

ASIA PACIFIC REFUGEE RIGHTS NETWORK

STRATEGIC PLAN 2018 – 2022

About the Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network

Established in November 2008, the Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN) is a network of 350 civil society organisations and individuals covering 28 countries in the Asia Pacific region.¹ APRRN members are diverse, comprising service providers, human rights advocacy groups, research institutions, faith-based organisations, lawyers and law firms providing pro-bono legal aid, refugee community-based organisations (CBOs) and refugees themselves.

Mission

The Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN) aims to advance the rights of refugees and other people in need of protection in the Asia Pacific region.²

Vision

APRRN envisions a region in which the rights of refugees and other people in need of protection are fulfilled and where they have equal and adequate access to assistance and protection, and to timely durable solutions. 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 and rights with respect for their differentiated roles and responsibilities.

Values and Principles

APRRN is committed to the following values and principles:

1. Using a rights-based approach
2. Using a gender responsive and age and diversity sensitive approach
3. The humanitarian principles of non-discrimination, impartiality, humanity, independence and accountability to affected populations
4. The principle of “Do No Harm”
5. Building solidarity and collaboration amongst civil society actors in the Asia Pacific region
6. Working responsibly and with respect, accountability and transparency
7. Upholding the rights of all people in need of protection, as outlined in:
 - a. The international refugee rights regime, which includes, *inter alia*, the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol
 - b. International human rights law
 - c. International humanitarian law
 - d. Relevant national and regional instruments
 - e. International customary law

¹ As of November 2018.

² The term “people in need of protection” derives from [APRRN’s Vision for Regional Protection](#). It includes refugees, asylum seekers, torture survivors and complainants, trafficked persons, IDPs, stateless persons and returnees. In this document, APRRN hereafter uses “refugees” for ease of reading. However, our strategic plan extends to all people in need of protection as noted above.

The Context and APRRN's Strategic Direction

The Asia Pacific region hosts a significant number of refugees and is also the site of some of the world's most acute and protracted refugee situations. The region is largely characterised by a lack of protection for refugees, since the majority of countries do not have national laws addressing forced displacement, only 20 of the 45 countries in the Asia Pacific region are parties to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (Refugee Convention) and/or its 1967 Protocol, and there is no effective regional protection mechanism in place.³ As a result, refugees are often undocumented, denied the right to work and other fundamental rights, subject to immigration detention, and struggle to access basic services such as health and education. Discrimination, xenophobia, and a lack of awareness among local host communities compound the issues highlighted above.

In addition to the lack of effective protection in countries of asylum, the lack of available durable solutions as identified in international refugee law is a key problem in the Asia Pacific region. Resettlement is only available for a small percentage of the refugee population. Safe, dignified, voluntary repatriation remains elusive due to on-going persecution and conflict. Most host countries in Asia are also unwilling to consider local integration, despite undocumented migrants and refugees forming a large part of their workforce and economy, albeit as an often highly exploited human resource. As a result, refugees are often stuck in limbo for many years. Increasingly, refugees in the Asia Pacific region are found in urban contexts, which can pose a new set of challenges and opportunities compared to camps and other refugee warehousing arrangements. Worryingly, civil society and protection spaces across the region have been shrinking with an increase of push backs, disturbing bilateral agreements that undermine protection, low recognition rates for refugees, and xenophobia on the rise. Women in need of protection and refugee women and girls are affected in a differentiated manner. They are subjected to the same types of discrimination and to sex and gender-based violence, and other types of violence, in addition to the other challenges of exile.

At the local and national levels, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and CBOs are addressing many of the challenges mentioned above by playing an important role in refugee protection, advocacy, and the provision of services. However, they struggle in very difficult and opaque operational environments with limited resources and minimal access to technical support, specialised training, and other key support structures at the regional and international levels. In light of this lack of access, and the challenges facing refugees and others in need of protection in the Asia Pacific region, civil society organisations and individuals from across the region established APRRN in November 2008 and have since then continued to build a movement towards better protection, greater solidarity, and effective, rights-based, progressive change.

Since its inception, APRRN has been a platform for the exchange of experiences, skills, resources and good practices. APRRN has enabled mutual support and joint advocacy between previously isolated refugee rights groups. It has provided a means for raising issues of concern with reduced risk to individual members and with the increased authority of an organised and connected network. APRRN has supported members on the national level and magnified national concerns at regional and international levels with the overall goal of influencing policy and affecting legislative change. On many occasions, APRRN has brought diverse stakeholders together towards common goals and supported refugees' leadership and meaningful participation.

³ For this strategic plan, APRRN has adopted UNHCR's definition of the Asia Pacific region.

The 2018-2022 Strategic Plan seeks to build on these achievements and sets out APRRN's strategic direction for the next four years. Based on a process of evaluation, reflection, and consultation, this strategy sets out APRRN's vision and mission and reframes our goals and strategies. The strategic plan is built on input from our members through APRRN's working groups, and is guided by their action plans. APRRN recognises that forced displacement is part of a constantly changing landscape, posing new obstacles and pushing the network to constantly consider new approaches and evaluate our effectiveness. The strategy also seeks to guide APRRN on overcoming these challenges and achieving the change we want to see. APRRN is grateful to the members and partners who have contributed to the development of this strategy through interviews, focus group discussions, surveys, and other means of feedback. The strategic plan may be revised at the next Asia Pacific Consultation on Refugee Rights (APCRR) in 2020. APCRRs are APRRN's biennial consultations that bring together APRRN members to meet, provide input on APRRN's strategic plan, complete governance matters, discuss new challenges, and generate new working group action plans.

APRRN's Theory of Change (see Annex) provides the basis of our strategic plan and sets out the change APRRN wants to achieve, through two programmatic goals:

- 1. APRRN aims to strengthen national, regional, and international systems of refugee protection and secure respect for refugee rights, ensuring refugees are provided protection and access to basic services, that key stakeholders respond to their needs, and that timely durable solutions are practical, available, and accessible.**

APRRN will continue to support our members at the national level through access to specialised training, technical resources, and key stakeholders essential to refugee protection. Ultimately, APRRN works to bridge refugees in the region and diverse actors across local, national, regional, and international frameworks. Our strategy is to influence and support systems for refugee protection and rights. In order to achieve this, APRRN will seek to strengthen capacity and accountability at the national level, capture Asia Pacific perspectives and issues, proactively set the agenda for our region, and identify and engage with national, regional as well as international opportunities. We envision that APRRN will continue to play a critical role in the civil society response to forced displacement and in advocating for the rights of refugees and for coordinated regional responses to forced displacement.

- 2. APRRN aims for refugees to influence policies, programmes, and solutions that affect their lives. This includes women, young people, people of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, people with disability and other diverse groups.**

Since inception, APRRN has made increasing efforts to ensure that those in need of protection are able to participate in APRRN's decision making and governance processes and are provided with leadership opportunities. APRRN has also facilitated opportunities for refugees to advocate for their own rights at different levels, and enabled peer-to-peer support between community representatives. Through this goal, we are progressing these efforts and centralising participation as fundamental to the change we want to see in the refugee protection landscape.

Strategies and activities: how APRRN will achieve change

APRRN's members are at the core of APRRN's work, and the working group model ensures that members are driving organisational priorities, direction, and approach. APRRN supports

the establishment of diverse geographic and thematic working groups through its membership, each led by a membership-elected Chair and Deputy Chair. With working groups drawn directly out of common cross-border concerns by local membership organisations, APRRN ensures a cross-cutting and progressive approach that enables synergies around and across issues, geographies, and experiences.⁴

APRRN will continue to operate through its working group model, allowing members to actively inform and participate in APRRN activities. This approach is fundamental to the achievement of APRRN's two strategic goals, which will be pursued through five interlinked strategies:⁵

1. Promoting the development and implementation of international, regional, and domestic protection and human rights standards, laws, policies and systems that are gender responsive, inclusive, and forward-looking.

APRRN believes that there must be ownership of refugee protection obligations at the national level, in tune with international and regional frameworks. The ratification of international refugee law instruments is meaningless in the absence of institutional support, accountability, and adherence mechanisms.

APRRN will therefore engage with the processes around developing domestic legislation where strategic opportunities arise and where APRRN as a regional network can add value to the domestic efforts of its members. At the national level, APRRN will also continue to encourage the strengthening of local civil society actors and the formation of national networks. APRRN believes that national ownership is key to refugee protection and to achieving sustainable and long term policy changes. APRRN will also continue to focus on promoting the development and implementation of alternatives to detention, for children as a priority. Where relevant, and in addition to the focus on developing domestic legal frameworks, APRRN will also continue to promote the ratification of international refugee law instruments and other relevant human rights law. In doing the above, we will advocate for standards, laws, policies and systems that are gender responsive and intersectional, but also take into account the needs of other diverse groups.

Overall these efforts are geared towards an increased ratification of international refugee law instruments and relevant human rights law as well as the development and implementation of national legislation and asylum systems.

To achieve this strategy APRRN will:⁶

- Hold relevant roundtables/consultations/workshops to bring government actors and other decision makers together with perspectives from advocates, refugees and other stakeholders
- Facilitate exchange of good practices among different stakeholders
- Engage directly with government and decision makers through lobbying, meetings, submissions and other advocacy interventions
- Organise capacity strengthening activities for governments and decision makers

⁴ APRRN's current [geographic working groups](#) are: Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific; East Asia; South Asia; Southeast Asia. APRRN's current [thematic working groups](#) are: Durable Solutions; Gender, Women and Diversity; Immigration Detention; Legal Aid and Advocacy; Refugee Leadership and Participation, Regional Protection; and Youth.

⁵ The strategies are not listed in any order of priority.

⁶ These activities are examples and not inclusive of all activities APRRN will pursue over the next four years.

2. Holding governments and other decision makers to account and improving awareness of protection gaps

APRRN will continuously monitor refugee rights violations and hold governments and decision makers to account. This will include various governmental departments and relevant international organisations, such as UNHCR, IOM, and other agencies, as well as implementing partners. APRRN believes that improved awareness of rights violations and protection needs can lead to a better targeted response by government and other actors.

As a regional body, APRRN has an important role to play in raising issues of concern as a broad network, reducing risk to individual members, and engaging the increased legitimacy of a network well-respected and soundly established. APRRN therefore plays a critical role in engaging, amplifying, and supporting civil society voices and in advocating for refugee rights and coordinating rights-based, protection-focused responses to forced displacement.

APRRN will also continue to advocate for refugees to have access to timely durable solutions. APRRN will strengthen advocacy on protracted situations such as the situation of Afghan refugees, Rohingya refugees, and other refugees in the region. APRRN will focus on specific situational contexts when rights are at risk, but advocate for universal enjoyment of those rights.

Through engaging specific regional contexts APRRN will develop more informed, and thereby impactful, advocacy based on the realities and risks defined by refugee communities and our members. This will enable APRRN to engage more effectively with policy makers in resettlement states such as New Zealand and Australia, as well as host contexts, with a view to encouraging greater positive leadership in the region and globally.

This strategy aims to achieve strengthened protection responses from governments and other policy makers and relevant actors.

To achieve this strategy APRRN will:

- Publish statements, press releases, open letters, briefing letters, and other publications
- Engage with the media through press releases, op-eds, interviews with member organisations, and building our media database
- Organise scoping and fact-finding missions and trips
- Pro-actively engage with governments and other decision makers in hosting, transit, destination, resettlement countries and countries of origin

3. Information sharing, capacity building, and improving collaboration between members and key stakeholders

One of APRRN's areas of strength is the considerable expertise and experience within the network. The network of refugees, academics, refugee practitioners, and refugee communities has unparalleled access to local communities in many of the countries of the region. Recognising this resource, APRRN seeks to build upon its potential and develop pathways through which information and experience sharing not only create more accurate interventions for protection, but build our memberships' capacity through shared experience.

APRRN will continue to organise a range of capacity strengthening initiatives targeting our membership, but extending to other relevant actors. Recognising that our membership is local, context-specific, and well-experienced, APRRN aims to engage this wealth of internal expertise rather than rely on external experts. Effective information sharing and exchange among existing and potential members, as well as the public, will be facilitated by the working groups and supported by the Secretariat through the various APRRN communication channels.⁷

APRRN will also continue to encourage collaboration between different stakeholders. Since inception, APRRN has been effective in bringing together a diverse range of stakeholders. Collaboration is the foundation and core value of the network. APRRN will therefore maintain positive working relationships with governments, UNHCR offices, other UN Agencies, civil society partners, academics, funders, as well as refugee communities engaged in refugee protection work.

APRRN will actively explore partnerships with universities and individuals with the aim to strengthen our evidence base. APRRN recognises the value and importance of partnering with academia. As a regional authority with significant local membership, APRRN is uniquely placed to identify research gaps, join collaborative initiatives, provide access to research opportunities, influence research priorities, and disseminate findings through our membership and outreach channels.

Ultimately, this will lead to strengthened capacity and skills among individuals, institutions, APRRN members, NGOs, and other stakeholders (e.g. government officials).⁸ The initiatives will engage APRRN members and other key stakeholders in dialogue, ensuring exchange and accuracy of information while incubating ideas and strengthening collaborative relationships.

To achieve this strategy APRRN will:

- Share information, resources, and good practices as relevant within our membership network, externally to stakeholders, and publicly
- Maintain and further develop APRRN's communication channels and platforms
- Facilitate peer-to-peer learning and mentoring opportunities
- Organise capacity strengthening initiatives to strengthen advocacy skills and understanding of refugee rights
- Build networks with academia with a view to strengthening our evidence base
- Organise roundtables and other activities that will enable greater collaboration between different stakeholders

⁷ Currently APRRN's communication channels include google groups, a website, social media (Facebook & Twitter), newsletters and webinars.

⁸ It is important to note that 'capacity' is a wide-reaching concept, that includes human resources, funding, expertise, access, operations, and more. APRRN believes information sharing will assist in a variety of organisational aspects. APRRN views its role in supporting a wide-reaching civil society strengthening effort through mutual support, organisational solidarity, and best practice sharing.

- Engage global networks, international fora, and extra-regional stakeholder meetings to ensure that information exchange benefits from the greater international dialogue

4. Bringing civil society perspectives to global and regional discourses on migrant and refugee protection

There have been significant global and regional developments over the last few years with respect to multilateral dialogues and new approaches to refugee protection. Some or all of these may offer new opportunities with prospects for positive change. Notably, at the global level, the September 2016 New York Declaration (NYD), unanimously endorsed by 193 UN member states, called for the development of a Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), led by UNHCR, and a Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), led by the co-facilitators from Mexico and Switzerland and negotiated by member states. The implementation of the GCR/GCM in the coming years offers significant opportunities for APRRN to engage, support, evaluate, and critique the process. More specific to the region, the Bali Process of People Smuggling and Trafficking (the 'Bali Process'), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) may provide avenues for advocacy towards an effective and accountable regional protection framework.

APRRN seeks to proactively engage with these processes and act as a bridge between members, refugee communities, and policy discussions at the global level: in Geneva, New York, and elsewhere. This will ensure that Asia Pacific perspectives are part of international discourses on refugee and migration policy, and that APRRN members have a better understanding of, investment in, and engagement with emerging structures of international protection, such as the GCR/Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) and GCM.

To achieve this strategy APRRN will:

- Develop fact sheets and toolkits as well as convene webinars to facilitate understanding among members on emerging and established regional and international protection processes
- Engage with on-going global processes relating to the implementation, follow-up, and review of the Global Compacts
- Convene or co-convene one or more regional or country-level roundtables to galvanise multi-actor engagement with respect to regional and international processes
- Coordinate APRRN representation at regional and international fora ensuring the views of our members are represented
- Update APRRN's Vision for Regional Protection to reflect the evolving context

5. Increasing meaningful and inclusive participation of refugees, in particular women, young people, and other discriminated groups at national, regional, and international level as well as internally within APRRN

Facilitating and supporting the meaningful participation of refugees is at the very core of APRRN's work. APRRN will proactively engage opportunities for refugees to substantively participate in our activities and leadership. APRRN will also actively provide spaces for refugees' voices to be heard, and will further provide platforms for refugees' self-advocacy at national, regional, and international levels. APRRN will also assist refugees and other displaced people to build avenues for networking, mutual support, and coordination.

Internally, APRRN will review its governance structure and make persistent efforts to continue to ensure refugees are part of APRRN's leadership.

APRRN is cognisant of risks facing refugees, and the complicated security concerns which can impact upon effective participation. APRRN will develop mechanisms to mitigate these risks, ensuring that protection is not compromised. Furthermore, APRRN recognises that the concept of intersectionality applies across human experience, and that refugee populations are not homogenous. Refugee participation must, therefore, be approached to ensure that internally marginalised voices are recognised and validated.

APRRN recognises that organisational culture often replicates or amplifies social bias in terms of traditional structures of power, privilege, and influence. Unmaking these structures is fundamental to progressive and inclusive collaborative change, and the resulting scope of innovative ideas, approaches, and mechanisms through which to achieve our fundamental mission of comprehensive protection.

APRRN further recognises that women and young people make up a very large percentage of the forcibly displaced population, and our approach will be comprehensive, inclusive, and supportive. Under this strategy, APRRN will therefore ensure the participation of women, young people, as well as discriminated groups, not only within project planning, but as essential contributors to organisational governance and strategy. Similarly, APRRN members are encouraged to engage a similar model and employ zero-tolerance policies for discrimination in structure. Ensuring access will increase leadership opportunities for refugees and others in need of protection. In addition, it will ensure that APRRN is fully inclusive of marginalised voices.

To achieve this strategy APRRN will:

- Provide peer-to-peer support, networking, and learning opportunities
- Facilitate leadership development and other training opportunities
- Identify and support opportunities for refugees to advocate for their rights at national, regional and international levels
- Provide guidelines and references for APRRN members on how to enable meaningful refugee participation
- Encourage and support refugee-established and refugee-led networks and organisations
- Document and share good practices on meaningful participation and leadership of refugees

Our Enabling Foundation: How APRRN Will Progress

In order to achieve our goals, the network requires a strong *Enabling Foundation* which includes an engaged membership, dynamic and effective leadership, an adequately resourced and supported Secretariat, robust governance and finances, strong systems for measuring impact and learning, and financial sustainability.

Engaged membership

As active membership is fundamental to the vision and mission of APRRN, we will continue to ensure that we are membership led. This will be facilitated through various mechanisms,

including APCRR, engagement through APRRN's working groups, strong orientation efforts, and working towards a comprehensive membership engagement strategy in the long term. APRRN will also continue to build membership in underrepresented countries while concurrently consolidating relationships between existing members.

Dynamic and effective leadership

APRRN, through its elected Steering Committee, will ensure member-led strategic direction for APRRN through democratic mechanisms for representation on the Committee. Further, APRRN will make every possible effort to ensure diversity on the Steering Committee, be accountable to its membership, and continually evaluate Steering Committee direction and leadership. Diversity for APRRN is not limited to representation of gender, age, class, race, or sex, but importantly must include people with lived experience of displacement.

Adequately resourced and supported Secretariat

APRRN will continue where possible to expand human and financial resources to meet the network's growing requirements through a strong and well resourced Secretariat. APRRN will develop a human resources strategy to further ensure sound policies are in place and regularly evaluated, that training and development are provided, and that attractive and fair remuneration is offered to ensure institutional investment, internal advancement, and continued engagement.

Robust governance and finances

Since its inception, APRRN has continuously improved its governance and financial systems. APRRN will consolidate and further develop governance procedures, review policies, and ensure strong structures and oversight systems are in place. APRRN will strengthen its financial systems, human resources policies and ensure compliance with all legal obligations.

Strong systems for measuring impact and learning

As an area of focus for 2018-2022, APRRN will develop a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning framework to verify that activities have a proven impact. APRRN will conduct internal and external evaluations as relevant. APRRN will also develop and promote strategies and systems for organisational learning and feedback mechanisms.

Financial sustainability

APRRN will endeavour to increase multi-year funding resources, and will continue to diversify our funding base. APRRN regards funders as partners and will explore their involvement in our activities in order to establish long term relationships that go beyond financial support to investment in programming and policy initiatives, adding strategic value to APRRN. The network will work with funders that share a common vision of advancing of refugee rights and that work on a level of mutual partnership. APRRN will also explore other income generating activities and develop a fundraising strategy in line with the strategic and operational plan.

ANNEX: APRRN Theory of Change

