



Photo: Enaytullah Azad / NRC

# About ADSP

## Introduction

*The Asia Displacement Solutions Platform is a joint initiative of the Danish Refugee Council, International Rescue Committee, and Norwegian Refugee Council, which aims to contribute to the development of comprehensive solutions for displaced persons across the Afghan and Myanmar displacement axes.*

Welcome to the October 2023 newsletter from the ADSP, our third newsletter of the year. These newsletters are intended to spotlight some of the issues being tackled by the ADSP, and the programmatic work done by members to improve outcomes for persons affected by displacement. In addition, the newsletter provides updates on global or regional processes of which we are engaged.

Each newsletter contains articles related to ADSP focus countries, exploring programme developments and regional migration trends. As we move into the tail-end of 2023, we encourage members and external stakeholders alike to share ideas or information that you would like to see addressed.

These newsletters are intended to improve information-sharing between ADSP member organisations, and to highlight the work of the platform more publicly. We hope you find the content useful and that it supports your work or spurs future ideas and collaborations.

For any questions related to the ADSP, please don't hesitate to contact the ADSP Specialist, Paul Vernon at [Paul.Vernon@adsp.ngo](mailto:Paul.Vernon@adsp.ngo).

## A message from the ADSP Secretariat

### Supporting collective multi-stakeholder efforts towards durable solutions

The past few months have represented a crucial time for ADSP and for its members. Across the two sub-regions, there remains challenging environments to support those in need. Lack of funding, nascent policy and legislative frameworks and political will remain consistent barriers that ADSP and its members remain committed to tackling. Through our consistent policy engagement, coordination and research, we have continued to act as a catalyst for change and greater protection for those in need.

At a national level, ADSP has continued to further discussions around education and access to mental health in Malaysia, as well as advancing discussions around Alternatives to Detention in Malaysia and Thailand. We have delivered this work in partnership and through local partners – actors who are better placed to engage and push for shifts in policy and practice.

Regionally, ADSP has continued to work closely with stakeholders and interlocutors in Southeast Asia. This includes members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), national civil society, policy think tanks, regional platforms and others to build-out and mature thinking around regional Rohingya responses. This has supported collective engagement in the lead up to the 17 October High-Level Event, as well as messaging to Indonesia as their role as outgoing ASEAN Chair, and in the lead up to the 2023 Global Refugee Forum.

On the Afghanistan axis, ADSP has remained working closely with UNHCR, ICVA, ADSP members and national civil society to strengthen NGO engagement in the Support Platform for the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR). In July, this was recognised through the inclusion of an NGO section on the Support Platform website, as well as a closed-door engagement co-hosted by the Government of the Netherlands in their role as Deputy Chair.

Globally, we have continued working in earnest in the lead up to the Global Refugee Forum. ADSP has entered into a knowledge and learning partnership with Samuel Hall to conceptualise and deliver a number of sub-regionally focussed pieces (Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan) in the lead up to the GRF. These will be shared with member states privately, as well as act as an impetus for further discussions around pledging. It is our hope that these efforts will inform member state thinking to better address the durable solutions agenda across the region.

ADSP acknowledges the challenging environment within which our members continue to operate. With the recent earthquake in Afghanistan, persistent drought, potential returns from Pakistan to Afghanistan, food ration cuts in Bangladesh, access issues in Myanmar, and maritime movements across Southeast Asia, the environment remains complex. We are committed to supporting our members and the humanitarian community writ large as we continue to work towards durable solutions for refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons and IDPs across the region.

As always, we wish to thank all members and stakeholders for your ongoing engagement and support.

Warmly,

*ADSP Team*



Photo: DRC Bangladesh // 2022

## PRiA project updates (July - September 2023)

'Protecting Refugees in Asia' (PRiA) is an ECHO-funded project that began in July 2021 that entered its second phase in July 2023. Current project partners include the Danish Refugee Council, HOST International Malaysia, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) – Indonesia, Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) – India, Mixed Migration Centre (MMC) – Asia, and the ADSP. ADSP leads the project's advocacy and coordination result, which fosters coordinated regional advocacy, promotes regional responses to Rohingya displacement, and supports national-level advocacy in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand.

On 16 August 2023, ADSP organised a follow-up launch event with the EU delegation to Malaysia to disseminate findings of two recently completed reports on the impact of Malaysia's immigration detention policies on Rohingya families and communities as well as the livelihood strategies and economic contribution of Rohingya refugees in Malaysia. The panel event in Kuala Lumpur brought together stakeholders to diplomatic and INGO representatives in Malaysia to disseminate and discuss report findings and recommendations on how to increase access to protection and services for Rohingya refugees in Malaysia and enable Rohingya to reach their full potential in contributing to the Malaysian economy.

ADSP will continue to support ongoing advocacy in Malaysia for implementing Alternatives to Detention (ATD) by entering a downstream advocacy partnership with the International Detention Coalition (IDC) from August 2023 to June 2024. This advocacy partnership will support IDC to coordinate the End Child Detention Network in Malaysia as well as two policy briefs on Malaysia's progress in implementing ATD initiatives, the situation regarding child immigration detention in Malaysia, and global developments/good practice for ATD. ADSP's advocacy partnership with IDC will also support IDC's ongoing efforts in Thailand to advocate for non-detention under the National Screening Mechanism (NSM) and work with the Immigration Bureau to apply ATD for persons undergoing the NSM process.



On 7 September, ADSP co-organised with ICVA, APRRN, and APNOR an NGO exchange on the Global Refugee Forum (GRF). In the exchange, participants discussed collective opportunities for NGO engagement in the GRF, updates on member state engagement and the development of multistakeholder pledges such as the Multistakeholder Pledge for Rohingya Refugees, and opportunities for involvement in planned side-events that will be organised alongside the GRF event in December.

On 12-13 September, ADSP participated in the 9<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Consultation on Refugee Rights in (APCRR9) in Bangkok organised by the Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network. In the two-day consultations, ADSP supported in the identification and development of APRRN's advocacy priorities for the next two years, including how to mobilise local, regional and global resources to respond to issues such as the Myanmar humanitarian crisis.

On 13-14 September, ADSP participated in the 2023 UNHCR Asia and the Pacific Regional NGO Consultations. The two-day consultations focused on '*Promoting Inclusion for Sustainable Solutions*' and ADSP supported the formation of region-specific recommendations to enhance inclusion of refugees into national systems and strengthen meaningful participation of forcibly displaced and stateless people in pursuing durable and transitional solutions.

On 13 September 2023, ADSP co-organised with the Myanmar INGO Forum a hybrid panel discussion on ASEAN and UN engagement on Myanmar. This meeting was attended by ADSP's Regional Specialist, Paul Vernon, and ADSP's Project Manager for SHARP Asia, Malini Sivapragasam. The panel discussion addressed ASEAN's outlook towards Myanmar, the role of the UN in resolving the political crisis in Myanmar, the role of I/NGOs in supporting regional and global diplomatic efforts, and ways forward for further ASEAN engagement.

On 19 September 2023, ADSP facilitated the fourth quarterly hybrid meeting of the Regional Rohingya Advocacy Forum co-organised with IOM and UNHCR Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific. The meeting primarily addressed irregular Rohingya maritime movement and included discussions of regional advocacy targets and messaging, forecasting of irregular movement trends, as well as an update on the Global Refugee Forum Multistakeholder Pledge for Rohingya Refugees. The next meeting of the Forum is planned for December 2023.

## Supporting Humanitarian and Refugee Protection (SHARP) project updates (July-September 2023)

ADSP, in partnership with the International Rescue Committee and the Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN), also remains engaged in supporting national and regional level advocacy initiatives through a one-year grant from the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO). With a focus on research, advocacy, and capacity-strengthening initiatives for non-Rohingya refugees from Myanmar, the project is centered around India, Malaysia, and Thailand. Some of the notable achievements and engagements over the past three months include:

### Malaysia

#### **Research study on Mental Health of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Malaysian Detention Centres**

A research study in Malaysia has been initiated, with a focus on the mental health needs of refugees and asylum seekers in Malaysian detention centres and post-detention settings. In addition to its primary objective, the study will also encompass the following;

- (a) Identifying best practices for providing mental health support to refugees and asylum seekers in Southeast Asia, incorporating expert commentary from regional professionals to enhance the development of policy recommendations,
- (b) analysing existing policies in Malaysia and formulating evidence-based policy recommendations that align with national strategies and international commitments, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and conventions and treaties adopted by Malaysia.

The recommendations derive from this study will play a significant role in ongoing discussions aimed at creating more robust and inclusive mental health support systems for refugees and asylum seekers. The inception report has been drafted, and the study is expected to be completed by mid-December 2023.

#### **Formation of Myanmar Ethnic Refugee Advocacy Team (MERAT) in Malaysia**

As an outcome of the advocacy capacity-building training held in May 2023, the refugee leaders who participated in the training identified the need to establish an advocacy working group based on the knowledge gained from the training. The refugee advocacy group officially formed the Myanmar Ethnic Refugee Advocacy Team (MERAT), which is supported by the SHARP Asia project on the development of advocacy strategies and workplan. MERAT is currently operating independently and actively engaging with UNHCR, regional key advocacy actors, former parliamentarians of Malaysia, ASEAN members, and diaspora organisations. They have well-defined advocacy goals and objectives and remain committed to advancing their advocacy efforts on issues related to RSD and protection, which have a significant impact on livelihoods and access to basic services.

#### **Refugee-led Organisation (RLO) Engagement with ECHO**

Refugee-led organisations were afforded the opportunity to meet with the funder of the SHARP Asia project, ECHO to discuss the issues, challenges, and opportunities facing refugee-led organisations in Malaysia. In line with the 'one refugee' approach, the meeting included refugee leaders from beyond the Burmese community.

Representatives from the Afghan, Somali, Rohingya, Pakistani, Algerian, and Eritrean refugee communities attended this meeting. ECHO acknowledged the challenges faced by refugee communities in Malaysia and expressed its commitment to engaging with regional actors to explore sustainable solutions.

## INDIA

### **Engagement with Key Stakeholders On RSD**

In August, the Migration & Asylum Project (MAP), India held a bilateral meeting with UNHCR's RSD heads at their office in Delhi, where advocacy for Burmese RSDs continued. The objective of this periodic meeting is to ensure that refugees have increased access to protection, fundamental rights, basic services, and sustainable solutions within the region. UNHCR India expressed appreciation for MAP's support in enhancing registrations for Burmese nationals through court orders. However, it is important to note that there has been no change in UNHCR's policy regarding the processing of cases for RSD.

### **Capacity Building Training for Women on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence**

MAP conducted training for 12 women, comprising a diverse group of Burmese nationals and Indians, focused on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). The training's primary objectives were to improve participants' understanding of SGBV laws in India and equip them with fundamental knowledge to assist fellow Burmese nationals in accessing redressal mechanisms in India. This comprehensive two-day training took place from 25 to 26 August and covered topics such as Indian laws, familiarity with police, court, and hospital referral systems, as well as information about various helplines.

### **Detention of Burmese Nationals in India: Issues & Challenges**

A concise recommendation note has been prepared regarding the detention of Burmese Nationals in India, focusing on the pertinent issues and challenges. Given the absence of UNHCR presence in the North-East, Myanmar asylum seekers face the imminent risk of arrest, detention, and deportation without the opportunity to present their asylum claims to UNHCR. The note presents recommendations aimed at ensuring protection, meeting basic human rights needs within detention centres, and putting an end to indefinite detention. This note has been shared with relevant interlocutors and stakeholders regionally and globally.

## **Afghan Displacement Workstream**

### **NGO Briefing on SSAR Support Platform, Global Refugee Forum, and Afghanistan Pledge**

ICVA, along with UNHCR and ADSP, held a briefing on 11 September to discuss the SSAR Support Platform, the Global Refugee Forum, and the ReResolve Pledge for the Afghanistan Situation. The 20 participants, from Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan, were briefed on the latest challenges and opportunities for supporting the resilience and solutions for displaced Afghans, particularly in Pakistan and Iran.

The briefing featured presentations from the SSAR Support Platform Secretariat, the Core Group deputy chairs from the Netherlands foreign office, UNHCR Policy Unit Regional Bureau, and NGOs working in the region with the aim of increasing collaboration with civil society actors and the support platform.

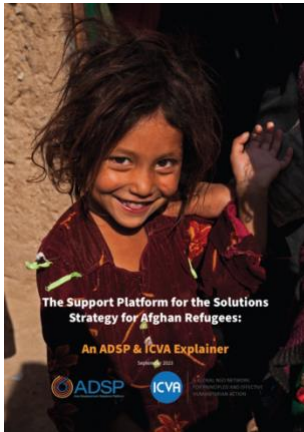
### **ADSP enters into renewed knowledge and learning partnership with Samuel Hall**



ADSP is proud to announce that it has recently entered into a renewed knowledge and learning partnership with Samuel Hall. Over the next six months, Samuel Hall will work closely with ADSP members and staff to deliver upon a range of sub-regional briefing notes and commentaries to supplement and strengthen our engagement with the Support Platform for the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees.

# ADSP Publications

## ADSP-ICVA: Explainer to the Support Platform for the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees



In December 2018, the United Nations General Assembly affirmed the Global Compact on Refugees. The GCR – the culmination of a two-year process of extensive consultations with Member States, international organisations, refugees, civil society, the private sector, and experts – articulated a fresh model of cooperation and joint objectives.

The four GCR objectives are:

1. Easing the pressures on host countries;
2. Enhancing refugee self-reliance;
3. Expanding access to third-country solutions; and
4. Supporting conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity

In December 2019, as a follow-up to the GCR, the inaugural Global Refugee Forum was held in Geneva, Switzerland. The aim of the Forum was to translate the principle of international responsibility into action through pledging, commitments, and sharing of best practices. The event was co-hosted by UNHCR and Switzerland, and co-convened with Costa Rica, Ethiopia, Germany, Pakistan and Türkiye.

The Forum led to an historic set of commitments and pledges, one which specifically called for the formation of 'Support Platforms' to promote responsibility sharing and regional refugee responses. Initially conceived as a 'group of friends', the three Support Platforms were created i.e., MIRPS in Central America and Mexico, the Nairobi Process facilitated by IGAD in the East and Horn of Africa, and the SSAR Support Platform for Afghan Refugees.

This Explainer – produced in partnership by the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) and the ADSP – aims to clarify the Support Platform for the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees and provide an overview of how NGOs and others can productively and proactively engage with this Platform.

The full explainer can be found [here](#).

## Snapshot – Understanding information sources and gaps among Afghan, Chin and Rohingya refugees in Malaysia



**Protecting Refugees in Asia**  
 - towards a coordinated regional approach

Access other publications under the PRIA Project here:

- Profiles and drivers of Rohingya moving to Malaysia
- Protection risks for Rohingya women and children, from departure country, to arrival in Malaysia
- Journeys to Indonesia for Rohingya refugees
- Protection risks of Rohingya refugees in Malaysia
- Rohingya refugees in Indonesia: a focus on smuggling, information, and financing
- Rohingya refugees in Thailand: Profiles, drivers of migration and access to assistance

This snapshot examines access to information about routes, destinations, costs, and risks among Afghan, Chin, and Rohingya refugees in Malaysia. It presents insights on the sources of information and the means used to obtain information both before and during the journey to Malaysia, information gaps and the implications these gaps have on decision-making.

**Key findings**

- Approximately 55% of respondents obtained information about routes, destinations, costs, and risks prior to their journey, while only 19% obtained information during their journey.
- Personal social networks were the primary sources of information before the journey, but their usage decreased during the journey.
- The role of smugglers as a source of information grew to dominate during the journey, with 68% of respondents relying on them for information compared to 31% prior to the journey. Varied perception of smugglers as a reliable source of information suggested different smuggling dynamic between groups.
- In-person interactions were the most preferred means to obtain information before (82%) and during the journey (69%).
- Only 5% of respondents reported that they had received all the necessary information, highlighting a serious lack of access to information among respondents.

The full Snapshot can be found on the website of the Mixed Migration Centre [here](#).

## ADSP Member Publications

### Resolving HLP Disputes - NRC assessment on housing, land, and property disputes in Afghanistan



Between July and November 2022, NRC’s Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance (ICLA) programme conducted an assessment on the resolution of Housing, Land and Property (HLP) disputes in Afghanistan. The assessment indicates an overall increase in HLP disputes and shows substantial ambiguity and regional variances in the justice system.

Despite notable improvements, including the removal of application fees, and perceived reduction in corruption, overall, the assessment indicates a complex and unpredictable system with women facing a number of challenges, and lack of representation. The unclear national legal framework and poor access to justice for women must be addressed as a matter of urgency to avoid compounding and exacerbating grievances through unresolved HLP disputes.

The full report can be found [here](#).