



ASIA JUSTICE AND RIGHTS

ANNUAL REPORT 2019



Annual Report © Asia Justice and Rights 2020

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Cover photo: Balinese priest and granddaughter on Kintamani lake © Michael Dean Morgan



10 Years of Asia Justice and Rights

Building Just and Accountable Societies Free from Impunity

When AJAR was founded, with a mission to help break the cycles of mass human rights violations occurring across the Asia Pacific region, we identified key contributors to these cycles — lack of accountability, impunity and intolerance. The past decade has reinforced our belief in the fundamental importance of these factors.

The emergence of the COVID-19 virus in November brought a new global reality. As countries struggle to control the health threat, we are again confronted with the impact of a lack of accountability, impunity and corruption linked to authoritarian regimes. Massive resources stolen by despots in recent decades in countries like Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, North Korea and China, were used to buy unimaginable luxuries for leaders, their families and cronies. Those resources belonged to the people and should have been allocated for building hospitals and universities, training doctors and nurses and buying medical equipment, now urgently needed to deal with the pandemic.

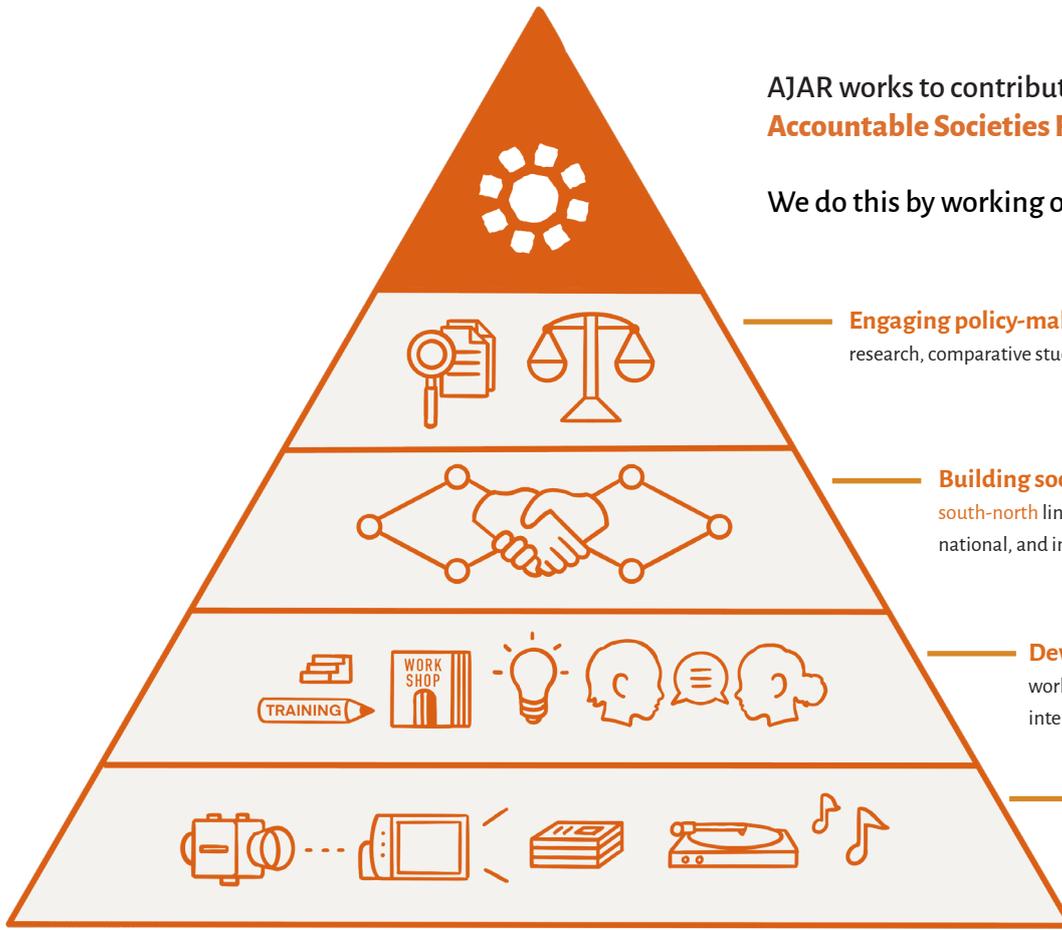
In a number of countries, effective responses have been severely hampered by ineffective leaders, appointed for reasons of nepotism and political power rather than merit. Societies are once again paying the cost of unchecked government, with the poor unable to access healthcare as a result of a failure of accountability. As we face this global pandemic, lessons of the past are more relevant than ever.

Responses to the pandemic have included invoking emergency powers, with the authority of the security forces unchecked. Reports have been received of violations committed by those entrusted to enforce 'social distancing' regulations. In many countries, criticism of government has been outlawed and journalists questioning the appropriateness of resource allocation, arrested. This inevitably leads to the re-emergence of authoritarian regimes and more impunity, oppression and economic ruin.

The new emerging reality means that AJAR needs to adopt new and effective strategies and tools. We have already developed online learning methodologies, drawing on our deep experience of using film, television, social media and music to increase understanding of rights and justice issues. These methods will be continuously adjusted and streamlined to meet the needs of our partners. Our teams are sharing basic information on the pandemic and new challenges to their rights in plain language, and translated into the local vernacular, for Rohingya refugees and for indigenous communities in Papua, Myanmar and Timor-Leste. Maintaining linkages with local communities remains critical, connecting their voices with important regional and global initiatives.

Defending human rights, tolerance and accountability is more important now than ever. Across the region, our staff and partners are working to challenge impunity and to hold governments to account. Voices of victims, and those challenging violations and government failures, are more important than ever, as we move through this crisis towards a fresh, new, and more accountable future. AJAR is proud to stand beside our partners working in difficult contexts of conflict, displacement and neglect during these important times.

Patrick Burgess
President



AJAR works to contribute to building **Accountable Societies Free from Impunity.**

We do this by working on four building blocks:

Engaging policy-makers and legislators by undertaking research, comparative studies, policy papers and briefs.

Building social capital by nurturing **south-south** and **south-north** linkages and maintaining networks at local, national, and international levels.

Developing capacity by conducting trainings, workshops, group discussions, exchanges, internships.

Promoting awareness and understanding by producing television series, music concerts, newspaper articles, social media contributions, exhibitions.

#AJAR10Years



After Timor-Leste's truth commission wraps up, AJAR and partners create an NGO to advocate for the recommendations of the truth-seeking process. Now, ACbit has worked with more than 400 survivors, focusing on women survivors of gender-based violence. It has brought together victims of the conflict and of gender-based violence to work together for change.

2011

TRUTH-SEEKING
PROCESS
400
survivors

ANNUAL
TRAINING
SERIES

**PEACE &
JUSTICE**

2012

Our Annual Training Series on Peace and Justice begins taking place three or four times a year at the Learning Center in Bali. Trainings offer best practices from the region and beyond, with guest lecturers from India, South Africa, Peru, Timor-Leste, Philippines, Myanmar, Thailand, Australia, United States, and Sri Lanka. Hundreds of alumni have used their new knowledge and networks to advance accountability.

AJAR is a key member of Indonesia's Coalition for Truth and Justice (KKPK). The Coalition holds public hearings and collates data on human rights violations from 1965 to 2005, leading to a final report, *Reclaiming Indonesia: Forty Years of Violence and Impunity*. Members then engaged with government agencies to provide basic services to thousands of victims.

2013



2014

AJAR scripts a television series on human rights in Myanmar, *The Sun, the Moon and Truth*. Produced by the Yangon Film School, the series has reached more than seven million viewers. Participatory research with women survivors of torture and violence leads to the establishment of self-help group in Yangon. Three survivors later win seats in national and local parliament.

In the last decade, AJAR has reached:

29,000 participants
736 events
90 publications

AJAR's online videos and TV series have been viewed by more than **8,000,000** people

AJAR and its partners have supported more than **8,000** survivors

Empowerment of **80 women survivors** in the Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh.

More than **800** young people from across Asia Pacific participated in a variety of activities.

AJAR develops its 'stone and flower' methodology based on action research with 140 survivors. Part of a series of manuals to *Unlearn Impunity*, 'stone and flower' has been adopted across Asia-Pacific. We created a follow-on manual, *Mosaic*, along with torture survivors from Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Timor-Leste, and Indonesia. In Myanmar, a network of CSOs and torture survivor groups began an annual campaign against torture.



After years of civil society campaigning, in Timor-Leste a Prime Ministerial Decree establishes the Centro Nacional Chega! to preserve memory, care for survivors, and promote peace education for the next generation. AJAR helps found a network to promote south-south exchange and best practice on accountability. Within two years, TJAN has NGO members from 10 Asian countries and has helped over 80 experts build their knowledge.



With partners, we have helped 80 'stolen children' from Timor-Leste reunite with their families after decades without contact and traced another 70 in Indonesia. This is a small portion of the thousands of children taken. AJAR's innovative approach has secured the support of both Timorese and Indonesian governments, and strengthened cooperation between civil society in the two countries.

2015

2016

Aceh Truth and Reconciliation Commission is established, more than a decade after the 2005 Peace Agreement provided for it. Civil society groups, including AJAR, campaigned tirelessly and held local hearings on truth-seeking processes. By 2019, the Aceh TRC had collected over 3,000 statements and held four public hearings with more than 100 victims and experts.

2017

SOUTH-SOUTH EXCHANGE



2018

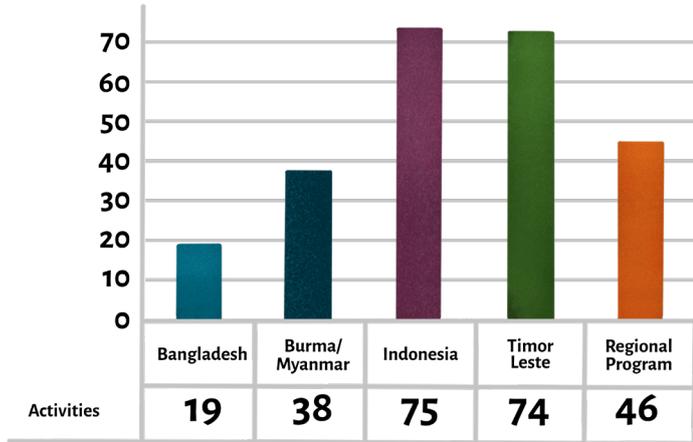
AJAR helps the Government of Solomon Islands create a Reparations Policy and a short version of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Final Report. National consultations on a new commission on the prevention of conflict and victim's rights are ongoing.

2019

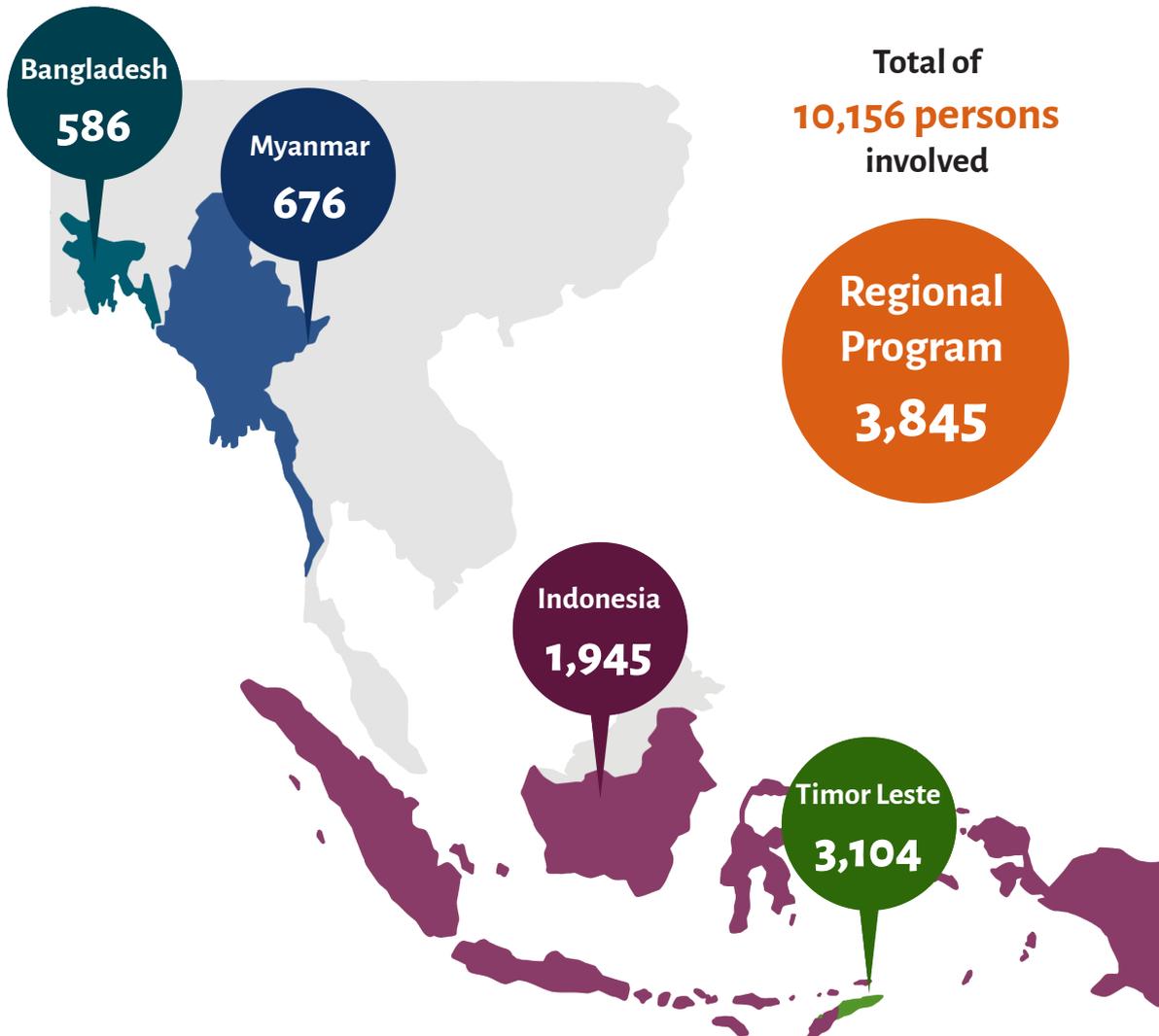


2019

Activities Held Throughout the Year



Number of Persons Involved in Our Training & Events in the Year



AREAS OF FOCUS

Working on specific themes with multiple stakeholders, AJAR employs a broad-based and holistic approach to realise its vision of just and accountable societies, free from impunity.

Themes

The report focuses on AJAR's main thematic approaches – accountability and the fight against impunity and tolerance for sustainable peace.

Accountability and the fight against impunity

Similar trends can be observed across many Asian contexts that have experienced mass human rights violations. Often political leaders threaten or attack those seeking to hold them to account. Those under threat include the media, for exposing wrongdoings, civil society, for researching and amplifying the voice of victims, and courts, for ruling against powerful interests. As these trends grow, the legitimate physical powers of the state, particularly those entrusted with weapons like the police and the military, are often complicit in atrocities, benefiting from abuse of those powers. Over time, holding officials to account becomes increasingly difficult, as the cost of challenging abuse can be high and may result in killings or disappearances, imprisonment and torture, and threats to family members.

Tolerance for sustainable peace

The Asia Pacific region, like many parts of the world, is experiencing increasing intolerance towards minorities. AJAR is working in a number of conflict areas in which ethno-religious minorities have been systematically marginalised and denied their rights over long periods of time, resulting in low levels of freedom and development. Feelings of injustice flowing from this treatment often lead to armed struggle by splinter groups typically met with massive and disproportionate

responses by security forces. This, in turn, is accompanied by impunity for killings, disappearances, rape and torture, leading to ever deeper divisions and ever decreasing respect and support for the nation state.



🕒 A quilt depicting Rohingya survivors' lives and journey in the camp in Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh. The quilt made was exhibited in Dhaka and Jakarta, Indonesia.

Stakeholders

AJAR collaborates with a broad range of stakeholders. It believes that recent trends that have seen populist and divisive leaders emerge, have only been made possible because insufficient work has been done to improve political and socio-economic knowledge and understanding amongst the broader population. For this reason, AJAR works at the foundational level, using a variety of methods, including digital tools, to share simple messages in order to stimulate discussion across large sections of society.

Much of AJAR's work involves strengthening civil society leaders, human rights defenders and torture survivors, enabling them to address serious human rights violations. Increasingly, AJAR works with progressive government officials and members of security forces willing to contribute to change from within. In addition, AJAR works with representatives from ASEAN and other regional entities, as well as with multilateral bodies, like the UN and the EU, involved with issues relating to rights, tolerance and accountability.

AJAR's broadest goal is to build resilient cultures and accountable societies free from impunity. Victims play a special role in this change process. While governments have a duty to repair the lives of victims, the victims themselves have a unique and incontestable moral authority to speak out. They are motivated by their own experiences to ensure others do not suffer similar fates. Victims' experiences can generate public pressure to bring about change for more accountable societies. However, victims are often poor, relatively uneducated and lack the strength of voice to fulfill their potential

to contribute to change. AJAR tries to strengthen their voice, combining psycho-social healing with learning and empowerment, identifying and investing in potential leaders and helping create sustainable victims' organisations and networks.

Without exception, in every conflict situation, women are the targets of mass crimes involving sexual violence and other violations. Therefore, women survivors have a crucial role to play in leading the call for transitional justice and durable peace.

AJAR increasingly focuses on young human rights defenders, building their knowledge and helping empower them to hold governments to account. At the same time AJAR prepares them for future leadership roles. For example, in Indonesia, the Voice program, implemented across several provinces, uses modern technology and creative tools to promote discussion and amplify the opinions of young people on crucial rights issues. This is particularly important now that minority rights are under threat and young people are testing their power to demand for more tolerant and inclusive cultures. In the Rohingya refugee camps of Bangladesh, AJAR has commenced programs to help equip young refugee leaders with the knowledge and skills to effectively participate in decisions that will affect them for decades to come. In Timor-Leste, the 'Human Rights and Social Justice School for Young Changemakers' is helping empower thousands of students to challenge growing trends of corruption and abuse of power.



© A Rohingya woman sits in her shelter in the refugee camps of Bangladesh, sewing a panel of her memory living in Myanmar. Asia Justice and Rights (AJAR) with the Liberation War Museum (LWM) of Bangladesh conducted a participatory study with women in the Rohingya Refugee Camps. Participatory tools were designed to fit the reality and rhythm of life in the camps.

AJAR Toolkits for promoting accountability and tolerance

AJAR uses a variety of innovative methods and approaches to promote accountability and tolerance, including:

Documentation:

AJAR's teams trained staff at the Aceh TRC on objective methodologies for documenting violations. Thousands of victims in five Asian countries have participated in AJAR's participatory action research in which they increase their knowledge, link with other survivors and record their stories.



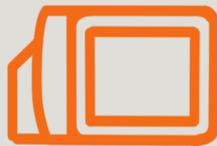
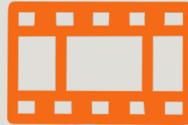
Instructive videos:

AJAR and the TJAN network produced and used seven, ten-minute videos on different aspects of transitional justice, utilised in trainings in ten Asian contexts and available on-line.



Film:

AJAR has produced documentary films, such as the new *Generation '99*, telling the story of Timor-Leste's vibrant music and art scene through the songwriters and artists' experiences during the periods of mass violations.



Television Series:

TV series like *The Sun the Moon and The Truth* in Myanmar and *Laloran Justisa*⁸ in Timor-Leste, use family dramas, love triangles, football, music and comedy to convey important messages on specific issues. Each episode is based around an important theme for rights and democracy. The series were very popular and have been viewed by millions. The Myanmar National Police Academy and the Timor-Leste Prison Service have used these television series for training purposes.

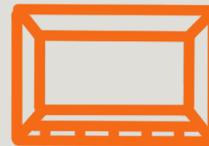


Music:

Songwriting competitions on rights themes in Timor-Leste, as part of the TV series program, with winners performing at a concert, receiving musical instruments and being included on a CD released with the TV series.

Digital narratives:

Short digital films of survivors' stories have been shared with respective communities using YouTube and other platforms.



Theatre:

Survivors in Indonesia, Timor-Leste and Myanmar use theatre as a way to tell their stories and express their emotions.



Travelling exhibitions:

Rohingya women survivors embroidered cloth panels of their stories which were sewn into quilts and exhibited in London, with plans for New York and other sites. Timor-Leste mobile exhibition focuses on the historical Marabia massacres and has travelled across the country, inviting those who attended to interact, write stories or add pictures to the panels.



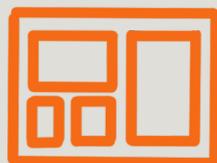
YouTube videos:

AJAR has produced a range of YouTube short videos that provide survivors with an opportunity to tell their stories, which also acts as a healing process.



Social media:

AJAR conducts a range of programs that utilise social media such as the Voice program for young human rights defenders in Indonesia.



Comic booklets:

Summaries of materials, human rights conventions etc. are presented in comic book format in local languages.

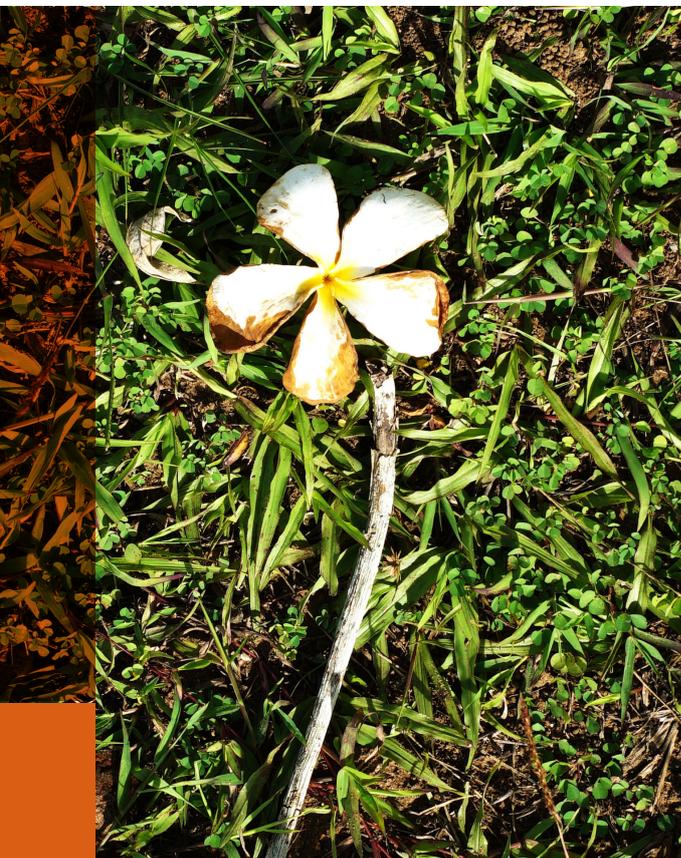


Plain language materials:

Summarising long, complex documents making them accessible thereby increasing the impact. For example, writing and producing an illustrated short version of the Solomon Islands TRC Report. Plain language materials relating to international justice mechanisms for the mass violations in Myanmar were produced in English and Burmese and placed online.

⁸Laloran Justisa means Waves of Justice

ACCOUNTABILITY AND THE FIGHT AGAINST IMPUNITY



In contexts where it becomes clear that perpetrators of major crimes will not be held to account, the incentive to act in accordance with the law diminishes. The lack of accountability for serious criminal offences blends into mass corruption, nepotism and environmental destruction for personal gain. If the powerful are not held to account for allowing those under their control to kill, rape and torture, there is little chance they will be held to account for enriching themselves, their families and their cronies, by diverting national budgets earmarked for schools, roads and hospitals.

From its inception, AJAR realised that, possibly, its greatest contribution was to strengthen movements for change that developed organically in transitional contexts or during pauses in cycles of violence. Increasing the capacity and effectiveness of the work of human rights defenders and survivors of abuse, as well as civil society and progressive government leaders, is an investment whose impact will be felt for years and decades to come.

The following examples of AJAR's programs reflect the belief that a broad range of approaches are necessary to build a foundation for change. The nature of these interventions needs to be tailored to meet the needs of specific challenges.



© The Aceh Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) completed a public hearing in Lhokseumawe on July 2019 for victims of past human rights violations committed in North Aceh during the period of 1998-2005.

Indonesia

Aceh Truth and Reconciliation Commission

AJAR is supporting the Aceh Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) that has recorded thousands of victims' statements, building a base of truth to combat the potential for a return to conflict.

The Aceh TRC is a non-judicial mechanism, established in 2016 by the autonomous Aceh parliament, as one of the world's first examples of a sub-national TRC. Its mandate includes investigating and establishing the truth concerning human rights violations perpetrated during the 30-year conflict, which only ended with the Helsinki Accord in 2005.

Over the past three years, AJAR has contributed to the training of commissioners and staff and provided technical assistance on a broad range of issues. To date the TRC has carefully recorded more than three thousand statements from victims and witnesses, and has held a number of public hearings at which survivors and experts provided testimonies.

Although Aceh remains part of Indonesia while Timor-Leste is an independent country, both territories experienced decades of conflict between local guerilla groups and Indonesian armed forces, while civilians were exposed to torture, disappearance, gender-based violence and other human rights violations. AJAR has worked for years with survivors in both locations and, consequently, is well positioned to support and facilitate peer-learning and exchange visits.

In September, AJAR facilitated an exchange visit from Aceh to Timor-Leste, to learn from the experience of the Timorese Truth and Reconciliation Commission or CAVR¹. Aceh colleagues learned about reparations for victims from Timor-Leste's Community Reconciliation

Procedures that dealt with over 1500 cases. These processes brought perpetrators and victims together to seek solutions according to both legal and cultural traditions.

Participants in the exchange included commissioners and staff from the TRC, members of local parliaments, representatives from the Ministry of Law and Human Rights, as well as leaders from civil society. The Acehnese met with the Prime Minister of Timor-Leste, members of parliament, government officials, civil society leaders and victims' organisations. The group studied the successes and challenges of the Centro Nacional Chega!, a permanent national institution established specifically to follow-up the work of the CAVR.

"This exchange has been enriching and insightful. It has strengthened our knowledge and built solidarity. The experience of Timor-Leste shows how they respect their history through memorials, creating digital archives, documentaries and museums, and building a narrative that is integrated into the school curriculum and textbooks. This is very inspiring and very significant for the learning process in Aceh."

Tunn Mastur Yahya, a member of the Aceh TRC.

¹ CAVR—Portuguese acronym for the Commission for the Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in East Timor



On November 2019, for the 5th Annual Gathering of Survivors, women survivors of human rights violations from Kachin State share their stories and learn about transitional justice.

Myanmar

Strengthening civil society through documentation

In Myanmar, where the establishment of an official truth-seeking mechanism is not yet possible, AJAR works with survivors, documenting their stories and developing support groups and networks that gradually bring to light violations committed in darkness.

2019 opened up new possibilities for accountability for mass violations through international mechanisms such as the UN's Independent Fact-Finding Mission, the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice, as well as universal jurisdiction cases brought in Argentina and Australia. AJAR's trainings and workshops strengthened partners' capacity to understand and engage with these international mechanisms while managing expectations on timing and likely impact.

AJAR's work with women survivors aims to establish groups to become powerful forces for psycho-social support, advocacy efforts and change within their communities. Work includes a focus on recording testimonies of women victims, while helping them form groups to strengthen their ability to call for justice and an end to ongoing violations. Training on documentation of survivor stories was combined with activities conducted with women survivor networks and involved conducting psycho-social healing, developing livelihood skills and promoting gender equality. In addition, AJAR supported memory initiatives such as museum exhibitions, commemorations and memorials.

In dangerous conflict areas, where sexual violations against local women continue to be committed, it is vitally important that victims' stories are recorded and that women join together to demand justice and an end to ongoing attacks.

During the course of the year, AJAR's core partner, the Ta'ang Women's Organization, working in northern Shan State, moved to a new strategy of collaborative work, building on previous years of empowering women survivors. A selected number of individuals now have sufficient confidence to develop new community groups involving larger numbers of survivors from across the region. This has produced a 'ripple effect', expanding the voice of women demanding truth and accountability.

A self-help group for Kachin women survivors

AJAR helped form the first self-help group of ethnic women survivors in Kachin State. Kasi Kaja worked with AJAR and the Kachin Women's Association of Thailand or KWAT, on a pilot project called 'Healing Wounds for Justice and Peace'. The project tests new methodologies for establishing survivor groups by addressing trauma, documenting violations, fostering peaceful returns for internally displaced persons (IDPs), as well as discussing sexual and gender-based violence.

Towards the end of the year, AJAR selected ten facilitators from among people displaced from the Sama area of Kachin State. These women will form support groups and lead awareness-raising, documentation and livelihood activities with a range of communities. AJAR and KWAT will provide training, mentoring and support at the Kasi Kaja Center, as well as a safe space for women to meet and collaborate away from the stresses of IDP camps. AJAR is testing a multimedia tool kit for facilitators to use in trainings which, if effective, will be translated into Kachin and other languages, for the use of partners and other women survivor groups.



👁️ A festival commemorating the 20th anniversary of its independence referendum held in Timor-Leste, August 2019.

Timor-Leste

Accountability through music, film and memory 20 years after referendum

In Timor-Leste, AJAR uses television, film and music to inspire, entertain and share the history of violations with the nation and with the world.

Generation '99: August 2019 marked the 20th anniversary of the UN-sponsored referendum for independence in Timor-Leste. The result, which overwhelmingly supported separation from Indonesia, was accompanied by mass violence and destruction which led to the birth of the new nation. AJAR took advantage of the 20th anniversary to bring 30 transitional justice experts from eight Asian contexts to study a range of TJ mechanisms employed in Timor-Leste. A parallel six-day youth program focused on reconciliation with young leaders from Timor-Leste, Indonesia's West Timor province and neighbouring Australia. The youth program emphasised lessons from the past, exchanging perspectives and building networks that will continue into the future. The celebrations provided an opportunity for a viewing of the one-hour documentary film, *Generation '99*, co-produced by AJAR. The documentary tells the story of the difficult past and the birth of the new nation through inspirational stories and performances of Timorese musicians, songwriters and artists. The film will be released to international audiences in 2020.

“Never Again”: Over the past year, AJAR has supported a range of ‘symbolic reparation’ projects designed to maintain a focus on mass violations, remembering lessons to prevent recurrences and honouring victims. Examples included seminars and

commemorations held on the 20th anniversary of the Liquiça Church massacre and the 39th anniversary of the Marabia incident. An event to mark another major massacre in the village of Quelicai focused not only on remembering, but on practical steps to seek truth, justice and reparations by working with the new government institution, the Centro Nacional Chega!¹.

¹ Centro Nacional Chega! – an independent government body created in 2017 to support and take forward truth commission recommendations.

Regional and global networks

The Transitional Justice Asia Network or TJAN, hosted by AJAR, connects organisations and experts from ten Asian contexts, sharing lessons and experiences from across the region.

Highlights from TJAN:

TJAN is a network, founded in 2017, made up of civil society organisations from ten countries, brought together for the common purpose of building a culture of accountability by combating impunity in Asia. This is achieved through supporting national and regional initiatives. The goals of the network are met through sharing knowledge and learning and deepening linkages, as well as conducting joint advocacy activities. Some examples of TJAN's push for accountability include:

Jakarta Roundtable on mass violations in Myanmar

AJAR and TJAN hosted a roundtable discussion on regional opportunities for addressing mass violations in Myanmar. The two-day discussion provided an important space for civil society groups from Asian countries to discuss cooperation for joint research and advocacy, as well as with representatives from ASEAN, the UN and other donor organisations.



Lessons on Reparations in Asia

In August, TJAN conducted a six-day workshop in Timor-Leste, focused on reparations in the Asia Pacific region. 32 civil society leaders from Indonesia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Timor-Leste participated and learned from international experts. Workshop participants discussed improvements and challenges for reparation initiatives. Participants included a commissioner from Aceh TRC, a former commissioner of the Victims' Claims Board in the Philippines and a commissioner from the Office of Reparations in Sri Lanka.



Trainings and campaigns in Thailand

Between September and November 2019, the Cross-Cultural Foundation (CrCF) conducted a series of transitional justice and human rights workshops. These included a ten-day TJ course organised with Srinakharinwirot University for 25 participants including academics, Muslim and Buddhist leaders, civil society representatives, victims' groups and staff from the National Human Rights Commission. In collaboration with the Association for the Prevention of Torture, SEA Junction and AJAR, CrCF presented a photo exhibition in five locations around the country. The exhibition was designed to draw attention to the widespread use of torture and other violations in the 'deep south', the use of 'special laws,' as well as to remind the general public of the impact on the everyday lives of people living in conflict areas.



Weak institutions for accountability in Nepal

The Advocacy Forum conducted a series of discussions on the challenges faced by transitional justice processes and the deep-rooted culture of impunity. Both a Truth Commission and a Disappearances Commission have been established in accordance with provisions of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. However, both institutions have been prevented from working due to complaints relating to the failure to appoint commissioners that are supported by civil society and victims' organisations. Participants shared best practices and lessons learned from the region and discussed ways forward.



Comparative research on economic, social and cultural rights

Together with members of the Global Initiative on Justice, Truth and Reconciliation (GIJTR), AJAR conducted comparative research on how transitional justice approaches have dealt with violations of economic, social and cultural rights in Indonesia and the Gambia. Working with the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience and the Center for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, AJAR's research produced case studies from six countries (including Indonesia and Timor-Leste) and a manual on how to integrate social and economic rights into transitional justice initiatives. The manual highlighted practical approaches on how to begin addressing the root causes of conflict.

Engaging internationally

AJAR provided submissions to UN human rights mechanisms, including country-focused rapporteurs, the Committee on Enforced Disappearances and the rapporteur on violence against women. Interventions by the Committee on Enforced Disappearances, for example, adopted lessons learned from AJAR's efforts finding Timorese 'stolen children' in Indonesia, and formulated principles for protecting vulnerable persons¹, including unaccompanied children. In May, the Committee published its "Guiding Principles for the Search of Disappeared Persons", with specific references to AJAR's lessons on the search for disappeared persons in other countries.

Over the course of the year, AJAR teams participated in a number of international fora. In February, in The Hague, it shared experiences in a major conference on access to justice. In May, at the Stockholm Forum on Peace and Development, AJAR spoke on conflict and accountability in Asia and, in Geneva, at an event organised by the UN Trust Fund for Victims of Torture, AJAR shared experiences working with survivors of sexual violence. In August, also in Geneva, on a panel organised by OHCHR², AJAR shared its work on impunity in Asia. Finally, in November and December, in Jakarta, AJAR facilitated a UNODC³ pilot training on improving the quality of legal aid with participants from twelve Asian countries.

¹ Principle 12 of the draft principles

² OHCHR – Office of the United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights

³ UNODC – United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

TOLERANCE FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE

Patterns of intolerance are evident in the mass violations committed in Mindanao in the Philippines, in the 'deep south' in Thailand, in Papua in Indonesia, in Rakhine, Shan, Kachin and other conflict areas in Myanmar, as well as in the north and eastern areas in Sri Lanka. Developments in a number of other Asian contexts, including in India, Pakistan, China and Afghanistan, give rise to fears of national policies prioritising ethno-religious majorities as a base for ongoing persecution against minorities, inevitably leading to region-wide destabilisation.

For this reason, a core part of AJAR's mandate and work on peacebuilding focuses on building understanding and tolerance, as well as a commitment to equal rights for all human beings. This work is conducted using a range of methods adjusted to meet the needs of different situations.

Below are examples of AJAR's work on tolerance and empowerment of minorities. Examples include working with women Rohingya survivors in Bangladesh, women living with HIV in Papua, university students in Timor-Leste and Indonesia, women politicians in Sri Lanka and traditional leaders in the Solomon Islands.

Bangladesh

Building solidarity and peer support among Rohingya women survivors

For both displaced Rohingya women in Bangladesh and those still living in Myanmar, AJAR's goal is to improve the lives of individual victims, while building a more just and peaceful society that benefits all.

As part of the 'Justice for All' program, AJAR and its partners are supporting Rohingya women survivors in the refugee camps in Cox's Bazaar, building solidarity to strengthen a multi-ethnic movement for justice.

“Throughout the year, AJAR and its local partner, the Liberation War Museum (LWM) have been implementing a program of participatory empowerment with more than 80 women survivors in eight Rohingya refugee camps.”

Using the 'stone and flower' methodology, which combines psycho-social help with learning and empowerment, women participants learn facilitation skills, basic principles of human rights, as well as healing and peer support techniques. For most, it was their first opportunity to attend a capacity building workshop. Participants were provided with the necessary skills to create safe spaces to connect, share experiences and work together. From the original group of participants, 20 women were offered further training. These

women are now facilitators, reaching out to share their knowledge and to assist other vulnerable women in the camps.

Following these trainings, women demonstrated a far deeper understanding of their experiences, the impact of the conflict on their rights and how justice mechanisms might help them in the future. Many were surprised to learn about rights that protected them under international law and how many of these rights were violated.



👁 As part of our holistic approach, Asia Justice and Rights (AJAR) with the Liberation War Museum (LWM) of Bangladesh want to create a process to heal, build solidarity and peer support among women survivors through action research.

“This is the first time anyone has ever listened to us”

Rohingya participant in a ‘Stone and Flower’ workshop

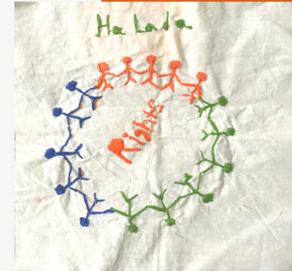
Working closely with the Victims’ Participation and Reparations Section of the International Criminal Court, AJAR filed a submission on behalf of community facilitators and their peers, highlighting their views on whether an investigation should go forward, what they consider important and their current feelings about their situation and challenges.

Rohingya women refugees were asked to sew panels to express their emotions, their hopes for the future, as well as their memories. 120 embroidered squares were made up into five quilts, bringing individual stories together representing a collective voice for justice. In November, AJAR, together with Liberation War Museum, launched an exhibition at the museum in Dhaka for the 6th International Conference on Bangladesh Genocide and Justice. The exhibition had a special focus on the persecution of the Rohingya. ‘Quilt of Memory and Hope: Stories of Women from the Rohingya Refugee Camps’, marked the first public display of the quilts.

AJAR continues to support survivors and facilitators in order to strengthen ways to speak out and build support groups within their communities.

“

We are united.
We live together.
We want to get our rights.
Unity is our strength.
This is my hope.



One woman shared a story about the flower she sewed. It was her first time sewing since she was a young child, and it helped bring back the memory of her mother teaching her how to sew. A flower was the first thing she ever sewed. Many facilitators were illiterate, and one woman said it was the first time she had held a marker.

Women in the Rohingya refugee camps participate in a workshop using tools from AJAR’s manual “Stone and Flower” in Cox’s Bazaar, March 2019. The manual is named after the exercise pictured here, where survivors share positive (flower) or negative (stone) feelings towards their personal experience of truth, justice, healing and freedom from violence.



Indonesia

Action research on violence and HIV/AIDS in Papua



Participants in HIV/AIDS and Violence Against Women in Papua participatory action research. In this exercise, participants are asked to draw a map of their community that provides particular information about what happened to the women and the locations where it happened. The action research was held in Merauke, Papua, in June 2019.

Young people, artists, and survivors

AJAR initiated a collaboration between young people and artists to learn about past mass atrocities. Working with 18 young people from five regions of the country, teams documented stories from 71 survivors of conflict and human trafficking. Over more than four months, participants learned about the root causes of violence and listened to and recorded survivors' stories. This brought a new sense of empathy and solidarity to their work as young human rights defenders. At the same time, five national-level artists are in the process of interpreting survivors' stories in preparation for an art exhibition in 2020.



In Papua, AJAR worked with groups of women living with HIV, empowering them to explore and address the challenges they face. In collaboration with four local organisations, AJAR researched the link between violence against women and HIV/AIDS. Adapting action research methods, 42 HIV positive women from Merauke and Jayapura took part in the study. The study exposed impunity and gender-blind policies as underlying behavioural patterns that negatively impacted women living with HIV/AIDS.

Researchers interviewed policy-makers, service-providers and local leaders and found that the most effective way to address HIV/AIDS was to integrate with efforts to overcome violence against women. The study further demonstrated the importance of supporting local initiatives to empower Papuan women to understand the root causes of conflict and to come up with sustainable, long-term solutions.

In addition, AJAR is also conducting research to find effective ways of listening to the concerns of women in communities threatened by large scale corporate land acquisition.

The facilitator from Semarang was leading a visit to the Semarang Pendem Fortress which was used as a prison for political prisoners during the 1965 incident. This visit was part of the City Tour program on violent sites in Semarang in the Humanity program. 1 December 2019.

Myanmar

Linking women survivors across ethnic groups

Very few organizations bring together women survivors from different ethnic and religious groups. Through spaces AJAR creates, survivors from diverse groups share experiences, build trust, learn to build community-based psycho-social support groups and discover ways of working together to heal, record truth and seek justice. Many reported that these activities were their first encounter with women from other ethnic backgrounds. This exposure builds solidarity as a foundation for collective healing and for advocacy efforts to secure peace, human rights and justice.

AJAR's *Unlearning Impunity* approach combines participatory action research (PAR), empowerment, healing and action for change. More than 200 women survivors participated in workshops, trainings and survivor exchanges, and 250 more took part in awareness raising events. Participants developed solidarity, built awareness of psycho-social issues and took action by reaching out to other survivors or speaking out on national and international platforms.

AJAR works with four core partners to empower women victims, while building a national victims' movement. In Northern Shan State, the organization worked with the Ta'ang Women's Organization (TWO) and the Kachin Women's Association of Thailand (KWAT) to build support groups. In Karen State, the Karen Women's Organization worked to expand support circles for women through six workshops. The Vimutti Women's Organization trained former women political

prisoners and their relatives in psycho-social support, traveling long distances to help political prisoners in remote locations in central Myanmar.

In June, AJAR and partners held an event in Yangon to mark the International Day in Support of Torture Survivors. The well-attended event featured speeches, testimonies, screenings and performances, all streamed live on Facebook and accompanied by a parallel event in the conflict area of northern Shan State.

In November, the 4th Annual Gathering of Survivors took place in Mandalay with 42 Karen, Burmese, Ta'ang and Kachin participants completing a five-day program focused on learning, sharing testimonies, healing and identifying opportunities for action.



🕒 Women survivors of human rights violations from different ethnic and religious backgrounds came together in November for the 5th Annual Gathering of Survivors.

Solomon Islands

Commission on Conflict Prevention and Victims' Rights

For the past decade, AJAR staff have engaged in the transition from conflict to peace in the Solomon Islands. In the early 2000s, the country was racked by an ethnic-based conflict resulting in militia groups breaking into the national armoury and stealing weapons, before breaking into the treasury and forcing the government to resign at gunpoint. Eventually regional peacekeeping forces led by Australian security forces (RAMSI)⁷ restored order.

AJAR has been involved in supporting the process of reconciliation, justice and peace, working with both the government and civil society. AJAR's President, Patrick Burgess, met with the Prime Minister and provided substantial technical assistance, working with senior government officials, tribal leaders, minority groups, women and youth, to construct a new draft policy creating a Commission for Conflict Prevention and Victims' Rights. Consultations on a parallel policy that will assist in the long-term peaceful reintegration of the armed groups has commenced.

In addition, AJAR assisted the Solomon Islands Government by writing a shorter illustrated summary of the official 1,200-page report of the Solomon Islands

Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This plain language summary ensures that this important work, which recorded violations, analysed root causes and made comprehensive recommendations, is accessible to government, civil society, universities and schools.



🕒 AJAR President Patrick Burgess posing with participants after consultations for the new Commission on Conflict Prevention and Victims Rights in the Solomon Islands.

⁷RAMSI – Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands

Sri Lanka

Building peace

As part of the Transitional Justice Asia Network or TJAN, AJAR has been working with the Suriya Women's Group in the eastern part of Batticaloa. Suriya's former Executive Director, Sarala Emmanuel, summarised the challenges and collaborative work below:

"In 2019, we saw the terrible attacks on Christian churches in Colombo and Batticaloa, as well as hotels in Colombo. On the 21st of April, in the aftermath of the Easter Attacks, there were outbreaks of communal violence and hatred against the Muslim community in different parts of the country.

This hatred particularly targeted Muslim women who wore the abaya. As local peace activists, we have been visiting and supporting those families who are trying to live with their loss after the Easter Attacks, as well as supporting families whose loved ones have been arrested under the terrible Prevention of Terrorism Act on suspicion of involvement in the attacks.

In this context, as community peace activists, we have to imagine new strategies of working. One of these strategies which we adopted in June is working with women in local government on how to promote co-existence in their constituencies. On an intensive seven-day training program, we worked with close to 30 women politicians from different political parties, different ethnic communities, speaking different languages and coming from the east and north-west of Sri Lanka. Through AJAR they got to know about processes of community level truth-sharing from East Timor and saw examples of remembering war time atrocities and what they, as local leaders, could do to make this process dignified and healing. With the possibility of state-led processes coming to a standstill, continuing community-led peace building initiatives becomes even more crucial."



🌀 Kurunegala women planting a tree as a gift to Batticaloa Women's Group as a symbol of remembrance. This joint-program has given a space for dialogue from diverse ethnic and religious groups to build common understanding on their histories.

Timor-Leste

'Stolen Children' – building acceptance and tolerance across religions

During the 24-year conflict, thousands of children were taken from their families by members of the Indonesian security forces to be resettled in various parts of Indonesia. AJAR's program works in both countries, one team locating the 'stolen children' in Indonesia and the other searching for their families in Timor-Leste and organising reunions. Often parents believed their children had died and, for more than 30 years, many had been placing flowers on 'symbolic' graves.

AJAR's efforts to ensure the victims are found and reunited with their families are intended to address ongoing human rights violations, by encouraging healing for the 'stolen children' and their families. The program contributes to reconciliation efforts of both nations,

allowing them to confront the truth. Other countries have learned from this example, recognising and addressing the problem of children taken during conflict.

An additional dimension to these reunions is religious tolerance – many survivors have new names and religions, requiring them and their families to practice tolerance and accept different beliefs and customs.

Since 2015, AJAR, along with partners in both countries, has traced more than 140 'stolen children', and has reunited 80 with their families. Timor-Leste's Country Director, José Luis de Oliveira, noted, "both countries share the obligation to do something to repair this past wrong."

"These reunions are a benchmark of democracy for bilateral relations between Indonesia and Timor-Leste. With the cooperation of all parties, these reunions have occurred several times before and must be continued... This program is a strong motivating force. I understand that finding each individual, one at a time, in various locations is very difficult."

Francisco Guterres, President of Timor-Leste



 Linu, a stolen children, with his family, standing beside his father's grave in Same, Timor-Leste. His father died in 1993 when Linu was in Indonesia.

School for young activists

AJAR's 'Human Rights and Social Justice School for Young Changemakers' enrolled its first 65 students in 2018. Participants conducted community projects over the Christmas break, before graduating in February 2019. Some graduates formed networks to share information with young people in rural areas, while almost half continued to the intermediate level. A second batch of 45 students enrolled in September.

AJAR organised an exchange between young people from Timor-Leste, Indonesia's West Timor province and Australia, to coincide with the 20th anniversary of the

referendum on independence. Starting with a visit to a refugee camp in West Timor, young people from both sides of the Timor border learned about the history of the conflict and its impact on people.

In August, a second exchange took place with the same participants, but this time with additional young people from Australia. During a workshop at the Centro Nacional Chega! and site visits around Dili and Liquiça, participants found common ground on which to build strong, long-term relationships. These activities help develop and embed cordial relations across borders.



Students of AJAR Timor-Leste's 'Human Rights and Social Justice School for Young Changemakers' class of 2019. Started in 2017, the school provided opportunities for young people to learn about human rights and engage meaningfully with social issues through social media activism and community action.



Participants of Youth Exchange between 10 East Timorese, 10 West Timorese, and 7 Australian. They were invited to attend an international workshop and exchange held at the Centro Nacional Chega! (a Timor-Leste institution mandated to follow up with the recommendations of the nation's truth commission) and memorial sites around Dili).

AJAR's Timor-Leste Director honored

One of the highlights of the year was the bestowal of the Sergio Vieira de Mello Award on AJAR's Jose Luis Oliveira in recognition of more than two decades of human rights work. President Francisco Guterres presented the award on Human Rights Day, noting:



"This citizen has proven to us all that he is consistent in what he does, and this has been proven through his actions. For many years now, he hasn't changed the course of his work away from human rights issues...This human rights activist has shown many times his bravery to speak out and defend what he feels is right and just."

LEARNING CENTER



Nasrin Akter from Bangladesh, talking about AJAR and the Liberation War Museum's work with Rohingya women refugees in Cox's Bazaar to create a quilt of hope and dreams based on their life stories, with young human rights defenders from Indonesia at our learning center.

A key element of AJAR's mandate is to empower those working on the ground in contexts where mass violations have taken place, to help make their work more effective. An important part of this work is facilitating an increase of comparative knowledge, strategies and lessons learned from other countries, and building networks so that learning and collaboration continues into the future.

For this purpose, AJAR operates a full-time residential Learning Center in Bali, a geographically strategic site for many to gather, discuss and learn. The Center accommodates up to 30 participants and boasts two dedicated training rooms, audio visual equipment and various 'break-out' spaces. Many human rights defenders and survivors have attended multiple trainings and discussions at the Learning Center.

AJAR uses the space to provide regular trainings on topics important to building accountable and tolerant societies, as well as individual events tailored for specific needs.

Trainings, workshops, seminars, discussion groups

AJAR conducted its bi-annual course on Foundations for Peace. These courses are an introduction to human rights and transitional justice, focusing on the Asian context.

To convey a commitment to empower survivors in post-conflict and transitional contexts, AJAR held its annual Training of Trainers. Participants from seven countries learned participatory methodologies for working with victims of gender-based violations and torture, and were introduced to AJAR's innovative "Stone and Flowers" methodology and training manuals.

"I learned that non-formal education can have a strong impact on healing trauma and informing the victims of their rights. I like what a speaker said about creating the conditions for transformation, but it's the victims who empower themselves. Not us."

Participant in the Foundation for Peace course



 Women in HIV/AIDS and Violence Against Women in Papua participatory action research exercised 'stone and flower' tool. By using this method, participants are asked to put stone (to symbolize negative feelings) and flowers (to symbolize positive feelings) to each aspect of their life (Truth, Justice, Recovery and Healing). The action research was held in Merauke, Papua, in June 2019.

FORWARD PLANS

Given the ongoing challenges to achieve justice and respect for human rights, the increase of intolerance and hatred and the shrinking civic space in the region, AJAR remains convinced that building social movements that demand accountability remains of fundamental importance. Governments, the private sector and society in general must be held to account for their actions.

In line with the UN's Sustainable Development Goal No. 16 "to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels", the pursuit of accountability must become a social movement that provides the foundation for a just society. A broad range of tools, including legal measures, advocacy efforts, education initiatives, south/south and south/north linkages and modern communication strategies, need to be used in the struggle against impunity.

For the coming three years (2020-2022), AJAR's goal will be to continue working towards building just and accountable societies, free from impunity by:

1. Upgrading AJAR's technical capacity to deliver virtual trainings, produce remote popular education materials and digitalize reports and testimonies;
2. Working with survivors, their organizations and communities, by putting them at the center of its work to seek redress for violations, to learn from experience and to put in place mechanisms to ensure these violations are not repeated;
3. Collaborating and building solidarity with like-minded individuals from civil society and state institutions to address identified human rights issues;
4. Closely monitoring and analyzing AJAR's plans and approaches ensuring the organization continues to make effective contributions for sustainable change;
5. Speaking truth to power in order to unveil or uncover human rights violations;
6. Creating learning and knowledge opportunities through south/south and south/north exchanges;
7. Engaging women and young people as change agents using innovative ways of working;
8. Investing in building AJAR's capacity, and the capacity of its local partners, to develop joint plans and ways of working for greater impact and sustainability; and
9. Increasingly working with government agencies and international mechanisms, improving linkages between grassroots movements, regional voices and institutions.

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS

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Governments

Australian Embassy Timor-Leste
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Canada
Embassy of Ireland
Embassy of Switzerland
Norwegian Embassy
Government of Timor-Leste

Foundations and NGOs

American Jewish World Service (AJWS)
Amnesty International UK
Bread for the World
Foundation for a Just Society
Global Campus of Human Rights
Hivos Southeast Asia
International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (ICSC)
International Development Research Centre (IDRC)
Misereor
Norwegian Human Rights Fund
Oak Foundation
Open Society Foundations
Sigrid Rausing Trust
The Fund for Global Human Rights
Tifa Foundation

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Regional

Advocacy Forum, Nepal
Alternative Law Groups (ALG), Philippines
American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative, USA
Amnesty International, UK
Center for Study of Violence and Reconciliation, South Africa
Chega! for Us Association (ACbit), Timor-Leste
Commission for the Disappeared and Victims of Violence (KontraS), Aceh, Indonesia
Cross Cultural Foundation (CrCF), Thailand
Global Campus of Human Rights, Italy
Global Initiative for Justice, Truth and Reconciliation (GIJTR)
Transitional Justice Asia Network (TJAN)
International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), USA
International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (ICSC), USA
International Commission for Jurists, Switzerland
Liberation War Museum, Bangladesh
National Centre for Chega! (CNC), Timor-Leste
Network for Human Rights Documentation–Burma (ND–Burma)
Sekolah Multimedia untuk Semua (SkolMus), Indonesia
Suriya Women's Development Centre, Sri Lanka
Truth and Reconciliation Commission (KKR) Aceh, Indonesia
This Play, Indonesia

Myanmar

Kachin Women's Association Thailand (KWAT)
Karen Women's Organization (KWO)
Network for Human Rights Documentation–Burma (ND–Burma)
Reparations Working Group (RWG)
Ta'ang Women's Organization (TWO)
Vimutti Women's Organization (VWO)
Women's League of Burma (WLB)

Indonesia

Advocacy Institute for Women's Care (eL_AdPPer), Merauke
Amnesty International Indonesia
Coalition of Justice and Truth (KKPK)
The Coalition of Civil Society Organizations in Papua (KOMASI Papua)
Commission for the Disappeared and Victims of Violence (KontraS), Aceh, Jakarta, Sulawesi, Surabaya
East Indonesian Women's Network (JPIT), Kupang
Forum of Human Rights Education and Struggle (Fopperham)
Foundation of Legal Aid Association of Indonesia (YLBHI), Jakarta
Humi Inane Foundation, Wamena
Indonesian Association of the Family of the Disappeared (IKOHI)
Indonesian Consortium of Human Rights Lecturers (SEPAHAM)
Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI)
Indonesian Trauma Testimony Project (ITTP)
Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Institute of Creativity for Humanity (LKK)
Institute of Human Rights Studies and Advocacy (ELSHAM), Papua
Jayapura Support Group
Joint Home of Papua Advocacy (Honai Bersama Advokasi Papua)
Katane Support Group
Labarik Lakon Community
Legal Aid Institute (LBH), Banda Aceh, Bandung, Jakarta, Papua
National Commission of Human Rights (Komnas HAM)
National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan)
Papuan Women's Working Group (PWG)
Peace and Justice Secretariat, Bishop's Office of Merauke (SKP Keuskupan Agung Merauke), Papua
Peace, Justice and the Integrity of Creation Unit, Evangelical Christian Church of Papua
(KPKC Gereja Kristen Injili di Tanah Papua)
PUSAKA Foundation, Jakarta
Socio-economic Development for Victims of Conflict (PASKA), Aceh
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Timor-Leste

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Belun
Cabinet of the President of the Republic
Cabinet of the Prime Minister
Chega! for Us Association (ACbit)
Coalition for Diversity and Action Foundation (Fundasaun CODIVA)
Forum for Women's Communication (Fokupers)
Fundasaun Mahein
HATUTAN
Human Rights Advisory Unit (UADU)
Human Rights Defenders Network (RDDU)
International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
International Office of Migration (IOM)
Judicial System Monitoring Programme (JSMP)
Land Network (Rede ba Rai)
Legal Association for Women and Children (ALFELA)
Ministry of Education
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Home Affairs

Ministry of Justice
Ministry of Social Solidarity
National Association of Victims (AVKP)
National Centre for Chega! (CNC)
National University of Timor Lorosa'e (UNTL)
NGO Forum of Timor-Leste (FONGTIL)
Office of the Provedor for Human Rights and Justice (PDHJ)
Political Prisoners' Association (ASEPOL)
Psychosocial Recovery and Development East Timor (PRADET)
La'o Hamutuk
Luta Hamutuk
Timor-Leste Association for People with Disabilities (ADTL)
Timor-Leste Association for People with Eye Disabilities (AHDMTL)
Timor-Leste Red Cross (CVTL)
Timor-Leste Students' Movement
University of Peace (UNPAZ)
Women's Network (Rede Feto)

Governance

AJAR's Governing Board is responsible for guiding the policy work of AJAR and for the governance of the organization. This includes providing a focused and informed voice on matters of policy in Indonesia and internationally, providing leadership and strategic direction in relation to policy and operations; oversight and monitoring of the policies and operations of AJAR; and making decisions on governance and finance matters in the best interests of AJAR.

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People trapped in cycles of war and political violence experience mass human rights violations, that can break their communities, their countries, and themselves.





ASIA JUSTICE AND RIGHTS

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