



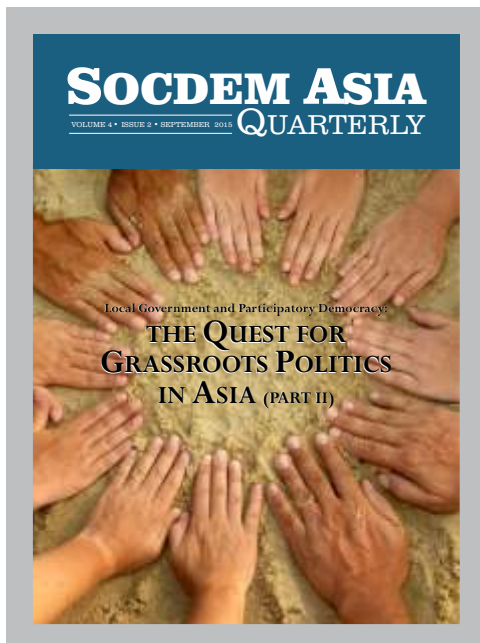
Network for Social Democracy in Asia



The Network for Social Democracy in Asia: 2016 Highlights

Following in the footsteps of years of dynamism and productivity, 2016 saw Socdem Asia spearheading various activities and publications with a focus on grassroots democracy in Asia, energy security, gender equality, and building open and safe societies in an age of terror and strongman populism. The year saw Socdem Asia organizing major events, which gathered leading progressive thinkers and activists from the Asian region and beyond. This year also had focused on capacitating activists at different level on campaigning, political management and inclusive policy development work. Without a question, the year was a difficult one for progressives around the world owing to the electoral victory of anti-democratic forces, rise in xenophobia, and precipitous decline for progressive, democratic values around the world. It also saw renewed challenges to freedom and democracy across Asia. And this is precisely why Socdem Asia's activities this year were filled a larger-than-usual sense of duty and urgency.

Key Publications



Local Government and Participatory Democracy: The Quest for Grassroots Politics in Asia (Part II)

The latest Socdem Asia Quarterly, the flagship publication of progressives in Asia, provided an expanded coverage of latest development in local and participatory governance in the region. This edition of the *Quarterly* came on the heels of the “SOCDEM Asia Conference on Lessons and Best Practices on Local Democracy and Governance in the 21st Century”, which was conducted 2-3 December 2014 in Penang, Malaysia, bringing together like-minded, progressive politicians to discuss among each other valuable inputs and strategies to deliver good, effective governance to their constituencies, especially in areas where social democratic forces are (or are poised to be) in position of power. The event served as a crucial platform for sharing of social democratic alternatives, with the aim of consolidating these experiences and discussions into a broader roadmap for bottom-up reforms, which will be of utmost importance to progressives in and beyond the region. The *Quarterly* builds up on the conference by providing a range of essays and commentaries on local governance in Asia. This is the second part of the Quarterly issue on local government and participatory democracy.



Asia's Democratic Landscape: The Shifting Sands of Progressive Politics

Without a question, Asia is a diverse lot. In fact, right until the modern times, people in the region, who constitute much of the world's population, didn't identify themselves as part of the same spatial community or episteme. Beginning with the Greeks, who divided the world between the 'civilized' Hellenistic world and the 'Barbarian' rest, including the towering Persian Empire, there emerged in the Western imagination an Orient, embodied by a distinct Asiatic world.

After centuries of humiliation under the yoke of Western colonial powers, Asia has gradually reconstituted itself, emerging as the world's most dynamic and promising region. Yet, despite decades of almost uninterrupted economic expansion and political consolidation, the region is still struggling to establish mature, inclusive democracies. This edition of *Socdem Asia Quarterly* brings together diverse views from leading activists and scholars across Asia, shedding light on the challenges of and opportunities for democratization and inclusive development.

Key Activities

Conferences



Building an Open and Safe Society for All

September 19-20, 2016/ Bali, Indonesia

Despite sustained economic expansion over the past three decades, there is ever-greater concern that the growth is often not sustainable and not paired with the creation of a more just and diverse society. In fact, economic growth often severely lacks the important dimension of inclusiveness: the strengthening of workers' rights, social security, and the inclusion and protection of marginalized groups.

The conference served as an ideal opportunity for bringing together progressive actors from all over the world, ranging from political parties to civil society. The seminar provided an excellent platform for political discussions, networking with fellow progressives and the exchange of experiences.. This conference also analyzed and identified elements of the progressive response to growing exclusive politics and right-wing populism in the region and beyond.



Closing the Gender Gap: A Conference on Feminism

October 13-15, 2016 / Singapore

The conference, bringing together leading policy-makers, activists and academics from across the Asia-Pacific region and beyond, assessed the achievements of the feminist movement and corollary efforts at advocating gender equity in recent history, particularly in the context of Asia. The aim was to come up with a series of policy proposals and advocacies to advance gender equality and women rights across the region beyond.

Women and men in the conference agreed that the progressive response to gender inequality and inequity is a rights-based framework that will shape the economy and the push for structural reforms. Concretely, these are to be translated into progressive labour policies, gender-just social protection pillars, recognition of valuable reproductive work, prevention and even criminalization of sexual violence including strong police power towards strict implementation, fair and democratic trade agreements, fair compensation, and implementation of global conventions. The conference also acknowledged that the different practices and mechanisms employed within the parties – quotas within the organization, capacity building for women members, progressive legislation, fielding women candidates, integrating transwomen to our fold, strengthening our women wings, and working with women in the grassroots. These practices and mechanisms should be taken as continuing tasks of the present and future workers and leaders of the parties.



Conference on Energy Security Outlook: Advancing a Progressive Response to the Energy Challenge

November 8-9, 2016 / Makati City, Philippines

The conference sought to weigh-in lessons from national and international experiences that will help inform a progressive energy security agenda. It also aimed to identify strategies and ways forward to push for more policies that enhance regional capacities to pursue sustainable energy options and venues to further cooperation at the regional, country and local levels.

With energy security being a persistent programmatic thrust of Socdem Asia, the network brought together members of political parties, think tanks, civil society organizations, diplomatic community, and government officials from Indonesia, Malaysia, Germany and the Philippines in a dialogue about shifting to more renewable sources of energy.

The keynote speaker of the activity was the advisor to the Minister for Environment and Economy of Germany, Dr. Felix Matthes. He talked about emerging concepts and trends in the energy sector and the politics behind them. Senator Sherwin Gatchalian, the senate committee chairperson on energy also graced the conference to converse about government thrusts on pursuing a more sustainable energy mix in the country. A diverse set of speakers- advocates, practitioners, bureaucrats, government officials and members of the private sector talked about a plethora of issues ranging from lessons from implementing local renewable energy programs, the progressive energy security narrative, to busting the nuclear myth.

Workshops and Trainings



Experience Exchange on Party Building and Strengthening

February 19-20, 2016 / Delhi, India

Democratic forces are in the process of organizing themselves to form progressive parties. As a part of The Network's thrust of helping capacitate actors in progressive political parties across the region, Socdem Asia facilitated the training of cadres in the areas of Political Ideologies, Discourse Analysis and Design, Political and Resource Mobilization, Organizing, Cadre Formation, and Building Sectoral Organizations.



Asia-Pacific Campaign Forum

April 16-17, 2017 / Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

The Asia-Pacific Campaign Forum is a cooperation of the Australian Labor International, Socdem Asia and the Progressive Alliance. The forum is an avenue for political parties in the Asia Pacific to exchange experiences, best practices and tools in getting messages across, generating public support for issues and winning elections. Among the campaigns discussed are Participatory Budgeting, Reproductive Health and Rights, Political Party Reform, Rural Infrastructure development and service delivery, and key electoral battles in the region.



Youth Leadership Training in Timor Leste: “ Building Strength, Spreading the Progressive Agenda”

Dili, Timor Leste

Through SOCDEM Asia, member parties Akbayan Citizens Action Party (AKBAYAN) - Philippines, the Democratic Action Party (DAP) - Malaysia and *Frente Revolucionária de Timor-Leste Independente* (FRETILIN) have teamed-up for a series of experience exchange and capacity building trainings for Juventud Fretilin leaders, and the education committee members of the women wing and members of the Party. This collaboration aims to further develop the FRETILIN Party and its youth wing's education and training program.

The first training in June of 2016 was dedicated for exchanges that will lead to the development of basic ideological framework for party movement as well as ideas on how to enrich organizational life in the local. In August 5-7, Trainers from Akbayan and DAP facilitated a Youth Leadership Training at the Party Headquarters. The Training included basic political education and capacity-building sessions which aimed to build strategic relationships among young progressives in East Timor.

Through these trainings and exchanges, participants acquired knowledge and skills to be able to train fellow young progressives in their respective countries using new content and methods. The participants also recognized the partnership and cooperation built among them during the training which could yield cross-country sharing and solidarity work.



Fretilin Grassroots Campaigning Training

Dili, Timor Leste

The Network contributes in capacitating progressive political actors in the region through discourse development, skills trainings, political education and exchange of experiences. Fretilin, or the Revolutionary Front of East Timor, is a leftist political party in East Timor and a member of the network. The party, which started as a resistance movement that fought for independence in East Timor, will embark on a national election campaign in 2017.

Part of the preparation in this campaign is to activate different Fretilin chapters to generate support in the grassroots level by reminding the people of Fretilin's revolutionary history and their track record in governance and reviving the movement where Timorese people are part of pushing the country forward. By the end of the workshop, the party was able to formulate draft plans geared towards their identified organizational and electoral objectives.



A Social Democratic Asia: Strengthening Inclusive Policy Formulation

Project Period: July 2016 – July 2017

The 1-year project will encompass three countries; two in Southeast Asia – Myanmar and Philippines – and one in South Asia – Nepal. In these three countries, the target audiences will be the respective countries' Members of Parliament, leaders of partner Parties, and national representatives from the Youth, Women and other key sectors. The Project intends to develop National Programme Papers in each of the three partner countries which will serve to concretize the policy proposals that are products of SOCDDEM Asia's thematic conferences for the past 7 years.

By helping create these National Programme Papers, SOCDDEM Asia is able to deepen its role in pursuing progressive policies and programs in the region. Hopefully, the processes involved in the different project-related activities will also contribute to further strengthening the practice of internal democracy, consultations with stakeholders, and peoples' participation in the partner countries.

The activities to be conducted by each partner in their respective countries include the following:

1. **One Issue Analysis and Agenda Setting Forum** wherein national stakeholders, including party and sectoral leaders, will come together to discuss issues regarding the topic selected;
2. **One Policy Formulation and Development Workshop** together with resource persons wherein selected experts will highlight democratic procedures, lessons, and experiences from other similar policy development work. They will also discuss consensus-building and how to generate popular support for their anchoring programs on progressive, social democratic, values. This will be the venue where the national project teams can already lift initial elements and possible contents of the national platform they are developing;
3. And an interface of parliamentarians, party leaders, grassroots leaders and experts through **one Writeshop and Policy Engagement Planning Seminar** wherein the National Programme/Platform Paper will be collectively drafted. The participants will cooperate to fine-tune the contents of the paper and also lay-out the future directions of the proposed national programme paper, including how it will be later subjected to consultations with local party branches and communities.



Political Management Training for Young Progressives

Cluster 1: May 30, 2016- June 4, 2016 / Ortias Center, Pasig City, Philippines

Cluster 2: October 29, 2016- November 4, 2016 / Cebu City, Philippines

The Network for Social Democracy in Asia Southeast Asia group composed of political party youth wings and progressive youth organizations from Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand and Timor Leste intends to pursue an institutionalized regional program that capacitates its young, emerging leaders from its ranks with tools that aid and advance their political work while at the same time consolidate these young leaders that will help advance collective goals in the future under their progressive leadership.

The PMT1 was attended by 20 youth leaders from member organizations of SocDem Asia, coming from Malaysia, Indonesia, Burma/Myanmar, and the Philippines. Seventeen of the 20 participants have completed the training. A pool of experts and practitioners serve as resource speakers/facilitators/trainors for the various modules. The pool of trainers includes resource speakers from the Philippines, Sweden, Germany, and Australia coming from various fields of expertise. PMT is a 10-day training course divided into two clusters of 5-day training participated by youth leaders selected by their parties/organization which are members of SocDem Asia. The training consists of modules that tackle both knowledge and skill sets, such as: (Cluster 1) Leadership and Organizing, Moderation and Facilitation Techniques, Comparative Ideology, Social Democracy, Party-Union-Social Movement Relations, Cultural Sensitivity, ASEAN Integration, and Political Communications; (Cluster 2) Climate Change, Migration, Trade Agreements, Feminism and SOGIE, Negotiations and Compromises, and Election Management and Progressive Campaigning.



Experience Exchange Seminar for Young Progressives in Indonesia

October 7-8, 2016 / Samarinda, Kalimantan Timur, Indonesia

As part of the capacity-building thrust of Socdem Asia, the network has been building a pool of trainers from political parties to discuss shared struggles and exchange best practices. Given the increasing reach and numbers of progressive youth in Indonesia, there is a need to train and build loyalty among them to the party and to the country. The training which transpired in October of 2016 gathered hundreds of young cadres in Samarinda, Indonesia to build capacities in the areas of ideology, political mobilization, communication tools, political mobilization and cadre building.



Economy of Tomorrow Workshop

November 17, 2016 / Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

The workshop was conceptualised after recognising the need for a progressive development model which will be able to address current and foreseen economic and social crises in Malaysia and the Southeast Asian region. This was especially crucial in light of Democratic Action Party's 50th anniversary and the rumoured Malaysian general elections in 2017. With the sweeping threat of right-wing populism, it is high time for the progressive movement to rebuild public support through providing the people with concrete solutions to the root cause of the problems which led to mass anger and discontent towards those identified as members of the perceived oppressive establishment.

The idea of having a country-specific development agenda to guide economic and social policies were discussed, focusing on the need for policies which focus on the strengths of each country, utilizing these in ensuring sustainable development. The Malaysia 2030 Declaration was therefore crafted during the workshop with the goal of providing DAP with a working framework with which to guide its policies on. The declaration has in mind what DAP envisions Malaysia to be in 2030 and the party's policies will be centered around achieving that vision.