

# “Asian Approaches to Development Cooperation: Supporting Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding”

May 9-10, 2018

Kathmandu, Nepal



## INTRODUCTION

Organized jointly by the Korea Development Institute (KDI) and The Asia Foundation (TAF), the “Asian Approaches to Development Cooperation” (AADC) dialogue series brings together development experts and government officials from the Asia region and beyond to share perspectives and to facilitate mutual learning between and among “emerging” and “traditional” development actors.

Now in its 8<sup>th</sup> year, the series began in 2011 with a focus on Asian approaches to development cooperation, then a novel topic of discussion in a changing aid landscape. Over the years, the dialogues have approached Asian development cooperation from different angles: pro-poor inclusive growth (2012), climate change mitigation and adaptation (2013), social mobility (2014), the future of South-South cooperation in the region (2015), role of non-state actors in Asian development cooperation (2016), and how Asian countries are tackling the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on urbanization and women’s and girls’ empowerment (2017) through their cooperation programs.

This year’s AADC dialogue discussed how Asian countries address conflict prevention and peacebuilding in their development and South-South cooperation. It reflected on SDG 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. The dialogue was held in Kathmandu, Nepal. This report covers the proceedings and outcomes of the Kathmandu meeting, featuring presentations and discussions by development experts, innovators, activists, and practitioners from governments, companies, academia, NGOs, and multilateral organizations across Asia.

## OBJECTIVES OF DIALOGUE SERIES

- To identify some of the key conflict challenges in Asia.
- To present and discuss Asian South-South and development cooperation approaches.
- To contribute Asian perspectives and experiences to the international dialogue on conflict and peacebuilding and SDG 16.
- To promote mutual interest, learning, understanding, and opportunities for collaboration and cooperation between and amongst Asian countries and experts as well as with traditional donors and regional bodies.
- To make specific policy contributions and recommendations on how Asian-led development and South-South cooperation can better address the challenges related to conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

## OPENING CEREMONY

**Ms. Anthea Mulakala**, Director of the International Development Cooperation at The Asia Foundation, was the moderator for the opening session and welcomed all participants and guests.

**Ms. Nandita Baruah**, Acting Country Representative of The Asia Foundation Nepal emphasized the usefulness of the conference to Nepal, as the country has emerged from many years of conflicts, ending in the peace agreement of 2008. According to her, Nepal is in the process of finding its own answers and resolutions to the post conflict political challenges. The dialogue presents a great opportunity for the country, as well as for all the other Asian countries who face the similar reality as Nepal, to learn from the experiences and knowledge of the participants.

In his welcome address, **Dr. Wonhyuk Lim**, Director of Global Economy Research at the Korea Development Institute (KDI), explained the relevance of the topic regarding the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the newly established principle of “responsibility to protect” of the United Nations (UN). He addressed the importance of the necessity of understanding the origins of subnational conflicts to determine the path for peacebuilding. Any resettlement would require reconciliation and cooperation from the inside, along with resources from the outside to help in the transition.

Finally, the speakers and participants of the dialogue introduced themselves.



## FRAMING SPEECH

Moderated by **Ms. Anthea Mulakala**, Director of the International Development Cooperation at The Asia Foundation, the framing speech featured as speaker:

**Fermin Adriano**

Senior Advisor on Mindanao Programs  
World Bank Office



**Dr. Fermin Adriano** introduced the conference’s topic from the Asian perspective and stressed the need for greater collaboration between Asian actors. With a steady growing GDP rate and an emerging middle class, Asia plays an increasingly important role in the world economy. However, with rapid economic growth comes diverse challenges such as subnational and sometimes even transnational conflicts. Dr. Adriano expressed that the framework used for conflict resolution in Africa will not work in Asia. Asia unlike Africa, is not suffering from civil wars, but rather subnational conflicts, which require a different approach. Therefore, peacebuilding requires a new framework, as the host countries become sensitive to outside “intrusion”, invest their own budget into reconciliation, and realize the need to play the leading role in peacebuilding efforts in order to gain back the trust of their citizens and minorities. According to Dr. Adriano, a new approach is already evolving. Asian countries are strengthening the regional security through intensifying existing partnerships like ASEAN or starting new cooperations to prevent violent extremist groups from gaining control. South-South cooperation has also been increased, as Asian countries have realized neighboring countries are in a similar situation or have found similar methods to overcome conflicts. Working with local or international NGOs, funding, and initiatives of newly emerging actors like China as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) are giving new opportunities in peacebuilding. Additionally, Western donors have also adapted to the specific needs, finding less “intrusive” and more matching ways to support.

#### **Q&A/Discussion:**

The main point of the discussion was the reliance of Asian countries on international stakeholders and NGOs. Participants were curious about the role of local NGOs and their scope of action. **Dr. Adriano** advised frameworks and regulations, which control local NGOs, depend on the sensitivity of the respective host country. In some countries as the Philippines, Dr. Adriano’s home country, local NGOs enjoy a good legal environment, as compared to Pakistan NGOs which face many restrictions. He agreed with participants’ comments and warned about overreliance on some INGOs because of their support to, violent extremist organizations in order to promote their own ideology. Monitoring is also a crucial element of how to deal with local NGOs. Countries like Thailand are becoming more comfortable with bilateral cooperation as international cooperation gives too much international exposure to conflicts, which in fact should stay local. However, the circumstances are fluid for every country; therefore, each government will choose cooperation partners according to their own national agenda. Another debate was about whether the Asian success would ultimately lead to subnational conflicts. Dr. Adriano corrected, it is not the success, which leads to conflict, but the distribution policies and approaches of that success. The benefits of development need to be shared equally with the poorest part of the population or

with minorities. Only such distribution would keep the confidence and trust of people in their government stable.

## SUPPORTING PEACE PROCESS

This first session presented how and why Asian countries have engaged in partner country peace processes.

Moderated by **Dylan Davis**, Country Representative of The Asia Foundation Korea, the session featured:

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|------------------------|---|
| <b>Kyungyon Moon</b>   | Associate Professor<br>Chonbuk National University, South Korea   |
| <b>Simbal Khan</b>     | Senior Fellow<br>Pakistan Peace and Development   |
| <b>Kentaro Yokata</b>  | Senior Representative<br>JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) Nepal                                |
| <b>Ayuko Takahashi</b> | Associate Program Officer<br>International Peace and Security Department<br>Sasakawa Peace Foundation (SPF) |



**Prof. Kyungyon Moon** presented about “Facilitating Peacebuilding through Social & Economic Cooperation between two Koreas”. The inter-Korean summit in May 2018 made the engagement policies as an important part of peacebuilding and lessons of South Korea even more relevant in the conference. According to him, the Korean government adopted concepts from CSOs, as those can change the context of the conflict and influence state actors by introducing new values. A historic overview of South Korea’s engagement policy showed that humanitarian civil society organizations (CSOs) had a significant influence on improving the security on the peninsula, and the conditions in and the opening of North Korea. However, there was criticism that foreign aid

was diverted to nuclear program, indicating that humanitarian aid can also lead to more distress. Nevertheless, Prof. Moon concludes, only when trust and inter-reliance are achieved, can political tensions be overcome and peace on the Korean peninsula established. The advantageous current circumstances of South Korea's Moon Jae-in presidency and Donald Trump in the United States, as well as the strong support of civil society led to successful talks. Although, he noted, the process will need ongoing patience and endurance until peace is reached.

**Dr. Simbal Khan** presented on "Human Security vs. Geostrategic View of Peacebuilding: Japan's ODA to Pakistan and Pakistan's Peacebuilding Approach to Afghanistan". First, she elaborated Japan's ODA (official development assistance) to Pakistan. Japan, has been an important Donor for Pakistan providing development assistance since the 1950s. In the post 9/11 period since Pakistan became a frontline stage in the war against terror Japan's assistance has increased and in recent years it has become the 2nd largest donor to Pakistan. Yearly, Pakistan receives approximately \$600 Million in assistance, a large portion of the which, is spent on poverty reduction measures programs, macroeconomic reforms, and development projects, e.g. building the Indus Highway. While Pakistan is a major aid recipient country, due to security challenges on its western borders, it is also engaged in peacebuilding in Afghanistan. The approach includes education programs for Afghan refugee children located in Pakistan, development assistance and support in the political reconciliation process with the Taliban. Pakistan also plays an important role in regional diplomacy with neighbours and has been engaged in building a consensus for peacebuilding. Lastly, Dr. Khan gave two essential recommendations on Japan's and Pakistan's further actions: First, she suggested that the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), which receive only little support in proportion to the fragility of the region, should receive a greater portion of Japan's ODA in the next phase. This will Japan's peace building assistance can be more effectively targeted to the long term long-term economic recovery and peace in the region. Secondly, she suggested Pakistan should try a stronger approach on political reconciliation, find a Pakistan-India consensus on Afghanistan and expand connectivity projects in Afghanistan.

Following Dr. Khan, **Mr. Kentaro Yokota** explained "JICA's Peacebuilding Assistance" in his presentation. The Japanese government policy promotes development cooperation as a contribution to security in the world, but also to Japan's own safety. JICA researched, that 44% of post-conflict countries resume conflict within 5 years after peace agreements. Therefore, state-building is a necessary tool for peacebuilding and peacekeeping. The development cooperation between JICA and the recipients not only benefit peace, but have also positive effects on economic, social or governance factors. As there is a gap between the government, which is dealing with shocks and crises, and civil society, JICA tries to build a social contract between those two actors. Using the example of Nepal, Mr. Yokota elaborated JICA's assistance. After the earthquake in Nepal, JICA offered reconstruction and infrastructure assistance, national resilience enhancement, helped strengthen governance and democracy and contributed to the reduction of poverty.

**Ms. Ayuko Takahashi** introduced Japanese civil society approaches and challenges in her presentation "Japanese Civil Society's Initiatives to engage with Emergency, Peacebuilding and Reconstruction Activities." Ms. Takahashi revealed that out of 350 non-profit organizations in Japan, only 45 are humanitarian and amongst those, only a few works solely on peacebuilding. According to her, it is broadly understood in Japan, that direct involvement in conflict affected countries is not necessary. The SPF is one of the biggest private, public interest incorporated

foundations in Asia, promoting peace through people-to-people exchange and region-focused programs and projects. While a guiding principle of Japanese assistance is “human security” based on mutual assistance through self-supporting efforts, SPF has a “non-traditional security” perspective. NGOs face a lot of challenges in Japan, such as lack of finances or assistance from the government; however, as the awareness for peacebuilding rises, the situation is improving. The Japan Platform, an emergency humanization aid organization, gives out grants for short- and long-term projects. The Asia Pacific Alliance for Disaster Management (A-PAD) builds partnerships with countries like Nepal for new generation leaders’ capacity development programs, disaster response projects, etc.

#### **Q&A/Discussion:**

During the discussion, **Prof. Moon** emphasized that the circumstances for every country are different and need an individual approach. As for the two Koreas, every stakeholder is currently eager to solve the conflict and achieve denuclearization. Regarding the CSOs he mentioned, transparency is a vital element, as the citizens need to know how and where the aid will be distributed.

Participants and attendees were interested in the contrasting approaches of Pakistan and Japan. While Pakistan follows a security approach, Japan focuses on humanitarian aid. **Dr. Khan** reminded the audience of the Pakistan government’s limitations as a development assistance actor. Although it gives humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, there are insufficient resources available. However, Pakistan is realizing the importance of joint development and cooperation beyond humanitarian aid to address subnational conflict. She suggested India could be a good potential cooperation partner for Pakistan as it has substantial resources to invest and this will also moderate Pakistan and India’s political competition in Afghanistan.

**Mr. Yokota** further explained JICA’s role as non-governmental agency and emphasized, that JICA is not involved in political mediation. However, the implementation of Japan’s ODA follows the policy of the Japanese government.

**Ms. Takahashi** explained further about SPF during the discussion. SPF was founded in 1986 with the aim to enhance international cooperation. It addresses current social challenges of Asia and promotes as part of their peacebuilding programs women’s empowerment, inclusive societies, and sustainability. It finances its program solely through endowments, special funds, and grants.

## **BOOSTING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TO PROMOTE PEACE AND SECURITY**

This session explored how Asian investments, economic infrastructure, and trade strategies are implemented to promote peace and security and mitigate conflict in the region. It also discussed how economic development efforts can heighten pre-existing tensions and harm peacebuilding efforts.

Moderated by **Rifat S. Fachir**, Communications Officer at the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation, the session featured:

**Adrian Morel**

Program Manager  
Conflict and Development  
The Asia Foundation

**Nazir Kabiri**

Research Fellow  
Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies

**Ying Huang**

Director  
Division of Financial Security  
China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR)



**Mr. Adrian Morel** presented on “Economic Development and Peace: A complex Relationship”. He explored the commonly accepted thesis that economic development can end conflict and bring sustainability. He cited the Global Peace Index which lists the ten most peaceful countries in the world with a GDP per capital over 30.000 USD, and the least peaceful countries which are mostly low-income countries. However, according to Mr. Morel, Asia is a good counter example, showing that economic growth also creates tensions, often at the expense of social groups or regions. Reforms on governance, transparency and accountability, often lag behind economic growth, which can lead to problems. Mr. Morel identified three risk factors, which provide a breeding ground for conflicts: Urbanization, land acquisition, and subnational conflicts. Therefore, investments into governance, law and transparency and insuring benefits of economic growth are shared across groups and regions are essential.

**Dr. Ying Huang** explained “The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI): Challenges and Suggestions” in her presentation. According to her, the BRI has progressed considerably after its establishment in 2013. It reconnects East Asia and West Europe with 6 continental and maritime routes. Under the five pillars of policy coordination, facilities connectivity, trade facilitation, financial integration and people-to-people exchanges, China is pursuing cooperation with neighboring countries. However, she also emphasized, that the BRI projects are expected to boost China’s own development and transform its external relations. BRI is facing challenges such as surging anti-globalization, financial sustainability and economical profitability of major BRI projects, difficult political and social environment in host countries,

geopolitical rivalry, and unconventional security issues. Dr. Huang suggested for China to play a bigger role in peacekeeping efforts as in South Sudan and cooperation with international agencies and Asian countries in order to gain more expertise as a mediator.

**Dr. Nazir Kabiri** presented on “Regional Connectivity for Peacebuilding (Please see attached the presentation for more specific information): A Case Study from Afghanistan.” Afghanistan was a poor, but functioning state with stable ties to its neighbors before the Soviet invasion. The invasion in 1979 created the first notion of instability, followed by the creation of Taliban by Pakistan that led to the U.S. intervention in 2001. He strongly emphasized the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan is not a civil war led by Afghans, but rather is a conflict imposed by a neighboring country for strategic reasons and the terrorist groups such as Taliban are being trained, funded and are being provided with intelligence and safe heaven across the border in Pakistan. It is the Afghan understanding, that terrorism is used as a tool of foreign policy, above all by Pakistan, making a distinction by three types of actors in Pakistan namely: the people of Pakistan, who e.g. were hospitable to Afghan refugees, the democratically elected civilian state sharing common agendas with Afghanistan, and lastly the military establishment seeking their interest in sponsoring terrorism in Afghanistan and harboring terrorists like Osama Bin Ladin. He also clarified the challenges on the Afghan side: Inability to finance its own troops and government, unsustainability, and the dysfunctionality of national institutions due to the imposed war. Dr. Kabiri concluded that international actors should understand the nature of the Afghan conflict before working on economic development and the relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan should be improved through joint economic projects as one of the means to building trust and bypassing the military establishment.

#### **Q&A/Discussion:**

In the discussion **Mr. Morel** clarified that the regime type in countries is also an important factor which plays into the relationship of economic development and peace. The relationship differs under democracies, which we believe maintain peace, military dictatorships, which also have the potential of maintaining peace by suppressing conflicts, or anocracies, having features of democracy and dictatorship. He also mentioned, new democracies such as those in Asia tend to have a better relationship of economic development and peacebuilding than old democracies. However, it is very country specific and therefore, he referred to the TAF publication [“The State of Conflict and Violence in Asia”](#).

A lot of questions were raised about the BRI’s social conceptional framework and China’s demand on countries coming up with own ideas for their development. **Dr. Huang** reminded the audience of the fundamental momentum of the initiative: Expanding China’s ties with Southern and Western neighbors to further develop itself. However, China has started to add a social framework to better secure local people’s interest and share benefits fairly between stakeholders. Recently, the China-International-Cooperation Bureau was opened, taking responsibility of foreign aid.

In his presentation, **Dr. Kabiri** recommended regional connectivity and interdependence through joint bilateral project as one of the means of building trust and enduring peace between Afghanistan and Pakistan, while also expressing his disappointment concerning the current state of bilateral relations. In the discussion he clarified the military establishment in Pakistan is the

business of spreading fear rather than promoting bilateral peacebuilding any bilateral connectivity projects with Afghanistan or India goes against the interest of the military establishment in Pakistan.

## KNOWLEDGE SHARING ACROSS OF DOMESTIC EXPERIENCE FOR CONFLICT PREVENTION

This session discussed how Asian countries are advising and supporting partner countries based on knowledge gained through their own domestic experiences of managing intercommunal tension.

Moderated by **Kyung-sook Lee**, Director of Programs at The Asia Foundation Korea, the session featured:

**Daehoon Francis Lee** Professor  
SungKongHoe University, South Korea

**Lina Alexandra** Researcher, Department of Politics and International Relations  
Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)



**Prof. Daehoon Francis Lee** shared his experiences on “Conflict-Sensitivity and Peacebuilding: A Case of Community Development Cooperation in Jogjakarta”. The project of the SungKongHoe University was conducted in villages in Jogjakarta during 2013-2018. Its goals were the community development of the low cash income villages, training for leadership, self-reliant programs and a local network for resources and consultation. The program adopted the conflict sensitivity model of INGOs, specially trained their staff and placed foreign actors at low key. Participation of women and youth, as well as acknowledging the importance of self-empowerment decision-making were key points of the new program. The project included problem-solving workshops, training programs and communication with local government and NGOs. According to Prof. Lee, the conflict sensitivity model proved valuable; the consensus-building was successful, mainly because it was locally owned. Women also became important

decision makers. He concluded, peacebuilding is a process to which local ownership and envisioned community governance is crucial. However, the influence of globalization should also be considered.

**Ms. Lina Alexandra** followed with her presentation on “Sharing Experiences: Indonesian Approaches to Peacebuilding”. Peacebuilding is a manifestation of one of the Indonesia's national objectives enshrined in the Indonesian constitution where the state should actively contribute in the maintenance of the world order and global peace based on freedom, independence and social justice. Indonesia has responsibility as a middle power, and regional stability contributes to the country's own stability and further develops Indonesia as rising peacebuilding actor. In Indonesian understanding, peacebuilding has two characteristics: the comfort level of the host country needs to be guaranteed through respecting its sovereignty and trust building, as well sharing lessons and capacity instead of dictating from the outside. Achievements in internal peacebuilding process in different parts of Indonesia, but especially the peace process in Aceh leading to a peace agreement in late 2006 and the ongoing dynamics in the province serve as valuable experiences other countries can learn from. Peacebuilding efforts include sharing Indonesia's democratic experiences through governmental and also non-governmental organized initiatives, humanitarian actions and mediation. However, even though there is a strong demand in Indonesia's aid, it is facing several challenges particularly due to the lack of internal comprehensive record and evaluation.

#### **Q&A/Discussion:**

**Prof. Lee** further elaborated the role of the government and youth in the project in Jogjakarta. The village councils are very important and should be approached first. High level officials were also very much involved and aware of the international cooperation agenda. Prof. Lee experienced them as open to new approaches. While traditional leaders tend to be less accepting towards the participation of the youth, they have realized their village will disappear without the youth and therefore welcomed the enthusiastic, young local community.

**Ms. Alexandra** stressed during the discussion the importance of a strong civilian government. If there is an existing military involvement, it needs to put pressure on the military to not meddle with domestic affairs anymore. This helped Indonesia in its democratization process in Aceh; other countries indeed cannot replicate this per se, but can learn from Indonesian experience. She strongly differentiated between government-led peacebuilding and efforts by religious groups, as those are not coordinated by the government and therefore act on their own.

Both agreed that peacebuilding as shown in the presentations is designed for post-conflict countries, very labor intensive, and time consuming. Therefore Ms. Alexandra and Prof. Lee recommended, donors should invest more in human resources and capacity building for the process to be sustainable in the future.

## FOCUS ON NEPAL: MEDIATION FOR PEACEBUILDING

This session explored how mediation is used for peacebuilding in Nepal. Additionally, this session introduced the project visit on the second day of the dialogue.

Moderated by **Bishnu Adhikari**, Program Advisor of The Asia Foundation Nepal, the session featured:

**Preeti Thapa**

Senior Program Officer  
The Asia Foundation Nepal

**Kenichi Tanaka**

Chief Advisor (JICA COMCAP II)  
JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) Nepal



**Ms. Preeti Thapa** shared “TAF-NP’s Experience of using Mediation and multi-stakeholder Dialogue as Tools for Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution” with the audience. TAF started its mediation program in 2002 as a means to promote access to justice, but also to empower communities and establish a culture of conflict resolution at the local level. It is now active in 21 districts in Nepal. Since 2013 the program has focused on knowledge creation, training, research on resource based (hydro-power) disputes and gender issues. The mediation centers deal with land issues, monetary transactions, defamation, domestic violence, family disputes and in recent times, even multi-stakeholder disputes over natural resources, identity, development, and political transition. Mediators, comprising of 38% women and 40% from marginalized communities, are not decision makers, but facilitate and ensure power balance between the parties. Following the promulgation of Constitution, Local Governance Operations Act and Mediation Act and regulation, mediation is recognized and regulated by legal standards of quality. This has provided safeguards of due process for quality control of services to ensure access to holistic justice delivery service. Despite this, the transition to a new governance structure has presented opportunities and challenges at all levels of governance and society. Therefore, keeping abreast of the current state re-structuring in Nepal, from a unitary to a federal structure,

TAF is re-calibrating its focus to institutionalize a community mediation model that harmonizes and sustains high-quality community mediation practices.

**Mr. Kenichi Tanaka** introduced the “Strengthening Community Mediation Capacity for the Peaceful and Harmonious Society Project Phase II (COMCAP II)”. Originally, the project, conducted from 2010-2018, was implemented by the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration (MoFAGA), targeted at the MoFAGA and the local communities. The project goal was to make community mediation service accessible for and by communities, in order to improve local governance for effective service delivery and citizen empowerment, and ultimately to reduce poverty through sustainable development. There are over 900 community mediation centers in more than 39 districts in Nepal. Mr. Tanaka emphasized the advantages of community mediation over traditional arbitration and explained how the mediation centers work successfully. Even though the project came to an end, Mr. Tanaka assured JICA will continue its support to Nepal.

#### **Q&A/Discussion:**

**Ms. Thapa** confirmed the success of mediation in Nepal as it integrates target communities and local governments, carefully selects mediators and receives endowment funds for sustainability. As the people become representatives and mediators, they become the mirror of the community. The informal trust between communities provides a secure environment for conflict reconciliation for various levels of conflict.

**Mr. Tanaka** gave insight into the mediator selection process during the discussion. Community mediators will be selected after consulting with the community and orientation by the community. Religion is also a very important factor for the selection as there are many conflicts between religious groups such as Hindu and Muslims. He also further elaborated the funding challenges of the program, as the government has not clearly confirmed funding for mediation purposes, but only for inclusive projects.

## **GOVERNMENT CAPACITY BUILDING**

This session discussed efforts to build state capacity for peacebuilding and conflict prevention, including training, institutional development, policy support, and learning exchange.

Moderated by **Nandita Baruah**, Acting Country Representative of The Asia Foundation Nepal, the session featured:

**Jennifer Oreta** Director  
Ateneo Initiative for Southeast Asian Studies  
Ateneo de Manila University, The Philippines

**Min Zaw Oo** Executive Director  
Myanmar Institute for Peace and Security (MIPS)

**Constantino Xavier**

Fellow  
Carnegie India



**Dr. Jennifer Oreta** explained the “The Challenges of Convergence in Governance” using the case study of The Philippines. Peace process covers a broad range of activities; but in general, can be clustered into two: the first is the Track 1 or the Peace Talks. This is the formal negotiations between the government and the rebel organization, the goal of which is to arrive at a political settlement to end the armed hostilities between the two parties. The second cluster is what can be labeled as the complementary effort to track 1. This covers a whole range of interventions on conflict management and peacebuilding intended for communities affected by armed conflict. The complementary track hopes to convince the people affected by conflict that “peace works.” For both Track 1 and “complementary track,” convergence and synchronized service delivery and program development are critical. Convergence in governance, however, has several challenges, as in leadership, accountability, capacity building and biases. Dr. Oreta presented the case of Commander Abedin Sanguila in Lanao del Sur. At the height of a 2013 siege in Zamboanga City, he decided not to join the hostilities. The national and local government, together with inter-faith groups worked with Commander Sanguila in bringing development interventions to his community. Even though the approach brought more stability and security in the community, a comprehensive mapping is still needed to make the intervention more relevant and sustainable. Dr. Oreta stressed that in communities affected by armed conflict, there is not one solution; rather, interventions have to be tailor-fitted for each community. She concluded that peace agreement is not the “magic pill” that will ultimately lead to peace; convergence of service by government and civil society are equally important for sustainable peacebuilding.

**Dr. Min Zaw Oo** explained the relationship of Myanmar with China and Thailand in his presentation on “Neighbors matter: Peace and Conflict in Myanmar”. After 70 years of various ethnic and communist insurgents controlling the country, the violent extremist groups were pushed back to the border areas, turning those into strategic areas and launching pads. While there are 15 ways which rebel groups can capitalize on the closeness to neighboring countries, the two most important factors are: weapon procurement and market place, which allow natural resources to pass across borders to make earning for rebel groups. Thailand and China both initially followed a buffer policy, supporting sympathetic rebel groups. Thailand, however, stopped the support to the rebels since the 1990s by cracking down smuggling of weapons and

restricting illegal export of natural resources. This weakened capability of rebel forces to generate income and procure weapons. China on the contrary has no similar practice on its border policies until today. As a result, the southern border areas in Myanmar have reached stability through a combination of a nationwide ceasefire agreement and regulated borders. This is not the case in the north. Therefore, Dr. Oo concluded, in addition to “constructive engagement”, active peace support by neighboring countries, especially by China, is required in order to achieve nationwide peace.

**Dr. Constantino Xavier** dismissed the belief of a passive India through his presentation on “Bringing Delhi out of the democratic Closet: India’s Liberal Tradition and Instruments in Regional Capacity Building”. While India advocates non-interference in its SSC, the country’s development, sustainability and security was and is fundamentally affected by its neighboring countries and make India’s involvement necessary. India’s peacebuilding policies include political mediation and advice. Since the 1950s, India has provided constitutional support and technical advice to other countries. Also, India pursues multilateral efforts e.g. with the UN. Dr. Xavier reminds the audience of the words of P.N. Haksar, advisor to the prime minister in 1974: “Distinguish between India’s strategic rhetoric and practice”, suggesting that in practice India is not a passive regional actor in peacebuilding support. Rather, India’s efforts are gaining significance as India’s confidence rises, and as China becomes a more competitive influence in the region. Still, India needs to address the challenges of exceptionalism and passivity, engagement in immediate short-term as well as long-term efforts, and strengthening aid recipients’ governments.

#### **Q&A/Discussion:**

**Dr. Oreta** commented that alongside the capacity building of state actors, the government also needs a strategic communication plan to clearly communicate the goals of the peace process. This is because of the danger that communities might construe the peace efforts, particularly the interventions for ex-combatants, as ‘rewarding violence’ rather than ‘investing on peace.’ Dr. Oreta likewise noted that the geopolitical reality with neighboring countries can also have implications on the domestic peace process. For instance, the dispute between Malaysia and the Philippines over Sabah always loom in the distance relative to the role of Malaysia as third-party facilitator over the peace talks between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation front (MILF). Likewise, having the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) with its designated representative Indonesia serving as third party facilitator in the peace talks between the Philippine Government and Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) also made the peace process more complicated and layered.

The participants were curious about possible triggers for changes in China’s border region policies in Myanmar. According to **Dr. Oo**, Chinese government’s relationship with armed groups have been ongoing since the 1950s, but certain triggers, such as the Myanmar’s friendship with Western countries, and the expansion of the BRI, are slowly changing this relationship. If Myanmar participates in the BRI initiative, there needs to be peace first. Therefore, China will be more inclined to actively support Myanmar’s peace process, in order to economically collaborate in the future.

During the discussion, **Dr. Xavier** further explained India’s willingness to compete with China as an emerging power and its reluctance towards the BRI initiative. From his perspective, China has

broad opportunities, which were not existent before in this region. India strives to further develop and strengthen its position as a superpower as well. He praised the BRI initiative, but also cautioned about the debt sustainability issues, noting the current debt dependency of Sri Lanka over the Chinese built ports.

## REGIONAL AND GLOBAL INITIATIVES

The moderated discussion among experts explored regional and multilateral initiatives on conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

Moderated by **Anthea Mulakala**, Director of International Development Cooperation of The Asia Foundation, the session featured:

**Bishnu Sapkota**

Country Director  
FHI 360 Nepal

**Nick Smith**

Assistant Director, Governance, Fragility and Water Branch  
Development Policy Division  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Australia

**Denis Nkala**

Regional Coordinator for Asia and the Pacific  
United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC)

**Rezlan Ishar Jenie**

Executive Director  
ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (ASEAN-IPR)



**Q1. ▣ South-South cooperation's emphasis on sharing Asia's own experiences shows significant potential for peacebuilding. More support is needed for country-to-country learning in Asia. How does the UNOSSC work on conflict prevention and peacebuilding? The UN adopted a new strategy in terms of peace development. What is this new strategy?**

**Dr. Denis Nkala** explained, that the UN and UNOSSC serve the member states. However, there is a reluctance from some member states in the UNOSSC regarding peacebuilding, as they feel the need to continue supporting decisions without being engaged in political decisions or taking sides. He proposed that the UN should be looking more at how the Global South is dealing with conflict prevention within the overall framework of sustaining peace. The UN Office is a small facilitator at this stage and currently working on a strategy for knowledge sharing on conflict prevention. He also emphasized that Asia and Asian institutions need an umbrella organization and a more encompassing approach to conflict prevention, which includes both ASEAN and SAARC countries. The main agenda of the new UN strategy is to bring together all UN agencies in order to have an equal voice for everybody and work on peace building before, during and after a conflict. Every agency will have a specific role to play.

**Q2. ■ Regional institutions in Asia are very much separated by region. How can these institutions at that level try to tackle South-South cooperation? How does ASEAN-IPR address it?**

**H.E. Ambassador Rezlan Jenie** reminded the audience of the three pillars of the ASEAN Community: ASEAN Political-Security, Economic and Socio-Cultural Communities. The ASEAN-IPR was launched in 2012 by the ASEAN Leaders, as an action line in the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC) Blueprint 2009-2015, as well as a tool to fulfill the endeavors of the Political-Security pillar of ASEAN. Bearing in mind the cross-cutting nature of the issue of peace and reconciliation, the ASEAN-IPR works to address political-security issues, while it may also touch upon economic and social-cultural development. Functions of the organization lie in research and capacity building activities on peace, conflict prevention, conflict management and conflict resolution. In other words, through the Institute, ASEAN Member States could view and address contemporary challenges as well as future challenges by taking stock and lessons learned and best practices of the region's own experiences. Moreover, the Institute functions to develop a pool of experts that, in time, is hoped to be able to assist in the need for negotiations to manage and resolve conflict. Such would be a reflection on how the ASEAN-IPR could support South-South cooperation.

**Q3. ■ Is there a similar organization within SAARC? Would the engagement of SAARC or a regional body support Nepal's peacebuilding and transitional issues?**

**Dr. Bishnu Sapkota** considered SAARC as largely dysfunctional in this area and lacking in terms of geopolitical sensitivity, and therefore, cannot be a solution to peacebuilding processes in Asia. Most peacebuilding initiatives have been supported by Western donors and institutions. Regional actors in Nepal's case would be the big neighbors, India and China, as there has been not much engagement by Pakistan and Bangladesh, who are coping with their own internal conflicts. India and China are perceived to be willing to engage at a political level only, seeing the conflict as a domestic, Nepal-only issue.

**Q4. ■ Where do you see Australia's role as outside donor? Triangular cooperation is emerging as a way for donors to leverage their aid to support South-South cooperation. What are the possibilities for TRC in relation to peacebuilding? Is this something you are exploring?**

**Dr. Nick Smith** noted, Australia has undertaken triangular cooperation before with countries such as Thailand or China, as the “pivot country”, but it has not been a common form of aid. Most of Australia’s peace-building activities in Asia tended to be multilateral, rather than bilateral, because it is very important that the international community presents a united front with regard to preventing conflict. If a range of countries pursued their own separate activities, there is the danger that they might pull in different directions potentially making a conflict worse. Across the board, Australia is increasingly exploring TRC.

**Q5. ■ What are your perspectives on the relative roles of global multilateral agencies (e.g. UN) and "western/northern" bilateral actors (e.g. DFAT) vs regional ones (e.g. ASEAN) in the future of development and peacebuilding investments in the region?**

Australia works frequently with regional agencies, as **Dr. Smith** explained. Western donors provide a history of development cooperation and resources, but may lack cultural awareness. Regional bodies may well provide a better cultural fit for the countries in which peace-building activities take place. If multilateral, regional and emerging agencies commit to working together, they may be able to understand the drivers of conflict better and find a way to work more effectively in the region.

**Q6. ■ What role can the non-governmental sector play in peacebuilding and how can they foster knowledge sharing?**

**Dr. Sapkota** optimistically affirmed the importance of the non-governmental sector, seeing a need for CSOs to play a vital role in peacebuilding, as they can go deeply and reach communities. In the case of Nepal in 2005, the U.S. government and other donors were actively funding for peacebuilding and dialogue in Nepal even when the Maoist groups were still considered terrorists. Dr. Saptoka warned, in this way governments cannot play the role of civil society. Peacebuilding role can be effectively played by civil society actors.

**Q7. ■ How does ASEAN-IPR see itself engaging with local CSOs?**

**H.E. Amb. Jenie** noted, even though ASEAN-IPR is an inter-governmental body, the organization is not implemented through the government. The ASEAN-IPR’s work is crafted pursuant to the Institute’s terms of reference (TOR) and APSC Blueprint 2025, which – among others – calls for dialogue, cooperation and collaboration with relevant stakeholders including regional and international organizations to exchange experiences and lessons learned on peace, conflict management, conflict resolution. Therefore, they are engaging closely with local and regional CSOs, networking and harnessing the strength of regional organizations. Such cooperation could facilitate those discussions that would be considered sensitive for governments, and thus build a bridge between government and civil society or think tanks, bringing multiple advantages for the ASEAN Community-building in the bigger picture.

**Q8. ■ How do DFAT, UNOSSC and ASEAN-IPR address cross-cutting issues in conflict prevention and peacebuilding across the region, specifically gender based violence? What are your suggestions for how to address these issues in some of the program modalities we have discussed during this dialogue?**

In Australia's case, **Dr. Smith** reminded the audience on its long tradition of thinking about gender issues in peacebuilding, recognizing that women are more affected. Therefore, Australia aims to promote women being decision makers and participating in conflict resolution. One of the DFAT funded programs is the "Women's Peace Leadership Program" led by a Cambodian based NGO in Myanmar, through which women of Cambodia, Myanmar and Sri Lanka share experiences on peacebuilding.

Regarding UNOSSC, **Dr. Nkala** referred to the new UN strategy on sustaining peace implemented by the Secretary General. Every agency of the UN should now be part of peacebuilding engagements and focus also on women, children and youth.

**Amb. Jenie** viewed that have been ASEAN lacking behind on questions on women's participation in peace and negotiation processes. He further underscores that the enhancement of gender mainstreaming in conflict resolution and management should be a new key principle and objective for the region. In 2017, the ASEAN Leaders produced a "Joint Statement on Promoting Women, Peace and Security in ASEAN". Moreover, he informed the Meeting that a project of the Institute is currently in the pipeline for the latter half of 2018 to (i) concretize the Joint Statement; and, (ii) establish a roster of women peace practitioners in the region. Such project may further be developed by the Institute to build capacities and widen the role of women in peace and security.

**Ms. Anthea Mulakala** added in conclusion, that the New Development Bank (NDB) has also started engagement processes with civil society in 2017. Their sustainable framework will consider gender, community and environment perspectives.

#### **Q&A/Discussion**

Questions from the floor revealed concern over key ideological principles of South-South cooperation and how the disparate approaches of different agencies in one country should be coordinated.

**Dr. Nkala** noted, that there are already established principles of South-South cooperation made by the annual committee for South-South cooperation in the General Assembly in New York. These principles include ownership of the development and peace-making process, and non-interference in other countries' affairs. However, according Dr. Nkala, they need a revision for clarification and greater relevance to Asia.

In addition to that, **Dr. Sapkota** expressed, the existing regional bodies (e.g. SAARC) or multilateral agencies (e.g. UN) can be a good platform for peacebuilding, but attempts are limited. According to him, civil society organizations have a better chances and greater willingness to work with governments.

Australia's first principle in peacebuilding is according to **Dr. Smith**: Do not harm. Efforts and measures should not make the situation they are trying to improve, worse.

## CLOSING REMARKS



In her concluding remarks, **Ms. Anthea Mulakala** summarized key takeaways from the discussions:

- I. Given the scale of Asian led economic cooperation, particularly in infrastructure, Asian providers should apply conflict sensitivity frameworks to their investments. Long-term investments in the rule of law and governance are also needed to ensure that economic development leads to peace and does not make fragile situations worse.
- II. Asian experiences of conflict-to peace transition often offer more valuable and relevant lessons for neighboring countries than global expertise and best practice.
- III. In countries like Afghanistan where there is a high level of violence, conflict prevention and peacebuilding may need to be put on hold until the security situation is under control.
- IV. Non-state Asian actors (CSOs, religious organizations) have played a significant role in Asia-Asia peacebuilding efforts.
- V. Regional economic projects can sometimes build political bridges in conflict situations and provide opportunities for the regions superpowers to work together.
- VI. At the same time, such large-scale initiatives can be stalled and undermined by geostrategic and political interests.
- VII. Community mediation is increasingly being used as a strategy to deal with brewing tensions in communities caused by urbanization, humanitarian crises, scarce resources, resettlement.
- VIII. Asian experiences of transition from/through conflict often offer more valuable or relevant lessons for neighboring countries than western experience.
- IX. Neighbors matter - the regulations and policies of neighboring countries can influence a country's conflict dynamics. Asia countries should examine how their own policies, particularly border regulations, may help or hinder neighboring conflicts.

**Dr. Wonhyuk Lim** referred in his closing remarks to Immanuel Kant. He said, the natural state of human kind is not peace, but war and for sustaining peace hard work is necessary. Kant laid out three factors: International governance and public consistency, international relations and a

federation of free states, and a respectful relationship of the individual and the global community through the acknowledgement of universal human rights. There are many measures to sustain peace on a long term, but as Dr. Lim emphasized, universal human rights are most important.

Closing the conference and bidding his farewell as The Asia Foundation Korea's Country Representative, **Mr. Dylan Davis** noted the wide range of topics that were covered over the two days of discussion. The dialogue provided insight on where research capacities are in specific countries, which governments seek cooperation and how The Asia Foundation and its 18 regional offices can offer further support in the future. He also took the opportunity to commend all participants for the quality, energy, and passion of the dialogue and thanked all those involved.

Dr. Lim handed **Ms. Nandita Baruah** as representative of The Asia Foundation Nepal office a token of appreciation for their great assistance.

## WELCOME DINNER & KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Moderated by **Ms. Nandita Baruah**, Acting Country Representative of The Asia Foundation Nepal, the keynote speech featured as speaker:

Vidyadhar Mallik

Chairperson

Nepal Transition to Peace-Institute (NTTP-I)



The keynote speaker at the Welcome Dinner was Mr. Vidyadhar Mallik. He provided a historical overview on Nepal's struggle, people's movement, and cooperation with neighboring countries. He remarked that after 70 years of struggle for democratization and social, political, and economic inclusion, Nepal still faces an unfinished agenda. Asian south-south cooperation is very important as Asian countries share similar experiences and pathways to development. Certain challenges, e.g. the unequal caste system, can only be overcome by learning from other countries who had to solve the same problems. He also explained Nepal's unique position as a neighbor between India and China. While Nepal shares cultural ties and similar governance structures with

India, both India and China compete for roles in Nepal. Increased stability in Nepal will benefit its own security and leverage with powerful neighbors. Nepal hopes to share its experiences with other countries in the future as well.

#### **Q&A/Discussion:**

During the discussion **Mr. Mallik** further commented on China-India collaboration in the region. The two countries have recently adopted policies in Afghanistan. Joint policies might be desired by some countries, but other countries, such as Sri Lanka might not appreciate their partners to collaborate. Mr. Mallik emphasized that both countries are of great importance for Nepal's future. However, a balance in self-reliance and reliance on outside forces is essential according to him.

Mr. Mallik was presented with a token of appreciation by **Dr. Wonhyuk Lim**.

## **FIELD VISIT**

Participants visited an Asia Foundation community mediation program in Banepa Municipality of Kavre District. Since May 2015, following the devastating earthquake in Nepal, TAF has been supporting the use of interest-based facilitated dialogue and mediation in addressing local disputes arising from issues related to post-earthquake short-term relief and medium to long-term recovery in seven highly affected districts. The program was predicated on the idea that, beyond the immediate disaster response, Nepal needed a plan for sustainable recovery especially during its post-conflict transition. One of the highly earthquake affected districts, Kavre hosts a total of 851 mediators representing diverse class, caste, ethnicities and gender. TAF implements community mediation and facilitated dialogue in Kavre through the help of local civil society organization - Natural Resource Conflict Transformation Center (NRCTC-N). The visit concluded with a visit to the community mediation center, which are housed at the local government (ward level) office and where counselling and mediation services are provided.



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Participants' biographies can be found [here](#).

The program agenda can be found [here](#).