

# 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

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# 10 in 2010

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ASIA Fellows  
Conference

*asianizing asia*

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Message

### From the Executive Director

It is always a happy thing to take stock of our blessings.

One of the remarkable things that happened to ASF is its partnership with the Ford Foundation. It played a pivotal role in setting up the Asian Scholarship Foundation, providing us with a generous initial grant. This grant helped us to work with a pool of eminent Asianists. In turn, these scholar friends mapped out for us a fairly reasonable path to take. Drawing from their own insightful experiences, they worked as one mind in articulating a research vision. And what an exciting vision it was—one that would involve a new generation of scholars in advancing Asia's social, political, and cultural concerns. The rest is history, the rewarding first decade of the ASIA Fellows grants.

Yet all good things have their well-appointed end. For the last two years, our operational activities have been alongside of closing this partnership phase. Perhaps, the future will allow us other timely ventures with the Ford Foundation. But for the moment, our first book is all written out.

First, our highest appreciation goes to the Ford Foundation for encouraging us to advance this vision. We have an exciting book of stories, telling the adventures of new scholars, many of them first-time travelers, who went on remarkable journeys of discovery—to research, to link arms with other eager partners, and to come into new insights about Asia's threatened future and its heroic struggles.

While our gratitude sees no end, we also set our sights on the future. Right now, we think about ensuring a sustainable future for ASF. In practice, this means working harder to raise new funds, to get our intellectual pursuits going.

And here's where the passion of our alumni scholars shines with much appeal. We are counting on their well-constituted ranks. This is not just about drawing from their individual expertise, but also from their organizational skills, and their persuasion in bringing in new patrons.

To our alumni network, the sweet time to pitch in your support has come. I encourage you to return the blessings. Throw in the passion, I plead—that which will see us through yet another season of bright discoveries, intellectual growth, and solid achievements.

*Lourdes K. Salvador*



I'm Fulfilling Promises - Says Who?

# Says Who?



"English has been included in the Thai National Education Curriculum for more than a hundred years. Yet our curriculum has been changed occasionally and adjusted many times in terms of content, teaching, learning approach, and the proper age for students to get started. The present mandate says that teaching and learning English should start from Grade 1. Students have to put up with high expectations. Sadly, student achievements at all levels do not meet national expectations.

The Bureau of Educational Testing reports that student achievements in English in schools under the Office of the Basic Education Commission of Thailand have been lower in recent years. National mean scores of Grade 6 students for the years 2004, 2006, and 2008 stand at 37.34, 34.51 and 37.63, respectively. These are at an all-time low, compared to achievements in previous years and to other school subjects.

The letdown is the result of many obstacles. First, most teachers did not graduate with an English degree, so their proficiency and pedagogy are limited. Second, most primary teachers are overloaded with teaching hours, extra duties, and more subjects to teach. Third, facilities for teaching and learning English are deficient. Language laboratory and computer rooms are limited. Not to mention that some of these facilities are all together unusable.

To address these problems, the Thai Ministry of Education must deploy enough English teachers and extend sufficient teaching and learning facilities for Thai schools, especially at the primary levels."

**Sooksil Prasongsook**, (Cohort 2004) is currently teaching English at Rajabhat Maha Sarakham University. He received his doctoral degree from the University of Canberra. Email: [sooksilprasongsook@yahoo.com](mailto:sooksilprasongsook@yahoo.com)

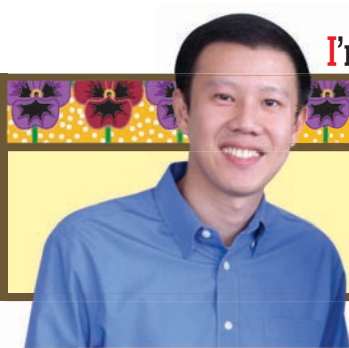
"Bright eyes, great smiles, and the happy faces of children—these are everyday sights at Ban Louk Rak Child Help Foundation. It is my house of love for disadvantaged children. For 30 years now, I have devoted love, kindness, and faith to help them. At the start, I faced many problems. But I have been able to weather every obstacle. This is because I have never lost faith and confidence in goodness.

Perhaps this is why every week, kind people come to offer food, goods, and money to Ban Louk Rak. Though the help doesn't come big everyday, it's always useful. Our foundation seems to be forever short on cash, while reaching out to a big number of children. But givers and takers are always happy—basking on love, kindness, and good intentions.

I'm currently on a scholarship for a Master's degree in Educational Administration at Khon Kaen University. From this training, I am committed to support, promote, and develop a learning center. This school of life is my alternative educational arrangement to nurture the young. For the future, I'd like to establish a 'College for Good People'—to build up human resources. I'd like to help children become efficient and effective, to see them serving as important forces in developing the country and to cause true peace in our time."

**Utis Somjai**, (Cohort 2009) manages the Child Help Foundation in Khon Kaen province. Email: [utissomjai@gmail.com](mailto:utissomjai@gmail.com)





## SWAN SONG

**Jaruwat Kiatiwongse**, IFP Program Officer from Thailand, has just returned from a meeting in New York, where he shared his stories and progress reports from the Northeast.

It was a bittersweet moment in Buriram, conducting our program outreach for the 2010 IFP fellowship competition. After all, our grant was ending and team Thailand had to keep in mind that it would name yet one more fellowship cohort for the very last time.

During our program outreach, we also invited alumni who have returned to the Northeast, now working actively in their respective fields, after obtaining their advanced degrees. We asked them to speak about their IFP experiences. Team Thailand also visited the IFP alumni sites in some 19 different provinces.

We did our last IFP selection interview in June 2010 in Ubon Ratchathani, to choose 16 fellows-elect. Dr. Mary Zurbuchen (Director of the Asia/Russia Program) flew in from New York for the curtain call. She came to observe the interview and to thank the IFP committee members who had given invaluable help during the past seven years. She also spoke about future plans in the global IFP picture.

While in Ubon Ratchathani, Dr. Zurbuchen also visited the SHARE organization. The local media sat her down for an interview.

Since the first fellowship batch in 2003, the total number of selected fellows has climbed up to 90 (40 males and 50 females). At present, the development work of Thai IFP alumni—a string of diverse, innovative, and knowledge-based developmental approaches—is dispersed in some 19 provinces in the Northeast.

The fellows also met up last May 2010 in Mahasarakham for the IFP Thailand Alumni Network (IFP THAN) assembly. In addition, several small meetings were held for alumni who belong to thematic groups for their collective research project on “Northeast Identity Study and Sustainable Development”. The alumni hope to complete this research in January 2011.

Dr. Zurbuchen also visited universities in Thailand where IFP fellows are currently

enrolled. On June 8, 2010, she and Jaruwat Kiatiwongse had a meeting at the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) to discuss the programmatic operations and possibility of future collaborative works utilizing the IFP model.

For November 2010, members of IFP THAN are gearing up to join an international conference. The big forum will be on “*Changing Ways of Life of Ethnicities in the Mekong Region*”. It will take place in Ubon Ratchathani on November 11-12, 2010.

By the end of 2010, IFP Thailand expects to welcome approximately 15 Thai alumni back home after graduation. As Ford Foundation President Luis Ubiñas noted, “IFP’s impact has reached far beyond the Fellows . . . It is reshaping how

### This was bittersweet: team Thailand naming one more IFP fellowship cohort for the very last time.

governments, universities and other scholarship programs are thinking about building diverse and talented leaders committed to our most pressing global issues. And it is proving that leaders from marginalized communities can compete academically in the most challenging environments and return to their home countries to make a difference.”

Intended as a decade-long program, IFP now enters its impact and learning phase, focusing on assessing and disseminating the knowledge generated by its groundbreaking model of leadership development. As part of its mandate, IFP will continue to work in shaping policies that will open the doors of higher education to a new generation of social justice leaders. \*



Visit IFP global website at <http://www.fordifp.org>

An audio file of Dr. Zurbuchen’s interview is available for listening at <http://www.cleanradio925.com/m.asp?id=2329>.

Partnership with AIT is a record of success: Ford Foundation IFP, visit the link at <http://www.ait.asia/news-and-events/2010/news/ait-partnership-is-a-demonstrated-record-of-success-ifp/view>



## CORNERS OF MY MIND

**Mattana Pongmai** (Cohort 2007) is a multi-talented teacher from Banmuangam School in Buriram province. She completed her Master’s degree in Curriculum Studies at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, U.S.A.  
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I came back to join the Orientation for the 16 IFP fellows-elect of Cohort 8. This year’s program took place in Khon Kaen on July 17-20, 2010. We pitched it with the *Bai Sri*, a traditional blessing meant to extend happiness and prosperity to the participants. Hearing the chant stirred up old feelings in me, about my life’s own turning points—getting the scholarship and being overwhelmed by happiness, excitement, and fear. Back then, I was quite thrilled about getting the chance to pursue higher education. But I was also anxious, unsure that I’d really finish the degree.

The chant overwhelmed me with memories. Indeed, I made history by becoming an IFP fellow. The many trips that I took came back to me: flying off to neighboring Vietnam to bone up on my academic English and traveling halfway around the world to Hawaii, to get a master’s degree at the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

### The Bai Sri chant stirred up old feelings in me, about my life’s own turning points—getting the IFP scholarship and being overwhelmed by happiness, excitement, and fear.

I flew to Vietnam to work on my academic English. I lived there with seven Thai Fellows-elect for five months. Each of us stayed in a double-room dormitory. With the purpose of getting fellows to speak English everyday, we were made to room



with a Vietnamese fellow. Living there certainly forced me to bring out my best English. And then, there were the day-to-day challenges of getting by in a foreign country with people of different ethnicities, languages, and cultures.

The next leg brought me all the way to blue Hawaii. Looking back, studying in Hawaii did not seem all that lonely, as I thought it would be. As an overseas student, I lived in Hale Manoa, a dormitory for international students. And what a multi-cultural house Hale Manoa was! Its residents had daily occasions to connect, share, and learn from each other—centered on their differences: food, languages, cultures, and perspectives. If there was one thing remarkable about

staying there, the place enhanced my ability to perceive and make sense of the world through different eyes.

The end of *Bai Sri* pulled me back from my thoughts. Before it was all over, the ASF staff were gently going around, tying white strings around the wrist of the new fellows, blessing them with good luck for their individual sojourns. Looking at it all, I smelled the sweet scent of encouragement. The color of hope certainly shone from the eyes of the new fellows. “Yes, there you go,” I spoke to each of them in my mind, blessing them in turn with a smile. One of the precious things that I have learned from this scholarship is “*Never to say I can’t, if I have never even tried.*” \*



# HAND IN HAND, WE CAN

**Pannee Samerpak**, (Cohort 2003), received her Master's degree in Development Management from the Asian Institute of Management (AIM) in the Philippines. She is the Director of the Organic Agriculture Center (OAC) in Yasothon. Email: p\_samerpak@hotmail.com

On July 25, 2010, Jaruwat Kiatiwongse (IFP Thailand Program Officer), Wanida Jiamram (Cohort 2007), Siriyaporn Saleepun (Cohort 2006), Mr. Audu Idi Guga and I trooped to the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) in Bangkok. We were there to see Prof. Sudip Rakshit of the Center for Sustainable Development in the Context of Climate Change (SDCC).

During this meeting, we shared ideas about SDCC. From our end, we wanted to find out how organic jasmine-rice farmers in Yasothon could adapt to climate change. Today, climate change and sustainable development are key elements to get livelihood and economies in Asia going. For most of Asia, agricultural products, specifically rice, mean life. Our region is a showcase of enormous cultural, social, political, and biophysical diversity. Given such diversity, professionals working on climate change and sustainable development need a good working knowledge of several interdisciplinary issues.

AIT boasts of a program meant to train professionals in climate change and sustainable development. People who complete this program proudly collect a degree from AIT.

The meeting explored possibilities for future cooperation between the IFP Alumni and SDCC. I gave a presentation about continuing the adaptation in Yasothon, where we're wrapping up preparations for a forthcoming conference. Prof. Rakshit has graciously accepted to speak in our conference. In return, he also asked me to speak about adaptation to climate change.

We also had a brief reunion with IFP fellows studying in AIT. Afterwards, we proceeded to the Yunus Center where two program officers briefed us. Then, it was time to grab lunch and to do small talk about campus life. We were also lucky to meet up with IFP friends from China, Nigeria, and Vietnam. The world seems big but many interesting projects in the future will certainly allow IFP fellows from the world over to meet again. \*

**We want to help organic jasmine-rice farmers in Yasothon in adapting to climate change.**



# WHAT YOU MAKE IT



The paradigms featured in the *University of Life* project tell us that human beings only need basic necessities to enjoy the good life. However, living in today's globalized world has made it really hard for many of us to stick to these basic needs. Today, we face tough realities and choices forcing us to redefine our relationship with others. We must even redefine our relationship with the things of this world—the very natural resources that nurture us.

For some reason, many people are attracted to the notion that social, cultural, and environmental resources are tangible things that have corresponding material values. Because these are valuable things, they should be exploited and controlled for maximal benefits. This is what drives the world's superpowers to cook up ways of controlling and managing the world's natural resources for their own greedy use. And really, some countries find it hard to let go. They stand behind powerful tools. They aim these tools to frighten other cultures, colonizing them to possess everything else.

Is there no more hope for the world? There's yet another concept that tells us how social, cultural, and environmental resources are difficult to value since they are intangible. Because of this, human beings should learn to live harmoniously with the natural environment and its resources. We must conserve and protect them for future generations.

**We are here to train people in reshaping old ideas about education, society, nature, and culture.**

As a village teacher, I like the second concept more. I think that it's the right thing to do, so that societies could move forward in a more sustainable way. In today's global set-up, there are other resources that we must develop, so we could complement the

world's social, cultural, and environmental resources. For one, we can tap "intellectual assets" and "human capital" to jumpstart human and social development in poor rural communities.

My responsibilities as a primary-school teacher in Amnatcharoen province have led to my involvement in the *University of Life* project. Following project objectives, we promote human development not only among schoolchildren but also among the very people living in the community. I have designed and implemented several training programs to help change the outlook of rural poor on issues related to education, society, culture, and environment. With new eyes, we hope that they can better understand and correctly interpret the true values of intangible human assets and available community resources.

Part of the training that I give is aimed at inspiring leadership and self-reliance among poor community folk. While the world hurries toward change, rural people cannot afford to be sidetracked. With clear eyes, we must see all the resources that are within our reach.

So then, what gives us hope? Hope is where we are able to account for many good things in our midst. Hope is where we are able to use them in creating a better life for all. \*

**Rakpracha Thisaweck**, (Cohort 2005), a teacher at Baan Nong Kan School in Amnatcharoen province, is promoting the synergy of school activities and community development projects. He completed his Master's degree in Social Development at Kasetsart University. Email: rakpracha001@hotmail.com





## 10 in 2010 : The ASIA Fellows Conference

ASF Fellows flew back on a sentimental journey to Bangkok last July, well in time for the ASF 10th ASIA Fellows Annual Conference. The grand forum was held at Montien Riverside Hotel from July 9-10, 2010. Dr. Tansen Sen, a U.S.-based professor of Asian history and religions at Baruch College, The City University of New York delivered this year's keynote address. Dr. Sen was recently on a stint as a Visiting Senior Research Fellow, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore

Dr. Sen reminded the conference presenters how Asia has been defined and framed mostly through provisional Western concepts. An example would be the very coordinates of Southeast Asia itself—a construct used by foreign strategists to make sense of the Asian war landscape. Dr. Sen urged the fellows to think out of the box and to wrestle with many working concepts in history and cultural studies. For him, this critical habit leads scholars and committed agents to discover new ways of dealing with the region's most stubborn problems.

The forum also launched the ASF alumni journal. Last year saw the formal establishment of the alumni association, under the flagship of South Asian fellows. By far, ASF fellows from India have enjoyed the most success in organizing an alumni circle, through the leadership of Drs. Swaran Singh and Reena Marwah. Dr. Marwah was in Bangkok herself, with a delegation of ASF alumni from India. They gave a short presentation to address queries about the organizational structure, as well as conference and publication plans in the offing. More importantly, they signed up new members and distributed promotional materials for various country destinations.

The latest batch of ASF fellows (Cohort 11) also met up for the first time, for their orientation seminar. Dr. Lily Rose Tope of Cohort 1 directed the workshop. She is a well-respected scholar of Southeast Asian Literature, who spent her fellowship year in Malaysia. This was Dr. Tope's second stint as orientation facilitator. Her workshop was on how to fine-tune research methodology and to sharpen individual research questions.

The event was not complete without the cultural night, made truly colorful by fellows who descended on the glitter and sheen of their national attires. Named as best dressed during the evening gala were Nishant Shah of India and Singapore's Vinita Ramani Mohan. An incoming Thai fellow, Thanyaporn Utthammachai, took along her own traveling ensemble from Chiang Mai. The troupe treated everyone to music and a breath-taking sword dance. The audience broke in thrilled gasps as a lone dancer quickly rolled over a floorboard lined with gleaming sword blades.

Performers from China, Vietnam, and the IFP brood from Northeast Thailand also obliged with their fine surprises in songs, folk dances, and traditional musical instruments. Prestige credits for the evening hit the max with the arrival of the Philippine Ambassador to Thailand, Mrs. Linglingay F. Lacanlale. Ambassador Lacanlale and Dr. Salvador were sorority sisters in the same honors' society, during their college days at the University of the Philippines. \*



# Pesta Igal

Together with Dr. Rachmi Diah Larasati of the University of Minnesota and Dr. Hanafi Hussin of the University of Malaya, I received this year's Collaborative Work Grant from the Asian Scholarship Foundation. Our mission was to put together "Pesta Igal: a Concert-Festival for the Popularization and Preservation of Sama Performing Arts."

Pesta Igal brings together "shared performances of shared traditions in shared spaces of cooperation". These shared heritages include traditional *tagungunggo* (aka kulintangan knobbed gong) and igo dance ensembles from three Sama communities.

The Sama or the Sinama (aka Bajau, Badjao or Bajo) peoples of central maritime Southeast Asia make up one of the region's most widely dispersed ethno-linguistic groups. For a long time now, they have thrived on the territorial borders of at least three Southeast Asian states: Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. In many ways, the Sama peoples are transnational communities with a chain-link of relations across national borders.

This year's Pesta Igal brought together three *tagungunggo* music and igo ensembles from the islands of Tabawan and Sitangkai,

Tawi-Tawi Province, Philippines, and Semporna, Sabah State, Malaysia. Two concerts were held at the newly inaugurated GT-Toyota Asian Cultural Center of the Asian Center, University of the Philippines, Diliman on July 14 and 15, 2010.

Future editions of the festival promise to draw support from eager partner institutions. Two offers for hosting next year's (2011) Pesta Igal were received from Judeth John Baptist of the Department of Sabah Museum in Kota Kinabalu and Dr. Hanafi Hussin of the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. For 2012, Dr. Rachmi Diah Larasati plans to bring it to Jogjakarta. Yes, we will make this celebration of expression sustainable!

This year's Pesta Igal evolved as a concert-festival with a research component. Its collaborating scholars have made bright discoveries. First, the interaction data support our understanding of igo (Sama/Bajau n. "dance") as a separate yet related dance tradition to *pangalay* (Tausug/Suluk n. "dance"), with its own set of movement vocabularies, kinesthetic conventions, and repertoire.

Second, the Sama appear to make clear distinctions between "classical" or old style dancing. They call the first *igo kamattoahan* (literally: olden igo) while referring to the more contemporary style as *igo pakiring* or simply *pakiring* (from the Sama *kiring* v. to sway or to roll).

Third, the Sama peoples are open to "innovation within tradition" as seen in their *pakiring* sub-genre. We have also seen this in our experiment on melding dance and narratives, featured in the concert festival's third section. This grafting of dance and narrative participants now call *igo kata-kata* (literally: igo that speaks) or narrative igo.

Our most fascinating experience was the explosion of improvised dancing that marked the end of each concert—a virtual communal expression linking both "insiders" and "outsiders" to the world of igo. It was a spontaneous sharing of performance, space, and conviviality. This is perhaps the most interesting facet of Asia: diversity linked by a common web of dynamic relations.

To all who made Pesta Igal a living and continuing reality, we say: *Salamat! Terima kasih banyak! Magsukol!* \*

**Matthew C.M. Santamaria** (Cohort 2) is a Professor of Asian and Philippine Studies at the Asian Center, University of the Philippines, Diliman.



# India-Indonesia Academic Dialogue

The India-Indonesia Academic Dialogue is perhaps the first serious attempt to bring together academicians from these two important Asian countries to research on international issues of mutual concern. The project dates back to my ASIA Fellow stint at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Jakarta, Indonesia from December 2007 to May 2008.

Dr. Hadi Soesastro, the CSIS Director, introduced me to many academicians and scholars in Jakarta and Bandung. One of them was Dr. Anak Agung Banyu Perwita, the Professor at the Universitas Katolik Parahyangan, Bandung. He proposed the idea of collaborative seminars between universities in India and Indonesia. Dr. Soesastro encouraged it, too, and promised support.

## The challenge for me was in putting together two international conferences in a sequel, one each in India and Indonesia.

On my return to India, I spoke to the Head of my department and other colleagues and they, too, welcomed the idea. However, it became a reality only when I applied for the ASF Collaborative Work Grant. We were four partners in this endeavour: Prof. Banyu (Bandung), Prof. Teuku Rezasyah (Universitas Padjajaran), Dr. Shankari Sundararaman (former ASIA Fellow, JNU-New Delhi), and myself.

We proposed to have two international conferences in a sequel, one each in India and Indonesia. The conference papers would then be published in a book. The theme was: "India and Indonesia – Regional Powers, Global Politics".

The Department of Civics and Politics, University of Mumbai hosted the first of two conferences on February 24-25, 2010. While the ASF grant took care of the airfare and other expenses, the Indian Council for Social Science Research (Western Regional Centre, Mumbai) covered the cost of local hospitality.

Five Indonesian academicians attended this conference: Dr. Bantarto Bandoro (Founder

Director, Indonesian Institute of Strategic Studies), Prof. Banyu; Prof. Rezasyah; Dr. Begi Hersutanto (Fellow, IISS), and Dr. Bonggas Adhi Chandra (Universitas Katolik Parahyangan). In addition, four Indian scholars read their papers: Dr. T. S. Vishwanath (lawyer and trade consultant, New Delhi); Dr. Utham Kumar Jamadhagni (University of Madras); and Prof. Aparajita Biswas (University of Mumbai).

This conference also benefited immensely from the *Keynote Address* given by former Indian Ambassador to Indonesia, Mr. Sudhir Devare. Commodore S. N. Singh of the Indian Navy (Former Director of the College of Naval Warfare, Mumbai) also gave a competent *Valedictory Address*. The conference was well attended by the faculty and students of the University of Mumbai. The Consulate of Indonesia in Mumbai had been very encouraging about this event right from the start. The Acting Consul-General took part in it; the Consulate also tendered a dinner in honor of all the conference participants.

During the Mumbai conference, we had agreed that its sequel would be in Jakarta in the last week of June 2010. Unfortunately, the IISS, our Indonesian partner institute, withdrew as hosts due to a paucity of funds. Their unexpected withdrawal seriously threatened the project. However, the ASF staff showed extra-ordinary patience and accommodation during this time of crisis.

Dr. Shankari Sundararaman initiated contact with the CSIS (where both of us had



**Uttara Sahasrabudde** (Cohort 9) is currently Associate Professor at the Department of Civics and Politics, University of Mumbai.

spent time earlier as ASIA Fellows). Its Director, Dr. Rizal Sukuma was exceptionally helpful in hosting a seminar panel at the last moment. Four Indian academicians visited Jakarta in the last week of August 2010 and made presentations at the CSIS on August 25. These were: Prof. Swaran Singh (JNU, New Delhi), Dr. Rashmi Bhure (University of Mumbai), Dr. Shankari, and myself.

The CSIS panel seminar was attended by many eminent figures: Dr. Rizal Sukuma, Mr. Jusuf Wanandi, and Mr. Wiroyono Sastrohandojo (both on the Board of Trustees of CSIS); and the Editor-in-Chief of *The Jakarta Post*, as well as members of the bureaucracy and NGOs. The presence of two officials from the Embassy of India also encouraged the presenters.

The Indian panelists also visited the Department of International Relations, Universitas Indonesia, Depok where it held discussions on India-Indonesia Relations with the faculty, including Drs. Makmur Keliat, Nurul Isaeni, and Hariyadi Wirawan. During this visit, the Jawaharlal Nehru Indian Cultural Centre (a part of the Indian Council of Cultural Relations under the Ministry of External Affairs) also organised a discussion, attended by several Indonesian students and some members of the press. Mr. M. K. Singh, Center Director, coordinated the forum.

Through a reputable press, the papers will soon be ready for publication in book form. \*



## ASF Partner Institutions

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## Says Who?

(Continued from page 3)

"I'm very grateful for this great opportunity to acquire my Masters of Science degree in International Health at the University of Leeds. The learning I experienced there has transformed both my work and thinking in unexpected ways. The courses I took have certainly given me broader perspectives about health. I have learned situation analysis, prioritization of problems, and effective interventions which I've often ignored before. Today, for instance, I see that good intervention in one place might not work for another, due to differences in context. So, I must always keep an eye not just on the clinical aspects of health but on important social needs, too.

I did all my fieldwork in the Northeast. Although my research participants had low socio-economic status, they gave me many practical suggestions on responding better to their health needs. They reminded me that I'm here not just to provide health services. They told me that allowing people to make decisions and to participate in their own health concerns was a more sustainable way to improve health.

**Umaporn Kumprom** (Cohort 2008), a pharmacist at *Thatphanom Crown Prince Hospital in Nakhon Phanom province, obtained her Master's degree in International Health from the University of Leeds, UK.* Email: kumporm@hotmail.com

"Right now, I am enrolled for the Master of Public Administration at the National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA), Bangkok. My future plans include promoting knowledge and community participation. I'd like to get people to interact with one another and with other government agencies. I'd like them to get involved, especially in the field of political participation.



**Police Sergeant Aphiwat Saenrat**, (Cohort 2007) works for the *Banduea Police Station in Nongkhai province.* Email: aphiwat\_@hotmail.com



I'll use my new knowledge to decrease health inequality and make health services more accessible. I'd like to push for some projects about public health in the public sector or among non-government organizations. I'm looking at policy development, too. I want to explore a bottom-up approach to reflect problems from the grassroots. I think that this is the only way to give the people a good health policy—all for the Northeast, where so many poor people live.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge IFP for giving me this opportunity of a lifetime. These days, my unending and hopeful mantra is *Health for all*.

To keep in touch with them, I rely on my community relation, work experience, and training in mass communication. I realize that the level of community knowledge about politics remains low. Many people know nothing about their roles, rights, and duties in governance.

This is one reason for the inefficiency in government, for activities that don't fully accomplish their objectives. For example, elections often mean a small voter turnout, void ballots, and massive vote buying. Participation remains low and lack of knowledge, understanding, and community spirit lead many to shun politics.

Where everybody is informed, then every sector can add to strengthening both local and national politics. If we manage to move in the same direction, then we will receive the right services and the welfare that we deserve. Only then can we enjoy peace and prosperity."