ASIA PACIFIC FORUM
of National Human Rights Institutions

Annual Report

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List of abbreviations

ANNI	Asian NGOs Network on NHRIs
APF	Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions
APT	Association for the Prevention of Torture
ICC	International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights
NGO(s)	non-governmental organisation(s)
NHRI(s)	national human rights institution(s)
NPM(s)	national preventive mechanism(s)
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
Paris Principles	Principles relating to the Status of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights
SPT	United Nations Subcommittee on the Prevention of Torture
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UPR	Universal Periodic Review

About the APF

> **The APF is a progressive organisation directed towards bringing about genuine change and reform. We need this kind of collective spirit in addressing questions of injustice, impunity and inequity.**
>
> LORETTA ROSALES
> OUTGOING CHAIRPERSON, COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE PHILIPPINES
> SOURCE: APF INTERVIEW, MARCH 2015

The Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions (the APF) is the leading human rights organisation in the region. Established in 1996, we are a coalition of national human rights institutions (NHRIs) from all corners of the Asia Pacific.

NHRIs are independent bodies, established by law or in the constitution, to promote and protect human rights in their respective countries. While they are established by the government, they operate independently from government.

Strong and effective NHRIs help bridge the "protection gap" between the rights of individuals and the responsibilities of the State by:

- Monitoring the human rights situation in the country and the actions of the State
- Providing advice to ensure the State meets its international and domestic human rights commitments
- Receiving, investigating and resolving complaints of human rights violations
- Undertaking human rights education programs for all sections of the community.

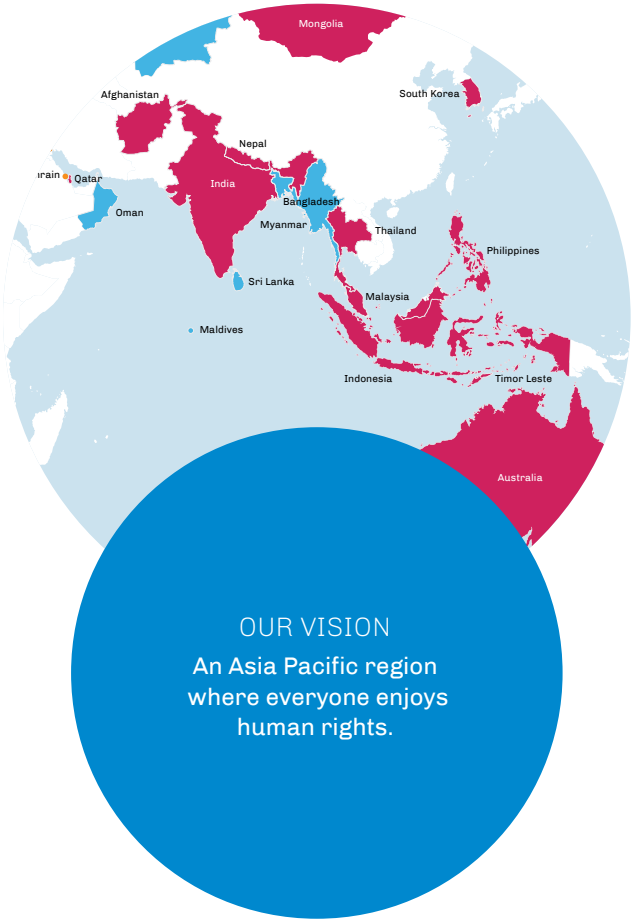
Unlike the other regions in the world, there is no regional court or protection system covering the Asia Pacific that people can turn to when their human rights are violated.

This makes the role of NHRIs in our region even more critical.

The APF provides practical support and advice to our members in order to help them be as effective as possible. We also provide advice and expertise to governments and civil society groups in the region to support the establishment of independent NHRIs that meet the international standards set out in the Paris Principles.

The APF brings member institutions together to develop a shared vision and shared strategies to tackle many of the most serious and complex human rights challenges in the region.

We also develop partnerships at the international and regional levels to promote and protect human rights, raise the profile of NHRIs and ensure that the collective voice of our members is heard.



How we seek to create change

Bringing about change on complex issues is hard, long-term work. It is the result of many committed groups and individuals working together for shared outcomes.

Our goal is to work with others – governments, civil society and international partners – to build communities where the human rights of all people are respected, protected and fulfilled.

During the past year, we developed a Theory of Change which illustrates the complex and interconnected pathways through which our activities lead to four higher order outcomes:

- Outcome 1: Increased number of NHRIs complying with UN and international standards.
- Outcome 2: NHRIs are better able to perform their functions in the areas of complaints, education, monitoring, advocacy and reporting.
- Outcome 3: A more conducive environment for the recognition and effectiveness of NHRIs at the national, regional and international level.
- Outcome 4: The APF is a well-governed, sustainably resourced, strategically directed and member-owned organisation.

Indicators were developed for these outcomes, as part of a robust monitoring and evaluation system that will underpin the APF 2015–2020 Strategic Plan, which will commence in July 2015.

To achieve these outcomes, the APF will undertake the following six functions:

- Providing advice and expertise
- Building stronger national human rights institutions
- Collaborating and sharing knowledge
- Promoting gender equality
- Contributing at the national, regional and international level
- Strengthening organisational leadership and governance.

These functions have been designed and will be implemented in a way that contributes to each of the outcomes over the life of our five-year Strategic Plan.

As part of our transition to the new Strategic Plan, the 2014–15 Annual Report records our progress over the past year in performing these functions, drawing on data from a simplified APF member survey and analysing performance information related to the delivery of our activities by a secretariat of seven staff and a small number of external consultants.

Our members

The APF currently has 15 full members and seven associate members, drawn from all corners of the region:

- **Afghanistan** Independent Human Rights Commission
- **Australian** Human Rights Commission
- National Human Rights Commission of **Bangladesh**
- National Human Rights Commission of **India**
- **Indonesian** National Commission on Human Rights
- **Jordan** National Centre for Human Rights
- National Centre for Human Rights of **Kazakhstan**
- Human Rights Commission of **Malaysia**
- Human Rights Commission of the **Maldives**
- **Myanmar** National Human Rights Commission
- National Human Rights Commission of **Mongolia**
- National Human Rights Commission of **Nepal**
- **New Zealand** Human Rights Commission
- National Human Rights Commission of **Oman**
- Independent Commission for Human Rights of **Palestine**
- **Philippines** Commission on Human Rights
- National Human Rights Committee of **Qatar**
- National Human Rights Commission of **Korea**
- Ombudsman of **Samoa**
- Human Rights Commission of **Sri Lanka**
- National Human Rights Commission of **Thailand**
- Provedoria for Human Rights and Justice of **Timor-Leste**.

> The important point to understand about national human rights institutions is that they are independent of government and they become, in a sense, the conscience of their country. We have a statutory power that allows us to speak the truth to power.

PROFESSOR GILLIAN TRIGGS
PRESIDENT OF THE AUSTRALIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
SOURCE: APF INTERVIEW, MAY 2015

Highlights for 2014–15

GROWING APF MEMBERSHIP

Membership of the APF has grown to 22, with the National Centre for Human Rights of Kazakhstan admitted as an associate member at our 19th Annual Meeting in September 2014. The NHRI is based on an Ombudsman model and, in 2012, was accredited with "B status" by the ICC. In the past year, decisions on the international accreditation status of APF member institutions from Afghanistan, Mongolia, Nepal and Bangladesh were finalised by the ICC. Three members were re-accredited as "A status" and one was re-accredited as "B status". The APF provided high quality advice to each member institution throughout the process.

SUPPORTING NHRIs UNDER THREAT

During the past year, we advocated strongly on behalf of three APF members – the Australian Human Rights Commission, the Human Rights Commission of the Maldives and the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand – who have faced reprisals for undertaking their work or serious threats to their independence. We also helped mobilise the support of the international community – including UN agencies, the ICC and leading NGOs – in support of our members.

ESTABLISHING AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO TORTURE PREVENTION

In November 2014, nine Torture Prevention Ambassadors from seven APF members met in Sydney to develop their proposals for a large-scale torture prevention project in their respective countries. Our goal is to marshal their efforts to develop "good practice" models that others can draw on and advance a torture prevention agenda within the Asia Pacific region. We are undertaking this initiative in partnership with the Association for the Prevention of Torture, as part of a comprehensive three-year program of torture prevention activities for NHRIs in the Asia Pacific, funded by the European Union

PROMOTING THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

Between January and April 2015, the APF held its first blended learning training course on the human rights of women and girls. Participants from our South Asia members (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, the Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka) explored how they could make full use of their mandates to promote gender equality and address the serious and systematic human rights violations that women and girls experience. The APF will provide $5,000 "seed" funding to two members to assist them implement the action plans they developed as part of the course.

INSPECTING PLACES OF DETENTION IN SAMOA

For the first time ever, prisons and other places of detention in Samoa have been inspected by the Office of the Ombudsman, as part of its expanded mandate as the country's NHRI. Over a five-day period in January 2015, a team of inspectors visited six facilities and then presented their findings and recommendations in a report to Parliament. The inspections followed a tailored four-day APF training course held in Apia, Samoa, for staff of the Office of the Ombudsman and representatives from the Ministries of Police and Prisons and Correctional Facilities.

ADVANCING RESPECT FOR THE RIGHTS OF LGBTI PEOPLE

In February 2015, the APF and UNDP ran a workshop on the Role of National Human Rights Institutions in Promoting and Protecting the Rights, including Health, of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) People in Asia and the Pacific. Representatives from 16 APF members attended the two-day workshop, along with civil society groups in the region. The outcome document set out a range of practical goals and activities for NHRIs in relation to capacity building, research, monitoring, advocacy and education, promotion and dialogue. The APF has already taken steps to implement commitments we made at the workshop, by commencing work on a manual for NHRIs on sexual orientation and gender identity. This manual will be used in a blended learning training program for APF members.

The APF is one of four regional coordinating committees of NHRIs. Regional coordinating committees have also been established to support the NHRIs of Africa, the Americas and Europe. At the global level, the ICC promotes the establishment and operation of NHRIs in compliance with the Paris Principles.

What sets the APF apart is the breadth and depth of the services we offer to our members, including thematic training programs and an innovative capacity assessment program. We are the only body that provides specialist advice on NHRI legislation and international accreditation for our members, governments in the region and other stakeholders.

In addition, the APF continues to be a leader among NHRI bodies in promoting and monitoring gender equality.

The National Human Rights Commission of Nepal hosted the APF's first blended learning training course on the human rights of women and girls, which brought together staff and Commissioners from the NHRIs of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, the Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

Credit: National Human Rights Commission of Nepal

Providing advice and expertise

VALUE TO MEMBERS OF PROVIDING ADVICE AND EXPERTISE

Source: APF Member Survey 2015

In a region that does not have a comprehensive intergovernmental system to monitor, promote and protect human rights, the role and contribution of NHRIs is vital.

A fundamental goal of the APF is to support the establishment of independent NHRIs in Asia Pacific region and to strengthen those that do exist.

To do this, we provide advice to governments and civil society groups on the unique status of NHRIs; their roles and functions; their relationship with government, parliament and civil society; and the international accreditation process.

This may include legal advice on compliance with the international standards for NHRIs set out in the Paris Principles and technical advice on operational issues, such as organisational structure, operational procedures and financial resources.

Members highly value the APF's provision of advice on legislation, accreditation, policy and practice. Those who rated the value of this APF function lower did not receive direct advice from the APF during the reporting period.

1. Membership and accreditation

The National Centre for Human Rights of Kazakhstan was admitted as an associate member at the APF's 19th Annual Meeting in September 2014, bringing the APF's membership to 22.

The APF now has 15 full members and seven associate members.

To be admitted as a full member, a national human rights institution must fully comply with the minimum international standards set out in the Paris Principles.

Institutions that partially comply with the Paris Principles are granted associate membership.

To ensure consistency and to minimise duplication, we use the accreditation decisions of the ICC to determine APF membership status. Full membership of the APF is equivalent to the ICC accreditation of "A status" and associate membership of the APF is equivalent to the ICC accreditation of "B status".

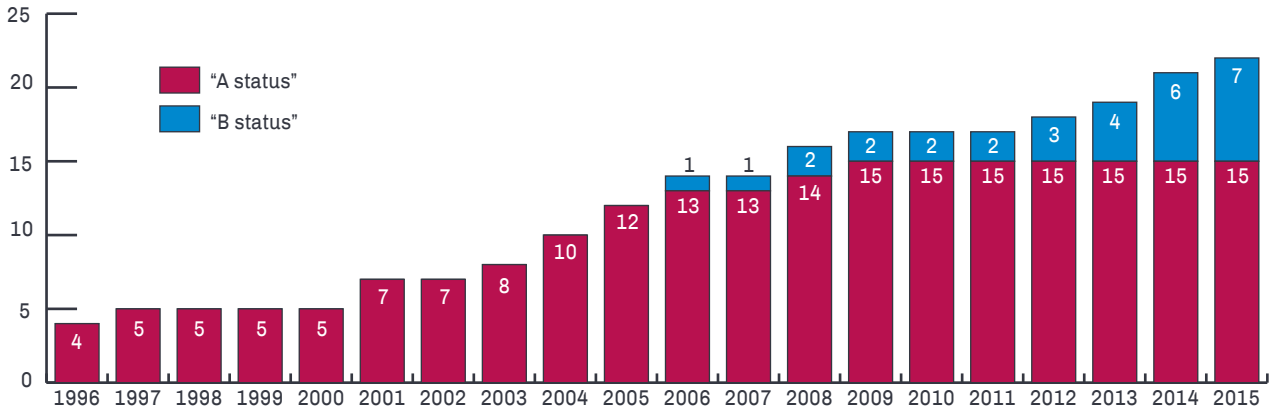
2. Advisory services

In 2014–15, the APF responded to 40 requests from NHRIs, governments, UN agencies, international organisations, civil society organisations and other stakeholders. These requests covered a broad range of issues, including:

- Legislation to establish or re-establish NHRIs
- Legislative amendments to strengthen existing NHRIs
- International accreditation of NHRIs
- Improvements to the international NHRI accreditation process
- Comparative analysis of legislative good practice
- Policy and practice development.

In our efforts to promote the establishment or strengthening of NHRIs, it is critical to ensure that that our advice, while promoting international standards, is drafted with an appreciation of the constitutional, political, social and cultural context in which the proposed or existing NHRI operates.

Figure 1: Growth in APF membership



Another challenge relates to the provision of advice to NHRIs that may be subject to, or threatened with, reprisals for raising concerns about human rights violations. In these cases, it is important that advice is constructed and provided in a way that is most likely to promote a positive outcome.

LEGISLATION TO ESTABLISH OR RE-ESTABLISH NHRIs

The APF provided advice to government ministers and OHCHR on the application of the Paris Principles and General Observations as they relate to proposals to re-establish an NHRI in Fiji.

LEGISLATIVE AMENDMENTS TO STRENGTHEN EXISTING NHRIs

The APF provided advice to member institutions on amendments to their NHRI's enabling legislation to address concerns about compliance with the Paris Principles and General Observations as they relate to the selection of Commissioners in Palestine and Korea.

INTERNATIONAL ACCREDITATION OF NHRIs

The Paris Principles provide the core framework for assessing the independence and effectiveness of NHRIs. In particular, they are used by the ICC to determine the accreditation status of NHRIs.

The APF provided advice on international standards and accreditation to Bangladesh, the Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Iraq, Palestine and Jordan.

This advice related primarily to an NHRI's legislative or practical compliance with existing international standards, highlighting those issues that were likely to impact on the effectiveness and efficient operation of NHRIs, as well as the practice and procedure of the ICC Sub-Committee on Accreditation.

In the reporting period, decisions on the accreditation status of four APF members and one non-member NHRI were finalised (Afghanistan, Iraq, Mongolia, Nepal and Bangladesh). A comparison of the APF's advice against the issues raised in decisions of the ICC Sub-Committee on Accreditation shows a direct correlation in 19 out of 22 issues. This is seen to reflect very high quality and relevant advice.[1] Three APF members were re-accredited as "A status" by the ICC and one was re-accredited as "B status".

The APF was represented on the ICC Sub-Committee on Accreditation by the Independent Commission for Human Rights of Palestine. The APF secretariat attended meetings of the Sub-Committee as an observer, along with the regional coordinating bodies of NHRIs from Africa, the Americas and Europe.

1 The correlation of advice against issues raised by the ICC is an indicator of its quality and relevance. Whether the advice is taken up by an NHRI and the actual accreditation outcome is a matter of the degree to which the country or NHRI takes up the advice. For example, high quality advice might be given to a "B status" institution but the ICC decision may not be to elevate the status to "A status", even though the APF advice correlates exactly with the issues raised by the ICC.

> … ICHR highly values the APF's contributions in reviewing its by-laws and giving legal advice on means of developing those bylaws to ensure ICHR's compliance with Paris Principles regulating the work of NHRIs. In this context, ICHR also appreciates support given to ICHR through conducting special workshops in Amman in February 2015 to support ICHR in preparing its re-accreditation documents for the upcoming review of ICHR at the Sub-Committee on Accreditation in November 2015.
>
> INDEPENDENT COMMISSION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS OF PALESTINE
> SOURCE: APF MEMBER SURVEY 2015

IMPROVEMENTS TO THE INTERNATIONAL NHRI ACCREDITATION PROCESS

The APF participated in a review of the accreditation provisions in the ICC Statute, including preparation of a policy paper, facilitating a consultation session with Board members and preparing a report for consideration of future amendments of the ICC Statute.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF LEGISLATIVE GOOD PRACTICE

The APF provided advice to an academic research institution on the application of the Paris Principles and General Observations as they relate to proposals to establish an NHRI in China.

POLICY AND PRACTICE DEVELOPMENT

The APF supports members through the provision of advice and assistance in relation to institutional policy and practice. The APF assisted the Office of the Ombudsman of Samoa to develop a website application to support the institution undertake its work.

Representatives from 18 APF members took part in the ICC's 28th Annual Meeting, held in Geneva from 12-13 March 2015. Discussion topics included preventing violence against women, protecting the rights of people with disabilities and advancing the post-2015 development agenda.

Building stronger national human rights institutions

VALUE TO MEMBERS OF BUILDING STRONGER NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS

Source: APF Member Survey 2015

Independent and effective NHRIs can be powerful agents for change.

They can use their complaint handling, investigation, advisory and education functions to promote and protect the rights of all people, especially vulnerable groups, as well as engage with the international human rights system to draw attention to pressing issues.

Many of the APF's activities are directed towards supporting our members to do this work as effectively as possible, by providing:

- Capacity assessments that enable our members to identify achievable steps to strengthen their institutions
- Training programs to build knowledge and skills that are central to the work of effective institutions
- Specialist programs tailored to the needs of individual members.

Of all our functions, our work to build stronger NHRIs is rated the most highly by our members.

1. Strengthening the capacity of our members

The Capacity Assessment Program is an APF initiative to build strong and effective national human rights institutions in the Asia Pacific region.

The goal is to support our member institutions to identify the capacities they have and those they need to strengthen in order to fulfil their mandate to promote and protect rights at the national level.

It is a forward-looking process that identifies strategies to bolster the capacity of the NHRI in the following five-year period.

Run in partnership with the UNDP and OHCHR, 17 APF members have undertaken a capacity assessment since the program was first run in 2008, including the Provedoria for Human Rights and Justice in Timor Leste in January 2015.

Each capacity assessment is based on a self-assessment process that draws on the expertise and insights of those working within the NHRI, including Commissioners and all staff. There is a particular focus to ensure that the perspectives of female Commissioners and staff are captured and presented in the final report.

The report of the capacity assessment proposes strategies to strengthen the NHRI as a whole, to develop the capacities of staff individually and collectively, and to make the internal processes of the NHRI more effective and efficient.

The report is a confidential document, owned by the NHRI, although the NHRI is encouraged to share the report or a summary with key stakeholders, including those who contributed to the capacity assessment process. It includes recommendations for capacity development initiatives that are strategic, long-term and integrated.

> **[We have] benefited a great deal from the efforts and activities of the APF, especially the capacity building programmes, as well as the array of manuals developed by the APF on various human rights thematic issues, which have served as valuable sources of reference for the Commission.**
>
> NATIONAL COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS OF INDONESIA
> SOURCE: APF MEMBER SURVEY 2015

IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

In March 2015, 16 of the 17 APF members that had undertaken capacity assessments were asked for the first time to report comprehensively on their progress in implementing the proposed strategies that they had accepted. Eleven (69%) provided reports, which was a high response rate given the detailed scope of the questionnaire.

The capacity assessment reports to those 11 NHRIs contained 243 recommendations. As independent NHRIs, they are free to accept each recommendation fully or in part or to reject it. All but three of the 243 recommendations were accepted by the NHRIs concerned.[2] The very low rejection rate indicates that the overwhelming majority of recommendations are considered relevant, appropriate and achievable.

Of the remained 240 recommendations, 90 were reported as "complete", 136 were "in progress" and 14 were "not started".

The completion rate is far higher for NHRIs that undertook a capacity assessment before 2013, which is to be expected. Among this group, almost half the recommendations have been completed.[3]

The high completion rate indicates that the capacity assessments are effective in building the capacity of participating members. The even higher "in progress" rate reflects the commitment of APF members to pursue implementation of the recommendations.

Reasons given for the large number of recommendations still "in progress", include:

- That the recommendations relate to the continuing work of the NHRI, such as human rights education or complaint handling, and so they can never be truly "completed"
- That the NHRI sees completion as depending on some factor outside its control; for example, changes to its founding legislation.
- Inadequate financial resources, which means implementation has to be staged over a period of time.

Where implementation has "not started", the reason was generally a lack of financial or staff resources for the task.

As a further measure of implementation capacity, the APF will track member efforts to enact or amend laws to promote and protect human rights. An analysis of data drawn from three NHRI re-accreditation applications finalised in the reporting year provides evidence of a very active role in promoting the ratification of international human rights treaties and the enactment of domestic laws to address a wide range of human rights issues, including torture, human trafficking, children's rights, disability rights and economic, social and cultural rights.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CAPACITY ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

In 2014–15, two APF members – the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka and the Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines – invited the APF to assist them review progress in implementing the recommendations from the capacity assessment they had previously undertaken. These visits have led to progress reports that have again been the subject of discussion with UNDP Country Offices. Based on the value of these two reviews, the APF will offer similar support to other members that have undertaken capacity assessments.

2 The three rejections were due to lack of financial resources for implementation or the action being no longer relevant or being considered unnecessary.

3 44% compared with 9%.

The APF has established a group of APF Master Trainers, drawn from a wide range of our members. Our Master Trainers have contributed their knowledge and skills to a wide range of APF training courses, including on torture prevention, human rights education and promoting the rights of migrant workers.

2. Providing quality training services

The APF offers a broad range of training programs that help build the professional skills and strengthen the capacity of Commissioners and staff working in our member institutions.

We use a blended learning approach to deliver our training, combining online learning and discussions, usually held over four to six weeks, with a face-to-face workshop that brings together participants from a broad range of our members.

The online training is conducted on the APF's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). There were 6,539 visits to the VLE and 37,112 page views during 2014–2015. This compares with 5,473 visits and 30,284 page views in the previous year.

In 2014–15, we ran a total of eight training courses, benefitting 158 staff from all but one of our members. This included 80 (51%) female participants and 78 (49%) male participants. Further information on these courses is available at Appendix 2.

The APF draws on expert trainers to lead our training programs, nearly all of whom have experience working in NHRIs. Where appropriate, we also invite APF Master Trainers to help facilitate these courses. APF Master Trainers are experienced human rights educators from our member institutions who have completed the APF's Trainer of Trainer course, along with other follow up training requirements. APF Master Trainers helped facilitate two courses in the last year. Our intention is to grow the number of APF Master Trainers who can support us in this work.

Language continues to be a barrier to participation for some staff of APF member institutions. In previous years, we have run blended learning training courses in Arabic for staff of NHRIs in West Asia. In November 2014, we conducted a Bahasa-language training program for staff of the NHRIs of Indonesia, Malaysia and Timor Lester. We also translated a number of APF training manuals into Arabic.

In 2014–15, the APF published the following professional development manuals:

- *A Manual on National Human Rights Institutions*
- *Defending Dignity: A Manual for National Human Rights Institutions on Monitoring Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (published in partnership with the Center for Economic and Social Rights)
- *Promoting and Protecting Women and Girls Human Rights: A Manual for National Human Rights Institutions* (Arabic version; translated by the Bahrain National Institute for Human Rights)
- *Promoting and Protecting Women and Girls Human Rights: A Manual for National Human Rights Institutions* (Tetum version)
- *Promoting and Protecting the Rights of Migrant Workers: A Manual for National Human Rights Institutions* (Arabic version)

While evaluation data demonstrates that APF training programs help to significantly strengthen the knowledge and skills of individual participants (see Appendix 2), a key goal is to help strengthen the institutional capacity of our members to respond effectively to the human rights challenges in their countries. As part of the training programs, participants develop practical "action plans" to promote and protect the human rights under discussion, for implementation by their respective NHRIs.

One way to encourage implementation of these action plans is to provide "seed funding", as the APF committed to do as part of the 2015 training course on the human rights of women and girls for the NHRIs of South Asia (see page 21 for more information).

The APF also develops training programs on selected issues for specific member institutions, where the participation of a range of NHRI staff, including decision makers, is assured. The effectiveness of this approach was demonstrated through a training program we delivered on inspecting places of detention for staff of the Office of the Ombudsman of Samoa in January 2015, which was immediately followed by inspections of six facilities across the Pacific Island nation.

3. Innovative approaches to building capacity: Torture Prevention Ambassadors for the Asia Pacific

While the UN Convention against Torture places an absolute prohibition on torture and ill-treatment of people held in detention, there is inevitably a gap between what the law says should happen and what happens in practice. Preventing torture is about narrowing that gap.

Across the Asia Pacific, staff and Commissioners from our member institutions regularly monitor places of detention, from prisons and police lock ups to immigration detention centres and closed psychiatric facilities.

Their work has been crucial in driving positive changes to laws, policies, practices and community attitudes in many countries across the region.

To help bolster progress in this long-term work, the APF and the Association for the Prevention of Torture jointly launched the Torture Prevention Ambassadors scheme in 2014. The aim is to encourage APF members to undertake a large-scale torture prevention project in their own country and collectively advance a torture prevention agenda within the region.

APF members were invited to submit a draft project plan and nominate a candidate to participate in a competitive selection process. Nine Torture Prevention Ambassadors (six female and three male) from seven APF member institutions were selected in September 2014.

The participating institutions include Australia, New Zealand, Korea, Maldives (two participants), Mongolia (two participants), the Philippines and Timor Leste. Our Torture Prevention Ambassadors include Commissioners and senior staff, all with considerable prior experience of working on or advocating for the prevention of torture.

Their projects focused on promoting greater respect for the rights of people in police stations, in immigration detention and in mental health units; encouraging ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture; and strengthening the ability of national preventive mechanisms (NPMs) to build cooperative relationships and generate systemic changes in places of detention.

The projects also combine different approaches and methodologies, including monitoring visits, investigations, training, capacity building and community awareness initiatives.

INSPECTING PLACES OF DETENTION IN SAMOA

For the first time ever, prisons and other places of detention in Samoa have been inspected by the Office of the Ombudsman, as part of its expanded mandate as the country's national human rights institution.

Over a five-day period in January 2015, a team of inspectors from the Office of the Ombudsman visited six facilities, including Tafaigata prison and Police Headquarters Custody in Apia, as well as the newly opened Mental Health Unit at Motootua, the Olomaanu Juvenile Detention Centre and Vaaita Prison in Savaii.

The purpose of the visits was to build an understanding of the current conditions within these places of detention, especially in key areas such as security, health, safety and education. The findings and recommendations from the inspections were presented in a report to the Parliament of Samoa.

Inspectors from the Office of the Ombudsman were assisted in the visits by Jacki Jones (Chief Inspector for the Office of the Ombudsman, New Zealand), Michael Woodhead (Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman) and Ashley Bowe (APF Project Manager).

In preparation for these visits, staff from the Office of the Ombudsman, including the Deputy Ombudsman, and representatives from the Ministries of Police and Prisons and Correctional Facilities attended a four-day APF workshop on the principles of monitoring places of detention. The workshop drew on an inspections handbook produced last year by the APF which provides a framework of standards for all areas of detention.

A plan of inspections for 2015–16 has since been developed by the Office of the Ombudsman.

All Torture Prevention Ambassadors attended an initial planning meeting in November 2014 where they worked with two expert mentors to develop and finalise their project plans. The APF signed a Memorandum of Understanding with each participating member institution to ensure the continuity of the project in the event that a Torture Prevention Ambassador leaves his or her institution.

The APF provided grants of 5,308 Euros for each project. As part of their participation in the program, each Torture Prevention Ambassador will receive ongoing support from a program mentor.

They will also report on how their project is progressing through regular blog postings, media interviews and formal presentations, sharing lessons learned and effective approaches to torture prevention with colleagues in other NHRIs in the region.

> National human rights institutions have access to a whole series of actors at the national level; to the parliament, to government ministers and to the media. If they play their cards right, they can be the ones who really bring about change.
>
> MARK THOMSON
> SECRETARY-GENERAL, ASSOCIATION FOR THE PREVENTION OF TORTURE
> SOURCE: APF INTERVIEW, MARCH 2015

Collaborating and sharing knowledge

VALUE TO MEMBERS OF COLLABORATING AND SHARING KNOWLEDGE

Source: APF Member Survey 2015

Despite the diverse social, political and cultural environments in which they operate, our members demonstrate a deeply-held commitment to sharing experiences, exchanging information and working collaboratively to address common human rights challenges.

In recent years, this has included undertaking work to advance the human rights of women and girls, preventing torture in places of detention, promoting respect and understanding on issues relating to sexual orientation and gender identity, and developing a common position on a possible Convention on the Rights of Older Persons.

The APF provides members with the opportunity to network, discuss issues and develop a strong, collective voice.

1. Networking

Each year, the APF hosts a range of meetings and workshops that bring together representatives from our members and provide opportunities for discussion and networking.

We also convene professional and thematic networks to support Commissioners and staff our members to share information and resources, develop collaborative partnerships and establish 'best practice' standards.

APF ANNUAL MEETING

The 19th APF Annual Meeting was held from 3-5 September 2014 in New Delhi and hosted by the National Human Rights Commission of India.

All 21 members were represented and, during the meeting, the National Centre for Human Rights of Kazakhstan, was admitted as an associate member.

APF members contributed to discussions about the development of the APF 2015–2020 Strategic Plan, with its focus on developing practical strategies to promote and protect the rights of the most vulnerable groups in the Asia Pacific region and to work with business on human rights issues.

The meeting featured a dialogue with representatives from the Asian NGO Network on National Human Rights Institutions, as well as a lively discussion on the work of APF members to implement the APF Action Plan on Women and Girls' Human Rights, with presentations from the NHRIs of India, Jordan and Mongolia.

Of the 60 participants at the meeting, 24 were women and 36 were men. All APF members rated the meeting as excellent or very good.

APF COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK

The APF Communications Network was established in April 2015 to support the exchange of information, resources and examples of good practice among our members.

The group includes senior staff with wide-ranging professional expertise in human rights education, communications and promotion. All 22 APF members have nominated representatives, as have the NHRIs of Iraq and Bahrain.

> I have to say that it is very good to be with the others and learn from the others. In our case, it has been very helpful and very cooperative, and they always support us when we are in a very difficult situation.

DR SIMA SAMAR
SOURCE: APF INTERVIEW, MARCH 2015

Through the APF Communications Network, our members contributed to the development of a communications strategy which will support the implementation of the APF 2015–2020 Strategic Plan. Members of the APF Communications Network will also play a key role in implementing a range of new communications initiatives, starting in the second half of 2015.

Members of the APF Communications Network helped distribute a short introductory video on the APF in June 2015, uploading it to their websites and social media channels. With this support, it became the most watched video on the APF YouTube channel in 2014–15.

The APF Communications Network currently comprises 10 women and 14 men. This gender balance ensures that men and women are jointly involved in sourcing and preparing materials for use by the APF. Network members are also encouraged to identify and share stories and case studies on their institutions' efforts to promote and protect the rights of women and girls.

SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICERS NETWORK

Established in 2002, meetings of the Senior Executive Officers (SEO) Network provide an opportunity for the senior management of our members to share information and expertise around organisational policies, management practices and staff development strategies. They also encourage communication about the APF's regional projects, including training programs, workshops and participation in United Nations and other international fora. There was no SEO Network meeting held in 2014–15. The next meeting will be held in September 2015.

The National Human Rights Commission of India hosted the APF's 19th Annual Meeting in New Delhi from 3-5 September 2014. During the meeting, the National Human Rights Ombudsman of Kazakhstan was admitted as an associate member of the APF.

Credit: National Human Rights Commission of India

TORTURE PREVENTION AMBASSADORS

The Torture Prevention Ambassadors scheme is an innovative program that supports participating APF members to undertake a large-scale torture prevention project within their respective countries and collectively help advance a torture prevention agenda in the Asia Pacific region.

The program is coordinated by the APF in partnership with the Association for the Prevention of Torture, as part of a comprehensive suite of activities on preventing torture for NHRIs in the Asia Pacific region, to be held over three years with funding from the European Union.

In November 2014, the nine Torture Prevention Ambassadors, representing seven APF members, met in Sydney to discuss and further develop their projects. The APT established a virtual networking platform to encourage the Torture Prevention Ambassadors to continue their networking between the face-to-face meetings.

The second meeting of the group will be held in Mongolia in August 2015.

APF-UNDP REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY

In February 2015, the APF and UNDP ran a workshop on the Role of National Human Rights Institutions in Promoting and Protecting the Rights, including Health, of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) People in Asia and the Pacific.

Held in Bangkok, the two-day workshop was attended by 31 participants, including 19 representatives from 16 APF members and 14 from civil society groups and other organisations.

The workshop was held to review the contribution of NHRIs in the Asia Pacific to the promotion and protection of the human rights of LGBTI people; to agree on priorities for strengthened engagement by NHRIs on LGBTI human rights and health issues between 2015 and 2017; to identify needs for capacity building, training, regional exchanges of experiences and other support that may be included in forthcoming regional development programming; and to make recommendations to UN bodies and other development partners accordingly.

The outcome document – the "Program of Action and Support" – sets out a range of clearly defined goals and activities for NHRIs in relation to capacity building, research, monitoring, advocacy and education, promotion and dialogue. It also includes recommendations for the APF and UNDP. The value of the document comes from the high level of participation provided by the delegates, the frankness of their discussions and the inclusion of non-NHRI representatives in the workshop.

Jacqueline De Guia from the Philippines Commission on Human Rights undertakes a consultation with law enforcement officials as part of her role as a Torture Prevention Ambassador.

Credit: Philippines Commission on Human Rights

> **The APF is well recognised as the most effective regional network NHRIs in the world. I think it speaks volumes for the way APF has been able to work and to get a disparate group in Asia to work together.**
>
> TAN SRI HASMY AGAM
> CHAIRPERSON, HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OF MALAYSIA
> SOURCE: APF INTERVIEW, DECEMBER 2014

The APF has already taken steps to implement the Program of Action and Support by developing a manual for NHRIs on sexual orientation and gender identity. This manual will be used in a blended learning training program for APF members.

NETWORKING AMONG APF TRAINING PARTICIPANTS

As a follow up to APF training programs, participants are invited to stay in touch with each other via social media and continue to share experiences and information. For example, Facebook groups were established for participants who took part in the training course on the rights of women and girls (organised by a participant from the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission) and the training course on the rights of indigenous peoples.

The WhatsApp SMS application has been particularly useful for post-workshop networking in West Asia, with an SMS group started by the participants of an Arabic-language course in 2013 still ongoing as of early 2015.

2. Communication

The APF uses a number of channels to communicate with members, partners and other stakeholders, including the APF website, the monthly *APF Bulletin*, email broadcasts and posting video resources on YouTube.

Our members strongly endorsed the usefulness and relevance of the APF's communication activities in 2014–15.

There were 45,631 visits to the APF website in the past 12 months, with 113,569 page views. This is broadly equivalent to figures from previous years. Most visits to the website (60%) came from search traffic, while 18% of visits resulted from the *APF Bulletin* emails.

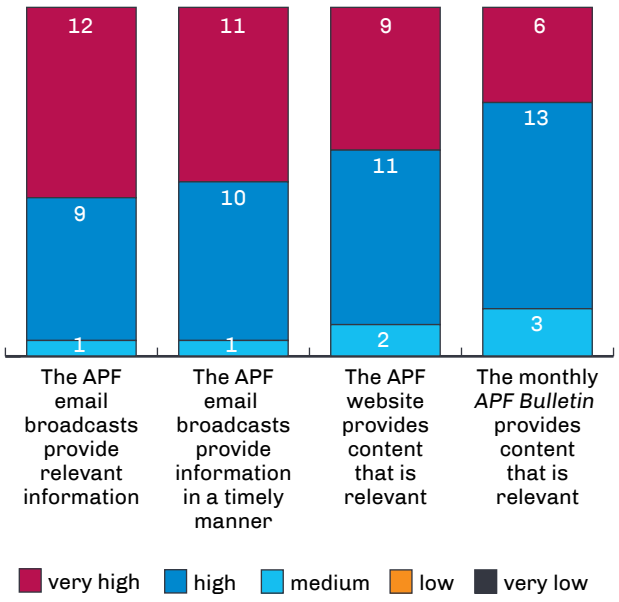
The *APF Bulletin* was very well utilised by subscribers and continues to perform well above industry benchmarks for non-profit organisations. In 2014–15, it had an average unique open rate of 36.7% (industry benchmark 25.6%) and an average click through rate of 42.8% (industry benchmark 3.0%).

A focus on gender equality and the rights of women and girls is reflected in the news articles, events, videos and other materials that are collected and published across the APF's communication channels. Over the past year, 35 gender-related articles, videos and other resources were featured in the *APF Bulletin* (equivalent to 3.66 items in each *APF Bulletin*).

While English is the agreed common language of the APF, the diversity of languages in use across the countries of our 22 members remains a major barrier to effective communication.

Advice and feedback will be sought on an ongoing basis from members of the APF Communications Network to identify effective approaches to address language barriers and to improve access to the APF information and resources.

Figure 2: Member rating on quality and relevance of APF communications

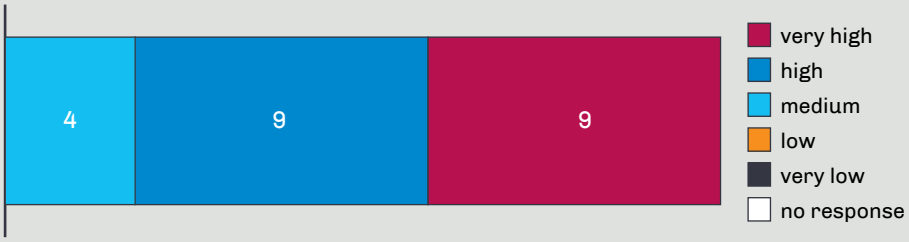


Source: APF Member Survey 2015

Promoting gender equality

VALUE TO MEMBERS OF PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY

Source: APF Member Survey 2015



Women and girls in all countries across the Asia Pacific are at risk of serious violations of their human rights, such as gender-based violence and harassment.

Entrenched roles, attitudes and stereotypes also mean that many experience poverty, discrimination and unequal access to services and participation in community life.

APF members have made the promotion and protection of the human rights of women and girls a priority in their respective countries. It is also a focus for collective action by our members.

Promoting gender equality is a core part of our strategic plan. We have developed a specialised and integrated approach to guide our work in this area.

1. Supporting our members

As part of the APF Regional Action Plan on the Human Rights of Women and Girls, adopted in 2012, our members pledged to take concrete steps to address the unequal status of women and girls in their respective countries.

This complements similar commitments made by NHRIs globally under the Amman Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted in 2012 at the 11th International Conference of National Human Rights Institutions.

NHRIs can promote and protect the rights of women and girls by receiving and investigating complaints, providing human rights education and training, making recommendations to government on law reform, building partnerships for change in the community and raising issues with the international human rights system.

To support our members in this work, the APF published *Promoting and Protecting the Human Rights of Women and Girls: A Manual for National Human Rights Institutions* in 2014. This manual has been translated into Arabic (courtesy of the National Human Rights Committee of Bahrain) and Tetum, with funding support provided by the APF.

Between January and April 2015, we ran a new blended learning training program on the human rights of women and girls, bringing together representatives from APF member institutions in South Asia (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, the Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka).

In the past 12 months, the APF entered into Memorandums of Understanding with the two of the UN's most significant agencies working to advance the human rights of women and girls: UN Women and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). These MOUs aim to provide practical support for the work of our members; for example, to assist NHRIs undertake national inquiries relating to reproductive rights.

The APF also provides advice to individual members when requested. In the past year, we supported the Ombudsman of Samoa to provide for gender equality in the composition of its Advisory Council and to integrate gender mainstreaming across all of the organisation's operations and activities. The provision of this support can be especially important with newer NHRIs as it helps embed a culture of gender equality and gender analysis within those institutions.

Afghan women earn a meagre living selling goods on the streets of Kabul and other cities and towns across the country.

Credit: Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission

> States have the obligation to protect, respect and fulfil human rights and national human rights institutions, with their monitoring function and their promotion function, can command attention to redress and remedy violations, not only at the hands of state actors but also non-state actors.

ROBERTA CLARKE
REGIONAL DIRECTOR, UN WOMEN REGIONAL OFFICE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
SOURCE: APF INTERVIEW, DECEMBER 2014

NEW APF TRAINING COURSE ADVANCES GENDER EQUALITY

Between January and April 2014, the APF ran its first blended learning program on the human rights of women and girls. Representatives from the NHRIs of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka took part in the course, which was based on the APF's manual on the topic.

The course focused on the international standards and mechanisms relating to the rights of women and girls and the ways in which NHRIs can use their legal powers and mandates to promote gender equality and respond to the serious and systematic human rights abuses experienced by women and girls.

Discussions also explored the practical steps that NHRIs can take to "mainstream" gender equality and the rights of women and girls across all areas of their work and operations.

Following a five-week online course, participants attended a week-long workshop in Kathmandu, hosted by the National Human Rights Commission of Nepal.

As part of the workshop, participants proposed a number of concrete actions in their action plans. These ranged from establishing a maternal health program to a focus on incorporating a gender perspective into all the member's work and internal policies and processes. The APF will provide $5,000 'seed' funding to two member institutions to assist them implement these action plans.

The course was rated very highly by participants in terms of its relevance and quality. It will be run again in 2015–16 to involve members from other sub-regions of the Asia Pacific.

WORKING TO END SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Tackling sexual harassment and violence against women and girls is an important role of NHRIs, as set out in the Amman Declaration and Programme of Action and the APF Regional Action on Plan on the Human Rights of Women and Girls.

Examples of activities or programs undertaken by or involving APF members include:

- In **Afghanistan**, the Commission continued to advocate for implementation of the recommendations in the landmark report of its National Inquiry into Rape and Honour Killing
- In **Australia**, the "Know the Line" campaign is supporting employers and employees address unwelcome sexual behaviour at work.
- In **Bangladesh**, the "Brave Men" campaign is encouraging boys and young men to stand up to violence against women
- In **India**, the Commission successfully advocated for the passage of the Sexual Harassment of Women in the Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013
- In **Jordan**, the NCHR partnered with CARE International to implement a two-year project to examine the extent of violence against women and girls, to raise awareness of the issue within specific sectors; and to highlight the issue through education and media
- In the **Maldives**, the "Dhoadhi" campaign is helping build awareness about the new Domestic Violence Act among women, men and government officials
- In **Mongolia**, the Commission has advocated that the Parliament revise the Law against Domestic Violence and amend other relevant legislation to eliminate domestic violence
- In **Nepal**, a solidarity campaign and petition was initiated, in partnership with Human Rights Film Focus, to end violence against women
- In **New Zealand**, the "Bring Back Kate" campaign is tackling violence against women and children.

2. Encouraging gender equality within our members

The Paris Principles require that NHRIs demonstrate pluralism, including membership that broadly reflects the society in which they work. Too often, however, women are under-represented at the leadership and senior management level of NHRIs.

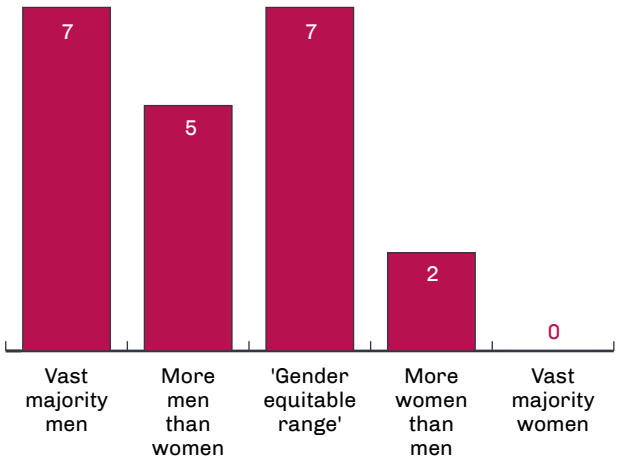
The APF promotes the principle of gender equality[4] within our members, including equal representation at the level of Chairpersons and Commissioners. At the time that the APF member survey was completed in 2015, seven of our 22 members fell within a "gender equitable range"[5] of 40-60% women (40-60% men) among their government-appointed Commissioners (see figure 3).

The conclusion is that women are not yet effectively represented in leadership roles. Given that terms of appointment are usually several years, and in some cases the legislation governing the NHRI hinders or prevents equity, this situation will take time to improve.

Governments in the region, however, should be advised of the importance of ensuring that appointments to NHRIs are representative of their societies and that a focus on gender is incorporated into the appointment process.

Figure 4 illustrates the gender composition in relation to senior and junior staff among our members. Ten members fall within the "gender equitable range" (41-60% women) for senior staff and six members fall within the "gender equitable range" for junior staff.

Figure 3: Gender balance of APF member Commissioners



	Definition	Number of members
Vast majority men	80-100% men, 0-20% women	7
More men than women	61-79% men, 21-59% women	5
"Gender equitable range"	40-60% women, 40-60% men	7
More women than men	61-79% women, 21-59% men	2
Vast majority women	80-100% women, 0-20% men	0

Source: APF Member Survey 2015 (note one member did not provide usuable data)

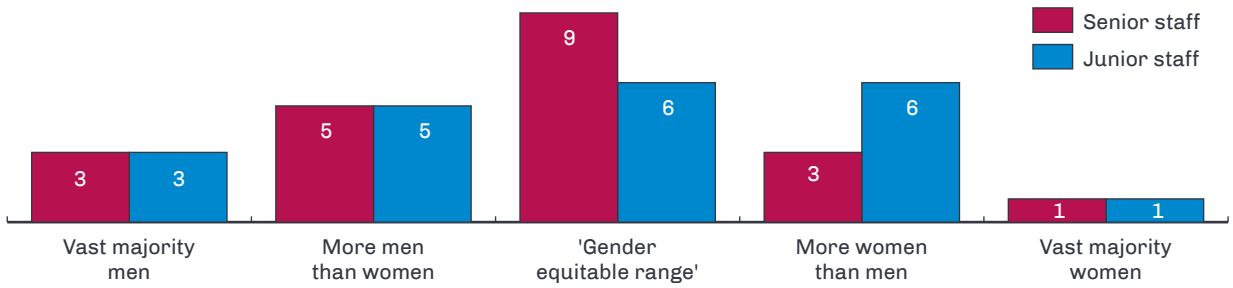
The Brave Men Campaign – an initiative of the National Human Rights Commission of Bangladesh, in collaboration with UNDP and other partners – encourages young men and boys to take a stand against the prevailing culture of sexual harassment and violence against women.

Credit: Brave Men Campaign/Facebook

4 In this context, gender equality refers to equality of representation between men and women. The APF acknowledges the diverse range of gender identity that exists beyond a female:male binary.

5 If there are five Commissioners, for example, and two are men and three are women (or vice versa), this is considered to fall within the "gender equitable range". This range is proposed as the most practical, as opposed to a strict 50:50 ratio of women and men Commissioners, which will never be achieved when a member has an odd number of Commissioners.

Figure 4: Gender balance of APF staff among members



Source: APF Member Survey 2015 (one member did not provide usuable data

Members outside this range fall on both sides, with either an over-representation of women and men. While this representation may be slightly distorted for smaller institutions, the ideal position would be for the majority of APF members to fall within the "gender equitable range" (41-60% women).

The APF Capacity Assessment program frequently includes recommendations related to gender issues. Of the 11 NHRIs to report this year on their implementation, five had received recommendations specifically on gender. Those recommendations principally addressed the position of women within the NHRI.

Beyond the requirement for pluralism under the Paris Principles, difficulties can arise for women alleging discrimination and human rights violations where a shortage of qualified women staff results in an NHRI not being able to provide appropriate services to women victims in an appropriate manner.

Of the four NHRIs that received recommendations on gender representation among members and staff, three reported progress in implementing the recommendation. Another NHRI received a recommendation on developing a gender policy which it reported had been implemented fully.

3. Gender integration in the APF secretariat

In June 2014, the APF commissioned an independent report on how the secretariat could work towards the progressive realisation of integrating and mainstreaming gender equality into the internal operations of the APF secretariat.

To date, six of the 12 recommendations have been completed. These include integrating gender in the APF's strategic plan; developing monitoring indicators and measures; recording gender disaggregated data; identifying gender expenditure; and annual reporting. Action has commenced on the remaining six recommendations.

The seven staff members of the APF secretariat include one female and one male at senior management level and two females and three males at other levels. The Deputy Director of the APF secretariat also acts as the APF Gender Focal Point.

APF expenditure on gender integration and activities specific to the rights of women and girls accounted for 13% of total APF expenditure in 2014–15. This is the first time that gender-specific expenditure has been identified.

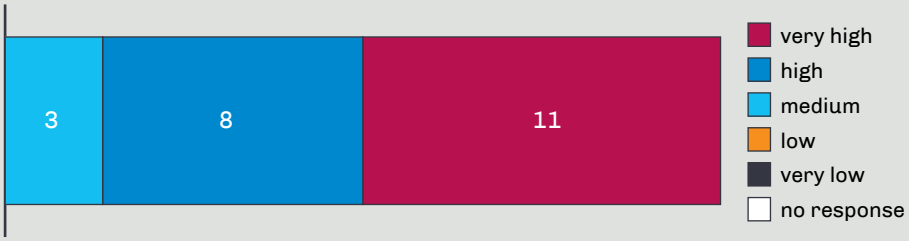
> We have to get our own house in order first and then we can take these messages out to the rest of the world … The data is clear: those organisations that have better gender diversity, particularly at the senior levels, perform better.

ELIZABETH BRODERICK
SEX DISCRIMINATION COMMISSIONER, AUSTRALIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
SOURCE: APF INTERVIEW, APRIL 2015

Contributing at the national, regional and international level

VALUE TO MEMBERS OF CONTRIBUTING AT THE NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

Source: APF Member Survey 2015



Promoting genuine and sustained change on human rights issues at the national level is long-term and complex work. To contribute to this change, NHRIs need to work with a number of different stakeholders, including the government, the parliament, the judiciary, civil society organisations and international agencies.

Our members also seek to raise human rights concerns with the international human rights system and different regional bodies that exist.

The APF supports our members in this important work by building understanding among governments in the region about the unique role and functions of independent NHRIs. During the past year, we also advocated strongly on behalf of individual members who faced reprisals and threats to their independence.

In addition, we work to support greater recognition and participation of NHRIs at the international and regional levels, as well as contribute the collective voice of our members to discussions in these fora.

Professor Gillian Triggs, President of the Australian Human Rights Commission, addresses the ICC's 28th Annual Meeting, held in Geneva from 12-13 March 2015, on the Commission's national inquiry into the treatment of children in immigration detention.

> In light of the fact there is no regional charter, framework or court, the Commission sees the role of the APF as critical in promoting and protecting human rights in the Asia Pacific region.
>
> AUSTRALIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
> SOURCE: ANNUAL MEMBER SURVEY 2015

1. Contributing at the international level

The APF promotes recognition and participation of NHRIs with various UN and international mechanisms in different ways.

With some, such as the Conference of State Parties on Disability, we keep a watching brief and take up opportunities to advocate on behalf of our members as they arise. With other bodies, such as the ICC, we contribute substantially to regular meetings and events, including the ICC's 28th Annual Meeting, held in Geneva in March 2015, and the biannual meetings of the ICC's Sub-Committee on Accreditation.

NHRIs that are accredited as "A status" have comprehensive participation rights within the UN Human Rights Council and its mechanisms. This includes having designated seating; the right to submit written statements and to make oral statements; and the opportunity to organise side events.

The APF played a leading role in advocating for NHRI participation when the rules and procedures for the Human Rights Council were established. The participation rights of NHRIs were further enhanced in 2011.

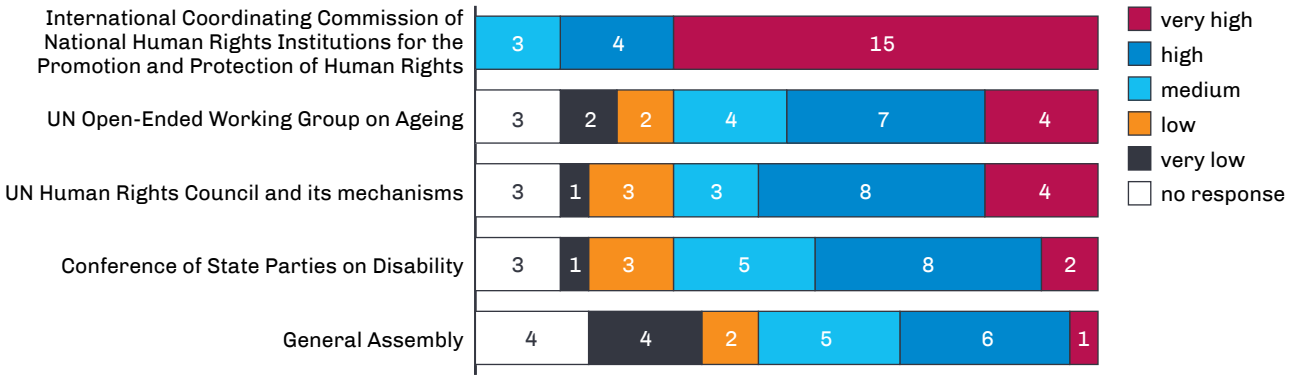
The contribution made by NHRIs to the Human Rights Council has been repeatedly welcomed by Member States and described as "increasingly important". Along with this acknowledgement, States have encouraged NHRIs in their efforts to seek participation rights in other UN processes.

While NHRI participation has been welcomed and facilitated in some General Assembly processes, such as the Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing, such participation has generally been ad hoc.

In 2013, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to focus his upcoming report on NHRIs on the current practice of NHRI participation at the UN and the feasibility of extending those rights. This report will be discussed at the 70th session of the General Assembly in September 2015.

During the past year, the APF has contributed to the substance of this discussion in relation to the recognition and participation of NHRIs and their coordinating committees at the General Assembly and ECOSOC by contributing to a third-party submission and ICC survey. The results of this engagement will be assessed after September 2015.

Figure 5: Value to members of APF engagement with UN and international mechanisms



Source: APF Member Survey 2015

MEMBER PARTICIPATION IN UN AND INTERNATIONAL BODIES

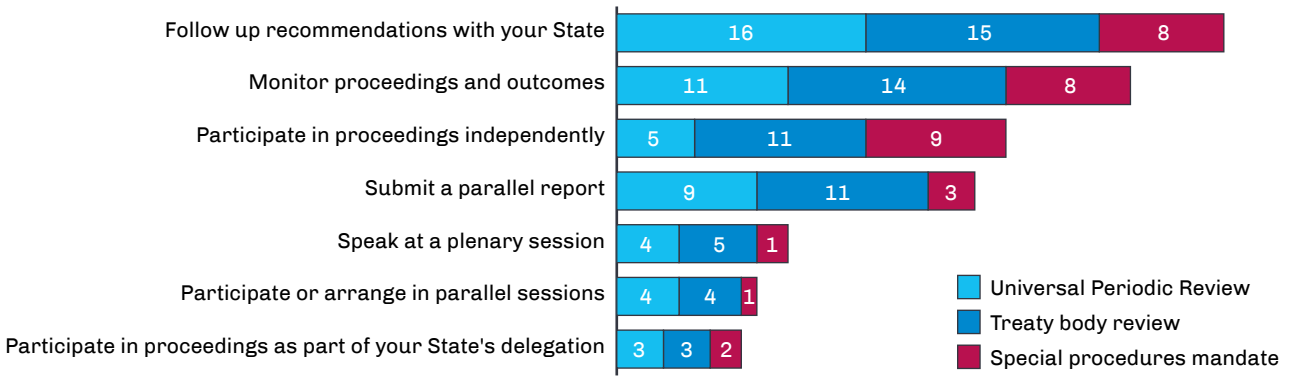
Our members, as with other NHRIs around the globe, are increasingly seeing the benefits that arise from their unique participation rights at the UN Human Rights Council and its mechanisms, in terms of raising critical issues and advocating for practical recommendations that can be made to their respective States.

From 2011 to 2014, the number of NHRIs contributing to sessions of the Human Rights Council increased from 21 per year to 31 per year. NHRIs have also been quick to make use of new modes of participation. In March 2011, three NHRIs participated in the Human Rights Council by submitting recording video messages. By September 2014, this number had increased to 12.

NHRIs have demonstrated a strong level of engagement in relation to the UPR process and in following up recommendations made to their respective governments. There continues to be a consistent level of engagement with the human rights treaty bodies. However, there appears to be less engagement with the UN special procedure mechanisms (see Figure 6).

While APF members provided a number of positive examples of their engagement with the international human rights system, others expressed frustration over the lack of NHRI participation rights in some UN bodies, such as the Commission on the Status of Women, and the high costs of travel to Geneva to participate in UN meetings. In a very concerning case, the Human Rights Commission of the Maldives suffered significant reprisal following its engagement with the UPR process in 2014.

Figure 6: Member engagement with UN processes



Source: APF Member Survey 2015

POSITIVE EXAMPLES OF ENGAGEMENT WITH UN HUMAN RIGHTS MECHANISMS

PHILIPPINES

The Commission's advocacy with the Executive Branch contributed to the UN Subcommittee on the Prevention of Torture (SPT) being invited to undertake an official visit to the country from 23 May-5 June 2015. As part of this visit, the Commission met with the SPT and presented reports on the state of detention in the country, including an unprecedented study on the human rights situation in lock-up cells in the National Capital Region. The Commission also informed the SPT of its current initiatives on torture prevention, including the APF Torture Prevention Ambassador project, and pending legislation to establish a national preventive mechanism (NPM) attached to the Commission. Although the SPT's report is confidential, the head of delegation publicly called for the approval of the NPM bill at the conclusion of the visit.

TIMOR LESTE

For the first time, the Office of the Provedoria for Human Rights and Justice (PDHJ) prepared reports for the Committee against Torture and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women without the assistance of external institutions. The Provedor and the Deputy Provedor spoke extensively to the treaty committees and were able to respond to questions based on research that the PDHJ had undertaken. The PDHJ also arranged meetings with civil society organisations before the submission of its reports and will meet further with them once the recommendations of the treaty bodies have been released.

2. Contributing at the regional level

Across the Asia Pacific region there is one sub-regional intergovernmental body established for the promotion of human rights: the ASEAN Intergovernmental Committee on Human Rights (AICHR). The Arab Human Rights Committee monitors the implementation of the revised Arab Charter of Human Rights. However, both bodies have very limited mandates to promote and protect human rights and both have limited geographic jurisdictions. NHRIs do not have formal participation rights under them.

Other bodies such as the Pacific Island Forum and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation focus primarily political, economic or social issues, rather than human rights issues. They are therefore difficult bodies for NHRIs to find space in.

A number of APF members (particularly Afghanistan and Bangladesh) in the South Asian region are cooperating to develop momentum around the establishment of a future human rights mechanism for South Asia. In West Asia, all four Arab members are engaging with the Arab Human Rights Committee.

In relation to the AICHR, the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia commented that:

> While the past year has seen greater engagement by AICHR with stakeholders such as CSO and NHRIs through consultations and workshops, AICHR as a whole, still does not officially recognise NHRIs as a dialogue partner and their important role in promoting and protecting human rights. Although only five of the ten ASEAN member states have NHRIs, the Commission strongly believes that AICHR, as a regional intergovernmental human rights body, should have frequent and formal engagements with the existing NHRIs in the region so that their views and recommendations could be given due consideration by AICHR and ASEAN Governments.

The APF helped mobilise international support for the Human Rights Commission of the Maldives after the Supreme Court of the Maldives launched a *suo moto* case against its five members in September 2014.

> The APF has a vital role to play in safeguarding national human rights institutions when they are under attack and speaking out against those acts of reprisal.
>
> PHIL LYNCH
> DIRECTOR, INTERNATIONAL SERVICE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
> SOURCE: APF INTERVIEW, MARCH 2015

3. Contributing at the national level

APF members reported that their relationships with their respective parliaments, executives and judiciary were mixed but generally good. They said they could simultaneously experience positive and challenging relationships with each of the three groups.

Some APF members, however, experienced very challenging relationships.

There were three instances this year of reprisals and threats to the independence of APF members. The APF offered strategic and ongoing support to each of these members.

RESPONDING TO REPRISALS AND THREATS TO INDEPENDENCE

In September 2014, the Supreme Court of the Maldives launched a *suo moto* case against the five members of the **Human Rights Commission of the Maldives** for treason. The case concerned comments regarding the Supreme Court which were included in the Commission's report to the UPR of the Maldives. In its submission to the UPR, the Commission cited criticism of the Maldivian judicial system by the UN's independent experts.

On 16 June 2015 the Supreme Court handed down its verdict, declaring the Commission's UPR submission "unlawful" and requiring the Commission to abide by a set of 11 very broad guidelines in carrying out its activities. One such guideline set out that the Commission should refrain from communicating with international bodies other than through the government.

Throughout, this period the APF updated members on developments and engaged with the international community. The UN sought advice from the APF on how to deal with the issue, with the APF ensuring that the Commission endorsed any of its measures in advance.

In September 2014, the APF wrote two letters to the President of the Maldives, urging the President to preserve the independence of the Commission and to guarantee the immunity of its members. We offered to send a delegation to the Maldives in November 2014 to meet with the Commission, Attorney-General and other relevant stakeholders. The Commission decided not to proceed with the APF delegation as it felt it may have a negative impact on its relationship with the Attorney-General. The APF continues to maintain close personal contact with the Commissioners.

> NGOs are the main supporters of the Commission in promoting and protecting human rights … A way of ensuring pluralism in the Commission, specified in the founding legislation of the Commission, is through an Advisory Board composed of NGOs, scholars, lecturers and other stakeholders that work in the field of human rights. In addition, the Commission conducts joint studies based on an agreement or contract with research institutions and independent researchers.
>
> NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OF MONGOLIA
> SOURCE: ICC REACCREDITATION SUBMISSION, 2014

In February 2015, the Constitutional Drafting Committee established by the Thai military government stated that it proposed to merge the **National Human Rights Commission of Thailand** with the Office of the Ombudsman. The Commission opposed the planned merger and stated that combining the two organisations might signify that a reduced priority will be given to the promotion and protection of human rights in the country.

In February 2015, with the support of the Commission, the APF wrote to the Constitutional Drafting Committee to express concern about the proposal and highlight the very different roles and functions of an NHRI and an Ombudsman. The APF offered support to the Committee, including the provision of advice. The offer of support was not accepted at that time but the APF stands ready to provide advice on the international standards relevant to the establishment and functioning of national human rights institutions, including their accreditation at the international level.

The **Australian Human Rights Commission** and, in particular, its President, sustained ongoing criticism following the release in February 2015 of its report documenting the violation of the rights of children in Australia's immigration detention centres. The scale and intensity of this criticism are unprecedented in Australia and have come from the highest levels of government, including the Prime Minister, the Attorney-General and the Minister for Immigration. This sustained criticism undermines the integrity, impartiality and judgement of the President in the eyes of the Australian public.

The APF has worked with the international community, including the ICC, OHCHR and the International Service for Human Rights, to support the Commission. We also maintained close personal contact with the Commission and its President.

In September 2014, the **UN Human Rights Council** adopted a resolution on NHRIs which stressed that NHRIs "should not face any form of reprisal or intimidation … as a result of activities undertaken in accordance with their respective mandates", including their engagement with the international human rights system. The resolution was co-sponsored by 76 States, including Australia, the Maldives and Thailand. The APF will continue to work with our members, the international community and other partners to remind governments of the content and spirit of this resolution.

4. Cooperating with civil society

During the year, the APF continued to constructively engage with the Asian NGO Network on National Human Rights Institutions (ANNI), a regional peak NGO relating to NHRIs. ANNI was invited to APF Annual Meeting in September 2014 to participate in a Forum Councillors-NGO/ANNI dialogue to discuss the practical ways in which they can engage cooperate on the APF's new five-year strategic plan. ANNI/Forum Asia wrote to the APF to express its appreciation for its measures to improve collaboration. The APF also attends ANNI meetings, as it did in April 2015 in Taiwan.

Promoting engagement with civil society is also a feature of the APF's Capacity Assessment program. Of the 11 members to report on implementation of their capacity assessment, eight had received recommendations specifically on civil society engagement. Their reports indicate that implementation of these recommendations is either completed or in progress.

Two NHRIs reported that they had entered formal memorandums of understanding with civil society organisations for joint work in accepting and investigating complaints and in human rights education. Another reported that it convened tripartite meetings of civil society organisations, government ministries and the NHRI in which the civil society organisations have unequalled opportunities for direct advocacy with government. Several NHRIs reported that they now hold quarterly or half-yearly meetings with civil society organisations to discuss their work.

Following the devastating earthquake that struck Nepal on 25 April 2015, the National Human Rights Commission of Nepal established human rights "mobile camps" in the 14 worst-hit districts of the country to monitor the post-earthquake situation and investigate the concerns of local residents.

It adopted a human rights-based approach to guide its work and inform its advocacy to government, especially in relation to the delivery of prompt and appropriate responses to address the needs of victims and their families.

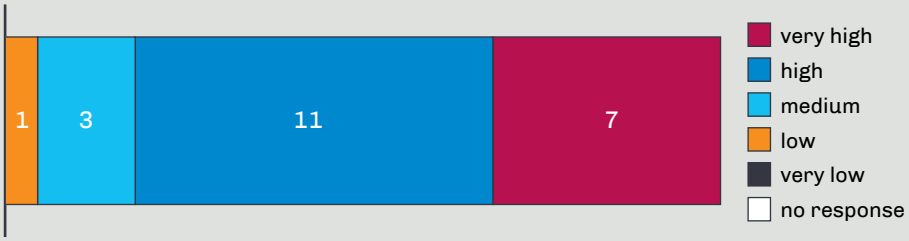
The Commission operated the mobile camps in cooperation with civil society groups, including the Nepal Bar Association, the Federation of Nepali Journalists and the NGO Federation of Nepal.

Credit: National Human Rights Commission of Nepal

Strengthening organisational leadership and governance

VALUE TO MEMBERS OF STRENGTHENING ORGANISATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Source: APF Member Survey 2015



The APF seeks to operate according to the highest levels of accountability, efficiency, transparency and member participation.

We are an independent, non-profit legal entity, with a board of directors – the Forum Council – that reflects the APF's regional diversity.

The key elements of the APF's governance structure include:

- The Forum Council, which is the decision-making body of the APF. Established by the APF Constitution, the Forum Council is composed of one voting councillor nominated by each full APF member. It sets the APF's policies and priorities, decides membership applications and exercises all the powers set out in the Constitution.
- The APF Chairperson, who is elected by the Forum Council and supported by two Deputy Chairpersons.
- A management committee, established by the Forum Council which oversees the operations of the APF and its secretariat.
- The APF secretariat, which reports to the Forum Council, APF Chairperson and management committee.

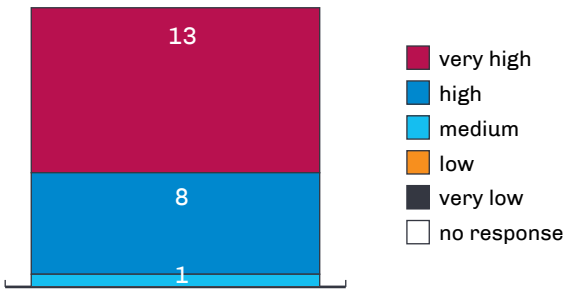
During the year, the APF secretariat was responsible for:

- Servicing the APF Chairperson, meetings of the full Forum Council and sub-committees established by the Council;
- Implementing all the activities approved by the Forum Council in the APF's Strategic Plan;
- Completing all monitoring, evaluation and reporting requirements;
- Identifying and implementing risk management strategies for all project activities and the overall operation of the APF;
- Fundraising and donor liaison; and
- Managing in an effective, efficient and equitable manner the APF's financial and human resources.

1. Value of membership perceived by members

Feedback and comments provided by our members demonstrate the significant value they attach to their membership of the APF.

Figure 7: Member rating of overall value of membership



Source: APF Member Survey 2015

In particular, our members say they place value on:

- Mutual learning and exchange, which emphasises the role of the APF to bring members together to exchange information and examples of good practice
- APF services in all areas, including accreditation advice, capacity building, training, communications and promoting gender equality
- The role the APF to support the development of collective action to address regional (or sub-regional) issues of mutual concern
- The role of the APF to strengthen the voice of members.

2. Member satisfaction with APF governance and organisational structure

In 2014, the APF commenced an 18-month period of consultation and review to produce its five-year Strategic Plan for 2015–2020.

We adopted a participatory approach to guide our strategic planning process, drawing on the expertise and knowledge of our members and other stakeholders, including partner organisations, UN agencies, donors and experts.

We worked with our members to analyse the context in they operate in order to arrive at a consensus on the priority human rights issues and on key member functions. This extensive consultation, led by a five-member working group of the Forum Council, provided robust guidance to the APF in planning its objectives for the coming five years.

Another important outcome was the decision to initiate a governance reform process for both the Forum Council and the Advisory Council of Jurists. This decision was made in recognition of the growing membership of the APF and it is currently in an early discussion phase.

Figure 8 indicates the current satisfaction levels of members with different aspects of the APF's governance.

While the feedback is overwhelmingly positive, there is a clear sense that governance and organisational structure could be improved across the board. This supports the initiation of the governance reform process.

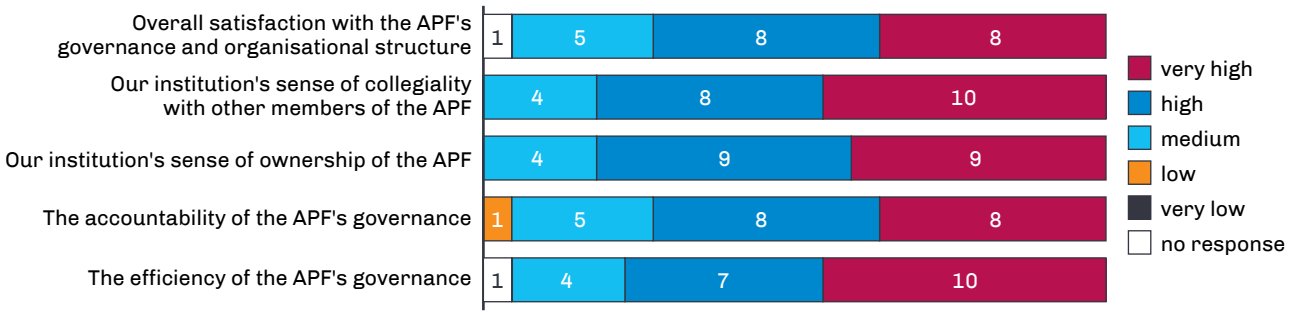
Comments provided by individual APF members demonstrate the high value that members place on ownership and "collective decision making" in relation to APF policy and operational decisions.

Feedback from the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia highlights the importance of maintaining collegiality as APF membership grows in the coming years:

> With the expansion of the APF's membership, the Commission believes that there is a need to ensure that the sense of collegiality is strengthened so that member institutions could work closely together especially in terms of sharing experience, expertise and good practices.

The APF will continue to respond to the needs of our diverse and growing membership. We will closely monitor governance indicators and respond accordingly as we progress through the new 2015–2020 Strategic Plan.

Figure 8: Member satisfaction with the APF's governance and organisational structure



Source: APF Member Survey 2015

3. Financial expenditure and income security

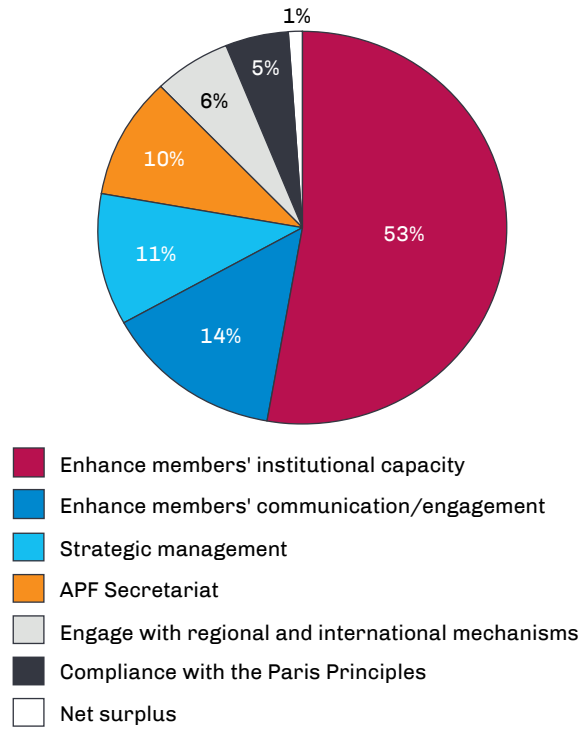
The APF's income for 2014–15 was $2,517,440, up by $153,677 from the 2013–14 financial year. Expenditure was $2,495,391, producing a modest operating surplus for the year of $22,000.

Enhancing our members' institutional capacity was the largest area of our expenditure, accounting for 53% of total expenditure. This includes services such as training, capacity assessments and technical assistance. APF secretariat costs accounted for 10% of total expenditure (down from 11% in 2013–14), reflecting the APF's commitment to operating an efficient, member-focused organisation.

The APF receives funding from governments, foundations, NHRIs and, in the past year, one private donor. The increase in the APF's overall income reflects a continuing trend of modest growth that has occurred over the last five years. This trend is in line with the APF's efforts to secure increased donor support and is particularly gratifying in the context of the global financial crisis and the resulting difficult operating and financial environment for many agencies working in the area of aid/human rights.

With anticipated growth in APF membership in the coming years, there will be greater demand for services and support. Accordingly, we are actively seeking ways to broaden our donor base and ensure the long-term sustainability of the APF's work in the region. Part of our strategy has involved commissioning a professional fundraising firm, Global Philanthropic, to assist the APF to understand its profile amongst donors, develop its fundraisings materials and identify individual philanthropists and corporate partners with a shared commitment to human rights. In the past year, we have held meetings with a range of interested parties to explain the unique contribution of the APF.

Figure 9: 2014–15 expenditure by APF objective[6]



Community consultations facilitated by the Office of the Ombudsman of Samoa identified the need to better promote and protect the rights of women, children, people with disabilities and prisoners. The feedback helped guide the development of Samoa's first State of Human Rights Report.

Credit: Office of the Ombudsman of Samoa

6 Expenditure for 2014-15 has been categorised according to the objectives of the 2010-14 APF Strategic Plan. The 2015-16 Annual Report will outline expenditure according to APF's six key functions on which this year's Annual Report is based.

APF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE 2014–15	
INCOME	**$AUD**
European Union	$282,059
Government of Australia	$825,000
Government of Qatar	$55,204
Government of Republic of Korea	$99,553
Government of Sweden	$828,603
Government of Thailand	$6,240
National Human Rights Commission of India	$184,148
Private Donor	$95,450
Interest income	$74,384
Membership fees	$66,800
TOTAL INCOME	**$2,517,441**
EXPENDITURE	
Enhance members' institutional capacity	$1,337,974
Enhance members' communication/engagement	$346,235
Compliance with the Paris Principles	$117,634
Engage with regional and international mechanisms	$157,115
Strategic management	$291,648
APF Secretariat	$244,789
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	**$2,495,395**
NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	**$22,046**

APPENDIX 1:

APF performance framework

During 2014–15, the APF upgraded its performance measurement system, in preparation for the implementation of the 2015–2020 Strategic Plan in July 2015.

As part of this process, the APF developed a Theory of Change which illustrated the complex and interconnected pathways by which the APF's activities lead to four higher order outcomes:

- Outcome 1: Increased number of national human rights institutions complying with UN and international standards.
- Outcome 2: National Human Rights Institutions are better able to perform their functions in the areas of complaints, education, monitoring, advocacy and reporting.
- Outcome 3: A more conducive environment for the recognition and effectiveness of NHRIs at the national, regional and international level.
- Outcome 4: The APF is a well-governed, sustainably resourced, strategically directed and member owned organisation.

Indicators were developed for these outcomes as well as for the six functions of the APF. The annual member survey was simplified. A new survey of progress against capacity assessments was introduced. The performance system now relies on secretariat staff and consultants to engage with a broader range of performance information and to tell performance stories around particular themes.

A formal baseline report will be put together by December 2015, but some of the baseline information is already contained in this report. A mid-term evaluation of the Strategic Plan is scheduled for 2017 and a final evaluation for 2019. This will allow sufficient time to feed into the preparation of the subsequent strategic plan commencing in 2020.

The main differences between the new and old performance systems are set out in the table below. These changes require a culture shift within the APF, as well as some additional responsibilities and workload for staff. It is typical that such changes take several years to embed.

	OLD SYSTEM	NEW SYSTEM
Level of performance information	Generally lower level activity information	Both activity level and higher order results
Source of performance information	Reliance on annual member survey	Multiple sources, requirement for clear evidence trail
Type of performance information and analysis	Quantitative information, generally averaged	More granular quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis of information, triangulation where possible
Engagement of APF staff with performance information	Limited engagement	Engaged, both through preparation of thematic performance reports and, progressively, though performance workshops
Gender considerations	Limited consideration	Mainstreamed, gender disaggregation
Ownership of system	Largely outsourced	Move towards largely in-house, indicators and means of measurement developed by APF staff
Baseline information	Historical data used but no formal baseline	Planned for 2015
Evaluation	Donor-led, end of strategic plan	Mid-term and final evaluations planned for 2017 and 2019, to be negotiated with donors
Use of performance information	Mainly accountability	Accountability, learning and management

APPENDIX 2:
APF training courses for 2014–15

1. LIBRARY AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS TRAINING: ONLINE, 1-31 AUGUST, WORKSHOP IN KUALA LUMPUR FROM 22-26 SEPTEMBER 2014

Average ratings by the 17 participants (6 female, 11 male)		
Relevance	Overall quality of online course	Overall quality of the workshop
N/A	3.9/5	4.6/5

This is the only known training course specifically targeting librarians and other documentation staff in NHRIs. It was run by documentation specialists from the Raoul Wallenberg Institute with the participants from 12 APF member institutions. The APF's role was confined to promoting the course to its membership and covering the costs of several participants' travel and accommodation expenses.

The Ombudsman of Samoa, Maiava Iulai Toma (centre), with staff from his office.
Credit: Office of the Ombudsman of Samoa

2. EU BLENDED-LEARNING COURSE ON MONITORING POLICE CUSTODY: ONLINE, 13-24 OCTOBER, WORKSHOP JAKARTA, 25-28 NOVEMBER 2014

Average ratings by the 15 participants (11 female, 4 male)		
Relevance	Overall quality of online course	Overall quality of the workshop
4.5/5	4.2/5	4.3/5

The Bahasa speaking NHRIs of Indonesia, Malaysia and Timor Leste participated in this blended-learning course, which was the first APF-APT activity to focus specifically on torture and other ill-treatment within police custody. The decision to focus on police custody was taken following the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture's identification of the period of detention within police custody as a particular flash point for torture in the Asia-Pacific region. The objectives of the course were to provide NHRI staff with an understanding of issues within police custody, enhance participants' skills to undertake effective monitoring visits to places of police custody, and encourage the three participating institutions to institutionalise a programme of regular monitoring visits to police detention facilities.

The course was unique in being the first APF course to cater for speakers of Bahasa, as the key course readings and all of the workshop sessions were all translated into Bahasa. This course was an initial attempt to make APF training accessible[7]. The course evaluation data and report indicates that the online and workshop were both very well received by participants and successful in meeting the objectives of providing the individual officers with information and skills to undertake monitoring visits of police custody. However, the extent of institutional uptake from the training is less clear.

7 An APF survey in 2014 indicated that only 40% of staff from Indonesia for example have an adequate working knowledge of English for APF training courses conducted in English. The same survey showed 100% of staff from Malaysia have sufficient English, but other survey data suggests Timor-Leste staff have very limited English language capacity.

3. INSPECTING PLACES OF DETENTION: SAMOA WORKSHOP 6-9 JANUARY 2015, INSPECTIONS 13-19 JANUARY

Average ratings by the 11 participants (5 female, 6 male)		
Relevance	Overall quality of online course	Overall quality of the workshop
5/5	N/A	4.8/5

This national level workshop was attended by NHRI staff, a member of the NHRI Advisory Council, the Commissioner for Prisons and Correctional Facilities and a Police Officer stationed at one of Samoa's prisons. The objective of the workshop was to train the NHRI staff in their new role of places of detention inspectorate. The content of the workshop was based on a manual for inspecting places of detention, written by the APF for the Office of the Ombudsman. The workshop focused on inspections principles and methodology before moving on to develop a program of inspections to be undertaken the following week.

Having a specific focus for the workshop (developing an action plan of inspections and its subsequent undertaking) proved to be extremely effective in terms of maintaining participant's interest and application. The learning was subsequently consolidated by the application of the new skills and knowledge they had acquired in the week of inspections. A further positive aspect of the workshop was the involvement of the outside agencies relevant to the workshop, namely the Ministries of Police and Prisons. Not only were they able to bring useful insight and knowledge that fed directly into the action plans but it also served as a learning experience for them and led to a better understanding of the NHRI's inspection function and the establishment of a good working relationship.

4. FOUNDATION TRAINING FOR REGIONAL OFFICE STAFF OF THE MONGOLIAN NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION, WORKSHOP, ULAANBAATAR, 9-13 MARCH 2015

Average ratings by the 26 participants (18 female, 8 male)		
Relevance	Overall quality of online course	Overall quality of the workshop
N/A	N/A	N/A

This induction training course was offered to the Mongolian Commission because of the recent expansion in its staffing numbers through the recruitment of 21 new officers from the same number of *aimags* (provinces). The workshop sessions were structured around the contents of the newly published APF Manual on National Human Rights Institutions, which had been translated into Mongolian for the training. An APF Master Trainer from the NHRI of India was part of the training team. In consultation with the participants, the trainers made a decision not to include an action planning session because the aim of the training was to provide the new provincial staff with an introductory overview of the history, roles and responsibilities of NHRIs, rather than aiming to enhance specific skills or encouraging work in particular thematic areas. Furthermore, there was only one officer from each of the aimags and each officer operates relatively independently with limited or no contact with staff in other offices.

The participants found the training to be very relevant and useful in providing them with an understanding of NHRIs – several of them previously did not properly understand the difference between NHRIs, government departments and NGOs. They particularly appreciated having trainers with experience of working in NHRIs, and having the author of the manual, Chris Sidoti, leading the training. The APF has yet to receive the translated evaluation data at the time of this report, but based on notes taken from the debriefing session with the interpreter, the main suggestions for improvement were: ensuring all power-point presentations are translated into Mongolian (particularly for any text heavy presentations), for all trainers to speak slowly, and lengthening the workshop as several participants reported there was too much information to take in for one week.

In December 2014, the APF and the Raoul Wallenberg Institute hosted a workshop for APF members to share their experiences of conducting national inquiries into serious human rights violations.

5. THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND GIRLS: ONLINE 27 JANUARY – 1 MARCH; WORKSHOP, NEPAL 13-17 APRIL 2015

Average ratings by the 26 participants (14 female, 12 male)		
Relevance	Overall quality of online course	Overall quality of the workshop
4.7/5	4.8/5	4.8/5

This sub-regional pilot blended-learning course was facilitated in light of the Amman Declaration and APF Regional Action Plan on the Human Rights of Women and Girls and was based on the APF manual of the same topic. Participants came from the South Asian sub-region members (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka with the aim of putting the APF manual into practice, providing skills and knowledge to support NHRIs in promoting and protecting the rights of women and girls and to create a platform for the exchange of experiences and best practice.

The course scored very highly across all sections, with the online course score of 4.8 being the highest of any APF course run during the 2014-15 program year. The positive reaction to the online course translated well into a productive workshop in Nepal where there were high levels of interaction, exchange of ideas and best practices and excellent interaction between trainer and participants. Indeed, it could be observed that the success of the workshop can be largely attributed to the lead trainer in addition to other factors such as a high calibre and diversity of participants, strong APF manual and good guest speakers. Lessons to be taken from this course included the need for more than one trainer for workshops over 3 days in length, the inclusion of more quizzes in the online course and consideration of a half-day trip to break up long workshops.

6. EU REGIONAL BLENDED-LEARNING COURSE ON INVESTIGATING AND DOCUMENTING TORTURE: ONLINE 16 MARCH-10 APRIL, WORKSHOP IN MANILA, 20-24 APRIL

Average ratings by the 23 participants (10 female, 13 male)		
Relevance	Overall quality of online course	Overall quality of the workshop
4.6/5	4.6/5	4.7/5

Investigations is a core function of an NHRI and a 'high' ranked APF training need. NHRIs that have the knowledge and skills to undertake effective investigations are in a key position to investigate and document allegations of torture, as they are often the first and sometimes only direct point of contact for torture victims. This regional blended-learning course is the first known training course offered to APF members to focus specifically on the investigation and documentation of torture. 23 participants from 18 APF members from across the Asia-Pacific region participated in this training course. The course was unique in having a team of 4 highly qualified expert trainers, namely a legal investigative expert from the APT, an Istanbul Protocol specialist form the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT), a consultant forensic doctor with more than 20 years of experience documenting torture for the International Committee of the Red Cross, and a consultant psychologist with experience of working with torture victims in the Philippines and the Maldives. The broad range of expertise of the trainers enable the APF to offer a very effective training course, covering legal and well as medical and psycho-social investigation and documentation of torture.

The course was evaluated very positively by the participants – the scores for the online (i.e. 4.6) and the workshop (4.7) – are the highest of any torture focused blended-learning offered by the APF and APT to date since the commencement of their partnership in 2006. Rather than the development of institutional action plans (as past experience raises questions on how effective these plans are within the context of regional or subregional trainings), a new approach was trialled

The National Human Rights Commission of Nepal celebrated International Women's Day by creating a colourful banner featuring the handprints of staff and community members who say no to violence against women.

at this workshop, namely individual action points focusing on smaller scale actions that each participant could undertake within their own spheres of influence to use, share and help institutionalise the knowledge and skills from the training. All participants committed to providing internal training. Several committed to translating the Istanbul Protocol into local languages. There is anecdotal evidence to indicate that the course was highly effective in improving individual investigators practices, as several participants commented in the evaluations that the training made them realise errors in their past practices. The participants had very few suggestions for improving the course other than: making more use of videos at the workshop (rather than during the online course), and using more 'ice-breakers' / learning games at the workshop.

7. UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES: ONLINE 23 MARCH-25 APRIL; WORKSHOP, BANGLADESH 4- 8 MAY 2015

Average ratings by the 20 participants (7 female, 13 male)		
Relevance	Overall quality of online course	Overall quality of the workshop
4.4/5	4.1/5	4.2/5

Following the 2009 OHCHR meeting on the role of NHRIs in promoting UNDRIP, and in response to its recommendations, the APF developed a manual on the issue, which formed the basis for this pilot-blended learning course. Member institutions whose country contains indigenous peoples (according to the UNDRIP definition) were invited to participate with the core goals of building the capacity of NHRIs to promote and protect the rights of indigenous peoples and to facilitate increased focus by NHRIs in the region on the rights of indigenous peoples in their work. The lead trainer for the course (and author of the APF manual on the topic) was Mr Andy Gargett of the Australian Human Rights Commission and he was joined by Master Trainer Mr Desigin Thulkanam from the New Zealand Commission.

The heavy workload during the online course led to lower than average participation and retention rates and needs to be addressed for future UNDRIP courses. There were also significant issues with the workshop venue, which demonstrated the value of having a fit for purpose venue for all future courses. Nonetheless, the course can certainly be deemed a success with positive feedback received for both the online and workshop elements of the course. Of particular note were the contributions made by external speakers Devasish Roy (UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and Mika Kanervavouri (OHCHR). The workshop facilitated extensive information sharing and peer to peer networking that has since led to the creation of two online forums for future exchanges. The workshop also led to a widely accepted new understanding of Indigenous Rights which participants felt capable of integrating into the work of their institutions.

8. HUMAN RIGHTS AND BUSINESS REGIONAL BLENDED-LEARNING COURSE: ONLINE 16 MARCH-10 APRIL, WORKSHOP IN BANGKOK FROM 5-7 MAY 2015.

This blended-learning course was offered jointly by the Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR) and the APF, with the former taking primary responsibility for course content development and training. The course was offered to APF members because NHRIs in the Asia Pacific region have over a number of years identified business and human rights as a key strategic priority and a 'high' training need. The DIHR is widely considered to be an international leader in the area of business and human rights, and the most experienced NHRI with expertise on the subject. Both trainers were DIHR staff and female. The online course was run from 16 March-10 April from the DIHR's own online learning environment, while the workshop took place from 5-7 May in Bangkok. 20 participants (11 male and 9 female) from 18 APF member NHRIs from across the Asia-Pacific participated in the course. The evaluation data has been provided to the APF in a different format so no direct comparisons are possible with the scores of other APF courses, but from the high percentages and participants comments it would appear that both the online and workshop were appreciated by participants and very successful in providing participants with an understanding of the key concepts underpinning NHRIs work in the area of business and human rights. Several participants appreciated the flexibility of online learning, while others commented on the expertise of the trainers. Lessons learnt / areas for further improvement would include: reducing the speed of presentations, limiting use of technical language, and more group work to reinforce learning.

APPENDIX 3:
Calendar of major activities for 2014–15

JULY 2014		
30 July-1 August	United Nations Open Ended Working Group on Aging	New York, USA
SEPTEMBER 2014		
3-5 September	19th Annual Meeting of the Asia Pacific Forum	New Delhi, India
25-26 September	Meeting of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Committee	Geneva, Switzerland
30 September-2 October	APF-UNESCAP Regional Workshop on the Rights of Older Persons	Bangkok, Thailand
OCTOBER 2014		
16-17 October	ICC Bureau Meeting	Johannesburg, South Africa
27-31 October	ICC Sub-Committee on Accreditation	Geneva, Switzerland
NOVEMBER 2014		
3-4 November	Preliminary visit for the Capacity Assessment of the Provedoria of Human Rights and Justice of Timor Leste	Dili, Timor Leste
10-13 November	Initial meeting of the APF-APT Torture Prevention Ambassadors	Sydney, Australia
19-28 November	RWI-APF Annual Regional Training	Bangkok, Thailand
24-28 November	Police Detention Training	Jakarta, Indonesia
DECEMBER 2014		
1-2 December	Regional High Level Dialogue on National Inquiries	Bangkok, Thailand
20 December 2014-22 January	Detention Centre Monitoring Training and general support to the Ombudsman of Samoa	Apia, Samoa
JANUARY 2015		
12-23 January	APF-UNDP-OHCHR Provedor Timor Leste Capacity Assessment	Dili, Timor Leste
13-15 January	Preliminary visit for the Capacity Assessment of the National Human Rights Commission of Oman	Muscat, Oman
27 January-27 February	Online component of the training program on the Human Rights of Women and Girls	Online

FEBRUARY 2015		
11-15 February	Paris Principles compliance and accreditation advice for Jordan and Palestine	Amman, Jordan
16-20 February	Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka Capacity Assessment Follow Up	Colombo, Sri Lanka
24-25 February	Regional Workshop on NHRIs and LGBTI Human Rights	Bangkok, Thailand
MARCH 2015		
9-13 March	Foundation Training for the Human Rights Commission of Mongolia	Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia
9-13 March	Annual Meeting of the ICC	Geneva, Switzerland
16-20 March	ICC Sub-Committee on Accreditation	Geneva, Switzerland
16 March-10 April	Online component of the training course on Business and Human Rights	Online
16 March-10 April	Online component of the training course on Investigating and Documenting Torture	Online
22-27 March	APF 20 preparatory visit	Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia
23 March-19 April	Online component of the training course on the Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples	Online
APRIL 2015		
13-17 April	Regional training workshop on the Human Rights of Women and Girls	Kathmandu, Nepal
20-24 April	Investigating and Documenting Torture Workshop	Manila, Philippines
27 April-4 May	Philippines Commission on Human Rights Capacity Assessment Follow Up	Manila, Philippines
MAY 2015		
4-8 May	Regional training workshop on Business and Human Rights	Bangkok, Thailand
4-8 May	Regional training workshop on the Human Rights Indigenous Peoples	Dhaka, Bangladesh
18-21 May	Re-establishment of a Fiji Human Rights Commission workshop and bilateral discussions	Suva, Fiji
JUNE 2015		
3-5 June	European Union Development Days, NHRI Workshop	Brussels, Belgium
8-9 June	Conference of State Parties for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	New York, United States
11-13 June	ICC-UNDP-OHCHR annual tripartite partnership meeting	New York, United States
22-23 June	Myanmar Human Rights Commission Paris Principles accreditation advice	Yangon, Myanmar
24-26 June	Conference with Trust Law Asia Pacific	Bangkok, Thailand

Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions

AFGHANISTAN
Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission
W: www.aihrc.org.af
E: aihrc@aihrc.org.af

AUSTRALIA
Australian Human Rights Commission
W: www.humanrights.gov.au
E: communications@humanrights.gov.au

BANGLADESH
National Human Rights Commission of Bangladesh
W: www.nhrc.org.bd
E: nhrc.bd@gmail.com

INDIA
National Human Rights Commission of India
W: www.nhrc.nic.in
E: covdnhrc@nic.in

INDONESIA
Indonesian National Commission on Human Rights
W: www.komnasham.go.id
E: info@komnasham.go.id

JORDAN
Jordan National Centre for Human Rights
W: www.nchr.org.jo
E: mail@nchr.org.jo

KAZAKHSTAN
National Centre for Human Rights of Kazakhstan
W: www.ombudsman.kz/en/
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MALAYSIA
Human Rights Commission of Malaysia
W: www.suhakam.org.my
E: humanrights@suhakam.org.my

MALDIVES
Human Rights Commission of the Maldives
W: www.hrcm.org.mv
E: info@hrcm.org.mv

MONGOLIA
National Human Rights Commission of Mongolia
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MYANMAR
Myanmar National Human Rights Commission
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NEPAL
National Human Rights Commission of Nepal
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NEW ZEALAND
New Zealand Human Rights Commission
W: www.hrc.co.nz
E: infoline@hrc.co.nz

OMAN
National Human Rights Commission of Oman
W: www.nhrc.om
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PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES
The Palestinian Independent Commission for Human Rights
W: www.ichr.ps
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PHILIPPINES
Philippines Commission on Human Rights
W: www.chr.gov.ph
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QATAR
National Human Rights Committee of Qatar
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REPUBLIC OF KOREA
National Human Rights Commission of Korea
W: www.humanrights.go.kr
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SAMOA
Ombudsman of Samoa
W: www.ombudsman.gov.ws
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SRI LANKA
Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka
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THAILAND
National Human Rights Commission of Thailand
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TIMOR-LESTE
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