



Network for Social Democracy in Asia

Network for Social Democracy in Asia Activity Highlights 2018

It was a dynamic and productive 2018 for the Network of Social Democracy in Asia (SocDem Asia). Last year, the network has delivered its line up of initiatives and introduced new activities all to further the social democratic agenda in the region.

We started the year with convening feminists from all over the region to determine progressive legislation for narrowing the gender gap. We held workshops for policy makers to create more inclusive economies, for parties to embark on more strategic and transformative campaigns, and for young progressives to tackle the bane of populism head on. We explored the possibility of an Asian social welfare model and introduced the essentials for catalytic projects. We built on the knowledge of young leaders from our member-parties and trained them to become skilled electoral campaigners. We welcomed new members to the SocDem Asia family.

It was a year of remarkable cooperation with our members and partners from Asia and beyond. Let's look back on the SocDem Asia highlights of 2018 as we welcome 2019 with renewed solidarity.



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Discourse and Policy Development



Action for Gender Equality

21-23 January 2018 | Jakarta, Indonesia

This conference brought together feminists across the region to share experiences and strategies in tackling key challenges to women empowerment. They shared initiatives and progressive legislation that parties can adopt to narrow the gender gap and push for gender equality in the region.

One of the highlights of the discussion was the need to maximize the impact of social media on mainstreaming gender issues, like what happened with the #MeToo movement. They also extensively discussed on the inclusion of hard gender quotas in parties and the linking of women's issues to political, economic, and social questions, not treating women's issues as a marginal topic.



An Economy for Progress and Justice

28-30 June 2018 | Kathmandu, Nepal

SocDem Asia brought together progressives and social democrats from around the globe to map out the emerging challenges in the existing economic order and outline elements of a progressive economic roadmap consistent with the principle of social and redistributive justice in development.

The primary challenge in this conference was for progressives is to craft, advocate and implement policies and initiatives that transcend conventional measurements of economic wellbeing by focusing on social justice and overall living standards. It explored the paucity of overreliance on Gross Domestic Product as a measure of economic development and individual wellbeing of citizens in favor of new progressive indicators and policy measures.



Regional Conference on Reimagining an Asian Social Welfare Model 13-16 April 2018 | Cebu City, Philippines

This conference was the launch of the SocDem Asia project on strengthening the network as a platform for reimagining and rethinking the Asian social and welfare state. Hosted by the Akbayan Citizens' Action Party, it was participated by policy makers, leaders and representatives from SocDem Asia member-parties and representatives from development partners.

The highlight of the Conference was the discussion on the regional framing paper on reimagining an Asian Social Welfare Model, complementing regional and national presentations on the topic. Participants discussed crucial challenges that social welfare models face, the rise of neo-liberal policies and populism, and the prospects for an Asian model of social welfare based on the region's conditions. They also visited the local government and organizations in Cebu working with marginalized communities and campaigning for basic services and the protection of their rights.

Part of the project on reimagining the social welfare model are the project orientation and agenda-setting seminars in Burma/Myanmar, Manila and Kathmandu and policy development seminars in Yangon and Manila.

Overall, it aims to promote regional discussions on Asian social welfare model and develop national policies towards establishing social welfare programs in Burma/Myanmar, Nepal, and the Philippines, and in the process build the parties' capacity on inclusive policy formulation and enhance the practice of democracy.

Communications and Youth



Political Management Training for Young Progressives

29 April-4 May 2018 | Jakarta, Indonesia / 14-19 October 2018 | Pahang, Malaysia

Now on its 4th batch, the PMT once again convened young progressives from the region for a 2-part training course which aimed to provide a platform for these emerging leaders to be capable of taking on the reins of their organizations and their country's parties and institutions while also actively pushing for the social democratic agenda in the region.

The training served as an avenue for the participants to learn about social democratic values and relevant organizing and campaigning skills; to discuss pressing ASEAN issues like climate change, migration and taxation; and to build solidarity among this diverse but like-minded group.

As young activists, the participants lengthily deliberated on populism, its spread across the Asian region, and the efforts they are going to make to counter this. With the historic win of progressives in Malaysia, the participants were energized to reverse the dangerous narrative of populism slowly creeping in their countries.

Standing Together: Strengthening Outreach of Juventud Fretilin

5-7 October 2018 | Dili, Timor Leste

The 3-day seminar participated by more than 20 youth activists and leaders of Juventude Fretilin, focused on sharing experiences and ideas, as well as new techniques and skills on election campaigning, social media, and ideology. Party members from Southeast Asian social democratic parties (Democratic Action Party - Malaysia, NasDem - Indonesia, and Akbayan Party - Philippines) gave Juventude Fretilin activists a glimpse on how political work is done in their respective countries as well as the challenges that progressive politics face in their countries. Juventude Fretilin members also shared Fretilin's experiences, history and current political work to their comrades.



Fretilin Training on Facilitation

23-28 October 2018 | Manila, Philippines

SocDem Asia, in coordination with Akbayan Youth, hosted a youth exchange visit with Fretilin Youth in Manila, Philippines. The exchange imparted practical experiences and knowledge in youth organizing, labor and urban poor sector with the participants from Timor Leste. The training also included dialogues with key sectors and workshops on facilitation, political education, and events management.

The Timorese delegates looked forward to applying their learnings in the workshop as they conduct their own organizing and electoral work.



Political Management Training – Executive Class

26-29 October 2018 | Bataan, Philippines

Springing from their learnings in the previous modules on political communication, comparative ideology and other introductory courses, selected alumni of the training were convened for a specialized course that sought to deepen their knowledge on party processes and election work, focusing on forging transformative alliances, understanding polling and electoral data management, and message development. They were also induced to forward a regional political project focused on youth concerns to galvanize this important constituency towards progressive change.

The Executive Class is the first training program for the alumni of the PMT. This project will be institutionalized in the coming year, with deeper discussions on party education, data analysis, transformative change-making and political communications.



SocDem Asia Youth Training Alumni in DAPSY Congress

02 December 2018 | Selangor, Malaysia

The Democratic Action Party – Socialist Youth (DAPSY), the youth arm of SocDem Asia’s member organisation in Malaysia, recently held their National Congress last 2 December 2018 in Seri Kembangan, Selangor, Malaysia. This was the first national congress after DAP and Pakatan Harapan’s surprise victory against the 60-year Barisan Nasional regime.

SocDem Asia commemorated this occasion by sending Political Management Training alumni from the Philippines, Indonesia, and Timor Leste. This enabled them to compare their own party dynamics to that of DAPSY and the current political landscape of Malaysia as well as the role that DAPSY and its leaders occupy in government.

This visit coincided with the Parliamentary and Senate sessions, an event that rarely happens in Malaysia. The PMT Alumni were able to visit the House of Parliament, observe one of the parliamentary debates, and meet with various Senators, Members of Parliament, Deputy Ministers, and Ministers from the Pakatan Harapan coalition who were more than happy to discuss with them about their ministries, key policy proposals, and the role of the youth in politics.



Charting a New Economic Roadmap: Inclusive Development and Democratization

21-23 September 2018
Penang, Malaysia

The workshop assessed the Malaysian government's (under the Pakatan Harapan coalition) long-term strategy to overhauling the economy. The workshop also touched on the government's goal of greater democratization alongside economic policies introduced by the government. Attended by Defense Minister Liew Chin Tong, Prof. Jomo Kwame Sundaram, Prof. Donald Low, among others, the workshop aimed to provide an avenue for evaluation of best practices in other countries across the region in the realm of economic development strategy.



Communications for Change training with Nepali youth leaders December 4, 2018 | Kathmandu, Nepal

The training was participated by youth and student leaders of Nepal Students Union and Nepal Tarun Dahl on communication skills using social media and other new tools for their campaigns and activities on gender equality and good governance. The activity invited experts based in Nepal who are leaders of innovation and good governance. Participants were also taught how to prepare communications plans to ensure that they can apply the lessons taught in the workshop in their own organizations.

Party Strengthening



Asia Pacific Campaign Forum

7-8 April 2018 | Sydney, Australia

Through cooperation of the Australian Labor International and SocDem Asia, the Asia Pacific Forum gathered representatives from political parties in Asia to discuss tools, techniques and grassroots experiences for modern campaigning. The participants are looking forward to use their learnings, as majority of them are having their regional and national elections in the coming year.



Political Strategy Development

12-14 July 2018 | Yangon, Burma

7-9 September 2018 | Manila, Philippines

The Political Strategy Development (PSD) workshop convened representatives from member-parties of the network to learn about key elements of political strategy development from the framework of transformative politics and to exchange experiences in successful campaigning. Participants were exposed to lessons on capturing the electoral discourse and were equipped to determine catalytic projects in their own countries. Parties, most especially those in the opposition were enthusiastic to apply the learnings on transformative change-making in their respective areas.



Study Visit in Denmark on History and Development of Social Welfare

17-23 September 2018
Copenhagen, Denmark

The Study Visit focused on the history of the Social Democratic Party of Denmark and the development and current challenges of the Danish welfare model through a series of dialogs with key party leaders involved in the Program of Principles, Education, Health, Taxation, Finance, Policy development. It was also an opportunity to meet with an elected local leader, representatives from the DIPD, and a Danish labour think tank. The Delegation also attended the Annual Congress of SDP and participated in the international program. The study visit was an opportunity for the policy writers to be exposed first hand to the danish welfare model and expound on related policies on education, health and taxation. The meetings on the Program of Principles and Policy Development, as well as participation in the Party Congress provided both process and content in developing social welfare policies in Denmark.

Bilateral Meeting with Political Parties in Thailand 09-12 December 2018 | Bangkok & Sakon Nakhon, Thailand

SocDem Asia, aiming to build a social democratic alternative in the region, continues to expand its network and reaches out to like-minded political parties and movements.

Last December, network and member-party representatives met with progressive political parties in Thailand, namely the Future Forward Party and the Commoners Party, to formally introduce them to the network. They also discussed the current socio-political and economic situation in the region and their common responses to these shared issues and challenges.

Network Meetings



Steering Committee Meeting

20 October 2018 | Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

The meeting, hosted by the Democratic Action Party Malaysia, was a platform for member-parties from Indonesia, Philippines, Malaysia, Timor Leste, Mongolia, and Nepal to discuss matters that relate to our collective organizational and political goals for the network.

The Network Coordinator presented the events and activities of the past year, which was broken down to the following categories: Party Strengthening, Youth & Communications, and Discourse & Policy Development. She opened the discussion for the preparations for the 10th anniversary of SocDem Asia.

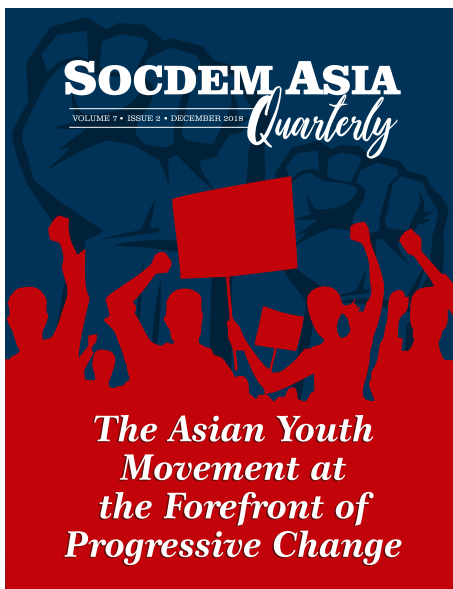
Key Publications



Reimagining Social Democracy in Asia: The Search for a New Welfare Model

The special edition of SocDem Asia Quarterly builds on the outputs and discussions from the SocDem Asia Regional Conference with the similar theme, “Reimagining a New Welfare Model in Asia” in April 13-16, 2018 in Cebu City, Philippines. It aims to broaden and deepen the discourse to SocDem Asia partners. Five national papers were solicited, which delve on specific topics covered by the regional framing paper.

The collection is an abridged version of the regional framing paper that tackles the history and development of social democracy in Asia, the rise and fall of progressive forces in the region, and the challenges and prospects in bringing about an Asian social welfare model.



Asian Youth Movement at the Forefront of Progressive Change

This edition of the SocDem Asia Quarterly looks at past Asian youth led movements that sought to democratize their countries and also provide an account of contemporary social and political movements and young people’s role in them. It features five articles from former and current youth activists.

This Quarterly will look into the achievements and limitations of past movements and what lessons might be drawn from them. It provides accounts of current youth-led movements, how they navigate under their respective countries’ current political climate and their trajectory into the future.