



Youth Advocacy Institute 2013



Youth Champions

**The Refresher Institute
2nd, 3rd Sept 2013. Mumbai, India
An Executive Summary**

Introduction:

In November 2012, ASAP conducted its first Youth Advocacy Institute for Safe Abortion Rights for 13 young SRHR advocates from the countries of **China, Cyprus India, Indonesia, Iran, Lebanon, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Vietnam**. These young advocates were introduced to a broad discourse on abortion that included the need to place abortion within the larger context of gender, sexual and reproductive health and rights. They were also introduced to the techniques of safe surgical and medical abortion, and give an overview of ways in which to formulate and communicate information and advocacy messages to the general public and fellow advocates.

Six candidates showed remarkable progress and were invited to participate in a Refresher Institute for Safe Abortion Rights on 2nd 3rd Sept in Mumbai. Four of them were recipients of the ASAP small grant project to implement short-term projects in their own countries. Four of them were also selected to attend the UNESCAP Asia-Pacific Population Conference. All six were provided social media mentoring during the course of the year.

These participants were from the countries of **China, India, Iran, Lebanon, Nepal and Sri Lanka**.

Objectives of the Refresher Institute for Safe Abortion Rights:

1. To strengthen the capacity of the **youth champions to be peer trainers** in understanding access to safe abortion as a gender and sexual and reproductive rights, as well as human rights issue.
2. To **consolidate the mentoring** for utilization of **social media** by the youth champions for online thought leadership and advocacy.
3. To support the **ongoing engagement** of the youth champions, within and outside their community to ensure implementation of the above strategies in order to advocate effectively for improved access to safe abortion services, including medical abortion.



**Figure 1: A reunion at the Refreshers
Summary of The Institute:**

The four youth champions selected for small grants presented reports of their projects before the ASAP Staff.

1. China:

The youth champion conducted **three capacity building workshops** for peer educators in collaboration with the China Youth Network. Each workshop had about 25 attendees from various provinces around China. The agenda included sessions on safe abortion as a woman's choice and right, and also sessions on how to address safe abortion and various methods used in peer education. A **survey** was conducted among the participants to assess their understanding of safe abortion, as well as their understanding of the need for safe abortion. The findings of this survey will be used to make recommendations for changes in the current peer education manual. This manual is distributed among 2500 to 3000 peer educators in China.



Figure 2: Youth Champion Yu Yang Shares his experience

2. India:

The youth champion from India conducted a survey among 20 abortion providers in the Indian state of Maharashtra to assess their knowledge about **sex selection as a symptom of gender discrimination**, and about the impact of this knowledge on the provision of safe abortion in the state.

3. Lebanon:

The youth champion from Lebanon plans to run a sexuality and reproductive health hotline that will provide accurate information on medical abortion to women who may need these services. As part of her project, she has designed a website with comprehensive information about gender, sexuality and reproductive health for women. This website will be available in English and in Arabic with additional material in the language of immigrant migrant workers in Lebanon.

4. Sri Lanka:

The youth champion from Sri Lanka conducted a study among 1000 undergraduate student across 20 Sri Lankan universities to assess the knowledge and attitude of young men and women to safe abortion, and to the inclusion of a liberal policy on safe abortion in the upcoming Youth Policy Review in Sri Lanka.

Social Media Experience:

All 6 youth champions shared their experience on social media. The participant from Nepal has launched her [own blog](#) during the course of the year, and the participants from Lebanon and Sri Lanka spoke about the progress made on website building and Twitter respectively.

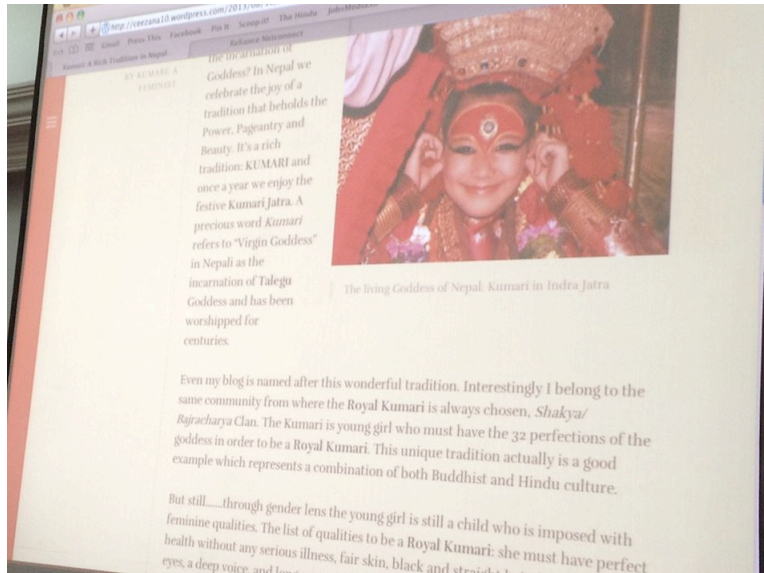


Figure 3 : Blog from Nepal by Youth Champion Shreejana Bhajracharya

The participants from **China, India and Iran** shared challenges. While China does not allow its citizens to access commonly used platforms like Facebook and Twitter, it does allow them to access a Chinese version of both these platforms called Renren and Weibo. The participant from India spoke about the challenges faced in rural India where the penetration of the Internet, mobile devices and electricity is limited. Finally the participant from Iran shared her experience of working in a policed environment, where occasionally netizens are arrested for their statements on social media.

The institute also provided the participants deeper insights into SRHR advocacy as well as to research and communications strategies during the following sessions:

1. Social Media Platforms - Update:

In this session the resource person discussed the challenges that had come up in the previous session, and then discussed nuanced communications strategies like scheduled posts and organizations methods like editorial calendars with the participants. This was a hands-on session that allowed participants to work alongside the resource person and try techniques as they were being introduced.

Facilitator: Shweta Krishnan, Communication Officer, ASAP

2. Population Stabilization, Environment and Safe Abortion:

This session gave the participants an overview of population policies and international development agendas like the ICPD and the MDGs and also provided insights on how abortion is positioned in these discussions.

Facilitator: Suchitra Dalvie, Coordinator, ASAP

3. Tools For Research:

This session gave the participants a quick overview of the various forms of research that can be used to procure the much needed data on safe abortion in Asia and also provided insights into the use of such research as an advocacy tool.

Facilitator: Sana Contractor, Masters in Public Health, Johns Hopkins

4. Ethics, Conscience and Being Prochoice:

This session introduced the participants to the concept of ethics, and to enquire into both the prolife and prochoice debate and sex-selection.

Facilitator: Amar Jesani, Founder Indian Journal of Medical Ethics

5. Building Social Movements:

In this session the participants discussed the ways in which feminist philosophy can be channeled into movements for social transformation. They learned that a movement unlike a campaign is long term, has a large critical mass and helps change social processes that might have been in operation for a long time. The session also helped them understand the significance of processes like networking that result in effective social movements.

Facilitator: Manisha Gupte, PhD, Feminist activist, Founder MASUM

The participants also watched a clip from the movie **Revolutionary Road** and critiqued various media that appear commonly on Facebook in order to understand the pitfalls of a non-inclusive feminist view. This session helped them explore intersectionality and the role of race and class in creating hegemonic views even within feminist spaces.

Peer Training:

The participants also had the opportunity to work alongside the resource persons for the Second Youth Advocacy Institute (YAI 2), and build their capacity as peer trainers in sessions on Patriarchy, Techniques of Contraception and Abortion, Abortion Law, Interpersonal Communication, Content Creation and Social Media Platforms.

Blog report:

<http://asap-asia.org/blog/youth-champions-2012-reunite-a-brief-report-on-the-refresher-institute/>