

Preparing the next ISP Consultation Pack 1: The World We See

Amnesty International Aotearoa New Zealand Feedback Final Report

Introduction

AIANZ members very much appreciate the opportunity to participate in the consultation and to contribute towards the development of the 2010-2016 ISP. Feedback from stakeholders was forthcoming in response to almost all aspects of the discussion document and in general it was considered a largely accurate and comprehensive mapping of the world around us.

In order to give a voice to AIANZ members, this Report canvasses a relatively broad number of issues in replying to the questions posed by AI. However, specific themes did emerge.

A key message from the consultation in New Zealand is the need for AI to include a specific plan of action on the Pacific region as a focus in the next ISP. There is a real opportunity for AI to have significant human rights impact in the Pacific in the next ISP period - if we choose to do so.

a) How do you see the world?

- Is this a complete picture? What key issues have we missed out?
- What issues will be key in your regional or national context in the coming years?
- Which of these global and or regional/national issues are most important?

Is this a complete picture? A suggestion for future consultation

A more comprehensive discussion document would have been beneficial in terms of allowing us to make a more significant contribution to the development of the next ISP. The brevity of the discussion document made it difficult to engage with the substantive reasoning underpinning the conclusions made.

However we do acknowledge the need to simplify such things in order to ensure accessibility for the greatest range of stakeholders. For future rounds of consultation we suggest making available both a shorter brief and a more comprehensive discussion document for those who are interested.

The Pacific Region

“AIANZ is uniquely placed among AI structures to engage effectively in the Pacific”.

It is of great concern to AIANZ members that there seems to be a lack of consistent awareness of the Pacific region within AI. The AI Asia Pacific Forum, while presenting a significant opportunity to AP Sections, has to date been facing towards Asia. These two factors have led to a perception amongst our members that Pacific issues are marginalised, and some of the grave abuses of human rights taking place are not fully addressed.

We are keen to see a specific plan of action on the Pacific included in the next ISP. Some members considered it “untenable” for AI to take no direct action to address human rights abuses in the Pacific during the period of the next ISP. AI’s strategy must enable AIANZ to focus on engaging where we can be most effective as a section, namely in the Pacific. While we are aware that AI’s research has identified some grave and ongoing abuses of human rights in this region, this needs to be accompanied by a plan of action for the future.

This situation presents a significant opportunity for AI in terms of the potential human rights impact that we could have in the region. AIANZ is well, if not uniquely, placed among AI structures to engage effectively in the Pacific. Both geographically and in terms of population New Zealand is a Polynesian country. Auckland is, for example, the largest Polynesian city in the world. As such we are strategically placed to advance human rights in the region.

Therefore we suggest AI’s strategy involve AIANZ taking a lead in addressing human rights issues in the region, to effectively make AI’s presence felt in Pacific Island countries. A collaborative approach involving AI sections in the region such as AIANZ and AI Australia, and strategic partnerships with Pacific NGOs, may be the best way forward to address human rights issues in the Pacific.

Some members expressed the view that, ultimately, a failure by AI to engage meaningfully in the Pacific will mean AIANZ is consequently challenged to be relevant in our own region. This would, of course, be neither healthy nor sustainable in the longer term.

AIANZ members considered the following issues to be of the greatest importance in the Pacific region in the period of the next ISP:

1. Environmental issues and the impact of climate change
2. Poverty and the lack of economic opportunities
3. Political change, instability and conflict in Pacific Island states
4. The movement of people throughout the region and the resulting impacts on societies of origin and destination
5. Women’s rights particularly the high levels of violence against women
6. Indigenous rights.

Environmental Issues and the impact of climate change

"In terms of AI's work around environmental issues, we ought to keep our traditional focus of defending the human rights of activists"

Although members recognised the importance of environmental issues, any move by AI towards taking them onboard was seen as muddying the water around what AI stands for. The linkages with human rights are not obvious to all AIANZ members or (member's suggest) to the general public.

However AI is correct in asserting that environmental issues are a root cause of grievous human rights abuse and will increasingly be so in the future. The challenge for AI is to effectively develop this understanding in the minds of others. In terms of AI's work around environmental issues members suggested one way forward was for the ISP to keep our traditional focus of defending the human rights of activists, in this case environmental activists specifically.

Climate change is likely to have a major impact on human rights in the Pacific region in the longer term; however these effects are unlikely to reach full impact in the next ISP period. For example the worst case situation in the Pacific region – low-lying islands disappearing under rising sea levels resulting in the creation of environmental refugees – is a longer term prospect. Nonetheless, New Zealand's Prime Minister has this year received a visit from President Anote Tong of Kiribati asking New Zealand to consider his peoples' migration to New Zealand in 50 to 60 years when their islands become uninhabitable.

The increased risk to small island states of severe weather events particularly in the form of cyclones may have a greater impact in the immediate planning period. Such phenomenon will occur more frequently and with greater intensity. The impact on human rights could potentially be enormous and the aftermath of such events occurring in relatively poor countries is likely to result in issues that AI will need to address in the context of the Human Dignity campaign.

Change in climate is also likely to impact on traditional sources of food supply in the region. Given that a significant proportion of the regions' population lives a subsistence lifestyle the implications of this are likely to be dire, driving poverty and destabilising states.

As a result of these anticipated impacts of climate change it is highly probable that the already significant regional migration flows to New Zealand and Australia will increase. This is will have implications for human rights as more stress is placed on resources in terms of food, healthcare and education, and in terms of social challenges arising from the integration of peoples of different origins and cultures.

Poverty and the lack of economic opportunities

“The failure of governments to take effective action to address poverty is seen as a key challenge that AI faces moving forward.”

The current prevalence of poverty globally and within the Pacific region has significant and grave human rights implications in terms of access to food, shelter, healthcare, education, and protection by the state. The inability or failure of governments to take effective action to address poverty is seen as a key challenge that AI faces moving forward.

This will likely be exacerbated by the expected unequal distribution of the harmful effects of climate change. Greater negative impacts will be experienced by groups who are already economically disadvantaged and suffering disproportionately more discrimination and abuse. This will serve to deepen the divide between the haves and the have-nots and further entrench extreme poverty.

This situation in the Pacific therefore presents a challenge for AI to address in the next ISP period, most likely through the Human Dignity campaign under the ISP’s umbrella.

Strategic partnerships will be essential in addressing poverty – please see the comments from AIANZ members under the Strategic Partnerships heading below.

Political change, instability and conflict in Pacific Island states

“...changes will often occur against a background of conflict and instability.”

Such political re-configuration will be a key trend in the Pacific region in the next ISP period. A number of governments in the region are afflicted by enduring instability and there are likely to be significant changes in terms of the constitutional arrangements and forms of government existing in others. Importantly, in some Pacific Island States these changes occur against a background of conflict and instability.

AIANZ members considered that good governance will continue to be challenged and potentially undermined in the Pacific variously by corruption, conflict and poverty. These issues may well emerge as more prominent concerns in the future. Corruption, a lack of transparency, and a lack of accountability in some governments presents a challenge to the whole region, a key shaping of the context in which AI must work. In this context the increasing competition playing out between the Chinese and Taiwanese governments to exert influence in the region through the distribution of foreign aid with few preconditions can only be viewed as potentially accentuating these concerns.

As with climate change, AIANZ members identified political instability and conflict as a further driver of Pacific migration. A continuing trend is large scale migration

within the region; from Polynesia primarily to New Zealand and Australia, and also a lesser flow of migrants out of the region, primarily to the U.S. The pattern of migration is very different further west. There is very little access to migration for people in Melanesian countries, and in Micronesia, a significant element of migration is the presence of Asian “guest workers”.

An additional driver of migration is economic opportunities and an important element of this is ongoing high levels of remittances from migrants working in relatively high wage economies back to relatives in their home countries. This provides a crucial source of foreign currency to many small island economies. Social friction caused by migrant flows is evident in the region and issues of integration, prejudice and discrimination have human rights implications.

At the same time as this upheaval in several individual states is taking place, stronger forms of supra-state Pacific regional organisations are likely to continue to develop. There is the potential for this process to serve as a counterbalance to sources of instability in the region. It therefore represents a significant opportunity to advance good governance and human rights in the region. Such institutions would be an ideal forum for AI to work in cooperation with to ensure the protection of human rights in times of political change.

Women’s Rights

“The ongoing high level of violence against women is an issue of significance”

For nearly all AIANZ members, the ongoing high level of violence against women is an issue of significance both globally and particularly in New Zealand and our Pacific region. AI’s efforts to combat violence against women present an important opportunity for AI to establish and utilise strategic partnerships. These can be with other civil society groups who are active on this issue in New Zealand and in the Pacific region in order have a greater impact and foster a stronger respect for the rights of women.

Indigenous Rights

“The need to address indigenous issues is of paramount importance”

Indigenous Rights issues are seen as a key force shaping the context in which AI works in New Zealand and elsewhere in the Pacific region. AIANZ members stressed that addressing indigenous issues was of paramount importance going forward. There was a strongly held view among stakeholders that indigenous rights issues are one of the most significant human rights issues that need to be addressed in New Zealand.

Some members suggested that unless AI at a planning level and AIANZ at a local level engage with these issues in a meaningful way, we risk being seen as irrelevant to mainstream New Zealanders. That in turn would challenge AI’s standing when seeking to engage with other nations in the Pacific region.

b) In the world you see, what threatens human rights and what will enhance human rights?

- What do you see as the major threats and opportunities for human rights in the coming years?
 - What are the key sources of change?
 - Who are the key players?
 - Are there different scenarios that we should take into account?
-

Major opportunity: China, India and Brazil emerging as global powers

“The growing middle class in the emerging powers presents the greatest opportunity for AI to advance human rights”

For AIANZ members, the emerging global powers China, India and Brazil are seen as key players in the next ISP period. The direction they choose to move in with regard to human rights will have ever more influence on the global human rights situation as they take a more central role in world affairs. In terms of engagement with these countries AI must continue to focus on protecting human rights defenders working within these countries. The possibility of realising significant advances in human rights is much greater if AI is able to support the emergence of human rights movements domestically within the emerging powers rather than AI focusing on trying to bring about change exclusively from the outside.

The growing middle class in the emerging powers presents the greatest opportunity for AI to advance human rights outside of our traditional support base in the global North. Human rights are primarily seen as being the domain of the middle class and with hundreds of millions of people emerging as middle classes in China, India and Brazil there is enormous potential for AI to engage with these people and (at least in the latter two democracies) mobilise them to advance human rights.

Major opportunity: Engaging With students from developing countries studying abroad

“Students studying abroad in developed countries are the future of human rights in developing countries”

A key opportunity AI must take advantage of – to advance human rights in developing countries where AI does not have a strong support base and where human rights are not well rooted – is through engaging with foreign students studying abroad in countries where AI is well established. The need for AI

globally to engage effectively with this group, and in the Pacific region specifically with the sizable Asian student diaspora cannot be stressed enough and should be represented in the next ISP.

These students are in a unique position, having experienced both ‘sides of the coin’, and when they return to their home countries at the end of their studies they tend to occupy influential positions within society and thus may exert significant influence in terms of the future attitudes to human rights.

AIANZ members reflected the views that have recently resulted in AI’s Asia Pacific Youth Project, and this should be reinforced in the next ISP. The potential for AI growth in young developing Asian countries is huge. In these countries AI members and supporters of human rights more generally tend to be professionals who have been educated overseas. In New Zealand there is potential for AI to engage with the Asian foreign students studying at universities here and this is likely to be the case elsewhere.

AIANZ members noted in particular that AI’s focus ought not to be exclusively on fundraising / increasing membership objectives but rather on objectives that will increase our human rights impact. This includes the strengthening of AI and human rights in developing Asian countries once these students return home.

Major opportunity: Strategic Partnerships to expand AI’s presence in the global South

“Strategic partnerships are considered the best way forward for AI”

“It is impossible for AI to have the human rights impact we want to without us having networks on the ground everywhere we work.”

It is important that AI’s membership is representative of global demographics if we are to have maximum human rights impact. To this end AI must focus on establishing influence and interacting with local structures in the areas we are currently underrepresented. Establishing or entering into partnerships with existing sustainable grassroots bodies is essential, as is recognising that local solutions are often better suited and more readily accepted than those which are perceived as being imposed from the outside.

It is impossible for AI to have the impact we want to without having networks on the ground everywhere where there are grave abuses of human rights. For this practical reason developing AI’s presence in the global South is an opportunity that AI must commit to focusing on in the next ISP.

A major opportunity exists in the continuing emergence of a plethora of civil society groups all over the globe. This phenomenon is likely to continue, and the role played by civil society groups and the influence they are able to exert is anticipated to continue to grow. We are aware that AI shares the view of AIANZ members that this is a key opportunity. In the next ISP, AI must embrace the opportunity to establish working relationships with civil society groups and enable Sections to easily form strategic partnerships when objectives and methods

permit us to do so. Strategic partnerships are considered the best way forward for AI, especially as we continue to expand the areas on which we work.

When engaging in strategic partnerships around new areas of work for AI we are mindful of the need to recognise and acknowledge the tremendous work over a long period of time carried out by other well established groups. We must make efforts to avoid stepping on other groups' toes and thus being resented. AI must ensure our identity and focus are maintained whilst engaging with other groups. We have the will to supplement the work of our partners, and no intention to recreate it.

It is fundamental that AI stick to its role as a promoter and protector of human rights and not allow that to be confused in the public eye. A key AI point of difference, for example, is the AI ability to harness letters of support and action. Such AI campaigning techniques employ clearly articulated objectives, which we must maintain. The Control Arms campaign was seen by AIANZ members as a model for AI to use going forward.

Of particular benefit to AI as a multinational NGO is the potential for increased effectiveness in terms of campaigning and membership growth through engaging with local partners. In the Pacific region there is a real risk that AI's engagement on Pacific issues without strategic partnership with existing Pacific NGO's will alienate rather than engage populations, by appearing to operate on a colonisation model.

Major threat: State actions and corruption

"The willingness of governments from all corners of the globe to disregard human rights in the pursuit of national interests will continue to threaten human rights"

Major threats to human rights are anticipated to come from the actions (or sometimes the inaction) of States. The willingness of governments from all corners of the globe to disregard human rights in the pursuit of national interests is seen as a trend likely to continue to threaten human rights in the next ISP period. The continual undermining of international institutions and human rights standards by States is actually likely to increase given the political reconfiguration expected to take place.

Governmental corruption is also seen as a threat to human rights, perhaps particularly in countries with limited resources, and one that must be overcome so human rights may advance.

There is the risk that during the period of the next ISP the language of 'measures to counter terrorism' will continue to be used to justify a global reduction in rights and freedoms. It is seen as vital that AI continues to address this threat in the next ISP.

Major threat: Non-State actors

“AI needs to develop methods for effectively engaging with and bringing pressure to bear on non-State actors”

The perceived inability of the human rights movement, international institutions and instruments or indeed the moderate majority in the political landscape to influence extremist non-state actors will be a key threat to human rights in the next ISP period. Terrorist and organised crime groups will be key players among non-State actors. AI needs to develop methods for effectively bringing pressure to bear on non-State actors.

In addition a more longitudinal perspective needs to be adopted when addressing the abuses carried out by non-State actors. AIANZ members suggested that AI must also focus on the actors that enable and facilitate non-State actors in carrying out human rights abuses. We need to be able to identify and exert pressure on the state and corporate actors that provide funding, arms, and impunity to non-State groups.

AIANZ suggests that the next ISP must provide for AI to focus on the role of actors from the global North in setting in motion developments which ultimately result in significant human rights violations in the global South. With respect to this, there is a need to address both hard flows (such as arms shipments from developed countries in the global North to groups in the global South that then use these arms to commit gross violations of human rights), and soft flows (such as the exporting of ideology and economic frameworks from the global north to the global South and the subsequent negative impacts on human rights in developing countries)..

Major threat: Economic globalisation

“economic drivers of human rights abuses are an important factor shaping the context of AI’s work.”

Our members noted that the process of economic globalisation is a double edged sword, providing both opportunities and challenges to the human rights movement. On the one hand, the advancement of economic and social rights is being facilitated by economic globalisation. However on the other hand the benefits of economic globalisation are not distributed equally, creating increasing divisions between the rich beneficiaries and the poor who miss out.

The disparity of economic opportunities will continue and have important implications in terms of the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on which AI works. In this context it is noted that economic drivers of human rights abuses are an important factor shaping the context of AI’s work over the next ISP period.

Major threat: Business & human rights

“The power and influence of the largest multinational corporations exceeds that of most sovereign states”

AI must take more and urgent steps to focus on the threat posed by the power of corporate actors. The ability of large multinational corporations to set the global political and media agenda is an example of this power at work. The power and influence of the largest multinational corporations exceeds that of most sovereign States. As such, it is essential that AI develops a trans-national strategy to address the interplay between business and human rights.

States with limited resources and largely subsistence economies (such as many in the Pacific) may be especially vulnerable to exploitation by some multinational corporations (eg mining). AI must make its presence felt in this sphere because in many instances the political process is captured by the influence of business interests who are driving State policy.

When coupled with a policy drift of governments around the world to centrist positions which may tend to neglect or dismiss human rights issues, the work of AI and other NGO’s working in this field is more important than ever.

c) Given the world we see, on what issues should AI work?

- What should be the top three issues for AI on which by the end of the ISP, we could make a real difference?
- Are there areas of work that AI should move away from to help it adjust to a changing world and to enable it to focus?

The top three issues for AI on which we could make a real difference by the end of the ISP:

For reasons we have outlined in the preceding detail of this Report, AIANZ members identified the following ‘top three issues’:

- 1) Human rights in the Pacific region (including poverty, climate change, political instability and conflict, and violence against women);
- 2) The climate of fear and intolerance that is prevalent in the developed world; and
- 3) The human rights of migrants, refugees and Internally Displaced People.

Changing areas of AI's work in a changing world

"it is of fundamental importance that AI maintains and emphasises its points of difference as we progress into spheres removed from our traditional areas of work."

The vast majority of AIANZ stakeholders expressed the view that there is no area of work that AI should move away from. Indeed the expansion of AI's mandate to work on human rights more broadly was often seen as vital.

It is considered fundamental to AI's ability to make a difference going forward that we address all spheres of human rights. Failing to take a holistic approach to human rights and continuing to focus on civil and political rights would serve to feed the perception held widely in the global South that AI serves as an agent of western cultural imperialism. Civil and political rights are often viewed as being associated with the agenda of western powers, whose leaders (or at least some of the leaders) are seen to have given democracy a bad name.

By pursuing a broad mandate, AI is able to move away from being perceived as advancing a pro-western agenda, away from the cultural relativism arguments, and towards advancing a more holistic and inclusive approach to human rights. This is likely to have the effect of making AI more relevant and credible in the global South.

However a significant minority of AIANZ members expressed the diametrically opposite opinion, saying that AI should move away from areas of work brought about by expansions in AI's mandate, beyond what were once considered AI's core areas of work, namely prisoners of conscience, the death penalty and torture. This group argues that AI needs to return its focus to civil and political rights and grave abuses of physical integrity in order to make a real difference.

This idea was often expressed as a concern that AI is losing something of its essence and reason for being. The concern is that an ever expanding mandate blurs AI's focus and directs attention away from these core areas. By expanding AI's mandate to work on economic, social and cultural rights and the continued evolution of this expansion in the Human Dignity campaign, it is argued that AI is running the risk of blurring the lines between us as a movement dedicated to human rights – and other organisations working in the fields of development or humanitarian assistance. Thus AI runs the risk of losing a key point of difference, namely enabling individuals to take action on behalf of other individuals.

AIANZ suggests that traditional methods of AI activism that have been a mainstay of past campaigning could be effectively utilised in the new areas of work we have moved into. For example, the use of Urgent Action style initiatives on behalf of individuals could be employed in the context of the Human Dignity campaign (and not solely for those imprisoned), and indeed in other aspects of AI's work on economic, social and cultural rights. Such an initiative may be highly effective in terms of reconnecting with longstanding but potentially increasingly disenfranchised members.

All stakeholders agreed that it is of fundamental importance that AI maintains and emphasises its points of difference as we progress into spheres removed from our traditional areas of work.

We must ensure we always communicate in the language of human rights and pay close attention to ensuring AI is identified as concerned solely about human rights.

Concerns about AI decision making processes

“AI’s membership needs to be convinced of why and how we come to decisions not just that what we progress to is important.”

While we realise that AI has not asked a specific question about the AI decision making process, we feel it is our responsibility to communicate our member’s comments on this, and the following, issue.

A fundamental concern around changing the areas on which AI works and the movement of AI’s mandate is not the change in focus but rather how AI is getting there. Some members had the perception that we are in danger of making significant changes through ad-hoc leaps as opposed to moving in a clear direction in accordance with a well developed strategic plan.

Some members suggested an increased focus from AI on demonstrating that changes in our areas of work and mandate are underpinned by a coherent and robust strategic framework that guides us. A primary concern is the perceived lack of a robust process. AI’s membership needs to be convinced of why and how we come to future decisions. This point has clear connections with the following feedback on AI communication, and to our member’s suggestions at the start of this Report on providing a fuller analysis option to members.

Concerns about AI communication

“The expansion of AI’s mandate has resulted in long-time AI members and activists losing the ability to succinctly explain ‘what we do and why’.”

An associated concern, which member’s thought would benefit from remedying, is that as AI has moved away from its traditional areas of focus we have left a significant proportion of our membership in the position where they don’t always know how to articulate simply what AI stands for.

The expansion of AI’s mandate to include economic, social and cultural rights has resulted in long-time AI members and activists losing the ability to succinctly explain ‘what we do and why’. Going forward, AI must ensure that future decisions and changes in our focus are communicated to all members in a comprehensive yet easily understandable way, accompanied by clear explanatory resources to members.