

2008 Report on the Performance and Establishment of National Human Rights Institutions in Asia

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In 2007, the members of the Asian NGOs Network for National Human Rights Institutions (ANNI) undertook a project to assess the performance and effectiveness of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) in Asia. The outputs of this project are reports written by members and partners of the ANNI who have practical expertise in engaging with their respective NHRIs. Reports were also written by ANNI members and partners from countries that are still in the process of creating NHRIs. All of these reports have been compiled by the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM ASIA) as the coordinator of the ANNI.

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Foreword

The idea of establishing a network of Asian non governmental organisations and human rights defenders engaged with national human rights institutions (NHRIs) initially came about during the 1st Regional Consultation and Cooperation between NHRIs and NGOs in Asia, which was organised by the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM ASIA) and held in Bangkok, Thailand, from 30 November to 01 December 2006. After three days of rich discussions on experiences on this issue from all over Asia, the participants of the consultation made the collective decision to form the Asian NGOs Network on National Human Rights Institutions (ANNI). It was also decided during the consultation that FORUM ASIA would serve as the convener of the ANNI.

The ANNI covers the sub regions of South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Northeast Asia. The goal of ANNI is to help establish and develop accountable, independent, effective, and transparent national human rights institutions in Asia. National human rights institutions hold an important role in the promotion and protection of human rights in the region, considering the fact that Asia has yet to set up a human rights mechanism that would cover the region. National human rights institutions are the primary protection mechanisms for human rights defenders working on the ground. They also hold the potential of developing a regional jurisprudence on human rights that would conform to international human rights principles.

It is in this light that the ANNI pursues its advocacy work at the national, regional, and international levels, on issues regarding NHRIs. Major advocacy activities of the ANNI include lobby missions during the annual meetings of the Asia Pacific Forum on National Human Rights Institutions (APF), as well as engagement with the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights.

The ANNI also undertakes every year a collaborative research project on assessing the independence and effectiveness of NHRIs in Asia. It released its first publication in 2007, which was entitled *The Performance of National Human Rights Institutions in Asia 2006: Cooperation with NGOs and Relationship with Governments*. This report covered ten (10) countries in Asia: India, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, the Philippines, South Korea, Sri Lanka, and Thailand.

This book, *The 2008 ANNI Report: An Assessment of the Performance and Development of National Human Rights Institutions in Asia*, is the network's second installment and we are happy to note that this now covers fourteen (14) countries: Bangladesh, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, Philippines, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, and Japan.

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Four of the reports examine the current efforts being undertaken in the establishment of NHRIs in four countries in Asia, while the rest of the reports critically assess the performance of existing NHRIs in the region. The period of coverage of this report is from January to December 2007, with some additions of critical developments which occurred during the first quarter of 2008.

I would like extend our appreciation to all ANNI members, writers, and editors, who have worked hard to produce the reports. I would also like to thank the NHRIs in Asia, and all the other friends and partners of ANNI, who made this report possible through their cooperation, and sharing with their information, comments, and guidance. Finally, I would also like to thank the staff of the Human Rights Defenders Programme of FORUM ASIA for the excellent job in this book. With this report, the ANNI hopes to develop a stronger and more constructive relationship with NHRIs in the region. This report also underlines the deep and sincere commitment of ANNI to work with NHRIs in building a regional community devoted to the promotion and protection of human rights.

Subodh Pyakurel
Chairperson