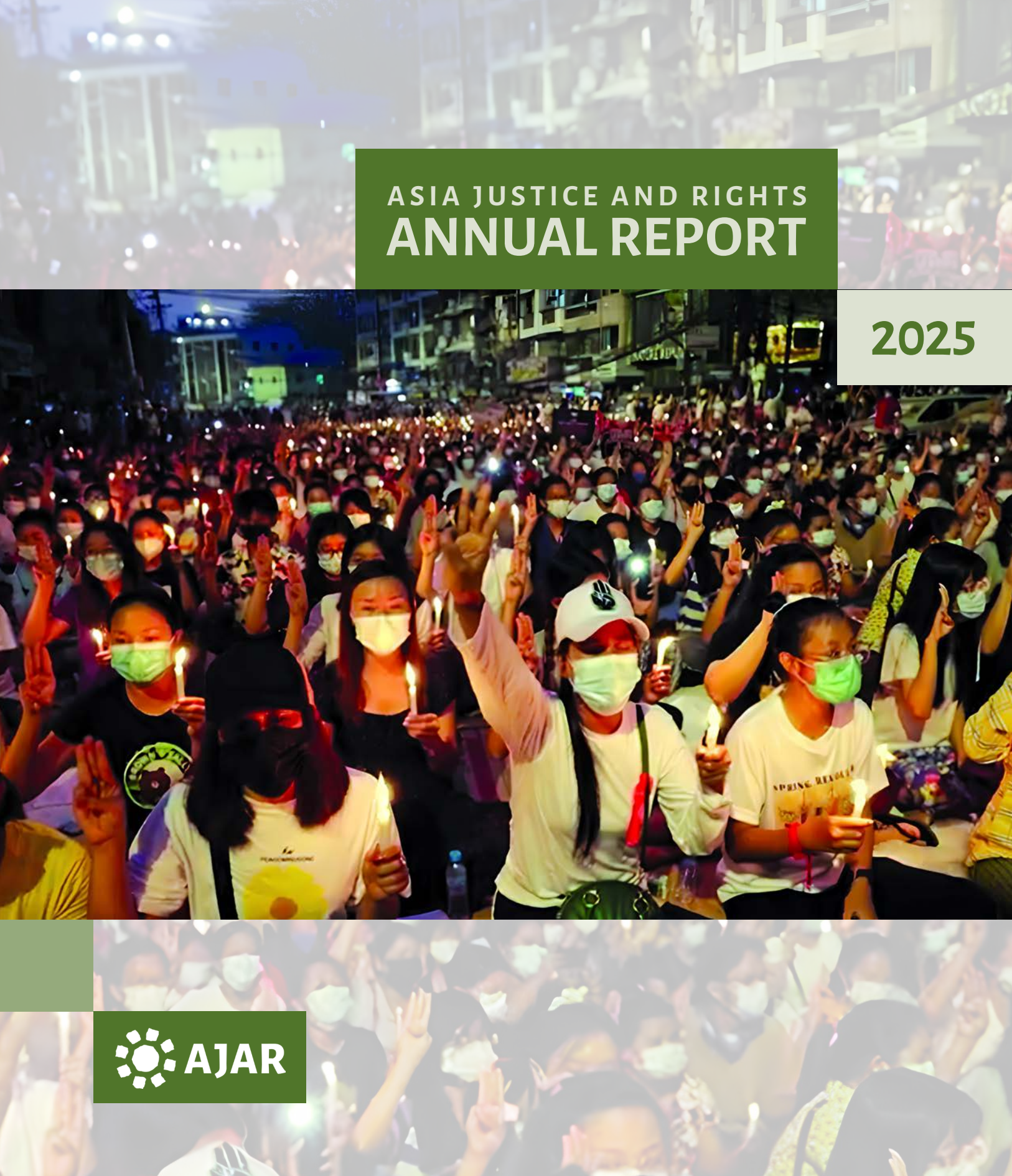




ASIA JUSTICE AND RIGHTS ANNUAL REPORT

2025



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

Annual Report © Asia Justice and Rights 2026

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Cover image: Thousands of Burmese protest against the violent takeover of the country's government by the military junta, calling for a return to democracy, justice, and respect for human rights.

Introduction

Reflecting on a year of recognition, resilience and renewal

Despite a year marked by deepening global and regional crises, AJAR found recognition, resilience and renewal in 2025.

In May, AJAR was awarded the Gwangju Prize for Human Rights, not only for its work on human rights, but also in recognition of the courage and resilience of survivors, activists and grassroots communities from around Asia, who stood up to gratuitous acts of violence often tolerated by cultures of impunity. The prize was awarded in Gwangju, a city inextricably linked to sacrifice and struggle, which provided a vivid reminder that working for justice never takes place in isolation, but is forged through lived experience, remembrance and solidarity that traverses borders.

“This recognition was not the culmination of our work, but a call for action — to deepen our efforts, to forge even stronger alliances and to ensure that the ideals of human rights and democracy remain relevant and alive.” — Galuh Wandita, Executive Director, AJAR

At the same time, 2025 unfolded against a backdrop of shrinking civic space, increasing authoritarianism and the systematic undermining of widely recognised human rights. Across the region, authoritarian regimes operated with increasing confidence and impunity, their actions unchecked and even upheld by weakened democratic institutions. International law, once a universal moral compass, is now under threat, either completely ignored or selectively applied.

For human rights defenders, this situation had consequences, manifested by increased surveillance and criminalisation, with unfair trials, frequent burnout and further isolation. In different contexts, ranging from armed conflict and forced displacement, to climate breakdown and environmental destruction, it demanded answers to difficult questions like: how to sustain movements when pathways to accountability are blocked; how to protect defenders while remaining effective; or how to remain relevant in the face of intersecting crises.

In responding to these questions, AJAR is constantly reflecting on its role and adapting to ever changing circumstances. We are increasingly convinced that justice, human rights for all and sustainable environments are not discrete agendas, but intersect and interconnect. Communities living with legacies of mass violence are often the same communities forcibly evicted to make way for extractive industries, and most vulnerable to climate change. The struggle for human rights in this environment requires radical new approaches, grounded in reality and sharply focused on long-term goals of sustainability and resilience.

Throughout 2025, AJAR remained committed to working alongside survivors of mass atrocities and defenders of human rights, keeping truth, accountability and dignity alive, even when progress felt painfully slow and uneven. This annual report reflects our commitment to honesty over optimism and solidarity over spectacle, as we resolutely keep working for justice for all.

Who are we?

The AJAR Alliance

The AJAR Alliance (or just AJAR) formalises a collaboration between three legally registered entities in Indonesia, Timor-Leste and Australia, working together with a shared vision and mission, and subscribing to common goals and values. Each organisation has its own governance structure, ensuring transparency and accountability, while jointly developing strategies and closely coordinating learning and advocacy efforts. Through this alliance, AJAR combines strong local leadership with regional solidarity, enabling survivor-centred, locally-led justice efforts to be amplified and sustained at national, regional and global levels, especially in the face of shrinking civic and democratic space.

Our shared vision

AJAR works to support survivors and communities affected by mass human rights violations in order to break cycles of violence and impunity. We believe that sustainable peace can only be achieved when truth is acknowledged, dignity restored and accountability achieved.

Our work is grounded in the understanding that justice is not delivered solely through courts or similar institutions, but is built over time, by strengthening relationships of trust, supporting community action, nurturing memory and giving agency to those most affected by violence. AJAR was founded on the lived experiences of those who struggled for freedom in Indonesia and Timor-Leste, and it continues to draw strength from regional solidarity and shared histories of resistance. The alliance works across multiple countries and contexts, with teams and partners based in Indonesia, Timor-Leste, Myanmar, Bangladesh and Australia, and with broader regional and international partnerships.

Our regional presence allows AJAR to respond to a diverse set of interconnected challenges — from post-conflict injustices and reparations in Timor-Leste, to democratic backsliding and youth mobilisation in Indonesia, from struggling human rights defenders in Myanmar, to empowered Rohingya survivors in Bangladesh. At the same time, our work in Australia supports regional advocacy efforts, international engagement strategies and cross-border solidarity initiatives.

While each context is distinct, they are linked by common patterns — unresolved incidents of past violence, entrenched cultures of impunity and shrinking civic space — while communities struggle to survive in the midst of political and environmental turmoil and upheaval.

Our approach

AJAR's methodology is participatory, survivor-centred and resilience-focused. Over the course of the year, we worked with survivors, not as beneficiaries but as agents of change, supporting them to shape their own agendas, tell their own stories and define what justice means in their own lives. Our programs prioritised safe spaces for collective healing, community organising and developing advocacy strategies, recognising that resilience and accountability are deeply interconnected.

For AJAR, resilience is not only about endurance, but it is also about rebuilding trust, sustaining collective action and creating conditions in which communities can both imagine, and work towards, a better world, without violence and free from impunity.

Theory of Change



A theory of change is the process or steps required that result in making a positive difference to people's lives. AJAR's vision is to build just and accountable societies, free from impunity. To achieve this, a broad-based and holistic approach is implemented.

Put simply, AJAR's theory of change follows four steps, or building blocks:

1. By focusing on a specific issue, like stopping violence against women and girls, for example, AJAR will support activities that promote awareness and understanding, by engaging the general public on the subject, and garnering their support to stop violence against women and girls;
2. With the public's support secure, AJAR will develop the capacity of selected individuals and organisations to equip them to effectively advocate for an end to violence against women and girls;
3. This is followed by activities that build social capital, meaning embedding this knowledge and understanding in the community, and building a constituency of likeminded individuals and organisations who will demand a change to the status quo; and
4. Finally, engaging policy-makers and legislators, or those who hold the levers of power, to use their influence to pass laws and regulations that will put a permanent end to violence against women and girls.

Initiatives & Networks

TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE ASIA NETWORK



Global Learning Hub for Transitional Justice and Reconciliation

Transitional Justice Asia Network (TJAN)

AJAR continued hosting the Transitional Justice Asia Network — a regional network established four years ago, with the goal of increasing the capacity of Asian experts to fight for truth, justice, and human rights. This year, TJAN members from nine countries (Indonesia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Bangladesh, Nepal, and South Korea) participated in a series of online training and discussions.

Global Action Against Mass Atrocity Crimes (GAAMAC)

GAAMAC is an inclusive network created in 2013 by states, civil society organisations, and academic institutions with the support of the United Nations. It works collaboratively to provide a platform for the prevention of mass atrocities (genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing). GAAMAC assists interested states in operationalising the prevention of mass atrocities at the national level through information-sharing, enhancing links among and between states, civil society and academia, and peer-to-peer support.

The Global Learning Hub for Transitional Justice and Reconciliation

AJAR joined the initiative of the Berghof Foundation and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, in collaboration with partners from Germany and across the world. The Hub seeks to strengthen partnerships and to advance the policy and practice of transitional justice through dialogue and mutual learning, practice-oriented knowledge generation, capacity development, and advice.

2025 at a Glance

In 2025, AJAR conducted **156** activities and **51** products in at least **8** countries in Asia and the Pacific, involving a total of **8,903** participants, with **5,156 (58%)** of the participants being women and non-binary. The activities were spread in many forms, like training and workshops, advocacy and networking, exchange learning, research and documentation, and public campaigns and events. The report, publication, and news of the activities have been exposed to **13,091** people.

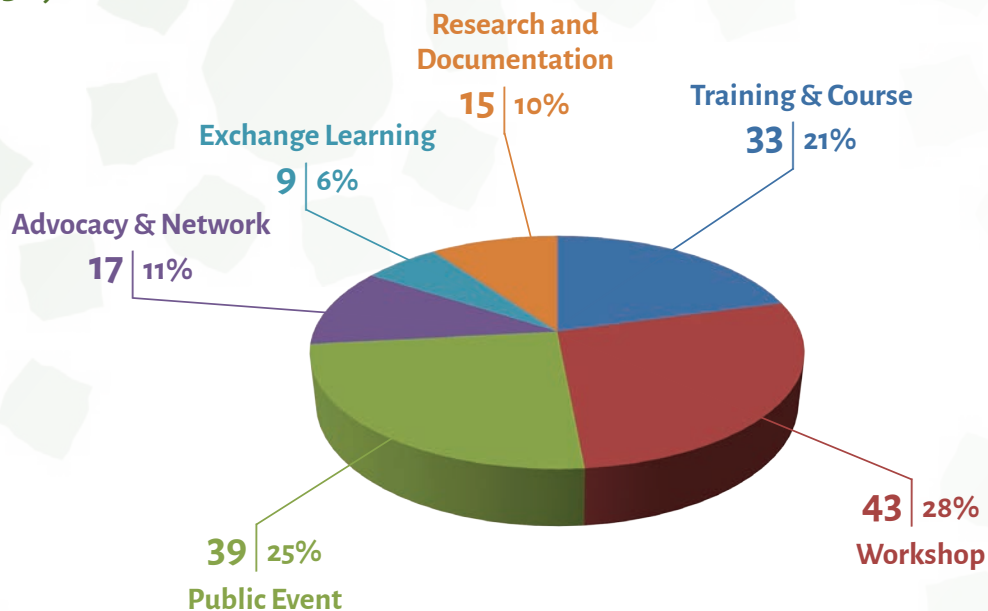
A total of **76** activities of training and workshops participated by **2,067** people, with **1,223** of them being women and non-binary, focused on the issues of human rights, transitional justice, human rights defenders' protection and care, as well as reparations for women survivors and children born of war.

While advocacy and network, with a total of **17** activities, were conducted by consultancy and engagement with **606** policy makers and experts, focused on the rule of law, truth and reparations, peacebuilding, and human rights enforcement in Southeast Asian countries through regional mechanisms.

AJAR also commenced **39** public events and campaigns, including discussion forums, photo exhibitions, film screenings, digital campaigns, craftwork and art produced by refugees and victims. This series of events involved **4,709** people, focused on increasing awareness and motivation towards action to respond to the situation in Burma, where people live under the brutal occupation of the military junta and led to people fleeing and being displaced, as well as portraying the civil society initiatives related to the excessive power of the military in Papua and other contexts of severe violations. The campaigns also promoted the resilience stories of the Rohingya refugees, women survivors, children born of war, and the youth movement who urged to end the junta. During 2025, a total of **28** online campaigns were launched and resulted **697,596** online engagements.

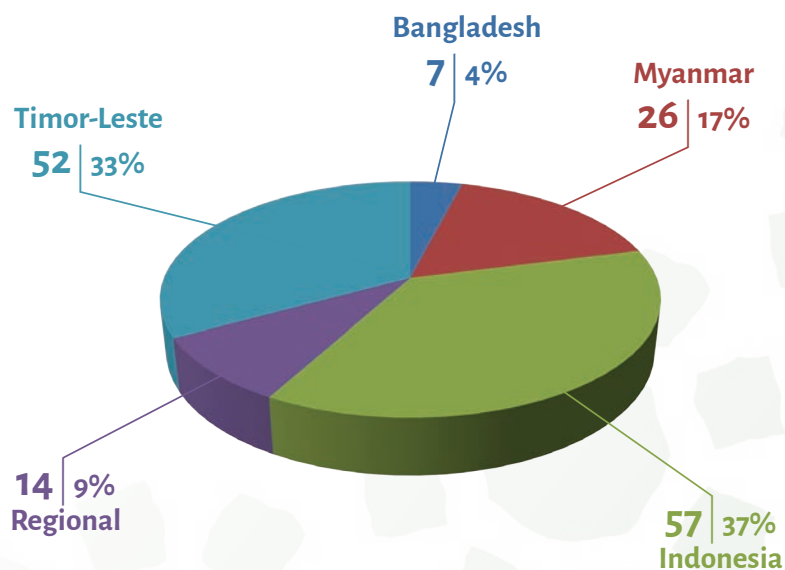
Activity by Type

(Total 156)



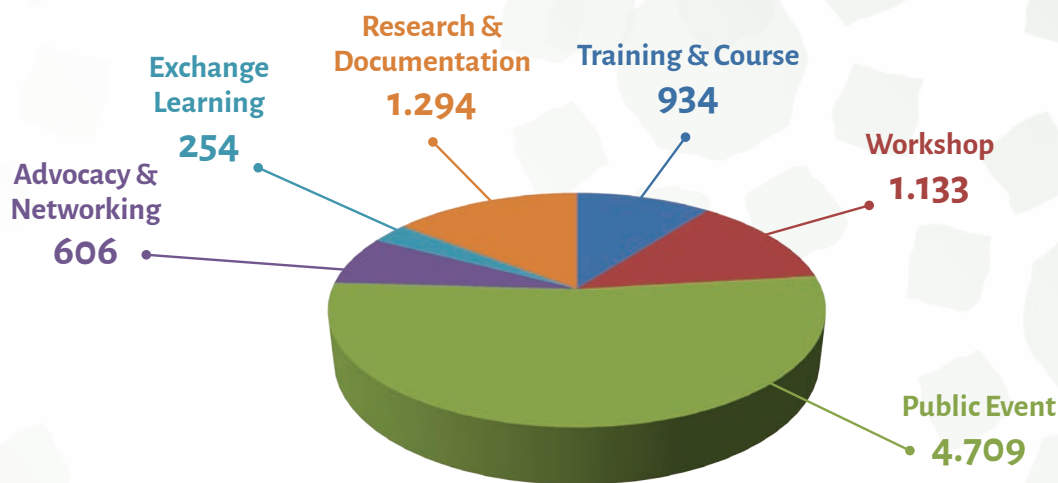
Activity by Country

(Total 156)



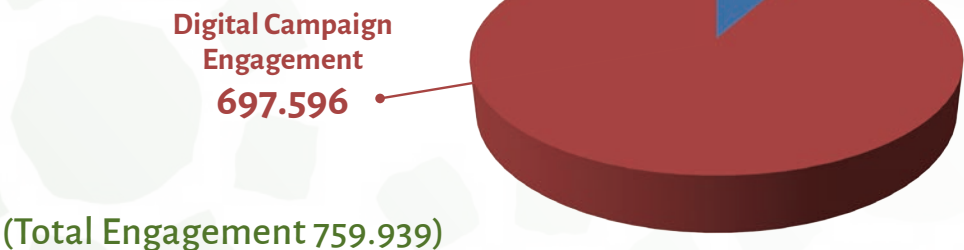
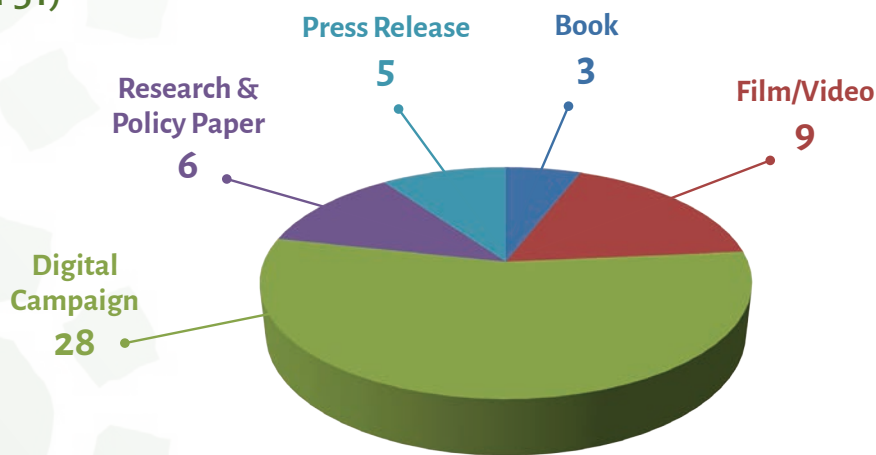
Participant by Activity

(Total 8930)



Product

(Total 51)



(Total Engagement 759.939)

Key moments through the year



Galuh Wandita and Patrick Burgess deliver acceptance remarks during the 2025 Gwangju Prize for Human Rights Award Ceremony, organized by the May 18 Memorial Foundation on 18 May 2025.

1. Recognition and learning

"In Gwangju, we were reminded that justice is not sustained by institutions alone, but by people — by survivors, families, educators and young people who carry forward memory, even when accountability comes slowly." — AJAR reflections, Gwangju, May 2025

In May in Korea, AJAR was honoured with the Gwangju Prize for Human Rights, awarded by the May 18 Memorial Foundation in recognition of our solidarity with survivors and human rights defenders across Asia and the Pacific. The impact of this moment was profound and went far beyond the celebration itself.

AJAR's delegation, represented by Galuh Wandita and Patrick Burgess, and accompanied by Timor-Leste's Jose Luis de Oliveira and Indonesia's Kania Mamonto, was deeply moved by the experience – meeting survivor groups, educators, civic leaders and youth groups who carry forward the legacy and lessons of the May 18 Democratic Uprising. Through exchanges and shared memories, we were reminded that rights movements survive not only through advocacy and campaigning, but because of everyday acts of resilience, community building and inter-generational solidarity. What was most striking was how memory becomes a living force for justice — in classrooms, public spaces and community rituals — shaping democratic aspirations long after the end of the conflict.

The experience deepened our conviction that recognition must be accompanied by reciprocal learning, and that global solidarity is strengthened when we listen and reflect, and bring lessons home to the communities we work alongside.

Lessons from Gwangju

- Memory as resistance: keeping truth alive through education and storytelling preserves dignity and fuels movements for accountability;
- Collective care matters: resilience grows when people nurture each other daily, across generations, and not just in moments of crisis;
- Shared struggles, shared strategies: the struggles in Gwangju resonate deeply with the struggles in Timor-Leste, Myanmar, Indonesia and elsewhere; and
- Recognition inspires action: the Gwangju prize strengthened our resolve, and renewed our determination, to advance the cause of justice for all with humility and purpose.

2. Resilience under pressure

Across Asia and the Pacific, 2025 was marked by shrinking civic space, intensified surveillance and a growing backlash against those who spoke out. Women, young people and minorities were often at the forefront of this backlash, and were the first

to face intimidation, criminalisation and exclusion. However, despite these challenges, 2025 was a year of resilience.

Meet Amandina Maria Helena da Silva, a young human rights defender

"We must let human rights flow through us like blood. When human rights are violated, it is like our own body being stabbed. This makes us stronger and more determined to stand up and fight against social injustices that harms us."

Amandina's journey began with AJAR's Human Rights School in Timor-Leste, from where she graduated in 2021. Inspired by the program, she joined AJAR as a Survivor Support Coordinator, accompanying women survivors of past conflicts, and ensuring their voices remained central to the design of reparations and advocacy work.



Apart from working with AJAR, Amandina is also the Coordinator of the Centre for Strengthening Human Rights Movements, and is involved in several feminist groups, leading discussions and actions on social justice with a focus on human rights.

In 2025, she played a key role in a three-day protest that successfully challenged a parliamentary decision to buy expensive vehicles for members of parliament and to provide lifetime pensions for government officials. Her leadership illustrated the quiet, yet powerful, ways young human rights defenders are advancing justice, accountability and gender equality in Timor-Leste.

Young human rights defenders continued to organise, document, create and speak out through zines, films, music, art, community discussions and regional exchanges. Women defenders maintained quiet, but powerful forms of leadership, by ensuring survivor collectives were sustained, by accompanying one another through legal and social processes and by insisting on care as a political tool.

AJAR prioritises collective care and resilience alongside its advocacy efforts. Rather than isolating defenders, we invested in networks — peer support, regional learning spaces and survivor-led initiatives — that reduced risk by strengthening solidarity. In Timor-Leste, Indonesia, Myanmar, Bangladesh and across the region, small victories mattered — survivors received interim reparations, youth-led initiatives reclaimed public memory, women defenders shaped reconciliation conversations and communities refused to be ignored or side-lined.

In an environment designed to exhaust and fragment movements for change, AJAR chose to stay connected, believing that resilience should not be endured individually, but shared collectively.

“Listening to others’ stories encouraged me to continue what I was doing”, commented a participant from Papua during a retreat for human rights defenders at AJAR’s Learning Centre, while others nodded in agreement. Some had travelled from afar, and carried stories from remote communities where justice work is both urgent and dangerous. However, despite different languages and backgrounds, participants shared one thing in common — they never gave in to complacency. Working alongside survivors of violence and injustice, they felt they had to be strong, that burnout was private and that rest felt self-indulgent.

The connections AJAR built, shaped up in quiet but powerful ways. In September and November, a number of human rights defenders gathered at AJAR’s Learning Centre. They spoke of fear, of court summons, of online harassment and of the weight of accompanying survivors through traumatic ordeals. They also laughed, drew maps of their bodies and discovered, sometimes to their surprise, how they themselves had managed to survive. One participant described finding a new family, while another described how her old wounds had been transformed into new resolve. The retreat was not an escape from reality, but a return to it — steadier, more resilient and less isolated.

“I felt light and rested, and happy and excited to share my experiences. The theme of the retreat was achieved in a very relaxed and enjoyable manner. It was reflective, connected and healing all at the same time. Our joys and pains are intertwined with our contexts. Likewise, our struggles are interconnected — from the physical to the spiritual. Some wounds are too deep to be healed right away, but understanding where our pain comes from, and that we are not alone, makes the burden lighter and easier to bear.” - Sister Imapa from Philippines

Across countries, repressive laws emerged as a shared concern. In Sri Lanka, anti-terrorism legislation was used to target activists. In Thailand, lèse-majesté laws criminalised dissenters. In Indonesia, the Electronic Information and Transactions Law was applied to restrict online expression. In Myanmar and Timor-Leste, weak infrastructure hampered coordination efforts. Racism and discrimination undermined defenders from minority backgrounds, like Papuans and the Rohingya. Legal pressures intersected with non-judicial threats, and extradition agreements made it harder for defenders to seek refuge abroad. Different strategies were compared, like ways to document abuses when phones are monitored or ways to engage communities when fear spreads.

In a recorded message, the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, Mary Lawlor, reminded participants that threats are escalating globally, and that self-care is also an act of resistance. The gathering became both a sanctuary for respite and a space to strategize — tending to the heart, while sharpening the mind.



Participants in AJAR’s retreat for human rights defenders from across Asia gathered in a circle, holding hands as they reflected on and shared their experiences in an atmosphere of solidarity and mutual support.

While developing an online learning hub with partners from Myanmar, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Timor-Leste, Sri Lanka and Thailand, something enduring was created – a referral system and a shared database of resources for human rights defenders. The objective was simple: to ensure that defenders know who to turn to in times of need, for example in the face of legal threats, digital attacks or the urgent need to relocate.

This new solidarity did not disappear when participants returned home. On their return, they remained connected through a chat group, sharing stories and maintaining a sense of solidarity and camaraderie across borders and time zones.

3. Human rights and the seismic shift in the world order

Over the course of the year, the rapidly changing world order directly affected human rights work in Asia and the Pacific, with country priorities moving away from justice and accountability towards a much greater emphasis on national and regional security. The effects of these shifts were immediate, with diminished resources for sustained human rights work, increased vulnerabilities for defenders and refugees and significantly reduced space for advocacy work at both national

and regional levels. For many partners and communities this was not an abstract shift in emphasis, but a lived reality.

AJAR responded to these shifts by remaining grounded and nimble. We strengthened our regional collaborations and focused on work that could be sustained, even as traditional funding sources became less reliable. This included survivor-led documentation, community education, advocacy linked to international mechanisms and creative public engagements through storytelling, film, art and culture. Rather than downsizing and retreating, AJAR used the year to rethink ways to sustain its justice work, for example by emphasizing legitimacy, trust and local ownership over scale. Our response to the new reality was to deepen roots, reinforce alliances and insist that human rights are not optional, even when politically inconvenient.

For Myanmar, this seismic shift was not just an abstract idea, but something people experienced first-hand. In March, a devastating earthquake struck central Myanmar, killing thousands and displacing millions in the midst of a violent armed conflict that had already weakened public services and restricted the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Many of the worst-affected communities, including religious minorities, women-led households and families of political prisoners, were left with little or no access to the scant aid that was available.



Working with local organizations and community networks, AJAR supported the distribution of food, health kits, and temporary shelter assistance, while contributing to efforts to rebuild homes in affected communities.

In response, AJAR shifted into emergency humanitarian mode, while staying true to its community-led principles. Working with trusted local partners and networks, like HAWARI, Tri-Star Humanitarian Aid, the Centre for Ah Nyar Studies, as well as community rescue teams and local youth networks, AJAR supported food distribution, emergency health services, temporary shelter, debris clearance and home reconstruction.

This included support for a community clinic serving marginalized families, nutrition and hygiene assistance for women and children and practical support for households that had lost everything. In this context of insecurity, these partnerships made it possible to reach communities that would otherwise have been overlooked and left behind. This was a good example of how mutual trust enabled AJAR to rapidly shift gears and stand with communities in their moment of greatest need.

The emphasis on public engagement and community voice was reflected by providing partners with support in order to design advocacy initiatives on human rights work. Following a workshop in Mae Sot, selected participants were provided with small grants to turn their advocacy ideas into practice. One such initiative was a human rights and freedom of religion or belief campaign, which combined an audio drama competition with online activities in federal schools inside Myanmar. The organizers were able to plan, implement and scale the campaign well beyond their expectations, reaching hundreds of participants across different communities in conflict-affected areas.

Importantly, in Karen State, one of the most conflict-affected areas in Myanmar, AJAR, in partnership with the Karen Human Rights Group, tested a new model for delivering transitional justice training. The training took place in an area where access for outsiders was extremely limited with serious challenges,



The exhibition *Stitches of Strength*, co-hosted with Chiang Mai University, featured an embroidered quilt created by Rohingya refugee women in Bangladesh, reflecting their experiences, resilience, and hopes for the future.

At the same time, AJAR maintained its profile and focus on justice through public engagements and survivor-centred documentation work. In December, it co-hosted the 'Stitches of Strength' quilt exhibition with Chiang Mai University. The exhibition showcased embroidery created by Rohingya women refugees in Bangladesh, as a way of visual truth-telling and creative documentation.

like security concerns and travel restrictions. In addition, the lack of internet coverage made online training impossible.

To overcome these obstacles, AJAR developed a series of context-specific transitional justice videos with Burmese subtitles. This made it possible to deliver meaningful capacity building trainings in a setting usually out of reach, and

opened new possibilities for reaching other remote, conflict-affected communities.

These experiences illustrated how a major shift in the global landscape manifested in Myanmar. Not only because of diminishing resources and shrinking civic space, but because of deeper uncertainties and greater risks. AJAR responded to these shifts by staying close to communities, working with trusted partners and adapting our ways of working to new realities. In a time of political and humanitarian shocks, this work reaffirmed a simple principle: even as the ground shifts, human rights remain vital, and community trust, solidarity and local leadership are fundamental for sustaining that principle.



Community members affected by the conflict in Myanmar participated in a Transitional Justice training, receiving updates on the evolving context and engaging with training materials translated into their local languages.

Countries and Themes

1. Bangladesh: Working with Rohingya survivors facing an existential crisis

AJAR carried on working with Rohingya survivors in an increasingly fragile environment, marked by deepening shortages of essentials and growing uncertainties about the future. For many, particularly survivors of sexual violence, women and young people, daily life was defined by ever limited choices and heightened vulnerabilities.



A Rohingya woman survivor displays her quilt during a workshop, where participants reflected on their experiences in the refugee camps and their aspirations for resilience and recovery.

Against this backdrop, AJAR prioritised survivor-centred initiatives designed to strengthen agency over dependency. Working alongside Rohingya women, young people and community organisers, we supported safe spaces for dialogue, storytelling and collective reflections, creating environments where survivors felt comfortable enough to articulate their experiences, risks and aspirations in their own words. These initiatives were not only about documenting experiences, but about maintaining dignity and reaffirming survivors as rights-holders, even in conditions of prolonged hardship and displacement.

Community learning circles

AJAR organized multiple workshops in the Rohingya refugee camps. The workshops highlighted the fears, hopes and daily struggles faced by refugees, including the devastating impact of the cancellation of US foreign aid, serious safety concerns and other significant challenges. The workshops were designed to help participants reflect on their lives, raise awareness of their struggles and strengthen their sense of

community and resilience, providing space to share personal stories, express dreams and find support from within their communities. Participants shared deeply personal stories:

I hope that the ICC, ICJ and other international courts will support us Rohingya people, and help us regain our rights from the Myanmar government. After spending eight years as refugees in Bangladesh camps, I feel exhausted by the lack of proper food, education opportunities and medical care. Violence, human trafficking, domestic abuse and illness are increasing, and many people are suffering or dying without treatment. I do not want to continue living or to die in a refugee camp — I want to return to my home in Arakan and live with dignity. God willing, one day we will succeed — Shomshud Duha

Meet Solim, an influential Rohingya community leader



Solim's life changed after he graduated from Class 10 in Myanmar. In 2017, Solim and his family became refugees. The journey to Bangladesh was extremely hard, and it caused his wife to become partially paralyzed. While she is now getting treatment, she has not yet fully recovered. Solim feels the pain of seeing her struggle while taking care of their three children. Despite these difficulties, Solim became an influential leader in his community. He joined AJAR and started advocating to improve his community's situation. He

organized workshops at AJAR's learning centre, where he invited people to learn about justice and other important topics related to their struggles. Solim's work helped many obtain new hope and knowledge, showing that even in tough times you can make a difference.

"No matter what happens tomorrow or what our future will hold, I want to work for my community and for the next generation who know nothing about Myanmar or our culture. I want to help them remember our land, our culture and our dignity as Rohingya." — Solim

ICC consultation

AJAR and the ICC held consultations with Rohingya refugees, with separate sessions for women. Participants shared experiences of violence in Myanmar, and the challenges of living in the refugee camps in Bangladesh, while the ICC provided updates on their ongoing investigations. The consultations took place in a safe environment, and highlighted the importance of including survivor voices in efforts to bring justice and hold perpetrators to account.

"Despite all the challenges we face, we still hold hope for the future, especially when we think about our homeland. We dream of a day when we can return to our own land, where we can live with dignity, peace and freedom. We long for a time when we can rebuild our lives and our country, and ensure that future generations do not have to experience the hardships we have faced. Our hope remains strong, even in the face of difficulties, because we believe that one-day we will be able to go back to our homeland, where we truly belong" — a participant at the ICC consultation

Human Rights Defender workshop

Young people have a unique ability to mobilize communities and create positive change. They are often at the forefront of social movements, and use their abilities to build bridges by promoting intercultural and interfaith dialogue. In order to strengthen the capacity of young human rights defenders, AJAR organized a two-month training course to develop an understanding of basic transitional justice principles and accountability mechanisms. It aimed to help both Bangladeshi and Rohingya youth better understand the Rohingya issue from a human rights perspective. At the end of the course, the participants created a poster demanding justice and peace, and illustrating the solidarity felt by all — both host and refugee communities.

"It was a meaningful journey for me. Each session felt like crossing a new bridge towards understanding justice, listening to survivors and learning how stories can become tools for change. The discussions on transitional justice, particularly in the context of the Rohingya crisis, were not only informative but deeply moving. They reminded me that defending rights is not only about laws and policies, but also about listening, feeling and standing alongside people. The chance to learn, reflect and create alongside others was inspiring, and gave me the courage to believe that small actions can build major bridges. This experience has given me the confidence and determination to keep walking the path of human rights. I hope more young voices will join, and continue building these bridges for justice." — Setu Pal, a young Bangladeshi professional

"My experience as a participant in the course has been incredibly enlightening. As a young Rohingya who has personally witnessed injustice, this course improved my understanding of human rights, and ways to defend them, that is strategic, peaceful and meaningful. I now feel more confident speaking up for others whose rights are often forgotten, as well as for my community and for myself. I was reminded that awareness is the first step toward change, and action strengthens it." — a young Rohingya human rights defender

Spotlight: Transitional justice and democratic reform — Dhaka, 2025



In July, **Bangladesh hosted a three-day Transitional Justice and Civil Society Exchange** in Dhaka, bringing together more than **80 human rights and civil society activists and academics** to chart a common path for justice and democratic reform, in the midst of an historic political transition. The initiative was organised by AJAR, in partnership with **Actions for National Transformation, Advancement and Reforms or ANTAR**, and with support from the **Global Hub on Transitional Justice and Reconciliation**.

Participants explored the core pillars of transitional justice – truth-seeking, prosecutions, reparations and institutional reforms – and worked to develop a **roadmap for Bangladesh's transition to democracy**. Drawing on insights and field experiences from South Africa, Colombia, Thailand and Indonesia, the exchange emphasised *survivor-centred and locally-led approaches* to justice in post-conflict and transitional settings.

A highlight of the programme was its bridging of **civil society actors, survivors of atrocities and interim government representatives**, signalling a growing momentum for truth and accountability, integral to Bangladesh's democratic reform discourse. Participants gained practical tools and frameworks to advance justice work, grounded in local realities and regional solidarity.

"Transitional justice is not a technical exercise — it is a moral and political commitment to those who have lived through violence and exclusion." — Exchange participant

2. Indonesia and Timor-Leste: defending memory, resisting impunity, strengthening survivor leadership

AJAR's work in Indonesia and Timor-Leste focused on defending historical memory, challenging impunity and advancing survivor-led approaches to truth, justice and reparations. In both countries, efforts to dilute, rewrite or ignore the past continued to pose serious risks to accountability and democratic space.

In Indonesia, AJAR supported survivors, families of the disappeared, female human rights defenders and young activists working to keep histories of violence alive through public education, research, advocacy and other creative forms of engagement. Particular emphasis was placed on amplifying survivor voices in national and international spaces, countering narratives that prioritise reconciliation over truth or accountability.

While in Timor-Leste, AJAR continued to accompany survivor collectives and community initiatives that centred lived experience and mutual support. Survivor-led reparation efforts, memory projects and youth engagement, demonstrated how justice can be rooted in local leadership, even when formal mechanisms are incomplete or limited in scope. Women survivors, including members of survivor networks, played a central role in shaping these processes, linking past violations to present struggles for dignity, care and recognition.

The Indonesia and Timor-Leste experiences reaffirmed a core lesson of AJAR's work, being defending memory is not about the past alone, but also about protecting the conditions for justice in the present, and ensuring that survivors remain at the heart of the way society reckons with violence.

The 'Bukae' program and youth empowerment

Through the Bukae Program, we supported survivors in all 13 municipalities across Timor-Leste. By the end of the year, 455 women survivors and children born of war had received



different kinds of support, including education grants, small business assistance, urgent needs support, house rehabilitation costs, as well as health care and psychological support. Economic empowerment remained an important part of the program, and more than 140 survivors joined business and financial literacy trainings to help them manage small businesses and improve their incomes. In parallel with Bukae, we continued the *Livru Memoria* project, which documented 454 survivor stories. We facilitated consultations, and directly verified stories with survivors, and obtained their full consent to share those stories. This helped preserve memory, and gave survivors space to reclaim their voices.

In addition to Bukae, which focused on women survivors of past conflict, we engaged with young human rights defenders to strengthen youth leadership and advocacy efforts. Throughout the year, young defenders were involved in a number of activities, including

community actions, public dialogues and house rehabilitations for survivors, as well as drafting petitions and advocacy articles. As part of their advocacy work, young defenders wrote 15 articles focusing on women survivors of past conflict and children born of war. One article, written by a young woman activist, was published in a national newspaper, as well as in *Diligente* and *Jornal Independente*. This helped raise public awareness, and encouraged decision-makers to pay more attention to the issues of reparations, justice and accountability.

Pirilampu

Pirilampu, meaning 'firefly' in English, made big strides during the Bukae Program. The organization achieved legal recognition, which strengthened its ability to advocate for survivors on their own behalf. Throughout the year, *Pirilampu* leaders participated in policy discussions, including consultations on the draft Reparations Law, and meetings with parliamentary women's groups to discuss issues affecting them.



Members of Pirilampu, a women survivors' organization, whose public engagement has contributed to broader recognition of survivors' experiences and support for truth-telling and reparations initiatives.

This growing public recognition validated survivor experiences and strengthened efforts towards, and support for, truth-telling, healing and institutional support. Over 700 members of the public, including local officials, signed a petition demanding formal recognition of their status as survivors, or as children born of war. By raising their profile, *Pirilampu* ensured that women survivors' voices were heard, respected and included in Timor-Leste's ongoing discussions on transitional justice.

"The main achievement of our existence is that more and more survivors are gaining the courage to speak out" - Maria Isabel, President of Pirilampu

Spotlight: Survivor-led reparations at Women, Peace and Security Week

AJAR was invited to share lessons from **Timor-Leste's Bukae initiative** on "addressing conflict-related sexual violence throughout the peace continuum" at a side-event of the **Women, Peace and Security Week at the UN in New York**. Discussions brought together survivors, civil society leaders, UN officials and peacebuilders, all committed to advancing accountability for conflict-related sexual violence.

AJAR presented lessons from the **Bukae Project** — an interim reparative measure co-designed with women survivors of conflict-related sexual violence in Timor-Leste, which reached more than 450 survivors and their children born of rape. Bukae combines material support with collective organising, recognition and survivor leadership. The initiative showed that reparations are not only about compensation, but about restoring dignity, rebuilding trust and enabling survivors to shape justice processes on their own terms.

The UN session highlighted how survivor-led initiatives, like Bukae, contribute to peacebuilding across the *entire peace continuum*, linking care, recognition, accountability and prevention, and why such initiatives must be central to global Women, Peace and Security agendas.

"Survivors are not passive recipients of assistance, but active agents of justice, peace, and social repair." — Galuh Wandita, WPS Week side-event, October 2025

Biak community learning circle and retreat

In Sorong, AJAR, together with the Papuan Women's Working Group and a survivor-led-group called DEBAR, facilitated a week-long healing retreat for women survivors of the Biak massacre. The retreat created a safe space where survivors were able to share experiences of violence without stigma, reconnect with their repressed memories and rebuild a collective sense of solidarity.

Through creative and reflective practices, including body mapping, art work and meditation, participants traced the impact of violence, while imagining the future they hoped to build. Healing was approached not individually, but collectively, and was designed to restore dignity, strengthen relationships and sustain long-term commitments to change. Participants had mixed emotions, but overall felt relief that they were able to shape new meaning from their life experiences.

"The reality we are facing now is a deep sense of sadness and grief for the unresolved cases following a long struggle. But there is also happiness from a feeling of solidarity with survivors and our shared struggle. There is hope for independence, freedom and self-reliance." — Women survivor

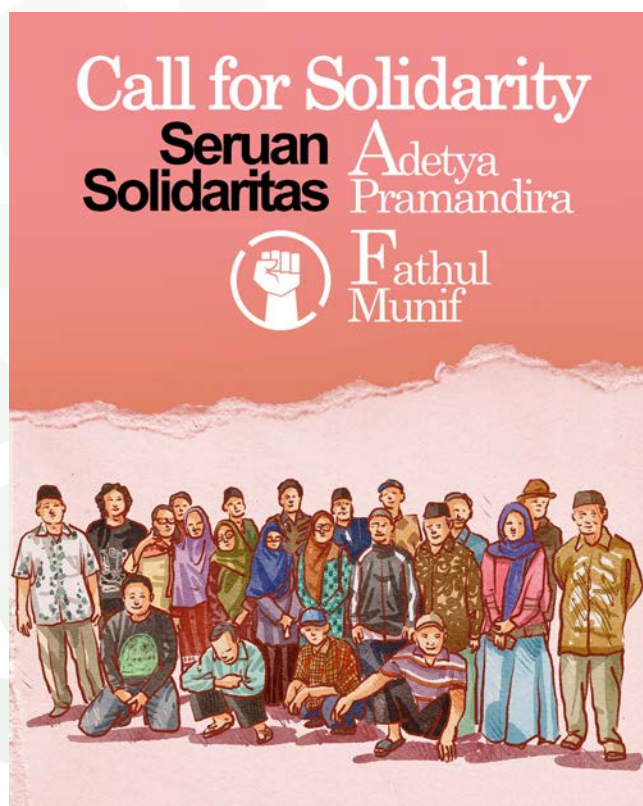
Bersemay Sekeibun youth collective

Bersemay Sekeibun is a youth collective based in Semarang, that envisions a world without impunity, and believes impunity can be dismantled in Indonesia. This vision is reflected in their work, which involves documenting and archiving survivor stories, building intergenerational learning through archives, art exhibitions, public discussions and other creative initiatives, in collaboration with communities, collectives and likeminded organizations.

'Semai' is an Indonesian word for 'seedling', symbolizing young and hopeful life that requires nurturing before it bears fruit. AJAR has been with Bersemay Sekeibun since the beginning. The founders are former AJAR facilitators, equipped with participatory methods and survivor-centred approaches. Since it was founded in 2020, Bersemay Sekeibun has grown its membership from diverse backgrounds, including workers, researchers, artists, musicians and students.

In collaboration with AJAR's youth fellowship programme, the collective is campaigning on issues affecting young people beyond Java, including refugees in West Timor, the stolen children of Timor-Leste (now adults living in Indonesia) and young human rights defenders in Papua. Through these efforts, they are fostering solidarity and critical awareness among young people, challenging Java-centric perspectives and helping build bridges linking Indonesia's diverse realities.

Since the 2025 youth-led protests in major cities in Indonesia, Bersemai Sekebun has played a key role in caring for young people impacted by arbitrary arrests, criminalization of political expression and general repression. Using tools learned from AJAR, Bersemai Sekebun has been organizing grassroots efforts to provide collective care for young people in Central Java, reducing their isolation and fear, rebuilding solidarity and providing urgent care for those unfairly detained.



Bersemai Sekebun has begun creating knowledge products, and is establishing new branches in Salatiga, engaging young people in documenting survivor stories. The organization has

begun seeking alternative sources of funding, including participating in community funding initiatives by Amnesty, KontraS, Civicus and others, and is no longer wholly dependent on AJAR.

Meet Marsen Sinaga, a member of the Steering Committee of AJAR's Youth Fellowship Program

Marsen Sinaga studied philosophy at Driyarkara School of Philosophy, law at the University of Indonesia and has a master's in Peace and Conflict Studies from Pannasastra University in Cambodia. Alongside his work as a freelance facilitator, he runs Studio Tanya, an independent school of critical thinking in Yogyakarta.



Marsen has been a facilitator for social analysis, and a writing mentor at AJAR's Community Learning Centre. He is constantly questioning the direction of human rights movements, emphasizing that advocacy should not be limited to addressing formal judicial systems, but must also centre on empowering survivors to reclaim their dignity as human beings.

In this context, daily communal practices, such as gardening, running community reading spaces and living collectively, are understood as efforts to counteract the toxic effects of impunity. He believes human rights work should prioritize people over ideas, meaning listening and attending to the immediate concerns of survivors are more important than big ideas about judicial processes that demand state responsibility.

"When I came to understand AJAR through its approach and participatory methods, I felt that it truly recognized and acknowledged how the impact of impunity penetrates deeply into the minds and bodies of survivors. Therefore, in the process of unlearning impunity, our whole bodies are invited to unpack our concerns through participatory documentation practices, such as Stone and Flower."

— Marsen Sinaga

Financial Overview

Category	Amount (USD)	Percentage
Staff and Consultancies	385.256,61	18%
Operational	160.077,98	8%
Travels	127.494,36	6%
Training/ workshop	203.711,28	10%
Advocacy and campaign	228.269,88	11%
Support for local initiatives	996.314,45	47%
Total	2.101.124,56	100%

*unaudited

Acknowledgments

AJAR's work in 2025 was made possible by the courage, trust and generosity of many.

First and foremost, we thank the survivors and affected communities who share their stories, insights and leadership, often at great personal risk, and who remind us that justice is not abstract, but lived. We are deeply grateful to the women, young people, families of the disappeared and refugees, who have shaped AJAR's work through their wisdom, resilience and dignity.

We also acknowledge our partners and allies across the region and beyond – grassroots organisations, survivor collectives, human rights defenders, researchers, artists and advocates – who walk alongside us in complex and often hostile environments. Our work is sustained by these relationships of mutual trust and solidarity.

We thank our donors for their support for our long-term, community-based justice work, especially in a global climate where such commitments are increasingly rare. These valued partnerships enable AJAR to remain true and accountable to the survivors who we serve.

Finally, we recognise AJAR's staff and volunteers in Timor-Leste, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Australia and across the region. Their care, creativity and commitment, often under difficult conditions, is the backbone of this organisation. AJAR works collectively with people who believe deeply in our shared vision, and in each other.

Looking Forward – 2026 and Beyond

AJAR enters 2026 with clarity of purpose. We will continue defending safe spaces for human rights in increasingly hostile and restrictive environments, by advancing survivor-led approaches to accountability and by strengthening solidarity across Asia and the Pacific. We will continue to centre those most affected by violence and the abuse of power, not as mere beneficiaries, but as leaders and political actors shaping their own futures.

At the same time, AJAR recognises the need to adapt. The shifting global landscape demands new approaches to sustainability, including diversified funding, innovative partnerships and different models that protect the independence and integrity of justice work. We will continue to learn, experiment and remain accountable, while always being guided by, and rooted in, our values and our relationships with grassroots communities.

Thank You

AJAR's work would not have been possible without the generous support of our donors. Their support has enabled us to work for meaningful change for the disempowered. On behalf of all of us at AJAR, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to the following donors for their loyal and steadfast support in 2025:

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- Royal Norwegian Embassy, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs

Foundation and NGOs

- Berghof Foundation
- Bread for the World (Brot für die Welt)
- Global Survivors Fund (GSF)
- Misereor
- Oak Foundation
- Open Society Foundation (OSF)
- Thousand Currents
- Tifa Foundation
- Urgent Action Fund (UAF)
- Women's World Day of Prayer (WWDP)

Staff and Board

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Ifdal Kasim, lawyer and former chair of Indonesia's national human rights commission (2008-2011)

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- Tati Krisnawaty, former commissioner of Indonesian National Commission on Violence Against Women, West Java
- Pdt. Dr. Mery Kolimon, Pastor, Evangelical Church of West Timor, Nusa Tenggara Timur
- Isna Marifa, environmental activist and writer, Jakarta
- Prihatin Asmidy, businesswoman, Jakarta
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- Samsidar, activist and member of Indonesia Women's Ulama Congress, Aceh

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- Dr. Jehan Perera, expert on reconciliation and transitional justice, Colombo
- Mandira Sharma, founder and executive director of the Advocacy Forum of Nepal, expert on transitional justice, combating torture, London/ Kathmandu

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- Muhammad Ibra Ramadhan, Data and Administration Assistant
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Indonesia

- Mulki Makmun, Country Manager
- Emmanuella Kania Mamonto, Deputy/Program Manager
- Sornica Ester Lily, Program Officer
- Julinta Moreng, Program Assistant
- Rudi Kogoya, Program Assistant
- Kelana Wisnu, Program Associate
- Mustofa, Office Assistant

Timor-Leste

- Jose Luis de Oliveira, Country Director
- Georgia Leyendekkers, Program Manager
- Virginia Manuela Genoveva, Office & Finance Manager
- Victoria Tomasia Miguel Maclo Costa, Monitoring & Evaluation Officer
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- Carmelita Maria Antonia Amaral, Finance Assistant
- Amandina Maria Helena da Silva, Survivors Support Coordinator
- Danilo Abilio Soares do Rêgo, Logistics Officer
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- Roberta Yolanda Imelda Soares Dias Fernandes, Program Assistant
- Januario de Araujo, Finance and Admin Assistant
- Cezario Cesar da Costa Hornay, Youth Outreach Officer
- Arminda Godinho Pereira, Youth Outreach Officer

Myanmar

In consideration of staff safety and security, names and detailed position information have been withheld.

Bangladesh

- Nasrin Akter, Program Lead/Program Coordinator
- Shakila Yesmin, Program Officer
- Sumaiya Bashar, Program Officer
- Pizuar Hossein, Reporting Specialist/Researcher

Volunteers & Interns

- Nick Dobrijevic, Australia
- Antony Murrell, Australia
- Chanmae Thiri, Myanmar
- Sophie Sukendro, United States
- Sofia Cabral Soares, Timor-Leste
- Abilio da Cunha Soares, Timor-Leste
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- Vitalio Claudio de Jesus, Timor-Leste
- Suzana E. F. Silva da Costa, Timor-Leste
- Filipio Marques de Jesus, Timor-Leste
- Damascena D. P. de Oliveira, Timor-Leste

How To Support Us

Every gift, regardless of size, plays a vital role in sustaining AJAR's work, and advancing our mission. You can contribute to AJAR in a number of ways. The organization is a registered non-profit organization in Indonesia, Timor-Leste and Australia, and has tax-deductible status in the following countries:

Australia

<https://asia-ajar.org/donate/>

In Australia, your donations of at least AU\$2 through this link are tax-deductible. AJAR is a member of the Australian Council for International Development or ACFID, and a Deductible Gift Recipient will be issued, as designated by the Australian Taxation Office.

USA

<https://www.every.org/asia-ajar>

In the United States, your donations through every.org are tax-deductible. AJAR partners with Myriad USA, a public charity organization with 501(c)(3) and 509(a)(1) status.

Other countries

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Donate through either:

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or

<https://kitabisa.com/campaign/stolenchildren>



AJAR works to rebuild communities
by championing justice for all and
empowering victims and society to
hold perpetrators to account



Indonesia

Jalan Tebet Utara III No. 7
Jakarta Selatan 12820 Indonesia Tel/Fax:
+62 21 835 5550

Timor-Leste

Rua Karketu Mota-Ain 08
Suco Motael, Dili Timor-Leste
Tel/Fax: +670 7723 7170

Australia

52 Raglan St,
Manly NSW 2095, Australia

AJAR Learning Centre

Jalan Pantai Berawa
Gang Sri Kahyangan No.1 Badung Bali
80361 Indonesia
Tel/Fax: +62 361 474 1462