Global instability, economic collapses and worldwide shortages - but through it all, the one thing that stands is, hope. This issue's focus is on the people and mechanisms that continue despite and because of global issues that affect and connect us all. From APS Alumni in the field to a new Executive Board, get in the know of what APSAN is up to.

The Newsletter Team

January 2022

Editor's Message for 2022

Just three months down and 2022 is already looking like a challenging and noteworthy year for global peace and stability. From international disputes that have exacerbated into full-scale military conflict, to advancements in the fields of medicine and psychedelics that aim to provide greater mental stability – it's clear that peace – whether at the individual or global level, is the need of the day.

This year, APSAN's main objective is clear. To provide our alumni network the possibility to share their peace-building experiences, in the respective fields in which they work. But forget the barriers. Our readers want to know how you keep your peace when faced with a personal issue, in as much as they want to understand how your peace-building skills are making the world a better place. The last two years have shown us that finding footing and cognitive strength can be important and decisive tools in an often unstable world. Our upcoming editions will provide a space for you to tell the world your story.

APSAN is also producing its first ever APSAN Professionals Network Directory and if you aren't on it yet, this edition provides you more information on how you can be.

This edition is also dedicated to the brilliant and resourceful Executive Council that served APSAN from 2019 to 2020 for all their hard work and direction. We welcome the new Council members and wish them luck on the way forward.

J. Natasha Gooneratne
APS 8 Sri Lanka

APSAN Thanks

Former EC!

APSAN thrived with a dynamic, dedicated, and a skilled Executive Council from 2019-2021. We are grateful to Gelie Erika Esteban [APS 11, Philippines], Jamila-Aisha Sanguila [APS 5, Philippines], and Saw Thura Aung-Bosco [APS 11, Myanmar] for the immense commitment to direct APSAN into a vibrant network.

Thank you
APPOINTMENT OF NEW EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
GET TO KNOW YOUR EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS

J. NATASHA GOONERATNE
APS 8 Sri Lanka
APSAN EC member: Media and Outreach

Natasha is a specialist in Public Diplomacy & Strategic Communications. Having operated as a specialist for Western governments, she is also a Former Second Secretary to the Sri Lankan Permanent Mission to the United Nations in Geneva, an Analyst for Geopolitical Relations, a creative in the Ad Industry, a Researcher and Fixer for the New York Times and Swedish Public Media (SVT) and currently dapping as a lecturer of International Law.

Natasha was part of the Eighth Cohort of the Asian Peace-builder’s Scholarship of the Nippon Foundation, Japan. She received a Masters in Political Science with a major in Global Politics from Ateneo de Manila University Philippines and a Masters in International Law & Human Rights from the United Nations Mandated University for Peace in Costa Rica, where she was Valedictorian for the class of 2015. Her Bachelors Degree was from the University of Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Natasha currently leads a cross-border project on strengthening global North-South ties.

ANDY C. ALEGRE
APS 10, Philippines
APSAN EC member: Database and Events

Andy serves as Lead for National Church Partnerships at International Justice Mission (IJM) Philippines, collaborating with churches, faith-based organizations, communities, and faith leaders to end online sexual exploitation of children in the country. He is also a community development and peacebuilding advocate working on areas of preventing violent extremism and gender-based violence, interfaith dialogue, and environmental protection. He holds an MA in International Law and Human Rights (UPEACE) and an MA in Political Science, Major in Global Politics (ADMU). He likes going outdoors, listening to music and tweeting @AndyAlegre.

TRAN THI THUY BINH
APS 8, Vietnam
APSAN EC member: Alumni-led Initiatives

Binh is the founder of the Club of Green Journalists in Vietnam that has been active since 2010. She teaches gender, journalism, and communication. Binh has been working on gender mainstreaming and communication for over twenty one years. She holds M.A. in Gender and Peacebuilding, M.A. in Journalism, and M.A. in Political Science.
Q
Tell us how you found APS and what motivated you to apply?

Southida: I have a background in Forestry and natural resources. When I was thinking of taking my Masters Degree, my consideration was for it to improve my knowledge and technical skills. I tried looking for a scholarship that will meet my need not only to study about the environment but to gain more knowledge or understanding about other perspectives. The APS program provided an opportunity for me to learn Political Science and study the environment in Costa Rica. Also, it is not only about the course itself but also, I found that it is a great opportunity. I will have a chance to study with many people from around the world who have diverse backgrounds, culture and this might open my world, I can exchange knowledge, opinions or share information with many people around the world. This is very important for me, that it will help me to see the world wider and understand more about the global issue. So when someone I know from APS, an alumnus from cohort 9, gave me the info and suggested for me to apply, I applied.

Q
The Gender question is apparent, the sectors of forestry and climate change, especially in countries such as your own don’t see many women. Tell us your driving factors.

Southida: As I mentioned earlier, I gained a degree in Forestry. Most of the people in Laos asked me, you are a woman, why don’t you choose to study Accountancy or Nursing or whatever. I got interested in the environment.
I would like to learn more about the environment or forestry. In Laos, in the past, the country was rich in natural resources, biodiversity and wildlife. But in my generation, the country is already facing deforestation and forest degradation and the forest cover is decreasing year by year. I just like to be a part of the society or a team that contributes something and learn why our country faces these problems. Basically, I like the environment. In the beginning, I did not see the clear picture, I found out that yes, I want to study it when I get into the area of forestry. It gets more and more interesting for me as days pass by.

Q Did you encounter challenges while in the program? How did you overcome them?

Southida: The first thing is about the culture and the second thing is about academic knowledge. I have to adjust myself and tried to be open-minded as I met people from diverse backgrounds and the main course. These were new things for me to know. The food is tasty, I gained a lot of weight as they serve big portions, more than I am used to. I would always eat everything on my plate because everything is expensive and I have to show I appreciated the farmers, the people who produced the food.

When it comes to academic knowledge, new things for me makes me nervous. For example, I do not have much experience and background in political science so I was a bit nervous to face a new experience and to face a new environment. I worry about how I am going to overcome it. But, when I stepped in at Ateneo, most of the professors were very supportive and understanding as we gained more knowledge in political science. They were open-minded, patient and supportive knowing that we lack background in the course. So, I put more effort and studied hard. This is very impressive to me. In Costa Rica and Ateneo, the professors were very friendly and welcoming. I felt like they were always ready to help us with whatever we encounter in our study.

Q Did the APS program change anything for you personally or professionally?

Southida: I can still remember how the first day when my APS life begins in Ateneo and Costa Rica. Facing a new environment makes me a bit nervous and very excited at the same time. It was so much fun to meet many people around the world who have diverse backgrounds, cultures and traditions. It was an unforgettable memory for me to have good friendships and I met interesting friends and study with respectful professors who were very supportive. I have learned a lot of things from them and sometimes having a good friendships made me feel at home even if I was far away in another country.
WHAT’S GOING ON AT APSAN...

Transparency and amplification of what we are doing at APSAN is extremely important to us. With every edition we’d like to keep you posted on what we’re doing on the ground. Here’s a quick update on some of the initiatives we have going on right now.

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<th>BUILD CAPACITY OF APSAN MEMBERS TO ENGAGE IN PEACEBUILDING</th>
<th>GRANT FUNDING FOR APSAN MEMBERS</th>
<th>CONTEXTUALISING PEACE IN ASIA.</th>
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<td>A need assessment was designed to identify the needs of APSAN members to support design the training content. The drafted need assessment survey will be enriched with feedback from EC and will be administered in the month of February 2022.</td>
<td>APSAN called for proposals from alumni to conduct small scale projects in response to Covid-19 and peacebuilding initiatives in the month of October 2021. The APSAN board was pleased to receive numerous proposals that encompassed high quality projects. The level of diversity and collaboration across varying APS batches was especially noted during the consultation process. The selection process is currently underway and Grantees are expected to be informed shortly.</td>
<td>APSAN alumni are developing and testing context-sensitive modules on peace education in Asia. In 2020, one module had been developed and validated in Vietnam by alumni from Vietnam. In 2021, two peace education modules have been developed in Sri Lanka and the Philippines. These modules were validated and will be published mid this year.</td>
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BE PART OF THE TEAM!

Join the APSAN Secretariat and help steer the growing network!

APSAN is looking for a new set of alumni-leaders to mobilize and guide fellow alumni through different work streams: 1) Media and Outreach; 2) Alumni-Led Initiatives and career Development; and 3) Alumni Events and Database.

JOIN THE TNFSA HUB!

Sign up for a chance to meet fellow scholars!

The Nippon Foundation (TNF) has supported more than 40,000 scholars across the world in the past 30 years. This year, TNF is connecting the TNF scholars’ Association in a new platform.

Are you an APS Alumni? Join the APS Alumni Network’s Facebook Page, and be in the know of the latest APS updates and collaboration opportunities with your fellow Asian Peacebuilders!