

Report
The Asia Safe Abortion Partnership
Strategic Planning Meeting
29th -30th January 2015
Narai Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand



Objectives:

To develop a strategic plan by articulating ASAP's theory of changing including

- priority strategies and activities for achieving each of its objectives;
- its assumptions about the network relationships and the external environment and how it will address these in ways that contribute towards improving access to safe abortion;
- how it will be addressing diverse contextual factors in the region; and
- how it will know it is making progress

Facilitator: Barbara Klugman

Dr. Suchitra Dalvie introduced the agenda, format and intended outcomes of the strategic planning meeting. Barbara explained the meaning and purpose of a "Theory of Change" to be able to define and communicate strategies which will lead to expected changes and outcomes. An attempt was made to familiarise the participants with the objectives of the

meeting and how the agenda aims to achieve those. Barbara said we will be brainstorming and thinking of ways to help the network to understand itself and access itself in terms of what it is doing?; we need to think as a network and be able to priorities and what changes we can reasonably expect, how can we contribute in bringing this change.



Barbara further explained Theory of change as: recognising that there is a change and every organisation is operating on some kind of idea which work on “if you do this then this will change”. We have to explicitly say what our assumptions are and how we need to change.

For Eg- Take one thing ASAP does and what does it lead to- ASAP creates content which is pro women, feminist and abortion as rights and women’s bodies--- which is of a value so that we can get the information, because other we do not have funds for that, so that we can get information to use it at local level/ generate in, put it out and start a conversation going in bigger world so that the conversation in work changes.

Thus, at the end of two days we should be able to spell out for ASAP these are the things it does, these are the expected changes, how do we measure the outcomes and what can we do.

Orientation of the Meeting

Dr. Dalvie then presented the existing Goal and Objectives of ASAP to review and finalise it with inputs and suggestions from participants. The following are the key outcomes of this exercise:

Goal:

To promote, protect and advance women's sexual and reproductive rights and health in Asia, by promoting access to comprehensive safe abortion services and by reducing unsafe abortion and its complications.

(Access refers to all its components such as geographical, financial, sensitive, continuity of care. Comprehensive services include pre procedure counselling, full range of safe and effective methods, post abortion care and contraception, as well as emergency referral services as needed)

Objective 1: To increase the availability of evidence based and scientific information on safe abortion, including medical abortion and to facilitate its dissemination and use among members and other relevant stakeholders.

Objective 2: To increase the capacities of the network and its members to advocate and network for access to safe abortion as a human right.

Objective 3: To promote technologies and service delivery systems (to include mainstream and alternative) for safer abortion access.

Objective 4: To increase visibility of a right based approach to safe abortion at local, regional and global forums (physical as well as media spaces).

Implications of the survey of members

Barbara presented the survey findings to the participants; the survey aimed to gain information to inform ASAP's strategic planning and ability to achieve its four objectives. The session intended to take account of the perspectives and needs of the ASAP's organisational and individual partners. Total 28 responses were received from 14 countries- out of these half were from organisations and half from individuals; following are the key findings shared by Barbara:

Objective 1: To increase the availability of accurate information on safe abortion, including medical abortion and facilitate its dissemination among members and other relevant stakeholders-

- Big differences in access to information across countries
- Different groups in SAME country have different access to information
- 2/3rd can access research-based information on laws & policies, methods of safe abortion & methods of legal abortion
- 1/3rd can access research-based information on other issues
- There is least information on

- Medical & nursing curricula
- Availability & quality of medical abortion drugs
- Women's preference for medical or surgical abortion

Objective 2: capacities of the network members to advocate for access to safe abortion

- A mix of individuals, voluntary groups, NGOs and networks are working to increase access to safe abortion
- Few abortion-specific networks
- Responses from the same country gave different information hence not all groups know or are working with others
- 2 major types: service providers & women's rights groups
- Limited no. of respondents have good relationships with
- Medical association, national / provincial health depts.
- nursing association /nursing school/ med school
- groups doing drug registration
- Many kinds of support needed from ASAP
 - Advocacy
 - Networking
 - Tech support & provider training
 - Movement-building
 - Reducing stigma
 - Comprehensive vision on SRHR & abortion

Objective 3: To promote use of new technologies including manual vacuum aspiration and medical abortion

- 2/3rd of groups promoting access to safe abortion include medical abortion; but wide differences across countries

Objective 4: To strengthen networking and increase visibility of the issue at regional forums

- 3 respondents indicated ASAP could support partners' engagement in regional and international forums.
- This is clearly not a priority issue for respondents whose primary focus is on ASAP's ability to support their in-country work.

(Detailed report on outcome of the survey is attached in the annexure)

Interview Panel:

Dr. Dalvie divided the participants into three groups; a speaker from each group was then invited to share their perspectives on the value and challenges of country level networking for safe abortion advocacy. Following were the three groups:

1. Indonesia, Afghanistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Myanmar
2. India, Nepal, Pakistan, Malaysia
3. Vietnam, China, Thailand

The panelists were Sarah Jane from Philippines, Saba Ismail from Pakistan and Phan Bich Thuy from Vietnam to share their perspectives on the value and challenges of networking.



Using the concerns highlighted by the panelists Barbara went on to explain what is meant by a strong network and what its key features are. The participants were asked to work in groups and look at what it would take for us to build effective network and what role ASAP can play in facilitating this process. She said that a network can be strong only if it is valuable to its members and therefore it is important to think of what would make people join the network?

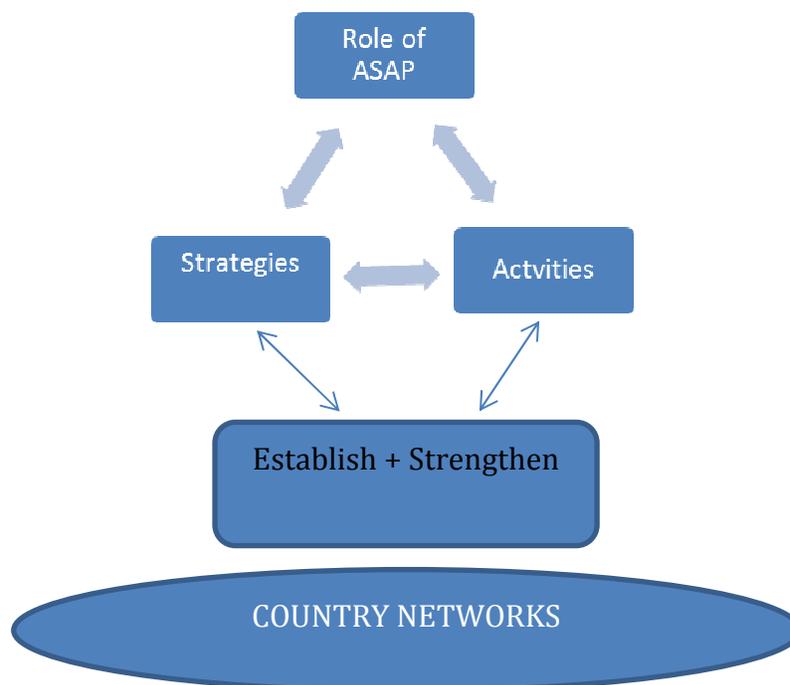
Elaborating further she mentioned the following features of a good network:

1. Bringing together diverse capacities: service provision, research, advocacy etc.
2. Bringing together diverse constituencies: Human Right groups, health professionals, government at different levels
3. Strong and reliable strategic and logistical coordination and communications from the Secretariat. The network needs to invest time in sharing and learning, bridging boundaries. Question of having a mandate of coordination very important
4. Transparency of governance is important-how members are represented, how decisions are made, transparency of budget, clarity of roles and responsibility

5. Strong and reliable participation of members is critical. For a very strong network members need to be connected to other groups to learn and share and need space for opportunities.
6. Network members within each country are learning from each other and that creates a healthy network. This needs central coordination with fluidity and movement.
7. Freedom of individual groups and sub-networks to make their own decisions, linkages, collaborations etc.
8. Collaboration and not competition is important and this includes feeding information to the Secretariat and doing work on behalf of ASAP.
9. Ability to rapidly take advantage of expected and unexpected opportunities -. If you have good governance this can be resolved, the Steering Committee can be responsive.
10. Funds that are flexible and long term
11. Transparency regarding purpose, use and accounting for funds

Would strengthening country networks be a good strategy for ASAP? If yes, what are the challenges?

Participants were asked to work in groups again and identify whether country-level networks of organizations are an effective mechanism through which ASAP can achieve its goals and if we should have diverse networks- health care providers, hotline etc.? The objective was to identify strategies for the ASAP Secretariat and partners to contribute towards strengthening of country-level collaboration, with particular attention to whether we need different strategies in different country contexts (levels of legality and public acceptability of abortion, as well as levels of civil society organisation)



Reporting from the Groups:

Group 1

ASAP

- ASAP to connect and introduce to organizations and networks working on the issue.
- Facilitate regional/national dialogues and be part of it.
- National youth networks can help identify participants
- ASAP more staff to facilitate this process

Members

- Country level networks can partner with other and share funds- eg Sri Lanka FPA may have extra funds for advocacy
- Connect and support other initiatives to build mutual trust
- Highlight ASAP work in our networks/ field of work provide visibility
- Let ASAP know who to connect
- Help in raising funds for future projects
- Include abortion in other allied issue
- In existing budgets of organizations can contribute to support country level advocacy

Group 2

ASAP

- Lebanon and Malaysia face a lot of migrant issues, ASAP could help by connecting with International Labour Organisation and other organizations working on the issue.
- Bangkok has many hotlines running, these are mostly run by government and hospitals ASAP can help in mapping and evaluating these in order how we can work with them
- Country level coordinators- representation
- Malaysia strengthen country level networks and connect with them like nurses, service providers

Members

- Public awareness in Thailand on safe abortion, sex for hotlines- sensitization of the existing hotlines
- Mapping impact of existing hotline and work with them
- Raise public awareness.
- Country/ provincial coordinator / organise programs in that country

Group 3

ASAP

- Flexible funding for members

- YCs contribute online for advocacy campaigns- one regional theme, slogans, t shirts, one voice for international days/ campaigns as one youth champions

Members

- We need to think through if country level networks need to be registered. One option is to have one SC member and rotational secretariat so each organization can host for one year similar to Y PEER
- Localizing ASAP objectives into country context
- Work with National Networks

ASAP at regional and global forums



In this session an attempt was made to assess if it is a strategic priority for ASAP to

- bring experiences on abortion from ASIA into international policy forums and
- aim to influence the debate at regional meetings on SRHR to get safe abortion onto their agendas and discussions.

Participants were divided into following groups and were asked to identify- What, Which & Why? This exercise will be instrumental in developing ASAP's Theory of Change in order to identify best practices, objectives around visibility at regional and international level.

In addition to unpacking this, the objective of this exercise was to assess if it is strategic priority for ASAP to bring experiences on abortion from Asia into regional and international policy forums and aim to influence the debate at regional meetings on SRHR to get safe abortion onto their discussions and agendas.

Group 1 & 4- Is it worth ASAP being involved at the international level? How will you know that it is giving you value?

Group 2 & 3 - Is it worth ASAP being involved at the regional level? How will you know that it is giving you value?

Group 5- International communications & Regional communications

- Identify stakeholder who can be an ally- disseminate information
- Important to engage for visibility
- Add voice strengthen the existing campaigns
- Shared learning- best practices
- Awareness

Plenary Report Back from the Groups:

International Group (Group 1&4) –

We should participate and it is important but there are funding constraints

ASAP should get involved at the international level for the following reasons:

- It is important because this will give more credibility to work of people back in their countries as there is a good chance to meet policy makers in these meetings. Will help in networking and lobbying. Will give visibility and recognition
- In a forum which makes consensus documents such spaces are important to influence to push for progressive language
- Shared learning

Following are some of the ways to facilitate more involvement in international forums:

- ASAP finding funding
- Scholarships ASAP may support in proposals
- Help identify donor agencies
-

Value contribution of this engagement can be gauged through the following:

- Follow up activities
- Who changed what and where- these outcomes need to be documented

Regional Group (Group 2 & 3)-

ASAP should get involved at regional level as this will help in capacity building, increasing visibility and funding opportunity, mainstreaming the issue. Through being involved at the regional level we may be able to influence the language of documents and also bring in the abortion component

Following are some of the ways in which these conferences can be used more strategically
ASAP

- Events
- Panel
- Satellite
- Lunch gatherings
- Booth with talks, materials, wifi, food
- Questions from the floor
- Using Social Media when you are there
- Presentations
- Self-promotion through pamphlets, annual reports
- Sharing by members
- Get onto planning committee
- Logo on outcome document
- Try getting our members into the drafting committee or getting onto rapporteuring

IWAC, Asia Pacific on Aids and SRHR, ICPD, WGNRR are some of the regional processes in which ASAP can engage.

Secretariat can access the value contribution of this engagement through the following-

- Secretariat creates a reporting form
- Feedback to ASAP- this can be done through designing a contract and listing down obligations like write a small report/ blog.
- Positioning the members who attend these conferences and profiling very important

Group 5- International communications & Regional communications

It is important for ASAP to engage and interact with organisations and issues both at international and regional level for the following reasons:

- Identify stakeholder who can be an ally- disseminate information
- Important to engage for visibility
- Add voice strengthen the existing campaigns
- Shared learning- best practices
- Awareness

In order to access the value addition of this engagement and the gauge the impact this is making the following tools can be used:

- Retweet
- Referring
- Blog visits

- Analytics
- Google importance
- Comments and engagement
- Comment analysis
- Case study- shared by partners
- Requests for information

Day 2

Deepening ASAP strategies

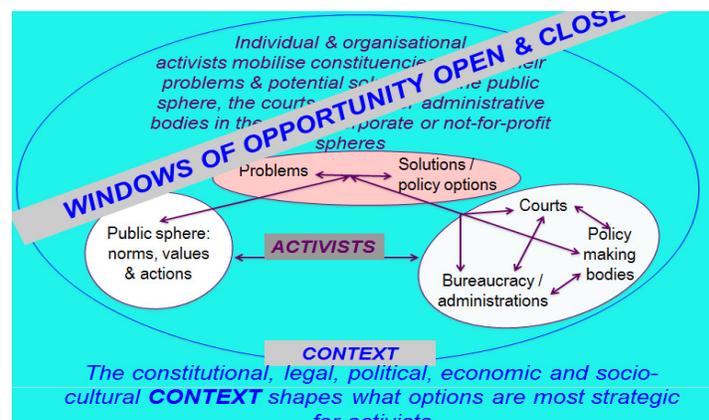
Barbara introduced the Theory of Change framework for accessing progress. She explained that it is a process and is an ever changing product. Many factors influence changes and therefore operating with complexities has been found to be useful.

Our role as activists is to first work out what is the problem of the people we care about. We are worried about problems of poor, young, unmarried women so we need to identify which impact of the problem we need to sort out- is it legality or stigma etc. Based on a mix of experience & evidence from the field it analyses the current context, actors & power dynamics to identify the:

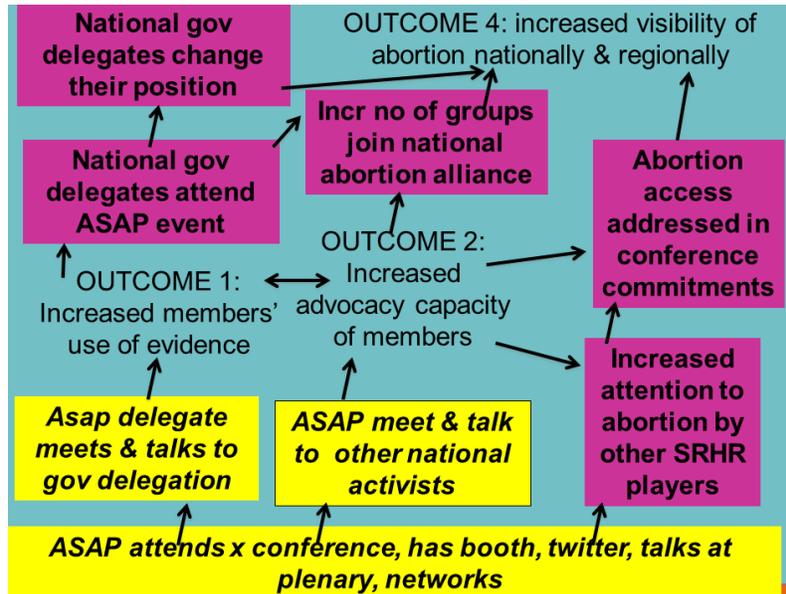
- mix of strategies you assume will contribute to outcomes on a pathway towards a specified social change goal
- Likely sequence /pathways of change; if there's any predictable order – what will be markers of progress?
- assumptions & hypotheses about causality, programme implementation & how external factors may influence these pathways / uncertainties & risks / & what to do about them

A THEORY OF CHANGE thus lays out your assumptions as to how you will get from a problem to a series of outcomes that lead towards your goal; it makes explicit -how the CONTEXT may affect this process, what strategies it hopes will influence and what outcomes will contribute to further change.

HOW DOES SOCIAL CHANGE HAPPEN?



Barbara then went on to explain what is meant by outcome- a **change** in the behaviour, relationships, actions, activities, policies, or practices of an individual, group, community, organization, or institution



Based on the discussion participants were asked to work in groups to identify priority strategies and activities for ASAP to achieve its objectives;



Strategy- Activity- Outcome

Group 1- Gathering Data- communication

Strategy:

- Collecting and disseminating data

Stakeholder:

- Civil Society
- Media
- Government

Activity:

- Training is the main mechanism for disseminating
- VCAT for all stakeholders
- Need to identify the kind of data to have more clarity on target group/ method and what role secretariat plays- strategizing under the umbrella of data collection

Outcome:

- Safe accessible, affordable and stigma free abortion service
- Decline in baby abandonment
- Decline in Child Marriage

Group 2- Media Sensitization

Strategy:

- Media exposure program and training for journalists and editors and those working on social media
- Different styles/ language creative to express our ideas messages- curating content
- Media Watch
- Create press release and also reading material

Activity:

ASAP

- develop manual
- ToT to country network
- Prepare/ curate reading material
- Funds- template for press release
- For media watch create guidelines/ toolkit

Country

- translate manual and RM into local context
- funds
- lobby federation
- explore more style of message- creative messaging
- mapping individuals in mass media who interested in the issue can be moved/ partnered/ allied

- Curating and sorting out messages- according to what works in a country context

Outcomes:

- Increase the visibility of ASAP and safe abortion issue- makes it more concrete and increase media coverage- interviews/ articles/ mainstream
- Involvement of media people in country network- media champions
- Research based and evidenced based reporting on the issue by Media

Group 3- Health Providers Advocacy Group

Strategy

- VCAT at three levels- Medical Doctors, Mid-level providers and trainers
- Will work with young trainers mainly- easy to move
- Train on technology and on using hotlines- enables to use guidelines
- This will enable them to Review and update guidelines- lead to changes in curriculum
- These trainers become advocates for safe services and sensitized – lead to an enabling environment, reduced MMR

Activity:

- provide us the country level guidelines on disseminating information and provide with concrete updated information on technology and help in lobby with local organizations in the country
- Facilitate exchange meetings with providers
- Share best practices- hotlines
- Raise funds for these activities

Outcome:

Access to safe MA and MVA

Reduced deaths from complications

Women achieve their rights

Reduced abandonment of babies

Group 4- Youth Capacity/ Leadership

Strategy:

- Youth Advocacy Institute
- Mentoring
- Networking
- Social Media
- Small Grants

Activity:

- Increases knowledge and SM skills
- Member share best practices with own networks- two way knowledge sharing
- More sustainable involvement for members
- Help them achieve the members to achieve their objectives- personal and professional
- Create mutual ground

- Creates Small Grants- mentoring, SM. Networking

Outcome:

- Create more attractive networks locally- opportunity for more funding since small funds used in big way
- Mentoring- you become a mentor on a special issue- area of skill
- Continuous learning- share best practices and awareness
- Expertise gained
- Sustainable network since mentors responsible for other
- Expertise gained
- Networking opportunity
- Social Media- engagement with surroundings- engage with the public- on local and national and secretariat can engage on regional and global creates visibility and legitimacy

Measuring the Impact:

Trainings

- YAI- no of applications
- More members to YAR as facilitators
- Trainers- willing to join
- YAI process being replicated in other countries

Mentoring-

- Do we have new mentors
- Do our mentors stay on board
- Mentors- do they have a niche
- Taking on mentoring and sharing

Networking-

- More organisations working on different issues collaborating/partnering with ASAP
- International regional forum- diverse panel- different people with diverse expertise
- No of Youth Champions representing ASAP in forums

Social Media-

- Youth Champion's blogging/ engaging/ advocating/ interacting with ASAP

Small Grants-

- No of applicants- has there been an increase
- Usability of small grant outcome
- Are the projects sustained?

Group 5- Country Network developing and strengthening

Strategy-

- Network with existing partners to get more Youth Champions
- Identifying local partners working on related issues and get them for advocacy training

- Connect with local level- brainstorming to get support- will help to identify grants and mutual relationship

Activity:

- Will have more young people in forums
- Bringing local level to ASAP trainings
- Providing new data/ platform for blogging

Outcomes

- Network building
- More People using ASAP tools for advocacy
- Support advocacy efforts
- Social Media visibility
- Funding opportunities
- Stronger local level support
- Growing no of youth advocates
- Visibility and credibility
- More Allies/ partnership building

Measuring

- Invitations
- New young people's engagement
- Increased funding
- New partners from new countries
- Online engagement
- Support for projects

Group 6- Sensitize Legal Professionals

Strategy:

- Identifying members
- CRR
- Repro-health law
- Including sessions on country law and International laws in our sessions

Activity

- Resource persons
- Provide with arguments/ critiques and disseminate what they are providing
- Connect with country level networks

Outcome:

- More legal professionals join
- More sensitized lawyers
- Contribute to drafting laws/ amendments
- Assured legal support
- Building advocacy capacity- hotline, service delivery systems

Discussing the outcomes of the session Barbara said it's important to analyse challenges to the goals/ outcomes/ strategy discussed and also spell out how realistic and doable they are.

What must ASAP secretariat & ASAP partners do to achieve:

- Outcome 1: increased availability & use of accurate information by members/ partners
- Outcome 2: increased capacities of network members to advocate
- Outcome 3: increased use of technologies for safer abortion
- Outcome 4: strengthened networking and increased visibility of abortion as a rights & health issue at local, regional & international forums

What is the relationship between these outcomes and where do they lead?

What assumptions are we making about the external context?

Member's Commitment- Key values that underlie ASAP's objectives-

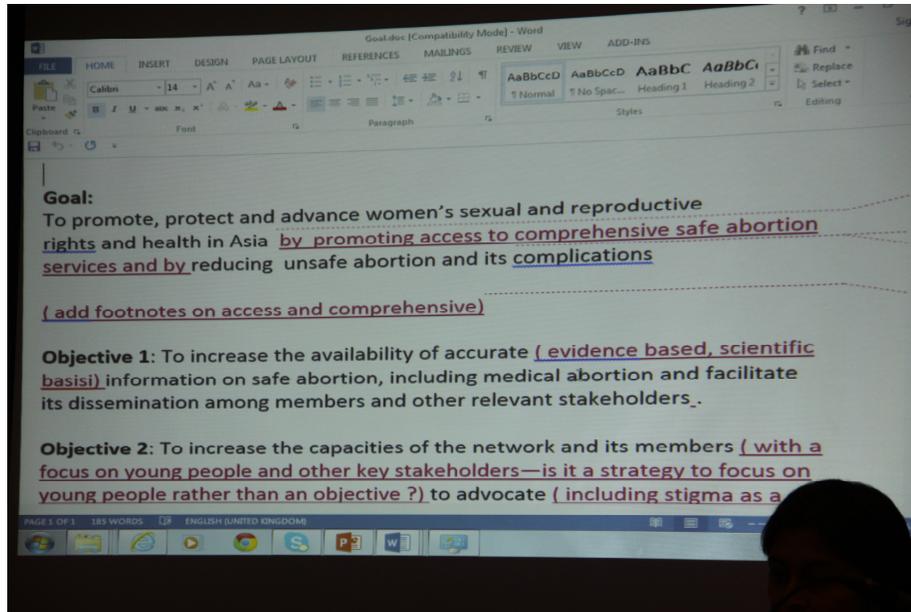
Members were asked to list out core values that they think should be part of ASAP's objectives:

- Promotes and safe guards Reproductive Rights
- Save women's lives
- Support ICPD
- Women's right and autonomy
- Non-discriminatory services
- Improving Quality of health services

Values underlying how ASAP works?

- Respect+ support country network activities
- Continuous meaningful engagement of young people
- Encourage diversity of opinions
- Open to change+ dynamic
- Autonomy and women rights
- Social Justice
- Abortion as a human right
- Non discriminations
- Empowering women
- Reclaiming power
- Radical yet not alienated

This two day exercise helped us to formulate new vision and goals of ASAP; following were the key outcomes:



Vision:

A society in which Asian women live with dignity, sexual and reproductive rights and health

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

Value statement:

We believe that women's rights are human rights and that gender equality cannot be achieved without reproductive and sexual rights, including access to safe abortion.

We believe in the right of all women to be empowered to obtain equitable access to reproductive services free of coercion, discrimination and violence, within a social justice framework.

We respect the diverse religions and cultural identities of the membership and find ways to work together in synergy.

We believe in the value of collaborative relationships with regional and international alliances to share and exchange and learn from their experience and be able to support efforts globally to move this agenda forward.

Internal values: (What should guide our expectations of each other and how should each group relate to and behave amongst us)

- Feminist values
- Inclusiveness—members from diverse countries, backgrounds, skills, constituencies etc
- Meaningful participation of young people in the process
- (do we listen to them adequately, can they give feedback, are they involved in governance)

- Being able to debate and move forward with democratic / strategic decision making
- Being responsive and strategic/ dynamic and evolving
- Reciprocity—feeding in needed from all levels
- Respecting and supporting country networks

Closing & Evaluation

The participants were asked for feedback on their experience and whether they felt that they had met the intended objectives? What we did in the last two days? What have we achieved? Shared expectation-What was the most valuable part of this workshop for you? What would have improved this strategic planning process?

Dr. Dalvie thanked everyone for their involvement and outlined the intended next steps.