



ASIA

ANNUAL REPORT 2020

CATALYST

ASIACATALYST.ORG

# ANNUAL REPORT 2020

## CONTENTS

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	3
COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT 2020	5
THE COVID-19 EMERGENCY	10
FIGHTING FOR EQUAL ACCESS TO A COVID VACCINE	13
BRINGING OUR PIONEERING ADVOCACY PROGRAM TO ETHNIC MINORITY FARMERS	15
SPIRIT: STRENGTHENING AND EMPOWERING WOMEN WHO USE DRUGS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA	18
OUR WORK ON THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW	21
BUILDING AN ONLINE HUB FOR HEALTH AND HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS	22
FINANCIALS AND SUPPORTERS	24
STAFF AND BOARD MEMBERS	26

# LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear friends,

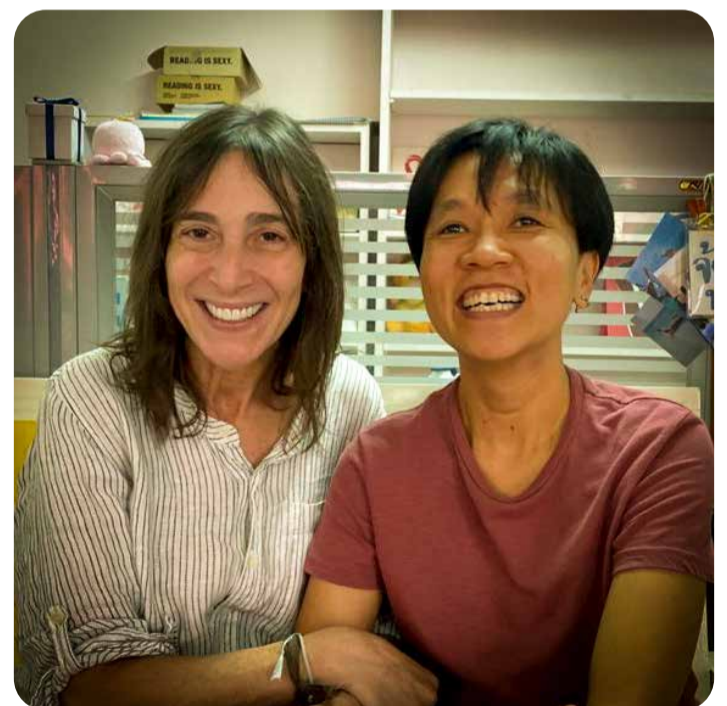
COVID-19 indeed turned our world upside down in 2020. Yet, in many ways, we were prepared for it.

Asia Catalyst itself was born of a pandemic, in response to a call for help from people with HIV/AIDS in China who were being denied care and treatment. Like millions of others across the globe, their human rights were being denied because of their HIV status, but they felt isolated in their experience and unaware of and disconnected from community.

Asia Catalyst was able to immediately offer a range of support, including emotional, financial, and most importantly, rights advocacy strategies, which became our organization's raison d'être.

While the COVID-19 pandemic caused seismic shifts in the way we work, our fundamental principle of supporting community-led responses — based on strong local documentation to address injustices in the healthcare system, law enforcement, and other public sectors and fostering global connections to new ideas, people, and resources — remained essential and effective.

In the early months of COVID, we provided emergency response support to HIV-positive women in Myanmar, and migrant workers and trans sex workers in Thailand.



**“OUR FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE OF  
SUPPORTING COMMUNITY-LED RESPONSES  
REMAINS ESSENTIAL AND EFFECTIVE.”**

## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (CONTINUED)

We helped keep those communities safe, emotionally supported, and food secure during the crisis; in collaboration with Drexel University's Jonathan Mann Global Health & Human Rights Initiative, we developed an online health and human rights platform where our signature advocacy training course can be accessed for free and asynchronously. This will expand the pool of potential advocates we can reach, even well beyond Asia, while creating a virtual activist community to share effective strategies. We look forward to launching it later this year.

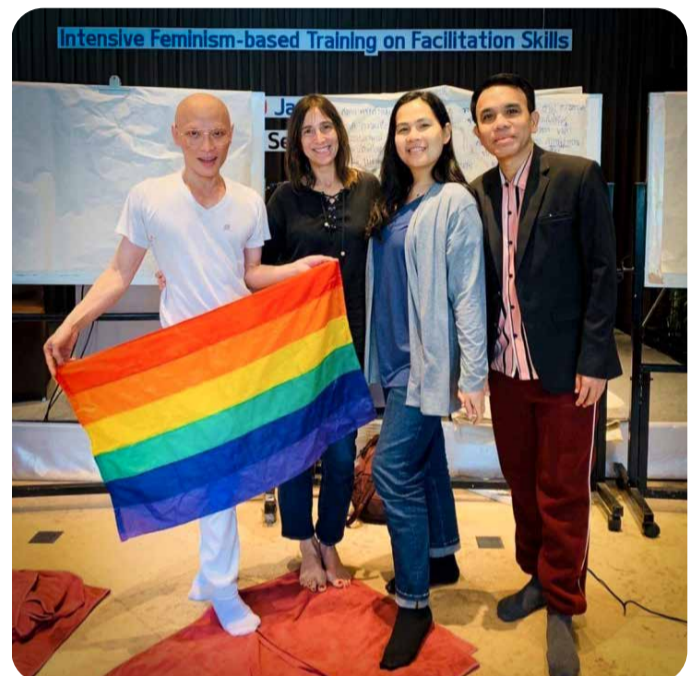
Innovation is often born of necessity and our communities do that better than anyone, because their lives depend on it. We want to continue supporting that community-driven innovation and advocacy, because AIDS isn't over; because COVID isn't over; and because systemic change, including equitable access to healthcare, is a goal worth fighting for so we can all be healthy and enjoy our rights, and each other.

Thank you for reading about our work.

In solidarity,



**Karyn Kaplan,**  
**Executive Director**



**“SYSTEMIC CHANGE, INCLUDING  
EQUITABLE ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE,  
IS A GOAL WORTH FIGHTING FOR.”**



# COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT 2020

# 01

## FOUR GROUPS WHO WENT THROUGH ASIA CATALYST'S YEAR-LONG HUMAN RIGHTS DOCUMENTATION AND ADVOCACY PROGRAM

In 2020, Asia Catalyst invited four community groups from Myanmar to join our Human Rights Documentation and Advocacy Program. From an open application process, we selected Community Based Organisations (CBOs) led by women who use drugs, women living with HIV, sex workers, gay men, transgender women, and young people affected by HIV.

Even with COVID-19, we were able to safely hold the first workshop in person, and then conducted them online as infection rates and restrictions on movement and assembly rose.

Our first two trainings focused on the local and international human rights framework, and techniques to accurately and ethically collect evidence of human rights abuses.

Because the pandemic made it impossible to regularly get together as we normally would, we offered our one-on-one coaching sessions virtually on Zoom, along with phone check-ins.

We gave each group a micro-grant to support data collection and other activities related to their chosen advocacy project.

## ENDING THE ARRESTS OF SEX WORKERS

Sex Workers in Myanmar (SWiM) is a national network of sex workers that has 5,000 members located across 30 townships in Myanmar. They are working to reform the 1949 Prostitute Suppression Act and make the case for decriminalizing sex work in Myanmar. The 1949 Act is one of the major crime prevention laws that police leverage to arrest women engaged in sex work, particularly when they are under political pressure to show they are effectively “reducing crime.”

SWiM joined Asia Catalyst’s year-long program to develop a strong advocacy strategy based on evidence of police harassing sex workers.

Though SWiM has done national advocacy before, they are now learning to do community-based research - using their own research findings as the basis of advocacy and taking a more data-driven approach. With Asia Catalyst’s support, they interviewed 30 female sex workers who were arrested and detained in the last year in Yangon about their experiences and the difficulty they had in accessing justice. They had planned to work with Asia Catalyst to analyze their findings and develop an advocacy brief or report.



**“ THE 1949 PROSTITUTION LAW MEANS  
THAT NO MATTER HOW POLICE TREAT US,  
WE DARE NOT SAY ANYTHING BECAUSE  
WE ARE ILLEGAL.**

**DESPITE THE LAW ON CARRYING CONDOMS,  
SEX WORKERS DO NOT DARE FOR FEAR  
POLICE WILL ARREST THEM. “**

## ADVOCATING FOR QUALITY HEALTH-CARE SERVICES FOR LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER PEOPLE

Lotus is a group of transgender women and gay men that provides HIV education, counseling, and referrals for testing and anti-retroviral treatment. Lotus also works to end police abuse as well as discrimination against LGBT people in healthcare, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lotus interviewed 30 gay and transgender people about their experiences at Yangon's three main public hospitals. Next, they will compile the findings, analyze and summarize the results and put out a policy brief to highlight gaps in healthcare services. They will focus on barriers to healthcare for LGBT people, including during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and offer recommendations for a better and more inclusive government response.

**"I HEARD ABOUT THE NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHT COMMISSION, BUT I DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT ITS ROLES AND FUNCTIONS. I'VE LEARNT ABOUT THE MECHANISM AND GOT INSIGHTS TO WORK TOGETHER WITH THE COMMISSION IN THE FUTURE."**



## MAKING THE CASE FOR GENDER-SENSITIVE SERVICES FOR WOMEN WHO USE DRUGS

Kachin Positive Women Network (KPWN) is a volunteer-run CBO led by ethnic Kachin women living with HIV. They are a branch of Myanmar Positive Women Network, a national women-led HIV group in Myanmar with whom Asia Catalyst has closely worked in the past. In Kachin State, despite a high prevalence of HIV infections related to drug use, harm reduction services for women are far and few between. KPWN provides referrals for HIV testing and treatment, counseling at public hospitals, and sexual and reproductive health education sessions.

KPWN came to Asia Catalyst's program wanting to advocate for women who use drugs, who face major challenges accessing healthcare of any kind, including maternal and pre-natal care and HIV prevention services. KPWN wanted to address the devastating issue but weren't sure where to start. In our trainings, they decided to focus on the root causes of drug dependence and adopt a new strategic direction in partnerships with providers on the frontline of drug user interventions. KPWN is conducting in-depth interviews with 20 women who use drugs to figure out what impedes access to gender-sensitive interventions and healthcare services. They plan to use their findings to advocate in Kachin State.



## ADDRESSING YOUTH-FRIENDLY SERVICES FOR HIV-AFFECTED YOUTH

Myanmar Youth Stars was founded in 2013 by young people at high risk of HIV – including people who use drugs, LGBT people, and sex workers – and has expanded to 800 members in 18 townships across Myanmar. They advocate for the availability and accessibility of youth-friendly HIV and sexual health rights and services.

Myanmar Youth Stars believes that far too many young people get HIV and other serious, if not deadly, health problems simply because information, prevention, and harm reduction is not available to them or tailored to their needs.

They are working to create an environment geared at young people, and are documenting the experiences of youth who have sought out services through the National AIDS Program in Kachin State.

They are interviewing 30 sex workers, drug users, gay and other men who have sex with men, and people living with HIV who are under 25 from Myitkyina Township in Kachin State. Based on the results, they will make recommendations of how the National AIDS strategy from 2021-2025 should offer comprehensive HIV prevention services aimed at young people, with their participation.



**“THE GROUPS WE WORK WITH ARE THE FRONTLINES —  
THE HEALTHCARE LIFELINE  
FOR MANY IN THEIR COMMUNITY.”**

## THE COVID-19 EMERGENCY

# 02

**COVID-19 made two things abundantly clear:  
public health is a human right that we ignore at our own peril  
and as a global community, we are only as safe as the most vulnerable.**

### COVID EMERGENCY GRANTS

Soon after the pandemic started, Asia Catalyst provided emergency grants to grassroots groups we work with, in order to provide COVID-19 relief in these marginalized and deeply affected communities. Drawing upon the hard-earned lessons from our 14 years working with activists on the frontlines of the AIDS pandemic, we knew we had to get emergency support to groups who are ignored by the government in most every crisis, focusing our response both on a short-term, emergency response and continuing the longer-term fight for systemic change.

The LGBTIQ+, women's, HIV, sex worker and drug user groups we work with constitute a lifeline for their communities. With our supplemental support, they mobilized their networks to distribute food and masks, helped out at quarantine centers, and made sure people got desperately needed mental health support throughout the pandemic. In light of high rates of gender-based violence in these communities, exacerbated by COVID-19 stay-at-home orders, they worked to reach women who needed food and protection, and migrant workers who were suddenly stuck far from home without any income.

- **MAP Foundation** in Thailand leapt into action to try to help the tens of thousands of migrants suddenly facing lockdown conditions with no work. With the borders closed, people couldn't get home and grew desperate without money coming in. MAP distributed food to domestic workers and people working in seafood factories, palm and rubber plantations. They also worked with a group of women along the Thai-Myanmar border on how to confront increasing rates of domestic violence.
- In Myanmar, the LGBT rights group, **TRY**, brought food, medicine, and COVID-19 prevention materials like facemasks, gloves, disinfectant, and vitamins to transgender sex workers. They also covered transportation costs to make sure trans people living with HIV could get to their anti-retroviral therapy clinics while public transportation was too dangerous or shut down.
- The **Myanmar Positive Women Network** similarly brought several weeks' worth of food to more than 70+ volunteers across 12 townships to make sure people living with HIV were able to stay safe. And **Aye Myanmar Association** brought masks, soap, hand sanitizer, and alcohol spray to sex workers, working with CARE Myanmar to share the latest health information and hook people up with an app monitoring COVID-19.



# HOW IS COVID-19 AFFECTING COMMUNITIES WITH WHOM ASIA CATALYST WORKS?



***"Most transgender people work as freelancers, 80% or 90% of them. Very few are employed at a company. But the government relief of 5000 Thai Baht a month only supports people employed at organizations. So transgender people get left behind.***

***My friends who work as nightclub singers or entertainers or even those who work as sex workers are affected – financially, mentally, and also at increased risk of COVID-19 as people go back to work."***

*Prem Pramroj, transgender activist in Thailand.*



***"The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly exacerbated structural inequalities and injustices in Asia and the Pacific. Lockdowns have disrupted routine health services, leading to a rise in unintended pregnancies, increases in unsafe abortion and preventable maternal mortality. There have been widespread increases of gender-based violence against women and LGBTIQ people. And a surge in early and child forced marriage has been observed in some countries. These show how pivotal protecting sexual and reproductive health and rights is to building a more just and resilient world for all."***

*Alexa Johns, Executive Director of the Asia Pacific Alliance for Sexual & Reproductive Health & Rights.*

## FAREWELL TO KHINE SU WIN

**KHINE, YOUR PIONEERING SPIRIT, COMPASSION, AND BOUNDLESS ENERGY TO SUPPORT GRASSROOTS ACTIVISM WAS AWE-INSPIRING.**

***You never shirked a challenge, and effectively expanded our mission to include new issues and groups, such as ethnic minority opium cultivators. You helped sex worker and HIV-positive women's groups strategize more effectively and access new funding. Most of all, you lit up every room you entered with your beautiful smile.***

***We will miss you!***

03

# FIGHTING FOR EQUAL ACCESS TO A COVID VACCINE

The coronavirus pandemic brought the world's social and economic inequalities into sharp relief. As an organization that came of age fighting alongside HIV activists as people were needlessly dying, we knew access to any COVID vaccine and its affordability would be essential.

While Western countries including the US poured billions of taxpayer dollars into developing a vaccine, the prevailing for-profit system risked keeping it from billions of people across Asia and the Global South for years to come. We knew that if we did not act, high-income countries were likely to gobble up global vaccine supplies with advance orders, and pharmaceutical companies would continue to be guided more by profits, patents, and good publicity, than the number of lives worldwide their work could save.

Asia Catalyst, with a 15-year history of supporting

Asian civil society on issues of access, was in a perfect position to help galvanize a community response. We received a grant to join a coalition of diverse global advocates, including health access advocates and those working on equity for women and marginalized populations, to ensure global vaccine access.

In recent years, countries in Asia, such as India, Thailand, and Malaysia have made remarkable progress on expanding access to medicines, including because of their willingness to work with civil society, especially in the fight against HIV. Thailand, for example, started producing generic antiretroviral drugs and ultimately achieving universal access, and India similarly offered to sell antiretrovirals to South Africa for less than a dollar per day – saving millions of lives at a critical moment.

## FIGHTING FOR EQUAL ACCESS TO A COVID VACCINE (CONTINUED)

03

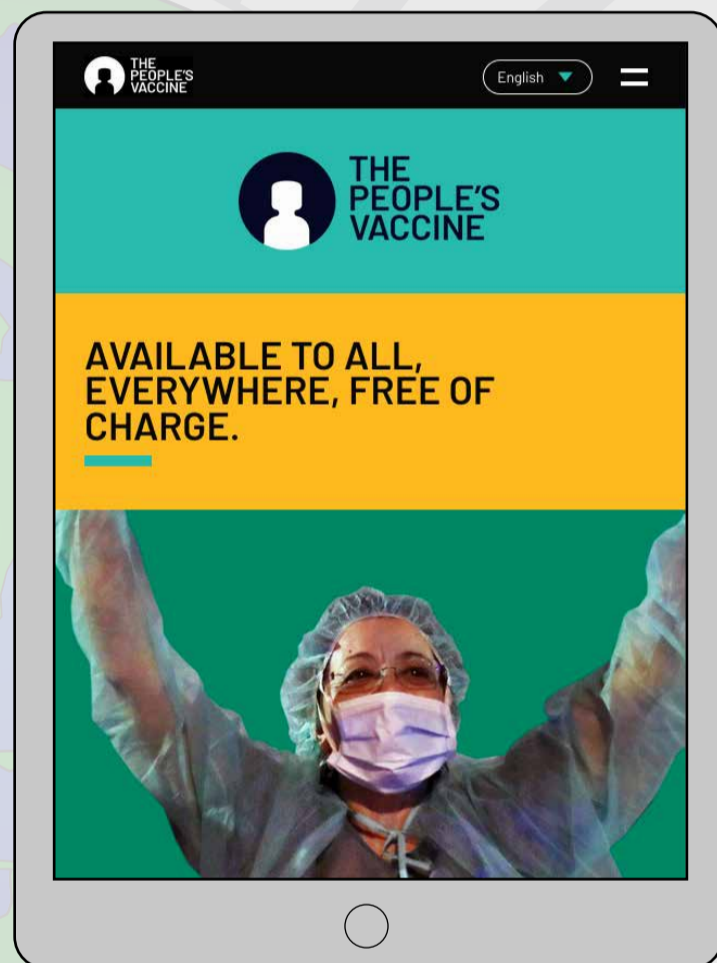
Asia Catalyst developed a project to contribute to the broader **"People's Vaccine"** movement to ensure equitable global access to a COVID-19 vaccine. Since the project began, we have been working to develop a robust, diverse and resilient regional community-led movement to advance vaccine globalism. Teaming up with leading civil society groups across the region, including Asia Pacific Network of Positive People and the Delhi Network of People Living with HIV, as well as instrumental international NGOs like Treat Asia, and with other feminist, youth and LGBTQ+ organizations, we have worked to shift power away from for-profit corporations and towards universal access to a "People's Vaccine."

We are doing this by:

- Consulting communities to understand what are their concerns and needs around vaccine access.
- Meeting with healthcare providers, researchers, and representatives from regulatory agencies to build a strategy for the procurement, distribution and uptake of coronavirus vaccines.
- Identifying vaccine candidates that are safe, effective and have been studied in vulnerable groups. And cultivating local producers who are able to provide affordable coronavirus vaccines with established efficacy and safety.
- Building confidence in and demand for these products on the ground, through workshops and clearly written low-literacy materials that address urgency for, and hesitancy about vaccines.

Throughout, we have been guided by the values of the right to health for all people and bringing an intersectional lens to understanding the impact of COVID-19.

We will feed into global activist efforts to coordinate diverse movements to come together for this goal. COVID-19 has shown us how truly interconnected we are. And if the problem is global in nature, we believe the response and solution must be too.



**"COVID-19 HAS SHOWN US HOW TRULY INTERCONNECTED WE ARE. AND IF THE PROBLEM IS GLOBAL IN NATURE, WE BELIEVE THE RESPONSE AND SOLUTION MUST BE TOO."**

# BRINGING OUR PIONEERING ADVOCACY PROGRAM TO ETHNIC MINORITY FARMERS

# 04

Our hallmark *Know It, Prove It, Change It* curriculum was originally designed to empower HIV activists pushing for an end to discrimination and criminalization, and widening access to life-saving medication and quality healthcare. But we have long used *Know It, Prove It, Change It* as a model for making change that can be applied to issues beyond health.

Over the past two years, we have had the opportunity to adapt and apply our training program to work with opium growers in

eastern Myanmar as part of a pilot project to strengthen the economic and political rights of ethnic minorities.

After working with the minority farmers in rural Shan and Kayah States to discuss their rights issues in the context of international and national laws, we focused on building human rights advocacy skills to document the punitive development and drug policies that target even small-scale growers. Then we helped organize their groundbreaking findings into a report.

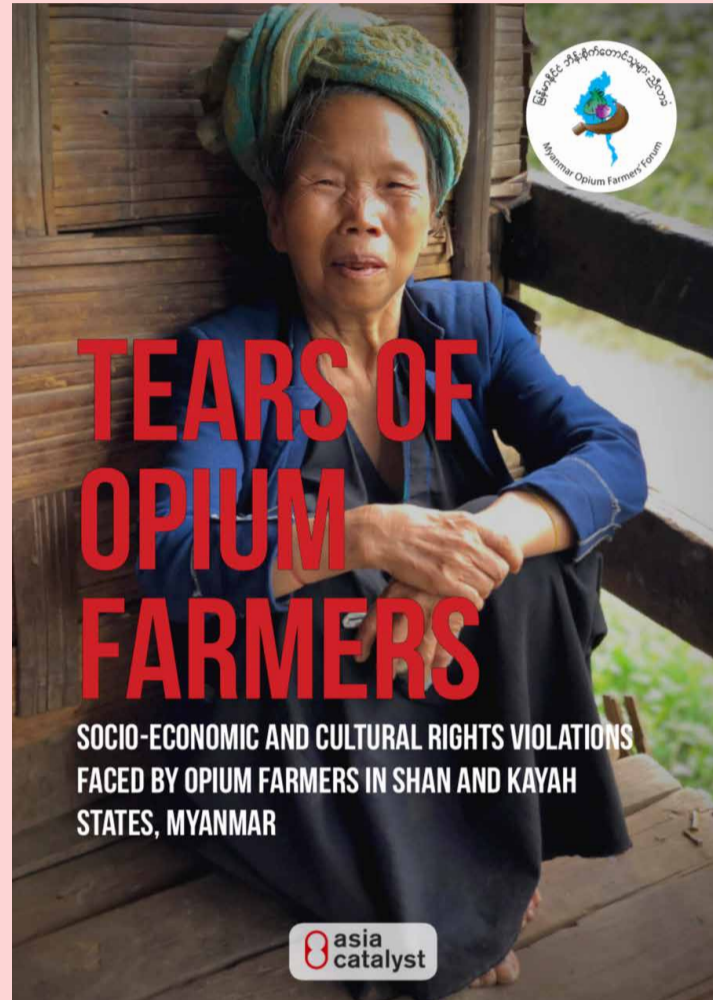
## BRINGING OUR PIONEERING ADVOCACY PROGRAM TO ETHNIC MINORITY FARMERS (CONTINUED)

***Tears of Opium Farmers*** is based on the experiences of more than 100 opium growers who cultivate opium on their land and have had their crops destroyed or profits seized in the last three years. Traditional healers, religious leaders, and community elders were also interviewed about traditional uses of opium. The report, published in conjunction with the Myanmar Opium Farmers' Forum, details how men and women are being forced to give up their crops with no viable alternatives, and their families are sinking further into poverty as a result.

The Myanmar Times covered our report, underscoring the desperate measures farmers resort to in order to survive. Farmers say they cannot feed their children or cover school and healthcare costs without continuing to sell opium, which they are also sometimes pressured to grow. Family members have been migrating to neighboring countries, often without documentation papers, in an attempt to find jobs to pay off debts. Though the government has espoused alternative development plans, farmers still lack the adequate time, support, or seedlings to support themselves by growing coffee or other crops.

Growers remain criminalized and can face up to 10 years in prison, despite the fact that opium has traditional religious and medical uses that stretch back generations.

Many feel the government policy is unfair and has become a tool for control. Government representatives come to collect informal "taxes" for growing opium, which often amount to bribes but which farmers must pay; if they don't, their crops – and source of income – are destroyed. *"We have to pay whatever amount is demanded, without negotiation,"* reported one. Another said,



*"Please don't consider us as criminals. We grow it to survive and to fulfill basic requirements for our family but not to damage the society."*

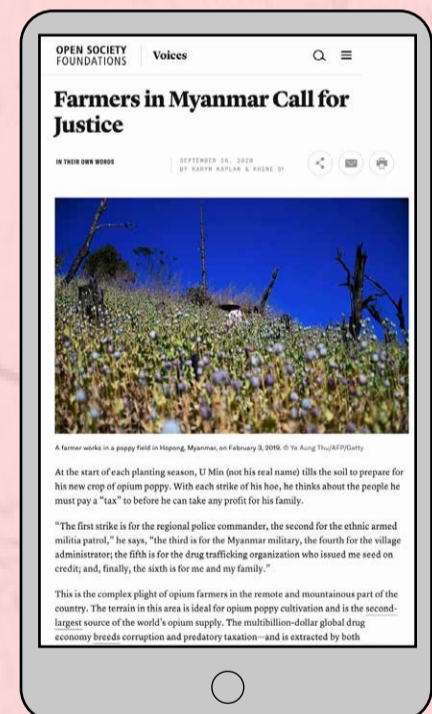
Myanmar Opium Farmers' Forum continues to conduct research, putting to use the data collection and interviewing skills they developed through Asia Catalyst's program. They are also poised to conduct advocacy meeting with state official in Shan and Kayah states once COVID-19 travel and meeting restrictions are lifted.

**"WE HAVE TO PAY WHATEVER AMOUNT IS DEMANDED, WITHOUT NEGOTIATION."**

BRINGING OUR PIONEERING ADVOCACY PROGRAM TO  
ETHNIC MINORITY FARMERS (CONTINUED)

## REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Invest in real economic development** in the region – in schools, healthcare, and programs likely to create jobs – before trying to eradicate opium. Let farmers continue growing until this creates a foundation that they can lean on to build a new way of life.
2. **Bring opium policy in line** with Myanmar's newer, more progressive national drug policy.
3. **Create a transparent mechanism** for taxing opium to ward off corruption.
4. **Legalize small-scale opium use** for traditional gatherings and medicinal use. Opium has a long history in Myanmar. In remote mountain regions, where it is hard to get to a clinic, many people use opium for pain relief and other legitimate medical uses.
5. **Include opium farmers in any roadmap or opium strategy going forward.** The farmers not only deserve a voice in government policies and practices that will radically change their lives, but also have inherent wisdom about the kinds of solutions likely to work.



"PLEASE DON'T CONSIDER US AS CRIMINALS. WE GROW TO SURVIVE ... NOT TO DAMAGE THE SOCIETY."

# SPIRIT: STRENGTHENING AND EMPOWERING WOMEN WHO USE DRUGS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA



The SPIRIT project was conceived of by women who use drugs working with the International Drug Policy Consortium and Asia Catalyst, to bring women in Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia and Thailand into a more prominent role in the movement of people who use drugs. Our goal was to help women who use drugs – who have been an overlooked population for far too long – access justice and leverage their voices in the effort to decriminalize drug use and treat it as a public health issue.

Community activists in those four countries took this vision and made it real. We partnered with:

- Aksi Keadilan Indonesia (AKSI), which translates to Action for Justice Indonesia, an informal group working to protect the legal rights of people who use drugs and create a knowledge hub for women who use drugs;
- IDUCare in the Philippines;
- the Malaysian AIDS Council, which focuses on access to anti-retroviral therapy and opioid substitution therapy for injection drug users; and
- the Health Opportunity Network in Thailand which focuses on transgender people who use drugs.

## SPIRIT: STRENGTHENING AND EMPOWERING WOMEN WHO USE DRUGS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA (CONTINUED)

05

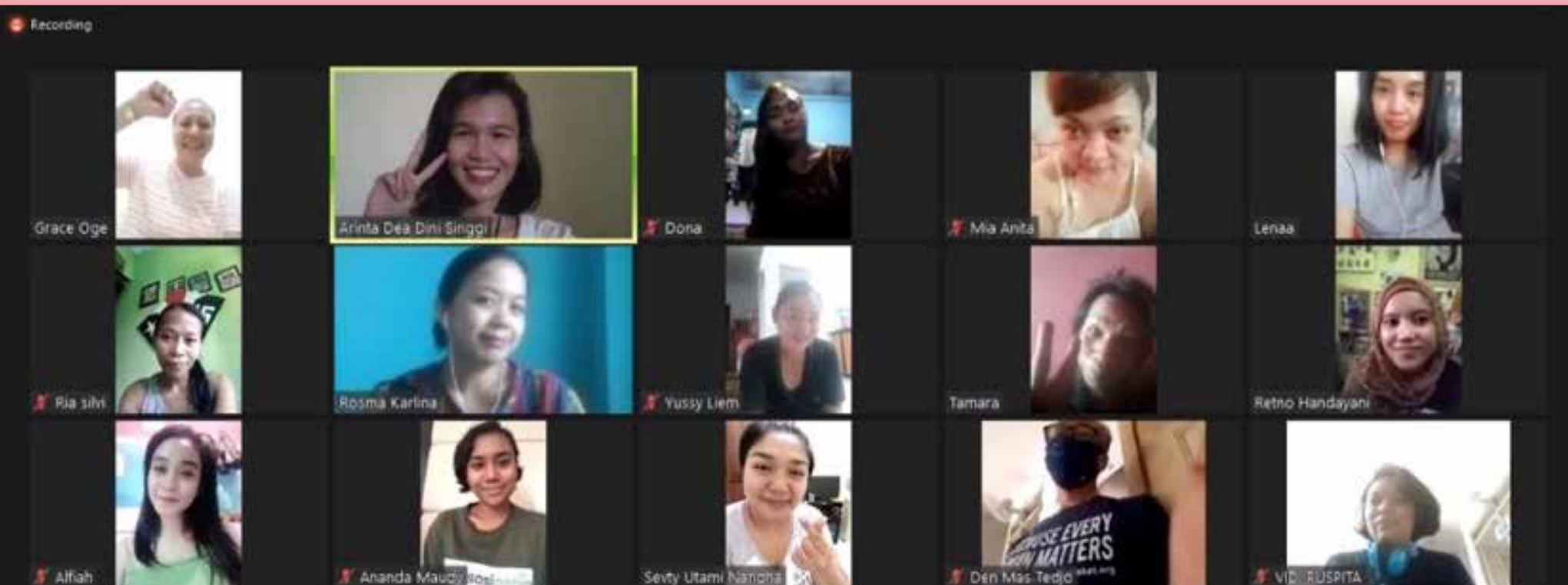
Women suffer deeply under bad drug laws and suffer higher rates of incarceration, worse health outcomes, more violence committed against them, and few harm reduction services targeted to their specific needs. Yet they are rarely seen or heard in advocacy efforts to address human rights abuses tied to drug policy, with most efforts focused on men. Meanwhile Southeast Asia is home to some of the most punitive drug policies in the world. Though there are some informal groups of women offering services or legal assistance to people who use drugs, there is no formal network of women who use drugs in the region (though a new global network, WHRIN, was recently established).

SPIRIT positioned women to take a more prominent role in the drug policy movement, and to advocate for gender-sensitive services. A peer-led initiative, SPIRIT offered leadership trainings, tips on building an advocacy network, and strategies to propel decriminalization – locally, regionally, and globally. In March, we managed to

hold a workshop before COVID lockdown to explore innovations that have worked in different countries and to leverage international law. AKSI developed a “Gender Transformative Approach and Leadership Training.” The consortium held monthly Zoom workshops to share insights on:

- Legal rights and need for access to justice;
- Progress towards decriminalization; and
- Improving harm reduction for women who use drugs.

The project was groundbreaking in its country-led, women-run, peer approach not requiring a formal group organization. Throughout the year, project leads published blog posts showcasing their community work, highlighting country-specific issues for women who use drugs, and the challenges to overcome them. AKSI launched a social media campaign to raise awareness about gender-based violence faced by women who use drugs, challeng-



## SPIRIT: STRENGTHENING AND EMPOWERING WOMEN WHO USE DRUGS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA (CONTINUED)



ing dominant narratives around gender and drug use.

The project's key takeaways can be integrated into our ongoing harm reduction and drug policy advocacy:

1. COVID-19 made it abundantly clear how drug use correlates to basic life struggles – and the importance of expanding harm reduction at a time when many people have lost work and gender-based violence is on the rise. Sex workers and those whose national ID cards do not match their current name or gender identity have gone without income or government assistance for most of 2020. In April, IDPC conducted a survey to understand people's needs and guide the movement's response, which will be useful in responding better to other crises in the future.
2. Not all advocacy groups and countries have the infrastructure to simply move life online. In the Philippines, where women don't have regular Internet access, we scaled down the number of participants to be COVID-safe. In Malaysia, we offered individual coaching sessions to

support and build skills for women who use drugs during the first few months of lockdown. It's also worth noting, as a result of lockdown, many women have undergone forced withdrawal at home, and risk arrest if they leave their home without a quarantine pass.

3. Understanding the needs of transgender women has been most eye-opening, given how little attention has been paid to this important group. In Indonesia, anti-LGBT protests and shortages of HIV medicines has also made things worse for trans women. In Thailand, project participants said they intend to make outreach to sex workers and trans women who use drugs a more central part of their work.

We are thrilled for women who use drugs in Southeast Asia that the SPIRIT project led to a successful invitation to submit a three-year grant to build on this work with women who use drugs and adding in Cambodia as a fifth country.

# OUR WORK ON THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW

06

In 2020, Asia Catalyst participated in the United Nations Universal Period Review (UPR) of Myanmar. The UPR is a unique process to improve the human rights situation around the globe, in which all 193 UN member states have their human rights record reviewed by other member states. It provides an opportunity for all states to declare what actions they have taken to improve the human rights situations in their countries and sharing best human rights practices around the globe.

The review cycle for each country happens every four years. NGOs like Asia Catalyst may participate by submitting information considered during the review. Asia Catalyst considers this an extremely important feature, amplifying the work of marginalized people who document rights abuses in their communities but whose experiences are rarely reflected in official government reports to the UN.

For Myanmar's UPR report submission, we partnered with the Leitner Center for International Law and Justice to summarize and analyze data collected by the community groups we trained over one year.

Our submission focused on the rights of key populations in the HIV response, since in Myanmar, these groups face some of the highest HIV prevalence rates in the region. We used our submission to make the case for decriminalization and improved access to harm reduction and healthcare.

**We had three main recommendations:**

- *Invest in expanding access to healthcare*
- *End discrimination against key populations*
- *Conduct human rights sensitization training for relevant government employees, including healthcare providers and the police.*

In addition to submitting our report, we engaged with diplomats representing organizations traditionally friendly to the human rights of marginalized populations, including the Netherlands, Australia, Denmark, Germany, France, Czech, Portugal and Canada. We asked them to consider our community-developed recommendations in their official report. We followed with meetings with human rights-focused staff at the Dutch, German, French, Czech and Australian embassies in Yangon. All agreed that the rights of people affected by HIV need to be addressed and that they would do their best to include our recommendations in the few issues they would be putting forward in the limited intervention time they had.

For the first time in the UPR process, Myanmar took up recommendations on key populations – echoing our language on the need to train civil servants on human rights of people living with HIV. Equally important in the UPR process is the follow-up that civil society does to monitor government promises, and to advocate where the government failed to uphold certain rights.

# BUILDING AN ONLINE HUB FOR HEALTH AND HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS

07

At the start of 2020, the world was upended by a global pandemic that killed millions and led to a wide range of restrictions on basic rights and freedoms in a rush to stop transmission of COVID-19. Everything we used to enjoy together seemed to shift to a virtual experience. There was a rush to move education, and most of life, online. Presciently, Asia Catalyst had already begun this transition in the previous year, with another goal in mind. We were working with Drexel University's Global Health Institute to transform our signature, field-tested rights curriculum for grassroots groups, Know It, Prove It, Change It (KIPICI) into an interactive, online course as part of a larger vision for an activist hub where global advocacy and community building could thrive.

This project became even more salient in light of the public health crisis. We could keep advocates connected and

expand our resources to movement leaders everywhere, our reach extending across issues, populations, and continents.

Asia Catalyst and Drexel worked hand-in-hand with a creative agency in Los Angeles to conceptualize how to optimize Know It, Prove It, Change It for a digital format. We built out a blueprint for the online course and mockups for the platform – making sure our tools would be accessible in various languages and regardless of the speed of their Internet connection.

KIPICI was developed in the early 2000s by Chinese and Thai drug user, sex worker, and LGBT activists who were supported by Asia Catalyst, Dongjen Center, and Thai AIDS Treatment Action Group, the three curriculum authors. It provides grounding in the human rights framework and

**Human rights are a powerful tool for demanding change. But to be effective, activists need to know what their rights are, how to document abuses, and how to demand change.**



## BUILDING A NEW ONLINE HUB FOR HEALTH AND HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS (CONTINUED)

07

teaches human rights documentation and advocacy skills tailored to the needs of our target groups, whose rights issues included increasing access to healthcare and harm reduction; ending discrimination against people with HIV; fighting gender-based violence; and ending the criminalization of sex work and drug use.

Today we have the opportunity to use it to train a new generation of health and human rights leaders. In addition, the site we are building includes a first-of-its-kind video library of health and human rights activists speaking about their challenges and victories, and a robust resource library offering:

- Case studies of success stories and tough lessons learned
- Model project timelines, and
- Ethical guidelines for field interviews

Asia Catalyst was able, despite COVID, to film 20 activists from Vietnam, Thailand, Nepal, India, and the United Kingdom for the video archive and includes many of Asia's pioneering LGBT, women's rights, HIV and harm reduction leaders. You can watch one of the videos [here](#).

### WHY CREATE A HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCACY PLATFORM?

COVID-19 has brought into sharp focus how essential it is to continue to be able to connect, organize, mobilize, and keep community activism alive — whether during a pandemic, or in the shadow of authoritarian regimes now on the rise.

We must support the next generation of changemakers to open up a new frontier of activism, while both inspiring and taking inspiration from their creative tactics and courage. Whatever the crisis, the issues we work on — equitable access to healthcare, freedom from discrimination, police violence, and criminalizing laws, and promoting access to justice for LGBT people, sex workers, people who use drugs, and ethnic minorities — should remain as crucial a focus as ever.

**We're here to help activists  
understand human rights and  
create meaningful, lasting change**



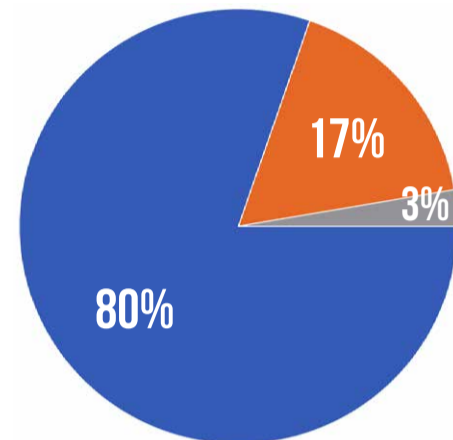
# FINANCIALS AND SUPPORTERS

# 08

## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

	2020	2019
<b>ASSETS</b>		
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$ 406,445	\$ 657,420
Grants and Contributions Receivable	12,986	175,000
Contracts Receivable	30,000	
Prepaid Sub-grant Expenses	7,653	2,638
Property and Equipment, net	3,631	1,956
Security Deposits	1,839	1,796
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>462,554</b>	<b>838,810</b>
<b>LIABILITIES &amp; NET ASSETS</b>		
<b>LIABILITIES</b>		
Accounts Payable and Accrued Expenses	\$ 14,152	\$ 15,946
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>14,152</b>	<b>15,946</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		
Without Donor Restrictions	438,984	347,988
With Donor Restrictions	9,418	474,876
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>448,402</b>	<b>822,864</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$ 462,554</b>	<b>\$ 838,810</b>

## WHERE THE FUNDS WERE UTILIZED:



**PROGRAM & ADVOCACY**

**FINANCIAL & ACCOUNTABILITY  
MANAGEMENT**

**FUNDRAISING & DEVELOPMENT**

## STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

	2020			2019		
	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Total	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Total
<b>REVENUE &amp; SUPPORT</b>						
Grants and Contributions	\$ 121,523	\$ 119,088	\$ 240,611	\$ 58,968	\$ 742,366	\$ 801,334
Contract Revenue	102,236		102,236	165,485		165,485
Donated Goods and Services	31,030		31,030	26,325		26,325
Miscellaneous Income	3,420		3,420	4,537		4,537
Net Assets Released from Restrictions	584,546	(584,546)	-	320,487	(320,487)	-
<b>Total Revenue &amp; Support</b>	<b>842,755</b>	<b>(465,458)</b>	<b>377,297</b>	<b>575,802</b>	<b>421,879</b>	<b>997,681</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>						
Program Services	608,440		608,440	509,879		509,879
Supporting Services:			-			-
Management & General	124,020		124,020	105,318		105,318
Fundraising	19,399		19,399	18,382		18,382
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>751,859</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>751,859</b>	<b>633,579</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>633,579</b>
<b>Change in Net Assets</b>	<b>90,896</b>	<b>(465,458)</b>	<b>(374,562)</b>	<b>(57,777)</b>	<b>421,879</b>	<b>364,102</b>
<b>NET ASSETS, BEGINNING OF YEAR</b>	<b>347,988</b>	<b>474,876</b>	<b>822,864</b>	<b>405,765</b>	<b>52,997</b>	<b>458,762</b>
<b>NET ASSETS, END OF YEAR</b>	<b>\$ 438,884</b>	<b>\$ 9,418</b>	<b>\$ 448,302</b>	<b>\$ 347,988</b>	<b>\$ 474,876</b>	<b>\$ 822,864</b>

FINANCIALS & SUPPORTERS  
(CONTINUED)

08

**A heartfelt *Thank You* to our donors, volunteers, and the experts** who've given their time, talent, and resources pro bono to support the work we do together. A huge thank you to our interns: Jon Jon March and Lindsay Berat.

*We are inspired each day by our community of supporters. Thank you for investing in a strong diverse civil society and supporting grassroots activists across Asia.*

Special thanks to Jessie Torrisi for the production of this annual report.

\$1-\$249

Adam Schwarz	Elisabeth Wickeri	Jonathan Lowet	Leila Zogby &	Michael Mills
Brian Bonci	Erica Lessem	Katherine Wilhelm	Mike Brennan —	Phelim Kine
Debbie Beeber	Gisa Dang	Marilyn Thypin	<i>in memory of</i>	Sandi Chamberlain
Elizabeth Lynch	Heidi Schmid	Meg Davis	<i>Mary Csete</i>	Simon McIntyre

\$250-\$499

Andrew Nathan	Joshua Rosenzweig	Madelyn Ross
Brenda Brathwaite	Larry Hepinstall	& Spencer Griffith
James Ross	Robert Kaplan	

\$500-\$999

Cynthia Kaplan	Joseph Saunders
Jerome & Joan	Laurence Bates
Cohen	Mark Sidel

\$1000-\$4999

Anonymous	Michael J. Schmale
Andrew Goldberg	Minky Worden
Deanne Wilson	Randall
Joy Rasin	Chamberlain

\$5000-\$9999

Bruce Rabb  
Karyn Kaplan  
Yvonne Chan

\$10,000+

Anonymous	Joanne Csete
Lois Whitman	Linda Lakhdhir

LAI SEE SOCIETY  
MEMBERS

Anonymous	Yvonne Chan	Linda Lakhdhir	Michael J. Schmale
Laurence Bates	Joanne Csete	Bruce Rabb	Lois Whitman
Deanne Wilson	Andrew Goldberg	Joy Rasin	Minky Worden
Randall	Karyn Kaplan	Steve Rasin &	Shannon Wu
Chamberlain		Sonya Hepinstall	

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES DONORS

Asia Catalyst would like to thank the following individuals and institutions for their volunteer work, pro bono services, and in-kind donations:

- *Members of Asia Catalyst's Board of Directors*
- *Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP*
- *Leitner Center for International Law and Justice, Fordham University School of Law*
- *Jessica Martini and Anjana Tang Suvarnananda.*
- *Rachelle Pereira, EQUALibrium*

# STAFF AND BOARD MEMBERS 09

## Board of Directors

**Laurence Bates**, *Panasonic Corporation*  
**Randall Chamberlain**, *Law Office of Randall Chamberlain, PLLC*  
**Yvonne Y.F. Chan**, *Of Counsel, Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP (Board Chair)*  
**Joanne Csete**, *Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health*  
**Linda Lakhdhir**, *Human Rights Watch*  
**Leon Mar**, *CBC/Radio Canada*  
**Bruce Rabb**, *Legal Advisor*  
**Steve Rasin**, *Cedar Management Consulting*  
**Mark Sidel**, *Doyle-Bascom Professor of Law and Public Affairs, University of Wisconsin-Madison*  
**Minky Worden**, *Human Rights Watch*  
**Narissara Udomvongsa**, *Allianz Ayudhya Assurance Public Company Ltd., Thailand*

## Emeritus members

**Jerome A. Cohen**, *NYU School of Law*  
**Sophie Richardson**, *Human Rights Watch*  
**Sara L. M. Davis**, *Founder, Asia Catalyst; Geneva Center for Education and Research in Humanitarian Action (CERAH)*

## Staff

**Palida Awassadaporn**  
**Karyn Kaplan**  
**Jittima Saelao**  
**Jessie Torrisi**  
**Khine Su Win**



**ASIA CATALYST PROMOTES THE RIGHTS OF  
MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES BY SUPPORTING A  
VIBRANT NETWORK OF ADVOCATES COMMITTED  
TO ENDING STIGMA, DISCRIMINATION, AND  
CRIMINALIZATION.**

FACEBOOK: ASIA CATALYST

TWITTER: @ASIACATALYST

WEBPAGE: [WWW.ASIACATALYST.ORG](http://WWW.ASIACATALYST.ORG)

C/O HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

350 5TH AVE, 34TH FL

NEW YORK, NY 10118 USA

ROOM S 9069, AIA SATHORN TOWER

11/1 SOUTH SATHORN ROAD, YANNAWA,

SATHORN, BANGKOK 10120 THAILAND

Asia Catalyst is a tax-exempt 501(c)3 organization  
registered in the United States and in Thailand.

