

YOUTH DEMOCRATIC SOLIDARITY AND LEADERSHIP TRAINING 2023
Theme: Fostering Movement and Solidarity
Concept Note

Dates: Nov 14 - 20, 2023

Where: Thailand

Background

The Asia Democracy Network (ADN) in collaboration with various regional actors have implemented consecutively a youth training program with the aim to strengthen knowledge and solidarity among young democracy advocates as well as to empower youth movements. This year, ADN will hold the event along the Thai-Myanmar border to foster cooperation among the youth in Asia and build connections and enhance their solidarity with the Myanmar youth actors.

Youth have been at the forefront of leading change in society through demanding social justice. The democracy wave from the 80's in Asia that started from the Philippines, Burma, Taiwan, South Korea, and Indonesia to name a few is a testament. Currently, sustaining and maintaining the momentum to uphold democracy and human rights have come with challenges. With the reality of closing civic space for activism to thrive there is also a dwindling number of drivers of the movement. Economic and social realities have impacted the interest in activism and working for change. This is not to disregard the evolving approaches to activism that are being undertaken.

According to our assessment, in the recent context of the world democracy situation, it is critical to empower youth to sustain the movement of human rights and democracy through intergenerational dialogue, knowledge sharing and coalition building with peers, and in-depth training on democracy and advocacy.

To respond to providing a platform for youth to build coalition, solidarity, and unity as well as to share knowledge, creating a youth network would be the most effective. However, we have found that maintaining and sustaining a youth network requires good coordination. In addition, with the high turnover rate among youth in civil society, it is difficult to maintain continuous momentum. Therefore, as the Asia Democracy Network is a network of networks acting as an umbrella of regional and national organizations with the goal of progressing democracy it is more fitting to have a youth ADN pillar that acts as an umbrella network of youth advocates, organizations, and regional networks. The ADN Secretariat will act as the convener and facilitator, providing the platform and opportunities for youth to strengthen solidarity and cooperation.

To kick off this initiative, the ADN in collaboration with the member and partner organizations, aims to conduct a training for youth democracy advocates in the region. This time it will involve a 3-way nexus including¹ youth in Southeast Asia, South Asian Youth (incubated by ADN), and the Milk-Tea Alliance coalition which actively advocates for issues related to democracy and human rights. Beside providing

¹ Tentative.

training for the Asian Youth entities, the goal is for them to synergize their respective efforts collectively and create a greater impact. In the past youth forums we held, it was realized that youth across the region were implementing action for change under similar circumstances and methods. What was regrettable was that if the action had been done in solidarity and in a coordinated fashion it would have created a greater impact.

Objectives:

- Enhance democratic knowledge, and increase awareness on democratic struggles across Asia, as well as an available platform for advocacy and engagement.
- Provide space and facilitation for the youth to exchange knowledge and coordinate with each other.
- Provide space for intergenerational dialogue to carry forward the future of democracy and human rights advocacy work.
- To promote unity to the different youth groups to break silos and consolidate efforts in their future agenda.

Methodology:

The training will be conducted in four steps which include conducting lectures, discussions and experiences sharing, field visits, and forward design. The methods are detailed below:

1. Lectures: The training will adopt a classroom teaching style, focusing on theories related to democracy, utilizing the Democracy Academy Curriculum.² A group of relevant experts, including NGO leaders based in Thailand, will be invited to provide lectures. This aims to enhance participants' knowledge and awareness of democracy related issues.
2. Peer learning - Discussion and experiences sharing: Participants will be assigned to present their respective organizations and discuss the democratic challenges in their country. This will be followed by engaging in discussions with their peers to facilitate peer learning and exchange of experiences.
3. Field visit: Participants will have the opportunity to visit other organizations and meaningful historical sites to bolster their understanding of the stories and conditions surrounding democratic struggle. The host will choose the organization or site based on the specific needs of the participants.
4. Forward Movement Design: Participants will be assigned to design and present their future plans either individually or in groups. This will involve contextualizing the role of youth in strengthening the democracy movement in the region.

² Prior to the arrival, the participants will be asked to read ADN curriculum ver.1 built in 2019

Potential Participants:

1. Representative of existing youth organizations Asia.
2. Youth Representative from ADN member-organizations.
3. Representative of the Youth who are alumni of this program.
4. HR and Democracy advocates.

Tentative Rundown

Schedule	Description	Location
Nov 14	a. Arrival of the students b. Introduction and ice-breakers	Bangkok
Nov 15	a. Class-room Lectures (5 topics) b. Depart to the Province	Bangkok
Nov 16	Lectures and Storytelling	Province
Nov 17	Field Visit 1 and Friendship gathering with Local	Province
Nov 18	Field visit 2 and Friendship gathering with Locals	Province
Nov 19	Presentation and return to Bangkok	Province and Bangkok
Nov 20	Thematic Conference: Democratic Youth Movement	Bangkok