

Approaches to Human Rights in Southeast Asia

2 Introduction: Opening Remarks

Rudi Jeung

The Asia Foundation

3 Cambodia

Kek Galabru

*Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of
Human Rights (LICADHO)*

7 Thailand

Pusadee Tamthai

Women in Politics Institute

11 Indonesia

Rizal Sukma

Centre for Strategic and International Studies

15 Human Rights Organizations in Indonesia

Tessa Piper

The Asia Foundation

19 Questions and Comments

27 Seminar Participants

Introduction

Asian Perspectives: Approaches to Human Rights in Southeast Asia is part of an ongoing series of seminars sponsored by The Asia Foundation. Convening on September 21, 1999, at the Helen Dwight Reid Educational Foundation in Washington, DC., the seminar provides an overview on the human rights situation in Cambodia, Thailand, and Indonesia.

Opening Remarks by Rudi Jeung, Assistant Director, The Asia Foundation, Washington, DC.

Cambodia, Thailand, and Indonesia represent three Southeast Asian countries that are each at a very different stage of political development. Especially on the human rights front, each faces a separate set of challenges. At the same time, significant government and/or nongovernmental efforts are underway to address human rights problems at the ground level in each of these countries.

Thailand, for example, is in the midst of a political reform process that could have far-reaching implications for human rights in the region. In this regard, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) continue to play a very critical role in pushing forward the reform process.

In Indonesia, the focus of late has been on East Timor. While that is understandable, it should be remembered that a growing political openness over the last couple of years is

allowing the media and NGOs, including human rights groups, more freedom to operate. On the government side, Indonesia's National Human Rights Commission also is proving to be fairly outspoken and active.

In the case of Cambodia, progress will continue to proceed step by step, dictated in large part by historical and political factors. On the bright side, the civil sector and a number of NGOs in particular, have managed to develop a deep commitment to human rights over the last four to five years. This commitment is a critical factor in moving Cambodia forward on the human rights front.

The Asia Foundation supports government and/or nongovernmental efforts in each of these countries in the areas of human rights investigation and monitoring, education, research, and advocacy. The Foundation also provides technical assistance, frequently drawing upon regional resources to strengthen capacity to effectively conduct activities.

While much is said in Washington, D.C. about the human rights problems in each of these countries, too little is said about what really is occurring on-the-ground to address these concerns. That is why I am pleased to present our panel, all human rights advocates and observers who will update us on the human rights situation in each of their countries.

Cambodia

by **Kek Galabru**

I will begin with some background on Cambodia, followed by an analysis of the human rights situation in my country.

Until a few months ago, Cambodia faced civil war despite the peace agreement that was signed in 1991 in Paris. Under the terms of that agreement, the United Nations agreed to help organize my country's first general election in 1993.

The first coalition government that came about as a result of that election did not work out. In fact, it ended in a coup in July 1997. A year later, the Cambodian people again tried to put their hopes in a secret ballot conducted with international observation. When none of the parties on the July 1998 ballot collected the requisite two-thirds vote, Cambodia's second coalition government was formed. This meant that the country's two main political parties, the Royalist or Funcinpec Party and the Cambodia Peoples Party (CPP) shared power.

Our Constitution has been in place since September 1993. It provides for a constitutional kingdom and a king who reigns but does not govern. There is also provision for the separation of the three powers, the executive, legislative, and judiciary. The Constitution also states that Cambodia will adhere to international covenants. There is no difficulty with the Constitution being in place. Instead, the difficulty lies with the government's lack of respect for the letter and spirit of the Constitution. Let me start with the positive aspects of this set of circumstances.

Since 1993, the Constitution has provided an umbrella

English, one that is French, and a few that are Chinese-owned. As is the case with our Constitution, the fact they exist does not mean the situation is without difficulties.

For example, most local journalists do not respect the code of ethics and demonstrate too little professionalism and independence from government and politics. In fact, most are affiliated with a political party. They also operate under a 'press law' that restricts media freedom. As a consequence, journalists have been killed. Others have been arrested, and some are in hiding. So far, no perpetrator of these crimes has been brought to trial.

As far as NGOs are concerned, there are more than 400 registered with the Ministry of Interior. While most have political affiliations, some, like LICADHO, are independent human rights NGOs. That said, we still do not operate without fear of danger. Recently, two people from LICADHO were arrested and detained for more than one month. An activist affiliated with a human rights organization (ADHOC) was killed, and that perpetrator also has not been brought to trial.

There is intimidation. For example, local authorities stood in our way a year ago when we tried to collect materials to be used in the trial of the Khmer Rouge. Authorities in six local provinces refused to allow human rights workers to come and see people for this purpose. So, it still is dangerous to work in Cambodia — but we can work. The message is quite clear. Human rights workers

Clearly, progress is also dependent on the government's ability and willingness to cope with changes. But herein lies the first challenge for democracy and human rights in Cambodia. The government still is able to act with impunity when it comes to exonerating those who are implicated in human rights abuses. LICADHO has completed an entire report on this subject, which is available to anyone interested.

There are numerous points in the criminal justice process where official action can undermine and then utterly destroy even the possibility of bringing a perpetrator of human rights crimes to trial. This is especially true when that perpetrator belongs to or is a member of the police or the military and/or has connections to a powerful individual in government or the private sector.

To effectively address this challenge, the government should lend its support for human rights monitoring and deal with cases that concern the military, police, judiciary, and legal reform. When it comes to human rights monitoring, Cambodia now has two commissions and a committee. The two commissions belong to the National Assembly and to the Senate, respectively. The committee is part of the government, and only the chairman of the commission on the Senate side is committed to the protection of human rights. The other two provoke deep concerns.

Lately, discussion has raised the possibility of a national institution that would address human rights. But the prospects for such a body being independent of the government's actions and wishes is very doubtful, particularly because the court system and the legal system have been slow to develop in Cambodia. Altogether, this leads me to think that Cambodia is not yet ready to embark

actors and perhaps, as a consequence, face a range of problems, including corruption, political bias, delay, and a general inability to resist pressure from the government, the police, and the military. The fact they have been very slow to cultivate independence underscores the fact that still missing is a real attempt at major reform.

Another illustration that a culture of impunity exists in Cambodia is the fact that police and prosecutors sometimes will refuse to prosecute or even investigate a case presumably out of fear of retaliation. Criminal procedures, which are set out as laws, are rarely compiled with. Arrests are made without warrants, and arbitrary arrests are frequent. People are tortured. Police decline to intervene when citizens capture and lynch a suspected criminal.

Evidence of this latter problem is a recent rash of killings. We suspect the public takes its authority from the Ministry of Interior and their authorization of neighborhood watch groups. People in the watch groups are allowed to carry a stick or other instrument and, in effect, act as a lynch mob. This is not something human rights workers appreciate witnessing in Phnom Penh or in the provinces, I assure you.

In prison, an estimated 30 percent of prisoners are tortured until they make a confession. The courts also permit these confessions as evidence.

From our perspective, the government needs to reformulate the Supreme Council Ministry and empower it as a neutral body that can address these issues. Specifically, the supreme Council of Magistracy should appoint the judge and prosecutor and extend to them the right to take disciplinary action. Likewise, steps should be taken to ensure the judges' safety, including from police and/or military

Corruption is another challenge. Corruption in Cambodia is endemic and as such becomes one of the most, if not the most important obstacle to the country's development. Money is not efficiently and rationally allocated. We are lacking transparency and accountability at all levels of government.

Corruption is also the means by which rich people escape the law and, in the process, subvert the basic democratic principle of equality in the eyes of the law. Here, people can be divided into two groups, the lower-level government agent who does not earn enough salary, and the high-ranking official who plays on a larger field especially for business commissions.

Still another challenge is how to control the army and police, both of whom have been known to operate without restraint. We have recorded the names of some 200 people who were killed arbitrarily or executed by the police and the military over a 20-month period. So far, one has been brought to justice for this. This fact alone helps perpetuate the feeling that Cambodia's police and army are somehow above the law.

For their part, there is no academy where they can go for police training. The implication for the long term is that Cambodia is not developing a professional law enforcement body. Police and the army are also feared because of their unscrupulous behavior. For example, we have uncovered a number of secret places where the army and police detain

Corruption in Cambodia is endemic and as such becomes one of the most, if not the most important obstacle to the country's development.

The prison situation has continued to worsen. Despite an assistance program organized by Australia on behalf of Cambodian criminal justice, there are many cases that allege arbitrary executions in prison. Over and over, people who manage to escape are recaptured, tortured, and then executed. There are many, many more examples. This is in part why we feel it would be very good for the government to set up a neutral police force and military, and then hold

officers of both accountable for crimes they commit in the course of doing their job in order to reduce the incidents of violence.

The existence of the rule of law is another challenge. A penal code and criminal procedure are in the works, but there is a lack of political will to see it through. Without this, the judiciary clearly cannot function properly. In the meantime, the government gives lip service to the creation of the

rule of law but their actions do not follow.

There also is no mechanism by which government and political institutions can be monitored effectively. This role should be assumed by the National Commission on Human Rights, and we hope that in the future, Cambodia will have such a commission.

Turning to the subject of NGOs that are concerned with human rights, LICADHO has had five programs underway since 1992. It was in 1992 that we started working with the United Nations to monitor the elections. A year later, we were able to branch out into five programs. The first

This program also disseminates information about human rights at the provincial, communal, and village levels.

The second program involves monitoring situations where human rights might be at risk, and then doing advocacy work. For example, when we receive a complaint, we try to collect all the information we can and then solve the problem at the provincial or village level. If we do not succeed, we send the case to the courts. Our third program is concerned with children's issues as they relate to children's rights. We monitor situations where crimes against children are suspected. We also hold children's rights seminars and courses.

The fourth program focuses on issues that are related to women's rights. There are many problems in this arena, as is also true in Thailand. Meanwhile, our fifth program involves providing medical assistance to prisoners as well as to guards in five prisons. We also provide assistance to victims of human rights violations. By way of illustration, we received complaints about human rights violations on behalf of some 200 to 300 victims after the coup and following the post-election demonstrations of 1998.

In conclusion, it can be said that Cambodia is passing through a very critical point on the path to democracy. Some real progress has been made, but the progress that has been achieved is still uncertain. Lately, human rights violations

are reported only by members of the opposition party and a few people who are associated with the press and NGOs.

For example, members of the opposition party are still being subjected to death threats and other forms of intimidation. In most instances, power holds more weight than the rule of law.

Likewise, the few democratic steps that have been taken seem to be unsure. As a result, a slide backward cannot be safely excluded — in the form of a coup, a crackdown on a demonstration, arbitrary arrests, and/or political activism. In such a context, strong support from the national and international communities would be needed to help Cambodia have another chance to cope with its challenges.

This support could be two-fold. First, international financial aid could be linked to making progress in democratic foundation building. Progress could be followed at the international donors' meeting. This would be good. There now are five subcommittees, but we would advocate another working group. A working group dealing with human rights, democracy, and the rule of law could be set up with subcommittee status.

The second aspect involves support for NGOs whose representatives, in turn, can pressure the government and promote human rights and democracy in Cambodia.

Thailand

by **Pusadee Tamthai**

The fact that little is said about human rights problems in Thailand does not mean that we are without concerns. We do have problems, perhaps not as severe as occurs elsewhere in the world, but we do have problems. That said, the overall situation with regard to human rights is quite good.

Our Constitution, promulgated in October 1997, sets forth the basic rules that form the framework for good governance. These rules call for transparent, efficient, and participatory management of operations on the part of both government and the private sector. They also provide for the recognition and protection of human dignity, rights, and liberties for individuals as well as communities. Protection of equality and justice likewise is promoted.

The Constitution also provides for mechanisms that are designed to protect these basic human rights. These include the Constitutional Court and administrative courts, Ombudsman, and the Human Rights Commission. All of these are in addition to the Court of Justice that already was in existence at the time the Constitution was written. Again that is part of the society's basic framework.

Still, we have some problems in the area of human rights. First of all, violence against women is a problem in Thailand, as it is in many countries. Women's rights are violated in legal terms as well as practically speaking. A wife does not have the right to file for divorce citing adultery as grounds, but a husband does. Nor does a woman have

welfare of women in Thailand. That said, many of the problems regarding women are attitudinal, stemming from the culture, tradition, and beliefs. This can cause an array of problems, particularly if they are reflected in the laws and regulations of the land.

The economic crisis of the last two years has also resulted in women being laid off work. When they returned to their villages, they were barred from the good jobs and, in effect, forced to take home-based work. They are not protected by our labor laws. While women are paid less than men are, prostitution and trafficking seem to be on the increase as a result of the economic crisis.

Within government, a glass ceiling still exists. And there is no equal opportunity for women to participate in politics or the economic sectors. The care of children's human rights and their protection from violence also poses a problem. While official statistics suggest that fewer children are being abandoned, runaway children still roam the streets, live under bridges, and try to enter the work force illegally. Some get involved in drug trafficking, both unwillingly and willingly.

Another concern is illegal and legal workers from outside Thailand. Their numbers are increasing, presumably because the economy is bad in neighboring countries and because people want to migrate to Thailand for work. Some come legally; others illegally. Today we have about 600,000 Burmese living in Thailand. Meanwhile, others come from

labor laws, violence at the hands of the police, and in the case of women and children, sexual harassment, and abuse. This is a big problem that the state is trying hard to deal with, but it is getting increasingly difficult.

Another human rights issue concerns ethnic minorities. In my opinion, this is the most difficult of the human rights challenges in my country. There are so many ethnic groups in Thai society, including the tribes of hill people. Many have lived in the country for years and years and still have not received citizenship. Because they are labeled as outsiders, it makes it that much more difficult for them to get citizenship or to get proper identification, which is necessary to apply successfully for work anywhere.

Only an estimated 20 percent or one million tribal people have citizenship. They represent a national security risk as far as the government is concerned. They are seen as trafficking in drugs and destroying the forests. Their human rights are often at risk because of the way government officials treat them. One illustration of this is their forced relocation from the highlands, where they have lived for so long, in harmony with the forest.

Many are promised shelter and land to cultivate, but when they return to the hills to pick what they have grown, they find everything has been burned down. They also find it difficult, if not impossible, to find work when they move to the lowland. Most of them face circumstances that are

increasingly is drawing attention from outside the government. In fact, there are some groups that are trying to raise the government's awareness about this.

This issue could become part of the next election campaign. I say that based on what happened to and number of academicians who, while in Europe, spoke about the problem with minorities in Thailand. When they returned, a governor in the northern part of the country,

where a number of hill tribes live, caused a stir by labeling them all as traitors. The issue is also being fueled by the media.

While these are some of the problems we face, overall I would give Thailand a B-minus, having improved from a C-plus in the area of human rights. This improvement reflects the efforts by a variety of sectors to create a human rights culture in Thailand. This collective effort by a number of nongovernmental organizations

(NGOs), including women's organizations, pro-democracy groups, and human rights organizations, influenced the decisions to include protection of individual and community rights, and a provision for the establishment of a National Human Rights Commission in the 1997 Constitution. They relied on radio programs, newspapers, seminars, and workshops to do their advocacy work. They also worked intensively, lobbying, debating, and generally sharing their human rights concepts and experiences with members of the Constitutional Drafting Assembly.

Another human rights issue concerns ethnic minorities. In my opinion, this is the most difficult of the human rights challenges in my country.

work in April 1998 and was comprised of representatives from both the public and private sectors, including 10 NGO representatives. In an effort to make the drafting process highly consultative, the 35-member House Vetting committee conducted public hearings in all regions of the country. Additional public hearings were held in various provinces during the review process.

This meant the public had a lot of input in the legislative process. In late August 1998, the House passed the bill, and the Senate Vetting Committee now has it under review.

My experience as a member of both the House and Senate Vetting Committees was interesting. First of all, several of us convinced the political parties to nominate a few in the NGO community to participate in the House Vetting Committee. We felt strongly that we should take a part in this, and to our surprise, they appointed quite a number of NGO workers.

That said, I learned a great deal during the review process. At the time, I believed the human rights concept was so basic that everyone would understand it. But I discovered that especially parliamentarians and those who are in power tend to resist the concept. Indeed, many saw the concept that originated in the West and therefore not applicable to Thailand.

This came as quite a surprise. That is why it took me some time to debate and exchange views about what human rights means. It also meant that we had to change some sections of the bill while refusing to change others because we maintained that the legislation should reflect international standards. Many did not like this, so we will see what happens in the future.

Still, it was my impression that the public understood

how they should be protected now and into the future. All was in line with international standards.

Before the hearings were held, the public had not been exposed to any kind of discussion about international standards and yet, here they were espousing from the heart, things that were right in line with these standards. As for governmental officials and also parliamentarians, perhaps they have been in power too long because they just could not come to terms with these international standards.

Since the Constitution was promulgated in 1997, the Women and Constitution Network, in collaboration with the Women in Politics Institute and other organizations, has conducted numerous workshops for local trainers and community leaders. The focus has been major constitutional concepts, including equality, human rights, human worth, dignity, and equality.

A parallel effort was the government's supervising decision to establish the National Commission commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Their initial task was to review existing circumstances with regard to present laws and regulations and violations. The hope is that this will put in place a national policy and plan of action that is practical, comprehensive, effective, and that serves as a basis for human rights movement in all sectors of society — and that is monitored by the National Human Rights Commission.

To conclude, it can be said that our approach the past two or three years has been to foster a collective effort on behalf of human rights on the part of all sectors, private as well as the government. So far, only newspapers and television, as well as the educational system, are working to raise awareness among the general public about human rights.

Indonesia

by **Rizal Sukma**

In any review of human rights in Indonesia, it is valid to focus first on the domestic context in which they are promoted and challenged. This approach is likewise important for comprehending the kinds of policies and measures that are necessary to protect the rights of individuals into the future.

The focus in Indonesia is on the state and society and how both regard human rights during this fragile period of democratic transition. In fact, special reference must be made to the relationship between the military and the rest of society when speaking about human rights. Here, three questions come to mind. First, how does this relationship affect the promotion and protection of human rights? Second, what are the challenges to improving human rights? And, finally, how have violations of human rights and the state's failure to respond heightened the potential for national disintegration?

In each instance, questions are raised about impacts on the stability of the state and security within Indonesia and throughout Southeast Asia.

I will deal first with the uncertain democratic transition in which Indonesia finds itself. This uncertainty also provides the context for questions about why violations of human rights continue to take place even though Indonesia has moved beyond the authoritarian rule that was the hallmark of President Suharto.

It will be recalled that Suharto was in power for more

replacement for what became the 'Suharto status quo,' change had to take place within the political parties. But the general election held last June did not solve this problem. Instead, the opposition proved to be quite fragmented and unable to fight against the status quo. What resulted was a kind of democratic negotiation between the defenders of the Suharto regime or the status quo and the challengers.

The defenders consisted of the government headed by President Habibie, the ruling Golkar party, and the military (even though the government and the military are not really the same). The challengers represented a camp that was quite divided. There was Megawati and her political party, which drew a dominating 34 percent of the vote in the general election, alongside 10 pro-reform political parties. Despite her dominant position, Megawati's party and the others were unable to resolve their internal problems.

But the irony is that if the Suharto status quo is to be displaced, the pro-democratic forces must be able to negotiate and bargain with the status quo forces, as represented by the government under Habibie's leadership in the interim or the military. No matter how the post-election scenario is painted, there is no way around a party forming a government without the military's support. Presently, the military has 38 seats in the parliament and could increase its numbers between now and the assembly's election of a president in mid-October (1999).

The military's position is easy to understand, despite

even the National Mandate Party, which claims to be the most reform-minded and pro-democratic of the parties, has expressed any wish to push the military into a corner. The fear is, in the short term, influencing the presidential 'horse-trading' that goes on between now and when the assembly picks the next president.

Recently, this set of circumstances put the military in a very strategic position when it came to the struggle between President Habibie and the Golkar groups, on the one hand, and the opposition parties, on the other. It also helps explain how the so-called 'rogue-elements' within the military are able to violate citizens' human rights without fear of being brought to trial later on by the new government. And even if the new president wanted to investigate human rights violations, he or she would never succeed in investigating all the violations.

My second point has to do with the 'horizontal violation of human rights.' What I mean here is that if the civil society is built on fragile inter-ethnic and inter-faith relations, it is very difficult, if not impossible to build up and then sustain human rights. Indeed, at this point in time, Indonesia is witnessing all kinds of violations of human rights by societal forces and sometimes with the aid of the state apparatus.

My third point is human rights violations are at the root of the problem of national disintegration. In this instance, it is quite easy to examine the pattern of how human rights violation, when not addressed, threaten the very core of the state's integrity. Three well-known cases illustrate my point.

The recent violence in East Timor is obviously the first. From day one in 1975 when the military invaded the territory, people there have witnessed all kinds of violation.

intimidation, rape, and killing, continued in tandem. The real message was not that the central government cares about the development in East Timor but that East Timor simply would have to endure under Jakarta's rule.

The second example concerns Aceh and goes back 10 to 15 years. The violations of human rights perpetuated there may have been worse than what we have witnessed recently in East Timor. Aceh is the outer province and the westernmost part of the country. By the time the international community got around to paying attention to the violations of human rights in East Timor, especially after the Santa Cruz massacre in 1991, the military had already imposed itself on Aceh. It actually happened by late 1989. Since then, at least 2,000, and perhaps more than 3,000 people have been summarily executed and a thousand more tortured.

The evidence concerning these atrocities is quite clear. Since Suharto's resignation, violations at the hands of the military have been published, and the information is now quite open to the public. Indeed, this makes the situation in Aceh very interesting when compared to what happened in East Timor. Basically, people complained at first, as was also the case dating back to the early 1980s in East Timor. In both instances, the state failed to respond. Even after the military's oppressive presence was reduced in East Timor and the people there demanded justice, the central government of Habibie declined to respond.

Then when the calls for justice escalated into demands for a referendum on independence, Habibie's central government again did not respond appropriately. Now, I fear others in Indonesia could demand independence, especially in the western part of the country. If that happens, the impact for the state will be even more

The case of Irian Jaya demonstrates a similar pattern. Complaints and protests went unheeded by the central government. If this pattern continues, we can expect in the future a process similar to what happened in East Timor.

What is even more interesting than the relationship between human rights violations and the problem of national integration in each of these three instances, is the fact that the international community really is unable to react to what I describe as the creeping violation of human rights. Again, the cases of East Timor, Aceh, and Irian Jaya (West Irian) demonstrate my point, namely that we need a more effective way to address the creeping violation of human rights. For example, if five, six, or seven people are murdered at the hands of the state apparatus, there is no international outrage. The international community only responds when the numbers escalate, as they did in East Timor and as we are witnessing now in Aceh.

On the subject of how the state and society are perceived when it comes to human rights violations, it is my opinion that the state is actually quite sensitive to criticism, especially from the western world. But what about society? This is where I worry. The East Timor case is instructive because it underscores the value of making an effort to understand the domestic forces in play before addressing the human rights

the state to shift attention away from the violation of human rights to the issue of nationalism. For example, not many groups at the moment condemn the military for what they did in East Timor. Instead, they focus on what they perceive as Australia's gross interference in Indonesia's domestic affairs.

We all know that there is a very high anti-Australian feeling in the country right now. And this has shifted the

entire discussion away from the military's role and the role of the state when it comes to the violation of East Timorese' human rights.

What is the message here? How does one create a social context where human rights are promoted and not stomped on? The conventional strategies include economic sanctions, insolation within the international community, intervention, and the weight of international public opinion.

Take economic sanctions. I personally doubt that they are

very effective. Consider their effectiveness when it comes to isolating the regime in Iraq, which continues to violate human rights. Nor have sanctions altered the attitude of the military regime in Myanmar. I have similar doubts about the effect of isolation as a technique. On the other hand, intervention can be necessary, especially in extreme cases where lives are in danger. Still, we continue to live in a time



In East Timor, the call for independence was a grassroots movement that was manipulated easily by the state to shift attention away from the violation of human rights to the issue of nationalism.

to Commission members and staff. Participants also included police and civilian forensics experts, staff from the Attorney General's office and the Ministry of Justice, and representatives of a number of domestic human rights organizations, including from Aceh, Irian Jaya, and East Timor.

Meanwhile, East Timor is doubtlessly on all of our minds in view of the violence taking place there at present. Sadly, there is nothing positive to say with respect to the human rights situation there, a point exemplified by the experience of Yayasan HAK, the only legal aid organization in East Timor and an Asia Foundation partner since its establishment in 1996.

In the past several weeks, Yayasan HAK staff have come under severe threat, having been targeted even prior to the recent violence. Indeed, since the organization's establishment, they have had to face a variety of threats and intimidation because of their human rights work. This reached a very worrisome level particularly when the militia started becoming more active in East Timor.

Serious threats continue, even after the exodus. Militias remain active not only in West Timor, where a large number of East Timorese have sought refuge, but in Bali and Jakarta, where East Timorese also have fled. The militias continue to try to keep tabs on the activities of anyone they perceive to be pro-independence or be involved in monitoring and disseminating information about the serious violations that have been going on.

The human rights situation in Aceh and Irian Jaya is also very disturbing despite the fact that the political space as a whole has opened up and a number of new human rights organizations have been established. There also has

work as human rights defenders.

It is therefore important that as the attention of the international community focuses on the very severe human rights situation in East Timor, the seriousness of the human rights problems in other parts of the country is not overlooked. This is particularly important when considered in light of domestic perceptions about human rights in Indonesia.

In this regard, it was interesting to hear from Dr. Pusadee that in Thailand, it is the parliamentarians who resist the human rights discourse on the grounds that it is a foreign and Western concept and, by contrast, the Thai public who understands human rights as a universal concept. Unfortunately, we are not yet at that point in Indonesia. In Indonesia, we have sectors of society that regard human rights as an essentially Western concept and therefore as something about which to be very concerned.

For example, in The Asia Foundation's Islam and Civil Society program, we work with a range of Muslim organizations which, in turn, engage with their constituents in discussions about civil society issues, including human rights. One of our partner organizations is a Muslim organization affiliated with Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the country's largest Muslim organization with some 30 million members.

One of their programs that we support provides human rights training to senior religious leaders in Islamic boarding schools in Java. One of the first concerns these religious leaders raised was that the human rights discourse to be used in the workshops reflected Western values. It was only after our partner organization sat down with them and pointed out that the same values embraced by the Universal

effort to render the issues more readily accessible to a Muslim audience. This way, the participants can also begin to see that human rights are grounded in Islamic values as well as a reflection of a western concept. This is an example of how works such as this can be conducted only after fundamental misconceptions are addressed effectively.

Another workshop that was held a few months ago highlights another kind of concern the Muslim community has about these kinds of programs. During a three-day workshop, the organizers realized that one of the participants was not eating. When a staff member inquired, the participant replied that he refused to eat because the program's funding came from an American organization. Again, the situation required that the organizers sit down with the individual and explain that, yes, funding came from a U.S. organization but that the program itself was a domestic initiative. In fact, the domestic organization had decided on the content and the curricula as well as conducted the program.

These examples highlight the fact that there are very real concerns among many Indonesians about human rights and about the role of the international community in this regard. At times, the political elite and the government are prone to whip up these concerns in order to divert people from the

real issues. This certainly was the case recently with East Timor.

Still, these very real concerns likewise stem from a perception that the international community is sometimes selective about the issues it focuses on. For example, it may be a coincidence, but if so, an unfortunate one that human rights cases provoking the greatest American outrage — the rapes of ethnic Chinese during May 1998 riots, the church burnings in 1996-1997, and the recent violence in East Timor — have been largely forgotten by the outside world.

The fact is there are enormously serious human rights problems in Indonesia, yet the international community remains largely silent. Whether correct or not, the perception is that the international community is selective in its condemnation of human rights abuses. It is important that this impression be countered if the international community is to help and not hinder the work of Indonesian human rights organizations.

This can best be done by placing concerns about specific incidents of human rights violations in the broader context of the overall human rights picture, thereby demonstrating a comprehensive and sophisticated understanding of the human rights realities in Indonesia.

Questions and Comments

by *Human Rights in Southeast Asia Panel*



What would it take to set up a regional and inter-governmental human rights mechanism in Asia, similar in operation to what is in place in the

Americas, Europe, and Africa?

Dr. Kek Galabru: The idea is a good one, but it requires the assistance of government. Consider Cambodia. If the government refuses an international tribunal to try members of the Khmer Rouge, no outside organization can force it to change its mind.

The solution may lie with ASEAN, which now has 10 member countries. It would be a good idea if, for example, Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, and the Philippines would talk about this issues. Cambodia would not go along but maybe the Philippines and Thailand would. The Philippines and Thailand could have co-presidents.

A solution like this would mean that someone with a complaint could go to the regional tribunal. That's a very good idea because it sets up a kind of ombudsman or watchdog that is impartial and that can be trusted. So why don't you start to lobby these countries?

Dr. Pusadee Tamthai: This is a good idea — but it is for the future. That said, it is my understanding that The Asia Foundation has been supporting regional discussions on the establishment of an ASEAN human rights mechanism.

In the case of Thailand, there are still anti-foreign

optional protocol to the Convention of Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), one concern is whether or not we should participate if it means giving women the right to go to an international committee with their complaints.

Originally, when Thailand ratified CEDAW, one reservation concerned an international court handling a dispute in the event of an impasse. Again, in the case of Thailand, we still are very cautious about letting an international body take care of something we regard as a domestic problem. What we should do instead is what Dr. Rizal suggested. We should try to equip, or help equip, the general public to better understand human rights and then lobby politicians and/or policymakers to move the country in the direction the public wants.

That seems preferable to outside pressure. It's a very good idea but again, it is for the future. Yes, the world is getting smaller, but it still is going to take awhile and quite a lot of effort before people really understand that we are one world.

Dr. Rizal Sukma: There are a number of obstacles to such an organization on behalf of human rights. Obviously, the first is the perception that human rights are not legitimate rights and that activities on their behalf do not erode the authority or autonomy of the state. Many countries in this region still are young, dealing with the forces of nationalism.

very important role in setting up any regional mechanism. Take Japan, for example, its approach is quite different from that of other countries, such as the United States and England.

The third obstacle is the problem with the so-called Asian values. Clearly, the debate is waning in the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis, but an important section of society still believes in these values. Finally, the permanence of human rights concerns is still an issue in many of these countries. Many countries prefer to focus on stable intergovernmental relations and not to touch the issues that involve human rights. So what is to be done?

First, there is a need to encourage what I call 'interference from below.' Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are a primary source of interference. There is no way, for example, to control NGOs in countries like Indonesia, Thailand, or the Philippines. And if an NGO criticizes human rights violations in a neighboring country, then the government there should be relaxed about it. But that is rarely the case. Governments are not easy about what they regard as interstate interference.

Secondly, I believe the only way to guarantee human rights is to establish a more democratic and open political system. Programs that focus on empowering regional civil society in order to tackle human rights issues are important. Thirdly, we should dig even deeper into the issue's cultural dimension. As has been mentioned, we should try to grow the roots of human rights in the culture of each country. We can promote this idea if we speak in the language of a particular community. In Indonesia, the program that has bridged to Islam on the subject of human rights has done an excellent job in trying to resolve the perception gap between pro-human rights groups and the society at large.

for an ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism, which is an initiative that is trying to do precisely what the questioner is talking about.

In 1993, at the Vienna Conference on Human Rights, the ASEAN governments undertook to consider the possibility of establishing an ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism. Not long after that, a group of NGO leaders in ASEAN decided to establish a Working Group that would look at what kind of mechanism could be created, what was feasible, and what was appropriate.

I should stress that this is an ASEAN initiative, with individuals from ASEAN engaging ASEAN governments on this issue to determine what form a human rights mechanism for ASEAN should take.

In 1996, the Working Group was recognized formally by the ASEAN foreign ministers as a dialogue partner. The Working Group is taking a step-by-step approach recognizing that if some kind of mechanism is going to be established for the region, it will be necessary to have all the ASEAN governments onboard.

At the moment, the Working Group has members from Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines. Representatives from Singapore are joining in the Working Group's meetings, without yet formally becoming members.

Over the next two years, the plan is to continue some low-key outreach to other countries in ASEAN, as well as to hold national and regional level conferences on human rights. Last year, there was a conference in the Philippines on the rights of the child, to which both government and nongovernment representatives from all the ASEAN countries were invited. This year, in Singapore, there will be a conference on CEDAW. Again, representatives from

NGOs are trying to take over the agenda. Until now I think it has made remarkable success, particularly on this issue of formal recognition by the ASEAN states.

Audience Comment: Two problems suggest that a focus on ASEAN is a nonstarter. ASEAN's membership includes countries like Myanmar, Vietnam, and Cambodia, which are unlikely to join any meaningful effort that involves human rights. The other problem is attracting countries like Japan and South Korea, even transitional countries like Japan and South Korea, even transitional countries like Mongolia, that might be interested in moving the human rights agenda forward without constraints and entirely independent of ASEAN.

Q What impact are international organizations like the World Bank having on building support for human rights? I am interested especially in Thailand where the construction of massive dams has been criticized for displacing people and impacting the ecology.

Dr. Pusadee Tamthai: Personally, I see the dam construction as a human rights issue. It is having a large impact on the lives of people who were living in the area. Despite the way the government handles the concerns, either with compensation or with an explanation when relocation is ordered, people still suffer. This issue is being debated, and it is a huge problem.

NGOs are attempting to block all future construction of similar magnitude. They advocate finding alternatives to dam construction, while some are even refusing to have anything to do with the organizations that back the

Q Corruption is a problem that stands in the way of effective government and governance. Are there specific ideas about how to effectively turn this problem around, in Cambodia, for example?

Dr. Kek Galabru: By acknowledging the problem, the Cambodian government already has taken the first step. This is progress as far as I am concerned since they had ignored the issue up until a few months ago. Now, they are drafting a law to combat corruption but, admittedly, there is a long distance between passing a law and implementing it.

A few weeks ago, the government also invited several NGOs to meet with them and discuss their concerns about corruption in a workshop that was conducted by an NGO and where members of the government addressed the issue.

Low salaries paid to members of the court also exacerbate the problem, as do concerns about judicial independence. The Supreme Council (of Magistracy) should not appoint the judge and prosecutor and also have the power to discipline them. To help create an atmosphere for judicial independence, the government has to be willing to pay judges and prosecutors a decent wage. It is difficult to ask a judge who earns \$20 a month to refuse to be corrupted. You can, but it probably won't work. Instead, the judge ends up taking money from the rich, and the rich get to escape the law completely.

As things stand now, the police, the judges, the tribunal, the courts — nobody abides by the law in Cambodia. Perhaps the international community can help us put pressure on the government to implement the law here, as well as show us how to collect more money for the state and then raise the salary of all civil servants.

their students for money. Then there is high-ranking corruption involving millions of dollars. Here, members of government, powerful businessmen, and members of commissions are involved. One answer could be to raise the salary of civil servants, too, so they avoid temptation and instead implement the law.

This is not a recipe for a miracle. Dealing with corruption is a major challenge in Cambodia, and we need a lot of assistance from national and international communities alike.

Dr. Pusadee Tamthai: In the case of Thailand, one of the positive outcomes of the economic crisis is that it caused quite a number of people to reflect on just what it takes to have a self-reliant economy. Many saw that the root of the problem is a society that is molded by consumerism and/or capitalism. We were too quick to embrace many concepts that were foreign to us. We did so, taking advantage of the free flow of information in Thailand. We enjoy widespread access to the greater world beyond us — especially to the world that worships money and wealth.

The concern is that we could become a society where money rules the day, and where, in turn, corruption becomes the norm. To stem this, Thailand has begun to experiment with a new monitoring system. Now, a mere 50,000 votes are required to petition the president of the Parliament to remove an official from office if that official is suspected of

relationship is a longstanding tradition in Thailand. In this instance, when the talk is about vote buying, the reference is not always a literal one — spending money to buy votes. Instead, the relationship can work hand-in-glove with corruption. Subordinates are prone to try to please superiors with gifts, which leads to corruption. It actually may take another economic crisis for us to really deal with the situation and to start to get rid of corruption everywhere in our society.

The concern is that we
could become a society
where money rules the
day, and where, in turn,
corruption becomes the
norm.

— Pusadee Tamthai
Women in Politics Institute

Dr. Rizal Sukma: Corruption is one of our biggest challenges in Indonesia. For example, the bank scandals that recently came to light could end up implicating individuals at the very highest levels of leadership. Still, there are a number of measures we can take to deal with this problem.

First, we have to encourage political parties to set up some kind of ombudsman office for constituents living in the provinces. Then people could report problems to their own parliamentary representative. This is an idea that political parties are talking about as we move to more of a district system. Also, members of Parliament should be more accountable, and this would help facilitate that.

Second, there are a number of NGOs that really focus on corruption issues in the country. Indeed, they are quite active. One is the Indonesian Corruption Watch, which has been at the forefront of exposing the big corruption cases

a higher social standing can tend to require more compared to the lower level official. So raising salaries can create a vicious circle.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that international donors, including foreign countries that give aid, make improvements in their own ability to monitor and control the financial assistance they provide. For example, Japan has no idea how to control the money it gives. Instead, the Japanese worry whether they will insult or offend the recipient government if they insist on knowing where the money is going and how it is to be spent.

This kind of attitude on the part of a donor country does not help. In the wake of the financial crisis, particularly, Indonesia needs a lot of improvements which the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are in a position to push. In fact, this kind of pressure would not be unwelcome in Indonesia. Our society believes that those who give money have the right to know how that money is being spent.

Ms. Tessa Piper: There definitely is a growing awareness in Indonesia about corruption. More and more NGOs, among others, are seeking to raise public awareness about corruption, particularly at the local level.

Until now, the focus has tended to be on the political costs and moral issues that relate to corruption and not

Now, Indonesia no longer has that, and so the money that is lost to corruption has become very significant.

Unfortunately, there has not been enough research to quantify how much has been lost to corruption. One project The Asia Foundation has supported in this regard is with an organization called the Institute for the Development of Economics and Finance (INDEF). INDEF conducted a review of the costs of obtaining the identity cards that all

Indonesians are obliged to carry, the objective being to estimate the amount of revenue that is lost due to corruption. Their results were very significant — one-third of the money paid for identity card delivery disappears because of corruption.

This research is why it is important that the public becomes more aware of how corruption affects them. It is not just a matter of the big bosses getting payoffs to get things done.

Corruption also reaches down into the daily lives of citizens, and this is an important issue.

Lastly, as has been noted, it is very difficult to figure out how to deal with the issue of corruption in a comprehensive way until a country has an independent judiciary in place. Unfortunately in Indonesia, we are a very long way from having such an independent judiciary.

Dr. Pusadee Tamthai: One way of dealing with corruption is to train people to closely monitor the budget allocations for

More and more
NGOs, among others,
are seeking to raise
public awareness about
corruption, particularly
at the local level.

— Tessa Piper
The Asia Foundation

our Constitution calls on the government to consult with citizens whenever it is expected that a mega-project will affect people's lives. So when the government decides to launch a major project, it must first meet with the people to get their views.

Dr. Kek Galabru: I, too, think the international donors should monitor the money that is given to the government. For example, the Cambodian Action Mine Center (CMAC) in Cambodia received a lot of money from different donors but without any mechanism for controlling the money. Now CMAC is embroiled in scandal. The money should go to the de-miners who risk their lives every day. The land, too, was supposed to go to the poor based on an agreement that was made. Instead, CMAC has given the land to a high-level official or to a former leader of the Khmer Rouge.

This is the kind of corruption we cannot and should not accept. The Cambodian people were so disappointed with the donors. They asked why the donors did not put someone in place to make sure the terms of the agreement were met. The donors replied that they relied on the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) to monitor CMAC. But UNDP has its own program and the consequence is that CMAC now is at the center of a big scandal.

I am certain that up until now, at least, the Cambodian people have not benefitted from the work of CMAC. The only one to benefit is the chief of the military, a former member of the Khmer Rouge. Can you imagine? Australia has given money to the former Khmer Rouge that killed one of its citizens.

That is why I think donors should put in place one of their own people or set up a mechanism to monitor how the

stipulate that as donors, we do not want these people in CMAC anymore? And if they stay, there will be a problem. That is easy for donors to do, so why don't they? I don't know.

Donors also gave a lot of money to the Cambodian Red Cross. And now they are pretty sure that the president of the Red Cross spent the money on her own political campaign. The donors said nothing. But the money should have gone for the poor people and not for an election campaign.

Ms. Rudi Jeung: Local organizations in each of these countries are looking at the corruption issue more and more. One of the reasons is that the World Bank has come out strongly against corruption and has begun to put pressure on recipient countries. While it remains to be seen whether Bank efforts will be effective, its public stand has been very helpful for local organizations, some of which The Asia Foundation is working with, especially in Thailand.



The point Dr. Sukma made about human rights education in the form of "interface from below" makes good sense. Here, the media can be a source of informal human rights education. But is the media effective in this regard?

Dr. Rizal Sukma: The media seems to be quite open and doing a great job on reporting all the violations of human rights. But as was mentioned, more work must be done to increase their reach and understanding. When it comes to human rights violations, the public must be made aware of the facts. To do that, the media has to connect what they report with human rights as such. There still is a gap in

Dr. Kek Galabru: Before the coup in 1997, Cambodians had an independent television station from Thailand, IVC. Its broadcasts included 20 minutes each on the subject of human rights. But ever since the coup, all five television stations in Cambodia belong to and are controlled by the ruling party, and they have cut out all programs relating to human rights and democracy.

A dozen radio stations are also under the ruling party's control. Before the coup, there was human rights programming that dealt with training, human rights, women's rights, and so forth, on one or two stations. That is no more. As far as newspapers go, we have about 40 local papers, but only four or five belong to the opposition party. Because they dare to criticize the government, they actually cover some human rights violations. They also agree to our requests to publicize training programs that concern human rights.

But the pro-government newspapers manipulate the story. It has been a little bit difficult, but now we are hoping that the new government, with pressure from the national and international communities, will allow an NGO to have maybe one radio station. It would be very good if that were the case.

Dr. Pusadee Tamthai: We have been quite fortunate in Thailand. At present, we are in a transitional period and hopefully on the road to economic recovery. If that is indeed the case, political and social reform will follow.

Some television channels are owned by the state and some are owned by the military. However, there is at least one program each night where issues relating to human rights concerns are discussed. In addition, there is a weekly

human rights issues — directly or indirectly. This is especially true at present during the parliamentary debates that concern the national human rights bill. Thus, the people are kept informed. In my opinion, this is a very positive development.

On the other hand, the media sometimes is perceived as being the one which violates human rights and specifically, individual rights. Periodically, it gives inaccurate information about politicians and others. And since people seem to believe what they read in the newspapers, it is hard to correct mistakes that are made.

This is why some feel that the media violates their rights. The long-term solution seems to be to help the public learn to distinguish between those papers that are credible and those that are not. Meanwhile, a media council has been formed to promote professional ethics. So, now when the Senate debates the human rights bill, people are kept informed.

This is a great development in my opinion.

Final Comments

Dr. Kek Galabru: When it comes to human rights, the people of Cambodia can be separated into two groups. The larger of the two groups includes the victims of human rights violations. The minority group includes the violators.

The victims believe that human rights are international rights. A monk explained to me that he thought the principle that informs human rights and that which informs Buddhism are but two wings of the same bird. People in Cambodia believe they are entitled to their rights. They accept that and trust NGOs who represent that principle.

Why? Because they believe that NGOs who espouse

NGOs work with the government to prioritize issues that have been raised at the grassroots level. In other words, the violators also accept what we in the NGOs are doing and they trust us.

For example, a group from the victims' group came to see an NGO after 3,000 tons of toxic waste was discovered (in the seaport of Sihanoukville). They did not go to the authorities. The persons responsible argued that the principle of human rights is not acceptable in this instance because it comes from the West. Cambodia operates with a different set of notions about human rights, they said. It was here that the NGO was able to step in and be effective.

The role of the NGO is crucial. The training we do makes an effort to raise awareness, not only among the weaker victims but also among those who are responsible for violating others' human rights. It also means we provide human rights training to the police force and the military.

Dr. Pusadee Tamthai: At this point in time, Thailand is passing through a very critical period. We are in need of widespread reform, especially political, social, and legal reform. Thailand is thankful for all the international organizations that have lent their technical and financial support during this difficult period.

I also want to stress that contributions to Thailand by most donors are worthwhile. I have seen numerous positive results, and your faith in us is greatly appreciated. At

present, the results can be seen in the outcome of a number of intensive workshops conducted across the country by the Women and Constitution Network group, which were supported by The Asia Foundation.

A high level of interest was apparent especially in those workshops dealing with people's rights and the protection mechanism as stated in the new Constitution. Positive results can also be seen from the workshops conducted by the Women in Politics Institute, which train prospective political candidates and community leaders. In these workshops, the training curriculum included and in fact stressed the human rights issue. The hope was that when these candidates are successful they will be able to make changes in how human rights are regarded in Thailand.

Dr. Rizal Sukma: Yes, there is progress in the arena of human rights, but limitations and challenges also lie ahead. At least four points should be kept in mind. First, the domestic context in which human rights unfold always should be taken into consideration. And this domestic context is both political and cultural.

Second, there should be more work done with civil society beyond the emphasis on policy measures aimed at altering government attitudes. Third, the international community should avoid any impression of a double standard whenever they promote human rights. And finally, we should all be patient with our expectations for results.

Seminar Participants

Kek Galabru

Dr. Kek Galabru is President and Founder of the Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO), one of Cambodia's largest nongovernmental organizations focusing on human rights monitoring, investigation, and education.

Prior to the founding of LICADHO in 1992, Dr. Galabru served as Director of the Information Office of the State of Cambodia for Europe for two years. She was the mediator on the issue of NGO access to Cambodia for the international organizations Medicins San Fronteires (Doctors Without Borders) and Amnesty International. Dr. Galabru also was the editor of the newsletter, *Lettre du Cambodge*.

From 1985 to 1992, Dr. Galabru served as President of AVBC, a medical humanitarian assistance organization for Cambodia. In 1987, she played a major role in organizing the first three meetings between Hun Sen, the President of the Council of Ministers of the People's Republic of Kampuchea, and then Prince Sihanouk, the President of the opposition coalition at the time.

Before returning to Cambodia in 1985 after a 14-year absence, Dr. Galabru worked as the resident doctor in the French Embassy in Angola, a consulting physician at the Cavanti Institute of Hematology in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and a researcher in the Center of Neurology of the University of British Columbia. She served as director of the biochemistry service at the Khmer Soviet Hospital in Phnom Penh and Professor of the Medical Faculty. During this period, Dr. Galabru also held the position of Assistant Director of the newspaper, *Contre Gouvernement* (1969-71).

Dr. Galabru received her medical degree from the Medical Faculty of Angers, France, and a Certificate of Superior Studies, for a specialty in hematology from the Saint Louis Hospital in Paris.

Rudi Jeung

Rudi Jeung has been with The Asia Foundation since 1990. She is currently Senior Program Officer in the Office of the President based in

political participation, and legislative development in Cambodia. From 1990-1994, she served as Program Officer in the Asian-American Exchange unit. Ms. Jeung holds an M.A. in Chinese from the University of Washington, and a B.A. in East Asian Studies from Pomona College.

Tessa Piper

Tessa Piper is Senior Program Officer in The Asia Foundation's Indonesia office, where she has worked for the past two years. She is responsible for the development and management of the Foundation's human rights and media programs in Indonesia.

A British national, Ms. Piper has worked in the field of human rights and media for 15 years, primarily in the nongovernmental sector. She has conducted research and advocacy activities for local organizations based in Southeast Asia, as well as for international organizations, including Amnesty International and the freedom of expression organization Article XIX. She served as an Asia research consultant for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and for the BBC World Service. The BBC World Service commissioned Ms. Piper to develop a series of radio programs on human rights.

Ms. Piper holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Southeast Asian Politics and History from the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

Rizal Sukma

Rizal Sukma is Director of Studies at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Jakarta, Indonesia, where he has conducted research on civil-military relations, China, security in Southeast Asia, and various domestic and foreign policy issues since June 1990. Dr. Sukma is also Deputy Head of the International Relations Department of the National Mandate Party (PAN), the political party led by Dr. Amien Rais.

Dr. Sukma has published a number of articles in scholarly journals,

1998); and “ASEAN’s Institutionalisation and Decision-Making: Problems and Recommendations,” (co-authored with Hadi Soessastro) in *Thirty Years of ASEAN: Milestones of Achievement ISEAS*, forthcoming).

His writings have appeared in the *Jakarta Post* (Jakarta), *The Nation* (Bangkok), *Trent* (Singapore) and the *Far Eastern Economic Review*. Dr. Sukma has also published a number of books in Indonesian, including *China’s Strategic Thinking: From Mao to Deng* (CSIS, 1995), and *The China Sea Dispute: Problems and Possible Solutions* (co-author, CSIS, 1997). His latest book is *Indonesia-China: The Politics of a Troubled Relationship* (London: Routledge, 1999).

Dr. Sukma received his Ph.D in International Relations from the London School of Economics and Political Science.

Pusadee Tamthai

Dr. Pusadee Tamthai became Director of the Women in Politics Institute in 1995. Since 1998, she has served as Coordinator of the Women and the Constitution Network and has been member of the National Commission on Women’s Affairs of the Office of the Prime Minister.

Dr. Tamthai was recently nominated to be one of the NGO representatives on the Senate Scrutiny Committee working on the

National Human Rights Commission Act, after having participated on this committee of the lower house of the Thai parliament. In 1996-1997, she also served as Vice Chair for the Chiangmai Provincial Committee of the Constitution Drafting Assembly (CDA).

Dr. Tamthai is active in the development and implementation of campaign, advocacy, and participatory training activities in the fields of civic participation, gender equity, and human rights. She has hosted and co-produced a number of radio programs, including “Together We Build” and “Gender Perspectives” in Chiangmai, and “Women’s Voice” and “Women in Action” in Bangkok.

Prior to taking up the directorship of the Women in Politics Institute, Dr. Tamthai was Headmistress of The New International School of Thailand and served as Assistant to the Minister of Industry and Environmental Affairs in the government of Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun. She also has held positions at the Institution for the Promotion of Teaching Science and Technology (IPST), including Director of the Office for the Development and Promotion of Science Talent, and Director of the General Science Section.

Dr. Tamthai received her Doctorate in Science Education and her Masters in General Science from Indiana University. She received her Bachelor’s of Science in Chemistry from Kasetsart University in Thailand.