

Terms of Reference

Development of Country Strategy for Human Rights Advocacy and Campaign in Bangladesh and Burma/Myanmar

1. 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 58 members in 19 countries and in Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

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. Its mission is to strengthen the human rights movement in Asia by creating an enabling environment for human rights protection and promotion, building capacity of human rights defenders, and forging collaboration and cooperation among human rights organisations and institutions regionally and globally. 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.”

FORUM-ASIA's specific objectives for 2016-2010 are: (a) to strengthen the capacity of Asian civil society organisations and human rights defenders; (b) to undertake advocacy for inclusive and participatory policymaking in relation to human rights, democratic governance and sustainable development at all levels in particular SAARC, ASEAN and United Nations (UN) human rights mechanisms; (c) to respond to human rights situations in Asia and beyond through solidarity actions and emergency assistance; and (d) to further strengthen FORUM-ASIA's institutional and operational capacity in order to better serve and effectively represent its constituencies at the national, regional and global levels.

To achieve the objectives, FORUM-ASIA organises relevant activities under four thematic priorities: (a) freedom of expression, association and assembly; (b) safety and security of human rights defenders (HRDs); (c) protection of civic space (mostly in the context of ‘priority a’ and ‘priority b’); and, (d) rights of migrant workers (through the Task Force on ASEAN Migrant Workers). Priority ‘a’ and ‘b’ include issues and actors working for promotion of economic, social and cultural rights as well.

As part of its response to specific human rights situations, as reflected in the third specific objective, FORUM-ASIA works on some ‘priority’ countries identified based on the severity of the human rights situation on the ground. For 2017, Bangladesh and Burma/Myanmar have been identified as countries in need of focused and concerted

response. FORUM-ASIA is aware of the persistence or unfolding of human rights crises in both countries based on media coverage and accounts by its members. However, the information available is not enough for FORUM-ASIA to conclude which specific issues should be addressed through what strategy and for what concrete outcomes. It is also important to take stock of opportunities available in each of the countries, such as alliances and networks that should be tapped for synergy and sustainability, and also for resource mobilisation.

With the Terms of Reference (ToR), FORUM-ASIA seeks to engage an external consultant to help it objectively assess the situation, analyse relevant constraints and opportunities, and draw practical recommendations for FORUM-ASIA to address the situation in each of the countries.

2. Objective

The objective of the assignment is two-fold. It is to objectively assess the existing human rights situation in Bangladesh and Burma/Myanmar; and, offer concrete practical recommendations for FORUM-ASIA to address the underlying issues and concerns.

3. Scope of Work

The scope of work involves (a) assessment of constraints, challenges and opportunities (friendly networks, alliances, resource-mobilization possibilities within the country, and so on) vis-à-vis promotion and protection of human rights in Bangladesh and Burma/Myanmar, and, (b) presentation of recommendations suggesting what FORUM-ASIA can and should do in the short term and long term.

3.1 Suggested Research Questions

The assignment can involve following research questions:

- What are key human rights problems facing the countries in general?
- How are civil society organizations and human rights defenders affected?
- Who is doing what to respond to the situation?
- How are FORUM-ASIA members dealing with the situation?
- How is the state of coordination and collaboration among change agents?
- Are there any multilateral/bilateral agencies addressing the human rights crisis of the day? What is their priority?
- How does the national human rights commission deal with the situation?

- What can FORUM-ASIA do to make a difference in the situation? How can it do so?

4. Methodology

The assessment will be exploratory. The consultant will collect data both from primary and secondary sources, and draw findings by cross triangulation of information collected

from various sources, including through impressions from observation.

4.1 Data Collection

The consultant will collect data in line with an assessment framework and guidelines s/he would develop at the start of the assignment. The framework should be able to generate response to the questions discussed in Section 3.1, and create basis for the achievement of the objectives of this assignment (Section 2).

4.1.1 Background Documents (Secondary Sources of Information)

The consultant will collect secondary information from the following documents:

1. Notes/Minutes of Annual Planning Meeting, 2017
2. Evaluation of FORUM-ASIA's Performance and Achievements (2011-2014)
3. FORUM-ASIA's Five Year Strategic Plan
4. Review Report on Policies, Systems and Practices of Forum-Asia
5. Documents on Human Rights Situation in Bangladesh (at consultant's discretion)

4.1.2 Primary Data

Primary data collection will involve Skype interaction with the Executive Director and/or Directors of FORUM-ASIA; face-to-face discussion with the South Asia Programme Officer (at INSEC, Kathmandu); and, one-on-one interview with FORUM-ASIA members in Bangladesh; select human rights defenders; representative of the Bangladesh national human rights commission; representatives of the donor community; and, media persons.

4.2 Data Analysis

Data analysis involves the analysis of information generated through secondary sources; perspectives, ideas and opinions collected through interviews and interactions with those involved; clustering of information based on research questions; and, drawing conclusion on the basis of evidence.

4.3 Consolidation of Findings

Consolidation of findings will include following:

- Preparation of a draft report based on the assessment framework, finalised in consultation with FORUM-ASIA. The draft report will have two parts: comprehensive overview of human rights problems and challenges in the countries; and, a set of recommendations suggesting concrete actions and strategies for FORUM-ASIA to address the situation.
- Sharing of the draft report with FORUM-ASIA for comments and feedback; and,
- Finalization of the report after incorporating comments and feedback received from FORUM-ASIA.

5. Duration

The review will take place in March 2017. The actual duration for the review will be 10 working days. One (1) day of which will be for review of documents and design of an

assessment framework; six (6) days, including travels, will be for collection of information; two (2) days for data analysis and report drafting; and, one (1) day for finalisation of the report incorporating comments on the draft report.

6. Deliverables

The assessment will have following output-related deliverables:

- **An Assessment Framework** should be prepared and submitted to FORUM-ASIA explaining methods and instruments of data collection;
- **A Draft Report** containing responses to all aspects of the assessment objective as outlined in Section 2 and the scope of work as discussed in Section 3 above; and
- **A Final Report** incorporating comments by FORUM-ASIA, no longer than 15 pages, excluding annexes.

7. Expertise

The consultant will have proven experience of human rights research and advocacy; human rights based approaches to advocacy campaigns and social movements; and, past experience of involvement in similar areas of work.

8. Budget

The budget for the assignment includes a standard consultancy fee for 10 days, and costs for economy-class travel, local transportation, and accommodation.