

**Indigenous Peoples, Human Rights and Advocacy:
A Training Program in Human Rights and Advocacy for Minority and Indigenous
Advocates in the Asia-Pacific Region**

In partnership with *The Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education* and
The Fred Hollows Foundation

4-13 May 2009, Darwin & Batchelor, Northern Territory, Australia

“Aside from the topics discussed, I value most the solidarity that has been established, realizing that we are all one with a common vision, aspirations and struggles”

Quote from anonymous participants evaluations of the program

Introduction:

The Diplomacy Training Program’s 2009 Asia-Pacific Regional Capacity Building Program on *Indigenous Peoples, Human Rights and Advocacy* was launched in Darwin on May 4th in cooperation with Fred Hollows Foundation (FHF) and the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE). There were 25 participants from Indigenous communities across Australia and from nine other countries across the region.

The program focused particularly on the recognition of Indigenous peoples’ rights in international law and human rights standards. The program also focused on how Indigenous advocates could use knowledge of the UN system to promote respect for human rights, and to bring about greater accountability when human rights are denied or violated.

Issues of recognition of special relationships to land, and of traditional knowledge systems are challenges common to Indigenous peoples across the region. In some cases, lack of recognition or respect for Indigenous peoples’ rights has led to displacement of communities and to conflict. With approximately half of the participants coming from Australia, there was a focus on the local context for Indigenous advocates in Australia – in the Northern Territory and beyond.

Participants had the opportunity to learn from one another, and also to learn about some of the important human rights challenges in Australia and the region. They learnt about the Indigenous Jumma people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh, the forced displacement of Indigenous communities resulting from development in Cambodia, the situation of the ethnic minorities in Thailand and the war being waged by the military government in Myanmar (Burma) on ethnic minorities such as the Karen. There was strong representation from the Philippines – from Mindanao and from the Cordillera region in Luzon where mining activities have led to community conflict and to environmental destruction.

The program included a two-day visit to Kakadu and Jabiru, where participants learnt more about the local struggles to claim and assert rights over land and resources, and to gain recognition of traditional knowledge systems in the management of the land and sea.

The program was made possible through the financial support of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the New Zealand Agency for International Development and the Fred Hollows Foundation. It was also made possible through the generous pro-bono contribution of the trainers who shared their knowledge and experience.

Background and Context of the Training

The Diplomacy Training Program (DTP) has had a focus on the rights of Indigenous peoples since its foundation in 1989, when José Ramos-Horta recognized the need to address the treatment of Indigenous peoples as the outstanding human rights issue in Australia. Co-Founder of the Diplomacy Training Program, Emeritus Professor Garth Nettheim, has been a dedicated defender of Indigenous peoples' rights in Australia and internationally. DTP's first specialized program with Indigenous peoples took place in Alice Springs in 1990.

Indigenous peoples in Australia and across the region have experienced, and continue to experience, different forms of colonization and displacement from their lands with negative impacts on their cultures and societies. Across Australia they continue to experience discrimination in many forms and in many aspects of their lives. This is clearly reflected in economic and social indicators, in life expectancy and in the impact of the criminal justice system on Indigenous people and their communities.

Indigenous peoples across the region are also often marginalized from the broader society and as a result of this marginalization are more vulnerable to a wide range of human rights violations. Where there is conflict over land and sovereignty these violations can include "disappearances" and extra-judicial executions by the military or armed groups linked to official military forces – for example in the Philippines. These human rights violations have been documented by United Nations experts and by local and internationally recognized human rights organizations.

The rights of Indigenous peoples received global recognition in 2007 with the adoption by the UN General Assembly of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples represents a significant achievement of Indigenous peoples across the world. It builds on other human rights agreements, and on the development of mechanisms focused on promoting and protecting the rights of Indigenous peoples.

Over many years Indigenous community advocates have worked together to develop international standards and mechanisms that can offer practical protection to Indigenous peoples. They have sought to ensure a place at the negotiating table when issues affecting Indigenous peoples' rights are discussed – for example, in relation to the Convention on Biological Diversity and discussions on climate change. Over many years Indigenous community advocates and human rights defenders have looked to the international community for recognition, support and action.

DTP has conducted its recent Indigenous Peoples' rights courses in Darwin and Batchelor, acknowledging the valuable lessons to be shared and learned from the achievements of

Indigenous advocates and communities in the Northern Territory in gaining recognition of their rights.

The determination and courage of the Gurindji people in the 1960's in their struggle for equality and labour and land rights, and the appeal of the Yirrkala Bark Petition to Parliament were a distinct part of a wider global movement against racial discrimination that swept the world in the 1960s. Successful community mobilization to end discrimination against Indigenous Australians resulted in an overwhelming vote for changes to the Constitution in the 1967 Referendum. Recognition of land rights in the Northern Territory followed with the 1976 Land Rights Act, and this saw the establishment of large and increasingly economically significant Indigenous controlled organizations – the Northern and Central Land Councils. The homeland movement – the return of Indigenous peoples to their traditional land or country – also began at this time, reversing the often forced removal to missions and reserves which they had experienced as a result of colonization and successive government policies of land seizure and assimilation.

Recognition of land rights and civil and political rights has also seen the more recent acknowledgement of Indigenous culture and knowledge. This acknowledgement is partially reflected in the shared ownership and land management arrangements for National Parks such as Kakadu and Nitmiluk, and the development of Indigenous owned tourism initiatives. It is also seen in continuing successful litigation through the courts to claim land and sea rights.

Formal recognition of civil and political rights, and rights to land, has not ensured an end to discrimination, or yet led to substantive equality – and human rights standards have not explicitly informed policy and practice in relation to community participation, or specific rights such as the Right to Health or the Right to Education.

Struggles over land rights have continued, including the successful major international campaign led by the Mirrar people to stop a new Uranium mine at Jabiluka. The history of mining in the Northern Territory has not been dissimilar to the experience of Indigenous peoples in the Asia-Pacific region. Seldom have local Indigenous communities benefited from the riches extracted from their lands – more often they have experienced displacement, destruction of environment and sources of livelihood, cultural dislocation – and the negative impacts that can be associated with transient labour forces in remote communities – the misuse of alcohol, and increased violence, including violence against women.

Most recently a major human rights concern has been the suspension of the Racial Discrimination Act (RDA) to allow for a range of government interventions in Indigenous communities. These measures, imposed without community consultation, are seen by many as a return to the bad days of the past, when Indigenous Australians were denied control over their lives and communities. Parliament's suspension of any protection offered by the Racial Discrimination Act has highlighted the weakness of human rights protection in Australia.

Training Methodology

The Diplomacy Training Program was founded in the belief that individuals working together have the capacity to make change. Its programs and approach to training reflect a deep respect for the knowledge, experiences and perspectives of the participants. It aims to build both

knowledge and skills in an integrated way. It is committed to teaching methodologies that are interactive and participatory – with an emphasis on case studies, small group exercises and role plays. Wherever possible it seeks to include *real life* advocacy exercises.

The participatory approach is reflected in the organization of the training programs. Participants are asked to take responsibility for key parts of the program – including the demanding task of daily timekeeping, as well as providing daily feedback on the previous day, introducing and thanking guest speakers and scheduling participant presentations.

Participant Presentations

Individual presentations from each participant are an important part of each DTP course. Prior to their arrival in the course participants are asked to prepare a short presentation (5-7 minutes). These presentations are an important opportunity to learn more about the different issues, challenges and advocacy approaches in the region, and to provide an introduction for subsequent discussions. They are also a valuable opportunity for participants to practice their public speaking skills.

“Hearing the presentations from participants opened my mind. Learning the Declaration of Human Rights, other conventions and treaties and then how to use them.”

Quote from anonymous participants evaluations of the program

Trainers

DTP is fortunate to be able to draw upon leading academic experts as well as experienced practitioners from relevant fields. Most provide their services on a pro-bono basis, some are themselves previous participants of DTP courses. DTP would like to acknowledge in particular the involvement in this course of its Founding Board Member, Emeritus Professor Garth Nettheim. Garth helped to facilitate the course overall and was a valued source of expertise and knowledge for participants throughout the course.

Songs and Culture

Many of the participants in this course are involved in protecting and promoting Indigenous cultures and among the participants in this course, DTP was fortunate to have a number of talented singers, including Shellie Morris, a professional singer and songwriter. Shellie, an Indigenous woman, is working with the Black Armband project (www.blackarmband.com.au/) which is being supported by the Fred Hollows Foundation.

In this program, more than many others, songs and singing played a major role in developing group dynamics and creating a positive atmosphere for learning. Songs are clearly an important way of preserving and communicating history and culture, of building bonds that connect people, and of celebrating life.

The Training Program

The training program was opened in Darwin, with a Welcome to Country by a representative of the Larrakia Traditional Owners. During an introductory session participants identified the

issues and challenges they saw in relation to Indigenous peoples' rights, and the schedule was reviewed and ground rules for the program were outlined.

The first major presentation was by Don Christopherson who provided participants with an overview of the history of colonization in the Northern Territory from an Indigenous perspective, and also provided an introduction to issues of culture, kinship and relationships to land that are central to Indigenous peoples. It was a compelling and thoughtful multi-media presentation. It helped provide participants with a sense of place and of the context for the program – raising many of the key issues around racism, marginalization and responses to it, and relationships to land, traditional knowledge and culture.

Participants, trainers and staff then loaded themselves into buses and cars for the journey to Batchelor – about 100 km south of Darwin.

- ***The International Human Rights Framework and the United Nations***

The next two days of the program focused on providing participants with an understanding of international law and the UN system and how these relate to the issues facing participants in their communities and countries. The sessions were led by DTP Board Member, Dr Sarah Pritchard.

There was a particular emphasis on the recognition of Indigenous peoples' rights in international law – most notably the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. There was also a focus on the mechanisms and forums that are dedicated to Indigenous peoples and their rights. These include the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues which takes place every May in New York, and the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples that has been established in Geneva to replace the UN Working Group on Indigenous Peoples.

Through a small group exercise and role play these sessions highlighted the function of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. (For the first time since this post was established the post of UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is held by an Indigenous person – Professor James Anaya.)

Indigenous peoples have looked to the UN to recognize and protect their human rights, and to provide space for discussion, sharing of experiences and solidarity. The broader human rights framework also has great relevance for many Indigenous peoples. In the Philippines, Indigenous advocates and communities have made urgent appeals to the UN Special Rapporteur on Extra-Judicial Executions, and the Special Rapporteur has made country visits to the Philippines, Indonesia and other countries to conduct investigations and raise concerns. In the Philippines, advocates noticed a decrease in the number of extrajudicial executions following such a visit.

Indigenous advocates in Australia have taken complaints to the UN Human Rights Committee, and raised their concerns in relation to Indigenous health, and the right to housing through the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Housing. When Australian governments introduced mandatory sentencing regimes that saw more young Indigenous people detained arbitrarily, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child raised its concerns. Most recently the UN Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has raised concerns with the Australian government regarding its laws and

policies in the Northern Territory and the suspension of protections under the Racial Discrimination Act.

“It was positively relevant to informing me about human rights, mechanisms to lodging advocacy reports and using other instruments to bringing offenders to the attention of UNOHCHR and UPR processes and reporting requirements. All was highly commendable and of practical use to my advocacy work.”

Quote from anonymous participants’ evaluations of the program

There was both acknowledgement and frustration at the weakness and lack of enforceability of international human rights standards. This weakness is particularly evident in relation to the failure of UN backed initiatives to stop human rights violations or bring about change in Myanmar/Burma. One of the program participants is a senior figure in the Karen Women’s Organization and has been closely involved in documenting and reporting terrible violations of women’s rights by the Burmese military fighting the Karen ethnic minority. She has taken these cases to the UN, lobbying officials and governments. The human rights situation in Myanmar has been the focus of discussion and actions in the UN Human Rights Council, by the International Labour Organisation, and in the UN Security Council, and condemnation by the UN’s independent human rights experts, yet little seems to have changed.

The need for realistic expectations about what is possible from the UN was emphasized, as was the need to understand that working through the UN system can be slow and resource intensive. It was clear from experience that advocacy strategies that sought to utilize the standards and mechanisms developed by the international community, also need to mobilize broader constituencies of support, so that the political will for action can be built and maintained.

- **Using Human Rights Standards**

The value of international law, and of international human rights standards, goes beyond the ability to access the UN system. Under specific human rights treaties, governments take on obligations to *respect, protect, and fulfill* human rights – to adopt laws and policies consistent with human rights standards, and increasingly it is possible to take action in the domestic courts using internationally agreed standards – and to cite the jurisprudence in relation to these standards developed elsewhere. As an example, Australia’s ratification of The International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination was central to the success of the *Mabo* case in Australia – and this case has in turn been cited in court action taken by Indigenous rights advocates in Malaysia and other countries.

Experiences with the Convention on the Rights of the Child showed how human rights standards can be used in very practical ways to guide policy and practice. Amalia Fawcett of PLAN International led two afternoon sessions exploring the content of the Convention and how UN agencies such as UNICEF, and NGOs such as Save the Children and PLAN International, have used the Convention on the Rights of the Child to change the way in which they engage with communities and children, to ensure participation in priority setting for development interventions, and in the planning and implementation of programs and projects. Realizing children’s rights, with the participation of children and young people, has become the objective

of these agencies. These were very practical, hands on sessions that brought human rights alive in a different way.

“For me the best part of the program was about lobbying and human rights law. It helped me a lot on my lobby skill and it gives idea how to do so.”

Quote from anonymous participants’ evaluations of the program

- **Advocacy and Media Skills**

In the next two days there was an intensive focus on how change can be achieved. Two aspects of advocacy were explored. Brian Wyatt explored effective advocacy skills with participants. He emphasized developing strategies with clear analysis of what needs to be changed, and clear objectives for action, and shared practical tips on effective lobbying based on his experiences of challenging racism and promoting the rights of Indigenous peoples in many different contexts both in Australia and internationally.

Linda McCaffery who heads the media unit at Batchelor Institute focused on the role of the media, which has become central to much human rights advocacy in different societies. The media plays a particularly significant role in relation to Indigenous peoples’ rights advocacy. In most countries in the region, Indigenous peoples are marginalized minorities, and it can be difficult to find space in the media for distinct Indigenous voices and issues. Moreover, in many cases Indigenous peoples’ advocates have to overcome very negative stereotypes and prejudice that shape the ways stories are reported and how they, their communities and their concerns are portrayed. Negative stereotypes and portrayals, including of Indigenous communities as anti-development can contribute to human rights violations by governments, or a lack of action to address violations. And, if advocates want to reach a broader audience, and build support and the political will for change, understanding and working with the media become important. Linda emphasized the importance of understanding the target audience, and of having clear succinct messages that build support for wider advocacy strategies.

- **Indigenous Peoples, Traditional Knowledge Systems and the Environment**

Minnie Degawan, an experienced Indigenous advocate from the Cordillera in the Philippines led sessions that looked at the growing international recognition of the value of Indigenous peoples’ traditional knowledge, including in relation to custodianship of the environment. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) have recognized and made space for Indigenous peoples – and the decision-making forums these provide have become the focus of advocacy. Minnie also looked at the particular vulnerability of Indigenous peoples in relation to climate change, but also how some Indigenous peoples have been negatively affected by some of the steps taken to address Climate Change – such as the emphasis on bio-fuels, which is leading to displacement and dispossession of Indigenous peoples in Indonesia.

- **Field Trip – Kakadu**

Minnie's sessions helped prepare participants for some of the key issues that were explored in the field trip to the World Heritage Listed, Kakadu National Park. On arrival in Jabiru participants were welcomed and given a background to the history of the creation of the National Park and the history of the conflicts and campaigning over mining. Justin O'Brien of Gundjehmi Association, the organization of the Traditional Owners, provided a fascinating and personal narrative of events that came to world attention when the traditional owners successfully resisted the development of a new uranium mine on their land in the 1990's.

The Traditional Owners forged alliances with key environmental organizations and won the support of the public in Australia and internationally. In winning their struggle to prevent a new mine, they highlighted the damage done, and lack of benefit to local peoples, from the existing uranium mine at Jabiru. They forced an acknowledgement that relationships between mining companies and Indigenous peoples had to be based on genuine free, prior and informed consent – and that mining companies had an obligation to look at how local communities could benefit from the resources extracted from their land – not just through royalties, but through training, employment and sustainable development initiatives.

Over the next two days, through interaction with different Traditional Owners, the participants learnt more about how traditional knowledge systems are now recognized in the management of the National Park. They also learnt the significance and meaning of some of the oldest existing paintings and rock art, testifying to perhaps the longest living culture in the world. Participants also learnt of how recognition of land rights and the Traditional Owners was reflected in the management structures of the National Park. Indigenous owned tourism enterprises are relatively recent and participants felt privileged to experience some of those now on offer. The Diplomacy Training Program and the participants are very grateful to Natasha Nadji for making time spent at Ubirr rock with its paintings that date back thousands of years such an extraordinarily rich experience.

On the Sunday morning, there was a cruise on the serene, wildlife-filled wetlands of Yellow Waters, guided by one of the Traditional Owners. In a special session that followed, John Christopherson provided a compelling account of Indigenous peoples' struggle to gain recognition for land and sea rights. He focused on the recent successful Blue Mud Bay case (Gumana & Ors v Northern Territory) which he had been closely involved with as one of the claimants. This case has great significance, and he explained the issues involved and how litigation, scientific understanding and traditional knowledge of the seas was used strategically.

Participants also witnessed the racism too commonly experienced by many Indigenous Australians, when some Australian participants were denied service at the bar of the accommodation – denied on the basis that they were Indigenous. The Resort Manager subsequently apologized, but this upsetting and disturbing incident is indicative of the discriminatory treatment that is still a reality for many Indigenous advocates.

- **Internet Training**

Back at Batchelor, the participants had a day of internet training with Philip Chung, member of the DTP Board. The internet has become an essential tool in human rights advocacy in the past ten to fifteen years. Most people have picked up the basics of email and *google* searching, but

Philip's sessions provide a more systematic introduction to using the internet effectively for research and also included a focus on security and safety. In addition participants learnt the basics of website design – and how to construct their own websites.

- **Human Rights and the Responsibilities of Business**

The following day, Professor Paul Redmond, Chairperson of the DTP Board, led two sessions exploring one of the major challenges associated with processes of globalization – the rise in power of trans-national corporations, or multi-national enterprises. The impact of mining and forestry on Indigenous communities has been highlighted by Indigenous participants in many DTP courses. These participants have noted that mining or forestry often takes place without the consent of local communities, damages the environment and sources of livelihood of local communities, has not resulted in sustainable development, and has often been associated with violence, displacement and social problems.

In these cases Indigenous advocates see the corporations as the direct cause of the problems, but also experience the unwillingness or inability of governments to hold the companies accountable. There is considerable interest in learning about the actions advocates might take in these circumstances. Professor Redmond looked at responses being developed at the international level – the work of the UN Secretary General's Special Representative on Human Rights and Business, codes of conduct and the OECD Guidelines on MultiNational Enterprises. Through practical exercises and cases studies participants explored how these could be applied to real situations. It was acknowledged that at this stage international standards offer only a weak and partial answer to the problems of holding corporations accountable, but they may be useful in advocacy efforts – and in some cases corporate practices are changing for a range of reasons.

- **Media – Hands on Skills and Interaction with Batchelor Students**

Participants had a further opportunity to develop media skills in a practical session on the Tuesday afternoon, getting hands-on experience with broadcast equipment and media skills. Media students at Batchelor Institute had the opportunity to test out their radio and TV interviewing skills with DTP participants. The exercise provided good, hands-on practice for both sets of students.

- **The Universal Periodic Review – Final Role Play**

“The simulation of the UPR process was the best part. Everybody went to work and it was a practical lesson on teamwork. The participants had a good idea of what actually happens when States convene to review human rights records of other states and how civil society organisations can be creative to ensure that people's issues are heard and considered in the process.”

Quote from anonymous participants evaluations of the program

The formal sessions of the program finished with a recap and review of the UN Human Rights Council's *Universal Periodic Review* process led by Patrick Earle, along with Imelda Deinla and Professor Garth Nettheim. *The Universal Periodic Review* (UPR) is perhaps the most important innovation in the establishment of the new UN Human Rights Council. Through this process, for the first time, the human rights record of every member of the UN is formally reviewed by other

governments – and the process is repeated every four years. It is still a very new process and NGOs are actively exploring how they might integrate this review process in their human rights advocacy strategies.

Participants had the opportunity to explore the advocacy possibilities in the final role play of the program where they took on the role of different governments and NGOs in a recreated UPR session of the UN Human Rights Council. It was a very lively and dynamic session. Participants took their roles seriously and put the knowledge of human rights and the UN and their lobbying skills developed over the past ten days into practice. Laughter and applause was saved to the end!

- **Participant Evaluations and Final Session**

The final feedback session, following the completion of evaluation forms, proved to be an emotional occasion. Feedback on the experience of the program was extraordinarily positive and emotionally charged. The efforts and thoughtfulness of Geoff Hazell, Alma Mir and all those at BIITE who helped out were acknowledged with gratitude. The presence through the program of DTP Founding Board Member, Emeritus Professor Garth Nettheim was clearly greatly appreciated.

What had clearly moved participants most was the opportunity to learn about and from each other's experiences, to learn about the challenges that others face, and to gain strength from the friendships formed over the previous ten days of intensive learning. There were tears shed, poetry, and songs sung. It was a remarkable and memorable session.

The positive feedback given in this shared final session was reflected in the written evaluations. At the same time, these thorough anonymous evaluation questionnaires also allowed for some very useful critical feedback that will assist in the planning of future programs.

Participant Evaluations

"I'm really impressed by the powerfulness of participants. I am totally moved by their dedication, hard-working and passion. At the moment I choose to take DTP training, even confronting challenges from my work place, and politically. I was scared I made a wrong decision that would not only have negative impact on me but my beloved families. But my participation proved I did the best thing ever in my life... At last, thanks DTP for offering me this opportunity. I will bring the torch of HR and IPs Rights to the darkest place of the world."

Quote from anonymous participant evaluations

Each DTP course is evaluated through anonymous questionnaires at the conclusion of the program. In addition individual trainers are also evaluated anonymously by participants. Participants are asked to reflect on what was most useful about the program, which sessions were least useful and how they might apply the training to their work.

"Aside from the topics discussed, I value most the solidarity that has been established, realizing that we are all one with a common vision, aspirations and struggles."

“Human Rights, Indigenous Peoples Rights and UN System was the best part of the program. It provides the avenue for the Indigenous Peoples voice to be heard at the International Level. This session has empowered and encouraged me to fight the injustices towards the Indigenous Peoples.”

“The knowledge gained through this course will help me write Indigenous cultural policy that supports the human rights of Indigenous people in Australia to bench mark best practice in indigenous policy and practice.”

“Excellent should be in schools, Aboriginal communities, and made a mandatory requirement for all to work with people- a social encumbrance to work for the best interests of humane and diplomatic treatment of people.”

“I will encourage people in my community and PCP members to attend this training. I rate DTP training program as the best training program in terms of its hard work to create a friendly environment, high qualified trainers and proper and appropriate spot for this training.”

Quotes from anonymous participant evaluations

The evaluation included a section asking participants to rate the extent to which the program met the objectives DTP set for it. Participants were asked to rate the extent to which each objective was met on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 meaning the objective was achieved and 1 meaning the objective was not achieved. Participants were also given the opportunity to comment on each objective. This section of the evaluations is included below with the numbers below each objective indicating the number of participants who selected each response

DTP Program Objectives

Please comment on the extent to which the following objectives were achieved for you at the *Indigenous Peoples, Human Rights and Advocacy Human Rights Training program* and provide examples from your experience.

Build awareness and knowledge of international human rights law, with an emphasis on human rights standards and mechanisms most relevant to Indigenous peoples and how these can be applied in practical ways.

Rating	1	2	3	3.5	4	4.5	5
	Very Poor	Poor	Average		Good		Very Good
Number of Participants	0	0	1	1	7	1	15

Develop the practical skills for effective human rights advocacy and lobbying including media skills and using the internet for advocacy.

Rating	1	2	3	3.5	4	5
	Very Poor	Poor	Average		Good	Very Good
Number of Participants	0	0	5	1	9	11

Provide an opportunity and a forum for participants to share perspectives and experiences of advocating for Indigenous Peoples rights in different contexts.

Rating	1	2	3	4	5
	Very Poor	Poor	Average	Good	Very Good
Number of Participants	0	0	2	6	17

Enhance the understanding of the human rights approach to development and it's relevance to policy and practice affecting Indigenous Peoples.

Rating	1	2	3	4	5
	Very Poor	Poor	Average	Good	Very Good
Number of Participants	0	0	4	6	14

A greater understanding of how international standards relate to issues such as intellectual property, the environment, community development and corporate accountability.

Rating	1	2	3	4	5
	Very Poor	Poor	Average	Good	Very Good
Number of Participants	0	0	3	12	0

Reflections and Recommendations

Judging from participant evaluations, this program was successful in meeting the objectives set for it, and generally exceeded participants' own expectations of the course. Clearly the both the values and specific content of human rights agreements resonated strongly with participants.

There was a good balance in the program between knowledge and practical skills. The new exercise on the Universal Periodic Review was very popular – both for learning about the potential of this new mechanism, and also for the way the exercise provided an opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills developed through the course.

There was considerable interest in, and perhaps not enough attention paid to, the issues of climate change, Indigenous peoples and human rights. This is a new area, but it is already clear from what is known about climate change that it will impact particularly harshly on Indigenous peoples and communities. There is a danger that the focus on the science of climate change, and on technocratic adaption and mitigation measures will exclude the effective participation of those most affected, and will contribute to the further denial of their human rights.

There was also considerable frustration at the weakness of international accountability mechanisms on human rights – in relation to Burma in particular, where there are massive and grave violations of human rights, but also in relation to rich countries such as Australia which appear able to ignore the well-founded criticisms of internationally appointed, and politically neutral human rights experts.

There will be value in conducting a follow-up survey to determine whether the strong feelings of solidarity have been sustained, and whether and what opportunities there have been to give these feelings practical expression.