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Preface

When the Southeast Asian Human Rights Studies Network (SEAHRN) was formed in 2009 one of its first activities was the development of a textbook for Southeast Asia students. This was in response to its objective of improving teaching on human rights in Southeast Asian universities. Given that education on human rights is a human right itself, and that few students graduate from university with any knowledge of human rights, there is much work to do.

Many lecturers at Southeast Asian universities spoke of the frustration of not having textbooks appropriate for their courses. While there are many excellent human rights textbooks available, they do not always suit the needs of students in Southeast Asian universities. Translation is a big problem, as nearly all undergraduate students study in their national language. The cost of a textbook is another challenge, as they can cost the equivalent of a month's living allowance for the average undergraduate student. Further, most textbooks do not mention Southeast Asia and do not focus on the concerns which are relevant for students.

Principles of the Textbook

To address these needs SEAHRN began drafting a human rights textbook for undergraduate students in Southeast Asia. Early on a number of principles were established:

- The textbook must be open source and freely available to all students. There would be no limitations to the distribution through copyright or control by an international publisher.
- The chapters and the text would be available through the web in PDF format.
- The textbook will have an accessible format which is easy to print and photocopy.
- The target audience is undergraduate students who study human rights as a general studies or elective course. The student does not need extensive background knowledge in law, politics, development, or sociology, but the textbook should supplement students studying these majors.
- The text examines the status of human rights in Southeast Asia, and all topics will be in this context.
- The textbook will be translated into major Southeast Asian languages in the future.
- While the aim was to produce a high quality textbook, priority was given to producing translation friendly material. Easing translation was one way to ensure that the textbook is widely accessible, locally specific, and participatory.
- The textbook only refers to relevant writing that is accessible to the students. Given the limited library resources and the cost of international journals, the textbook favors referring to work which is freely available on the internet.

Work on the textbook has been slower than originally anticipated, and the task is now greater. The increasing attacks on academic freedom in many Southeast Asian countries, and the demands placed upon academics have hindered the development of the textbook. Regardless, the large team of writers, researchers and reviewers have pooled their energy to create this first edition and they have made significant steps towards chapters in the second edition.

Even when the full edition of the textbook arrives, it will be a huge challenge to get it taught in universities throughout the region. Not only are governments reluctant to place human rights in a core curriculum, many students do not have an interest or see no relevance in studying human rights. The discussion of some human rights topics, such as historical events or current political conflicts, can be sensitive within a country. Yet, even given this climate an increasing number of students and lecturers want to gain knowledge on human rights.

Features of the textbook

The first edition was a collaborative activity involving lecturers and students across the region. While it challenging working collaboratively with many lecturers and students from different countries, the diversity has added much content to the textbook. The features of the textbook to assist students are:

- List of definitions: Helps students to catch up with human rights terminology
- Discussion and Debate points: These boxes can be used to increase discussion and debate with students on the challenges to human rights.
- Southeast Asian examples: Where relevant, human rights are described in action in the eleven Southeast Asian countries.
- Example questions section to help lecturers structure exam and essay questions.

At the end of each chapter is a short summary and details of where a student can look for further material. Knowing the limited resources of most students, the further work focuses on useful websites and organizations which have research freely available. Given all students have a competency in searching the internet there is no need to write complex URLs, and rather this section gives useful search terms for internet searches, and names of authors which can be searched to find publications and journal articles.

A note on the use of Southeast Asia: The textbook uses Southeast Asia rather than ASEAN because it includes the eleven countries of Southeast Asia, that is the ASEAN countries and East Timor, as it is likely East Timor will join ASEAN in the near future. .

Looking Forward to the Second edition

The first edition is an initial step towards a much expanded Second Edition, detailed below. Due to time and resource constraints the publication of the second edition has been held back and this first edition is the collection of chapters which have completed the review and proofreading process. The second edition will feature chapters focusing on a Southeast Asian history of human rights, and addressing current human rights issues. A breakdown of the working table of contents for the Second Edition can be found below

Chapter 1	The Fundamentals of Human Rights
Chapter 2	The History of Human Rights in Southeast Asia
Chapter 3	Current issues in Southeast Asia
Chapter 4	International Human Rights Standards
Chapter 5	International Human Rights Treaties: ICCPR and ICESCR
Chapter 6	Protecting human rights in Southeast Asia: National and Regional Protection Mechanisms
Chapter 7	Protection: The International System
Chapter 8	Sex And Gender Diversity
Chapter 9	Children
Chapter 10	Disability
Chapter 11	The Rights of Non-Citizens: Refugees and Stateless
Chapter 12	The Rights of Non-Citizens: Migrant Workers and Trafficked persons
Chapter 13	Indigenous, Minorities, and Cultural Rights
Chapter 14	Development, business, environment and human rights
Chapter 15	Human Rights, Democratization and the Media
Chapter 16	Peace, Conflict and HR (IHL)
Chapter 17	Transitional justice, ICC (CAH, Rome statute)
Chapter 18	Torture and Disappearances
Chapter 19	Researching Human Rights

We welcome all input into the structure, content, uses and ideas for the second edition.