Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network
Strategic Plan
2014-2018

MISSION STATEMENT

The Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN) aims to advance the rights of refugees and other people in need of protection[1] in the Asia Pacific region, through knowledge/resource sharing and outreach, mutual capacity strengthening and joint advocacy.

VISION

APRRN envisions a region in which all people in need of protection have equal and adequate access to assistance and protection, and to timely durable solutions as relevant. We envision a region in which States (including those outside the region), civil society, UNHCR, refugee community groups and other actors collaborate effectively towards a common purpose of protection with respect for their differentiated roles and responsibilities.

VALUES

APRRN as a network is committed to upholding the following values and principles:

- Using a rights-based approach
- The humanitarian principles of non-discrimination, impartiality, humanity, independence and accountability to affected populations
- The principle of “Do no harm”
- Building solidarity and collaboration amongst civil society actors in the Asia Pacific region
- Working responsibly and with respect, accountability and transparency
- Upholding the rights of all persons, in particular refugees, stateless persons and forcibly displaced persons, as outlined in:
  - The international refugee rights regime, which includes, inter alia, the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol
  - International human rights law
  - International humanitarian law
  - National and regional legislation
  - International customary law
CONTEXT

The Asia Pacific region is currently home to the largest population of refugees in the world and not only produces a large number of refugees but also hosts them and is the site of some of the worlds most acute and protracted refugee situations. The Asia Pacific is also home to large numbers of torture survivors, trafficked persons, internally displaced persons (IDPs), stateless persons, returnees, people displaced by conflict and other forms of human rights abuse, and other people in need of protection.

The Asia Pacific is characterised by low levels of accession to international refugee and human rights instruments and there is also a lack of domestic legal frameworks for the protection of refugees and displaced persons. The increasing deviation from international protection standards by countries in the region that have international commitments to refugee protection adds further complexities and challenges.

Only 20 out of the 45 countries located in these two regions are state parties to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (Refugee Convention) and/or its 1967 Protocol. The tendency of most states to avoid accession to the basic elements of the international legal protection framework indicates their resistance to fulfilling their international obligations to people in need of protection. This undermines the ability to obtain effective protection in host, transit and destination countries. As a consequence of this legal vacuum, refugees and other displaced persons are frequently subject to gross violations of their fundamental rights. They are constantly at risk of arrest and arbitrary detention, deportation, torture and Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV). In addition access to basic services such as food, housing, education and health are very limited. Growing xenophobia and negative perceptions of those fleeing persecution further compound the issue.

APRRN was formed due to the realisation that civil society in the region working with people in need of protection should collaborate and advance the rights of affected populations. Prior to the establishment of the Network, these groups worked in isolation in their own local contexts, with limited access to specialist training, technical resources, and key stakeholders related to advancing protection. At the heart of our work lies the belief that by strengthening national civil societies and building strong regional alliances, we can create together a better environment for people in need of protection region-wide. By coming together as a united Network we are able to share experiences, resources as well as expertise and build upon the work of each other. The Network also provides a platform for exchange of good practices, skill sharing, magnifying local and national concerns at the regional and international levels, sharpening advocacy and influencing policy at local, national, regional and international levels. APRRN further envisions being an effective force for the realisation of rights of people in need of protection through cooperation among civil society organisations and other relevant stakeholders such as governments, regional formations/bodies, UN agencies, research institutions, law firms as well as refugee communities themselves.
The APRRN Vision for Regional Protection encapsulates what APRRN believe could be achieved in the Asia-Pacific region within ten to twenty years in relation to refugees and other people in need of protection. This has been informed by extensive consultations with a range of stakeholders, underlining the spirit of partnership, collaboration, accountability and transparency which guides our work. The APRRN Vision for Regional Protection will be accompanied by a Plan of Action that sets out what various stakeholders need to do in order for the Vision to be realised and a Research and Consultation Framework to identify challenges, opportunities and good practices and guide research and further consultation. Together, these three documents comprise the APRRN Vision and Framework for Regional Protection. This APRRN strategic plan includes a four-year roll out of what APRRN needs to do to support achievement of the APRRN Vision for Regional Protection over the longer term. It also includes institutional goals for consolidating and strengthening our performance and resilience as a network.

APRRN aims to achieve the goals set out in this 4-year strategic plan through its three core pillars namely:
1. Knowledge/resource sharing and outreach
2. Mutual capacity strengthening
3. Joint advocacy

This will be supported and enhanced by the Enabling Foundation. APRRN will build on its demonstrated strengths particularly greater membership involvement in APRRN, a growing funding base, an engaged and active APRRN Steering Committee, a committed APRRN Secretariat, and membership which contributes to the development and strengthening of the network through sharing expertise, best practices, experiences and providing support particularly in terms of human resources and sometimes financial resources. However, APRRN will also have to address challenges which include fast changing geo-political environments which are often detrimental to protection, a shrinking and restricted funding environment, resource overstretch which includes both human and financial resources and increasing numbers of people in need of protection.

CORE PILLARS

1. Knowledge/resource sharing and outreach

Rationale:
A key strength of APRRN lies in the geographic reach and coverage of its membership. The network of experts, academics, refugee practitioners and refugee communities themselves have unparalleled access to the local level in many of the countries of the Asia Pacific. Meanwhile the overall regional and international support network provides an ideal support function to our members who are engaged in a diversity of activities from comprehensive service provision to advocacy. The Network can be called upon through existing communication channels, and because collaboration is the foundation and core value of the network, APRRN maintains positive working relationships with Governments, UNHCR Offices, civil society partners as well as refugee communities engaged in refugee protection work.
Knowledge here is viewed as the research, strategies, perspectives, talents, experience, and strengths of our members. Resources here are viewed as human and financial resources, infrastructure, contacts/connections, and in general each member’s unique skills and capacities.

The knowledge/resource sharing and outreach pillar aims to build on the existing work of APRRN members, and further strengthen this area through improved knowledge sharing throughout the network, as well as infusing new perspectives through outreach. Effective information sharing and exchange among existing/potential members as well as the public will be facilitated by the Working Groups and the Secretariat through the various APRRN communication channels. Under this pillar, outreach as well as awareness raising will be conducted with the aim of increasing APRRN’s visibility, raising awareness on refugee issues and fighting against growing xenophobia in the region. Through various research activities and information collection, APRRN will be in a better position to conduct advocacy activities and ensure that those are based on the needs of our members.

Strategies:

- Develop a stronger network, with members actively engaged, sharing information, best practices, strategies, and resources
- Develop APRRN membership in unrepresented countries and underrepresented countries
- Strengthen APRRN’s communications tools
- Maintain effective communication with members
- Share best practices, resources and strategies among members
- Facilitate face to face interaction between members, discussion on key priorities/joint actions and drafting of action plans
- Represent APRRN and refugee rights concerns in relevant national, regional and international fora
- Strengthen engagement with media
- Outreach to groups working on similar issues
- Strengthen the evidence base for APRRN’s activities through research activities

Outcomes:

- Building stronger working relationships and better cooperation/collaboration amongst APRRN members
- Development of clear action plans and joint strategies to key issues in the region
- APRRN members are enabled to participate in structuring and deciding collective courses of action as a Network
- Strengthened network by increased number of members from un- and underrepresented countries
- APRRN members enabled to share information and resources effectively and cost-efficiently
- Better visibility of APRRN and increased awareness of rights violations
- Strengthened evidence and identified needs for advocacy interventions

2. Mutual capacity strengthening
Rationale:
The practice of providing protection and assistance to individuals is something that takes place at the national and local level where refugees are located. Ultimately, therefore, there must be national and local ownership of refugee protection, harmonised within an international and regional framework. Given the increasing number of urban refugees, and the fact that they are largely dwelling side-by-side with local communities, it is clear that risk reduction and capacity strengthening at the national and local levels remain key priorities. Linkages with the many relevant sectors of the local community (such as hospitals, academic institutions, lawyers and law firms, landlords, municipalities, etc.) are key. APRRN strives to strengthen mutual capacity and increase members’ access to knowledge, resources, participation, and decision-making power, and to support their advocacy goals.

Strategies:

• Strengthen capacity of members to respond to key protection challenges (legal aid, advocacy, immigration detention, gender issues, mental health etc.)
• Strengthen partnerships with local universities
• Facilitate consultations on thematic issues
• Facilitate annual courses to train a new generation of refugee rights activists
• Support micro level trainings at the national level
• Identify further capacity building needs of members in the area of statelessness
• Facilitate exchange of resources via APRRN’s communications challenges
• Increase understanding and strengthen coping strategies and resiliency of urban refugees through research, consultations and pilot projects
• Strengthen opportunities and capacity of people in need of protection to advocate for themselves and become active partners of change

Outcomes:

• Increased capacity and development of skills, knowledge and resources in the areas of legal aid, immigration detention, refugee law, advocacy and fundraising
• Strengthened coping strategies of urban refugees
• Increased capacity and opportunities for people in need of protection to self-advocate for their rights

3. Joint advocacy

Rationale:
APRRN exists to advance the rights of refugees and those in need of protection. As a regional Network, APRRN gives a voice to members that may not otherwise be heard, and it amplifies the voice of its members on different levels. APRRN seeks to support the advocacy goals of its members towards the development of a regional protection framework that translates into meaningful protection in practice. The goal is national and local ownership of refugee protection, harmonised within a regional framework, that is consistent with international standards. APRRN seeks to support State responsibility, and
responsibility sharing among all relevant stakeholders, in an inclusive, transparent, and collaborative alliance. This involves engagement, collaboration and cooperation with a multitude of partners, institutions and stakeholders. At the national level, APRRN aims to strengthen local civil society actors and encourage the formation of national networks. Through this pillar we also aim to create spaces for advocacy with regional bodies such as the ASEAN and SAARC and the Bali Process among others. APRRN further aims to engage with a variety of other key stakeholders such as UNHCR, other UN agencies, donors and, importantly, governments. Under this pillar APRRN will also continuously monitor and influence bilateral and multilateral negotiations relating to a prospective regional protection framework and the accession to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees as well as its 1967 Protocol.

To coordinate, plan and evaluate these advocacy strategies, APRRN will hold sub-regional consultations, roundtables, and workshops throughout the year.

**Strategies:**

- Strengthen national level advocacy through roundtables and consultations
- Amplify concerns and voices of members on the regional and international level
- Take a more proactive approach in setting the agenda for regional protection mechanisms
- Create advocacy spaces at the regional and international level
- Monitor and respond to developments relating to refugee rights violations in the region
- Establish APRRN as a key stakeholder in refugee rights discourses and policy setting in the region and at the international level
- Take an inclusive, multi-stakeholder approach in our advocacy and continuously explore new partnerships

**Outcomes:**

- Advancement of legal rights and policy changes at the national, regional and international level
- Strengthened debate and engagement on regional protection
- Increased advocacy spaces for civil society to engage with key stakeholders
- Insertion of rights language in submissions to various regional bodies (ASEAN, SAPA, AICHR, SAARC)
- Increased recognition of APRRN as one of the key stakeholders in discourses on the rights of people in need of protection in the Asia Pacific region
- APRRN members working on the country level have access to UNHCR on an international/regional level as well as to other international stakeholders
- Voices of people in need of protection are represented and reflected in APRRN’s advocacy efforts
- Strengthened debate and engagement on statelessness
ENABLING FOUNDATION:

In order to achieve the 3 strategic pillars, the network will require a strong support structure that enables members of the network to achieve the goals set out in the pillars. This support structure is called the Enabling Foundation which includes dynamic leadership from the membership, an engaged and effective Steering Committee, an adequately resourced and supported Secretariat as well as Working Groups, robust governance structures, strong systems for quality accountability and efficiency, and adequate and sustainable funding.

1) Dynamic leadership
   • Involve and engage leadership by members through the working groups and Steering Committee.

2) Engaged and effective Steering Committee (SC)
   • Develop clear guidelines on roles and responsibilities of SC members
   • Organise annual planning retreat when funding allows
   • Strengthen SC’s capacity to undertake its role in governance, providing direction for APRRN and representing the network
   • Continue to strive for diversity on the SC
   • Evaluate all aspects of the SC and its efficiency
   • Explore professional development opportunities for SC members

3) Adequately resourced and supported Secretariat

Staffing:
   • Increase staff by two additional programme officers
   • Increase staff by one full time finance manager/accountant
   • Expand intern and volunteer programme
   • Review the salary and benefits with the aim to implement more attractive packages (subject to funding)

HR policy and compliance:
   • Further develop HR policy

Training for staff:
   • Explore training opportunities for staff

Staff evaluation:
   • Develop sound annual performance evaluation

Codes:
   • Finalise and adopt Codes of Good Conduct and Good Practice

4) Robust governance
• Consolidate and further develop governance procedures and policies
• Develop a comprehensive and strong constitution
• Have a strong structure and oversight system in place

5) Strong systems for quality, accountability and efficiency

Monitoring and Evaluation:
• Develop internal evaluation and monitoring framework
• Use an annual retreat to conduct evaluation
• Conduct external evaluation

Programme management system:
• Develop a comprehensive programme management system

Financial system:
• Strengthen the financial viability of APRRN and ensure compliance with legal obligations
• Review and improve accounting systems and methodology

Policy development and implementation:
• Develop framework for policy development and monitor implementation[JM2]

6) Adequate and sustainable funding:
• Increase funding annually
• Identify new potential funding sources
• Develop fundraising strategy in line with the strategic and operational plan

[1] People in need of protection is the umbrella phrase used by APRRN to refer to all categories of people who we have decided to include within the scope of our activities. It includes: refugees, asylum seekers, torture survivors and complainants, trafficked persons, internally displaced persons (IDPs), stateless persons and returnees. It includes people displaced by conflict, persecution and other forms of human rights abuse, and stateless persons in situ, who are in need of protection (but not in all cases international protection). We are mindful that the phrase ‘people in need of protection’ could be used to refer to far broader categories of people. Our intended meaning is as described here.