dialogue and discussions can help the groups strengthen the “how” of human rights work.

There is also a need to learn the strategies used by other groups working at the national and international levels. Such learning can include critical reflection on the context of the issue, the nature of the strategy, the conditions that help successful use of the strategy and the challenges involved in using such strategy. There can also be similar learning from experiences regarding initiatives that did not achieve the desired results.

Learning from the experiences of other groups working at national, regional and international levels can also help in building alliances and contributing to each other’s efforts.

- *Need for both thematic and cross-cutting learning programs*

There is a need for thematic programs because they help build knowledge and skills on specific areas of human rights. At the same time, there is a need for programs on learning different themes. Since issues are inter-related, **programs that are cross cutting in nature** can help facilitate learning between diverse groups working on a range of issues and help create synergies between such groups.

- *Human rights learning for State functionaries*

There is a need to institutionalize human rights courses in government departments and offices, as government policy, in order to provide government officials opportunities for learning human rights theory and practice. Such courses may be in the nature of academic courses as well as short practical courses.

- *Public campaigns on human rights*

In order to create a culture of human rights, there is a need to involve the public in human rights learning. Such learning can be promoted through the public media or creative forms of campaigns. The idea is to bring before the public different aspects of an issue confronting the society, encourage people to reflect upon their own understanding of the issue and, where needed, inspire them to take action that can contribute towards bringing about change.

- *Focusing on the “mission at hand”*

Last, but not the least, those working on promoting human rights learning, must always remember – that the focus of the learning is people’s current human rights predicament in ever changing societies. Thus, the work on human rights learning must also be able to respond to the challenges posed by contemporary contexts.

Endnotes

1. Presentations by Sanjeeb Drong, Bangladesh Adivasi Forum, in the Annual Human Rights Study Sessions held in Bangladesh by AIHR and its partners.

2. AIHR has been organizing the annual study sessions in Bangladesh in collaboration with the Department of International Relations in University of Dhaka and the Center for Human Rights Studies. The 3rd Annual Human Rights Study Session was held in 2013.

3. In February 2014, a human rights study session was organized by AIHR in Yangon in collaboration with the Pandita Development Institute.

4. In Thailand, AIHR has been organizing the annual human rights study sessions together with the Rotary Peace Center at Chulalongkorn University. The 4th Annual Study Session was held in October 2012.

5. These organizations include Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), Acid Survivors Foundation (ASF), Bandhu Social Welfare Society (BSWS), Bangladesh Adivasi Forum, Bangladesh Dalit and Excluded Rights Movement (BDERM), Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS), Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST), Bangladesh Mohila Parishad (BMP), Boys of Bangladesh (BOB), FAIR, Karmojibi Nari (KN), Kapaeeng Foundation, Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF), National Alliance of Disabled Peoples’ Organizations (NADPO), STEPS, Transparency International Bangladesh.

6. The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a process under the Human Rights Council of the United Nations (UN), which involves a periodic review of the human rights record of all States, which are members of the UN. Under this process, States are required to submit a report to the Human Rights Council on the human rights

situation in the country. Based on the report, the members of the Council engage in a dialogue with the State and give recommendations to the State for strengthening their performance. In this process, civil society organizations also have the space to present their reports, called the “Stakeholders Report” before the Council on the situation of human rights in the country. For more information, see “Basic Facts about the UPR,” United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/upr/pages/BasicFacts.aspx.

7. Human Rights Forum Bangladesh, UPR Stakeholders Report, Summary, March 2013, available at www.askbd.org/web/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Human%20Rights%20Forum%20Bangladesh%20-%20UPR%20Stakeholders%20Report%20-%20Summary%20March%202013.pdf.

8. LGBTQ is the acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual and Queer.

9. This name is based on interview with the staff of the network. The name of the network according to its website is Network of Civic Women for Peace, a literal translation of its name in Thai language. See Annex B for more information.

10. The ten basic rules are: (1) absolutely no use of pesticide (2) in situ and ex situ conservation of seed and genetic resources, (3) protection of healthy soil without external inputs, particularly chemical fertilizers, (4) mixed cropping, (5) production and management of both cultivated and uncultivated spaces, (6) no extraction of ground water and conservation of water and efficient surface water use and management, (7) learning to calculate the output both in terms of single species and varieties as well as systems yield, (8) integrating livestock in the household to produce more complex household ecology to maximize benefits of both humans and life forms, (9) integrating water and aquatic diversity to generate more ecological products and (10) integrating, non-agricultural and rural activities to ensure prosperity of the local communities as a whole. Source: Nayakrishi Seed Sovereignty Movement; Farida Akhter, UBINIG.

11. Briefing Note 3, “Gender and Indigenous Peoples Education,” Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/Briefing%20Notes%20Gender%20and%20Indigenous%20Women.pdf.

12. For more information on the Mowakhi Community School, view its documentary video in IMPECT website: www.impect.org/.

13. Case study presented by Nagorik Uddyog at the 2nd Annual Human Rights Study Session held in Sonargaon, Narayanganj, October 2012.

14. India’s caste system assigns individuals a certain hierarchical status according to Hindu beliefs. Traditionally, there are four principal castes (divided into many sub-categories) and one category of people fall outside the caste system—the Dalits. As members of the lowest rank of Indian society, Dalits face discrimination at almost every level: from access to education and medical facilities to restrictions on where they can live and what jobs they can have. Source: <http://navsarjan.org/navsarjan/dalits/whoaredalits>.

15. Case study presented by Nagorik Uddyog at the 3rd Annual Human Rights Study Session held in Sonargaon, Narayanganj, 26 October – 7 November 2013.

16. Case study presented by ActionAid at the 3rd Annual Human Rights Study Session held in Sonargaon, Narayanganj, 26 October – 7 November 2013.

17. This means the power that comes from collective action and working together in alliances.

18. This means the individual's ability to act, to organize and change existing hierarchies and conditions of social inequalities.

19. See Amnesty International, <http://amnesty.org/en/who-we-are>.

Annex A

Case Studies on Practice of Human Rights Education

Organizational Classifications

The thirty-six organizations in Thailand and fifteen organizations in Bangladesh covered by the study are classified on the basis of the issues focused on in their work and on areas of work, as presented below.

Issues

<p>Land (6)</p> <p>Thailand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Center for Protection and Revival of the Local Community Rights Northern Development Foundation Highland Peoples Taskforce Upland Holistic Development Project P-Move <p>Bangladesh</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Nijera Kori</i> 	<p>Indigenous Peoples Rights (4)</p> <p>Thailand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inter-Mountain Peoples Education and Culture in Thailand Association (IMPECT) Highland Peoples Taskforce Upland Holistic Development Project <p>Bangladesh</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bangladesh Adivasi Forum
<p>Natural Resource Management/Community Rights (7)</p> <p>Thailand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mekong River Group in Chiangrai Human Rights and Peace Information Center Community Network for Social and Political Reform Learning Process and Creating Understanding on Nuclear Plants Nature Care Foundation <p>Bangladesh</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Phulbari Movement</i> <i>Bangladesh Adivasi Forum</i> 	<p>Right to Housing (1)</p> <p>Thailand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human Settlement Foundation <p>Right to Education (2)</p> <p>Bangladesh</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) Steps towards Development <p>Environment (2)</p> <p>Thailand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ENLAWTHAI Foundation (EnLAW) <p>Bangladesh</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Bangladesh Paribesh Andolan</i> (Bangladesh Environmental Movement)

<p>Labor (5)</p> <p>Thailand (Migrant Labor)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MAP Foundation • Human Rights and Development Foundation <p>Bangladesh</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Karmojibi Nari</i> • Bangladesh Legal Aid Services Trust • <i>Ain o Salish Kendra</i> 	<p>Rights of LGBTQ (2)</p> <p>Thailand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M-Plus Foundation • Violet Home
<p>Trafficking (2)</p> <p>Thailand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-Trafficking Co-ordination Unit of Northern Thailand (TRAFCOD) • Human Rights and Development Foundation 	<p>Child Rights (1)</p> <p>Thailand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundation for Child Development
<p>People with Disabilities (1)</p> <p>Thailand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thai Disabled Development Foundation 	<p>Rights of Elderly (1)</p> <p>Thailand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundation for Older Persons' Development
<p>Gender Equality (8)</p> <p>Thailand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundation for Women • EMPOWER Foundation • MAP Foundation • Gabfai Community Theatre Group <p>Bangladesh</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bangladesh Legal Aid Services Trust • <i>Nagorik Uddyog</i> • <i>Ain o Salish Kendra</i> • Bangladesh Institute of Theatre Arts 	<p>Food Sovereignty (1)</p> <p>Bangladesh</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UBINIG <p>ASEAN (1)</p> <p>Thailand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pro-rights Foundation <p>Dalit People (1)</p> <p>Bangladesh</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nagorik Uddyog
<p>Access to Justice (7)</p> <p>Thailand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muslim Attorney Center (MAC) • Promoting Human Rights and Access to Justice Network (HAP) • Cross Cultural Foundation • Human Rights and Development Foundation • MAP Foundation <p>Bangladesh</p> <p>Bangladesh Legal Aid Services Trust <i>Ain o Salish Kendra</i></p>	

Areas of work

<p>Raising civic consciousness (9)</p> <p>Thailand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gabfai Community Theatre Group • Asian Institute for Human Rights • Internet Dialogue on Law Reform (ilaw) • Prachatai • Amnesty Thailand <p>Bangladesh</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bangladesh Institute of Theatre Arts • Human Rights Theatre Councils (<i>Manob Adhikar Natya Parishad – Ain o Salish Kendra</i>) • <i>Nagorik Uddyog</i> • Center for Human Rights Studies 	<p>Promoting experiential learning (4)</p> <p>Thailand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Songkhla Forum • Thai Volunteer Service • Asian Institute for Human Rights <p>Bangladesh</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Center for Human Rights Studies
<p>Facilitating economic empowerment (2)</p> <p>Thailand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upland Holistic Development Project <p>Bangladesh</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UBINIG 	<p>Human rights monitoring (8)</p> <p>Thailand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-Cultural Foundation • Highland Peoples' Taskforce • Human Rights and Development Foundation • Foundation for Women <p>Bangladesh</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bangladesh Legal Aid Services Trust • <i>Ain O Salish Kendra</i> • <i>Nagorik Uddyog</i> • Human Rights Forum
<p>Promoting participatory budgeting (1)</p> <p>Bangladesh</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ActionAid 	<p>Promoting right to information (1)</p> <p>Bangladesh</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nagorik Uddyog

<p>Human rights lawyering (8)</p> <p>Thailand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cross Cultural Foundation• Human Rights and Development Foundation• Human Rights Lawyers Association• ENLAWTHAI Foundation (EnLAW)• Center for Protection and Revival of the Local Community Rights (CPRLCR)• Asian Institute for Human Rights <p>Bangladesh</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bangladesh Legal Aid Services Trust• <i>Ain O Salish Kendra</i>	<p>Supporting social movements (3)</p> <p>Thailand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• P-Move <p>Bangladesh</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Phulbari Movement</i>• New Agricultural Movement (UBINIG) <p>Using community radio (3)</p> <p>Thailand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Human Rights and Development Foundation• MAP Foundation <p>Bangladesh</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Center for Human Rights Studies
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Annex B

Profile of Institutions Included in the Study

THAILAND

Protection and Revival of the Local Community Rights (CPRLCR)

ศูนย์พิทักษ์และฟื้นฟูสิทธิชุมชนท้องถิ่นดั้งเดิม

CPRLCR is a legal resource group that provides legal aid and assistance to community-based organizations focusing on the rights of people living in the forests. The objective of CPRLCR is to facilitate legal empowerment of the people. It tries to do so by instituting a sense of consciousness among the people that they are holders of rights, helping them understand and analyze their problems critically, helping them to identify strategies that may address such problems and by supporting them in their actions.

Northern Development Foundation

มูลนิธิพัฒนาภาคเหนือ

While CPRLCR focuses on legal empowerment, the Northern Development Foundation (NDF) provides assistance to people in setting up sustainable models of land management so that they can get recognition of their rights under the laws. It also focuses on advocacy on issues of land reform such as land redistribution, creation of land banks and facilitating security of tenure through land titling. The NDF played an important role in the drafting of the community forest bill.

As part of the different activities for strengthening the capacity and voice of farmers in developing land management systems, the NDF helped in the formation of the *Northern Farmers Network*, which advocates the rights of local communities and people's organizations to participate in all decision making processes relating to natural resource management which has an impact on their lives. The network helps in building alliances among villagers so that they can share their experiences regarding land use and through such collective processes develop local sustainable approaches to natural resource management. The NDF helped establish *community learning centers* to support learning among members of the community.

Upland Holistic Development Project (UHDP)

โครงการพัฒนาพื้นที่สูง
<http://uhdp.org/>

The Upland Holistic Development Project (UHDP) is a local organization that works in the golden triangle area (Mai-ai, Chiangdao and Fang Districts of Chiangmai province), an area where hill tribe people are struggling with poverty that is exacerbated by lack of citizenship rights and declining access to forest resources.

Traditionally the hill tribes living in the golden triangle practice swidden or shifting agriculture. However, due to decreasing access to forests in recent times, it has become difficult to practice this form of agriculture. UHDP provides support to the hill tribe farmers to develop sustainable models of upland farming such as raising livestock, fish farming, multiple cropping or growing cash and food crops simultaneously so that the farmers can have food security. UHDP also helps in raising awareness about the laws regarding nationality and citizenship and assists the villagers in fulfilling the procedural requirements under the law on obtaining nationality and citizenship. Thus UHDP assists the villagers in achieving economic and social security that enables them to survive with dignity. Such interventions also enhance the capabilities of the people to engage in other political processes around them such as movements on securing recognition for community rights.

Inter-Mountain Peoples Education and Culture in Thailand Association (IMPECT)

สมาคมศูนย์รวมการศึกษาและวัฒนธรรมของชาวไทยภูเขาแห่งประเทศไทย
www.impect.org/

IMPECT is an association of indigenous groups in Thailand. The association has more than three thousand members belonging to ten indigenous groups. An Executive Committee, elected after every three years, is responsible for developing the direction of the work of the association and taking policy decisions. The election process of the Committee ensures that there is equal representation of men and women and ethnic member groups. An advisory group known as the Indigenous Peoples Council guides the Executive Committee in its work and helps it in formulating the policies and strategies of the association.

The main areas of action related to human rights are the following: promotion of indigenous cultural practices through alternative systems of education; promotion of indigenous knowledge and skills in natural resource management; and strengthening of networks of indigenous peoples for promotion and protection of rights.

Highland Peoples Taskforce (HPT)

ศูนย์ปฏิบัติการร่วมเพื่อแก้ไขปัญหาประชาชนบนพื้นที่สูง

The Highland Peoples Taskforce is the secretariat of a network of twelve indigenous groups in Thailand. It works towards the elimination of discrimination against indigenous peoples and empowerment of the indigenous groups so that they can make their voices heard. As part of the process of empowerment, it tries to build the capacity of indigenous groups by organizing training sessions and workshops on knowledge and skills, such as on law, leadership skills, public speaking, report writing, negotiation skills, etc. Workshops on laws have included inputs on laws relating to nationality and citizenship and the procedure on citizenship application. The organization has been active in organizing the celebration of the International Indigenous Peoples Day every year. The celebration activities marking the day help to bring together all indigenous communities and highlight the rich cultural diversity of Thailand.

Mekong River Group in Chiangrai

กลุ่มรักษ์เชียงใหม่

In the mid-nineties a development project called the “Economic Square” was introduced in the Mekong Basin comprising of Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and China. China started to blast the rocks in the Mekong River in order to facilitate smooth navigation of vessels transporting goods to Thailand. It also started constructing dams on the river.

These projects had adverse impact on the life and livelihood of the people living in Chiangkong District of Chiangrai. During those years, people affected by the project informally came together in *saphas* (meetings) to discuss the ways the project had been impacting the lives of the people in the community. Gradually these meetings became more structured and the organization came into being.

The nature of the discussions in these meetings also changed gradually. From just discussing the adverse impacts of the development projects, the people started reflecting on the ways in which the lives of the people are intimately linked with the natural resources around them, the importance of conservation of such resources, and the actions that the people could take themselves in order to protect these resources. Thus in the late 1990s, the people initiated the “Chiangkong Forest Water Spring Conservation” project with the objective of conserving the forest and river resources by using the traditional customary ways of people living in the Mekong Basin.

Human Rights and Peace Information Center – Northeast Branch

ศูนย์ข้อมูลสิทธิมนุษยชนและสันติภาพ (ศสส.) อีสาน

The Human Rights and Peace Information Center was established by a group of activists working on environment and natural resources issues. They have been active in monitoring developmental policies and projects and the impact of such projects on the environment and human security of the people. One case that has occupied their attention is that of potash mine in Udon Thani province in northeast Thailand. The villagers are afraid that the proposed mine will destroy their lands and livelihoods. They allege that the initial exploration by the company (Asia Pacific Potash Corporation) to assess the potash reserves and ground water resources resulted in saline contamination of the land, making it unfit for cultivation. Even while this exploration was being done, villagers did not have information that a potash mine was proposed to be set up on their land.

Community Network for Social and Political Reform

เครือข่ายชุมชนเพื่อการปฏิรูปสังคมและการเมือง (คปสม.) จังหวัดอุบลราชธานี

The network is present in different parts of Thailand. It focuses on issues of land, management of natural resources, rights of local fisherfolk and stateless people as well as the conflict in Deep South. The network aims to strengthen the structures that people have to participate in decision-making processes of the State, strengthen the capacity of community leaders to participate in decision making processes and create forums where people can engage in critical discussion about community issues.

Learning Process and Creating Understanding on Nuclear Plants

โครงการศึกษากระบวนการเรียนรู้และสร้างความเข้าใจเรื่องโรงไฟฟ้านิวเคลียร์

The objective of the group is to enable the affected communities to enhance their understanding about the proposed nuclear power plant project so that they can make an informed decision. It shares information about the positive and negative aspects of a nuclear power plant project and also shares the experiences of other countries with regard to similar projects, such as that of Japan. The group also helps the villagers do a mapping of Thailand's power policy and facilitates reflection on other sources of energy. Armed with such information, the group encourages the people to think for themselves and decide whether they would like a power plant to be set up near their community or not.

P-Move (Peoples Movement for a Just Society)

ขบวนการประชาชนเพื่อสังคมที่เป็นธรรม

P-Move, an offshoot of the Assembly of the Poor, is a network of many organizations and grassroots movements such as the Anti-Pak Moon Dam Network, the Four Region Slums Network, the Northern Farmers Federation, the Northeastern Land Reform Network, the Southern Farmers Federation, networks against dams, mining and electricity projects, stateless people, forest dwellers, fisherfolk movements, etc.

Human Settlement Foundation

มูลนิธิพัฒนาที่อยู่อาศัย

<http://humanset.org/>

The Foundation has been working on the issue of right to adequate housing since 1983. During the 1980s, people living in the slums were very vulnerable to threats of eviction, which were carried out with a lot of force and violence. The people were helpless. The Foundation provides assistance to the people living in the slums and organizes them to form a collective. The Foundation focuses on issues such as shelter for the homeless people, developing the quality of life of people living in slums, affordable housing for the urban poor, etc. The Foundation supports the work of the Four Region Slums Network. It is also part of P-Move.

ENLAWTHAI Foundation (EnLaw)

มูลนิธิธรรมาภิบาลสิ่งแวดล้อม

<http://enlawfoundation.org>

Article 67 of the Constitution, provides that any project or activity which may have an impact on the quality of environment, natural resource and health of the community shall be permitted only after appropriate studies to assess the impact of such projects have been completed and shared with the people in public hearings so that they may give their opinions. This implies that communities have the rights to receive information about proposed projects from the government, assess the impact of such projects on resources, health and environment of the community and monitor the steps taken by the State to address the harmful effects of such projects. Under Article 67 of the Constitution, people have the right to file cases in the courts and seek accountability from the state agencies implementing such projects. Under this legal framework, En-law has been working towards strengthening the rule of law, access to justice and protection of the environment and rights of the communities. It provides legal aid and assistance to communities, engages in advocacy for reforms in laws and policies and provides support to civil society organizations working for the promotion and protection of the environment and community rights.

Songkhla Forum

สงขลาฟอรัม

The Songkhla Forum was born out of the political movements in Thailand in the early 1990s. After the events on Black May 1992, a new people's constitution was sought to be written. Dialogues, discussions and public hearings were held nationwide to seek opinions and inputs from the people and communities. The Songkhla Forum was set up to continue this process of invoking civic consciousness among the people. The goal of Songkhla Forum is to create a consciousness that can help in building a participatory democracy. It primarily focuses on the youth and together with them organizes on a regular basis seminars, discussions, workshops on issues of local and national importance. Its work is guided by James Bellanca Ron Brandt's thoughts in his book, *21st Century Skills: Rethinking How Students Learn*.

Gabfai Community Theatre Group

โครงการละครชุมชน กลุ่มก๊อไฟ

www.gabfai.com/

The Gabfai Community Theatre Group, based in Chiangmai, was established in 1996. The group uses theater, arts and contemporary culture to empower communities and vulnerable groups by creating spaces for initiating discussions, dialogues and actions on issues of human rights and social concern. Gabfai considers theater to be a medium that can facilitate reflection and dialogue about issues, attitudes, beliefs and behavior of people in the community.

Foundation for Child Development

มูลนิธิเพื่อการพัฒนาเด็ก

www.iamchild.org

Established in 1981, the Foundation works towards fostering the overall development of children in body, mind and spirit. As part of its mandate, it undertakes studies about the problems faced by children and disseminates such information among the society in order to create public opinion and mobilize the public and other official agencies to take appropriate actions. It also provides support to actions by individuals, communities and other agencies for promoting children's development.

Foundation for Older Persons' Development

มูลนิธิพัฒนางานผู้สูงอายุ

<http://fopdev.or.th/>

The Foundation for Older Persons' Development (FOPDEV) seeks to enhance the quality of life of older persons by developing their capacity in sustainable ways and by ensuring community support and mutual care. It gives special focus to elderly people living with HIV/AIDS and their communities. It is considered to be a resource organization for issues relating to older persons. As part of its activities, it tries to enhance opportunities for income generation among the elderly and their communities to ensure their income.

M-Plus Foundation

มูลนิธิเอ็มพลัส

www.mplusthailand.com

M-Plus Foundation focuses on the rights of LGBT people to access health care. In collaboration with other groups it is also doing advocacy for laws and policies that recognize the rights of LGBT people and eliminate discrimination against them.

Violet Home

บ้านสีม่วง

The organization was established in 2003 with the objective of empowering men who have sex with men (MSM), transgender people and those among them who are living with HIV-AIDS. At the individual and family levels, it provides support services to MSM and transgender people so that they can take care of their economic, physical and mental well-being. It also provides counseling services on how they can protect themselves from HIV-AIDS, on how to take care of their physical and mental health and facilitates their access to required medicines. It also helps to create spaces and forums for the people to link with each other and form collectives. Apart from such activities, it organizes training activities with health care professionals to sensitize them towards issues faced by people living with HIV-AIDS and address issues of stigma and bias prevalent in society.

Muslim Attorney Center (MAC) and SPAN

ศูนย์ทนายความมุสลิม, อาสาสมัครผู้ช่วยทนายความ

<http://th.macmuslim.com/>

The Muslim Attorney Center is a collective of lawyers that facilitates access to justice in the southern provinces of Thailand by providing legal aid and assistance to those who have been arrested and detained due to security operations. Since 2005 when violence exacerbated in the region, it has become one of the main centers to receive complaints of extra-judicial killings, torture, disappearances and arrests and detention. Based on such documentations, it has worked with human rights groups operating at the national level such as International Commission of Jurists, Cross Cultural

Foundation, Human Rights Lawyers Association and the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand to monitor human rights violations and seek accountability from the State. Other than this, it has also worked with the law enforcement agencies to reform existing rules and regulations as well as improve existing systems to reduce the number of cases of torture, disappearance and arbitrary detention. It has participated in the submission of reports before the different United Nations human rights mechanisms.

Promoting Human Rights and Access to Justice Network (HAP)

เครือข่ายส่งเสริมสิทธิและเข้าถึงความยุติธรรม

HAP is a group established by human rights defenders who suffered arbitrary detention and torture by security agencies, and who with the assistance of legal aid groups were able to defend their rights before the courts of justice and secure remedies for the violations suffered. They established HAP in order to provide assistance to people who have been affected by the conflict in Southern Thailand.

Women for Peace Network/Network of Civic Women for Peace

เครือข่ายผู้หญิงเพื่อสันติภาพ

<http://civicwomen.com/>

The Women for Peace Network was set up by women who have been affected by the violence raging in the southern provinces of Thailand. Today the network includes women's groups working on issues regarding management of natural resources. The objective of the network is to strengthen the capacity of women so that they can contribute to the process of building peace in southern Thailand.

Thai Disabled Development Foundation

มูลนิธิพัฒนาคนพิการไทย

www.tddf.or.th

The Foundation was established in 1999 with the objective of promoting and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities and empowering them to live with dignity and happiness. To achieve these objectives, it seeks to create awareness in the society about the needs of persons with disabili-

ties and help in creating a supporting environment. It also takes different measures in order to ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access buildings and public services such as education, health and other public services.

Foundation of Child Understanding (FOCUS)/The Anti-Trafficking Coordination Unit Northern Thailand (TRAFCORD)

หน่วยงานเพื่อต่อต้านการค้ามนุษย์ ภาคเหนือตอนบน ประเทศไทย
www.trafcord.org/

TRAFCORD was established in 2002 in Chiangmai in collaboration with the Center of Child Protection and Women to address the problem of human trafficking in northern Thailand. The unit works with state and non-state agencies in order to provide psychosocial and legal assistance to the victims of trafficking. It also provides assistance to the victims and their families to re-integrate in society or community. In 2011, TRAFCORD was registered as a foundation with the name Foundation of Child Understanding (FOCUS).

MAP Foundation

มูลนิธิเพื่อสุขภาพและการเรียนรู้ของแรงงานกลุ่มชาติพันธุ์
www.mapfoundationcm.org

MAP Foundation works towards empowering migrant workers so that they are able to protect themselves from exploitation and abuse. It also engages in advocacy for the improvement of the state systems and structures to promote and protect the rights of migrant workers.

Human Rights and Development Foundation

มูลนิธิเพื่อสิทธิมนุษยชนและการพัฒนา
<http://hrdfoundation.org>

Since 2006, the Human Rights and Development Foundation (HRDF) has been working for the promotion and protection of the rights of migrant workers. Its approach includes: legal advocacy through strategic litigation, advocacy through awareness-raising and public campaigns, engaging with international human rights mechanisms to support advocacy at the national level and empowerment of migrant workers and communities.

Human Rights Lawyers Association

สมาคมทนายทนายสิทธิมนุษยชน

<http://naksit.org>

The Human Rights Lawyers Association was established by human rights lawyers with the objective of promoting the practice of human rights lawyering and in order to strengthen the knowledge and skills of lawyers for doing so. The Association has conducted strategic litigations (Check Mae-Om Kyi case) in order to set judicial precedents that can help in promoting and protecting rights. It has also participated in drafting laws and policies.

Pro-Rights Foundation

มูลนิธิส่งเสริมและคุ้มครองสิทธิมนุษยชน

The objective of the Foundation is to promote human rights through education and strengthen national mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights.

In the past years, the Thai Working Group set up under the Foundation has worked with the Ministry of Education in Thailand to develop a policy on human rights education including human rights education in schools. During the same period, the Thai Working Group surveyed organizations engaged in human rights education in order to pool together existing resources on human rights education; determine the purpose and nature of human rights education activities, the curriculums, and the education methodology employed. The mapping project led to the drafting of the first national plan on human rights in collaboration with the State.

Amnesty International Thailand

แอมเนสตี้ อินเตอร์เนชั่นแนล ไทยแลนด์

www.amnesty.or.th

Amnesty International Thailand is part of Amnesty International, “a **global movement of more than 7 million people** who campaign for a world where **human rights are enjoyed by all.**”¹⁹ As part of its policy, Amnesty International Thailand refrains from making interventions in national issues, meaning human rights issues in Thailand. Rather it tries to create

awareness in Thailand on issues of human rights concern outside Thailand and strengthen the global campaigns regarding them. Some of these campaigns may also inspire reflection and action among activists working at the national level – such as the campaign on death penalty. Thai activists have linked this campaign on death penalty to issues such as access to justice within Thailand and are doing advocacy for the strengthening of laws and systems.

Amnesty International Thailand engages in human rights education with students with the objective of creating awareness among them about global issues and inspiring them to take action. The organization also supports students in initiating campaigns on issues identified by them.

Cross Cultural Foundation

มูลนิธิพัฒนาวัฒนธรรม

The Cross Cultural Foundation is working for the legal empowerment of people and advocacy for reform in laws and policies in order to strengthen the systems for promotion and protection of rights.

One of its focus areas has been the promotion of access to justice in the southern provinces of Thailand. Towards this end, it works to build the capacity of local actors – communities, local organizations and local administration. Capacity-building programs include training on human rights standards, fact-finding and documentation and on laws and policies. These capacity-building programs help to strengthen local institutions such as the Muslim Attorney Center, SPAN, HAK and others.

Foundation for Women

มูลนิธิผู้หญิง

www.womenthai.org/eng/

The Foundation for Women started its work in 1984 as a Women's Information Center providing advice to Thai women who were going abroad. In 1986, it opened a women's shelter for victims of domestic violence. In 1988, it launched a community-based project to create public awareness about the problems of child sex work and the ways in which children could be protected from national and international trafficking networks. The experience gained from the community-based work led to the initiative called

“weaving new life,” which combined public education with training of village volunteer development workers to assist women and children in their communities. The Foundation implements this initiative by working with sub-district administrative organizations such as the Tambon Administrative Organizations.

It has played a leading role in the drafting of the law on gender equality and has continuously been engaged in advocacy with the State regarding the improvement of the law enforcement and mechanisms for the promotion and protection of the rights of women.

Internet Dialogue on Law Reform (iLaw)

<http://ilaw.or.th>

Internet Dialogue on Law Reform (iLaw) is a website that promotes civil participation in social change by proposing new laws or amending the existing laws which can be done through the gathering of ten thousand signatures of voters to submit the draft laws before the parliament for further debate and enactment. This procedure is a right guaranteed by the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand, 2550 BE (2007).

iLaw provides space since 2009 for campaigning and supporting civil participation in law making process through its website. Anyone can propose the law or idea on iLaw website while others can give comments and engage in debate.

Empower Foundation

www.empowerfoundation.org/education_en.html

Empower Foundation works to prevent HIV and protects the rights of sex workers. The activities of the Foundation are designed, managed and implemented by sex-workers themselves. Empower Foundation uses street theater as well as materials such as t-shirts, posters, and cartoons to combat discrimination against sex-workers, and increase the respect for their dignity by the government, the media, non-governmental organizations and the general public.

It believes in using art and cultural performances as modes of expression that inspire a process of reflection and questioning among the people in challenging traditional beliefs held and exploring the creation of new tradi-

tions that recognize and accept differences and values the inclusion of each individual as an important part of the whole.

Thai Volunteer Service

<http://thaivolunteer.org/en/>

Thai Volunteer Service (TVS) began in 1980, a time when university students in Thailand were eager to come and participate in discussion about democracy and social change. TVS believes that by providing training and opportunities, young people can be encouraged to become agents of social change and help those who are disadvantaged in society. For the past thirty years, TVS has been facilitating different projects for young people including creating opportunities for different kinds of volunteering such as human rights volunteers, young people for social change, teacher volunteers, etc. The objectives of TVS are to create a space for learning and developing attitudes and skills for volunteering, to enhance the capacity of young people to develop their skills and analytical thinking, and to promote collaboration among non-governmental and government organizations.

Prachatai

www.prachatai.com/english

Prachatai is an independent, non-profit, daily web newspaper that was established in June 2004. Its objectives include the following: to provide the Thai public with access to reliable news and information on the problems, concerns, activities and accomplishments of local communities and civil society movements and organizations; **and to promote active public participation** in Thai news media.

BANGLADESH

Ain o Salish Kendra

www.askbd.org

Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) is a national legal aid and human rights organization established in 1986. Initially focused on providing free legal services to the disenfranchised in Dhaka City, its aims and activities have developed over twenty years to encompass investigation, advocacy, media

campaigning, documentation, training and action research in addition to its core activities of legal services (including legal aid, mediation and public interest litigation).

Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST)

www.blast.org.bd

BLAST primarily focuses on legal empowerment of the people by providing legal aid and assistance. It also engages in advocacy and strategic litigation to bring changes in laws and policies.

Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE)

www.campebd.org

CAMPE works with the unprivileged sections of the society who do not have access to essential public services. It works with a range of stakeholders at the local and national levels. CAMPE is a membership-based network. It has 1,367 members all over Bangladesh. It also works with teacher unions, though they are not members of CAMPE. It works in seventeen districts of Bangladesh.

Nagorik Uddyog

www.nuhr.org

Nagorik Uddyog (The Citizen's Initiative) has worked to strengthen the local government in Bangladesh via the dual imperatives of, on the one hand, raising awareness among the general masses of people's basic human rights and, on the other, building people's capacity to pursue and realize these rights.

Nijera Kori

www.nijerakori.org

Nijera Kori (We do it ourselves) aims to reach the most poor and marginalized groups in society. These groups include those dependent on physical labor as their main source of livelihood. Its capacity-building strategies grow from a fundamental belief that "power" should and must remain with

people. Hence, its **programs and activities are structured to ensure that financial and organizational autonomy remains with the people.**

Bangladesh Institute of Theatre Arts (BITA)

The Bangladesh Institute of Theatre Arts (BITA), established in 1994, works towards developing personal skills of people so that they can address their issues and raise their voice against any form of discrimination. With confidence and awareness of their rights, they can play a positive role in the development of their community. (See Sisir Dutta, “Human Rights Education Through TIE: A BITA Experience,” in volume four of this publication for more information on bita.)

Karmojibi Nari (KN)

www.karmojibinari.org.bd/

Karmojibi Nari, established in 1991, is an organization of women-workers that strives to establish the rights, dignity and authority of women-workers. This organization is the first ever of its kind in Bangladesh that is fighting relentlessly and advancing with success the liberation of the women’s movement from the domination of aristocracy and upper class and the labor movement from the domination of patriarchy through upholding the agenda of women workers, since they are a vanguard for social change in Bangladesh.

Steps Towards Development

www.steps.org.bd/

The main mandate of the organization is to promote equality, human rights and good governance. The thematic areas include participation rights and right to development.

“I would like to say [that] as human rights activist[s] we need to reflect on problems and identify ways to address them. Activist means you are the change agent and you have to be ready for any change and accept the conflicts that arise while working for the change. We have to facilitate those who don’t have power to transform their status and ensure that those who hold power do not abuse it.”

Ranjan Karmakar, Executive Director

Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (Bangladesh Environment Movement)

www.bapa.org.bd/

Bangladesh Poribesh Andolan (BAPA) is a common forum of citizens and organizations concerned with the environmental issues in Bangladesh. BAPA, acting as a pressure group against any kind of environmental degradation, tries to create a broad-based citizen's movement for protection and betterment of the environment in Bangladesh. It organizes seminars, meetings, conferences and workshops to draw attention to general and specific problems relating to environment and educate the public on such issues. It holds rallies and demonstrations to build up public awareness and secure wide participation of people on environmental issues. It undertakes publication for education or mobilization of public opinion.

Center for Human Rights Studies (CHRS)

www.chrs-bd.org

The Center for Human Rights Studies (CHRS) is a forum for human rights education that endeavors to bring together academics, activists, community leaders and students to reflect on the theory and practice of human rights. It strives towards strengthening the knowledge and skills of stakeholders, promoting human values among youth and children and encouraging the spirit of voluntarism in Bangladesh.

(See the second edition [2013] of the *Directory of Asia-Pacific Human Rights Centers* for more information on CHRS.)