

Asia/Pacific ISTR Regional Network

Third ISTR Asia and Pacific Regional Conference 2003

by Samiul Hasan, University of Technology Sydney, Asian Third Sector Research Unit

The Third ISTR Asia and Pacific Regional Conference was held in Beijing on 24-26 October 2003. The Host Committee for the Conference was drawn from many universities in China chaired by Professor Xie Qingkui of the Peking University. The Program Committee was chaired by Jenny Onyx (from January 2003) and Mark Lyons (until December 2002). The Asian Third Sector Research Unit at the University of Technology, Sydney worked as the secretariat of the Program Committee.

There was an overwhelming interest in the conference from the region and beyond, with papers and panel proposals received from 176 individuals. The two and a half day conference had twenty-four paper sessions (with four concurrent sessions) and three plenary sessions. Three paper sessions and two plenary sessions were in Chinese with simultaneous translation.

In all, seventy-two people from seventeen countries (and regions) presented papers (visit: <http://www.asianphilanthropy.org/ndev/index.cfm> for a copy of the Program and Abstracts). There were eleven papers from mainland China (these were not reviewed, but allowed to present to demonstrate the types of third sector research being undertaken in China).

Sustainability issues of the Third Sector, governance and accountability, partnership among the three sectors, and regulatory regime in the light of recent worldwide development were the subject matters of many papers. There were also papers on (transnational) philanthropy, civil social, local institutions and empowerment, social capital, social enterprise, co-operative management, etc.

The first plenary session on Third Sector research in China included discussions on recent development in legal and regulatory system in China, issues faced by the Third Sector in China and the social responsibility of Third Sector researchers in China.

In the second plenary session Masa Deguchi, president-elect of ISTR, informed the participants about ISTR and its Asia Pacific Regional Network. Rosemary Leonard (Australia/New Zealand), Yashavantha Dongre (India), Naoto Yamauchi (Japan), and Tae-Kyu Park (Korea) talked about their respective country/regional networks, and recent developments in the field of research and networking. Sami Hasan talked about development that has taken place since the Osaka Conference, and that which will be undertaken, in the activities of the Asia Pacific Philanthropy Information Network (APPIN) and its website (www.asianphilanthropy.org). The session testified to the growing strength of Third Sector research and networking among the researchers in the Asia and Pacific region.

In all there were five panel sessions. Two panels reported findings of an ongoing comparative research project on six Asian countries (China, India, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam) initiated and coordinated by the Asian Third Sector Research Unit, University of Technology Sydney. One panel focused on the legal environment influencing Third Sector governance in these countries, and the other on reporting the perception of Third Sector governance, based on a recent survey of some influential people, in these countries.

Another panel session was devoted to "Philanthropy and Anti-terrorist Financing," mainly to analyse recent developments in the USA and other OECD countries. But the discussion revolved around USA Patriot Act, and the US Treasury Department's "Antiterrorist Financing Guidelines: Voluntary Best Practices for US-Based Charities" and their implications on philanthropy and Third Sector resource mobilisation.

The changing relationship between the state and the voluntary sector in the Asian late industrialisers was the focus of another interesting panel session. Three papers analysed recent developments impacting on and in the state of this relationship in Hong Kong SAR, Korea, and Malaysia. The fifth panel session, "Beyond Households: Giving, Receiving and Volunteering in the Philippines," reported the findings on giving, receiving and volunteering undertaken in six provinces in the Philippines.

Dorothy Gordon, ISTR Board member, represented the ISTR at the Conference and, at the end of the last plenary session, delivered a note on her vision of the Society.

A comprehensive ISTR Report on the Third ISTR Asia and Pacific Regional Conference will be placed on the ISTR website early in 2004.