The Asia Safe Abortion Partnership

Expanding access to safe abortions for all women in the Asia-Pacific region

ANNUAL REPORT 2015
FROM THE DESK OF THE COORDINATOR

2015 has been a year of remarkable progress in many ways, consolidating the work of the past while continuing to face current challenges.

The WHO released two important documents—one on task shifting and one on the role of health workers in providing safe abortion services.

Our own studies were published in respected peer reviewed journals, adding to the increasing and valuable pool of evidence and data that is needed for all of us as vital tools for advocacy.

We also hosted the first ever Healthcare Providers’ Networks Regional Think Tank, bringing together groups that work on humanitarian issues and healthcare in crisis situations to discuss the need to include safe abortion as a key agenda. We discussed the critical role that doctors and nurses can play in bearing witness as well as moving policy and implementation to improve women's rights and health.

But, most definitively, this has been a year when young people have proved their worth and returned our investments in capacity building with some amazing and brave efforts of their own. Young people everywhere are showing up, speaking up and standing up for their rights. From small advocacy efforts to consolidating Country Advocacy Networks, our Youth Champions have been showing the way!

As this year draws to a close, we can look back on it with satisfaction and look forward to 2016 with high expectations and renewed energy to continue our work with our amazing members, partners, supporters and collaborators.
The Problem

55% of the world’s unsafe abortions happen in Asia.


“Unsafe abortion accounts for 12 percent of all maternal, or pregnancy-related deaths in the region and claims the lives of 38,000 women each year.”


Who we are

Formed in March 2008, The Asia Safe Abortion Partnership (ASAP) is the only safe abortion advocacy network in the region. ASAP is one of the co-founders of the International Campaign for Women’s Right to Safe Abortion.

Working towards the solution

Build Capacity and support members in Advocacy, Research, & Service delivery

Serve as a Regional Forum for Information sharing and Strategic Thinking

Promote New Technologies like Medical Abortion and Manual Vacuum Aspiration

Acknowledgements:

Our work in 2015 was made possible by support from:
The David and Lucile Packard Foundation
International Women’s Health Coalition
The Safe Abortion Action Fund (SAAF)
Preventing Maternal Deaths from Unwanted Pregnancy (PMDUP) Project
Mama Cash
Samsara
This is our 8th year, and we held our second Strategic Planning meeting in January in Bangkok, to review and re-work our Theory of Change, Vision, Goal, Objectives and articulate our underlying values.

The meeting began with facilitator Barbara Klugman, sharing findings of a survey of ASAP’s organizational & individual partners’ perspectives and needs. Through the 2-days the Steering Committee and some key General Members explored ways to strengthen ASAP’s position as a network and build on our role in national, regional, & global advocacy towards expanding safe abortion rights and services in Asia.

**Goal**
To promote, protect and advance women’s sexual and reproductive rights and health in Asia by promoting universal access to comprehensive safe abortion services and by reducing unsafe abortion and its complications.
In a major milestone, Youth Champions in two countries - Nepal and Sri Lanka, formalized country-level advocacy networks with support from ASAP. The **Youth Champions Advocacy Network Nepal** (YouthCANN) and **Youth Advocacy Network Sri Lanka** (YANS).  

**YouthCANN** was formalized in Nepal in January 2015 to ensure young people’s sexual and reproductive health and rights by promoting access to safe abortion as a right.  

**YANS** was formed in January 2015 to work on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights of young people and Gender Equality in Sri Lanka. In September 2015 YANS initiated the National Youth champions Think Tank on unsafe abortion and network building meeting.
**O N L I N E  A N D  S O C I A L  M E D I A**

**Website**

[Image of a website]  
**www.asap-asia.org** received 19,800 page views in 2015. The website had 8121 users, 76% were new visitors.

**Facebook, Twitter & Youtube**

[Thumbs up icon]  
In 2015 ASAP’s Likes on Facebook grew by **177%** from 1207 to 3350.

[Twitter bird icon]  
Followers on Twitter grew by **37%** from 1008 to 1380.

[YouTube icon]  
ASAP’s Youtube channel has **48 subscribers** and got **13,251 views** in 2015.

ASAP’s animation film *From Unwanted Pregnancies to Safe Abortions* is now available with subtitles in Arabic, Hindi, Nepali, Sinhalese and Vietnamese.
In 2015 ASAP’s blog published 59 articles. We received contributions from writers in several Asian countries including Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam. The ASAP Blog got 15,274 page hits in 2015.
ASAP’s first Regional Youth Think Tank (YTT)
January 2015, Bangkok, Thailand

In order to build wider alliances and move the safe abortion agenda beyond the usual cohort, we brought together young people from allied sexual and reproductive health networks, to encourage them to include safe abortion as an advocacy agenda.

The meeting included young people representing a wide range of issues and constituencies including women living with disabilities, peer education, sex workers’ rights, medical students for choice etc.

Following an introductory session where Youth Champions shared their current work, the participants were guided to examine 3 main challenges facing them in the work they do, these were: Lack of Access to Services, Lack of Information and Stigma. Participants further strategized ways to address these 3 challenges.
4th Youth Advocacy Institute (YAI)
September 2015, Colombo, Sri Lanka

We held our 4th Youth Advocacy Institute (YAI), which brought together participants from Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Lebanon, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam.

The sessions ranged from understanding the **social construct of gender**, to **patriarchy and power** and helped the participants think through the legitimacy that the **rights-based framework** & language lend to achieving gender equality. Contraception was explored through a fun role-play game and safe abortion techniques were learnt in a hands-on papaya exercise that demonstrated MVA, demystifying medical procedures for a lay audience.

The Institute also delved into **laws and policies** around abortion and the most important question—**what does it mean to be pro-choice?!**
Youth Advocacy Refresher (YAR)

The Youth Advocacy Institute was followed by a Refresher Institute for Youth Champions who had attended previous YAI's. The Refresher Institute aimed to delve more deeply into safe abortion rights advocacy, and strengthen specific skills of participants like communications.

Nadine Moawad of the Association for Progressive Communications, led participants through sessions on communications for a feminist movement building, how to use social media effectively, and creating compelling content using infographics, lists, etc. An important topic of concern was internet security especially for participants from countries with stringent legal restrictions.
Youth Advocacy Institute (YAI), Nepal
September 2015, Kathmandu, Nepal

YouthCANN, the newly formed country advocacy network in Nepal was supported by ASAP to organize its first major event, the 5th YAI in Nepal in October 2015.

The Institute was ASAP’s first country-level YAI, which created a platform for 13 men and women from different spheres including, activism, law, engineering, medicine (doctors and nurses), and social work, to discuss issues surrounding safe and legal abortion in Nepal and Asia.
Youth Champions are encouraged to plan and implement short-term advocacy projects at country or organizational level and are supported through Small Grants Fellowships. 13 such Fellowships were awarded in 2015. The grants may be small but the impact is big!

**INDIA**
Research on impact of sex selection ban on abortion access – published in Reproductive Health Matters

ASAP-CREA meeting on sex selection & safe abortion in India attended by 47 activists.

Abortion rights training of 72 public health students

**CHINA**
12 Youth trained to create feminist forum on safe abortion

**BANGLADESH**
50 Community women trained in menstrual hygiene and contraception

**NEPAL**
32 doctors, nurses and mid-wives trained in gender

15 peers trained in SRHR

12 journalists trained in women’s right to abortion

25 people trained for video contest on abortion rights

**INDONESIA**
15 Youth trained in SRHR & communications to create a blog & website

**PHILIPPINES**
68 members trained in post-abortion care

**VIETNAM**
60 youth trained in interactive drama
9 drama skits created
193 participants in social media campaign

**SRI LANKA**
15 Youth trained in SRHR & communications to create a blog & website
Small Grants in Action

Bangladesh Assembly of Youth Advocates’ **one day training for community women on “Menstrual Regulation for All”**

In Indonesia, the project aimed to mainstream SRHR issues targeting young people through a website. 15 young people passionate about gender and sexuality were trained in communications and a website AYO NGOBROL (meaning Let’s Talk) was set up.

Nepal, **sensitization program for journalists** on Safe abortion and women’s rights.

In the Philippines, Youth Champions set up a "Women’s Rights Collective” a **Post Abortion Care (PAC) advocacy forum** to raise awareness on abortion rights among Filipino women, a **safe abortion blog and Facebook page**.

In Vietnam, Youth Champions organized a successful **social media/communications campaign called 3S-Valentine.** It aimed to raise awareness of young people about Sexual Rights and Safe Sex, with the intention of empowering them through improving their knowledge and practice regarding Sexual and Reproductive health.
Health Care Providers’ Regional Think Tank
September 2015, Colombo, Sri Lanka

We are proud to share that for the first time ever, a meeting of representatives from networks of healthcare professionals in the Asia-Pacific region was held.

Medical and nursing professionals have always been at the forefront of providing care in difficult and dangerous situations and have stepped up on behalf of the vulnerable and marginalized during natural disasters, wars or internal displacement. However, although the medical profession has made progress in recognizing and protecting the human rights of women, not enough has been done by medical professionals to prevent and manage unwanted pregnancies by advocating for and providing access to safe abortion and post-abortion contraception using available platforms, social and professional networks and technology.

ASAP coordinated a meeting of representatives of networks of healthcare professionals in the Asia-Pacific region to explore the potential for collaboration and discuss the willingness and possibilities for a greater inclusion of programs for managing unwanted pregnancies within their existing strategies and activities.

“Over the twenty years that I have been advocating for women’s right to safe abortions, laws seem to be becoming more restrictive.”

Ninuk Vidyantoro

“Medical fraternity has not allowed technical revolutions in reproductive health to progress because they privately profit from restrictions to access.”

Dr. S. T. Choong

Over the twenty years that I have been advocating for women’s right to safe abortions, laws seem to be becoming more restrictive.

Ninuk Vidyantoro
Hotlines

Hotlines providing information to help women seeking abortions are now operational in: India, Indonesia, Lebanon, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand. In 2015 we supported our country partners to set up and run Hotlines on Misoprostol, in India, Philippines, and Sri Lanka. On an average the Hotlines receive anywhere between 10 to 60 phone calls every month depending on their location.

**HOTLINE NUMBERS**

**BANGLADESH** – NARI BANDOPH - 880 1853892424

**INDONESIA** – SAMSARA - +62813 27171188 (Simpatico), +62857 29001188 (IM3), +62878 39770033 (XL), +62896 74677433 (Three)

**INDIA** – MARZEE - +91 9075 764 763

**MALAYSIA** - Betty +6018 390 5198 (9am to 5pm), Dr S P Choong 012-477-2551 (after office hours)

**PAKISTAN** - 0307 - 494 07 07 – (Urdu and Punjabi), 0315 - 917 04 08 – (Urdu and Pashto), 03159473366 (Urdu), 03159473399 (Saraiki).

**PHILIPPINES** – ASK MADS - (+63) 927-3016907, (+63) 939-5277721

**SRI LANKA** – ASK US - +94(0)71590341 / +94(0)715903417

**THAILAND** – TAMTANG – 08399942128, 0890063948, 0844634647, 08651705446,
In partnership with Samsara, Women on Waves, and Women on Web, ASAP organized a three-day workshop for Hotline counselors and managers, who provide information on Misoprostol in April 2015. The purpose was capacity building, evaluation of current services, experience sharing and brainstorming to improve services.

**ADVOCACY & NETWORKING**

ASAP staff participated as spokespeople, trainers and attendees in several international conferences including:

**The 59th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women/Beijing +20, New York, March 2015**


**Gynuity Health Project** on Innovations in Medical Abortion: Improving Access in Restricted Settings held in Bangkok, Thailand, March 2015.

**Association for Progressive Communication**, Imagine a Feminist Internet, Malaysia, July, 2015

**Catholics for Choice** meeting on Conscience and Autonomy, New York, December 2015
COUNTRY ADVOCACY

In 2015 ASAP supported advocacy efforts to examine and strengthen laws, polices & practice in 6 countries.

Afghanistan:
Dr. Katayon Sadat organised a two-day training on safe abortion techniques for 15 participants from the Obstetrics and Gynecology (OBGYN) department of Malalai Maternal Hospital and Rabia Balkhi Hospital.

Indonesia: Ignatia Alfa Gloria, Ninuk Windyantoro and SAMSARA organized a national-level working group for safe abortion advocacy by looking into implementation of Regulation 61, which permits abortion up to 40 days, in cases of rape or to save the woman’s life.
**Pakistan:** Tanzila Khan from the National Forum for Women with Disabilities (NFWWD) organized a meeting of 10 women with disabilities to explore how they can be involved in abortion rights and SRHR advocacy.

**Philippines:** Sarah Jane Biton set up a “Women’s Rights Collective” a Post Abortion Care (PAC) advocacy forum to raise awareness on abortion rights among Filipino women.

**Vietnam:** Hoang Minh Son and Thao Vi from the Centre for Creative Initiatives in Health and Population worked to build discussions on the regulation related to safe abortion in the draft Population Law.
Sex selection and safe abortion rights: Past trajectories, current impact and future strategies
A meeting organized by ASAP & CREA, June 2015, New Delhi, India

For several years now the issue of sex selection has gotten entangled with safe abortion access and the understanding of women’s right to safe abortion in India. This conflation has occurred at many levels—policy, programmes, language and implementation. In order to unpack the issues involved, ASAP & CREA jointly organized a 2-day meeting in Delhi, bringing together researchers, advocates, and activists to examine the context, share findings of field research studies, and legal cases that highlight attacks on abortion access due to sex selection and implementation of the PCPNDT Act.

Among the speakers were Shweta Krishnan who presented ASAP’s study about the origins of the sex selection campaign and the history of the status of girl children in pre and post-colonial India. Anand Pawar and Pritam Potdar of Samyak shared the findings of their field research from Maharashtra which found that medical doctors are increasingly turning away women seeking second trimester abortions due to fear of being accused of sex selection under the PCPNDT.
SAMYAK’s work to expand access to second trimester abortions in Maharashtra

Under ASAP’s Small Grants program, Pritam Potdar, ASAP Youth Champion, undertook research to study the impact sex selection and the PCPNDT Act was having in curtailing access to second trimester abortions in Maharashtra. This research study led to a larger grant to Samyak from the Safe Abortion Action Fund, to expand research and advocacy related to this specific issue. As part of this project Samyak has organized trainings for medical doctors in 6 districts in Maharashtra. ASAP continues to support this work integrally in training, research methodology and data analysis.

The A Project, Lebanon

Rola Yasmine, is a nurse and works with the feminist collective Nasawiya. Being one of the small grant awardees, Rola set up the A Project & launched its website http://www.theaproject.org/ in 2014. The project builds agency, alternatives and autonomy in sexuality, sexual health, and gender. In 2015 the A project engaged in activities like - Sexuality Hotline, Support Groups, Outreach and Training, Multimedia and Research.
The International Campaign for Women’s Right to Safe Abortion

May 28th International Day of Action on Women’s Health

In support of the International Campaign for Women’s Right to Safe Abortion, ASAP ran a social media campaign for May 28th International Day of Action on Women’s Health. Additionally, ASAP Youth Champions in Nepal organized sensitization sessions in 3 medical colleges and distributed Dignity kits to women. In Sri Lanka champions organized an online campaign on Facebook inviting youth from across Asia to share their picture with a slogan in support of women’s right to sexual and reproductive health. ASAP also participated in a tweetathon to mark the day.
The theme for the International Day of Women’s Access to Safe Abortion 2015 was “Busting the Myths.” ASAP Youth Champion Sarah Jane conducted a photo shoot of Myth Buster Super Heros, a series of photo-posters that challenge myths about abortion. In total over 45 posters were created and circulated widely on Facebook and Twitter on September 28th for International Day of Women’s Access to Safe Abortion.

**Tweetathon**
On behalf of the International campaign for Women’s Right to Safe Abortion, ASAP Communications Officer along with Youth Champion Sarah Soysa from Sri Lanka led a global Tweetathon for September 28th. In total the ASAP Twitter account received 230 retweets, gained over 30 followers, 78 favorites and 180 mentions.
From unwanted pregnancy to safe abortion: Sharing information about abortion in Asia through animation, Shweta Krishnan, Suchitra Dalvie, Reproductive Health Matters, May 2015, Vol 23, Issue 45

“If a woman has even one daughter, I refuse to perform the abortion”: Sex determination and safe abortion in India, Pritam Potdar, Alka Barua, Suchitra Dalvie, Anand Pawar, Reproductive Health Matters, May 2015, Vol 23, Issue 45

The Asia Safe Abortion Partnership

*Because restrictions on women’s access to safe abortions violates their fundamental rights to health & life*

www.asap-asia.org