



# ASIAN SCHOLARSHIP FOUNDATION

Under the Royal Patronage of H.R.H. Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn

Newsletter of the ASIA Fellows Program  
and the Ford Foundation International Fellowships Program

November 2008

[www.asianscholarship.org](http://www.asianscholarship.org)

## A ROYAL TEA PARTY

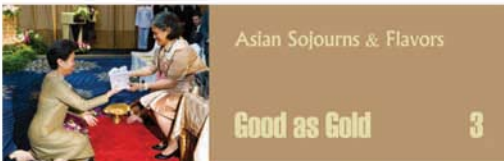
On June 24, 2008, patrons, alumni, and friends of the Asian Scholarship Foundation came together at the Royal Orchid Sheraton Hotel for a special afternoon marking 10 years of the ASIA Fellows Awards. Graciously presiding this high-tea event was Her Royal Highness, Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, who placed ASF under her royal patronage in 2007.

Dr. Juree Vichit-Vadakan, Chair of the ASF Board of Directors, headed the royal welcome entourage, along with Prof. Yoneo Ishii, Chair of the ASF Board Management Committee (BMC), and Dr. Wang Gungwu, BMC Honorary Chair. Her Royal Highness also received a ceremonial garland and a bouquet of tulips from Dr. Lourdes G. Salvador, ASF Executive Director.

The Main-Hall event opened with Her Royal Highness addressing the assembly, composed of Asian diplomatic envoys, representatives of the various partner institutions, ASF alumni, IFP delegates, and members of the press. Her Royal Highness had only kind words for all the gallant benefactors who have pledged to help ASF. She presented a gift to Khunyng Wanna Sirivadhanabhakdi, one of the promptest Thai donors to assist ASF.

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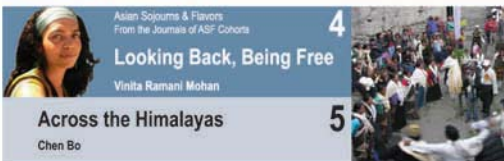




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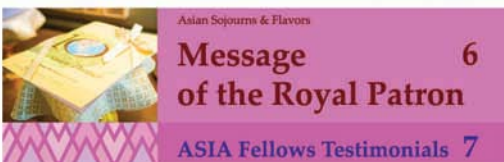
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## Message

## From the IFP Program Officer

On the auspicious commemoration of the 10th anniversary of the ASIA Fellows Awards, ASF was honored to receive Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn as well as distinguished guests from government, the diplomatic corps, and various public and private organizations in Asia during the special reception at Bangkok's Royal Orchid Sheraton Hotel.

This event marked the critical success and regionalization of some 270-strong ASIA Fellows, in 10 cohorts from 22 countries/regions. Their intellectual exchanges and expansions of knowledge signify our region's capacity building through their impressive metrics. Not to forget that here in Asia, we all know by heart what an "extended family" means!

Along this line, the Ford Foundation's smaller family of International Fellowships Program (IFP) in Thailand warmly welcomes back 18 Thai alumni to their Northeast homeland. After completing their advanced studies, these committed change agents are now fulfilling their promises in the name of social justice and sustainable development.

*Origins, Journeys, and Return* is a most fitting theme when looking at IFP as a whole. IFP fellows have not only gone through memorable journeys enhancing their knowledge, professional skills, and capabilities. But IFP itself has also created more innovative non-academic activities for fellows in 22 countries as a springboard for their local and international work arenas.

In this issue, we are proud to feature various activities at different fellowship phases, more importantly, the IFP sponsored *Global Leadership for Social Justice Forum (GLSJF)* in Khon Kaen, Thailand, which brought together 40 alumni from 6 Asian countries. During the past year, we've also had several initiatives for alumni and current fellows. To wit, there's the *Asset-Based Community-Driven Development (ABCD)* at Vietnam's An Giang University hosted by the Center for Educational Exchange with Vietnam (CEEVN), and the *University-Based Fellows Meeting (UBFM)* at both Brandeis University and the University of Hawaii at Manoa. Everywhere, all post-activity feedback point to usefulness and practical community applications.

People often ask why it matters for all these promising fellows to "go and see" what is happening out there. Looking past the "journey," here's some wisdom that's worth mulling about:

*Does the person make a journey?  
Or does the journey make the person?*

May the fragrant November breeze bring ASF's warm regards from our corner of Asia to yours.

Jarwat

JARUWAT KIATIWONGSE



When ASF launched its fundraising campaign, TCC Group's **KHUNYING WANNA SIRIVADHANABHAKDI** had no second thoughts at all about being the first Thai to pledge generous support. Because of her endowment, several Thai scholars have flown all over Asia, to dig into and pen new books about issues of current concern. It wasn't lost on **H.R.H. PRINCESS MAHA CHAKRI SIRINDHORN** either, who recognized the big-hearted lady's fine deed during the royal tea party.



**DAVID HULSE** flew in from Hanoi last June as the Ford Foundation's charming voice during the annual meeting of the ASF Board Management Committee. He also enjoyed the lively high-tea talk at the Royal Orchid Sheraton, presided by **H.R.H. PRINCESS MAHA CHAKRI SIRINDHORN**. With her signature grace, **THANPUYING SUMALEE CHARTIKAVANIJ** (of *Thai Woman Watch*) was quick to take Mr. Hulse aside for a guided tour of the ASF exhibit, rightly with an eye for things Thai, this time.



## Good as Gold



Anyone with a nose for Asian Studies knows that **DR. WANG GUNGWU** rocks. He was in Bangkok last July to keynote the 8th ASIA Fellows Annual Conference. On post-war regionalism in Asia, he lauded the 10-nation ASEAN, for 40 years of gentle talk, for top-of-the-line cooperation, and their finish-line bid for a charter. "But let's also learn from Europe," Dr. Wang added, warning against ultra-nationalism that rushed the modern world back to the trenches. Honorary Chair of ASF's Board Management Committee, this Asian idol is university professor at the National University of Singapore.



Never mind the muggy Bangkok heat, but Cohort 10 fellows were actually fired up about research design and methodology, thanks to the well-paced talk and tough exercises put together by **DR. ANNA MIREN GONZALEZ-INTAL**, noted Philippine social psychologist and this year's Orientation facilitator. Her smooth people skills breezed Dr. Intal through a six-year stint as immediate past Vice-President of the Jesuit-run Loyola Schools of the Ateneo de Manila University.





**Vinita Ramani Mohan**, Cohort 9, is currently the Case Manager of the Access to Justice Asia Legal Team (AJA – Legal Team), which hopes to represent victims before the Khmer Rouge Tribunal. Presently based at Stanford University, she is auditing courses in rule of law, justice, and creative non-fiction writing. She will return to Cambodia next summer to continue with the project.

# Looking Back, Being Free

As an ASIA Fellow from Cohort 9, I went to Cambodia from Singapore to investigate memories and narratives circulating among survivors of the Khmer Rouge period, which led to the deaths of 1.7 million people from 1975-1979.

A great deal of literature already exists on the Khmer Rouge period—it's one of those infamous moments in history when idealism went awry and the intention to create a socialist utopia bred a Frankenstein by way of butchers and dictators. Most of the writing, though, comes from political science and history.

The first and, perhaps, the most critical discovery I made while researching there is the paucity of scholarship on post-conflict, postcolonial countries in Southeast Asia focusing on “muddy” areas like memory/forgetting, identity, genocide, and reconstruction.

I had countless unforgettable moments during my 6 months there. For one, I realized that Cambodia is the exception to the rule among nations with unfortunate histories of genocide. Unlike the former Yugoslavia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, East Timor, and possibly including Sudan and Burma in the future, Cambodia's atrocities occurred nearly three decades ago and have gone largely unaddressed until now.

Cambodians enjoyed no immediate international intervention by way of foreign troops dismantling autocratic regimes; no truth and reconciliation commissions; no multi-billion dollar international tribunals to try dictators, who still had blood on their hands.

As things happened there, the international community quietly mumbled about “diplomacy” and “the Cold War,” while several international players consciously embraced the Khmer Rouge as the country's rightful leaders. Now that its aged rulers are too old to withstand a criminal trial, the equally aged survivors are about to witness a trial addressing traumatic events that occurred nearly 30 years ago.

Yet another factor stood out as I interviewed survivors and their children (which I have since tagged as the “post-conflict generation”). It's the stoicism sitting like a thin layer over memories of violence and the still raw sense of personal suffering. Most survivors would state facts of suffering as facts. Feelings emerged only as they began trawling through details of what happened, where it happened, who disappeared one night and never returned, how hunger slowly killed a family member.

As I listened in mute silence, I realized that “memory” is hard to translate into Khmer;

that justice is equally elusive; that when memories have been buried for too long, one remembers them as if they happened to someone else – that maintaining a distance is what keeps the survivor going.

It's unfortunate that very few Asians in the field are asking these questions. We tend to go where the larger, practical tide takes us. This means that if “country x is a hot spot

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**When memories have been buried for too long, one remembers them as if they happened to someone else**

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right now,” that is where the focus, funding, and attention go. I also discovered that the vast majority of researchers in Cambodia were from select American Ivy-League universities. There was such a preponderance of students from Yale, Harvard, Berkeley or Columbia, that Asians were almost invisible in the field.

Inversely, I discovered a sense of camaraderie among Asians that I hadn't known until I went to Cambodia. As a Singaporean and as an Indian, I found myself relating to strange, idiosyncratic points of cultural identity. Singaporeans and Cambodians have the same reluctance in being vocal about sensitive issues (particularly those pertaining to government). But dig deeper and emotions, passions, and strong opinions soon emerge. There is a strong, cultural tie among Indian Hindus like myself and Cambodians from a distant past who have been deeply influenced by Hinduism.

They would always remind me: Angkor is Hindu! They seemed less reluctant to state this than to point out to Angkor Wat itself, where Hinduism had been overtaken by Buddhist influences. True enough, people are more aware of the complexity of culture and identity than governments,



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# Across the Himalayas

Chen Bo, Cohort 9, is currently Assistant Professor at the College of History and Culture, Sichuan University, P.R. China



After studying Tibetan culture for more than 15 years, I never thought that I'd see a different picture while looking at polyandry among the Tibetan-speaking and Tibetan-related groups in Nepal. Speaking very little Nepalese at first, I had a hard time expressing myself.

Most of what I've read on polyandry hardly links it back to culture. It's been painted quite strangely, taking any woman with more than one husband as a cash-driven animal with no passion, emotions, or shining values.

Looking at polyandry in Nepal, I found some new vistas opening for me. Here, people marry differently, following their own cultural logic. For one, the Mustang people follow their patrilineal descent, like the Dolpo, Humla, and Ladak people. But they're quite different from the folks of central Tibet, who inherit from both sides.

For lineage, the Mustangs rely more on their male offsprings than their female descendants. A son is more welcome than a daughter. Among the Mustangs, if a family can't have a child, not to mention a son, what's there to live for?

I met Sangpel, an 81-year old man at a village in lower Mustang. He has two long-married sons and one daughter. His two sons were born 6 years apart. When the eldest, Tashi, married Lhamo, Sangpel's younger son was only 15. The couple took up with the bride's parents.

After being together for five years, the couple still had no sons to boast of. So, Tashi brought in Lhamo's younger sister Yutsun. Another five years passed for the three of them and, still, there were no children. So, Tashi's younger brother, Jamyang, also hopped in. The four of them had a joint family, namely two husbands and two wives. They were together for 5 years, until Jamyang found work in the US.

About 3 years ago, Tashi and Yutsun also left for Delhi to run a restaurant there. Lhamo was left behind to take care of Sangpel

and his wife. Tashi sired no child at all but now, he's looking for an heir to all that wealth. What's there to do?

When I was there, I met Sangpel's adopted granddaughter. The child, who was about to turn 3, had yet to learn how to talk. She came from a village in the middle hills. Apparently, her parents were Rongba—people from the lower valley, who are not Tibetan by birth. Her parents gave her up; she was raised by kind people before finding her way to Sangpel who gave her the Tibetan name Tsering Lhamo. Now she is destined to be the family's heir. When she grows up, Sangpel will find her a *Mag-pa*, or son-in-law.

## In Nepal, people marry differently, following their own cultural logic

Here we have patrilineal Mustangs, where male is superior to female, as son is superior to daughter. We see this expressed in various ways daily; for instance, in the way people sit down to dinner, or the way ordered food comes in—with the senior males digging in first, followed by their juniors, and the women trailing behind, ranked, in turn, from senior to junior.

I hope that my Himalayan trek will shed some light on polyandry and lead to cross-cultural comparisons. It's all beyond my imagination, really. Had I stayed in China to merely read up on Tibetan culture, my view would have been limited by China's nation-state boundaries.

But as an ASIA Fellow, my view opened to a wider vista from which I saw an Asia away from the stereotypes. After my stint with the Himalayan Mustangs, I now have a different picture of Tibetan civilization. This inspired me to finish a book in Chinese, with an English version coming soon.

I thank the Nepalese people for teaching me something about their being at the heart of inland Asia.\*





## MESSAGE OF THE ROYAL PATRON

Her Royal Highness  
Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn

It is my pleasure to spend this very special afternoon with the Asian Scholarship Foundation. As a research fellowship program, ASF matters very much since it is one of a few in the region committed to promoting Asian Studies.

This afternoon, I note the presence of promising scholars from all over Asia – thinkers and idealists driven by both passion and the creative outlook. I share ASF's pride in your devotion, as you create new knowledge about Asia. This way, you are proposing many practical solutions to our region's crucial problems and taking part in shaping Asia's future.

I am also happy that this affair makes it possible for ASIA Fellows and members of its Board to interact with some very distinguished invited guests. I am referring to the philanthropists, corporate leaders, government leaders and supporters of the Asian cause who have joined us this evening.

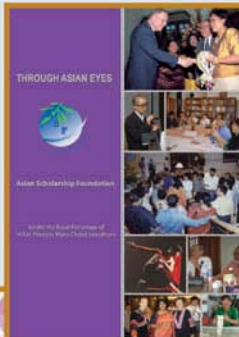
To these eminent guests, I enjoy you to support the Asian Scholarship Foundation. ASF welcomes contributions from all of you to support and fund its research fellowship. Such support will see the ASIA Fellows not just for some time but for so long as Asia needs its visionaries and heritage protectors. Your patronage can make it possible for life-changing projects to happen. We believe that some of these ventures have the power to solve our region's lingering problems, the cause of Asia's poverty and miseries. We also believe that many of our projects will help elevate creativity and knowledge in preserving and enhancing Asian arts, culture, and other creative endeavours.

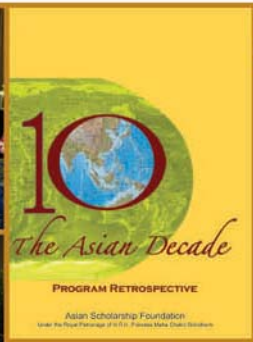
The Asian Scholarship Foundation holds the distinction of bringing some 240 scholars, artists, and public intellectuals to various Asian destinations – where there is real need to speak for Asia, to take up its concerns, and to propose meaningful change. Twenty-two countries/regions are represented in the fellowship program, which makes ASF cover a large part of Asia. These figures matter because as the increasing numbers translate to the force and power of dreamers, ASF can hope for a critical mass to influence Asia, to direct its outlook, and to inspire timely needed social reform.

Once again, my affectionate regard for the work of the Asian Scholarship Foundation. More power to all of you in your shining service to the life, mind, and heart of Asia. \*



ASF's newly designed purple and silver promo-folio is called *Through Asian Eyes*. Along with formal invitations to last summer's Royal Tea Party, ASF couriered the first batch to prospective donors and corporate partners who can commit promising reinforcements to the ASF funds. The folder initiates ASF's campaign to "allow young scholars to launch their research sojourns and to support more projects that could possibly address some of the region's lingering problems."





Royal Tea-Party guests received the first copies of *The Asian Decade*, ASF's 10th anniversary program retrospective. The folio, drafted in gold and royal yellow, charts ASF history and articulates its vision and goals. Also featured are program key metrics and reports, scholarly excerpts, and a visual chronicle of ASF program engagements across the years. More importantly, it pays tribute to the ASF patron, Her Royal Highness, Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn.

"It was really on a lark that I applied for an ASF fellowship. It was difficult coming up with a topic but I managed to write a research proposal on *A Comparative Study on Shakespeare and Colonial Education in British Malaya and the American Philippines*. I know, on the surface, it seems like quite a reach, like I was really groping for an Asian angle.

But at that interview I argued for an *Asian-ness* to Shakespeare by posing the question *Why is it that a Filipino cannot speak to a Malaysian of Lam-Ang or the Malaysian to a Filipino of Hang Tuah, but they can very well speak to each other of Shakespeare?* Luckily, the committee did not find my facetiousness disrespectful and ASF offered me a fellowship

– perhaps on a lark as well.



I was stunned. Suddenly, I had to take on terra incognita and turn into an 'Asian Scholar.' I was heartened though by the ASF's open-mindedness and its rather accommodating view of what Asian scholarship was in the first place. If they were willing to take a chance on me, I decided, then I was willing to take a chance on them."

**JUDY CELINE ICK** (Cohort 7)

Associate Professor  
English and Comparative Literature  
University of the Philippines, Diliman



"In the year 2000, as an ASIA Fellow, I spent a spell of nine months in the Institute of Thai Studies of Chulalongkorn University. The ASF grant had many significant meanings for me. By the time I received the fellowship, I had quite secured my job in Calcutta University; so the ASIA Fellowship had a special meaning for me and for my profession.

Compared to 1994, when I started my journey in developing Thai/Asian Studies, I feel my activities at my institution or in my country have led to greater awareness and knowledge on the part of students and the broader public and, that way, I feel myself commended. And again, my all-sincere gratitude goes to ASF.

So we can, perhaps, declare with big pride that the ASF grants had extended a bigger arena for the promotion of Asian Studies in India. It was not really an individual like me who had the benefits but the benefits have been channelized to many institutions, circles, and to an overall academic arena."

**LIPI GHOSH** (Cohort 1)  
Director, Center of South  
and Southeast Asian Studies  
Calcutta University, India





## A CASTING COUP

Bangkok welcomed back members of Cohort 8, who trooped to Montien Riverside Hotel for the 8th ASIA Fellows Annual Conference last June 25-26, 2008. This year, the spotlights were on *Sheltered States, Troubled Peoples, Threatened Cultures: Contemporary Prospects and Challenges for Asia's Changemakers*. Thailand's Dr. Juree Vichit-Vadakan was the guest of honor and speaker while ASF Board Management Committee Honorary Chair Dr. Wang Gungwu gave the keynote address.

The tightly-packed parallel presentations featured provocative topics such as the dynamics of learning, Asian conflict and peace, poverty and welfare, public health, regional policies and global strategies. Equally compelling were sessions on gender and history, labor and migration, facets of urban poetics, and the colorful visual cultures of Asia. The new ASIA Fellows from Cohort 10 also came in full force to listen, fire tough questions, and inspire rewarding discussions. ASF had flown all 28 of them to Bangkok for their orientation seminar.

Alumni scholars also showed up to offer their appreciation and their occasionally spiky critiques. The much articulate all-woman panel of reactors included Drs. Judy Celine Ick, Lipi Ghosh, Reena Marwah, and Anna Miren Gonzalez-Intal.

Capping the academic field day was cultural night. The all-men Indonesian quartet stole the show after marching in paired earth-brown *ikat*. After their rowdy gig, the cheering crowd remembered them for the rest of the evening as the *Backache Boys*. Not to be beaten was China, which worked hard matching its own Olympic show-troupe back home. It staged all the spectacular entries: a grand choral number and a whirling, riveting dance from Dong Shikui. And because beauty knows no limits, yet another Chinese lady reigned supreme, Deng Yingwen, who was voted best-dressed for the night. \*





## In Asia with Asians

In my research, I have worked either with local, national, or western partners. Except for a few conferences that meant flying in Asia, I've rarely worked with other Asian scholars. But four days with ASF (two at the 8th ASIA Fellows Annual Conference and another two at my own Orientation for Asia Fellows Cohort 10) made me see how rewarding it is to work with fellow Asians.

"Where the Wise Gather" was the lead story in the ASF Newsletter's last edition. Being new at the ASF loop, I can say that its affairs are more than a gathering of the wise. As I witnessed (and report ala CNN), they brought together kind, kindred spirits, with lots of joy, bonding, and laughter.

ASF scholars flew in not only with their own brand of tough knowledge but with a lot of stories, too—on the love and friendship of other Asians met on the road. It struck me that ASF scholars don't just have a good head. From all the session sharings (including some spectacular cultural-night surprises), they showed us that they have hearts that think and minds that feel. They gamely walked us through the possible fellowship challenges and gave helpful tips on how to beat the odds.

At the conference, the keynote speakers (Drs. Wang and Juree) spoke their thoughts out, serving us food for hungry minds. I'm still chewing on those juicy ideas—quite a lot really, but here's a few of them:

- Marginalization means not only being poor but also having no chance to play the game
- The Asian way of doing gives us a unique basis for getting things done
- To score on regionalism, we need more than hard call and hard talk
- There's strength in our language of peace and cooperation

To my Cohort-10 colleagues (such unselfish, interesting guys in their sharing), see you again on the e-screen for occasional stint updates. I also look forward to our batch's annual conference. I won't forget the colleague who promised that he'd play a musical instrument for all of us. I'd like to see the dances that others will rehearse soon as they hit their ports of call. Best of all, I look forward to the crop of experiences and the lessons learned in making Asia a better place to live in (within our life time, I pray).

Being an ASIA Fellow is both a challenge and a privilege, indeed. And I hope that all of us in Cohort 10 will rise to this challenge, accepting the privilege with both pride and humility. For now, here's till we meet again.\*



**Chona R. Echavez** (Philippines), Cohort 10, is currently Associate Professor at Xavier University's Research Institute for Mindanao Culture (RIMCU).

# SAYS WHO?



"For 2 years, I've learned lots of things in the Philippines about its people, culture, and language. I was an NGO staff before going there for my Public Management degree. Suddenly, it was so different from what I used to do. At once, I had to re-learn everything and to express myself in English. Looking back, I didn't really speak well, lacking the confidence to show my ideas. But now, I'm more confident, with more drive to work with others. I want to apply everything that I've studied in my home town."

**SIRIWAN ARSASRI** (Cohort 3)  
Health Coordinator, SHARE Organization  
Annat Charoen Province

"From new friends abroad, I've learned a lot about new cultures and also picked up the right academic experience for work. Going for a graduate degree has given me the expertise and taught me new community-development techniques. These have helped me a great deal in working for equality within Thai society, especially among the poorest in the Northeast. I have surely gained much from exchanging ideas and making new discoveries in an academic setting. And I'm sure to build on these skills and experiences."



**SAMPAO NGAMCHOIE** (Cohort 2)  
Local Information Center for Development  
Nakhon Ratchasima Province



It's a whopping €300,000 windfall from the European Commission for the formidable Clark University team that signed up **KAENSRI CHAIKOT** (Cohort 4, Thai IFP Fellow doing her master's degree in *International Development, Community, and Environment*). With IDCE student **RATNA BAGCHAND** at the helm, and teammates **ALLISON PETROZZIELLO** and **JENNY BOYLE**, the group is pushing to end the plight of Nepal's untouchables through the feisty nation's current charter-writing process.

"IFP allowed me to improve my academic capability, enhanced my desire to serve my community, and gave me a place in the big IFP brood. I now count on different people from the world over as my family. The IFP experience did not only let me walk on my own but also pushed a whole society to dream of better things to come."

**SAKUPAN PHOTIJAK** (Cohort 2)  
Lecturer, Faculty of Liberal Arts  
Ubon Ratchathani University  
Ubon Ratchathani Province





## BAYS OF BLUE HAWAII

**Sirichoke Namsong**, Cohort 4, is currently pursuing his Master's degree in Educational Technology at the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

**I**FP students currently enrolled at the University of Hawaii at Manoa had the chance to broaden our horizons in *Leadership, Social Justice, and Social Networking* last May 20 to 23, 2008. We took part in the University-Based Fellows Meeting, organized by the East-West Center and the Ford Foundation International Fellowships Program.

It was a first time for us—all 26 IFP fellows—to take part in field trips and

**Social networking is about making friends, building and keeping relationships, and interacting with others to strengthen our own organizations**

workshops. Still, some fellows missed it because of their summer courses and data-collecting assignments.

The meeting was launched after the spring semester was over, just when we thought we were done with all the classwork. Yet, we still had a lot to read. For some, this was like aftershocks from our barely-finished final examinations. But we were duly rewarded with new concepts beyond our field of study.

On the first day, Dr. Scott MacLeod, Senior Education Specialist, introduced us to the basics of Social Network Analysis (SNA). Social networking, Dr. MacLeod explained, is about making friends, building and keeping relationships, and interacting with others to strengthen our own organizations.

On the second day, we crossed Kaneohe Bay to visit the He'eia Fishpond. We learned how networking and social justice were applied to manage the



fishpond. Locals regard the ancient He'eia Fishpond as a valuable community heritage. Moreover, schools and colleges use it as an outdoor learning resource for their students. Besides learning from Hi'ilei Kawelo, the fishpond director, we also assisted in restoring the fishpond's wall by hauling and moving rocks donated by local organizations.

The next day Elizabeth Yacuk-Reilly, President and Founder of Livable Hawaii Kai Hui, shared her success on Ka Iwi coastline protection against hotel and resort invasion. We also went hiking from the Hanauma Bay coastline to the lighthouse in Makapu'u.

Dr. Mary Zurbuchen (Director for IFP Asia/Russia) and Ms. Minh Kauffman, Executive Director of the Center for Educational Exchange with Vietnam

(CEEVN) joined us as meeting observers.

Allen Hong, director of Hanauma Bay Nature Preserve, also talked about some bay-preservation challenges and their search for practical solutions, such as limiting bay visitors and looking for support grants. Yet today, the bay enjoys strong support in terms of management, facilities, and budget. In addition, it also provides educational activities to communities as well as to thousands of tourists. One of their interesting strategies is to make visitors watch a 10-minute video fostering awareness of marine-life and reef protection.

My own unforgettable reward was snorkeling at Hanauma Bay and basking in paradise, with rainbow-colored fish from the Pacific Ocean. \*



**Daoden Laopha** belongs to Cohort 2 of Thai IFP Fellows.

# KNOWING MY ABCD



**ABCD keeps an eye on assets, the power of positive thinking, and people's capacities**



From January 25 to February 2, 2008, forty IFP Alumni from six countries attended the *IFP Global Leadership for Social Justice Forum (IFP GLSJF)* in Khon Kaen, Thailand. Delegates included 7 Chinese, 6 Filipinos, 11 Indians, 8 Indonesians, 4 Thais, and 4 Vietnamese. The forum's main theme was ABCD or *Asset-Based Community Development*.

Three different organizations managed the event: the Center for Educational Exchange with Vietnam (CEEVN), the Coady International Institute, and the Asian Scholarship Foundation (ASF).

The ABCD training provides various tools and theories for looking at communities under different

circumstances. People everywhere find it useful for planning and decision-making, be they managers, community leaders, teachers, laborers, or even students.

Through ABCD, I learned more about asset-based approaches. I also had some practice in applying it. Moreover, we had ample time to discuss participatory planning as well as monitoring and evaluation with different key stakeholders: communities and their leaders, government workers, NGOs, and businessmen.

We did not only explore theories; we also applied them during a field-practice session. I found out a lot of principles and thoughts behind ABCD. The easiest comes by way of a metaphor: "Plants grow in the direction of their source of energy."

Comparing our communities with plants allows us to see the assets (sources of energy): people, stories, individual talents and skills, social

networks, government institutions, natural resources, and cultural assets. To know more about these assets, ABCD also provides tools like appreciative interviewing and skills mapping, as well as mapping the existing local institutions, physical and natural assets, and even the leaky bucket. Obviously, many of the participants were interested in applying these tools in a village setting.

To use another metaphor, ABCD teaches people how to fish instead of sending them clueless, far into deep waters. It's true that different communities pose different problems. But ABCD keeps an eye on assets, the power of positive thinking, and people's capacities. And our communities have never been wanting in these assets.

With ABCD, it feels like I am making new clearings in a forest that I do know by heart. Indeed, here's carrying on with my IFP goal—to turn my community into a better place. \*

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# WEEKEND IN NEW ENGLAND

**Siriwan Arsasri** is a Thai IFP Fellow  
from Cohort 3

With Brandeis University, the Ford Foundation International Fellowships Program conducted the 2008 New England University-Based Fellows Meeting last March 28-30, 2008. Fellows trooped there to make friends, exchange bits about our cultures, and share relevant work experiences. The conference theme was *Responding to the Challenges of Leadership, Social Justice, and Development in a Complex World*.

From this conference, I learned the following:

1. *Leadership* can be improved. It should be visionary, helping to provide both ideas and direction. Fellows must be skilled communicators who can win over a variety of audiences, with a patient ear for what the target groups say. This requires 'internalizing the feeling as well as the facts.' We felt free to adopt the experiences shared in New England, in running our own organizations or reaching out to our own countries.

2. *Social Justice* is a classic world problem. We see unfair practices everywhere, even in developed

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countries where there are homeless people, cases of sexual harassment, and the AIDS stigma. Everybody wants the good life but we don't know how to go and get there. The conference allowed us to exchange complex ideas about social justice. We were encouraged to see clearly through the different problem contexts.

3. *Development workers* are very important. Every IFP Fellow has worked for people in their own country before flying to New England. But we also had a lot to learn from peer learning—to share well-earned ideas and further boost our skills.

Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne told us to remember always that 'the answer is in the community'. For sure, we cannot copy all that works for the West, but we must value what we have and integrate these knowledges appropriately.

Dr. John Ambler also gave helpful suggestions for looking beyond the problem and anticipating future impact. He talked about investing in evaluation and continuous follow-up. This helps in creating processes for solving problems right to the point.

My reflection is that theories from developed countries are never effective like PC softwares for use everywhere. Back home, we must only take what is useful. We should approach the problem singularly, without always imitating from the outside.

I do agree that people from the target groups should participate all the time. This inspires them to think creatively. In the end, the New England conference gave encouraging reviews about my work on AIDS prevention. It also encouraged me to return to my homeland and do more for health and development in my own community. \*



## ON THE NORTHEAST EXPRESS

**Jaruwat Kiatiwongse**, Program Officer of the Ford Foundation International Fellowships Program (IFP) in Thailand, feels equally at home in the Northeast.

### On the Road with the Alumni Network

On May 18, 2008, 10 Thai IFP alumni showed up *sabai sabai* style for the 4th IFP Thailand Alumni Meeting. They met at Khon Kaen's Union International Cancer Control (UICC) where Prasert Wongphuthorn currently works as project manager. The alumni hit the road again last summer to fulfill a promise about meeting up with alumni friends twice a year. In practice, they hold talks in different provinces across the Northeast to gain exposure to various contemporary issues and contexts. The trips have also given them the chance to visit their peers' workplace, which is almost impossible for people with hectic day jobs.

After a lively exchange, they formulated a research on "Northeast Identity Study for Sustainable Development: A Participatory Research Project on Northeast Regional Identity in Promoting Sustainable Development." The project aims to study the chronological roots and identity of the Northeast region, and development's effect on its identity.

This two-year project received approval and funding from the IFP Secretariat in New York last September 2008.

Since the IFP Thailand Network is growing, alumni have been inspired to explore effective communication platforms. They aim to keep network members together by minimizing the communication divide. This is with more than 80 professionals in mind, posted in different places where phone coverage and internet access may not be readily available. At present, the fellows-elect, fellows, and alumni are using electronic list serves and e-groups—to exchange ideas, conduct intellectual discussions, debate issues, share photos, update their contacts, and create a group activity schedule.

For them, the burning issue is to put together a collective project for the alumni working in diverse fields. They now regard themselves as a group of emerging agents of social change, working in an inspiring way to fulfill their homeland commitments and promises. \*

### IFP Cohort 6 Orientation Meeting

Fourteen (14) fellows-elect of the 2008 cohort had their *Orientation Program and Skills Assessment* at the Charoen Thani Princess Hotel, Khon Kaen. Meeting their peers for the first time, the fellows-elect gladly swapped personal and professional stories. Their four days together brought teachers, a pharmacist, a news reporter, nurses, NGO workers, environmentalist, and social workers to learn more about the IFP fellowship terms and conditions. They also looked at networking with alumni and fellows from previous cohorts before attending a 5-month Pre-Academic Training (PAT) at AUA in Khon Kaen. \*





**Kunaporn Patthawaro**, ASF Program Assistant, is also the newsletter's graphic stylist and visual artist.

## SEACHANGE

### The Landscape of Asian Integration

The South Asian ASF alumni-propelled Association of Asia Scholars (AAS) staged a Regional Conference on the *Landscape of Asian Integration* on January 11-12, 2008 at New Delhi's India Habitat Centre. Featured presenters were enthusiastic academics, scholars, public intellectuals, filmmakers, and well-known writers from Bangladesh, China, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. Also in attendance were ASIA Fellows who were doing field work in India at the time of the conference. \*

### Exploring Inter-Asian Connections

As SSRC guest, Dr. Lourdes G. Salvador (ASF Executive Director) flew to the UAE last February 21-23 for the *Inter-Asian Connections Conference* held at the Dubai Trade Center.

New York's Social Science Research Council (SSRC) and the Dubai School of Government hosted the event, with more than 150 participants from Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and the US, including four ASIA Fellows from India, Nepal, Pakistan, and the Philippines, presenting papers at the conference. UAE's Minister of Foreign Affairs gave the keynote address.

The plenary played up the Gulf region's role in Asia and the rise of state organizations in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in connecting local and international communities. \*

### Taking the Gulf of Tongking

With Prof. Gu Xiaosong (*Cohort 1*) of Guangxi Academy of Social Sciences as host, Drs. Lourdes G. Salvador and Thanyathip Sripana (*Cohort 1*) flew to Nanning, China on March 14-15 for "A Mini Mediterranean Sea": *The Gulf of Tongking through History*. The Australian National University and Guangxi's Academy of Social Sciences jointly organized the event.

Presenters came from all over Asia, Australia, Europe and the US. Some participants also trooped to the Sino-Viet border, visiting Dongxing, Fangcheng, and the Kind (Viet) people's three islands. \*

### Tracing the Southern Silk Route

In early August, Dr. Salvador was in Kolkata, India with Kunaporn Patthawaro, Program Assistant, for the ASF-sponsored *International Workshop on the Southern Silk Route: Historical Links and Contemporary Convergences*. Dr. Lipi Ghosh (*Cohort 1*) used her collaborative work grant to convene the workshop with Dr. He Ping (*Cohort 1*) from China. Also collaborating with her were scholars from India, China, Europe, Southeast Asia, and the US. The affair attracted a good number of intellectuals and interested professionals. Conference papers are now in print for public access. \*

## ASF Partner Institutions

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## A Royal Tea Party

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During the tea party, four ASF alumni also offered heart-warming testimonials about ASF's shining impact on their scholarly life and Asian outlook. The presenters included Drs. Judy Celine Ick (Philippines), Lipi Ghosh (India), Thanyathip Sripana (Thailand), and Quan Heng (P.R. China).

With characteristic pen in hand, Her Royal Highness took note of many shared insights, warmly approached old friends, spoke enthusiastically with alumni, and obliged for more photographs with admirers. On her way out, Her Royal Highness also toured the colorful retrospective exhibit corner that ASF lit up, featuring different Asian curiosity



pieces, more alumni testimonials, and sterling volumes of alumni scholarly publications.

Members of the ASF Board Management Committee showed up in full force for the gala occasion, flying in from all corners of Asia. Dr. Juree Vichit-Vadakan organized this grand event with enthusiastic assistance from the ASF staff. \*

## Looking Back, Being Free

(Continued from page 4)

tampered nation-building agendas, and restored historical sites could ever be.

While wrapping up my research, I tried grappling with questions that I had never set out to tackle: an indication that fieldwork is dynamic and something that we should all undertake in our academic careers and personal lives!

I began to see how civil society organizations, helmed by newly-educated Cambodians sensitive to western donor agencies, were going out and tutoring villagers about notions of "justice," "reconciliation," and "rule of law." I put these terms in quotation marks because that's how they were being taught and defined. These are special terms; this is how you must understand them; this is what they mean; this is what we must learn.

I do believe in some sort of a positive outcome from the Khmer Rouge Tribunal, despite all its flaws and for taking place thirty years later. However, I find it interesting, perplexing, perhaps even disturbing, that a new kind of colonialism is under way. This is where Asian genocide survivors are being taught that there is only one kind of law to answer to their brutal pasts. There are many notions of justice, but we must apply only one kind. Truth-telling and vocalizing one's emotions are part of the healing process (though not all would feel this; healing is after all, deeply personal and subjective).

Along the way, something happened which proves that the ASF program has



truly impacted on my life: I am now engaged in a project with lawyers from Singapore and Australia (including my husband Mahdev Mohan) to represent victims before the Khmer Rouge Tribunal. This has never been done before. And we are all entering new turf, stumbling, and laying the bricks on our path, step by step. It's frightening at times, frustrating, and deeply confusing. But the experience of being in Cambodia was so life-changing, that there is no way to cut ties even after my research ended.

As they say, this is the beginning of a long and beautiful relationship with Cambodia. I couldn't have discovered that without the support of ASF. \*