

AFAD
Annual
Report

2009

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I. THE REGIONAL PHENOMENON OF ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

Mr. Santiago Corcuera, Chair of the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (UNWGEID), reported during the 10th session of the UN Human Rights Council in March 2009 that: “The total number of cases transmitted by the Working Group to Governments since its inception is 52,952. The number of cases under active consideration that have not yet been clarified, closed and discontinued stands at 42,393 and concerns 79 States... of the 79 states, 21 are Asian countries. In 2009 report of the UNWGEID, there are 52,232 cases transmitted since its inception, 42,600 of which remain unclarified and these concerns 82 States.

In view of the huge number of cases in Asia submitted to the UN in recent years, the latter, for the first time, conducted its 75th session in Asia, i.e. in Bangkok, Thailand in May 2005. During which, the AFAD actively participated. Requests for visits to Nepal, Philippines, and Thailand were made to concerned governments, yet for lack of openness of the said governments, these visits did not materialize.

In Kashmir, the Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP) has documented about 8,000 cases from 1989-2004. These cases occurred in the context of internal conflict. Many of the victims were taken into police custody under counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism operations. In 1993, the state government accounted for the 3,931 people who disappeared since 1985 but it released no more information regarding the matter. Mass graves have been reported in the APDP publication, “*Facts Under Ground*” – a report on multiple graves in the Uri District of Jammu and Kashmir which, because of their proximity to the Line of Control with Pakistan, are not accessible without the specific permission of the security forces. The graves of at least 940 people have been found and are believed to be remains of victims of human rights violations. To date, the AFAD Council member representing the APDP, Mr. Parvez Imroz has, since 2004, never been issued a new passport by the



Bandipora is one of the districts where mass graves were found in Kashmir.

Indian government, thus, constraining his movement and preventing him from attending AFAD activities. Last year, his house was bombed by unidentified men after the expose that he made on the mass graves. This incident was only one of the series of harassments against his person. On 2 December, another report was launched, entitled, “Buried Evidence,” which speaks of more than 2,700 mass graves found in Kashmir. The said report was already sent to the Indian Chief Minister, but it has never been acknowledged.

In Indonesia, the government continues to refuse to account for about 1,266 people who disappeared between 1965 and 2002 during Suharto’s “New Order” regime and Habibie’s interim government. Many of the disappearances occurred in the military-controlled areas, e.g. Aceh, Irian Jaya and the East Timor (used to be under Indonesian control). In addition, the UNWGEID reported that majority of the cases allegedly occurred in 1992 and also from 1998 - 2000. The cases concerned students involved in anti-government demonstrations in East Timor, Jakarta and Sumatra. The documented cases during the 32 years of Suharto’s regime, however, pale in comparison to the actual number. While cases remain unresolved, the government continues to commit human rights violations. Munir, staunch human rights activist and former AFAD Chairperson, was poisoned by arsenic in a Garuda flight from Singapore to Amsterdam on 7 September 2004. It is sad to note that the year 2009 began with the news about the acquittal of General Muchdi at the end of 2008.



Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, 59, is a retired general and the president of Indonesia. In July 2009, he became the first Indonesian president ever re-elected, winning a landslide. (© AP)

To note, as a result of the first round of visit of the lobby team of the Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD) to Indonesia, the Commission on Inquiry of the Disappearances of 13 Indonesian Activists of 1997 -1998 made a four-point recommendation to President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono who garnered a landslide victory during his second bid for presidency. The recommendations include the following:

1. The president to establish an *Adhoc* Human Rights Court;
2. The President and all relevant institutions and other relevant parties should take appropriate steps to immediately locate the whereabouts of 13 people cited as still missing by *Komnas Ham*;
3. The president to facilitate the rehabilitation and satisfactory compensation to victims and/or the families of the disappeared;

4. The government to immediately ratify the UN Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

Unfortunately, however, the four recommendations remain unimplemented in view of the fact that immediately after winning a landslide victory, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono was shook with major corruption issues that politically destabilized the government.



Family members of victims campaigning for justice in Kathmandu on 17 February 2009, the 5th anniversary of the killing of Maina Sunuwar by Nepal Army Soldiers. (© 2009 Advocacy Forum/Robert Godden)

In 2004, Nepal is the country which submitted the highest number of cases to the UNWGEID. The latter visited the country on the same year and reconfirmed the alarming phenomenon of enforced disappearances. Human rights organizations locally and internationally lobbied for the enactment of a national law criminalizing enforced disappearances. Since before the change of government until the present government of the Maoists

Party, a law has been drafted and recently promulgated as a form of an ordinance. Human rights organizations challenged the very form of the law, i.e. an ordinance and not an act of parliament. Such is contradictory to the democratic process wherein the participation of the victims and other stakeholders is found wanting. Moreover, the Ordinance's very substance does not comprehensively reflect the needs of the victims and their families.

A new bill has been drafted with the participation of the civil society organizations. Its enactment into a law is long-awaited in view of the still unresolved cases during the ten-year conflict. The Maoist government resigned, thus an interim government is temporarily in power, making it impossible in the meantime to ratify the UN Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. The Ministry of Peace, however, explored the possibility of having the Convention signed at the soonest time possible.

Prior to the February 2008 elections, the former government of Pervez Musharraf consistently denied subjecting anyone to enforced disappearance or knowing anything of their fate and whereabouts, despite evidence to the contrary. Attempts by the Supreme Court to trace the disappeared were obstructed by government officials, including by moving the victims to other secret locations and failing to comply with court orders.

Terrorism suspects are frequently detained without charge or, if charged, are often convicted without judicial process. Human Rights Watch has documented scores of illegal detentions, instances of torture, and “disappearances” in Pakistan’s major cities. Counterterrorism laws continue to be misused. It is impossible to ascertain the number of people “disappeared” in counterterrorism operations because of the secrecy surrounding such operations. Pakistan’s Interior Ministry has estimated the total at 1,100.

Since the Marcos dictatorship until the administration of President Arroyo, the Philippines have been marred with cases of enforced disappearances. About 2,000 cases have been documented by organizations of families of the disappeared, of which, only one case had recently resulted in success in the prosecution of the immediate perpetrator, but not the mastermind. While an atmosphere of impunity looms, cases continue unabated. This was confirmed by the visit of the UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial Execution, Mr. Philip Alston to the Philippines in February 2007. The second report of Mr. Philip Alston, while stating the reduction of the number of cases of extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances, still speaks of the non-resolution of past cases and the fact that more cases continue to occur with complete impunity. One of the most recent cases include those of Melissa Roxas, Juanito Carabeo and John Edward. Roxas and Carabeo resurfaced alive, but severely tortured while Edward remains disappeared.



Photo of Melissa Roxas, victim of enforced disappearance. ([©www.pinoytoday.org](http://www.pinoytoday.org))

Human rights organizations have been, for 15 years, lobbying for the enactment of a law criminalizing enforced disappearances, yet until now, the law has not seen the light of day. The term of the present Congress will end in June 2010 and if prior to the end of the term, the bill will not be approved, organizations of families of the disappeared and other members of the civil society will once again start with the first steps of lobbying.

In a meeting with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo on 14 January 2010 by the Families of Victims of Involuntary Disappearance (FIND) and the Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD), the president promised to certify the bill as urgent and sign the UN Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. Efforts to follow up the promise are being done to ensure its fulfillment before the end of June 2010.

In Thailand, the Relatives Committee of the May 1992 Heroes or victims of the Black May 1992 massacre in Bangkok has documented 253 cases of enforced disappearances. While the truth about the disappeared victims has not yet been revealed and perpetrators have not yet been brought to justice, new cases in the recent past during the martial law in Southern Thailand occurred. One of which is the case of lawyer, Somchai Neelaphajit who disappeared on 12 March 2004. While all evidences point to the police as the perpetrator, the case remains unresolved and the disappeared lawyer is still nowhere to be found. This same fate is suffered by many other cases that occurred in Southern Thailand during the martial law declared by former Prime Minister Thaksin.



Pratubjit Neelapaijit in a meeting with the Thai Ministry of Justice.

In a meeting by the Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances and the Families of Victims of Involuntary Disappearance with the Ministry of Justice, it was learned that a process of writing an academic paper towards the possible ratification of the Convention is being drafted. However, problems on consistency vis-à-vis the domestic laws, especially on the issue of justice and reparation are one of the stumbling blocks for the ratification of the Convention.

In East Timor, innumerable victims of human rights violations, including enforced disappearances during the East Timorese' struggle for independence, continue to cry for truth and justice. While efforts of national and international organizations to implement the recommendations based on the report, entitled "*Chega*," much remains to be done in terms of concrete actions to realize the victims' much-cherished dream for justice. It is important to note that East Timor and Indonesia established a Truth and Friendship Commission (TFC) that recommended, among other things, the establishment of a Commission on Disappearances.

Except for India, which signed the UN Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, the governments of the above-mentioned countries have not signed and ratified the said international treaty. No Asian country has a domestic law that criminalizes enforced disappearance. The phenomenon of enforced disappearance is just one of the several human rights issues in the Asian region. The bleak human rights situation is aggravated by the absence of strong regional human rights mechanisms for

protection. Worse still, judiciaries in many countries are weak, resulting in the difficulties in the prosecution of perpetrators and contributing to the perpetuation of the climate of impunity. This background focuses on highlights of enforced disappearances in countries where AFAD has member-organizations. Hence, this does not include equally appalling situations of enforced disappearances in countries where AFAD does not have a member-organization.

In as far as the UN Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance is concerned, as of this writing, Japan and Kazakhstan are the first and only countries in Asia that signed and ratified it. However, in as far as other countries are concerned, despite efforts of the AFAD especially in the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand and Nepal, not one of these governments even signed the Convention within the timeframe of this report. The governments of Indonesia and Thailand promised to sign, but unfortunately, nothing has materialized, thus far.

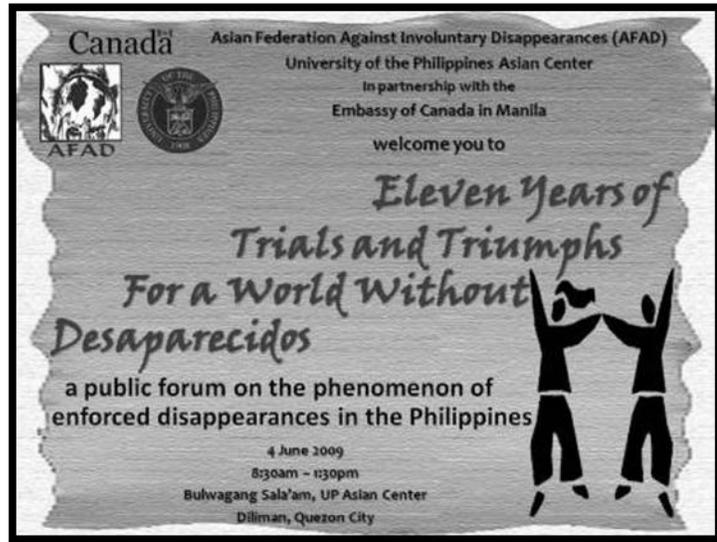
II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Eleven Years of Trials and Triumphs for a World Without *Desaparecidos* – thus was the theme of the 11th anniversary of the Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD) which was commemorated by a public forum on the Writ of *Amparo* held at the Asian Center of the University of the Philippines.

The eleventh year of the Federation was indeed one of those years of trials as the Federation was affected by the global financial crisis resulting in the uncertainty as to whether its secretariat in Manila would be able to sustain its physical center and its operation until the end of the year. Moreover, its programs' continuity was challenged and as a matter of fact, the direct assistance program, specifically on psycho-social rehabilitation was stopped due to financial difficulties, although the educational assistance continued, albeit in a very limited extent in terms of the number of beneficiaries.

At the beginning of the year, the AFAD Secretariat conducted a Year-End Assessment of its work during the past year, the results of which were incorporated in AFAD's annual report 2008 that was submitted to its partners. One major concern of the Federation at the beginning of the year was its financial situation, considering the fact that HIVOS ended its financial support at the end of 2009. Another major concern is the need to ensure the consolidation and expansion of the Federation after having completed, in 2008, its ten years of journey towards a world without *desaparecidos*. Furthermore, in terms of its advocacy, the Federation is very much alarmed about the absence of additional signatories from Asian countries to the UN Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced or Involuntary Disappearance in view of the continuing phenomenon of enforced disappearances in Asia.

Both the member-organizations and the Secretariat agreed to help each other in ensuring the continuity of the work and ruled out the idea of closing down. After all, the absence of funding should never be a reason to stop the work which continues to be relevant in view of the still bleak phenomenon of enforced disappearances in the Asian region. Those member-organizations who could afford to donate some funds gave support to the Secretariat while the latter also tried to the best of its capacity to raise funds both



internationally and locally while doing its utmost best to limit its administrative expenses to the bare minimum – limiting the use of electricity; using the cheapest local transportation available, using the most economical ways of holding activities, etc.

In view of the financial difficulties, especially during the first months of the year, time was spent on writing project proposals simultaneous with the implementation of the activities of both the AFAD Secretariat and the member-organizations. The Fourth AFAD Congress was supposed to be held in December 2009; however, financial difficulties hampered the Federation from holding its Congress within the year. In consultation with the AFAD Executive Council, the AFAD Secretary-General proposes that the Congress be convened in March 2010, giving the Federation the time to find sources of funds. Moreover, to ensure that the substance of the Fourth Congress be contextualized in the present stage of the AFAD's development and considering the developments in the political arena, it is deemed important to hold an internal evaluation with the help of professionals, taking into consideration the result of the 2005 Participatory Capacity-Building evaluation and the results of earlier evaluations which the AFAD Council and the AFAD Secretariat conducted. In so doing, it will guarantee that the results of such internal evaluation be thoroughly presented in the Congress, which will serve as a major basis of the review of its Six-Year Strategic Plan.

Despite the financial difficulties, the core of the work of the Federation, i.e. advocacy, continued and as a matter of fact, intensified, especially on the second half of the year. The first half of the year was highlighted with an event parallel to the UN Human Rights Council which was co-sponsored by the AFAD and the Latin American Federation of Associations of Relatives of Disappeared-Detainees (*FEDEFAM*), entitled: **Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, Urgency of Ratification**. Held in *Palais des Nations*, Geneva, Switzerland, the activity was graced by then Chairperson of the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances and participated in by the governments of France, Argentina, Thailand, Italy, and Uruguay. The event was attended by more than eighty people – a number which was difficult to reach in view of the fact that it was conducted simultaneous with many competing side events during the session of the United Nations Human Rights Council. The activity was also part of the AFAD commemoration of the 5th anniversary of the disappearance of Thai human rights lawyer, Atty. Somchai Neelaphaijit.

With the continuing campaigning and lobbying for the entry into force of the UN Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (hereinafter refer to as The Convention), the Federation convened an expanded Council Meeting, which included representatives from Latin America and the Euro-Mediterranean countries as well as representatives in countries where AFAD has prospective member-organization on the

last week of August. Convened in Manila, the meeting, which was highlighted by the joint commemoration of the International Day of the Disappeared, aimed to devise urgent strategies to campaign and lobby for ratifications of the said treaty and the enactment of domestic laws criminalizing enforced disappearances.

Hence, the last four months of 2009 was characterized by a series of lobby visits to different Asian countries, e.g. the Philippines, Indonesia, East Timor, Thailand, and India. To note, these campaign activities continued up to February of 2010 in the Philippines and Nepal. These activities were intended to complement what the AFAD member-organizations are doing locally to get the support of civil society to the cause of the disappeared and their families; to sensitize the families of the disappeared in order to ensure their governments' ratification of the Convention, thus contributing to its entry into force in 2010. Concretely, these activities included public fora; meetings with heads of state and national authorities; meetings with families of the disappeared to inform them about the importance of the Convention, media interviews, etc.

In the Philippines where the AFAD Secretariat is based, more efforts are geared towards information dissemination through university and community hopping in order to inform the public about the national and regional phenomenon of enforced disappearances and about the anti-enforced disappearance bill as well as the Convention. Moreover, several public events were conducted in Manila. Many of these were done in cooperation with the Families of Victims of Involuntary Disappearance (FIND).

All these efforts were supported by campaign and lobby materials, e.g. the continuing dissemination of the book, *"Reclaiming Stolen Lives;" "Healing Wounds, Mending Scars;" "The Voice;"* and the updated Primer on the UN Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. Public statements were also disseminated both during these activities as well as through the internet, using the email system as well as the AFAD website.

Concrete international solidarity was conducted through the participation of the Latin American Federation of Associations of Relatives of Disappeared Detainees (*FEDEFAM*) and the Euro-Mediterranean Federation of Families of the Disappeared (*FEMED*) in the activities of the Federation.

It is also important to note that on 9-11 November 2010, the Federation co-organized and hosted the "First Asian Conference on Psychosocial Support To the Families of the Disappeared in the Process of Exhumations" and gathered experts and activists working on this particular theme. Held in Manila, Philippines, the conference was expected to come up with an output, i.e. a publication to be presented during the Second World

Conference on Psychosocial Support in the Process of Exhumations to be held in Bogota, Colombia on 21-23 April 2010.

Efforts to continue the capacity-building of the Federation through trainings participated in by the AFAD members as well as the AFAD Secretariat were exerted. These went a long way towards strengthening the capacity of the whole Federation.

The new member of the Federation, HAK – East Timor offered hope to the Federation in terms of bolstering its capacity.



It is very important to note that amidst financial difficulties, the support of other AFAD members, both monetary and local counterpart, however modest, had helped a lot in maintaining its office and the secretariat, thus helping to facilitate the sustainability of AFAD's work. Moreover, it worth-noting that the AFAD Treasurer was able to facilitate funding from the Foundation Open Society Institute for a physical meeting, with the participation of prospective members and representatives of partners from other continents, on the last week of August this year.

III. ACTIVITIES

A. LOBBY ACTIVITIES

1. NATIONAL LOBBYING

a. PHILIPPINES

- **Forum on the UN Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances held on 22 May 2009 and the National Bill Criminalizing Enforced Disappearances, held at Astoria Plaza Hotel, Manila, Philippines-**



PAHRA Chairperson Max de Mesa says the closing remarks during the forum with PHRC.

In cooperation with the Coalition Against Involuntary Disappearances (CAID) and the Presidential Human Rights Committee, a public forum was conducted which was participated in by families of the disappeared, various representatives of government agencies, members of the NGO community. Because the Presidential Human Rights Committee had direct contact with government agencies, it was the first time that an AFAD activity was participated in by several government agencies, which was quite good considering that these government agencies have a say in the both the bill and the Convention, because they will be consulted.

During the forum, the following topics were presented:

- A presentation of a wife of a disappeared on a case of a disappearance that occurred during the GMA administration and another presentation on a cases perpetrated by non-state actors;

- ii. A presentation on the national phenomenon of involuntary disappearances by Atty. Carlos P. Medina Jr., Executive Director of the Ateneo Human Rights Center;
- iii. A powerpoint presentation on the bill, entitled, Act Criminalizing Enforced Disappearances which has been approved by the Philippine House of Representatives, but still pending in the House of Senate – The presentation was given by Chairperson of the Families of Victims of Involuntary Disappearance (FIND) Chairperson, Ms. Nilda Lagman-Sevilla;
- iv. A powerpoint presentation on the UN Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance by AFAD Secretary-General, Mary Aileen D. Bacalso;
- v. A powerpoint presentation on the results of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) on the Philippines in relation to the issue of enforced disappearance: by Mr. Carlo Cleofe, International Lobby officer of TFDP;
- vi. Updates on PNP Task Force *Usig* by Police Chief Superintendent Reynaldo S. Rafal, deputy of Chief Director Raul Bacalzo;
- vii. Discussion on the Writ of *Amparo* by Supreme Court (SC) Administrator Judge Jose P. Perez;
- viii. Commission on Human Rights' (CHR) Perspective on the issue of enforced disappearance – Director for Legal and Investigation Office, Atty. Flora Atilano

An open forum followed, which was participated in by both the members of civil society and representatives of government agencies.



Commissioner Rene Sarmiento talks about the advantages of the Writ of *Amparo*.

- **A Public Forum on Enforced Disappearances in the Philippines held at the Asian Center, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City on 4 August 2009** - Entitled, “Eleven Years of Trials and Triumphs for a World Without *Desaparecidos*,” the AFAD Secretariat, in cooperation with the Asian Center of the University

of the Philippines and the Embassy of Canada in Manila conducted another public forum on Enforced Disappearances in the Philippines. This time, the target audience was composed mostly members of the academe, several representatives of NGOs and several family members of the disappeared. Several foreign embassies also attended the occasion, e.g. Canada, France, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Japan and Australia. The event focused on three topics, e.g. the Writ of *Amparo*; the UN Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the national bill criminalizing enforced disappearances. After which, an open forum was conducted, which focused on the importance of giving education to the alleged perpetrators and also on the issue of inclusion or non-inclusion of cases perpetrated by non-state actors. After which, an AFAD anniversary ritual was conducted which focused on splashing on screen of pictures of disappeared people from different parts of Asia and reading of solidarity messages to AFAD sent by different organizations from different parts of the world.

Details about the forum can be found in pages 25-29 of the August 2009 issue of *The Voice*.

- Series of Conferences on Extrajudicial Killings and Enforced Disappearances by the Philippine Judicial Academy of the Supreme Court** – Within the first seven months of the year, the AFAD Secretary-General was invited by the Supreme Court of the Philippines to give a presentation on the obstacles in investigating and prosecuting cases of extrajudicial killings enforced disappearances. These were done in the following cities: Davao, Cagayan de Oro, Baguio City and Zamboanga City. These activities were a continuation of the same series of conferences in many other cities which started at the last quarter of 2007 and which ended in August 2009. These conferences were venues to present the problems in investigation and prosecution from the point of view of the victims. An average of 70 judges attended each conference. The AFAD Secretariat took



AFAD Sec. Gen. Aileen D. Bacalso participates in the panel organized by the Phil. Judicial Academy.

all these as venues to distribute its lobby materials, e.g. The Voice, Primer on the Convention and AFAD and Resource Center brochures. Moreover, it is also an opportunity for the Federation to be projected at the national level. But most importantly, it was important for AFAD to impart with the judges all over the country the problems in investigation and prosecution with the objective that in their dealings with cases of enforced disappearances, they will make decisions in favor of the victims.

- In view of the AFAD's concern on the composition of the UNWGEID, the Federation conducted an intensive electronic lobbying for the candidacy of Ms. Mandira Sharma, Director of Advocacy Forum and AFAD Treasurer, to the member of the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances. The AFAD Chairperson and Secretary-General wrote letters of endorsements to concerned UN body; appealed to members of the UN Human Rights Council members, through their Permanent Missions in Geneva and facilitated an extensive signature campaign with various NGOs to consider Mandira as the new Asian representative to the body. These efforts were done both unilaterally and in cooperation with *FEDEFAM* and the Asian Human Rights Commission based in Hong Kong. The AFAD Secretary-General also approached the French, Swiss and Canadian embassies in Manila who responded positively to the request for support. Unfortunately, however, perhaps, because physical lobbying in Geneva by the Asian Human Rights Commission, in cooperation with Forum Asia and the AFAD Chairperson who was in Geneva was late, the nomination of Ms. Sharma was unfortunately, not considered. It is noteworthy to say that for the last thirty years, the UNWGEID never had any woman member, which is really unfortunate. Ms. Sharma could have been an excellent choice.
- As part of the Federation's over-all lobbying strategy, the AFAD Secretariat relates with foreign embassies based in Manila. Throughout the year, the following interactions with foreign embassies were conducted:
 - **Embassy of France in Manila** – At the beginning of the year, the new ambassador to the Philippines, His Excellency Philippe Zeller and the embassy's Political Officer, Mr. J.L. Bertrand visited the office of AFAD on 2 February 2009. It was a very good opportunity for the Federation to present the phenomenon of enforced disappearances in Asia, with emphasis on the

Philippines; the work of AFAD vis-à-vis the UN Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the Bill Criminalizing Enforced Disappearances and the Federation's need for financial support.



His Excellency Philippe Zeller visits the AFAD office at the beginning of 2009.

The said visit by the Ambassador was followed up by the AFAD Secretary-General's visits to the office of the First Secretary, Political Section of the Philippine Embassy. The AFAD received some financial support for administrative purposes from the French Embassy in Manila in the amount of Five Hundred Euros.

The AFAD Secretary-General also visited the Embassy of France in Manila to update the Political Officer; Mr. Bertrand on the developments of the Federation's lobbying for the Convention. The latter also visited the AFAD office again on the third quarter of 2009 in order to discuss matters of common concern.

The AFAD Secretariat also joined in activities organized by the French Embassy, e.g. Film Festival and the French Day.

- **Embassy of Canada in Manila** - The AFAD Secretary-General visited the embassy of Canada in Manila as a follow-up to the visit of the Second Secretary, Political Section of the Embassy to the AFAD office during the last quarter of 2008. The visit was exploratory, i.e. both for lobbying for the UN Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances and for possible financial support to AFAD's work. The visit resulted in a partnership between the AFAD, the University of the Philippines Asian Center and the Embassy of Canada in Manila in organizing the Forum on Enforced Disappearances in the Philippines held on 4 June. The Embassy of Canada was also helpful in the candidacy of Ms. Mandira Sharma to the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances.

- **Embassy of Switzerland in Manila** – In view of the promotion of the Deputy Head of Mission, Ms. Irene Fluickeger, the AFAD Secretary-General and the Administrative Officer participated in the farewell party of Ms. Fluickeger who thanked the AFAD for fruitful cooperation it had with the embassy in the production of the book, “Reclaiming Stolen Lives.” There were other interactions with the Embassy after the departure of Ms. Fluickeger to South Africa. The AFAD requested the help of His Excellency Peter Sutter to help in the candidacy of Ms. Sharma. The Ambassador wrote a letter to the UN Human Rights Council requesting it to seriously consider the candidacy of Ms. Sharma.

At the latter part of the year, the AFAD Secretary-General and the AFAD Administrative Officer visited the new Deputy Head of Mission, Mr. Casserini to present the work of AFAD and explore possible new partnership. While the Federation was invited to send a proposal, the proposal sent before the end of the year for the purpose of organizing a concert for the disappeared in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao, was not approved.

- **Embassy of Italy in Manila** - For the last three years, His Excellency Ambassador Rubens Fedele has been attending AFAD’s activities in Manila. His most recent participation was the AFAD’s 4 June activity, i.e. Forum on Enforced Disappearances in the Philippines. The AFAD Secretary-General visited him to request for possible support for Atty. Gabriela Citroni’s participation in AFAD’s activities on the last week of August. While the Ambassador offered accommodation for Atty. Citroni, he could not give financial support for her coming due to the embassy’s financial constraints.

His Excellency Ambassador Fedele also supported the nomination of the AFAD Secretary-General to the Emilio Mignone Human Rights Award.

- **AFAD’s Commemoration of the International Day of the Disappeared and Devising a Common Strategy with AFAD member-organizations as well as Philippine-based organizations working on the issue-** The commemoration was jointly conducted by the AFAD and the Families of Victims of Involuntary Disappearance (FIND), a national organization of

families of the disappeared in the Philippines. A fitting tribute to all the *desaparecidos* of the world, the activity had two parts, namely:



The international movement against disappearances commemorates the International Day of the Disappeared in the Heroes' Monument, Quezon City, Philippines.

The first part was an interfaith activity which was highlighted by prayers said in various languages for the *desaparecidos* of the world. While said in various languages, the prayers were a collective offering of a common language of truth, justice, reparation and redress. With the theme, ***“Reconstructing the Historical Memory of the Desaparecidos of the World,”*** the activity meaningfully depicted the families of the victims’ and society’s oneness in pain, in hope, in struggle for the victory of justice for all the world’s disappeared persons.

The commemoration was highlighted by the cultural presentation, entitled *De Profundis* (From the Depths) by the *Samahan ng Mga Anak ng Desaparecidos* (SAD) or the Association of the Children of the Disappeared and the offering of flowers at the Wall of Remembrance of the *Bantayog ng Mga Bayani*. Mrs. Edita Burgos, mother of Filipino *desaparecido*, Jonas Burgos, gave a testimony while other family members of the disappeared in other parts of Asia, in Latin America and Africa expressed their solidarity with the families of the disappeared in the Philippines.

To grace the occasion, Chairperson of the Philippine Commission on Human Rights, Atty. Leila de Lima gave an inspirational message.



Chairperson Mugiyanto honors the *desaparecidos* of the world.

The second part of the event was a forum on the UN Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. It was highlighted by the presentation of Atty. Gabriella Citroni on the Convention and her calls for its immediate ratification. Complementing her speech was a presentation on the Anti-Enforced Disappearance Bill of the Philippines, which is an effort to codify the offense of enforced disappearance and incorporating it in the country's penal code. The said presentations were responded to by the AFAD Chairperson, Mr. Mugiyan to and by Ms. Ruth Llanos of *FEDEFAM* and Ms. Nasser a Dutour of *FEMED*.

It is important to note that during the event, campaign materials were distributed, e.g. August issue of *The Voice*, the Federation's official publication; an updated copy of the Primer on the Convention; posters; campaign t-shirts and umbrellas.

The whole event was attended by 130 people from the families of the disappeared in the Philippines, representatives of civil society, the tri-media and the diplomatic community, e.g. embassies of Indonesia, The Netherlands, Canada and Germany and a representative from UNDP.

- **Forum on the ASEAN Human Rights Body – 26 August 2009**

In view of the developments in human rights in Asia, particularly on the then upcoming launching of the ASEAN Human Rights Body, as provided for in **Article 14 of the ASEAN Charter**, the Federation deemed it fit to discuss the ASEAN Human Rights Body. Considering that holding this additional activity would entail additional expenses because of the need to invite the general public, the Federation decided to hold the event in cooperation with the National Institute for Policy Studies and the Friedrich Naumann Stiftung, who sponsored the welcome dinner of the participants to the forum.

Secretary-General of the Philippine Working Group on ASEAN Mechanism, Atty. Carlos P. Medina Jr. was the invited speaker who gave a comprehensive input on the history of the body, the burning issues vis-à-vis its effectiveness and the challenges to civil society to ensure that the said mechanism would indeed serve its purpose. The presence of representatives from Africa and Latin America, two regions with

experiences of using regional human rights mechanisms, was a good opportunity to learn from them the best and perhaps, worst practices of their respective human rights mechanisms.

The ASEAN Human Rights Body, whose Terms of Reference was approved in October 2009, is the first human rights body to be established not only in Southeast Asia, but in the whole of the Asian region. Thus, it was but very important for the AFAD member-organizations to seriously discuss the matter in order to contribute to the role of civil society in asserting the human rights body's effectiveness.



Ateneo Human Rights Center Director Carlos Medina speaks about the history of the AHRB.

Realistically, this body could certainly be used by ASEAN as cosmetic tool without really seriously serving the interests of the victims of human rights violations. But with its existence, civil society has to exert efforts to make use of it for purposes of human rights promotion and protection, thus serving the cause of the victims of human rights violations.

What would be the role of the Federation in the challenge of establishing an ASEAN human rights body with teeth? This is a question to be reflected on and considered in chartering the AFAD's future plans of action towards the realization of its vision to attain a world without disappeared persons.

The forum served as a venue to reflect on this new mechanism, to learn from the lessons of Africa and Latin America, to ponder on the role of civil society in ensuring a human rights body with teeth and possibly in encouraging South Asian participants to start lobbying for its own sub-regional human rights body. Moreover, since it was a public event, it was also an apt occasion to strengthen ties with other members of civil society in the Philippines where its Secretariat is based in their collective

endeavor to promote and protect human rights in general and to campaign for the institutionalization of enforced disappearance as a social issue (and not just as a parochial issue of the concerned families of the victims), in particular.

- **Meetings with national organizations working on the issue of enforced disappearances** - After the strategizing done by AFAD with the presence of the national organizations working on enforced disappearances, separate meetings were done with FIND and members of the Coalition Against Enforced Disappearances on one hand and the *Karapatan* on the other hand to explore areas of cooperation. This is in view of the fact that considering that the Federation does not have a strong base in the Philippines, thus, the need for the AFAD Secretariat which is based in Manila to be grounded at the national level.

So far, the AFAD and FIND already had several activities together in many universities and had come up with other joint activities within the period of August to December 2010.

- **Mass for the National Day of the Disappeared, Dec. 4, 2010** - The AFAD Secretariat sponsored a television Catholic mass, which was shown nationally and internationally in honor of the Filipino *desaparecidos*, whose national day is commemorated every December 4. While there were no inputs on the situation of enforced disappearances during the mass, it served as a venue to honor the disappeared and their families who were watching during the live mass where, at the end, the sponsoring organization was mentioned. The AFAD Secretariat members were part of those who gave offerings during the offertory.
- **Series of presentations to different universities** - The following universities were visited by both the AFAD and FIND, during which, the national phenomenon of enforced disappearances, the anti-disappearance law and the international Convention were presented and followed by an open forum.
 - New Era University – attended by 26 students
 - University of the Philippines, College of Law – attended first by 20 students and second, by 50 students

- University of the Philippines, Asian Center – attended by 80 students and faculty members during the Students’ Conference wherein a presentation on the Convention was one of the entries to the contest and which won a prize for one of the best presentations
- University of Muntinlupa – attended by 500 students and *barangay* officials.



The AFAD and FIND speakers pose with the forum organizers of the University of Muntinlupa.

- **Joint FIND-AFAD Forum on the National Bill Criminalizing Enforced**

Disappearances and the UN Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, 4 December 2009 –The Families of Victims of Involuntary Disappearance and the AFAD, in cooperation with the local government of Quezon City, convened a forum which was participated in by about 50 representatives from Manila-based NGOs. Speakers from the local government were invited to present their response to the problem of enforced disappearances and on their support to expedite the enactment of the bill into law. University of the Philippines Professor Roland Simbulan presented his views on the UN Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

- **Poetry Writing and Reading Contests** - The AFAD conducted an On-The-Spot Poetry Writing and Reading Contests, entitled “**Celebrating Human Rights through Poetry and Music.**” The first activity was the writing contest which was held on 4 December in commemoration of the National Day of the Disappeared. Ten out of almost twenty confirmed contestants participated, the results of which were processed by selected members of the Board of Judges both from the NGO community and from the academe. All the contestants were asked to read their poems on the 8th of December for another round of contest, i.e. the poetry reading contests.

Note: See full story on pp. 29-33 of the March 2010 issue of The Voice. Translated from Filipino to English, the winning piece can be found at the back cover of the same issue of The Voice.

- **Participation in the December 10 Human Rights Day Commemoration** – In cooperation with the Families of Victims of Involuntary Disappearance and the Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates, the AFAD Secretariat participated in a rally in Mendiola Plaza. On this occasion, the AFAD commemorative statement for the Human Rights were distributed.

b. *INDONESIA AND THAILAND*

- On the occasion of *KontraS*' 11th anniversary, the *KontraS* and *IKOHI* conducted major events in March this year. In cooperation with the Amnesty International, the families of the disappeared in East Timor and the Working Group on Justice for Peace, they invited the ***Madres de Plaza de Mayo*** to visit Indonesia in order to hold solidarity and lobby activities. The week-long series of events were both done for the purpose of exchange of experiences among families of the disappeared in Indonesia, East Timor, Thailand and Argentina. Moreover, it was a very good opportunity to lobby the Indonesian government to sign and ratify the UN Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. The event was indeed, a breakthrough on the part of the AFAD member-organizations in Indonesia and a great example for other countries to forge similar activities.



The *Madres de Plaza de Mayo* representatives visit Indonesia.

Note: See two separate stories on pp. 13-17 and p. 58 of the August 2009 issue of The Voice.

- September 2009 lobbying in Indonesia – The AFAD and *FEDEFAM* delegation came up with the following activities in Indonesia:
 - Meeting with the Ministry of Law and Human Rights
 - Meeting with the Special Committee on Enforced Disappearances in the Indonesian Parliament
 - Meeting with families of the disappeared
 - Visit to the house of the victims of 1965 massacre
 - Public Forum on the UN Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance
 - Talk Show in radio station, The Voice of Human Rights
 - Meeting with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
 - Participation in the weekly rally in front of the Indonesian Presidential Palace
 - Participation in the Munir Lecture in the city of Yogyakarta.



AFAD and FEDEFAM accompany their Indonesian colleagues in front of the Presidential Palace of Indonesia.

Aside from the gain on public information and the support to the families of the victims who were present during the activities, the above-mentioned activities, especially

the meeting with the Parliament, had resulted in the four-point recommendations of the Special Committee on Enforced Disappearances, the most important of which was for President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono to immediately facilitate the resolution of the disappearance of the 13 students who disappeared between 1997-1998 and immediate ratification of the UN Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

- c. **THAILAND** – A public forum on the UN Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, despite the Thai government's serious consideration to become a party to the UN Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, was not appropriate during the period in view of the political instability of the Thai government within the given period. For which reason, efforts were directed to cooperating with the two member-organizations of AFAD in Indonesia during the visit of the *Madres de Plaza de Mayo* on the occasion of the 11th anniversary of *KontraS* and the *Kartini Day*.
- d. **NEPAL** - The AFAD Secretary-General visited Advocacy Forum on February 13- 16 in order to participate in campaign and lobby activities for the UN Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the national bill criminalizing enforced disappearances, which was enacted in a form of ordinance and whose process and substance are questionable. Activities conducted included participation as speaker in a huge rally organized by Advocacy Forum and other members of civil society to reenact the death of justice on the occasion of the 5th death anniversary of Maina Sunuwar who disappeared, sexually abused and killed. Other activities included meetings with the National Commission on Human Rights and the Ministry of Peace. Such meetings however did not clearly give indication of a positive position of the government of Nepal in favor of soon signing the Convention, although the government has enacted a law criminalizing enforced disappearances in a form of an Ordinance. But such ordinance has been contested by members of the civil society in terms of substance and process.

See pp 18-21 of the August 2009 issue of *The Voice* for a related story.

The visit was also maximized by participating in the psycho-social rehabilitation activities conducted by the Advocacy Forum, entitled: "From Victims to Healers." As earlier stated, the activity was supposed to be held in December based on the 2008 budget, but due to time constraint, the Advocacy Forum moved the activity to the first quarter of the year.

- e. **PAKISTAN** – In an effort to hold, for the first time, a campaign and lobby activity in Pakistan, the AFAD Secretariat coordinated with the Truth and Justice Commission in order to prepare for a forum on enforced disappearances in Pakistan, an issue which is very relevant in the country.

The AFAD Secretariat was supposed to send its Documentation and Research Officer, Mr. Darwin Mendiola to Pakistan, who already made several efforts to apply for a visa. However, a bombing occurred just before his visit, killing a Filipina who worked at the United Nations. Because of security reasons, an official invitation from Pakistan approved by several agencies could not be produced, resulting in the inability of Mr. Mendiola to visit Pakistan.

2. INTERNATIONAL LOBBYING

a. United Nations Human Rights Council, Geneva, Switzerland, March 2009

– The AFAD in cooperation with *FEDEFAM* organized an event parallel to the UN Human Rights Council at the time when the Chairperson/Rapporteur of the UNWGEID was to present the latter's 2008 report to the United Nations Human Rights Council. The activity was also participated in by other organizations, e.g. Nonviolence International, Forum Asia, Aim for Human Rights and the *Asamblea Permanente por los Derechos Humanos*. The activity was conducted on the occasion of the fourth anniversary of the disappearance of disappeared Thai lawyer, Somchai Neelaphaijit. Speakers during the parallel event included the following: Mr. Santiago Corcuera, Chairman/Rapporteur of the UNWGEID; Ms. Pratubjit Neelaphaijit, daughter of Somchai Neelaphaijit; Mr. Mugiyanto, AFAD Chairperson; Ms. Mary Aileen D. Bacalso, AFAD Secretary-General; Ms. Gimena Gomez, *FEDEFAM* representative; Atty. Gabriela Citroni, member of the Italian delegation of the former UN Inter-Sessional Working Group To Elaborate a Draft Legally-Binding Normative Instrument for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. The activity was conducted in Room XV1 of *Palais des Nations* and was very well attended by representatives of various governments and members of the civil society. It was very important as it was officially registered as one of the activities parallel to the UN Human Rights Council.

Other AFAD Activities in Geneva included the following:

- ❖ **Meeting with the UNWGEID** – In cooperation with *FEDEFAM*, the International Commission of Jurists, the AFAD, with its member-organizations from Indonesia and Thailand had a meeting before two members of the UNWGEID. Mr. M.C.M. Iqbal, former member of the National Commission of Inquiry on the Disappearances of Persons in Sri Lanka also participated. The meeting's agenda dealt on general country situations vis-à-vis enforced disappearances and specific cases. It was

also an opportunity for the AFAD to distribute copies of its book, “Reclaiming Stolen Lives” and other materials to the members of the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances.

Members of the Working Group present during the occasion were Mr. Olivier de Frouville and Mr. Jeremy Sarkin.

- ❖ **Meeting with the Philippine Government** – The AFAD Chairperson, the Secretary-General, *FEDEFAM* Representative and Mr. M.C.M. Iqbal of Sri Lanka had a meeting with the Assistant to the Ambassador of the Philippines to Geneva, Mr. Dennis Lepatan and his assistant, Mr. Hendrik Garcia. The agenda delved around the result of the Alston visit and the Philippine government’s failure to fulfill its pledge during its candidacy as member of the UN Human Rights Council, i.e. to sign and ratify the United Nations Convention For the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. There was not much to hope, though because when asked when can the Philippine government possibly sign and ratify the Convention, the not-so-positive diplomatic response was: “in due time.” The representatives of AFAD were instead, told to do their lobbying at the national level which the latter has already been doing. The AFAD just took the opportunity of being in Geneva to speak to the Philippine government, through the representative/s of its Permanent Mission there.
- ❖ **Monitoring the interventions of governments on Agenda Item 3, i.e. Civil and Political Rights of the UN Human Rights Council** - The AFAD representatives listened to the report of the Chairperson/Rapporteur of the UNWGEID and the presentations of various governments, especially of Asia, vis-à-vis Item 3 of the UN Human Rights Council. Of the countries that gave oral interventions, only Thailand made an explicit statement stating that it would take serious consideration of becoming a party to the Convention. While this was not an explicit promise, the fact that it was stated officially was something to be followed-up with the Thai government, whose Ambassador reiterated the same statement during the parallel event of the AFAD and the *FEDEFAM* mentioned earlier in this report. The rest of the governments did not say anything on the Convention.

- b. June 2009, Torture Survivors’ Conference, Washington D.C.** – The AFAD Secretary-General attended series of activities sponsored by the Torture

Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition held in Washington D.C. from June 23-29, 2009. It was also an opportunity to present the phenomenon of enforced disappearances in Asia before torture survivors, mostly based in North America and civil society in the US. The AFAD Secretary-General was a speaker in two major events, e.g. a forum of torture survivors wherein she spoke during a panel discussion on the effects of torture to women and children. This was also an apt topic considering that enforced disappearance is a form of torture. Moreover, she also spoke before the Commission on Human Rights of the US Congress where she presented the phenomenon of enforced disappearances in Asia and called on the new government of President Barrack Obama to be serious in eradicating torture from the face of the earth by ratifying without delay the UN Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. Other activities in Washington D.C. also included discussions/workshops with torture survivors, etc.



AFAD Sec. Gen., Aileen D. Bacalso speaks before the US Congress on the imperative of the anti-disappearance Convention.

Part of the AFAD agenda in the US was to visit the Embassy of the Philippines in Washington DC in order to clarify the latter's statement on the disappearances of Melissa Roxas; Juanito Carabeo and John Edward. It was also a venue to explore possibilities for cooperation.

The trip to the US was also maximized by AFAD to meet with the National Endowment for Democracy, where AFAD sent a proposal on Documentation and Research, including the Resource Center; the Foundation for Open Society Institute which is based New York and the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team office in New York where the AFAD will also have a partnership for a forensic training.

c. Lobbying for ASEAN Human Rights Body

- ❖ During the period of this report, the AFAD Secretariat has been invited to local meetings on the ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism. Several meetings had been attended by the Documentation Officer and by the AFAD Secretary-General. The discussion delved on the Terms of

Reference of the ASEAN Human Rights Body. Considering that the Asian continent does not have any regional human rights mechanism to protect people from various forms of human rights violations, the AFAD Secretariat deems it important to attend these meetings in order to contribute some inputs from the point of view of victims of enforced disappearances.

- ❖ On 4-5 May 2009, the AFAD Secretary-General was invited by Forum Asia to attend a conference on best practices of the Americas, Africa and Europe in terms of the use of existing human rights mechanisms vis-à-vis the lobbying for the ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism. Held in Jakarta, Indonesia, the conference was entitled: Experts' Dialogue with Civil Society on the Regional Human Rights Mechanisms in Africa, the Americas and Europe and was attended by the National Commission on Human Rights in the Philippines and several NGOs based in various parts of Asia, including AFAD. The event enabled AFAD to give inputs on the perspective of the victims and at the same time to network with other NGOs based in Asia.

d. Regional Meeting with Participation of Representatives of FEDEFAM and FEMED, 26-37 August 2009

The regional meeting was a very important occasion for the Federation to convene itself especially so that the latter's latest meeting was held in June 2010, i.e. more than a year already since the holding of this meeting.

Several developments both externally in terms of the human rights situation in the Asian region and internally within the Federation had already occurred, thus the need to share both the political and human rights context in each of the countries represented and the response of the AFAD member-organizations to the situation. Moreover, in view of the fact that the 4th AFAD Congress would soon be convened, it also served as an occasion to prepare



Representatives of three federations speak about the best and worst practices of regional human rights mechanisms.

for it at a relatively early stage, i.e. six months ahead of time in order to attain maximum results.

The reports by the AFAD member-organizations both on the human rights situation and their implementation of the AFAD plans were prepared, presented and discussed in the presence of observers from Latin America, Africa and Sri Lanka. To note, Sri Lanka is a country wherein the Federation wants to renew ties with. The AFAD used to have a member-organization in Sri Lanka in the past and more importantly, because of the sorry state of human rights in the country, causing a huge number of cases of enforced disappearances, there is indeed a need for renewal of ties.

The discussions of the above-mentioned country reports served as a venue for updating and analyzing the human rights situation, at least in the countries represented. These reports served as a significant picture of the human rights situation in the Asian region. In so doing, the Federation knows its context, where it stands in responding to the signs of the times - to the human rights situation of the region, in general and to the phenomenon of enforced disappearances, in particular.

The sharing of experiences by the representative of both the AFAD's Latin American and African counterparts had broadened the knowledge of the AFAD Council members and observers present. It enabled them to think beyond the confines of their countries and their region. Thus, possibilities for further cooperation were explored and seen.

A central issue of concern was the discussion of positions of various governments on The Convention and the efforts done by the Federation's constituents in the different Asian countries where they are based. Such discussion served as a backdrop to an in-depth discussion on the Convention.

Internal organizational concerns vis-à-vis the dynamics of the Federation were likewise discussed exclusively by the members of the AFAD Council. In general, these included issues of performance of some member-organizations who were, unfortunately, absent. A general consensus on initial decisions on how to deal with the problems was achieved.

e. Asian Lobby Tour

Starting September 2009 and ending January 2010, the lobby tour was conducted by a team composed of representatives from the AFAD Council,

the AFAD Secretariat, families of the disappeared in countries visited and a representative from the Latin American Federation of Associations of Relatives of Disappeared-Detainees (*FEDEFAM*). The lobby team spoke with heads of state and representatives of government agencies, held public events, organized meetings with families of the disappeared and conducted media interviews in the Indonesia, East Timor, Thailand, India, Nepal and the Philippines. For security reasons, the planned visits to Pakistan and Sri Lanka did not materialize.

- **Indonesia** - Indonesia's seat of government was visited twice, first in September and again in November. The main reasons for giving priority to Indonesia was that in 2007, the Indonesian delegation promised before the High Level Segment session of the UN Human Rights Council to sign the Convention. The second visit was inspired by the Recommendations of the



Indonesia's Prime Minister, Pataiales Akbar, is asked by the media on the government's commitment to the Convention.

House of Parliament's Special Committee to inquire into the Disappearance of the 1997-1998 Activists to reelected President SBY urging him (among three other points) to ratify the Convention. While the first visit which included meetings with the House of Parliament, resulted in the above-mentioned recommendations of the said Commission on Inquiry, the second visit occurred at an unstable political situation when SBY was shook with a huge scandal involving an issue of corruption. Hence, what the lobby team received included an assurance that Indonesia had already ratified sixty-seven international treaties and an ambivalent promise by the Ministry of Justice to include the issue in the 2009-2014 Human Rights Action Plan and to raise the matter to the president's attention.

- **Timor Leste** - *"Every family in my country has someone disappeared. I myself have two brothers who disappeared."* These were words of Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and Timor-Leste Pres. Jose Ramos-Horta in a meeting with the AFAD, whose local member is **HAK** Association and with the *FEDEFAM*. The president made a clear commitment that he would

undertake all efforts to sign and ratify this international treaty before the end of 2009.

He noted that had he been alerted earlier, the government of Timor-Leste could have been a state party.

The team asked the President to facilitate the possibility that Timor-Leste be one of the first 20 countries to ratify the treaty which provides, among other things, the right to truth and the right not to be subjected to enforced disappearances.



With President Jose Ramos - Horta of Timor Leste, the AFAD-FEDEFAM lobby team, contented with the promise of ratification, poses for picture.

The AFAD Chairperson, Mugiyanto confirmed that the Indonesian and the Timor-Leste- governments established a Truth and Friendship Commission. The joint commission, which recommends the establishment of a Commission on Disappearances, will be guided by the treaty, if ratified.

Khurram Parvez of the AFAD member-organization in Kashmir greeted Pres. Ramos-Horta with admiration as the latter is considered as an icon by the Kashmiri people who are fighting for independence. Looking up to Pres. Ramos-Horta as an exemplary world leader, Parvez appealed to the president to ratify the treaty and to appeal to other Nobel Peace Laureates and other Asian heads of state to endorse the same. Pres. Ramos-Horta assured the group that he would write to other heads of state and Nobel Peace Prize winners.

- **Thailand** - During the March 2008 session of the UN Human Rights Council, the Thai government expressed that it was seriously considering being a party to the Convention. Thus far, nothing had been realized to fulfill the promise.



Angkhana Neelapaijit and Puttanee Kankun emphasize the need to resolve cases of disappearances.

In a meeting with the Ministry of Justice, the lobby team, headed by Ms. Angkhana Neelapaijit and her daughter, Pratubjit Neephalaijit, learned that a process is ongoing to conduct a research on the possibility of the government to ratify the Convention. However, possible conflict points in the treaty's provisions vis-a-vis domestic laws have prevented the government from fulfilling its promise. Moreover, insinuations expressed on the issue of justice, such as, for example in the punishment of perpetrators, were accordingly, major impediments to the government's signing the treaty.

The team also conducted a meeting with the reconstituted members of the Commission on Human Rights who, being new, still had to familiarize themselves with the Convention. The Chairperson, Prof. Amara Pongsapich, Ph.D. assured the AFAD and the *FEDEFAM* of the Commission's support.

- India** - In the historic signing of the Convention in the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 6 February 2007, India had signed the Convention but thus far, has not yet ratified it. Hence, the AFAD deemed it important to make a breakthrough by visiting government authorities, especially the Indian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in order to see possibilities for ratification. The latter, however, did not give an appointment to the Federation accordingly because they feared that it would embarrass the government by mentioning the report on the 2,700 mass graves found in Kashmir, entitled, "*Buried Evidence*."



The AFAD-FEDEFAM lobby team with MP Soz.

Nevertheless, the lobby team was able to make full use of its visit by conducting meetings with parliamentarians, members of civil society in New Delhi and families of the disappeared in Kashmir.

- f. Participation in the Conference on Justice, Reparation and Memory by the Euro-Mediterranean Federation of Associations of Families of the Disappeared (FEMED) held in Istanbul, Turkey, 10-12 December 2009 -** The AFAD Secretary-General gave a speech on the work of the Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances to a group of representatives and international guests who spoke on various topic related to the fight against impunity.

B. STATEMENTS, CAMPAIGN MATERIALS AND THE AFAD WEBSITE

1. Statements

The Secretariat issued official statements on the following:

- ❖ Easter Sunday Statement
- ❖ Letter to the Editor on Jovito Palparan
- ❖ Women’s Day Statement
- ❖ Statement of Support to the Mandate of the UNWGEID
- ❖ Letter to the Editor on Jovito Palparan
- ❖ AFAD Statement on the 5th anniversary of Somchai Neelaphaijit
- ❖ Anniversary of Aasia Jeelani
- ❖ Easter Sunday Statement
- ❖ Letter to the Editor on the State of the Nation Address of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo
- ❖ Statement on the International Week of the Disappeared
- ❖ Statement on the International Week for Torture Survivors
- ❖ Statement on the AFAD Anniversary
- ❖ Solidarity Message for the 11th anniversary of *KontraS*
- ❖ Solidarity Message to *FEMED* during the raid of one of its activities
- ❖ Solidarity Message to Bolivian organizations of the disappeared for winning cases in court
- ❖ Statement on the 5th anniversary of the murder of Munir
- ❖ Statement on the Philippine Martial Law Anniversary
- ❖ Statement on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- ❖ Statement on the Anniversary of Jonas Burgos’ disappearance
- ❖ Solidarity message for the Karapatan Congress
- ❖ Open Letter to Philippine President GMA and to Indonesian President SBY by the Conference, titled: “*Psycho-social rehabilitation in the process of exhumation.*”

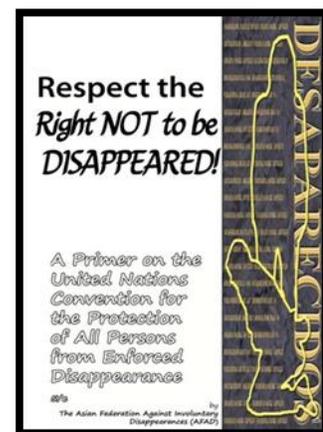
2. **General Allegation Against the Indonesian Government on the Case of Munir** - The Federation submitted to the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances a general allegation against the Indonesian government on the case of Munir. The main issue of the allegation was the acquittal of the alleged mastermind, General Muchdi on 31 December 2008. Based on the said allegation, the UNWGEID sent a confidential letter to the Indonesian government.



3. **The Voice** - Within the period, the AFAD Secretariat prepared the production of the August 2009 issue of AFAD's bi-annual publication, The Voice. The preparations included issue planning; data-gathering; writing, editing, proofreading. It is now ready for distribution to various outlets. Most of the copies will be brought by the representatives of the AFAD member - organizations when they come to Manila on the last week of August.

A copy of the August 2009 issue of The Voice is available at the AFAD website: <http://www.afad-online.org>. The supposed second issue of The Voice for 2009 was released only in March 2010 due to other simultaneous lobbying activities held by AFAD during the last quarter of 2009.

4. **Convention Primer** - In view of the developments of the signatures and ratifications of the Convention, an updated version of the Primer, with the annexed full text of the treaty was published by AFAD. To respond to the needs for copies needed during presentations in different universities, religious congregations and communities, 3,000 copies were printed. While the earlier editions were translated to different Asian languages, AFAD did not have the resources to do so for the most updated version. The printed copies were an important source of information to who's who were able to listen to the presentations.



5. **AFAD Calendar 2010** – To popularize at least some of the most important provisions of the Convention, the AFAD Secretariat took the initiative of putting these provisions in the 2010 AFAD desk Calendars. The calendars are being distributed during the Federation’s activities both in the Philippines and in other countries.
6. **The AFAD Website:** To ensure the Federation’s visibility electronically, the AFAD website was being regularly updated. Efforts to make it interactive are being done in order to get feedbacks from the viewers on the how the website had been of use to them.

C. RESOURCE CENTER

The Resource Center continued to be maintained, however, collection of books and materials were limited because there was no budget to purchase additional materials. Efforts to get financial support for its digitization so as to make it available to international users have been unsuccessful, so far. Such efforts are being sustained and will hopefully garner positive results.

The Resource Center still remained underused. Efforts to promote it were done during university hopping through presentation of the Resource Center powerpoint and distribution of its brochures. There were users from neighboring universities, such as the University of the Philippines and the New Era University.

The Resource Center is rich in materials which are useful for the Federation’s advocacy. However, the number of users is indicative of the low level of support the issue of enforced disappearances has from society. Moreover, the internet stage has all the more limited the number of library users. To be true to its objectives, the Resource Center has to consider the experiences of other NGOs and libraries, share experiences and learn lesson from each other in order to improve its viability. It is important to steadfastly continue promoting it in whatever possible ways there are while mindful of the perspective of digitizing it once resources are made available.

D. DOCUMENTATION AND RESEARCH

Documentation work could not be intensified in view of the absence of resources for this purpose. The proposed project to the National Endowment Fund which intended to use the Martus system was not realized because of fund unavailability. The work done by the Federation in 1998 during the production of the book entitled, “Reclaiming Stolen Lives,” while already finished, needs to be sustained at the higher level. Based on the book,

initial statistics of cases in countries where AFAD member-organizations are based are documented in the book's accompanying CD. These cases are already uploaded in the AFAD website.

Cases are received from time to time from different sources and these cases are systematically filed. However, at the regional level, no active documentation are being done by the AFAD Secretariat. The AFAD member-organizations, in varying levels, are conducting documentation, but these efforts need to be coordinated so that a regional output can be produced.

The documentation and research work of AFAD should really be given important attention, as this serves as the basis of the rest of its interventions. It will determine the correctness of the other components of work of the Federation and will also help AFAD in maintaining its credibility.

Thus, this component of work has to be given serious attention in by the Federation both at the national and the regional levels.

E. DIRECT ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES

1. Educational Assistance – As earlier stated, the Federation had difficulty to get financial support from other sources, thus, only member-organizations in countries funded by EED as per budget submitted, were able to receive funds for educational assistance. These include the following:

- i. ***Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP), Kashmir*** – On the first half of the year, thirty, out of originally sixty children of the disappeared had received the educational assistance from EED funds. The organization in Kashmir expressed difficulty selecting who among the originally sixty beneficiaries would be prioritized, considering that the sixty former beneficiaries are all in need of financial support. But because funds were available only for half of the number of beneficiaries in the past, there was nothing that could be done from the AFAD's end, since the proposal submitted to OAK Foundation was not approved.

An additional ten beneficiaries were given on the second half of the year in view of the fact that the Federation was able to get additional donation.

- ii. ***IKOHI/KontraS, Indonesia*** – Twenty beneficiaries were given the educational assistance of Ten US Dollars each per month for six months.

So far, the AFAD Secretariat has not yet received a report from the member-organizations as to the fund distribution and that discussions resulted in the decision to give the rest of the amount to families of the disappeared in East Timor.

iii. Advocacy Forum, Nepal – On the first half of the year, thirty-one beneficiaries from Nepal received educational assistance. The thirty children received the funds from the EED support and one support was given by an individual donor from Italy. The AFAD member-organization in Nepal complained that like the APDP, they had a difficult time explaining to the former beneficiaries (seventy of them during the last semester) that there were not enough funds for the others.

On the second half of the year, additional five children were given, since the Federation also received additional funding from a donor.

iv. Justice for Peace Foundation, Thailand – Twenty-nine children received educational assistance. Nine of these twenty-nine children got the one-time support from an individual donor from Italy.

2. Psycho-Social Rehabilitation Program - Despite the expressed need to continue this program, there was no possibility to do it, except in APDP-Kashmir and Advocacy-Forum, which were not able to do their activities at the end of the year due to time constraint, thus, budget was unspent in 2008.

It is such a pity that due to absence of funds, this important activity which the families themselves expressed as their need and which they appreciated very much could not be done.

To note, the Federation is trying to look for other sources of funds to sustain these efforts, but it has never been easy. The UN Voluntary Funds for Victims of Torture did not approve the proposal sent, but in a recent meeting with them, problems were clearly mentioned in terms of the need for member-organizations to ensure prompt submission of narrative and financial reports. It was clearly mentioned by the UNVFVT in the meeting with AFAD in March 2010 that the reason why the proposal was not approved was because of the delay of the AFAD member-organizations in sending their reports which caused the delay of the AFAD Secretariat's submission of the whole regional report. After difficult efforts to convince them to let the AFAD send a new proposal again, the UNVFVT agreed to receive a new proposal on

the condition that only members who have the capability to implement the program and to send reports punctually be included in the program.

F. INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY WORK

International solidarity work was expressed in various programs, through joint activities especially in international lobby, campaign and public information. The Federation had made great efforts in this regard by inviting representatives from different parts of Asia, including those who are not members of the Federation and FEMED and FEDEFAM to attend AFAD activities. The Federation, on the other hand, was invited to participate in FEMED and other organizations' activities.

The several joint activities both at the national, regional and international levels were a proof of the strength of the international movement against enforced disappearances. While there is no international structure in this movement, the bilateral cooperation speaks that the commonality of the experience in terms of enforced disappearances had urged the various organizations working on the same issue, especially those federations/associations of families of the disappeared to join hands together in order to achieve greater victories in the fight for justice and against impunity.

There was no distinct program followed in the aspect of international solidarity work as this is imbedded in the Federation's various aspects of work. So far, in the past year, not much urgent action cases were sent to the Federation for the latter to respond.

It is important to mention here, under solidarity, the program on membership recruitment. In 2009, a new member has been recruited, i.e. the *Perkumpulan HAK*. However, it is worrisome that there are also not-so-active active members in the Federation, e.g. the Claimants 1081 and the Relatives Committee of the May 1992 Heroes. However, reviewing the six-year strategic plan of the AFAD Congress held in Nepal in 2006 in terms of targeting 16 new member-organizations in two years, the Secretariat reckoned in its assessment that the plan is unrealistic. Within the period of 2007-2009, the Federation lost one member, which was the CPRLD of Sri Lanka because of the fact that it was dissolved. On the other hand, it had recruited two members, e.g. the Working Group on Justice for Peace and the HAK-East Timor.

G. LEADERSHIP, ADMINISTRATION, AND FINANCE WORK

In terms of Leadership and Administration, the Federation tried its best to function amidst financial difficulties. Due to lack of resources especially at the beginning of the year, the AFAD Council was not able to function. However, consultations among members, e.g.

the Executive Council through yahoo messenger and during the AFAD activities in Geneva where three AFAD Council members were present were maximized to ensure that decisions be made collectively. A regular Council meeting on the first quarter of the year could not be convened because of funding constraints. It was later convened when the Federation was able to get support from OSI and such a meeting had indeed, helped a lot in discussing several matters both of internal concern as well as in terms of program implementation, especially on strategizing for the AFAD Congress.

The presence of AFAD Council members in lobbying activities in different Asian countries also facilitated discussion on matters of important organizational concern as well as plans in the immediate future. This was especially true during the last four months of the year when some of the AFAD Council members visited member-organizations and accompanied them in their lobbying.

In as far as the AFAD Secretariat is concerned, management functions at the secretariat level was conducted through regular (bi-annual) planning and monitoring of plan implementation; regular (bi-annual) evaluation; evaluation after every major activity. However, in the last year, while there were efforts to ensure submission of quarterly reports, there was no time to discuss these reports before the next periodic evaluation. Also, evaluation of performance was not done prior to the year-end assessment, although when problems arose, these were discussed timely by the concerned personnel.

Training of AFAD secretariat members were consciously conducted through their participation in local as well as international trainings: The said trainings, which helped in the secretariat's day-to-day work, include the following:

1. Training on the Human Rights Council held in Bangkok, Thailand which was participated in by the AFAD Admin. Officer;
2. Training conducted by the Dignity International on ESCR held in The Netherlands and which was participated in by the AFAD Resource Center Officer;
3. Training on tools of monitoring the UN Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance attended by the AFAD's Philippine Project Coordinator;
4. Participation of Secretariat members in the actual lobbying for the UN Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances;
5. Training on the UN Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

Related to these staff development activities were regular sessions to enhance interpersonal and working relationships to improve teamwork and camaraderie among members of the secretariat.

Reports of member-organizations on program implementation were submitted by the majority; however, two member-organizations are delinquent in their submission of reports especially on direct assistance, thus affecting both the substance as well as the timeliness of the Secretariat reports to the AFAD partners. This problem has consequences in terms of the AFAD credibility vis-à-vis its partners.

On the focal persons, there was no opportunity for them to meet as a group. They gave regular reports on their work, which reports should have been read and analyzed but because of time constraints, these were filed and considered only during assessment and planning.

Major assessments were conducted at the beginning of the year to prepare for the one year plan and at the middle of the year to check the implementation of the said plan and come up with adjustments. During these activities, discussions on the regional and national human rights situations were conducted to contextualize evaluations and plans to the concrete situation of the region. These helped the AFAD Secretariat in ensuring the sustained implementation of the work despite the fact that due to financial difficulties, it took a long time before the Council could meet. Thus, guidance of the AFAD Council, which is the highest policy making body of the organization in between congresses, was found wanting.

For purposes of the substantial preparation of the Fourth AFAD Congress, an internal evaluation was conducted in order to facilitate a qualitative leap in the development of the Federation. Visits to the AFAD member-organizations were made by one of the two evaluators. During the last four months of the year, the evaluator conducted evaluation in Indonesia and India. These would have to be continued on the first half of the year. The actual output is expected to be presented during the 4th AFAD Congress to be held in Indonesia on the first week of June.

Routinary day-to-day administrative work, e.g. petty cash, filing of important documents, payment of bills, ensuring the payment of benefits to personnel, office equipment maintenance and cleanliness was being done.

Regular bookkeeping, fund disbursements and daily transactions were done both at the national and regional levels. Timely audits were conducted as part of the basic requirement of the AFAD partners. A comprehensive audit was conducted at the beginning

of the year and a bi-annual audit was conducted for the purpose of the requirement of the *Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst (EED)*

The following were proposals sent to the following organizations and their corresponding status:

- On the Experts' Training on the UN Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance sent to KIOS - disapproved;
- On the Experts Training on the UN Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance sent to the Embassies of Spain, France, Germany - disapproved
- On the Psycho-social Rehabilitation sent to the UN Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture – disapproved;
- On a Public Forum on the Writ of *Amparo* – sent to the Embassy of Canada in Manila – approved
- On the Regional Meeting of AFAD sent to OSI – approved
- On the Intensification of the AFAD's Campaign for Truth, Justice, Redress and the Reconstruction of the Historical Memory for the *Desaparecidos* of the Philippines sent to Misereor – approved
- On the Administration needs of AFAD sent to DKA – approved
- Abstract on the comprehensive work of AFAD sent to the Sigrid Rausing Trust – an invitation for AFAD to send a proposal was received in February 2010
- On the realization of the Fourth AFAD Congress sent to Diakonie, Germany – proposal was approved in March 2010; however, one third of the budget has still to be secured from another source. The same proposal was sent to Australian Aid, but disapproved.
- On the Documentation, Research and Resource Center of AFAD submitted to National Endowment for Democracy – disapproved
- On Information Dissemination Work of AFAD in relation to the national elections sent to the Embassy of Canada in Manila – disapproved
- On the realization of AFAD's Third Concert submitted to the Embassy of Switzerland in Manila – disapproved
- On the realization of AFAD's Third Concert submitted to the Embassy of France in Manila – disapproved
- On the realization of AFAD's Third Concert submitted to Asia Foundation, etc. - disapproved

It is important to recognize the support of local friends in the Philippines and in other parts of the world such as *Pax Christi* from Germany for the kind support they gave, without which, AFAD would not have survived the difficult financial crisis we underwent in 2009.

In terms of the implementation of policies, the same approved policies were followed. To suit the needs of the organization, implementation was done with some degree of flexibility.

IV. GENERAL STATEMENTS

1. **In the field of campaign, lobby and public information**, while the above-mentioned activities were conducted, the process of conducting the regional strategizing which could have been done at the beginning of the year by the whole AFAD Council was rather done at the latter part of the year. It was not too late, though, but ideally, it should have guided the whole work throughout 2009 and that initial results could already have been gauged at the middle of the year. But due to financial difficulties, a regional meeting was impossible at the beginning of the year.

What was most important was that the Capacity-Building on the Convention given in August was a factor that facilitated the strategies regionally and nationally.

Related to this facilitating factor was the solidarity work that the Federation has forged with similar formations, e.g. *FEDEFAM*, *FEMED*, without which, lobbying heads of state and government authorities would not have been that strong. Having penetrated the highest officials of the countries visited, the Federation has proven itself to be a force which has the potentials in influencing policies and decisions in favor of the victims of human rights violations.

What are still to be regularized are the consistent local efforts in between the regional interventions in each country. However, much depend on the capability in material and human resources of each AFAD member-organization. Intensive and extensive advocacy, with the support of national, regional and international organizations and with a high level of media coverage has still to be achieved. Moreover, conscious and wide participation of families of the victims, as can be seen in Indonesia, for example, are a key to making the AFAD voice louder.

What is always most basic in campaign and lobby is the basic documentation, which, at the regional level and national levels, remains to be improved. While documentation is available, these have still to be systematized and completed for purposes of accuracy, correctness in interventions and credibility.

The Resource Center, which was designed to complement AFAD's advocacy work, necessitates a pro-active promotion while at the same time, taking active efforts in soliciting the necessary resources to ensure full blown implementation both as a physical center as well as in the implementation of the plan for digitization to reach a wider audience.

In as far as the AFAD Secretariat is concerned, it appropriately made groundwork by inviting Philippine national organizations coming from different political persuasions to its efforts to come up with common campaign and lobbying strategies. While absolute unity was not impossible, it was a breakthrough on the part of the Federation to be able to work, to a certain extent with these organizations in some of the activities.

- 2. In the aspect of direct assistance**, the much-appreciated program by the families of the disappeared, i.e. the psychosocial rehabilitation program was stopped because of funding constraints. So far, prospective funders were keen to funding advocacy work rather than direct assistance program. The difficulty of the national member-organizations, which are supposed to principally respond to the needs of the victims, in raising funds for this purpose made it very difficult, nay impossible to continue the program implementation within the period. It is however a pity that after the program, *"From Victims to Healers"* was conducted by most of the AFAD members, there were no more resources for them to practice what they have learned from the training in order to heal their co-victims.

Thus, going back to the result of the December 2007 Summing Up of the Psycho-Social Rehabilitation Work of the Federation, member-organizations have to take the principal responsibility of doing the psycho-social rehabilitation program by looking for the much-needed resources to respond to this expressed psycho-social needs of their members. The Federation's intervention is only complementary to what the member-organizations' work in the over-all empowerment of the families of the disappeared.

A major problem in direct assistance, both in terms of the psycho-social rehabilitation and educational assistance for the children of the disappeared is the inability of some of the members to deliver narrative and financial reports to the AFAD Secretariat. This indeed very much affects the whole program, affecting the credibility of the Federation vis-à-vis their partners. The case of the disapproval of the proposal sent to the UNVFVT was caused

by delay of member-organizations' reports resulting also in the delay of the AFAD Secretariat's report.

3. **In terms of consolidation and expansion**, much remains to be desired. How have member-organizations concretized the agreed mission, vision and goals both in their respective countries and regionally/internationally? This remains to be assessed. Are regionally agreed plans seriously implemented at the national and regional levels? Have regionally agreed upon plans religiously echoed to the leadership and membership of the organizations? Do the voice of the greater majority of the constituents of each member-organizations carried at the regional level? Does the AFAD regional office have complete profiles of the member-organizations, based on distinct status of which, corresponding interventions be made? How much have been implemented of the recommendations made during the Participatory Capacity Building Evaluation of 2005? These questions remain to be answered by the Internal Evaluation which is being conducted for the purpose of raising the level of the organizational capacity of the member-organizations.

It is obvious that in terms of expansion, the number of members recruited during the last three years pales in comparison to the target additional members of 16 organizations within six years. It reflects that the 3rd AFAD Congress was not well-grounded on the situation of the Federation as reflected in such a very unrealistic target of membership expansion.

It is important that a realistic target of number of member-organizations to be recruited every year be made as the Federation reviews its 6-Year Strategic Plan during its upcoming Congress in June 2010.

4. The sustainability of the Federation is a very important issue considering that the work against enforced disappearances is long term. Thus, it is essential to devise measures to raise financial support to ensure sustainability of efforts. Corollary to this is the need to train second liners to ensure sustainability.

V. IMPACT

The initial impact of the above-mentioned activities in 2019 are manifested in the following:

- a. Information dissemination on the phenomenon of enforced disappearances and the UN Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance to the audience, which included heads of state, representatives of embassies, government agencies, the academe, the media and members of civil society, thus making them realize the importance of this issue and their role as part of society.
- b. The continuing projection of the phenomenon of enforced disappearances in Asia to various audiences has a multiplying effect as they, too, can disseminate the said information to their respective networks.
- c. The lobbying conducted with the participation of the families of the disappeared was in itself empowering for the families of the victims.
- d. The solidarity among family members of the disappeared in Latin America, Asia (Thailand, East Timor, Indonesia) during the visit of the *Madres de Plaza de Mayo-Linea Fundadora* was fostered. Such solidarity is very important in sustaining the strength and commitment of the families of the disappeared in this long-drawn struggle against enforced disappearances and against impunity.
- e. More concrete solidarity work was done through joint efforts of the three federations, e.g. The Latin American Federation of Associations of Relatives of Disappeared-Detainees, the Euro-Mediterranean Federation Against Enforced Disappearances and the AFAD and with the support of We Remember-Belarus.
- f. As for the direct assistance program, specifically the educational assistance, it is very important to help in the daily needs of the economically hard-up families of the victims. Equally important, the small amount that they receive gives them strength, as they feel that despite their difficult situation, there are still people who care for them.
- g. In terms of leadership and administration, the trainings participated in by both the AFAD secretariat members and the AFAD Secretariat, while cannot be

- quantified, qualitatively strengthened the capacity of the whole Federation in better carrying out its mission, vision and goals.
- h. In terms of fund-raising, concrete results were seen through the approval of about fifty-percent of the proposals sent, however a significant 50 percent were also disapproved.
 - i. The additional member-organization recruited during the year had initially bolstered the capacity of the Federation.

In terms of lobbying, if gauged in terms of concrete signatures and ratifications by Asian countries to the Convention, we could not see tangible results. The task of convincing governments to ratify international treaties is an uphill battle.

In general, with the continuing activities in these countries in Asia, the AFAD has been considered as the only regional Federation in Asia working on the issue of enforced disappearances and is trying to make at least, a little difference, in the everyday lives of the families of the disappeared and their survivors.