

ASIA SAFE ABORTION PARTNERSHIP

Annual Report 2011



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ANNUAL REPORT - 2011

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We owe a great many thanks to our donors for supporting our ASAP activities— Packard Foundation and MamaCash. .

Our deepest thanks to Dr S.P. Choong, Chairperson, ASAP and all the SC members for their valuable time and support throughout the year and for expanding the work of ASAP within their countries.

Thanks and appreciation to all the ASAP partners and allies for their collaborations in various ASAP projects and supporting the campaign for global initiative for safe abortion access.

Thanks also to ICMA for its role in keeping us involved with relevant work at the global level.

FROM THE DESK OF THE COORDINATOR

It has been a wonderful journey over the last 4 years ! Challenging, demanding, sometimes frustrating due to lack of adequate funds, but on the whole very satisfying and enriching. ASAP has grown from a small meeting held in Kuala Lumpur to a large network with members across 15 countries in Asia. We have recently expanded our presence in cyberspace also and you can find us on social media platforms like facebook, blog and twitter.

We look forward to the continued support and engagement from all of you, our members, partners and supporters as we work to support the International Campaign for Women's Right to Safe Abortion. Find us on www.asap-asia.org and stay in touch !

Suchitra Dalvie

INTRODUCTION

Asia is a complex region with different laws and political contexts. There are some unifying threads such as the legacy of the colonial rule in the form of Penal Codes that criminalize abortion and deep rooted religious beliefs and practices that reinforce patriarchal social and cultural norms. The governments do not prioritize policy or funding for women's issues and though most countries are signatory to CEDAW and the ICPD PoA, the civil society movements have not been very successful in holding the governments accountable for their inadequate implementation.

The Asia Safe Abortion Partnership (ASAP) is a network of activists, doctors, lawyers, researchers, demographers and others, working towards improving access to safe abortion services in the region. The network creates a forum for information and experience sharing, strategic thinking and planning for a collective vision aimed towards regional and international advocacy. ASAP also supports its members to advance the partnership goal in their country contexts in the areas of advocacy to improve laws and policies, capacity building, research and documentation as well as service delivery. ASAP ensures that all its members have access to updated information on safe abortion technology and programs. This is done through the website, newsletters and training programs as and when needed.

CURRENT CHALLENGES FACED

Increasingly, in Asia as well as the world over, we see religious fundamentalism and political conservatism rearing its head and preventing more liberal laws from being passed. Many countries in this region do not have functioning democracies and it is then even harder for women's rights and human rights to be ensured. The women's movement has not succeeded in moving this agenda forward in many of the countries in Asia. A greater mass of aware, enlightened and empowered citizens is needed and stronger civil society movements are needed to be catalyzed.

Many of the countries in Asia are signatory to ICPD and CEDAW but government accountability towards implementation is inadequate. In most of the countries in our region, women's issues are not a priority in terms of policy or funding. Even when policies exist or the law exists, the implementation is inadequate due to multiple barriers created, often by health care providers, the public health sector systems or other relevant professionals.

In countries such as China, India and recently Vietnam, the age old son preference issues are being reflected in the practice of sex identification of the fetus prenatally, followed by a termination of the pregnancy if the fetus is a female. The response of the government, in India in particular, has been to restrict access to 2nd trimester

abortions. Lack of adequate documentation makes it difficult for advocates to emphasize that most of the women who seek abortions in the 2nd trimester are those who are the most vulnerable or those who were unable to access safe services in the first trimester.

Pro- life proponents exist in many guises and have been inadvertently given a credible platform due to the sex selection issue and many of the projects funded by domestic and even some bilateral donors have created anti -abortion rhetoric in the name of preventing sex selection.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The goal and objectives of the network are as follows:

Goal: To promote, protect and advance women’s sexual and reproductive rights and health in Asia by reducing unsafe abortion and its complications and where it is legal, by promoting access to comprehensive safe abortion services.

Objectives:

1. To serve as a forum for information and experience sharing, strategic thinking and planning for a collective vision aimed towards regional and international advocacy
2. To support members to advance the partnership goal in their country contexts through the following areas:
 - law, advocacy and policy
 - capacity building
 - research and documentation
 - service delivery
3. To promote new technologies, including manual vacuum aspiration and medical abortion.

OVERVIEW OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The activity plan is being carried out as agreed upon with the Steering Committee and based on the funding support available. During the period **January to December 2011**, the Asia Safe Abortion Partnership has carried out the following activities:

Creating a forum for information and experience sharing, strategic thinking



and planning for a collective vision aimed towards regional and international advocacy:

ASAP had its first Steering Committee meeting of this year in January 2011, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia along with an Advocacy Seminar “Abortion Access and Technology Update: Global and Regional Perspectives.

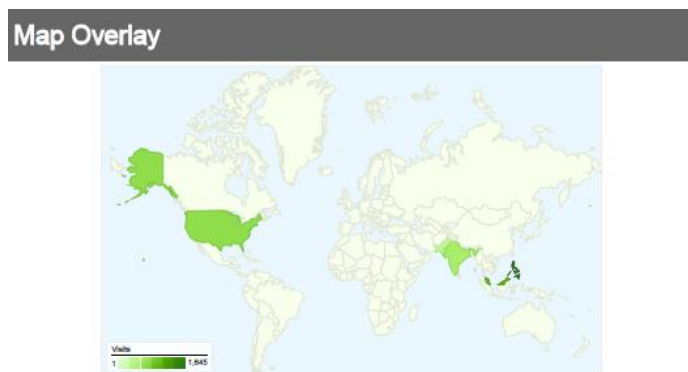
The second meeting was held in October 2011, in Jogjakarta, Indonesia, along with the 6th Asia Pacific Conference on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights.

Website development

The official website www.asap-asia.org was launched in March 2009. The website home page has a map of Asia with hyperlinks on each country which lead to the country profile. The website has 2 more country profiles added making the number of countries 14 (Malaysia, Japan, Vietnam, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand, Nepal, Mongolia, Indonesia and China) which give an overview of the abortion law, policy and data from those countries. These country profiles have been developed by ASAP members as a contribution to the collective knowledge of the current situation of access to safe abortion in the different countries.

The website has direct links to ICMA, Women on Web, Gynuity and Ipas on its home page. We have had direct queries for safe abortion services from Malaysia, Pakistan, Dubai, Australia, Philippines, Thailand and India. We hope to set up a provider directory for each country to ensure timely responses to such queries. However, we would plan to give access to it only through a designated local partner who can identify genuine cases, so as to protect the providers.

The website also provides technical information on Medical Abortion, kindly shared with us by the ICMA website. The website also provides updates on events, news articles and links.



From Jan 1, 2011 –Dec12 2011; the site has had 5429 visitors (absolute unique visitors). In total, 6693 visits came from 102 countries/territories.

Maximum visits came from Philippines (1645) followed by Malaysia (1005) and United States (687). There were 80.55% % New Visits and a bounce rate of 76.68%.

There were 12,261 page views with an average of 1.83 page views. The average time spent on the site was 1.41 minutes. 62.63% visits were through Google and 17.18 % were direct. The main views were home page, country profile and information page.

Networking

An e –discussion forum (googlegroup) has been functioning since May 2008 and has had over 895 messages/ updates sent out to the members so far, mostly on a daily basis. The list serve has 129 members on it and is moderated by the Coordinator who not only introduces the information but also promotes the dialogue and discussions among the members of the discussion forum. Members also share reports of meetings attended, concerns about emerging issues and comments on messages uploaded.

The Asia Safe Abortion Partnership held its second Satellite Session (SS) along with Five partners at the 6th Asia Pacific Conference on Reproductive and Sexual Health And Rights (APCRSHR) held in Yogyakarta, Indonesia on 20th October 2011: **'Medical abortion in Asia – the revolution yet to happen!'**

The partners were **Concept Foundation, IPPF ESEAOR, Gynuity Health Projects, Women on Web** and **Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights (WGNRR).**

The welcome note was given by Dr Suchitra Dalvie, Coordinator, Asia Safe Abortion Partnership, who was also the facilitator of the session. There were about 40 people present in the audience.



The speakers and the topic for this session were:

Dr Sim Poey Choong - Asia Safe Abortion Partnership (ASAP): An overview of the crucial importance of MA for Asia

Dr. Helena von Hertzen - Concept Foundation: Introducing medical abortion in a restrictive environment

Dr Tran Nguyen Toan(IPPF ESEAOR) spoke on behalf of Alejandra Trossero (IPPF ESEAOR) : Making medical abortion seeds grow

Susan Davies -Women on Web (WoW) and Dr Shilpa Shroff – ASAP: Using Hotlines for MA information dissemination: The experience from Pakistan and Indonesia

Dr Suchitra Dalvie (ASAP) on behalf of Dr. Nhu Ngoc Nguyen thi - Gynuity Health Projects (GHP): Advances in medical abortion and its potential to transform abortion access

Kathy Mulville -Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights (WGNRR): MA and its impact on service delivery systems: sharing examples from Africa



Dr SP Choong spoke about the need to move beyond de-criminalizing safe abortions, but in fact he suggested it was time to start criminalizing those who prevent women from accessing safe abortions!

During discussions from the floor the idea of the proposed global network had been shared and some strong feedback received from those present was the urgent need for creating such a platform but for the purpose of a visible global campaign on ensuring safe abortion access!

The ideas suggested were that with the MDG and ICPD reviews coming up in the next few years, this campaign should work towards ensuring that safe abortion issues and indicators find a space in the impact assessment of both programs.

The report from Anand Grover (<http://www.un.org.au>), UN special rapporteur was also expected to come out strongly in favour of de-criminalization of abortion and the campaign would plan to build on that and endorse it.

With this in mind, the group decided to prepare a declaration to be read out at the closing ceremony of the conference. The declaration statement was drafted as given below in the box. It was read out by a young person from Asia and was applauded by those present in the audience.

6th APCRSHR in Yogyakarta, Indonesia

DECLARATION FROM THE GLOBAL CAMPAIGN FOR SAFE ABORTION ACCESS

22nd October 2011

Despite commitments within ICPD, CEDAW, MDG 5 and 5b; women in our region continue to die in large numbers. 10.8 million unsafe abortions take place in the Asia-Pacific region, contributing to high rates of maternal mortality and morbidity.

In some countries in our region, changing demographic in the near future will result in a significantly large proportion of the population being under 25. Young women, regardless of marital status, are especially vulnerable and may be forced to resort to unsafe abortions; putting their lives at grave risk. This is not acceptable.

The need for access to safe abortion was a recurrent theme in the conference panels, showing an urgent need for action. The entire range of issues related to abortion were discussed including the home use of medical abortion, task-shifting to mid-level providers such as midwives, nurses and community health workers, decriminalization, affordable public health service provision, and barriers to access to abortion for young women and other marginalised groups.

To respect, fulfill, and protect the human rights of women requires States to take action to reduce unsafe abortions, including making access to effective contraceptive and safe abortion services legal.

Abortion has been systematically ignored in the majority of SRHR health programmes. We demand the inclusion of safe abortion in all SRHR programmes within the region and guaranteed access to the full range of safe abortion services of all women.

Signed, the 22nd of October 2011; Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Research activities

ASAP partners have conducted a study on the KAP of providers who manage HIV positive women with regard to medical abortion .The information from this study will help to improve the programs and services for PLHIV, specially to improve access to safe abortion for women living with HIV.

The study was implemented by the Centre for Operations Research and Training (CORT) in India and by the Group of Technical Assistance (GTA) in Nepal. The study is being conducted in 3 states in India and 4 districts in Nepal. The report of the study is ready for further dissemination.

Advocacy Programmes



The Hotline Campaign in Pakistan initiated by ASAP in collaboration with Women on Waves and women on Web is still running successfully. A Poster presentation of this campaign was made at the 6th APCRSR by Dr. Shilpa Shroff. The findings were also shared at the ASAP satellite session at the 6th APCRSR. The reports of this campaign are published and were widely disseminated at APCRSR and

will be disseminated also at the Bangkok, Hotline meeting.

After its success in Pakistan, ASAP in collaboration with Women on Waves and Women on Web launched a second Hotline in Asia, in Indonesia, in Jan 2011 after a training of 3 days . The training on “Misoprostol Information to Prevent Unsafe Abortions” was held at Hotel Jentra Dagen, Yogyakarta, Indonesia from 20th -23rd January 2011. The training was conducted by Women on Waves, Women on Web and Asia Safe Abortion Partnership. It is being implemented by two local partners. The Indonesia Hotline is functional is partnered by Samsara, in Jogja. The dissemination and meetings for the hotlines are conducted by another group called Jakarta Chapter, based in Jakarta. An evaluation meeting was conducted on 18th October in Jogja. Based on the findings of this evaluation, Samsara has been requested to submit a further plan for expanding of the



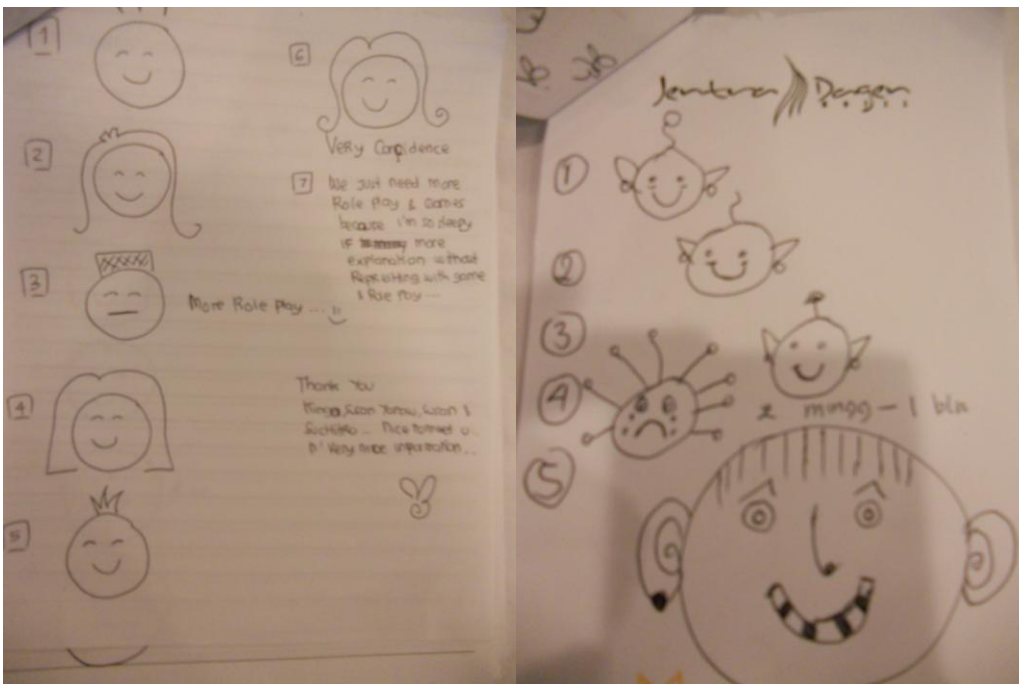
project into research, dissemination and data management.

ASAP worked in collaboration with IPPA, Jogja (PKBI) for this workshop. Maesur Zacky, Executive Director IPPA Jogja joined us for the inauguration of this workshop and Dr Suchitra Dalvie, ASAP Coordinator later visited their clinic.

Some more picture from the Jogja, Indonesia Workshops:



Result of post-evaluation of the training workshop:



CAPACITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES

ASAP supported the participation of all its SC members as well as a member of the Jakarta chapter of the Hotline, to be at the 6thAPCRSHR in Jogja, Indonesia , in October 2011. ASAP also supported the participation of a young person from Hanoi, Vietnam for the “Regional Youth Partner’s Meeting”. held by Women Global Network for Reproductive and Rights (WGNRR), International Women’s Health Coalition (IWHC) and Asia Safe Abortion Partnership (ASAP) from 16th – 20th January 2011.

VISIBILITY

ASAP members have been invited to and have participated in various forums to discuss safe abortion issues. This has helped ASAP gain visibility across the region. Some of the important meetings/ conferences ASAP was a part of :

- The ASAP International Seminar on “Abortion Access and Technology Update: Global and Regional Perspectives” was held on 16/1/2011 in Dynasty Hotel with local support from RRAAM and OGSM.
- IPPF ESEOR held a regional level meeting on Abortion Updates in Jan 2011, where ASAP had a panel describing the situation of Abortion in Asia.
- ASAP Coordinator spoke on “Unsafe Abortion in Asia: A situation analysis”, at the 8th SAFOG Conference held in Cinnamon Grand Hotel, Colombo, Sri Lanka 23rd 24th April 2011
- Expanding access to safe abortion and PAC in South Asia: is provision of services by midlevel providers a feasible option? organized by Population Council in Delhi, India on 7-8 March 2011.
- 6th APCRSRHR held in Yogyakarta in October 2011 .
 - Dr Suchitra Dalvie presented the findings of the study on the KAP of providers who manage HIV positive women with regard to medical abortion . The information from this study will help to improve the programs and services for PLHIV, especially to improve access to safe abortion for women living with HIV.
 - A Poster presentation of the Hotline Campaign in Pakistan initiated by ASAP in collaboration with Women on Waves and women on Web this campaign was done by Dr. Shilpa Shroff. The findings were also shared at the ASAP satellite session at 6th APCRSRHR and the reports of this campaign were published and widely disseminated.

- Mama Cash held a grantee meeting and facilitated participation of grantees in the 6th Asia Pacific Conference on Reproductive and Sexual Health and Rights (APCRSHR) in Yogyakarta, Indonesia on 18-19 October, 2011.
- A safe abortion workshop: “Safe Abortion Saves Life” was organized on the first day of the annual conference of All Maharashtra Obstetrics & Gynecological Society (AMOGS) on 11th February, 2011 at Government Medical College, Nagpur under the leadership of Dr. Milind Shah, Vice President of FOGSI and ASAP SC member.
- We disseminated the ICMA conference statement 2010 at the Advocacy meeting at KL. Reports on hotline campaign in Pakistan were printed and distributed widely at the APCRSR Indonesia. PDF file of this report was send to all the donors, collaborators and partners and the listserve members.

Dear Dr.Suchitra Dalvie, Dr. Shilpa and Dr. SP Choong,

Greetings from Peace Foundation Pakistan!

Coordination of ASAP has enriched us very well. I have examples to share with you, on how your information from Google group has been useful to us.

Peace Foundation has got admission in Mumbai University Course on Health and Human Rights. Our two senior officials are waiting for visa. Similarly, we have applied for courses and training and though we have not been selected for trainings, we have developed a goo relation/ network with these organizations. This is fruitful for our organization's progress.

One of our staff is selected for an international conference on early marriages which is being held on 9th February 2011 at New Delhi. It is because of information sharing process of ASAP.

We are hopeful ASAP will play same role for capacity building opportunities sharing forum for advancement of women's rights in Asia.

We welcome expansion planning of ASAP. We are eager to be part of it.

Thanks

Aslam , Peace Foundation

TESTIMONIALS

ASAP has received appreciation from its partners and collaborators. Please read below few kind words from them.

ASAP has worked with the media in Nepal, Malaysia and Vietnam in 2010 with their country partners. Workshops were conducted with journalists from the print and electronic media in order to sensitize them to the gender and rights dimensions of sexual and reproductive health issues in general and safe abortion issues in particular.

In Vietnam, after the workshop few journalists approached Dr Phan Bich Thuy, Training & Services Senior Advisor, Concept Foundation in Vietnam and a SC member ASAP to start her own blog on SRHR issues

[HTTP://BICHTHUYHN.BLOG.TIENGVIENT.NET/2010/11/10/A_A_N_A_NG_VA_A_A_N_BA_P_HAOBN_III](http://BICHTHUYHN.BLOG.TIENGVIENT.NET/2010/11/10/A_A_N_A_NG_VA_A_A_N_BA_P_HAOBN_III) .

This was so successful that she was then invited by the national radio named Voice of Vietnam 2 (VOV2) twice for interviews. The first interview was on how parents should deal with their children when they fall in love and become sexually active. The second interview was about her pre-married training courses with SHARE.

THE POTENTIAL FOR TRANSFORMATION

I have realized the vast unmet need that exists among people, especially young people, in Vietnam. Even those who can access the internet do not have adequate or accurate information on issues related to their own bodies and health and rights. I spend many hours after work to write articles and reply to all the comments of the readers (you can see the comments in blue and my replies in brown if you see my blog). I am in more or less direct communication with more than 13,000 readers of my blog and I can sense that this is just a drop in the ocean! Through the comments received I understand that my articles and responses are helping the readers to process ideas and facilitate a positive change in their attitudes and behaviors related to sexual and reproductive health issues.

The readers' reactions encourage me to continue my work in this sensitive field with a deep passion.

I would like to thank ASAP and its donor for supporting us in Vietnam to organize the Mass Media Workshop which has changed my personal life and in consequence I hope will lead to changes in the lives of people in Vietnam!

Phan Bich Thuy, has written in an article in ICMA newsletter “ ASAP mass media workshop changes my life” ¹

ADVOCACY FOR ABORTION ACCESS IN MALAYSIA – SOME OBSERVATION FROM A SENIOR ACTIVIST²

By Dr Sim-Poey Choong Co-Chair RRAAM and Chair, ASAP



For RRAAM, ASAP provided us opportunity to become part of a regional and global movement. The network has obviously benefited members through its regular email forums, organizing workshops in abortion technology, advocacy strategies and values clarification. But apart from this, the realization of being members of an international movement has significant internal and external impacts. Speaking for RRAAM members, we have broken out of a shell that labeled us as an isolated ‘eccentric non-conformist group’ and for the general public, RRAAM is now seen as part of an international movement in sync with the efforts of international agencies like IPPF, ICMA, Ipas, Gynuity, etc. and prominent regional players from Vietnam to Nepal.

The gratifying response to the joint ASAP/RRAAM seminar on Abortion Access in January 2011 in Kuala Lumpur is, I believe, a testimony to this.

FINANCES

ASAP has implemented its work on a series of projects/ activities through various donors and collaborations in the Year 2012. These activities were funded by the Packard Foundation Dutch Ministry (reallocated funds of 2010) and Mama Cash.

In addition to this ASAP held a Satellite Session at 6th Asia-Pacific Conference on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, in collaboration with 5 partners

¹ ICMA NEWSLETTER n.5 | APRIL, 2011

² ICMA NEWSLETTER n.5 | APRIL, 2011

Concept Foundation, IPPF ESEAOR, Gynuity Health Projects, Women on Web and Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights (WGNRR). ICMA contributed towards the printing and communications cost of ASAP

STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

SP Choong, Malaysia
Chairperson, ASAP Steering Committee
Clinician, Co-chair of Reproductive Rights Advocacy Alliance Malaysia (RRAAM)

Indira Basnett, Nepal
Member, ASAP Steering Committee
Country Director, Ipas, Nepal

Khalid Qureshi, Pakistan
Member, ASAP Steering Committee
National Project/Campaign Manager, Adolescents & Youth 's Sexual & Reproductive Health & Rights (AYSRHR) and Women Empowerment Group (WEG)

Milind Shah, India
Member, ASAP Steering Committee
Consultant Gynecologist, past Chair of the Medical Abortion Providers Network in India.

Phan Bich Thuy, MD, MPH - Vietnam
Member, ASAP Steering Committee
Training & Services Senior Advisor, Concept Foundation

Ninuk Widyantoro – Indonesia
Member, ASAP Steering Committee
Founder, Women Health Foundation, Indonesia

ASAP STAFF:

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Website: www.asap-asia.org

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