ACTIVITY REPORT

REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON MONITORING AND DEFENDING FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

29 April - 01 May 2019
ibis Bangkok Riverside
Thailand
FORUM-ASIA's Regional Workshop on Monitoring and Defending Freedom of Expression was a three day workshop for young human rights defenders from FORUM-ASIA's members and partners in Cambodia, Indonesia, Mongolia, Myanmar, The Philippines, and Thailand. Sessions were designed to transfer soft skills on monitoring and documentation for more effective advocacy.

During the last day, participants were able to craft an advocacy plan with knowledge and skills learnt from the workshop.
Political Scenario Mapping
Participants were introduced to stakeholder mapping, where they identified allies and potential partners within the scope of their advocacy.

Monitoring and Documentation
Participants in this session learnt key principles of human rights monitoring and documentation, information gathering processes, as well as data analyses and ethical considerations in employing evidence-based advocacy.
Online Fact-Checking

New tools and websites were introduced for online fact-checking and news verification. Participants were able to determine first-hand if news sources were legitimate or a hoax.

Legal and Non-Legal Means of Advocacy

In this role-play session, participants took different characters ranging from concerned citizen, rebels, change agent, reformer, and power holder. Participants were able to present their ideas according to the roles they played at various stages of activism.
Gender Lens on Freedom of Expression Advocacy

Participants were able to examine how gender and social status of each individual affect power relations in a patriarchal system.

Utilising International Mechanisms for Freedom of Expression Advocacy

Various mechanisms of the United Nations (UN) system were explained to the participants, highlighting that the system can be utilised as a value added for their respective advocacies. It was followed by a success story presentation using Myanmar's case.
Utilising Regional Mechanisms for Freedom of Expression Advocacy

This session explained ASEAN’s structure and its human rights mechanisms namely AICHR and ACWC. The session highlighted that although there exist gaps in ASEAN’s human rights mechanisms, local civil society organisations should still strive to include in their strategies ASEAN human rights instruments.

Utilising National Mechanisms for Freedom of Expression Advocacy

This session outlined basic notions of national human rights institutions (NHRIs), their international standards, and accreditation system. Participants were encouraged to adapt their advocacy strategy according to the effectiveness of their respective NHRIs.
Non-traditional Advocacy Means
This session presented various case studies where the use of media and art intersect with human rights advocacy. This session pushed participants to have a conversation on how to engage with new media to craft effective human rights campaign.

Digital Security
This particular session reviewed participants’ basic knowledge on how to stay safe in online spaces. The session also introduced tools that young human rights defenders can utilise to be more cautious when doing freedom of expression advocacy work.
The last day provided ample time for participants to come up with a concrete advocacy plan for their respective countries. This planning session was followed by focused group discussions per country in preparation for an upcoming research on freedom of expression.
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FORUM-ASIA
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