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Sida Decentralised Evaluation

Ali Dastgeer
Camilla Riesenfeld

Evaluation of FORUM-ASIA's Performance and Achievements (2011-2014)

Final Report

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Ali Dastgeer
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Authors: Ali Dastgeer and Camilla Riesenfeld

The views and interpretations expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida.

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SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AGENCY

Address: S-105 25 Stockholm, Sweden. Office: Valhallavägen 199, Stockholm

Telephone: +46 (0)8-698 50 00. Telefax: +46 (0)8-20 88 64

E-mail: info@sida.se. Homepage: <http://www.sida.se>

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACWC	ASEAN Commission on the Promotion & Protection of the Rights of Women and Children
AICHR	ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights
ANFREL	Asian Network for Free Elections
ANNI	Asian NGO Network on National Human Rights Institutions
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
HR	Human Rights
HRC	Human Rights Council
HRD	Human Rights Defender(s)
HRDF	Human Rights Defenders' Forum
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICJ	International Commission of Jurists
ICP	Information, Communication, and Publication
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NHRIs	National Human Rights Institutions
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OIC	Organization of Islamic Cooperation
PME	Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SEAPA	Southeast Asian Press Alliance
SEK	Swedish Krona
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SMT	Senior Management Team
SR	Special Rapporteur
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
WHRD	Women Human Rights Defender(s)

Preface

This evaluation of FORUM-ASIA was commissioned by the Embassy of Sweden in Bangkok. The evaluation was undertaken by Indevelop through Sida's framework agreement for reviews and evaluations between March- May 2015.

Indevelop's management team included Ian Christoplos, who provided quality assurance for the methodology and reports, and Anna Liljelund Hedqvist, project manager, who was responsible for coordination and management of the evaluation implementation.

The independent evaluation team consisted of two members:
Ali Dastgeer, Team Leader
Camilla Reisenfeld, Evaluator

This final evaluation report has incorporated feedback received from FORUM-ASIA, Embassy of Sweden and Ford Foundation on the draft report. The evaluation team wishes to acknowledge the fruitful collaboration with all evaluation stakeholders throughout the evaluation process.

Executive Summary

The objective of FORUM-ASIA's work is *"to strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights and democracy in Asia and beyond by consolidating Asian human rights movements through effective collaboration with partners on international solidarity as well as engagement with states and other stakeholders at national, regional and international level."* Sida has commissioned this evaluation of FORUM-ASIA in April 2015 with the objective to assess the organisation's performance and achievements during the period 2011-2014 during which time Sida has been providing core funding. The aim of the evaluation is also to recommend concrete measures for FORUM-ASIA to improve the work of the organisation, if deemed necessary.

The main conclusions of the evaluation are:

Relevance:

The work that FORUM-ASIA undertakes is relevant to the needs of the region and the work of its members. Some of the most common issues present in most Asian states are the absence of civil and political rights: authoritarian rule, corruption, lack of transparency and accountability. Human rights defenders routinely face incarceration and intimidation, and freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly is denied to citizens in many of the concerned countries to varying degrees. FORUM-ASIA plays a vital role as it functions as a link between the various well-established national NGOs and grass-root organisations in Asia and the international UN Human Rights Council, the highest legitimate political arena for the promotion and protection of human rights. Its current strategic framework, which spans 2014 to 2018, was prepared after consultations with its 47 member organisations.

Efficiency:

The organisation organises or takes part in a number of events that allow members to come together, undertake networking and build solidarity. These include the General Assembly sessions every three years, the Human Rights Defenders Forum every two years, various trainings and other events. Since 2014, efforts have also gone into organising sub-regional meetings - a feature which is expected to continue. The Secretariat has developed an intranet and an online forum for members. These are recent initiatives and still have to bear results.

FORUM-ASIA has taken several steps to improve its administrative and financial systems. In terms of administration, the organisation has developed new staff rules and regulations, beefed up its administrative department and put in place documented procurement procedures. Further work on the staff rules and regulations needs to be

done. In terms of its financial management, till now most of it had been outsourced to an external company due to the lack of capacity within the organisation, amongst other constraints. Since April 2015, that outsourcing has ceased and all financial management is now done in-house. The financial department has been strengthened by adding two additional staff to the existing one, finance and accounting responsibilities have been separated and new financial rules and regulations have been approved and are in place. Administratively and financially, FORUM-ASIA is in a much stronger position than it was in 2011.

The target audiences regarding communication for FORUM-ASIA include the UN, national governments and intergovernmental bodies, international and regional CSOs, its members and ordinary citizens. The Information, Communication and Publication Department has taken a number of initiatives over the last one and a half years during which its capacity has been strengthened. These have included the development of the intranet, discussion forums, revamping of FORUM-ASIA social media pages and production of brochures and newsletters. Till now though, FORUM-ASIA's engagement of the media has been poor. Its press statements and releases lack the ability to attract attention and little enthusiasm is shown by journalists to attend its press briefings. They do not view FORUM-ASIA as the authoritative commentator on human rights developments. One major reason for this is because FORUM-ASIA has failed to cultivate relationships with them either in Bangkok, or in other countries through its members.

The Planning Monitoring and Evaluation (PME) Department has also been strengthened through the induction of full-time staff. There are now satisfactory logframes in place for each Department and progress reporting to Sida has significantly improved from the mere listing of activities undertaken to the reporting of what results are being achieved.

The Geneva and Jakarta offices are worth the cost incurred given that it is small compared to the benefits that can be yielded of having physical presence in the two cities. The presence of the Geneva office is extremely important given that it plays a key role in assisting Asian human rights defenders (HRDs) and NGOs to gain access to the UN Human Rights mechanisms, and the year round advocacy work it engages in. It is restrained because of lack of additional manpower. The Jakarta office's potential may be better realised if the responsiveness from the intergovernmental bodies, the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights and ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children, improves.

Effectiveness:

The organisation is currently facing internal challenges that are as result of mis-understandings between the Executive Committee and Secretariat staff as well as the inability of the Senior Management Team (SMT) to effectively manage. This is the

most serious threat the organisation faces and the challenge for the Executive Committee is to be able to guide and advise, and at the same time to listen and allay the concerns of the staff. The current state of affairs is leading to despondency within the Secretariat. Key to resolving this issue is also the capacity of the SMT to be able to manage and lead.

FORUM-ASIA's publications are stated to be objective and well researched. The organisation is well-appreciated by nearly all its members, partners, and other stakeholders. It brings together CSOs from across the region and has supported scores of human rights defenders in their safety and protection. Its trainings in human rights defenders, and in UN and ASEAN human rights mechanisms have built the capacities of member and partner CSOs to provide contributions to the Universal Periodic Reviews (UPRs), draft urgent appeals and written statements.

It has been able to draw the attention of and provide support to Special Rapporteurs to deal with human rights abuses. Due to the global mission and the amount of issues that demand attention of the Special Rapporteurs, they genuinely appreciate FORUM-ASIA as a representative to turn to when in need of information regarding the human rights situation in the Asian region. FORUM-ASIA is also highly appreciated among mission representatives and partner organisations for providing the space to grass-root organisations to speak from own experiences during Human Rights Council sessions. FORUM-ASIA is seen as a vital and indispensable partner in Geneva and is invited to stakeholder meetings on any issue concerning Asia.

In ASEAN, FORUM-ASIA's relationship with the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) is not a harmonious one. FORUM-ASIA has been critical of AICHR's lack of effectiveness, which has contributed to alienating AICHR. This is unfortunate as many saw FORUM-ASIA as the only body which had pan-ASEAN presence and grassroots support to engage with AICHR. The relationship with the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion & Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC) has been better but has not resulted in any substantive engagement so far.

FORUM-ASIA's membership varies between very active to inactive members. The membership of FORUM-ASIA needs to show greater commitment to the effectiveness and sustainability of the organisation. Till now, conditions for becoming a member or for losing membership have been rather lax; this has resulted in some members not actively contributing to FORUM-ASIA's goals.

Regarding gender, mainstreaming of it has remained confined to the documents and there has been scant attention paid to the issue. The organisation has, subsequent to a Sida-funded evaluation in 2014, now developed an Action Plan which if implemented should make significant improvements to gender mainstreaming within the organisation and its programmes.

Impact:

It is difficult to attribute increased respect for human rights, democracy, freedom of expression, association and assembly in the region solely to the work of FORUM-ASIA. Nonetheless it is clear that FORUM-ASIA is contributing to attitudinal and behavioural change of governments and several examples exist in this regard.

The evaluation makes several recommendations. A number of them relate to improving communication and coordination between the various tiers of management within the Secretariat including better division of responsibilities. Recommendations also include suggestions on how to improve use of the media. The evaluation recommends FORUM-ASIA to determine its strategy vis-à-vis bodies such as AICHR. Given that FORUM-ASIA cannot tackle all issues confronting human rights in Asia, it should build on its expertise such as human rights defenders, freedom of expression, association and assembly. In other cases, it can support the work of civil society organisations with better competence on those subjects. There are also several recommendations on how to make its membership more effective.

1 Introduction

1.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE REPORT

The Government of Sweden through the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) has been supporting the regional human rights and development organisation FORUM-ASIA since the mid-1990s and began providing core institutional grant support to the organisation in 2008 for a two year period. The second period is guided by the “Institutional Three-year Core Grant Proposal for 2011-2013” which was extended until December 2016. Sida has commissioned this evaluation of FORUM-ASIA in April 2015 with the objective to assess the organisation’s performance and achievements. The aim of the evaluation is also to recommend concrete measures for FORUM-ASIA to improve the work of the organisation, if deemed necessary. The evaluation aims at providing constructive input and analysis of FORUM-ASIA which can be utilised in future developments of the organisation. The Terms of Reference (ToR) of the evaluation is given in Annex 1.

In order to adhere to Sida Evaluation guidelines, the evaluation has followed the recommended OECD-DAC criteria of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability.

Below follows a presentation of the organisation FORUM-ASIA, followed by the methodology of the evaluation. In Chapter 3, the key findings are presented followed by the conclusions (Chapter 4) and recommendations (Chapter 5).

1.2 INTRODUCTION TO FORUM-ASIA

FORUM-ASIA is a regional membership based, non-governmental organisation, founded in 1991 in Manila, Philippines. It has 47 member organisations in 16 countries across South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Northeast Asia. Its vision is to build a peaceful, just, equitable, and ecologically sustainable community of peoples and societies in Asia, where all human rights of all are fully respected and realised in accordance with internationally accepted human rights norms and standards. The mission of the organisation is to promote and protect all human rights, including the right to development, through collaboration and cooperation among human rights organisations and defenders in Asia.

The objective of FORUM-ASIA’s work is “*to strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights and democracy in Asia and beyond by consolidating Asian human rights movements through effective collaboration with partners on international*

solidarity as well as engagement with states and other stakeholders at national, regional and international level.”

FORUM-ASIA has special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and is registered in Geneva as an international non-governmental organisation. The organisation operates offices in Geneva and Jakarta, but the Secretariat is situated in Bangkok since 1994.

The secretariat is responsible for the overall management and project implementation, including follow-up, monitoring and evaluation. The work of the office in Jakarta is focused on the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) level, on standard setting and institution building of the ASEAN human rights systems. The Geneva office links Asian human rights issues to the global issues on human rights and monitors developments on the international level as well as channels information to FORUM-ASIA members on emerging trends and priorities at the global level.

To guide its work, FORUM-ASIA has set up the following five result-areas with identified corresponding outcomes:

Result-areas	Corresponding Outcomes
Advocacy	• Increased respect and protection of freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and freedom of association • Improved democratic institutions and processes by governments with civil society participation • Positive behaviours and changes of Asian States in fulfilling their human rights obligations • CSO advocacy in engaging with ASEAN and its human rights mechanism is strengthened
Building Capacity	• Asian NGOs and defenders are capacitated with expertise to articulate, represent and defend human rights situation of their countries at the UN human rights mechanism in a sustainable manner • Enhanced capacity of human rights defenders (HRDs) in effective campaigns and advocacy on different human rights issues at national, regional and international level • Vigilant and sustainable pool of human rights trainers as well as comprehensive training manuals, modules and resources widely used by Asian HRDs to continue to educate people on their rights in Asia
Coalition Building	• Increase of members in countries where FORUM-ASIA is not represented or under-represented • Wider participation and engagement of civil society in the work of the AICHR and ACWC • National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and their regional and international groupings address issues of HRDs and Women Human Right Defenders (WHRD)

Documentation and Research	• Issues and concerns of HRDs and WHRDs, including sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) defenders, in Asia researched, documented and compiled, and efforts made to address those issues at the national, regional and international levels • Human rights performance of Asian governments, national human rights institutions and other actors concerned researched, analysed, published and disseminated for knowledge enhancement and policy advocacy
Enhancement of organisation	• Increased efficiency and effectiveness of organisational management through developing, updating and implementing the system

To achieve the goals, FORUM-ASIA's activities are structured around the following core programmes with the accompanying objectives:

1. South & East Asia Programme

- **Objective 1:** To influence positive changes in the respect and protection of freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly and association by Asian States.
- **Objective 2:** To foster an environment conducive to better protection of political and democratic participation in Asia.
- **Objective 3:** To strengthen and promote the role of NHRIs towards better respect and protection of human rights in Asia.
- **Objective 4:** To consolidate advocacy and campaigns towards the establishment of a South Asia Human Rights Mechanism.

2. UN Advocacy Programme

- **Objective 1:** To strengthen the effectiveness of Asian HRDs' advocacy actions by consolidating their engagement with UN human rights mechanisms
- **Objective 2:** To influence positive changes in the independence and accountability of ASEAN human rights mechanisms
- **Objective 3:** To influence positive changes in Asian States' diplomacy on human rights at relevant geopolitical bodies

3. Human Rights Defenders' Programme

- **Objective 1:** To reduce occurrence of threats, intimidation and attacks against HRDs in Asia.
- **Objective 2:** To foster an enabling environment for Asian HRDs to carry out their legitimate work freely.

- **Objective 3:** To develop next generation of HRDs in Asia equipped with leadership and capacity for strategic advocacy actions.

4. ASEAN Advocacy Programme

- **Objective 1:** To intensify the effectiveness of Asian HRDs' engagement with ASEAN and its human rights mechanisms
- **Objective 2:** To influence positive changes in the independence and accountability of ASEAN human rights mechanisms

To achieve the objectives within the respective programmes, FORUM-ASIA conducts trainings to member organisations, partner organisations and to human rights defenders. The trainings are focused on the UN system and international human rights mechanisms including those of ASEAN, on advocacy tools when filing complaints to Special Rapporteurs and other relevant stakeholders, courses on the rights of human rights defenders, freedom of expression etc. FORUM-ASIA also arranges academic visits for Special Rapporteurs to raise awareness on particular human rights issues in various parts of Asia. It organises regional symposiums, side events at the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) sessions and workshops on a range of human rights issues. FORUM-ASIA also organises and engages in events and forums organised by partner organisations on relevant HR issues. It is or has been convenor or co-convenor of a number of regional human rights related networks.

Apart from capacity building FORUM-ASIA conducts advocacy by writing open letters to media, arranging press releases, making statements to governments and the Human Rights Council (oral and written), and filing complaints of human rights abuses to the Special Rapporteurs on Human Rights Defenders, Freedom of Expression, Freedom of Assembly and of Association.

FORUM-ASIA also produces research, publications, fact sheets and reports on a variety of human rights issues in Asia. The organisation also conducts outreach visits to areas affected by human rights violations.

2 Methodology of the Evaluation

The Evaluation began with a document review: mainly annual progress reports submitted by FORUM-ASIA to Sida during the period 2011-2013 and the recommendations of the Sida-contracted system audit of FORUM-ASIA which took place in 2012. The Annual Report of 2014 was not available as it was still in the process of finalisation and is not required to be submitted to Sida until the end of April as per the Contribution Agreement.

During this period, prior to the initiation of country visits within the region, a Skype discussion was also conducted with the Embassy of Sweden in Bangkok to assess its expectations from the evaluation and its impressions of FORUM-ASIA. Another Skype meeting was conducted with two of the three members of the senior management team (SMT) of FORUM-ASIA during which discussion took place to clarify points in the evaluation's ToR and to finalise the list of stakeholders to be interviewed. FORUM-ASIA offered to both host the evaluation team in its offices during the team's stay in Bangkok and also to assist by contacting the final list of stakeholders to be interviewed, and getting time slots from them.

The field phase of the evaluation began with a joint briefing with Sida and the SMT in Bangkok. At this stage, further documentation was provided by FORUM-ASIA. This was followed by meetings with various departments within FORUM-ASIA over two days. After that, the 2-member team split. One evaluator staying on in Bangkok and later travelled to Jakarta while the other evaluator moved onto Kathmandu (Nepal) and then to Geneva.

In Bangkok, the remaining FORUM-ASIA departments continued to be met and discussions were held with Bangkok-based regional organisations such as OHCHR, FORUM-ASIA's partners and the other stakeholders. Jakarta was chosen for a field visit because it is home to the ASEAN Secretariat, and thus to the relevant intergovernmental commissions ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion & Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC). Indonesia also has the largest number of FORUM-ASIA members i.e. 7, out of which 6 are based in Jakarta. A focus group discussion with a number of these members was made possible and discussions were also held with other partners as well as the ASEAN Secretariat and the Indonesian representative to the AICHR. The organisation he heads also happens to be a FORUM-ASIA member, so the meeting provided an opportunity to discuss FORUM-ASIA's work with him from the angle of both these relationships.

Kathmandu was chosen because it is where the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Secretariat is based as well as three of FORUM-ASIA's four members in Nepal. FORUM-ASIA has been trying for some time now to get SAARC to establish its own regional human rights mechanisms. In Kathmandu, a meeting was held with the largest NGO network organisation (a member of FORUM-ASIA) which together with FORUM-ASIA advocates for the creation of a regional SAARC human rights mechanism. Other members were also met, as well as two of the founders and advisors of FORUM-ASIA.

Geneva was chosen since it is the centre for advocating to the UN Human Rights Council and an important place for interaction with government representatives and Special Rapporteurs. By the time the visit to Geneva commenced, the 28th regular session of the Human Rights Council had just concluded. While this was good in that stakeholders were not occupied with the proceedings of the Council, the approaching Easter break meant that representatives of many delegations or organisations were not present in the city. However, meetings were held with the office of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, two mission representatives and a number of well-established international partner organisations. The Geneva visit also broadened understanding of FORUM-ASIA's achievements on the international human rights arena and of the added value of having a presence close to the Human Rights Council.

A number of Special Rapporteurs and FORUM-ASIA partners were contacted by Skype. The same was done with a number of former employees, Executive Committee and FORUM-ASIA members in other countries such as Mongolia, South Korea, Malaysia and Sri Lanka. A full list of persons interviewed is provided in Annex 2.

FORUM-ASIA was extremely open in providing any type of documentation or information requested. A list of documents studied is given in Annex 3. In consultation with Sida and the FORUM-ASIA Secretariat, it was decided that activities related to the Asian NGO Network on National Human Rights Institutions (ANNI) would not be explored in this evaluation as the work of ANNI had been assessed during a Sida evaluation of the Asia Pacific Forum (APF) and National Human Rights Institutions in 2014. ANNI is a network of Asian human rights non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and human rights defenders engaging with NHRIs in Asia. This network was established in December 2006 and FORUM-ASIA is its secretariat.

A debriefing was held with the SMT of FORUM-ASIA in the second week of April.

3 Findings

3.1 RELEVANCE

3.1.1 Relevance in terms of needs of the Asian region

In Asia, as a region, there are several pressing human rights issues of concern such as lack of government accountability, responsibility and transparency. Land concessions and property rights as well as discrimination against minority ethnic groups, women and LGBT persons are other examples of human rights violations present in Asian states. Clearly all states have their own specific issues which need to be dealt with (the transition period and peace building process in Myanmar and the treatment of the Rohingya, misuse of blasphemy laws in Pakistan and persecution of minorities, the suppression of democracy in Thailand, impunity and lack of accountability in Sri Lanka, authoritarian rule in Cambodia, lack of land rights in Nepal, and the recent crackdown in Malaysia using sedition laws and the introduction of indefinite detentions are just a few examples) but there are common traits and violations of human rights that are similar across the region. Some of the most common issues that seem present in most Asian states are the absence of civil and political rights: authoritarian rule, corruption, lack of transparency and accountability.

All informants that the evaluators have spoken with, be it member organisations, partner organisations, human rights experts on Asia, UN representatives or Asian mission representatives in Geneva, confirm that FORUM-ASIA is one of the most important regional member-based organisations focussing on human rights in Asia. FORUM-ASIA plays a vital role as it functions as a link between the various well-established national NGOs and grass-root organisations in Asia and the international UN HR Council, the highest legitimate political arena for the promotion and protection of human rights. If compared to other global south regions there are several regional HR organisations from Africa and Latin America. In Asia, however, FORUM-ASIA contributes with being the only regional platform to raise shared Asian HR issues. The organisation connects smaller grass-root organisations with the UN system and is a valuable source of information and point of contact for UN staff and mission representatives in Geneva who need to be informed about specific issues in Asian countries. FORUM-ASIA is valued and appreciated among partner organisations and state representatives at the HR Council for being an entry point to receiving updates on issues in Asia, such as the developments recently in Myanmar and Sri Lanka. The organisation is seen as a trustworthy partner for accessing reliable information about human rights violations and issues occurring within Asian states.

Asian states receiving complaints about human rights issues within their countries

have more difficulties ignoring cases raised by FORUM-ASIA as the organisation is seen as a strong advocacy voice for the protection of human rights in Asia. Due to its close ties with national human rights and development NGOs in Asia, its advocacy has a stronger effect when putting pressure on Asian states to promote and protect human rights and fulfil their mandate as duty-bearers.

3.1.2 Relevance seen from FORUM-ASIA member organisations

FORUM-ASIA consists of 47 member organisations from 16 countries with their own strategic plans as well as different priorities and needs when it comes to the support needed from FORUM-ASIA. From a relevance perspective, it is crucial that FORUM-ASIA is able to adjust to the different needs of its constituents and work with a participatory approach to ensure that the activities are relevant to the needs of its member organisations.

In general, the member organisations highly value and appreciate FORUM-ASIA as a regional platform that brings together representatives of human rights organisations from various countries on a regional level. Through FORUM-ASIA's activities, member organisations are able to interact and engage with one another, and exchange and share information and research on shared human rights issues. Member organisations are also able to use the platform of FORUM-ASIA to receive regional support on issues that are too sensitive to raise on a national level.

3.1.3 Relevance of the strategic framework

The strategic framework is prepared by the FORUM-ASIA Secretariat after consultations with member organisations and the Executive Committee and is thereafter adopted at the General Assembly with the participation of member organisations. Whether the member organisations feel that the strategic framework and the activities of FORUM-ASIA are relevant for them depends on the extent to which the agenda and thematic focus of the members overlap and coincide with that of FORUM-ASIA's current programme priorities.

Member organisations have the possibility to provide input to the strategy of FORUM-ASIA through the Secretariat and/or the General Assembly of all members which is held every three years. The consultations with member organisations, together with input from the Executive Committee, are supposed to determine the strategy. Most member organisations say that they are able to provide their views and opinions to the Secretariat on the focus areas of the strategy. However it has proved difficult for FORUM-ASIA to respond to all requests received at the Assembly - a dilemma faced by many regional and international member-based organisations. Some of the organisations that were working more on economic and social justice expressed a request that FORUM-ASIA should increase the focus more on social, economic and cultural rights. Looking into the programme priorities of the strategic framework, it is true that FORUM-ASIA seems to focus its activities on civil and political rights rather than economic, social and cultural rights. At the same time, FORUM-ASIA supports and provides training for human rights defenders regardless of the rights they

are defending, be it land rights or gender identity rights.

In the present five-year strategic framework there are 9 programme priorities that FORUM-ASIA aims to focus its activities on. The various programme priorities are a mixture of thematic focus areas, such as Freedom of Expression and Economic, Social and Cultural rights, Democratisation, Global Human Rights Leadership and Solidarity, and tools such as Human Rights Defenders, Human Rights Trainings, ASEAN and SAARC Advocacy, and UN Advocacy.

Some of the programme priorities seem to be more in line with the actual produced activities and outputs of the organisation, such as the thematic areas of “Freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association”, “Human Rights Defenders”, and “UN Advocacy”. FORUM-ASIA does not seem to work on the programme priorities of Economic, Social and Cultural rights, Democratisation or Global Human Rights Leadership and Solidarity programmes to the same extent as the above. This focus is reflected in its advocacy efforts and close ties to the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of assembly and of association, the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of opinion and expression and on the situation of human rights defenders. Its advocacy towards these Special Rapporteurs is highly relevant and there is clearly a need for an organisation such as FORUM-ASIA to be able to provide input to the Special Rapporteurs on these issues. It is also constructive of FORUM-ASIA to focus especially on these issues where it has considerable skills and experiences and thus can be more effective in its advocacy efforts. Clearly in large areas such as Democratisation and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, there are other actors (such as ANFREL) that can complement the expertise that FORUM-ASIA has.

3.1.4 Relevance to Swedish development cooperation

FORUM-ASIA is very much in line with the current Swedish strategy for regional development cooperation in Southeast Asia. It fits well into the sector goal *to strengthen regional actors and systems for greater respect for and compliance with human rights*. The strategy focuses on mechanisms for the protection and promotion of human rights and human rights defenders which is one of the areas where FORUM-ASIA has proven most active. FORUM-ASIA’s work and focus on freedom of expression and the right to information is highly relevant to the Swedish strategy as it contributes to focus area two in the human rights section of the strategy. It is well in line with Sweden’s aim *to contribute to developing free and independent arenas for information dissemination, networking, accountability, and documentation of human rights violations*.

3.2 EFFICIENCY

3.2.1 Networking and Information Sharing

FORUM-ASIA has 47 members and not all are equally active in FORUM-ASIA ac-

tivities. Some have been observed to be very active, participating frequently in FORUM-ASIA events and contributing to them, maintaining frequent communication with it, and contributing to its reports and publications. At the other extreme are several civil society organisations (CSOs) which seldom respond to emails.

Building up a strong regional network requires efforts both by the Secretariat and the members, and the opportunity for members to interact frequently with one another. The number of events where this can occur physically is limited, both due to the vastness of the region and budgetary constraints. Every two years, FORUM-ASIA organises a Regional Human Rights Defenders Forum (HRDF). The sixth and last one was held in Manila in December 2014 in which 40 of FORUM-ASIA's 47 member participated apart from other human rights defenders and FORUM-ASIA partners.

However, the main event that brings together all 47 members is the General Assembly of FORUM-ASIA which is held every three years. The next one is planned for January 2016. During the General Assembly, the future strategy of FORUM-ASIA is discussed and approved, new members are admitted, a new Executive Committee is elected, and other policies and rules are adopted. Holding it more frequently than this proves to be difficult given the preparation that goes into organising it and the costs involved of holding it.

FORUM-ASIA members do interact with each other at other events such as FORUM-ASIA trainings and events organised by other INGOs. Special communication meetings within sub-regions have also started. One such meeting was held in April 2014 in Taipei for the Northeast region and another later in December 2014 in Manila for South and Southeast Asia. Members also engage with each other on a bilateral basis, especially if they are based in the same city such as Jakarta where 6 of FORUM-ASIA's 7 Indonesian members are located. However, across the region there is scope for greater interaction as the degree to which it occurs affects the strength of the network, its solidarity and information sharing, and also members would be less inclined to support the work of other members if they do not know them. Thus it is a positive step that the Secretariat has developed an intranet and an online forum for members. These are recent initiatives and still have to bear results. The challenge for the Secretariat is how to increase the meaningful use of these two online tools by its members.

3.2.2 Internal Systems

The system audit of FORUM-ASIA conducted in 2012 made a number of recommendations to strengthen the administrative and financial capacity of the organisation. In both these areas, the audit did not find any serious issues. It noted that "systems for operational and financial management and control at FORUM-ASIA are relevant and reliable. These systems are adhered to and implemented on all levels within the organisation. However, there is need for improvements of the systems" and gave a

number of recommendations.¹

Since that audit, FORUM-ASIA has taken several steps to improve its administrative and financial systems. In terms of administration, the organisation has developed new staff rules and regulations, beefed up its administrative department and put in place documented procurement procedures. Further work on the staff rules and regulations needs to be done. In terms of its financial management, until now most of it had been outsourced to an external company due to the lack of capacity within the organisation, amongst other constraints. Since April 2015, that outsourcing has ceased and all financial management is now done in-house. The financial department has been strengthened by adding two additional staff to the existing one, finance and accounting responsibilities have been separated and new financial rules and regulations have been approved and are in place. Administratively and financially, FORUM-ASIA is in a much stronger position than it was in 2011.

3.2.3 Communication

FORUM-ASIA needs to communicate with a range of audiences. Within the Secretariat, there are the various programme departments and the Senior Management Team. Communication can be done informally and formally (through meetings and intranet) whereby messages related to strategic, programmatic and administrative issues have been communicated amongst themselves. Beyond the Secretariat is the Executive Committee and the General Assembly both of which have to be kept abreast of developments within the organisation and provide guidance and support. Externally, the target groups include:

1. International agencies including the UN system and CSOs: to collaborate with FORUM-ASIA and to support its advocacy efforts
2. Governments and inter-governmental institutions: to pressure them to protect and promote human rights.
3. Ordinary citizens: to inform them of the work of FORUM-ASIA and to encourage them to raise their voices for the respect of human rights.

FORUM-ASIA does this through a variety of means including press releases, social media, the UN mechanisms, FORUM-ASIA General Assembly sessions and its own sponsored research, amongst other things. The organisation currently does not have a communication strategy that would elaborate on the above and identify the most appropriate methods to communicate.²

¹ System-Based Audit of FORUM-ASIA by Professional Management (2012)

² A list on various ideas and ICP-related issues was shared with the evaluation team though those notes cannot be classified as a draft strategy.

The Information, Communication and Publication Department has taken a number of initiatives over the last one and a half years during which its capacity has been strengthened. The Department is aware that its functions need significant development. It has, as mentioned above, developed an intranet so that staff and members have a dedicated space to communicate with one another. The members' forums will enable discussions on specific subjects. The effort now is to encourage staff and members to increasingly start using the intranet by making more relevant material available on it. This will take time. Other initiatives include revamping of FORUM-ASIA social media pages (Facebook, Twitter and YouTube), and production of brochures and newsletters.

Many observers and followers of FORUM-ASIA have pointed to its tepid press releases and statements. As one interviewee stated, there is "no branding of FORUM-ASIA's press releases and statements". The general observations are that FORUM-ASIA press releases tend to come to the point in a roundabout manner, are not hard-hitting enough and poor at grabbing attention. When journalists need reaction from civil society to human rights abuses in the region, they tend to turn to organisations like Human Rights Watch (HRW) rather than FORUM-ASIA.

The same can be said for its press briefings. They are mostly not well attended and held in 'dingy basement rooms' as one observer stated. FORUM-ASIA has failed to develop strong relationships with international and regional media outlets, and it has been poor at developing relationships with national media outlets in the region, even though it has members in 16 countries and some of those members have extremely good relationships with some of their national media. It has not been able to build on its members relationships with the media. FORUM-ASIA has not been good at disseminating the stand it takes on various issues.

The organisation is conscious of its poor communication. It has already started a raft of initiatives as mentioned above to overcome this, and is further strengthening the Information, Communication and Publication Department through the appointment of a manager. It has undertaken training of its staff in how to better compose press statements. It can also learn from and collaborate with organisations such as the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) which has offered the services of its communication consultant due in Bangkok later this year.

3.2.4 Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation

The Planning Monitoring and Evaluation (PME) Department has also been strengthened. Previously there was no consistent resourcing of this Department. It sometimes had somebody looking after PME affairs and at other times no-one. Since 2014, there are two full-time PME staff members. There are now satisfactory logframes in place for each Department and progress reporting to Sida has significantly improved from the mere listing of activities undertaken to the reporting of what results are being achieved. There is still no meta-logframe of the organisation, which would provide

greater focus for the array of interventions the organisation undertakes, and the reporting on results - while it is good - could be further improved. During the evaluation, how this could be done was discussed with the PME team. Reporting to Sida is undertaken annually as per the Contribution Agreement.

The Senior Management Team (SMT) of FORUM-ASIA comprises of the Executive Director and two Co-Directors. Since its formation in 2014, it has still not been able to allocate different portfolios, dealing with both internal and external programmes, amongst itself.³ It is unclear why it is taking the SMT so long to decide how to divide the workload. However, the result is that programmes are operating without any focal point in the SMT to turn to. This uncertainty is also impeding the Directors' involvements in the various programmes.

3.2.5 Cost-efficiency: Geneva and Jakarta Offices

The issue to be discussed in this section is whether the resources spent on the running of the Geneva and Jakarta offices offer value for money. In Geneva, the major cost is that of the staff, a cost that would have been incurred anyway had the staff been stationed in Bangkok. Rental costs of the office are extremely reasonable given rental prices in Geneva. By its permanent presence there, FORUM-ASIA is able to engage both formally and informally with diplomatic missions, the Human Rights Council and its special procedures on a continuous basis. The HRC sessions are held three times a year for several weeks each. Further, Asian human rights defenders and CSOs making interventions and statements at the sessions require logistical and administrative support, which the office is able to provide. The Geneva office assists in the interventions and oral statements, as well as side events, press briefings and meetings with diplomatic missions.

The Geneva office consists of one Programme Manager, a Financial and Administration officer, and one intern. It occupies a small but well located space in a building that hosts most prominent international NGOs, very close to the UN Campus which facilitates the best conditions for networking. Considering the small number of permanent staff and the amount of advocacy, monitoring, and organisation of side-events etc. performed by the Geneva office, it is a highly valuable and necessary component of FORUM-ASIA. FORUM-ASIA is the only Asian CSO representative situated in Geneva. All mission representatives and partner organisations confirmed that to be able to have an impact from its advocacy work, an organisation has to have presence in Geneva. This is not only during Human Rights Council Sessions, but also for interacting and creating ties and relationships with the diplomats in between sessions. It is clear that advocacy in Geneva in reality comes down to developing personal ties with

³ There is an informal division of some of the programmes. The Secretariat states that "At the time of evaluation, a guideline to better articulate the division of labour vis-à-vis programmes and day to day operation was being drafted to firm up these oversight responsibilities."

the diplomats. Having a diplomatic approach and being visible in the Geneva context is a pre-requisite to be able to influence policy makers to take a stance for Asian human rights issues.

Partners confirm that FORUM-ASIA does play a very valuable role in Geneva. It is visible and effective considering the small amount of resources/staff available. The limited number of staff is restricting the Geneva office in terms of efficiency and in demonstrating its full potential.

The Jakarta office's existence is less justifiable in the current context where there are virtually no collaborative activities on-going between itself and the ASEAN human rights mechanisms (see below). While there has been some interaction between the Jakarta office and AICHR and ACWC - in 2014, for the first time, FORUM-ASIA was invited to AICHR's workshops - it has not developed into any sort of formal arrangement of engagement. No procedures of grievance or transmittal of cases have been elaborated by ASEAN and its human rights mechanisms, and letters written to these bodies to highlight cases of human rights abuses have not resulted in any positive replies. Still, with the recent adoption of guidelines based on which AICHR intends to engage with CSOs, some windows of opportunity for engagement may emerge. Again the advantages of having a presence in Jakarta outweigh the associated costs, mainly in terms of renting of the office.

3.3 EFFECTIVENESS

3.3.1 Internal conflicts

There is currently great deal of mistrust and acrimony between the Executive Committee, senior management and Secretariat staff. Certain members of the Executive Committee are accused of being too overbearing and interfering in the day-to-day running of the Secretariat. This view is held not only within the organisation but by external stakeholders also. The Executive Committee in turn states that certain staff members are fomenting discord and that its decisions are not implemented as they should be and on time. On the other hand, there is a general feeling of despondency amongst Secretariat staff. They feel they should be trusted to make the correct decisions, are competent enough and should be consulted more on issues that affect the activities they are implementing. This evaluation report does not intend to discuss each allegation and counter-allegation heard over the 2-3 weeks that the field visits took place, and repeating them would serve little purpose except to possibly aggravate the situation. What is clear though is the following:

- The internal power struggles of FORUM-ASIA are not new. They have plagued the organisation for over a decade if not more. Today, while the situation may not have deteriorated, it has certainly not improved.
- The Executive Committee does feel a sense of ownership of and responsibility

for the organisation, and its members have invested time and effort in the performance of their duties.

- Similarly, the Secretariat staff has been observed to be competent and dedicated, and the evaluation team has noted that external stakeholders hold members of Secretariat staff in high regard.
- The Senior Management Team has weak capacity. It has not been able to give the organisation a strong sense of direction since its establishment, which was in 2013-14. This is due to a number of reasons including that its members lack the exposure to running an organisation of the level of FORUM-ASIA, that the Executive Committee is itself a strong body and that senior programme staff resent having a new layer of managers to report to.
- Nine months since its formation, the Senior Management Team has failed to allot the different management responsibilities amongst its members. The result is that, apart from maybe in the case of the ICP Department, the departments are mostly operating independently of any direction the SMT should be providing.⁴
- The SMT has poor visibility externally. While the Executive Director is relatively known due to her longer association with FORUM-ASIA and human rights work especially in Southeast Asia, overall the members of the SMT are not known even by Bangkok-based partners/stakeholders.
- There is a serious lack of communication between the Executive Committee and Secretariat staff. The SMT which could provide a bridge between both tiers, and bring the concerns of the staff to the Executive Committee and vice versa has failed to do that.⁵
- This internal struggle is affecting the credibility of FORUM-ASIA externally. It appears that everyone in the development/human rights sector seems to know the problems afflicting it, even though FORUM-ASIA is held in regard.

The above state of affairs has perturbed both of FORUM-ASIA's donors, Sida and Ford Foundation. They are concerned not only about their investments within the or-

⁴ The Secretariat has stated that for some programmes, a division of responsibility does exist. It also states that "At the time of evaluation, a guideline to better articulate the division of labour and day to day operation was being drafted to firm up these oversight responsibilities."

⁵ The Executive Committee has responded to this statement noting that it regularly interacts with the Secretariat staff during EC meetings and on other occasions. It states it has "time and again offered to send its representative in the half yearly staff review meetings. On one occasion it was even the Chair who had volunteered. But the staff did not want the EC in the review meeting for their confidentiality." The Secretariat has stated, "The EC meets with the staff during regular EC meetings. They also meet at other times during workshops and other activities. Staff concerns are normally brought to the attention of the EC through a monthly update of the Executive Director to the EC." In response, the evaluation team would like to emphasise that the point being made here is not whether meetings are held, but is effective communication taking place including trust being developed, concerns openly expressed, and misunderstanding being removed.

ganisation but also of the inability of FORUM-ASIA to openly discuss with its donors such matters in which the donors could possibly provide support and guidance.

3.3.2 Quality of Outputs

FORUM-ASIA works closely with partners such as Southeast Asian Press Alliance (SEAPA), Human Rights Watch (HRW), Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) and many others on a range of activities including advocacy, joint statements and joint missions. FORUM-ASIA's publications including the annual ANNI reports, the reports on AICHR, working papers and publications such as the 2013 report on corporate accountability in ASEAN. All of these have been well-appreciated and are stated to be objective and well researched.

Despite the internal problems mentioned above, FORUM-ASIA is well appreciated by nearly all its members, partners, and other stakeholders. International human rights institutions, Special Rapporteurs, academics, other CSOs, indeed everyone - with the possible exception of inter-governmental institutions - values the contribution that FORUM-ASIA makes.

FORUM-ASIA is considered a truly regional organisation and what makes it stand apart from other international bodies with regional offices is that it originates in the region, and is not merely the Asian chapter of an International, European or American organisation. It is viewed among its stakeholders as the most important regional member-based civil society organisation that focuses on all aspects of human rights in the whole of Asia.

It also contributes to networking and building solidarity amongst civil society organisations within the region. Having presence in the three sub-regions of South East Asia, South Asia and East Asia permits a good exchange of regional experience such as at the FORUM-ASIA organised Asian Regional Human Rights Defenders Forum (HRDF) which brings together regional HRD players. These events are also attended by the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders and OCHCR, amongst others. Scores of human rights defenders have been assisted in their safety and protection due to the human rights defender's programme. Its trainings in human rights defenders, UN and ASEAN human rights mechanisms have built the capacities of mem-

ber and partner CSOs to provide contributions to the Universal Periodic Reviews (UPRs)⁶, draft urgent appeals and written statements. Some members have then used the trainings and the associated material to train other non-governmental organisations (NGO's) in their countries or the target groups of their various projects.

3.3.3 UN Human Rights Mechanisms

FORUM-ASIA, through its members, is able to take human rights issues affecting people at the grassroots to the highest international bodies such as the UN Human Rights Council and its special procedures. Members, in interviews, have greatly appreciated this aspect of FORUM-ASIA's work. Without it, most of its members, partners and other human rights defenders would not have any channel to internationalise their struggles. It is able to influence the priorities and agendas of the Special Rapporteurs. By supporting the involvement of members in national consultations of the UPRs, FORUM-ASIA capacitates them as well as giving voice to their concerns.

It is clear that FORUM-ASIA has developed a unique bond with Special Rapporteurs in the areas where it has been most active during the evaluated years. The Special Rapporteur on rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, and on the situation of human rights defenders confirm that they have a close working tie to the organisation and consider it as a unique contribution to the human rights NGO field in Asia. FORUM-ASIA is valued for its role as an intermediary conveying issues on the ground from all parts of Asia to the international level and for providing the Special Rapporteurs with trustworthy information on human rights cases that they would not be able to obtain had it not been for FORUM-ASIA. Both rapporteurs have been participating in events organised by FORUM-ASIA and by doing so they have gained an increased understanding and interest for the human rights issues occurring in the Asian region.

FORUM-ASIA frequently files complaints on human rights issues with the Special Rapporteurs, especially with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders. FORUM-ASIA has the skills to forward its complaints in a consumable format, according to the office of the Special Rapporteur, which increases the likelihood that the Rapporteur will respond and act on them. FORUM-ASIA has been an important channel and voice for issues occurring on the ground which many of the member organisations have a challenge to report on in the format demanded by the Special Rapporteurs. Due to the global mission and the amount of issues that demand

⁶ The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a unique process which involves a review of the human rights records of all UN Member States. The UPR is a state-driven process, under the auspices of the Human Rights Council, which provides the opportunity for each state to declare what actions they have taken to improve the human rights situations in their countries and to fulfil their human rights obligations. Under this mechanism, the human rights situation of all UN Member States is reviewed every 4.5 years.

attention of the Special Rapporteurs, they genuinely appreciate FORUM-ASIA as a representative to turn to when in need of information regarding the human rights situation in the Asian region.

FORUM-ASIA is also highly appreciated among mission representatives and partner organisations for providing the space for grass-root organisations to speak from own experiences during Human Rights Council sessions. FORUM-ASIA has contributed to spreading knowledge on the situation in Sri Lanka and Myanmar among state representatives by organising relevant side events. It is clear that the direct information from the ground channelled through FORUM-ASIA indeed fills a need on the international arena, bringing a distant high-level environment eye to eye to the issues at stake.

FORUM-ASIA is seen as a vital and indispensable partner in Geneva and is invited to stakeholder meetings on any issue concerning Asia. It is invited to consultative meetings at the Indonesian Mission before each Human Rights Council session begins and is able to have a close dialogue on relevant human rights issues. This collaboration has developed over the years and is the result of being present in Geneva and conducting persistent and constructive advocacy. After the publication of the FORUM-ASIA working paper series – *Understanding the role of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Human Rights* - FORUM ASIA was invited to a consultative meeting to OIC to present the findings of the report. It was provided the space to propose its recommendations directly on how OIC can strengthen its work on human rights. These forms of interactions with government representatives are valuable spaces where FORUM-ASIA is proving to be a legitimate and resource rich partner. Through these types of consultations and dialogues, FORUM-ASIA does have an impact in terms of providing states with direct information which in turn may come to influence their stance on human rights on particular issues.

3.3.4 Advocacy Tools & Communication

Till now, FORUM-ASIA has largely depended upon the following advocacy tools for its interventions:

- Press releases and statements
- Open letters
- Joint statement (with FORUM-ASIA members and partners)
- Submission of urgent appeals and letters of allegation to UN Special Procedures Mandate Holders

Along with this, at the Human Rights Councils FORUM-ASIA directly, or indirectly through supporting its members and partners, delivers oral and written statements. It organises press briefings and also side events at the HRC, where its members and partners are able to interact with other participants at the HRC sessions. Advocacy and solidarity missions have also been undertaken to some countries in the region.

The use of social media till now has been limited but as has been discussed above, it will be more strongly focussed upon in the near future. FORUM-ASIA has not made any significant attempts at specifically targeting youth, which in other regions has proved to be a strong target group for rallying for change. While there are incidences where FORUM-ASIA has worked with its members to carry out advocacy involving citizens (such as petitions, rallies and protests), the potential for using them appears much higher. In some cases, there seems to be a greater need for more sustained efforts to be undertaken when cases of human rights abuses occur.

The Information Communication and Publication (ICP) Department has taken a series of steps to improve the effectiveness of FORUM- ASIA's communication with its members and external audience. The Department realises the importance of social media and other non-traditional tools. It is making better use of tools such as Facebook and Twitter, though more could be done to target specific audiences such as youth - a key segment of the population which has not been specifically focussed upon by FORUM-ASIA till now.

3.3.5 ASEAN Human Rights Mechanisms

At the ASEAN level, there are two key bodies central to the ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism - AICHR and ACWC. The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) was established in 2009 and consists of one member from each of the 10 ASEAN countries appointed by his/her respective government. AICHR's primary purpose is to "promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms of the peoples of ASEAN". The AICHR representatives have mostly come from government backgrounds, thus have had little enthusiasm to speak out against human rights violations, especially those occurring within their own countries. FORUM-ASIA, along with many other CSOs, has been critical of the mandate and performance of AICHR. FORUM-ASIA has voiced its concerns about the mandate of the body; a mandate which it maintains is not strong enough. It has also produced four publications over the years, which have been critical of and expressed exasperation with the performance of AICHR and its inability to take concrete actions against human rights violations. The publications have been praised as being objective and insightful by academics and CSOs, but have antagonised most of AICHR. At the same time, FORUM-ASIA has attempted to engage with AICHR and individual representatives, inviting them to launches of reports and other events.

AICHR is universally considered a toothless body and it is only recently that it has come out with guidelines on how it will engage with CSOs. It remains to be seen how these guidelines will be put into practice but it appears that only those CSOs which comply with them will be dialogued with. Many NGOs/CSOs would find certain provisions they would have to adhere to as an attempt to muffle dissent. As it is, AICHR has to agree on actions by consensus and given that most representatives are strongly associated with their governments, any significant action is unlikely in the near term.

There is much greater opportunity to engage with the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC). It consists of 20 members: 2 from each country; one for women's rights and the other for children's rights. While ACWC is also significantly composed of members allied to their home governments, its mandate is neither as sensitive as AICHR's, nor does it possess any substantive powers. Its mandate is narrower yet clearer and ACWC representatives seem more responsive. ACWC representatives have more eagerly engaged with CSOs, including attending FORUM-ASIA organised consultations.

FORUM-ASIA needs to make a strategic choice of whether it will continue to confront AICHR on the latter's inability to perform, or will engage with it on issues which do not alarm AICHR. Whichever approach it takes, is up to FORUM-ASIA and its members, but it is difficult to see how it can do both. AICHR representatives have become sensitive to FORUM-ASIA and its partners' criticisms, and as one source stated, "FORUM-ASIA will most likely be excluded from the proposed consultations with AICHR because it does not comply with the adopted guidelines". Amongst other provisions, the guidelines state that CSOs invited for consultation should "Abide by and respect the principles and purposes of the ASEAN Charter, ASEAN Human Rights Declaration (AHRD) and the Phnom Penh Statement on the Adoption of the AHRD and the Terms of Reference of the AICHR". FORUM-ASIA and many of its partners have disagreements with a number of provisions in the Declaration and the AICHR ToR.

3.3.6 Commitments of Members to FORUM-ASIA

During the evaluation, members have mentioned the usefulness of being associated with FORUM-ASIA and the benefits they have received including exposure to the HRC and special procedures, trainings and capacity building, opportunity to provide input into their country's UPR and being able to engage, share experiences and build solidarity with each other. There has been little feedback given on how they can support FORUM-ASIA to become a stronger network. Being a member-centric organisation, FORUM-ASIA does have a responsibility to service the needs of its members. However, there is also an obligation on members to invest time and effort into strengthening the network - whether it be through sharing the knowledge learnt from FORUM-ASIA trainings with other CSOs in their home countries, supporting FORUM-ASIA's advocacy efforts, supporting interested and qualified CSOs to join FORUM-ASIA's network, or merely providing timely responses whenever FORUM-ASIA seeks input from them. Till now, the expectations that FORUM-ASIA has had from its members have been extremely modest, which reduces its effectiveness and sustainability as a network.

Greater membership engagement can also be encouraged if FORUM-ASIA encourages networking amongst its members and partners based on themes. Not all members and partners are interested in all the issues FORUM-ASIA seeks to address, and their target audiences also differ. As an example, thematic gatherings and networking

could have occurred amongst those CSOs that work with journalists, those involved in legal aid or those focussing on land-grabbing, torture, extra-judicial killings and so on. The intranet portal is expected to provide space in the form of discussion boards on these themes. CSOs may find it more useful to network with CSOs working on similar topics but from different sub-regions, than with CSOs from the same sub-region but which work on different issues.

There are quite a number of members of FORUM-ASIA who are dormant, and others are unresponsive in their engagement with FORUM-ASIA. Amongst its membership, FORUM-ASIA has a few members that actually have very little outreach or influence compared to the magnitude of human rights issues within their countries. All this affects the effectiveness of FORUM-ASIA and the influence it can have at the national and regional level. The conditions for membership as given in its by-laws are not stringent enough so that through filtering, FORUM-ASIA is able to choose the more qualified CSOs or CSO networks for membership. Similarly, the conditions for loss of membership are rather lenient. There were some competent applicant CSOs met during the evaluation which have been told to wait for membership, while there are quite a few current members which contribute nothing to FORUM-ASIA in terms of time or effort. The forthcoming 2016 General Assembly session provides a good opportunity for FORUM-ASIA to take stock of its membership and how it can be optimised.⁷

3.3.7 Gender Mainstreaming

A Sida-commissioned study, “Assisting with Gender Assessment in the contribution support to Regional Development Cooperation in Asia focusing on Southeast Asia” was conducted late 2014, which looked at gender mainstreaming within FORUM-ASIA as an organisation and within its programmes. The study found that by and large, FORUM ASIA’s Gender Policy is well articulated. FORUM ASIA’s Gender Policy has three main goals; to ensure that women’s rights and gender perspective guide FORUM-ASIA’s planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, programmes, projects and research; that women’s rights are recognised as human rights; and that gender is mainstreamed and integrated into the human rights work of FORUM-ASIA to strengthen the impact and coverage of its work. FORUM-ASIA’s five year strategy further emphasises that: ‘Gender equality and women’s rights shall be a cross-cutting issue in all the works of FORUM-ASIA. The gender perspective shall be mainstreamed in the organisational management system, as well

⁷ The comments of the Secretariat should be noted here: “There are membership policy guidelines and strategic plan on membership adopted by the EC last year that will address the conditions of membership and retention of the same. This needs to be strengthened further to address circumstances that would warrant action on the part of the EC/Secretariat in which membership is questioned. The best place to address these issues is the General Assembly, and preparations have been initiated towards that end.”

as in all programmatic works’.

However, the study found that the focus on gender presented in both the Gender Policy and the Programme is not reflected in the programme’s context, challenges and opportunities analysis. None of the proposed intervention strategies focus specifically on gender or have integrated a gender perspective.

In response, FORUM-ASIA in February 2015 developed an action plan for gender mainstreaming within FORUM-ASIA, its work and its members. Short and long term strategies have been proposed, along with a series of recommendations. It is too early to judge the results of this action plan, but if implemented it will significantly contribute towards mainstreaming gender into FORUM-ASIA and its programmes.

3.4 IMPACT

As mentioned in the Mission Preparation Note of this evaluation, it is difficult to attribute increased respect for human rights, democracy, freedom of expression, association and assembly in the region solely to the work of FORUM-ASIA or even to attribute a portion of that improvement. This is because there are so many processes taking place simultaneously and so many actors involved that, as is the case nearly always in social change, attribution becomes impossible. Other processes may include international pressure, changes in government, political and judicial activism and so on. The most that can be done is to be able to demonstrate that FORUM-ASIA has contributed to a change. Another factor which makes it difficult to attribute the occurrence of an event to a single actor such as FORUM-ASIA is that when working on attitude and behavioural change it is a process that takes time. Influencing the acts of governments demands years and years of persistent advocacy. In the end it will usually be a chain of events that led up to a specific change. And that chain of events is most likely built by the contribution of a number of actors, sort of like ‘constant dripping wearing away a stone’.

FORUM-ASIA’s annual reports have progressively improved over the years in terms of reporting on results. There is space for more improvement. When a result is achieved or a positive change in terms of human rights takes place, FORUM-ASIA’s reporting can be stronger in displaying the link between its efforts and the results achieved. As an example, in its 2013 progress report, the organisation reports that on the arrest of a human rights activist in Bangladesh, it issued a press statement, set up an online petition which it then handed over the Bangladesh authorities and conducted an advocacy mission which held bilateral meetings with government officials and CSOs. A post-mission statement was also issued by FORUM-ASIA. Subsequent to that, the activist was released. In this case, documentation of the opinions and quotes of the parties involved, and the responses and comments of the Bangladeshi government to the petition and in the meetings with the advocacy mission would have

strengthened FORUM-ASIA's claim that its efforts contributed to the activist's release.

Nonetheless, it is clear that FORUM-ASIA is having an impact. As one interviewee from an international human rights organisation noted, "the region would have been worse off in terms of human rights and democracy had FORUM-ASIA not existed". More obvious examples of FORUM-ASIA's impact include the February 2014 visit of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of assembly and association it arranged to Cambodia. The visit followed a crackdown by the government on demonstrations by garment workers and five deaths. Three weeks after his visit, the government lifted the blanket ban on assemblies. In Mongolia, a law protecting human rights defenders is expected soon following the urging of the Human Rights Council. The HRC in turn was influenced by the statements of FORUM-ASIA members during the FORUM-ASIA facilitated visits to Council sessions in Geneva. Proving the direct link of FORUM-ASIA's attribution to the government action is of course not possible. However, FORUM-ASIA seems to have contributed to the extent possible by the organisation by bringing international awareness to bear on the issues and putting pressure on the Mongolian government.

During the period of the evaluation, the UN Human Rights Council has passed several important resolutions, for example one recently on the lack of government responsibility in Sri Lanka and the call for the Sri Lankan government to respond to the atrocities and war crimes committed during the conflict. The situation in Myanmar has also received a lot of attention and several resolutions calling on the government to respond to the violations of human rights have been passed over the last four years. FORUM-ASIA has actively focused on both cases, conducting extensive advocacy on the issues and brought forward member organisations from each country to present voices and transmit experiences from the ground to the international level. In Geneva, many well established international NGOs and mission representatives pointed to the fact of FORUM-ASIA's active advocacy efforts as a direct contribution to the outcomes of the resolutions. Its work has proven to have an impact in terms of influencing states, providing them with trustworthy information and advocating for them to take a stand for the resolution.

3.5 SUSTAINABILITY

Financial sustainability: Currently, for funding, FORUM-ASIA is relying upon two donors for support: Ford Foundation and Sida. Ford Foundation has committed USD 1 million for a period of two years. Sida's funding is SEK 34 million (just under USD 4 million) over a period of 5 ½ years. The attempts to broaden its donor base so far have been limited. A European Union Grant is expected to be approved shortly for a project implemented by a consortium including FORUM-ASIA on human rights defenders. The organisation intends to field a scoping mission to East Asia in the near

future to look at possible donors. A documented strategy though is still lacking regarding how FORUM-ASIA expects to attract more donor funding.

Technical sustainability: The retention of technical capacity within the organisation may be hampered in the future due to the attractiveness of higher salaries and better career prospects in INGOs, and UN agencies - even though salaries are currently competitive compared to other national or regional CSOs. Staff spoken to are satisfied with current salaries. However, there has been high turnover in the organisation. Only a couple of current staff members were with the organisation before 2010. Most of the current staff joined in 2012 or later. The provision of a more satisfying working environment would contribute towards a reduction in staff turnover.

4 Conclusions

- The organisation is currently facing internal challenges that are as result of misunderstandings between the Executive Committee and Secretariat staff as well as the inability of the SMT to effectively manage. This is the most serious threat the organisation faces and the challenge for the Executive Committee is to be able to guide and advise, and at the same time to listen and allay the concerns of the staff. The current state of affairs is leading to lethargy within the Secretariat. Key to resolving this issue is also the capacity of the SMT to be able to manage and lead.
- On the positive side, FORUM-ASIA is highly praised for the outputs and results it has achieved so far: its publications, trainings, support to NGOs/CSOs, approach to Geneva based HR mechanisms, networking and visibility. The effectiveness with which it conveys messages from the grassroots in the region to the highest international human rights organ is especially appreciated. However, it also needs to adapt and to start using more relevant advocacy tools alongside the traditional ones it is making use of. Through its members, it has the potential to build more support for its advocacy campaigns than it is currently doing.
- In terms of systems development, there has been good progress over the last 2-3 years in FORUM-ASIA in developing its financial and administrative systems. Rules and regulations have been codified, developed and improved though further work needs to be done. New staff has been inducted into the departments concerned as well as in the planning & monitoring, and information, communication and publication departments. This has improved organisational efficiency.
- The Geneva and Jakarta offices are worth the cost incurred given that it is small compared to the benefits that can be yielded of having physical presence in the two cities. The presence of the Geneva office is extremely important given that it plays a key role in assisting Asian human rights defenders (HRDs) and NGOs to gain access to the UN HR mechanisms, and the year round advocacy work it engages in. It is restrained because of lack of additional manpower. The Jakarta office's potential may be better realised if the responsiveness from AICHR and ACWC improves.
- Until now, gender mainstreaming has remained confined to the documents and there has been scant attention paid to it. The Sida-funded evaluation in 2014 has catalysed the organisation to develop an Action Plan which if implemented should make significant improvements to gender mainstreaming.

- FORUM-ASIA's engagement with the media is poor. Its press statements and releases lack the ability to attract attention and little enthusiasm is shown by journalists to attend its press briefings. They do not view FORUM-ASIA as the authoritative commentator on human rights developments. One major reason for this is because FORUM-ASIA has failed to cultivate relationships with them either in Bangkok, or in other countries through its members.
- FORUM-ASIA's relationship with AICHR is not a harmonious one. FORUM-ASIA has been critical of AICHR's lack of effectiveness, which has contributed to alienating AICHR. This is unfortunate as many saw FORUM-ASIA as the only body which had pan-ASEAN presence and grassroots support to engage with AICHR. The relationship with ACWC however has been better but has not resulted in any substantive engagement so far.
- FORUM-ASIA's membership varies between very active to inactive members. The membership of FORUM-ASIA needs to show greater commitment to the effectiveness and sustainability of the organisation. Till now, conditions for becoming a member or for losing membership have been rather lax; this has resulted in some members not actively contributing to FORUM-ASIA's goals and so a period of consolidation should be able to filter out dormant members to make the network more effective and resilient.

5 Key Recommendations

While a number of suggestions have been made throughout the report, the key recommendations which the evaluation urges FORUM-ASIA to focus upon are given here:

Management Issues

1. (a) A review of the structures, mandates and functions of the organisation needs to be undertaken. (b) The Terms of Reference of and division of responsibilities between the General Assembly, Executive Committee and Senior Management Team have to be made clearer. (c) The documents (ToRs, statutes, by-laws, strategic plans) should also outline how communication will be undertaken between all three entities, and also with the Secretariat staff. (d) The services of an experienced management/organisational development specialist/facilitator should be contracted to support this process.
2. The division of responsibilities amongst the three-member Senior Management Team needs to be finalised on a priority basis, and their engagement with the programmes needs to be clarified in consultation with programmes.
3. (a) FORUM-ASIA's Senior Management Team should keep Sida updated through meetings on a quarterly basis about the steps being undertaken to improve the working environment, clarity of roles and communication between the organisation's various tiers. (b) During its thrice-yearly meetings, the Executive Committee should arrange regular meetings with the Sida office in Bangkok to keep it abreast of strategic developments of the organisation, to relay its concerns and strengthen cooperation.⁸
4. The management abilities of the SMT urgently need considerable improvement. It is up to the Executive Committee to decide how this should be done. No specific recommendations on this will be provided in this report.
5. (a) Regular informal management meetings, involving senior and programme management, should be held on a weekly basis. These meetings should serve to discuss any issues which need to be addressed, to give feedback on the activities undertaken in the previous week and to outline the forthcoming week's workplan of both the senior and programme management. (b) These meetings should provide an opportunity to convey any message from and to the Executive Committee. (c) In addition, monthly or quarterly meetings with minutes

⁸ The EC notes that that there is such a practice already.

should continue to be conducted regularly and involve all staff.

6. Members of the Executive Committee should play an observer role during FORUM-ASIA's annual review and planning meetings.

Communication and Advocacy

7. (a) Relationships with the media should be significantly enhanced. (b) Support in this regard should be sought from FORUM-ASIA's international partners based in Bangkok such as OHCHR and HRW. (c) FORUM-ASIA should utilise the existing relationships of its members with national media. (d) The presentation of press releases should be improved and (e) press releases and statements should be translated into local languages where needed.
8. (a) Along with the traditional advocacy FORUM-ASIA undertakes, it should increase its use of social advocacy. The use of social media and other campaigns should continue to increase and be in a sustained manner. (b) Members and their networks, and the youth should be better co-opted to galvanise support.
9. The Geneva office needs to be strengthened through the deployment of at least one additional staff member to support the Programme Manager in research, UN advocacy work and media work.

Relationship with AICHR

10. FORUM-ASIA needs to develop a strategy on how it will engage with AICHR. This strategy needs to be developed in consultation with its Southeast Asian members.

Gender Mainstreaming

11. The strategies and recommendations proposed by FORUM-ASIA in its February 2015 Action Plan on Gender Mainstreaming should be implemented in earnest. This issue affects the whole organisation and thus should be spearheaded by the Executive Director/SMT.

Priority Themes

12. (a) Human Rights Defenders and Freedom of Expression, Assembly and Association continue to remain of relevance. They should continue to be focussed upon and this focus should be validated in the next General Assembly. (b) FORUM-ASIA should focus on those pressing issues like torture, extrajudicial killings, disappearances, and economic, social and cultural rights which can be addressed through the Human Rights Defenders and Freedom of Expression, Assembly and Association programme priorities. (c) FORUM-ASIA should, when the situation arises, ally with existing networks working on issues like torture, extrajudicial killings, disappearances, and economic, social

and cultural rights.

Effective Membership

13. (a) A process of membership consolidation should be undertaken to enhance the effectiveness of the network. (b) Conditions for becoming and being retained as members should become more stringent. (c) While dormant/passive members should be dropped, invitations to and applications of potentially strong and effective contributors to the network should be extended and accepted.⁹ (d) This process should be completed in time that the General Assembly can approve the consolidated membership by early 2016.
14. (a) There should be greater consultation of members on FORUM-ASIA strategy, programmes and emerging challenges whenever the opportunity arises such as at the biennial Regional Human Rights Defenders Forum or the ASEAN People's Forum (otherwise known as ASEAN Civil Society Conference (ACSC)). (b) The recently established intranet should be employed as a key means of communication. (c) Online mid-term reviews, in between two consecutive General Assembly sessions, and the continuation of meetings with members in sub-regional groupings are recommended.

Monitoring and Evaluation

15. A meta-logical framework for the FORUM-ASIA organisation as a whole should be developed building upon the logical frameworks of the individual departments. This would assist in the articulation of a theory of change that FORUM-ASIA aims to contribute to. FORUM-ASIA should consider an external consultant to be hired to facilitate this exercise. The exercise should also act as an opportunity to refresh staff's understanding of results-based monitoring and of the logical framework.

⁹ It is noted that the process has already begun.

Annex 1: Terms of Reference

1. Background and Context

FORUM-ASIA was founded in 1991 with the mission to promote and protect all human rights, including the right to development, through collaboration and cooperation among human rights organizations and defenders in Asia. It is a membership-based non-governmental organization with 47 members from 16 countries in Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Registered in Geneva as an international non-governmental organization, the main office (Secretariat) of FORUM-ASIA is based in Bangkok. But, it also operates an international office in Geneva and an ASEAN Advocacy office in Jakarta.

The main office or Secretariat is responsible for overall project implementation, including regular follow-up for quality control, monitoring and evaluation. The Jakarta office works at the ASEAN level focusing on standard setting and institution building of the ASEAN human rights systems, while the Geneva office monitors and follows up on Asian human rights issues and links them to global debates on human rights, and monitors developments at the international level and feeds FORUM-ASIA members and other concerned emerging trends and priorities at the global level.

FORUM-ASIA's vision is to build a peaceful, just, equitable and ecologically sustainable community of peoples and societies in Asia, where all human rights of all are fully respected and realized in accordance with internationally accepted human rights norms and standards. The overall organizational objective is to “strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights and democracy in Asia and beyond by consolidating Asian human rights movements through effective collaboration with members and partners on international solidarity action as well as engagement with states and other stakeholders at national, regional and international levels.”

Since about mid-1990s, SIDA has been supporting FORUM-ASIA to achieve its mission and objective in various ways. Until the end of 2007, SIDA supported in a project-based mode. Since January 2008, it has been providing core institutional grant support. The first phase of the core grant covered the period from 1 January 2008 to 31 December 2010. The second phase began on 1 June 2011 and will conclude on 31 December 2016. The second phase was designed in the light of the findings and recommendations of the external evaluation of the first-phase core grant.

Ford Foundation has been another core donor of FORUM-ASIA since 1 October 2012 providing support through its window of “Grant Award for Investing in a

New Era of Global Human Rights Leadership.” Among the focus areas of the partnership are strengthening advocacy capacity of human rights organizations and defenders in Asia in engaging with intergovernmental decision-making platforms at the global level, particularly the UN, OIC, NAM and the Commonwealth; enhancing independence and effectiveness of regional intergovernmental bodies, particularly ASEAN and SAARC, in addressing the issues of human rights promotion and protection; initiating the formulation of international human rights policies by Asian States; and enhancing financial integrity and sustainability of FORUM-ASIA. The partnership with Ford Foundation will come to an end in December 2014. In January 2015, a second phase is expected to begin for another two years.

In addition to the two core donors, Freedom House has been supporting FORUM-ASIA, since 17 November 2011, through its “Lifeline: Embattled CSOs Assistance Fund” on a project-based mode. Under this Grant, FORUM-ASIA works as part of an International Consortium of NGOs comprising seven international organizations¹⁰ to assist embattled NGOs to withstand attacks on civil society organizations and human rights defenders domestically, regionally, and internationally, and raise awareness about harassment and repression. Similarly, the Foundation Open Society Institute (FOSI) has supported the implementation of the "ASEAN Human Rights Advocacy Project" aimed at strengthening human rights monitoring and advocacy capacity of civil society in Burma and Laos and enhancing independence, transparency, and accountability of the ASEAN human rights mechanisms.

The American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative also supported FORUM-ASIA to implement the "ASEAN Advocacy Project" to achieve three main objectives: make lawyers and civil society aware of ASEAN and its human rights system; strengthen the participation and engagement of these actors with the ASEAN human rights system; and virtually connect networks of lawyers and civil society leaders. The project ran between 1 April 2012 and 30 June 2014.

The Terms of Reference (ToR) is to guide the evaluation of the performance and achievements of FORUM-ASIA with reference to the above projects. The SIDA-supported “Institutional Three-Year Core Grant Proposal for 2011-2013,” which has been extended till December 2016, will be used as the main reference document as it covers all areas of FORUM-ASIA programmes and activities, and provides an anchor for other projects, which basically build around the issues included in the Grant Proposal to add to their focus and outreach.

¹⁰ These organisations are: Freedom House, CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, Front Line: Protection of Human Rights Defenders, the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, People in Need, FORUM-ASIA, and the Swedish International Liberal Centre

2. Objective of Evaluation

The broad objective of the evaluation is to assess FORUM-ASIA's performance and achievements against the objectives of the projects discussed above, and also to summarize results against the results framework¹¹ and strategic plan. Critical analysis of factors and reasons behind over or under-performance and deviations, if any, and recommending what concrete measures FORUM-ASIA should initiate to address the underlying issues and concerns are also part of the broad objective.

3. Scope of Work

The scope of work will have two dimensions. The first dimension involves the assessment of outcomes/results. The second involves the performance review of Geneva and Jakarta offices.

3.1 Assessment of Outcome/Results

The main focus of the evaluation will be on the extent of the achievement of results vis-à-vis the following five result-areas of FORUM-ASIA against corresponding "Expected Outcomes" and indicators as discussed in the LFA. Please see Annex 1 for the LFA.

Result-Areas ¹²	Corresponding Outcomes ¹³
Advocacy (for policy change)	▪ Increased respect and protection of freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and freedom of association ▪ Improved democratic institutions and processes by governments with civil society participation ▪ Positive behaviours and changes of Asian States in fulfilling their human rights obligations ▪ CSO advocacy in engaging with ASEAN and its human rights mechanism is strengthened
Building-capacity	▪ Asian NGOs and defenders are capacitated with expertise to articulate, represent and defend human rights situation of their countries at the UN human rights mechanism in a sustainable manner ▪ Enhanced capacity of HRDs in effective campaigns and advocacy on different human rights issues at national, regional and international level ▪ Vigilant and sustainable pool of human rights trainers as well as comprehensive training manuals, modules and resources widely used by Asian HRDs to continue to educate people on their

¹¹ Please note that the results framework (LFA) is being reviewed to make it more measurable and result-oriented, and the process is expected to be complete within December.

¹² These result-areas are identified as "intervention strategies" in the Agreement

¹³ For Outcome Indicators, please see Annex 1 of the ToR.

	rights in Asia
Coalition-building	▪ Increase of members in countries where FORUM-ASIA is not represented or under-represented ▪ Wider participation and engagement of civil society in the work of the AICHR and ACWC ▪ National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and their regional and international groupings address issues of HRDs and WHRDs
Documentation and Research	▪ Issues and concerns of HRDs and WHRDs, including sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) defenders, in Asia researched, documented and compiled, and efforts made to address those issues at the national, regional and international levels ▪ Human rights performance of Asian governments, national human rights institutions and other actors concerned researched, analysed, published and disseminated for knowledge enhancement and policy advocacy
Enhancement of organization	▪ Increased efficiency and effectiveness of organizational management through developing, updating and implementing the system

3.1.1 Suggested Research Questions

The assessment of results stated in para 3.1 above can involve the following research questions:

- What are the main (verifiable) results that have been achieved in each of the result-areas over the years? What larger policy, behavioral or structural changes (impacts) have these results brought about?
- What are key areas that require improvement? And, what should be done to improve? Change in organizational strategies and division of responsibilities? Reprioritization of activities? Revisit of project logic and design?
- Has the programme (its implementation) produced any unintended consequences? How will they impact positively or negatively the overall objective and rationale of the programme?
- Have there been any deviations? What might have caused the deviation and how that should be corrected?
- To what extent have FORUM-ASIA members been involved in the planning and implementation of FORUM-ASIA programmes? Has FORUM-ASIA been any help to them? Do they have any evidentiary proof of benefit? Do they have specific suggestions as to how FORUM-ASIA can be more effective to their work?
- To what extent are FORUM-ASIA programmes based on the 5-Year Strategic Plan?
- How does FORUM-ASIA feature in term of efficiency and effectiveness in general?

3.2 Review of Performance of Geneva and Jakarta Office

The rationale behind the operation of the Geneva and Jakarta offices is to enhance

FORUM-ASIA's reach and influence in its policy advocacy vis-à-vis the performance of Asian states both at regional and global levels. The Jakarta office works at the ASEAN level through its human rights mechanisms. The international office in Geneva works to strengthen and represent advocacy and lobbying on Asian human rights issues at the global level through the United Nations mechanism, specially the Human Rights Council, in coordination with various departments in the Secretariat internally and with members and partners externally. The international office also fosters South-South solidarity, working closely with Latin American and African coalitions of social movements and NGOs, in order to amplify cross-regional voices in the international forum and mobilize international pressure on Asian states to live up to their human rights obligations and to democratize their workings. On this backdrop, the performance review will help SIDA and FORUM-ASIA with feedback as to how best the offices have been delivering in line with the rationale and what additional efforts, if any, should be made to enhance the performance.

3.2.1 Suggested Research Questions

Following questions can be useful to probe into the review of performance.

- How do beneficiaries (FORUM-ASIA members and partners) feel about the role played and services offered by these offices, including the secretariat? Do they expect anything different? Anything more or less?
- How do these offices feature in the assessment of solidarity networks and collaborating partners, such as AICHR, other regional networks and Human Rights Council?
- What should FORUM-ASIA do to enhance the role and services of these offices, including the secretariat?
- In what way have these offices added value and input to the work of the secretariat? Have they contributed to cost-effectiveness of overall performance of FORUM-ASIA?

4. Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation will be a participatory exercise, with external consultants and FORUM-ASIA members and staff working closely on the continuum of the evaluation process starting from data collection. While the analysis of data and presentation of findings will be done independently by the consultants, FORUM-ASIA staff and members will have an opportunity to explain the context or condition related to the data.

4.1 Data Collection

The consultants will collect data in line with the evaluation framework they would develop through a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods.

4.1.1 Secondary Sources of Information (Background Documents)

The consultants will collect secondary information from the following documents:

1. Three Year Grant Proposal, including LFA
2. Annual and Semi Annual Progress Reports (submitted by FA)
3. Minutes of Mid-term and Annual Review Meetings
4. Report of External Evaluation of Previous Grant Support (“Outcome-Based Evaluation through Participatory Process of FORUM-ASIA’s Results” 2010)
5. Evaluation Report on HRDs Programme of FORUM-ASIA, 2009
6. Annual Report 2013-2014 of FA
7. FA’s results framework and strategic plan
8. Provisional Programme, Agenda and Reports for 7th General Assembly (Nov 2012)
9. Minutes and Decisions of 7th General Assembly
10. Organisational policies and systems

4.1.2 Primary Data

Depending on the methodology developed, primary data collection may involve a multi-method approach with semi-structured and structured interviews, stakeholder survey through a structured questionnaire, focus groups discussions, key informant interviews and non-participant observations, among others. Some of these methods may require field visits as well.

4.2 Data Analysis

In analysing data, the consultants will, in addition to the information generated through secondary sources, take into consideration perspectives of various stakeholders consulted, and triangulate findings from different methods used. They will make every effort necessary to provide a sound evidence base for the evaluation.

4.3 Consolidation of Findings

The consolidation of findings will include the following tasks:

- Preparation of a draft report based on a research framework finalised in consultation with FORUM-ASIA and SIDA and addressing each of the issues highlighted above. The report will also include a set of recommendations responding to the issues that have emerged.
- Sharing the draft report with FORUM-ASIA and SIDA for comments and feedback.
- Finalization of the report, including an executive summary, after incorporating comments and feedback received from FORUM-ASIA and SIDA.

5. Duration

The evaluation will take place during March-April 2015. The actual duration for the evaluation will be 36 working days, in accordance with proposal of evaluation – see attachment (1).

6. Deliverables

The evaluation will have process-related and output-related deliverables:

6.1 Process Deliverables

- Management of the review process, including planning for field visits and other related activities.
- Management of consultations with respondents.

6.2 Output Deliverables

- **A Mission Preparation Note (MPN)** should be prepared and submitted to FORUM-ASIA and SIDA explaining the methodology for the proposed evaluation, including operational definitions of major concepts to be used in the evaluation and an evaluation framework, list of methods to be used and instruments needed for these methods. The MPN should also include a timeline for the evaluation and a plan for field work
- **A Draft Report** containing responses to all aspects of the evaluation objective as outlined in Section 2 and the scope of work as discussed in Section 3 above
- **A Final Report** incorporating comments by FORUM-ASIA and SIDA. The final report will be limited to 30 pages, including an executive summary of around 3 pages, and excluding annexes

7. Expertise

The consultants will have an adequate understanding of human rights, governance, gender equality and social inclusion (GESI), transitional justice and accountability-impunity issues. They will also have good knowledge of human rights based approaches to advocacy campaigns and social movements linked to social transformation in general and human rights protection and promotion in particular. They are also expected to have an adequate understanding of issues pertaining to organisational development, including institutional governance, and capacity building of civil society organisations, and past experiences of involvement in similar areas of work.

Annex 2: List of persons consulted

Embassy of Sweden in Bangkok

Camilla Monsine Ottosson, First Secretary, Senior Programme Manager - Human Rights and Democracy Development Cooperation Section (Regional)

FORUM-ASIA Executive Committee

Henri Tiphagne, People's Watch, India

Adilur Rahman Khan, Odhikar, Bangladesh

Haris Azhar, The Commission for the Disappeared and Victims of Violence (KontraS), Indonesia

Chalida Tajaroensuk, People's Empowerment Foundation, Thailand

FORUM-ASIA SECRETARIAT

Senior Management Team

Evelyn Balais Serrano, Executive Director

Mukunda Kattel, Director

Sunil Pal, Director

Programme Staff

John Liu, Country (South & East Asia) Programme Manager

Pimsiri Petchnamrob, East Asia Programme Officer

Joses Kuan, NHRI Advocacy Programme Officer

Renato Mabunga, HRD Programme Manager

Saartje Baes, HRD Programme Officer

Sejin Kim, HRD Programme Associate

Ahmed Adam, UNA Programme Officer/Researcher

Betty Yolanda, PME Programme Manager

Cecile Gaa, PME Programme Officer

Lorenzo Urbinati, ICP Programme Officer

Suleeporn Permpasertsuk, Finance Manager

Wichai Prabpaln, Finance Officer

Kusuma Premchayaphak, Admin & Finance Assistant

Chutamas Wangklon, Administration Manager

Atnike Sigiyo, ASEAN Advocacy Programme Manager (Jakarta Office)

Daywin Prayogo, ASEAN Advocacy Programme Associate (Jakarta Office)

Iniyen Ilango, UN Advocacy Programme Manager (Geneva Office)

Joseph Sycip, Admin and Finance Officer (Geneva Office)

FORUM-ASIA MEMBERS

Urantsooj Gombosuren, Chairperson, **Center for Human Rights and Development (CHRD), Mongolia**

Yap Swee Seng, former Executive Director **Suara Rakyat Malaysia (SUARAM)** and **former Executive Director FORUM-ASIA**

Chris Biantoro, Deputy of Coordinator, **KontraS, Indonesia**

Arfi Bambani Amri, Secretary General, **The Alliance of Independent Journalists, Indonesia**

Julius Ibrani, Coordinator of Legal Aid, **Indonesia Legal Aid Foundation**

Ardi Manto, Researcher, **The Indonesian Human Rights Monitor Imparsial, Indonesia**

Rafendi Djamin, Executive Director, **Indonesia's NGO Coalition for International Human Rights Advocacy – Human Rights Working Group (HRWG)** and Convener of **SAPA Task-Force on ASEAN and Human Rights**

Jagat Basnet, **Community Self-reliance Centre (CSRC), Nepal**

Subodh Raj Pyakurel, Chairperson, **Informal Sector Service Centre (INSEC) Nepal** and Advisor to FORUM-ASIA Executive Committee

Balasingham Skanthakumar, former staff of **Law and Society Trust, Sri Lanka**

FORUM-ASIA PARTNERS/STAKEHOLDERS

Anselmo Lee, Co-Convener, **Asia Democracy Network (ADN)** and Convenor, **Asia Development Alliance (ADA)**

Debbie Stothard, Coordinator, **Alternative Asean Network on Burma (Altsean Burma)**

Ati Suryadi, Office Manager, **Human Rights Resource Centre Jakarta**

Michelle Staggs Kelsall, Deputy Director, **Human Rights Resource Centre Phnom Penh**

Laurent Meillan, Deputy Head, Regional Office for South-East Asia, **OHCHR**

Corrina Lopa, Regional Coordinator, **South East Asian Community for Advocacy (SEACA)**

Gayathry Wenkiteswaran, Executive Director, **Southeast Asian Press Alliance (SEAPA)**

Edgardo Legaspi, Alerts and Communications Officer, **Southeast Asian Press Alliance (SEAPA)**

Phil Robertson, Deputy Director, Asia Division, **Human Rights Watch**

Saman Zia-Zarifi, Regional Director Asia and Pacific Programme, **International Commission of Jurists**

Emerlynne Gil, International Legal Adviser for Southeast Asia, **International Commission of Jurists**

Indriaswati Dyah Saptaningrum, Executive Director, **Institute for Policy Research and Advocacy (ELSAM), Indonesia**

Zainal Abidin, Acting Executive Director, **Institute for Policy Research and Advocacy (ELSAM), Indonesia**

Kieren Fitzpatrick, Director, **Asia Pacific Forum**

Jeremie D. Smith, Director Geneva Office, **Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, Geneva**

Philip Lynch, Director, **International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)**

Sharmila Karki, President, **NGO Federation of Nepal and Jagaran Nepal for Women Rights, Peace and Governance, Nepal**

Philippe Dam, **Human Rights Watch, Geneva**

Louis N. Bickford, Program Officer, **Ford Foundation**

OTHERS

Michael George Hayes, Lecturer, Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies, **Mahidol University, Thailand**

Seree Nonthasoot, Representative of Thailand, **(ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights) AICHR**

Sriprapha Petcharamesree, former Representative of Thailand, **(ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights) AICHR**

Rafendi Djamin, Representative of Indonesia, **(ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights) AICHR**

Parinya Boonridrerthaikul, ex-Executive Director, **Amnesty International Thailand**

Vitit Muntarbhorn, Professor of law and former trainer for FORUM-ASIA,

Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok

Lily Purba, Indonesian Representative, **ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and the Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC)**

Leena Ghosh, Assistant Director, Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, Civil Society Engagements and Interaction with ASEAN Associated Entities, Community Affairs Development Directorate, **ASEAN Secretariat**

Anup Raj Sharma, Chairperson **Nepal National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)**

Tabitha Snowbarger, Political Officer/Second Secretary, **United States Permanent Mission to the United Nations**

Caka Awal, **First Secretary, Mission of Indonesia, Geneva**

William Pace, **Coalition for the International Criminal Court, CICC**

Maina Kiai, **Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association**

Jamshid Gaziyeu, Desk officer, **Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders**

Annex 3: List of documents reviewed

FORUM-ASIA

Strategies and workplans

Five-Year Strategic Framework of Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development 2014-2018

Institutional Three-year Core Grant Proposal for 2011-2013

Action Plan on Gender Mainstreaming (2015)

Action Plan on Recommendations from System Audit of FORUM-ASIA (2012)

Policies

By-Laws and Statutes of FORUM-ASIA (Adopted 2009 and Amended 2012)

Policy Guidelines on Membership & Strategic Plan for 2014-2015

Procurement Policy of Goods and Services of FORUM-ASIA (2012)

FORUM-ASIA's Gender Policy (2012)

Staff Rules and Regulation (2015)

Staff Recruitment Policy (2015)

Human Rights Internship Programme Manual (2015)

Financial Rules and Regulations (2015)

Progress Reports

Annual Progress Reports submitted to Sida for 2011, 2012, 2013

Mid-Year Progress Report submitted to Sida for Jan-Jun 2014

Summary Activity Report of the Secretariat : December 2009-November 2012 (2012)

Minutes of Meetings

50th, 52nd, 53rd, 54th, 55th, 56th and 60th Minutes and Decisions of the Meetings of the Executive Committee (various dates between 2011-2015)

Proceedings of and Decisions Adopted at the 7th General Assembly of FORUM-ASIA (2012)

Assessments/Evaluations

System-Based Audit of FORUM-ASIA by Professional Management (2012)

Risk Assessment Report on FORUM-ASIA by Mike Hayes (2015)

Outcome-Based Evaluation through Participatory Process of FORUM-ASIA's Results in January 2008 - June 2010 by Mike Hayes (2010)

Evaluation Report: HRDs Programme of FORUM-ASIA by Chris Collier (2009)

Sida

Minutes of Annual Review Meeting between Sida and FORUM-ASIA (2012, 2013, 2014)

Assisting with Gender Assessment in the contribution support to Regional Development Cooperation in Asia focusing on Southeast Asia (2014)

(ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights) AICHR

Guidelines on the AICHR's Relations with Civil Society Organisations (2015)

Terms of Reference of ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (2009)



Evaluation of FORUM-ASIA's Performance and Achievements (2011-2014)

This evaluation of FORUM-ASIA was commissioned by the Embassy of Sweden in Bangkok to assess the organisation's performance and achievements during the period 2011-2014 during which time Sida has been providing core funding and to provide recommendations. FORUM-ASIA is relevant to the needs of the region and its members. The organisation is currently facing internal challenges with regards to communication and management, but its publications are stated to be objective and well researched. The organisation is well-appreciated by nearly all its members, partners, and other stakeholders, and has been able to draw the attention of Special Rapporteurs on human rights. They are seen as a vital and indispensable partner in Geneva. The organisations has taken several steps to improve its administrative and financial systems, including its planning, monitoring and evaluation unit.

SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AGENCY

Address: S-105 25 Stockholm, Sweden. Office: Valhallavägen 199, Stockholm

Telephone: +46 (0)8-698 50 00. Telefax: +46 (0)8-20 88 64

E-mail: info@sida.se. Homepage: <http://www.sida.se>

