



ASIA AND PACIFIC FUNDERS WORKING GROUP

MEETING NOTES

JULY 13, 2011

New York City

Information collection

- Based on priorities identified at the June 2011 Gw/oB workshop, the group collected information on:
 - Working group member funding priorities and strategies
 - Asia and Pacific-based grantmakers
 - Technical experts in the Asia and Pacific region and grantee partner resources
- This information will be stored as google excel documents, so that members can continually add updates

Reflections from recent travel

Hoa Tu Duong, Global Fund for Children (GFC) -- China

- Hoa highlighted the challenges facing NGOs operating in China. If NGOs register with the government, they may receive support from the provincial authorities, but they may be subject to heavy involvement from local authorities and monitoring of funds received from external actors. If groups are not registered they risk closure of their websites and logistical challenges in receiving outside funding.
- To address these challenges GFC began channeling funds through intermediary organizations. Intermediaries are always selected by the group GFC is trying to fund and grantees often pick a group that is doing similar work to them, but in a way that is acceptable to the government.
- Hoa does not travel to China on a business visa. . If she were to apply for a business visa, she would need to provide a list of all organizations she planned to meet with and present letters of sponsorship from those organizations.
- GFC worked with a local grantee organization that served as a logistics coordinator to organize a recent meeting of grantee partners and identify a safe space. This trip they met in a small Chinese hotel in Yunnan province.
- Hoa also met with four grantee partners in the Tibetan area. Following the 2008 Olympics, 2009 Xinjiang riots, and 2010 Nobel Peace Prize award, government scrutiny of the civil society sector increased, creating some challenges to sending funds to China grantees. Specific international funders were banned and GFC's partners in the TAP region lost about 50% of their funding. After the earthquake last April 2010, the Chinese government sent provisions and supported reconstruction, but not in consultation with the local community. As schools were destroyed,

the Chinese government forcibly relocated middle and high school students to other provinces to study. Half of GFC's grantee partners in attendance at the Yunnan meeting were Han Chinese and half are Tibetan. Han groups sometimes view the Tibetan groups as having an advantage in obtaining international support for their cause resulting in some misunderstanding and tension between the groups, even though they work on similar issues.

Mai Kiang, Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice -- China

- Before 2005 the LGBTI movement in China was largely invisible but has since gained energy due to increased leadership building support and intentional efforts in building a collaborative national network.
- Through convening a small group of LGBTI leaders, Astraea learned that leadership development is a common goal for advocates and that groups break the isolation they face through networking virtually and sharing tools as well as an annual training camp for young leaders to meet in-person and share expertise.
- These connections create a sense of community nationally. During June Pride groups brought rainbow kites to a national monument and took photos to share with one another.
- On-the-spot activism has proven successful for boosting the visibility of the LGBTI movement in China, as it is more difficult for the government to intervene. E.g. Action on the International Day Against Homophobia started with one or two groups in Beijing, now there are more than ten groups nationally that ride bikes through college campuses to educate about sexual minorities. E.g. Groups flash rainbow messages at a train station, take a photo and then disperse.
- Astraea uses a variety of methods to deliver funds. The Chinese government at times conducts elaborate audits on registered organizations and Mai thinks that specific funders can be potentially associated with a government watch list. Astraea asks grantee partners if they prefer to receive funds via a direct wire transfer or via an intermediary.
- Anasuya Sengupta of the Global Fund for Women (GFW) shared that GFW hears from its grantees interest in setting up bank accounts in Taiwan or Hong Kong and then transporting the funds via land.
- Urgent Action Fund receives requests from Chinese exile groups based in North America working with groups in China. There are many requests because of multiple detainments – activists are imprisoned, released and are then homeless, and this cycle repeats multiple times per year.

Navin Moul, American Jewish World Service -- Thailand and Cambodia

- AJWS works with 14 grantee partners in Thailand. The majority of these work on natural resource and land rights.
- Thailand has been politically unstable during the last six years, and it has been difficult for grantees to work in that environment. In the July 2011 national election, the Pheu Thai party ("red shirts") won by solid majority. Pheu Thai's stronghold is mainly the rural poor in the north

and northeast of Thailand. The new Prime Minister, Yingluck Shinawatra, is the youngest sister of ousted former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra.

- In February 2011 there was a large P-Move (People's Movement) protest to push the Thai government into following through on policies it committed to enacting regarding land and natural resources. The protest was held in anticipation of the upcoming elections, as activists felt uncertain regarding the policies of the future government.
- During her travels Navin visited Koh Yao, an island in the south of Thailand, where a community is resisting the development of land along a watershed. There is conflict over who holds ownership of the land and the community struggling with this issue for many years. One question that AJWS' grantee partner is grappling with is, "how do we get others who don't see themselves as affected by the project to stand with us?" Many of the families of those resisting the development question why they are involved with the NGO and suggest taking the financial incentives the company is offering instead.
- The Cambodian government is in the final stages of drafting a law that would significantly shrink space for civil society to operate. It would require all organizations to register (even community based organizations), would increase government monitoring, and would limit NGO independence.
- Anasuya notes that GFW's experience in Thailand has been that much of the funding for women's rights has gone to national/regional groups based in Bangkok or to groups working along the Thai/Burma border. There have been very few women's organizations based elsewhere in Thailand that have reached out to her, because of the weak women's movement in Thailand. She sees the land rights movement as being quite strong, but asks how it is linking up with other issue bases and groups.
- Jenna Capeci, AJWS, responded that groups don't see a reason to link with the women's movement, as it is very weak. For the most part, conversations about gender and sexuality in Thailand happen in academic circles. Jenna offered to put GFW in touch with a few women's groups. Language is also a big challenge. The ailing health of the king is also likely to increase instability and restrictions on NGOs and the media are increasing. All agreed to keep in contact about these issues and participants suggested organizing a quarterly call on the mechanics of grantmaking, specifically to address the issue of increasing regulation of civil society.

Zaynab Nawaz, Open Society Foundations (OSF) -- Nepal

- OSF's International Women's Program has 15 grantees in Nepal. The focus of OSF's grant making in this area is: ending discrimination and violence against women, increasing women's political participation and access to justice.
- The work in Nepal is not through a formal call for proposals, OSF identifies grantees through referrals and site visits. They are moving outside of Kathmandu and fund several Dalit groups. They provide project and general support and like to support for multiple years. The program is anxious to identify new grantees to support and cost share with other projects.
- OSF has organized regional exchanges and the IWP would like to do more of these types of exchanges regionally.

- They have funds set aside for travel grants for women and men engaged in the grant making areas with priority given to the 11 countries of focus (Sierra Leone, Liberia, Zimbabwe, Sudan, Kenya, Nepal, Colombia, Guatemala, Iraq, Palestine and Bosnia).