Annex 1

AsiaDHRRA and ASEAN: A Case Study on the Process of Civil Society Engagement with a Regional Intergovernmental Organization
by Marlene D. Ramirez

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Abstract

This case study explores the experiences of the Asian Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Asia (AsiaDHRRA) in engaging the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in pro-poor policy advocacy and program cooperation. It provides a brief rationale for the engagement, examining the context of growing regional integration, regionalism, and cross-border issues, ASEAN's charter building, and increasing but uneven, Civil Society Organization (CSO) cooperation. The case discusses AsiaDHRRA's approach as it evolved over a five-year period, reflecting on strategies employed, constraints, gains, challenges faced, and lessons learned. Finally, it makes recommendations on how CSOs can more effectively engage with a regional body like ASEAN.

ASEAN and its Thorny Civil Society Interaction

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)[1] established in 1967, is primarily a state-centred inter-governmental body. While, initially, its major goal was to ensure peace and political stability in the region, its objectives and vision eventually expanded to encompass the economic and socio-cultural advancement of its peoples.

Although it is considered the most established regional grouping in the world, ASEAN's staying power veils the absence of a clear vision for the region. While undoubtedly the most enduring example of regional integration, ASEAN is not known for responding to real grassroots needs. A pillar of the ASEAN community, for example, is economic integration, yet integration has been very slow to materialize. Overlooked in explaining the slow pace or failure of economic integration over the past years is the lack of consultation and/or participation in the formulation of economic programs and policies by the basic grassroots sectors that produce the region's traded commodities.

Historically ASEAN is an association of predominantly autocratic governments with little contact with non-governmental development players. This distance is not the case for the academic elite or for "think tanks". The ASEAN Institute for Strategic and International Studies (ISIS)[2] is such a think tank well-recognized by ASEAN. By institutionalizing meetings between the Heads of ASEAN-ISIS and ASEAN Senior Officials, ISIS obtained recognition, from the ASEAN member states as a valuable mechanism for policy-making. ISIS also contributed significantly to the emergence of "track two"[3] diplomacy, an informal political process aimed at bridging the gap between civil society and governments. To this end, ASEAN-ISIS played an important role in bringing about the ASEAN Peoples' Assembly (APA)[4]. This annual event provided a platform for CSOs to have their voices heard by ASEAN through the intercession of the academic elite.

Skeptical of ASEAN as a potential platform for pushing their organizational agenda, most CSOs directed international advocacy towards other bodies including the UN system, the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank/International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Trade Organization (WTO). To this day, the general consciousness and interest of CSOs in ASEAN remains low. However, there is a marked change in the views of regional organizations facing the geographical dimension of the issues they work on (e.g. backlash of WTO agreements, issues of food security). Most regional organizations facing such issues now have very explicit agendas on ASEAN and have mobilized resources to ensure sustained ASEAN advocacy and engagement work. AsiaDHRRA is among these organizations.

AsiaDHRRA and ASEAN: Exploring the Grounds of Partnership

The Asian Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Asia (AsiaDHRRA) is a regional partnership of 11 social development networks in 10 Asian nations. AsiaDHRRA's vision is of rural Asian communities that are just, free, prosperous, living in peace, and working in solidarity towards self-reliance.

AsiaDHRRA's entry point: Seizing the opportunity for engagement

AsiaDHRRA began its ASEAN engagement in 1999 after almost three decades of crisscrossing the region in pursuit of genuine human resource development. Its unplanned entry point in ASEAN relations was through the ASEAN Foundation (AF)[5]. The AF, founded by ASEAN foreign ministers, invited AsiaDHRRA to its final programming/launching conference in Jakarta in 1999. AsiaDHRRA's presentation and proposal to strengthen the voices and solidarity of small farmers' organizations in the region was recognized by the Foundation as a concrete initiative.

As a grant-making body, the Foundation supported AsiaDHRRA's flagship program directed at stimulating the formation of a regional farmer's alliance in Asia. AsiaDHRRA also used its connection with the ASEAN Foundation to expand cooperation in some "not so CSO-friendly" Southeast Asian countries. In its exploratory entry work in Myanmar, AsiaDHRRA requested and received support from the ASEAN Foundation to have the ASEAN Secretariat[6] arrange meetings with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Myanmar. These "courtesy calls" were opportunities to dialogue with generally inaccessible governments on what CSOs do and the potential roles they could play in nation building.

Thus, while the original entry point to ASEAN was the ASEAN Foundation, AsiaDHRRA moved to establish links with the ASEAN Secretariat and its Bureau for Human Development. This bureau's mandate to support the Senior Officials Meeting for Rural Development and Poverty Eradication (SOMRDPE) clearly matches the institutional agenda of AsiaDHRRA, which focuses on promoting people-centered, rural development, with a clear bias for poor and marginalized. This fit with the Secretariat mandate proved to be crucial in efforts to find viable institutional links within ASEAN that would ensure AsiaDHRRA's advocacy voice is heard in a sustained manner.

Indeed, AsiaDHRRA was able to convince the ASEAN SOMRDPE to become an institutional partner of a proposed Southeast Asian Rural Development Award

(SEARDA)[7]. This award is designed to showcase successful rural development practices of NGOs and People's Organizations (POs). In order to provide a clearer mandate for their support, part of ASEAN's partnership process included encouragement for AsiaDHRRA to become an ASEAN NGO Affiliate[8]. AsiaDHRRA decided on affiliation to allow itself more avenues to explore in its engagement process with ASEAN. Supported by the SOMRDPE, AsiaDHRRA's application for Affiliate status was noted as one of the least troublesome and they were granted their status in April 2004.

This successful process set the stage for further engagement and, while the award is yet to be established, AsiaDHRRA values the institutional backing of ASEAN for showcasing rural development good practices. For ASEAN this partnership is an innovative avenue for strengthening ASEAN identity among its peoples. Through seizing the opportunity of an initial entry point, AsiaDHRRA was able to strengthen its engagement in ASEAN.

Continuing the Progress: Tactics, Persistence, and a Growing Engagement

The succeeding years have been marked by continuing efforts on the part of AsiaDHRRA to learn more about ASEAN and to have them respond to some tactical requests designed to test their responsiveness (e.g. setting up of meetings between CSO representatives and ASEAN Secretariat leaders, exchange of information, and reviewing of papers). These were small confidence-building steps that proved to be helpful in allowing AsiaDHRRA and its partner the Asian Farmers Association for Sustainable Rural Development (AFA)[9] to establish links inside the ASEAN Secretariat.

In March of 2007, AsiaDHRRA facilitated the dialogue between AFA and ASEAN Secretariat leaders at the headquarters in Jakarta. The Secretary General of ASEAN[10] and key officers attended the meeting. The process was viewed as a concrete effort to help demystify ASEAN's view of grassroots organizations and NGOs and vice versa. It was a positive experience, with follow-up actions taken by the ASEAN Secretariat (e.g. presenting bio-fuel issues during their subsequent technical committee on bio-fuel meetings, invitation to AFA and AsiaDHRRA to "ASEAN talks Business", and invitation to succeeding meetings on the Charter drafting). The Asian Farmers Association and AsiaDHRRA have also drafted a proposal to improve the current ASEAN celebration of ASEAN Farmers' Week, in particular to make the celebration more meaningful and relevant for the farmers in the region.

Thus, since its accreditation, AsiaDHRRA has sustained its engagement with ASEAN on sector-based concerns, specifically through its efforts to promote the roles of NGOs and People's Organizations in rural development. AsiaDHRRA has successfully embarked on confidence-building activities with the ASEAN Secretariat leadership. This is crucial in the long haul for both sector-based and broader CSO agenda building. Together with fellow regional CSOs, AsiaDHRRA has moved the process of broad-based engagement with ASEAN to generate recognition of the civil society sector and, as will be discussed in the following section, to assert civil society participation in the immediate, and very important, agenda of establishing the ASEAN Charter.

Furthering the Grounds for Broad-based Advocacy

Encouraged by the small progress it was making in engaging ASEAN for its sector and thematic rural development agenda, AsiaDHRRA also began to pro-actively engage fellow CSOs to direct their attention to ASEAN. AsiaDHRRA, a founding member of the Southeast Asian Committee on Advocacy (SEACA)[11], saw the potential for collective engagement with ASEAN. As a program-based cooperation, SEACA provided a broad platform for convergence of some key regional organizations concerned with different sectors and issues. In SEACA's 2005 strategic planning, ASEAN was identified as a platform for policy lobby and subsequent programming on ASEAN engagement started in 2006.

Responding to feedback in 2005 that the Secretary General of ASEAN expressed interest in interacting with CSOs, AsiaDHRRA, SEACA and Forum Asia met with ASEAN Secretariat officials in July of 2005. This meeting led the regional organizations to organize the first regional CSO Consultation on ASEAN in October of 2005 in Bangkok. Senior officers of the ASEAN Secretariat and the Secretary General himself attended this meeting. After Bangkok the CSOs focused on the 11th ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur held in December 2005 when the first ASEAN Civil Society Conference was held. The first output statement from this conference was delivered in the first ever 15-minute interaction by CSOs with ASEAN Leaders. It was at this time that the ASEAN Civil Society Conference (ACSC) was recognized as a formal platform of CSOs that will convene in conjunction with the annual ASEAN Summit. This recognition further encouraged the growing civil society solidarity.

Toward a common agenda: Solidarity for Asian Peoples' Advocacy (SAPA)

With the promise of the ACSC platform as an official link to ASEAN leaders, four regional organizations (Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development, AsiaDHRRA, Focus on the Global South, and the Southeast Asian Committee on Advocacy) agreed to facilitate the coming together of regional and national NGOs toward a common agenda. This agreement led to the birth of the Solidarity for Asian Peoples' Advocacy (SAPA)[12].

The SAPA Working Group on ASEAN pulled together its own think tanks, which collectively put forward its ideas to the Eminent Persons Groups (EPG) on the ASEAN Charter. Submissions were presented during the series of EPG meetings in 2006 and were recognized by the EPG. While these submissions did not appear intact in the EPG report[13], the important gain was the CSO breakthrough in the process. The interaction also sent a clear signal to ASEAN that there was now a pro-active stakeholder of the ASEAN Charter from among the CSOs.

In 2006, the SAPA Working Group on ASEAN and the Southeast Asian Committee on Advocacy launched a series of national consultations on ASEAN to make national and local CSOs aware of the regional nature of the issues they confront, and the necessity to engage ASEAN based on issues that are anchored locally. The national consultations, together with the SAPA processes and reports to the ASEAN Eminent Persons Group, served as preparatory inputs leading to the 2nd ASEAN Civil Society Conference, ACSC2, to coincide with the 12th ASEAN Summit.

Unfortunately the Philippine government, host of the 12th Summit, decided to recognize the ASEAN People's Assembly (APA) as the CSO component of the Summit[14]. Undaunted by the refusal to recognize the follow-through platform of the 11th ASEAN Summit, the CSOs pursued the ACSC2. This commitment to ACSC2 facilitated further strengthening of solidarity among CSOs in its advocacy before ASEAN. The ACSC2 was not only a venue to deepen the discourse on issues, it was also an opportunity for confidence-building among CSOs. Hosting for the 3rd ACSC was passed on to the Singaporean CSOs with the nation as the host of the 13th ASEAN Summit in 2007[15]. The Singapore government already assigned an academic think tank to organize the official civil society component of the 13th ASEAN Summit.

Small Victories and Gains for the Long Haul

Looking at progress since 1999, important small and steady gains accumulated, helping to build a foundation for the long haul:

Demystifying ASEAN: For AsiaDHRRA, the decision to make use of the entry point that it had with the ASEAN Foundation in 1999 was worthwhile. The interaction with ASEAN was a demystification process that lead to a new confidence to explore possibilities of engaging the, seemingly distant, state-centered body and to advocate for both its sector, and a broad-based development agenda.

Tactical gains: The ASEAN Secretariat (ASEC) recently extended a vote of confidence on AsiaDHRRA's proposed technical cooperation towards linking small farmers with the market. This action was taken despite the technocrat point of view that investing resources into the marketing activities of small farmers would not be viable – the argument being that it would be more worthwhile to invest in commercially established farmers than with those with whom AsiaDHRRA works. This action taken by ASEAN is a solid indicator that the ASEC could be convinced to support CSOs who are serious about engaging ASEAN in very concrete work on the ground. With the constant and pro-active hammering out of issues and positions, tactical gains are possible.

Regional solidarity: For the broader civil society movement, the decision to engage ASEAN led to stronger solidarity building among CSOs at the regional level through Solidarity for Asian People's Advocacy (SAPA). Engaging ASEAN compelled CSOs to go beyond their own comfort zones and take positive steps in understanding how each other's issues overlapped[16]. Through efforts to bring to ASEAN's attention the issues and advocacies that they work on, SAPA made in-roads in gaining CSO recognition by ASEAN. Its relationship with ASEAN remains on uncertain grounds, but already ASEAN recognizes SAPA as a broad-based regional platform keenly watching and acting for a more progressive integration in the Southeast East region. Though SAPA is not totally devoid of the dynamics that traditionally mark the CSO movement, donors and other CSOs recognized the relevance of SAPA's existence as a platform for broad-based CSO cooperation.

Emerging CSO leadership: Highly noticeable in the SAPA process is the emergence of a new-generation of CSO leaders who are more prepared to cross political lines and traditions and to form broad-based partnerships. These leaders recognize new friendships as essential in sustaining a movement that must present a united front before ASEAN, while, at the same time, acknowledging that each has its own agenda. The

alliance at the SAPA level does not stop each individual CSO from pursuing their own direct sector-based engagement with ASEAN, as long as it is mindful of the broader long-term agenda for reform. This flexible solidarity is an important gain for the movement that has grown beyond the shadows of its pioneer leaders.

CSO empowerment: CSO engagement on the ASEAN Charter is a milestone that marks the awakening of CSO consciousness to the regional nature of their issues. This engagement became a strategic platform that served as a repository for the CSOs' long history and experience of working for the people's agenda. The resulting paper submissions to the ASEAN Emminent Persons Group (EPG), the Asian Civil Society Conference proceedings, and national consultation reports are more than enough for SAPA to embark on drafting its own shadow ASEAN Charter, if it so chooses. Given the uncertainty of an ASEAN Charter drafted without meaningful input and participation from civil society and the ASEAN people in general, the idea of having an ASEAN Peoples' Charter remains in the forefront. The experience of engagement was also an affirmation of the capacity of CSOs in the region to deliver collectively.

Civil Society Engaging Regionalism: Lessons Learned

The following lessons can be draw from this long and steady process of engagement:

Be proactive and persistent: Pro-activeness and persistence in the engagement with ASEAN works. Without consistent knocking on their doors, ASEAN and its bureaucracy will proceed as usual without venturing beyond their comfort zones. There is a known bias or perception in ASEAN that development CSOs in particular are difficult to deal with and will make their lives more complicated. Thus, without any pro-active effort to reach out and demystify development-oriented CSOs, the progress of engagement will be sluggish or one-way, with processes and substance dictated by ASEAN and thus defeating the participatory purpose of engagement.

Focus on concrete issues on the ground: Engagement through substantive issues is necessary. AsiaDHRRA's work with the Asian Farmer's Association for Sustainable Rural development (AFA), and its clear agenda to promote NGO/People's Organization roles in sustainable rural development at the national level, were the clear anchors of its advocacy and engagement with ASEAN. Nothing can beat advocacy engagement that is anchored in concrete work on the ground and in issues carried directly by the sector. When approached on specific technical and substantive issues, ASEAN, as an institution that has yet to become comfortable with CSOs, was able to relate much more easily with the national dimension of AsiaDHRRA's work. More political issues – like agrarian reform – should be addressed on a non-political entry point such as learning exchange programs. The people-to-people exchange will serve as a confidence-building step towards a regional dialogue that is hoped to spark openness to learn from other fellow ASEAN governments already committed to agrarian reform.

Engage key decision-making bodies: Engaging the ASEAN Secretariat is a crucial step. CSOs prepared to engage in substantial and technical issues have to begin dealing with this critical organ of ASEAN. AsiaDHRRA established rapport and familiarity with key ASEC officials. The ASEC responded very professionally to AsiaDHRRA as a CSO affiliate for almost its entire request. More direct CSO engagement with the secretariat also helps ASEAN broaden its perspectives about CSOs. In almost all transactions with

ASEAN, its leaders depend upon and refer to the input of the ASEC. Thus having the ASEC as both a channel and direct venue for CSO advocacy has much merit.

Develop broad-based coalitions: Engagement with a broad-based coalition as part of a bigger CSO movement is a strategic move. ASEAN goes beyond a specific sector and time and needs to transform into a more responsive, people-oriented body with which Southeast Asian people can truly identify. This is a common agenda for all CSOs. The more consolidated the approach and efforts the stronger and more sustained its impact will be. Engaging ASEAN for reform will be a commitment for the long haul.

Sustain CSO capacity, and confidence, building: Investment in education, capacity building, and confidence - building within the CSO community needs to be sustained. ASEAN is a new arena for most CSOs. National level consultations on ASEAN helped to get local CSO leaders mindful of an ASEAN agenda. The ASEAN lesson 101 embarked on by many CSOs was complemented by simultaneous discussions and allowed its vision of regional integration[17].

Plan for the long haul: Given that the process of ASEAN engagement is for the long haul, a long-term plan and mobilization of resources is necessary. Both tactical and strategic grounds should be explored, technical/substantive and structural issues addressed, and in-and-out processes continued. Engagement has to be a mix of different strategies and approaches. Preparedness to compromise without losing sight of its vision is an option, depending on the collective assessment of the CSO community. Tension and conflicts are to be expected, thus the need to clarify at the outset basic principles of coalition work.

Concluding Reflections: What Lies Ahead?

Sustaining engagement with ASEAN is an act of a responsible citizenry. A rules-based ASEAN should be made much more accountable to its people. It must aspire to be inclusive and participatory and aim for the greater good of the Southeast Asian people, especially the marginalized poor. Its leadership should adhere to democratic governance that will ensure that the growth they envision from economic integration will translate to real human development.

Engaging ASEAN on the Charter Building process beyond the output of the High level Task Force (HLTF)[18], the body that took over from the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) and was tasked to write the Charter, needs to be sustained. The specific provisions and enabling instruments of key proposals within the Charter are yet to be defined. All avenues to influence these follow-up processes should be explored. Particular attention must be given to those advocacy efforts that are close to being institutionalized. These efforts include the ASEAN Human Rights Body, the ASEAN Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children, and institution building to implement ASEAN's commitment to the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers.

The decision of the HLTF to include a provision to create an ASEAN Human Rights Body is a gain hard-fought and won by CSOs and other stakeholder groups. This future ASEAN human rights body should promote and protect human rights in a comprehensive manner covering civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights[19].

It is hoped that the recommendation for the ASEAN Charter that includes CSOs in the consultative organizational structure of ASEAN will allow CSOs more

opportunities and space for engagement and cooperation with ASEAN. The collective actions of CSOs should not be limited however to what is possible in the ASEAN frame. It is the process of drafting a shadow ASEAN People's Charter, regardless of what comes out in the ASEAN Charter, that will sustain the continuing discourse and action of CSOs in the region towards constructing a more solid foundation of alternative 'regionalism'. The CSO movement must be actively mobilized and sustained.

Mobilizing and Sustaining the CSO Movement

As a movement, it is imperative that CSOs ensure that grassroots voices are heard directly and not just represented in the halls of advocacy by NGOs and professional activists. It is important that regional advocacies are anchored in concrete bases and work at the local levels. Language constraints in the region must be overcome if greater national and grassroots participation is to be the goal. Thus efforts to popularize and translate relevant materials for broader public consumption should be supported.

CSOs at the regional level need to be rigorous in defining the issues they intend to deal with at the ASEAN level. This process must begin at the national levels with clarity regarding how issues are to be taken up by the national ASEAN Secretariats and the respective national implementing agencies. This national clarity will guide engagement at the regional level. CSOs must also engage governments at the national level in order to generate their support when they go to the ASEAN level. One country vote against a regional agenda is enough to keep an issue on the back burner or totally shelved. One very strong and positive voice in support of an agenda also has the chance of achieving consensus support from the rest of the members.

Understanding that ASEAN is sensitive to political issues, and realizing that the presence of a Charter will radically change the regional body, CSOs must find ways to frame their advocacy in ways that do not threaten member states. It is not just about throwing rotten tomatoes from the outside, but also preparing for critical yet constructive engagement. There is a maze of existing ASEAN bodies and organs that CSOs must understand well and know how to explore.

It is also recognized that not all ASEAN members are keen to deal with civil society. Regional CSOs need to extend solidarity and support to strengthen efforts at the national level that push for more space for featuring CSO roles and work that will, eventually, be recognized by their respective governments. The ASEAN platform will have to showcase some progressive relations between CSOs and government for others to emulate and to learn from. There is pressure among all ASEAN members to relate to, and work with, CSOs, hence, these members can no longer afford to say no.

While there is call for transformation in ASEAN, the long journey along this path requires transformational leadership among CSO leaders. There have been many occasions wherein regional leaders within the SAPA community expressed the need to be together simply for reflection and dialogue, to learn from one other, and to become better leaders based upon the experiences of colleagues in the movement. The depth and breadth of investment in developing our own CSO leaders indicates and affirms leadership - key for sustaining any movement.

Notes

1. www.aseansec.org
2. The ASEAN-ISIS (ASEAN Institute of Strategic and International Studies) is an association of non-governmental organizations registered with the ASEAN. Formed in 1988, its main purpose is to encourage cooperation and coordination of activities among policy-oriented ASEAN scholars and analysts, and to promote policy-oriented studies of, and exchanges of information and viewpoints on, various strategic and international issues affecting Southeast Asia's and ASEAN's peace, security and well-being. www.siiaonline.org/asean-isis_network (accessed September 25, 2007).
3. 'Track Two' diplomacy may be considered the practice of bringing together public intellectuals, academics, government, business, media and other relevant sectors so that in their private capacity they may discuss economic, political, and security issues at the domestic, regional, and global levels.
4. The idea of APA was first raised in track one and track two discussions in the mid-1990s; subsequently, ASEAN-ISIS discussed modality and procedures for organizing APA. www.asean-isis-aseanpeoplesassembly.net. (accessed September 25, 2007).
5. www.aseanfoundation.org (accessed September 25, 2007).
6. The ASEAN Secretariat was established in 1976 with the basic mandate of providing greater efficiency in the coordination of ASEAN organs, and more effective implementation of ASEAN projects and activities.
7. SEARDA was accepted by SOMRDPE in December 2003 as a possible joint venture with AsiaDHRRA. It was a program found to be relevant and complementary to the call for better understanding in the ASEAN region, and towards a sharing and caring ASEAN community.
8. Affiliation could be by invitation or pro-active application by an interested CSO. AsiaDHRRA simply filled up the prescribed form and submitted required documents (Charter, securities registration, and list of Board of Trustees of country members) . It had to establish its presence in most ASEAN member countries, its informal working relations in Laos and Myanmar, and its absence in others e.g. Singapore and Brunei.
9. AFA was catalyzed through a series of farmers' exchange visits from 1992 to 2002, organized by AsiaDHRRA, which also provided secretariat support during its formation and consolidation years. AFA now represents around 10 million farmers in the Southeast and East Asian region.
10. ASEAN Secretary General Ong Keng Yong, Singaporean 2002-2007; he finishes his term in 2007 and will be succeeded by H.E. Dr. Surin Pitsuwan, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand.
11. SEACA is a programme that focuses on advocacy capacity building of CSOs in South East Asia sponsored by the Catholic Institute for International Relations (CIIR) and supported by the Department for International Development (DFID) of the United Kingdom. From 2006, SEACA supported national consultations on ASEAN in 7 countries and acted as convenor of the SAPA Working group on

ASEAN. It realigned its programming, which now has a specific focus on ASEAN engagement. www.seaca.net. (accessed September 25, 2007).

12. The Solidarity for Asian People's Advocacy (SAPA) is an open platform for consultation, cooperation and coordination between Asian social movements and civil society organisations including NGOs, people organisations and trade unions who are engaged in action, advocacy and lobbying at the level of intergovernmental processes and organisations. www.asiasapa.org. (accessed September 25, 2007).
13. www.aseansec.org/19236.htm on-line copy available, Report of the EPG on the Charter.
14. ACSC2 was not recognized by the Philippine government, host of the 12th ASEAN Summit. Instead, the 6th APA was considered as the official civil society conference. It should be noted that during this time the Arroyo administration was politically unstable and CSOs were generally seen as anti-administration. Hence, APA anchored by the think tanks/academics was a safer alternative for them.
15. As of this writing, the SAPA preparation for ACSC3 in Nov 1-3 is ongoing. Singapore CSOs are involved in the preparations and efforts to bring understanding about ASEAN to ordinary citizens.
16. SAPA events such as organizational meetings, ACSC processes, and EPG submissions happened with each member paying their own costs or those with larger allocation covering some of the common costs. There is no single project that funds SAPA events and this is a concrete manifestation of stakeholder building, of a sustainable process.
17. Dano E. Building People-Oriented and Participatory Alternative Regionalism Model in Southeast Asia: An Exploratory Study. Unpublished paper as of this writing.
18. The High Level task Force (HLTF) is composed of highly recognized and respected leaders chosen by their respective governments. It was mandated by the 12th ASEAN Summit to draft the main provisions of the ASEAN Charter, based on the blueprint submitted by the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) during the 12th ASEAN Summit in December 2006. They are to complete the final draft for signing during the 13th ASEAN Summit in Singapore in November 2007.
19. Vitit Muntarbhorn is a Professor at the Faculty of Law, Chulalongkorn University. Speech delivered at the “International Workshop on Forty Years of ASEAN” organized by the Institute of Security and International Studies, Aug 28, 2007. www.bangkokpost.com/News/01Sep2007

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