



PROCEEDINGS 2026-41

Program on Alternative Development

Cross-Border Solidarity for Peace, Culture, and Peoples' Alternatives in Southeast Asia

**Sixth Conference of the Movement for Alternatives
and Solidarity in Southeast Asia (MASSA)**

11-13 November 2025

Siem Reap, Cambodia

**ISSN 2718-9295 (PRINT)
ISSN 2718-9309 (ONLINE)**





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UP CIDS Proceedings is published by the

**University of the Philippines
Center for Integrative and Development Studies**

Lower Ground Floor, Ang Bahay ng Alumni
Magsaysay Avenue, University of the Philippines
Diliman, Quezon City 1101

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ISSN 2718-9295 (Print)

ISSN 2718-9309 (Online)

Cover Image Credit

"Participants of the 6th MASSA Conference in Siem Reap, Cambodia during the opening day."

Photo taken by Sim Vongkheang of Gender and Development for Cambodia

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Forging a People's Alternative Regionalism

Preliminary discussion on the history of the
regional solidarity movement in Southeast Asia



ISSN 2718-9286 (PRINT)
ISSN 2718-9309 (ONLINE)

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Forging a People's Alternative
Regionalism: Preliminary
discussion on the history
of the regional solidarity
movement in Southeast Asia



PROCEEDINGS 2026-38
Program on Alternative Development

Empowering Southeast Asian Peoples on Addressing Food Security, Environmental Sustainability, Climate Justice through Alternative Regionalism

Fifth Conference on Alternatives in Southeast Asia

21-24 October 2024
Pangandaran, West Java, Indonesia



ISSN 2718-9286 (PRINT)
ISSN 2718-9309 (ONLINE)

PROCEEDINGS

Empowering Southeast Asian
Peoples on Addressing Food
Security, Environmental
Sustainability, Climate
Justice through Alternative
Regionalism

About the Proceedings

These proceedings document the Sixth Conference of the Movement for Alternatives and Solidarity in Southeast Asia (MASSA), with the theme “Cross-Border Solidarity for Peace, Culture, and Peoples’ Alternatives in Southeast Asia.” The conference was held from November 11 to 13, 2025 in Siem Reap, Cambodia. The Gender and Development for Cambodia (GADC), together with the Focus on the Global South–Cambodia, and the Social Action for Community Development (SACD) hosted the 2025 conference. The Program on Alternative Development (AltDev) - UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS) served as its conference secretariat.

The objectives of the conference were: (1) to ensure the active engagement of MASSA members and to introduce new partners, particularly those from Cambodia, to the conference; (2) to facilitate discussions on key regional issues that broadly affect member organizations and grassroots communities, with the aim of building a shared understanding and fostering strategic partnerships; and (3) to clarify and strengthen MASSA as a regional network through a process of organizational development (OD).

These proceedings were prepared by Eunice B. Santiago and Ananeza P. Aban with assistance from Sheila Mae Pagurayan. The photos in these proceedings are credited to GADC through Sim Vongkheang and Eunice Santiago of UP CIDS Program on Alternative Development. Translations of the Khmer text were done by Seavmey Ngorn of GADC.

Acknowledgements

Alongside the immense effort of the Cambodian host organizations, the conference likewise received generous support from the Catholic Committee Against Hunger and for Development–Solidarity of the Earth (CCFD–Terre Solidaire), the Global Tapestry of Alternatives (GTA), Union Aid Abroad APHEDA, Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (RLS)-Southeast Asia, Pantau Gambut, Trend Asia, and Kawula17.id. The collective fundraising initiatives were instrumental in the success of the conference and reflected everyone’s shared commitment to advancing peoples’ alternatives for regional integration from below.

DAY 1

Grounding: Regional Struggles, Common Principles, and Shared Vision

Opening Ceremony with a Cambodian Welcome Performance

Phoungvyna Sangva of Gender and Development for Cambodia (GADC), who served as the Master of Ceremonies, facilitated the Assembly's opening. She warmly welcomed participants, noting the presence of both familiar and new faces brought together by a shared commitment to justice, peace, and people-centered alternatives in the region.

All participants were invited to stand and pay respect to the Cambodian National Anthem. Following this, the audience was invited to witness a traditional Cambodian welcoming performance, the Robam Choun Por (Khmer Blessing Dance). The welcome dance was offered as a gesture of goodwill, peace, and prosperity, to set a reflective and hopeful tone for the Assembly, underscoring aspirations for meaningful connections and regional solidarity.



Photo 1. Phoungvyna Sangva of Gender and Development for Cambodia facilitating the opening ceremonies of the 6th MASSA Conference.



Photo 2. *Robam Choun Por* (Khmer Blessing Dance)

Khmer Blessing Dance

Robam Choun Por, is a ceremonial form of Khmer classical dance performed at the start of important events to greet, bless, and offer good wishes to the audience. The dance features elegantly poised dancers garbed in traditional Cambodian dress carrying ceremonial objects such as golden goblets filled with fragrant blossoms, symbolically representing blessings bestowed upon the audience.¹ The dance also reflects broader Khmer cultural values that emphasize pleasantness, politeness, and honesty, highlighting a strong cultural orientation toward nurturing friendships and promoting peace.²

Roll Call of Assembly Participants

Following the opening performance, Phoungvyna invited participants to take part in a roll call to acknowledge the diversity and regional breadth of the Assembly. Participants were asked to stand as their respective countries were called, allowing the Assembly to collectively recognize and celebrate their presence. Acknowledged participants were from Indonesia, Timor-Leste, Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia, India, the Philippines, Laos, and the host

¹ See <https://www.oakkhmerangkor.org/dances/blessing>

² See <https://intocambodia.org/>

country, Cambodia, including participants from Siem Reap, Phnom Penh, and other local provinces. Phoungvyna highlighted the Assembly's broad representation of communities, organizations, partners, and supporters from across Southeast Asia and beyond, reinforcing the spirit of unity and regional solidarity.



Photo 3. Philippine delegates raise their clenched fists during their introduction, expressing solidarity with peoples across the region.

Opening Remarks

Cross-border Solidarity and Regionalism from Below

Dr. Eduardo C. Tadem

Program on Alternative Development, UP CIDS

Dr. Eduardo C. Tadem opened the Conference by expressing his gratitude to the organizers and partners who made the gathering possible—particularly the Cambodian organizers led by the Gender and Development for Cambodia. He also extended appreciation to the people of Siem Reap, noting the honor of holding the conference in such a beautiful and historically rich land: one that symbolizes both the shared heritage and the continuing struggles of Southeast Asian peoples.



Photo 4. Dr. Tadem of UP CIDS AltDev delivering the conference's opening remarks.

Dr. Tadem reflected on the first of four key ideas framing the conference: borders and boundaries. He urged the audience to critically question the divisions that have historically separated Southeast Asian societies – divisions that were not created by the people themselves but imposed by colonial powers. He explained: “An example that is always loud in my mind is how come there are more Laos people living in Northeast Thailand than in Laos itself? And yet colonial masters drew the borders that separate them. These borders became the source of conflicts and misery for peoples.”

These borders, he argued, did not just divide territories: they divided communities, cultures, and histories. They became the roots of underdevelopment and the continuing inequalities in the region. Hence, one of the key challenges for Southeast Asian peoples is overcoming these borders, not by erasing national identities, but by reaching across them and rebuilding connections severed by colonialism. Dr. Tadem also encouraged participants to interrogate the very concept of “Southeast Asia.” While ASEAN recognizes only ten countries, he reminded everyone that scholars have long argued for a broader understanding: one that includes parts of Southwest China, Northeast India, and even Papua New Guinea, which share close linguistic, cultural, and historical ties with the region. “We need to get rid of these boundaries,” he said, “not because we don’t want to be Filipino, or Indonesian, or whatever identity—but because we want to reach out across these borders and overcome the limitations and boundaries created by Western colonialism.”

From there, Dr. Tadem turned to his second theme: regionalism. He distinguished between two forms—regionalism from above and regionalism from below. Regionalism from above, represented by ASEAN, is dominated by political elites and corporate interests. He explained: “ASEAN is a gathering of Southeast Asian political elites. These ruling families and classes represent less than one or two percent of the population. It promotes the interests of these political guardians and their corporate partners, imposing rules that keep us contained and maintain their privilege.” In contrast, Dr. Tadem advocated for an alternative regionalism from below: one grounded in the struggles, innovations, and solidarities of grassroots communities. This led to his third point – the alternative practices of Southeast Asian societies. These practices—political, economic, social, and cultural—have long existed before colonialism. They are rooted in the daily lives of people; in the collective ways they organize for survival and dignity. However, colonialism marginalized these practices, pushing them to the peripheries. Dr. Tadem emphasized that the goal of MASSA “is to surface these practices—to move them away from the margins and back into the mainstream of society.” These local, people-led initiatives—whether cooperatives, communal farming systems, solidarity economies, or cultural resistance—serve as the building blocks of an alternative regionalism. To sustain them, Dr. Tadem highlighted the importance of people-to-people exchanges—his fourth and final point.

Through such exchanges, practitioners from different societies can meet, share their experiences, and collectively reflect on their struggles and solutions. From these interactions, the region can begin to generate shared principles and ideas—the foundations of a new paradigm for Southeast Asia and the wider Global South. “These practices,” he concluded, “are the building blocks of an alternative regionalism. For the next three days, let us consider how these alternative practices, communities, and sectors on the ground can help us build the alternative regionalism we envision.”

Dr. Tadem’s opening remarks set the tone for the conference: a call to rethink Southeast Asia beyond imposed borders, to reclaim precolonial and grassroots forms of solidarity, and to collectively build an alternative future grounded in peoples’ practices, cooperation, and resistance.

Keynote Address

A Shared Vision for Southeast Asia: Collective Care, Regional Planning, and Solidarity

Chandy Eng

Executive Director, Gender and Development for Cambodia



Photo 5. Chandy Eng of GADC delivering the conference's keynote address.

Chandy Eng, Executive Director of the Gender and Development for Cambodia, delivered the keynote address entitled “A Shared Vision for Southeast Asia: Collective Care, Regional Planning, and Solidarity.” She welcomed participants from across the region and opened by reflecting on the interconnected crises confronting Southeast Asia: from the erosion of democracy and the rise of authoritarian regimes to armed conflicts, forced migration, climate disasters, and the growing human trafficking and cybercrime networks exploiting vulnerable populations. These, she said, are not separate national problems but shared regional challenges that call for collective responses rooted in solidarity, justice, and peace.

Among the situations she raised, Ms. Eng emphasized the recent border conflict between Cambodia and Thailand, where more than 200,000 civilians—farmers, families, and workers—were displaced within days by artillery fire and airstrikes. She underscored that it is the ordinary people who bear the brunt of conflict, not the political elites or military forces that cause it. Communities on both sides of the border lose homes, livelihoods, and loved

ones, revealing that national boundaries imposed by colonial powers continue to divide people who share the same histories, cultures, and kinship ties. For Ms. Eng, this tragedy is a reminder that peace in Southeast Asia is fragile, and must be actively nurtured through people-to-people solidarity, not through militarization or nationalist rivalries.

She also explained the conference's three components: collective care, regional planning, and field visits that capture clearly the essence of this task. Collective care means standing in empathy and compassion across borders, ensuring that communities and activists alike are supported in times of crisis and repression. Regional planning, she said, must be reimagined as people-centered regionalism, one that connects grassroots initiatives—farmers' cooperatives, women's movements, environmental defenders, and youth networks—into a broader movement for social justice. Field visits, meanwhile, serve as a reminder that all visions for change must stay rooted in the lived realities and wisdom of communities on the ground.

In closing, Ms. Eng called for a renewed commitment to peace, care, and solidarity as the guiding principles of a new Southeast Asia. She reminded participants that the Alternatives Conference itself already embodies this vision through years of collaboration among movements across borders. "Our region's future depends on our capacity to care for one another," she concluded. "Here in Siem Reap, let it be said that we stood together and declared: We will take care of each other. We will nurture peace. We will build a Southeast Asia of solidarity, equality, and hope."

Solidarity Videos

Ryan Martinez

Program on Alternative Development, UP CIDS

Ryan Martinez of the Program on Alternative Development then proceeded with a presentation of solidarity videos highlighting the ongoing struggles in Palestine, Myanmar, and among the Rohingya peoples. He underscored the importance of acknowledging these crises within the broader context of regional discussions, emphasizing that the conference must also express solidarity and speak out against the continuing conflicts and humanitarian injustices in these areas. The videos presented were as follows: (1) 'We teach life sir' by Rafeef Ziadah, (2) 'Close the Sky Lullaby' (covered by) Phyu Phyu Kyaw Thein, and (3) Myanmar Struggle Video.

On MASSA's Common Convention

Following the solidarity videos, Mr. Martinez reflected on the importance of connecting these global and regional struggles to the conference's ongoing conversations. He emphasized that this was “a perfect moment to look back at our history—to reflect and to put into words what we are learning from the experiences of past movements.” He presented a working draft of a common convention titled “Common Declaration and Convention of the Movement for Alternatives and Solidarity in Southeast Asia Draft Zero – November 11, 2025”—a living document meant to articulate the shared principles that guide the gatherings and collective work of MASSA. Mr. Martinez finds the document relevant in addressing the issues of conflict and regional struggles.

Cultural Symbol of the ‘Kroma’

Seavmey Ngorn and Sopheak Pech

Gender and Development for Cambodia (GADC)



Photo 6. Seavmey demonstrating the uses of ‘kroma’ alongside Sopheak who explained its use and symbolism.

Seavmey Ngorn of the Gender and Development for Cambodia (GADC), oriented participants on the assembly's/conference's protocols. She reminded everyone that registration and logistical concerns are being coordinated by GADC which heads the conference organizing committee. She also announced that translation services in Bahasa and Khmer were available throughout the

sessions to ensure inclusivity and participation from all delegates. Seavmey emphasized the importance of maintaining a safe, non-discriminatory, and harassment-free environment during the three-day gathering. She reminded participants to seek consent before taking photos or posting images online, in recognition of participants' privacy and security. The assembly, she said, was a shared space built on respect, equality, and mutual care.

Following this, Sopheak Pech of the GADC presented the significance of the Khmer *kroma*, a symbolic gift given to all conference participants during registration. He explained that the *kroma* (a traditional Khmer scarf) is crafted by hand, reflecting the Khmer peoples' creativity, resilience, and simplicity. The *kroma*, he said, has long been part of Cambodian life—used as protection from the sun, a belt, a baby carrier, or even a child's toy. “It reflects who we are as Khmer,” he shared, “a reminder of our dignity and hope.” Even during the Khmer Rouge period, he explained, the *kroma* held painful memories, yet it also stood as a symbol of endurance, unity, and solidarity throughout the country's most difficult times. For this reason, GADC offered it as a gift of friendship to all MASSA conference participants, a token of Cambodia's solidarity with peoples across Southeast Asia.

Finally, Sopheak, who coordinated the conference catering, informed participants that refreshments and lunch had been prepared by Women Community and Hope, a women-led collective based in Siem Reap Province and a partner of GADC. Founded in 2014, the group comprises 306 members from 13 villages, including survivors of sexual violence, women with disabilities, widows, and young women who have experienced domestic abuse. Through their collective work, these women have rebuilt their lives by upholding economic independence through producing community-based goods such as palm sugar, handmade crafts, fermented paste, and other local food products. As participants enjoyed the meals, Sopheak told everyone that GADC is supporting the livelihoods and empowerment of these women, as a contribution to their ongoing journey of recovery and solidarity.

This was followed by the gift offering of participants for the Cambodian hosts. The gifts are from their respective countries and communities. This symbolic gesture was an expression of deep respect and appreciation for the hosts' hospitality as well as a profound recognition of Buddhist traditions, in which gift offering is understood as a meaningful practice.



Photo 7. Participants from various organizations and countries offered gifts (some coming from their communities) to the Cambodian hosts.

Highlights of the 5th MASSA Conference

(Pangandaran, West Java, Indonesia)

The session revisited key reflections and outcomes from the 5th MASSA Conference held in 2024, in Pangandaran, West, Java Indonesia, hosted by the grassroots organizations Serikat Petani Pasundan (SPP, Pasundan Peasant Union) and the Konfederasi Pergerakan Rakyat Indonesia (KPRI, Confederation of Indonesian Peoples Movement). The SPP organizers Erni Kartini and Yani Sri Mulyani shared highlights alongside Anwar ‘Sastro’ Ma’ruf of the KPRI.

Ms. Kartini first recalled that the 5th MASSA Assembly in Pangandaran brought together a large and diverse group of participants from across the region, including comrades from Africa and Latin America. She emphasized that the gathering was not only a MASSA Assembly, but also an opportunity for the SPP to introduce its struggle and organization to comrades from different countries. For the SPP, the conference was particularly meaningful, especially for its youth and women members, who were able to engage directly with regional and international movements. Ms. Kartini reaffirmed that the SPP acknowledges itself as an integral part of MASSA and of the broader international movement. She highlighted the importance of learning from seasoned movement leaders, such as Dr. Tadem, whose experiences—including imprisonment under authoritarian regimes—resonate deeply with the SPP’s own history of struggle. She also stressed the SPP’s commitment to amplify peoples’ voices at the international level and strengthening collective solidarity. As a concrete expression of this commitment, Ms. Kartini shared that the SPP

had initially allocated 20 hectares of land to MASSA to build a school. This land is envisioned as a shared space for future collaboration, dialogue, and planning—particularly to ensure that the next generation can continue the struggle for land, justice, and peoples' power.

Ms. Srimulyani also expressed gratitude to all comrades who participated in the Pangandaran conference and described MASSA as a family bound together by cross-border solidarity, despite differences in background and context. She emphasized that the land offered to MASSA should not be understood merely as a physical resource, but as a political and symbolic commitment to sustaining the movement for the future generations. For Ms. Srimulyani, the vision is for this space to become an arena of collective learning where principles, struggles, and peoples' voices are continuously nurtured and strengthened across borders.

Mr. Ma'ruf underscored that the 2024 Pangandaran conference marked a critical moment in deepening MASSA's political direction. Central to the discussions was the concept of alternative regionalism explained by Dr. Tadem—emphasizing genuine spirit—one that is rooted in peoples' liberation rather than elite or oligarchic interests. He also highlighted the importance of revisiting the Bandung Spirit of the 1955 Asia–Africa Conference, noting the challenge of reclaiming this legacy to advance people-centered liberation in the present context.



Photo 8. Yani Srimulyani, Anwar ‘Sastro’ Ma’ruf, and Erni Kartini sharing updates about the MASSA School. Behind them is a photo of the MASSA School Team field visit led by Andrew Aeria of Pemangkin Research Malaysia, to the land where the school will soon be erected.

Ecosocialism emerged as another major theme of the conference, with substantial inputs on climate change that linked ecological crises to broader systemic injustices. Participants also learned directly from the SPP's experience in land reclamation struggles, through which thousands of hectares have been reclaimed across West Java, Indonesia through collective action, alongside similar experiences from other regions. Importantly, the conference amplified demands and perspectives not only from farmers, but also from workers, the urban poor, and Indigenous Peoples. Sastro concluded by affirming that both the 5th and 6th MASSA Conferences have served as spaces for strengthening collective spirit and advancing genuine alternative regionalism. He also expressed hope that the proposed MASSA School in Bangunkarya, will be realized in the future as a regional hub for political education and movement-building towards alternatives.

Panel Discussion on Youth Future and Alternative Regionalism

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Photo 9. Southeast Asian youth activists Misu of Burma/Myanmar, and Ihksan Rahmadi of Indonesia sharing about their experience of intersecting youth activism with the peoples' struggles, moderated by Ryan Martinez from the Philippines.

Ryan Martinez opened the panel by quoting Antonio Gramsci's saying that "the old world is dying, the new world struggles to be born, and now is the age of monsters." He described "monsters" as those who weaponize the state against the people—bombing schools, destroying communities, and perpetuating war. Mr. Martinez also noted that November 11, the same day that the conference

is being held, also marks the end of the First World War, which was once hoped to signal the end of war, yet armed conflicts persisted, including in Southeast Asia. He emphasized that activists and peoples' movements are not monsters.

He called for international solidarity—particularly with the peoples of Sudan, Palestine, Burma/Myanmar, the Rohingya, and other stateless communities. This call framed the session as a space to reflect on a shared future grounded in youth solidarity and alternative regionalism. He also expressed his appreciation for sharing the panel with fellow youth activists, like Misu of Impact 360 and Ihksan from the KPMP, and emphasized that alternative regionalism must be grounded in solidarity, resistance to militarism, and the collective aspirations of peoples struggling for peace, dignity, and self-determination.

■ Misu

Impact 360 Myanmar

Misu of Impact 360 Myanmar shared a personal and political reflection – following the screening of solidarity videos on the situation in Myanmar. She stressed that the videos evoked painful memories of the ongoing conflict and reminded her of friends and comrades she has been separated from. Growing up from a middle-class family, she recounted having no early exposure to politics and was initially hooked to fulfilling her dream of becoming a flight attendant in order to travel and see the world. Her political awakening began in 2007 during the Saffron Revolution, when Buddhist monks led mass protests against the military government. She was in the sixth grade at that time. She vividly recalled witnessing a monk running down their street, injured and bleeding—an image that compelled her to question who truly ruled the country, and what gave them the authority to harm a monk, a deeply respected person in Myanmar society. When she was already studying in the university, she joined the Student Union where she became more immersed in political organizing.

She highlighted the structural role of the military in governance, noting that under Myanmar's Constitution, the military junta automatically occupies 25 percent of the seats in the parliament. Seeking alternative forms of political expression, she later became involved in the Peacock Generation “Thangyat,” traditional performance group, a youth-led collective that used satire and performance to critique those in power. The group traveled from township to township, performing in front of grassroots communities, with lyrics and narratives that reflected the everyday realities and frustrations of the people.

As a result of her participation in these performances, Ms. Misu was charged with defamation and consequently imprisoned for two years in 2019. Other members of the group received sentences ranging from seven to ten years. Her imprisonment also forced her to discontinue her education. She was released during the COVID-19 pandemic, and shortly thereafter, in February 2021, the military staged another coup. At that time, many people (especially the youth) believed that democracy was within reach and that meaningful change was possible. Following the coup, Ms. Misu returned to her activism by helping organize street protests and demonstrations. After confronting multiple arrest warrants, she was eventually forced to leave Myanmar. Right now, she emphasized the importance of telling more stories and lived experiences from Myanmar to the international community, rather than relying solely on statistics to convey the human cost of the conflict.

Ms. Misu shared data illustrating the scale of repression in Burma/Myanmar since the coup. Before February 2021, there were 234 political prisoners; after the coup, this number has risen to 21,683, with arrests occurring even over online posts. The military continues to construct new prisons, while civilians (including women, children, and peaceful protesters) have been deliberately targeted. She reported that there are approximately five air strikes daily, contributing to widespread fear and displacement. Internally displaced persons increased from around 370,000 before the coup to 3.5 million thereafter, signaling a severe humanitarian crisis.

Reflecting on the situation of the next generation, Misu cited UNDP findings indicating that around 40 percent of young people in Myanmar want to leave the country due to the absence of jobs and educational opportunities. She described them as a “generation on hold,” with their futures – education, employment, and personal aspirations – suspended amid ongoing violence and instability. She also raised concerns about the military’s recruitment efforts, which pressure people to take up arms against fellow citizens. In conclusion, she underscored the urgency of international solidarity with the people of Myanmar and the need to center lived experiences and narratives in understanding the country’s ongoing struggle.

■ **Ihksan Rahmadi**

Konfederasi Pergerakan Rakyat Indonesia - KPMP

Ihksan Rahmadi from the KPRI-KPMP (Student Movement Community) shared his experiences in youth and grassroots activism in Indonesia.

His activism began in 2014, when he joined the student movement at Universitas Padjadjaran (Unpad) amidst growing dissatisfaction with the political and economic situation in the country. Together with fellow students, he mobilized protests against the rising prices of fuel, electricity, and other basic necessities—issues that deeply affected the majority of Indonesians.

During a major demonstration in Bandung, Mr. Rahmadi and his comrades organized a march of around 5,000 participants, including peasants and community members, to the university campus. Their collective action disrupted regular university operations and led to a larger awakening among the university's own workers. At that time, around 400 campus workers (mostly women) were only earning around 150,000 Rupiah (roughly 10 USD) per day for nine hours of work. Many of them faced intimidation from the university administration and were in a heavy debt trap due to increasing campus taxes. Inspired by the student movement, these campus workers began to organize themselves and eventually formed a union to assert their labor rights.

Over the past decade, the labor situation has slowly improved. Campus workers have begun to secure fairer working conditions and reduced working hours. The struggle has also evolved beyond wage issues, toward envisioning alternative economic solutions rooted in collective empowerment. As Mr. Rahmadi highlighted, “We now want to eat what we produce:” a vision of self-sufficiency and solidarity that connects students, workers, and communities in pursuit of social justice. Today, the KPRI continues to advance this agenda by advocating for workers’ rights and promoting community-based, cooperative forms of production that challenge exploitative economic structures.

Open Forum

The open forum invited participants to reflect on the future of movements for democracy and social justice across the region.

Mr. Ma’ruf of KPRI asked how movements can be strategically designed to win. He emphasized that movements must have clarity of purpose and vision, especially in contexts where economic dependency and structural inequalities persist. Ms. Misu responded that “a revolution or resistance without ideology will never win.” Drawing from Myanmar’s experience after the military coup,

she shared that many young people were forced to leave schools and universities to join the resistance. In response, activists began building alternative education systems to fill this gap and sustain their movement. In fact, her organization conducts political education and training for young activists focusing on ideological grounding and the strengthening of democratic spaces amid repression.

Mr. Rahmadi, citing the state of the youth movement in Indonesia, noted that the movement today is divided: some groups have chosen to accept the current government, while others continue to resist. He emphasized the need to come together, learn collectively, and develop a shared vision rooted in political understanding and solidarity. “He also highlighted ongoing research and education initiatives among young activists.

Madhuresh Kumar of Global Tapestry of Alternatives added that intergenerational and cross-border exchanges among activists are crucial. He observed that while Gen Z activism is often seen as facilitated by social media, the stories shared by Ms. Misu and Mr. Rahmadi demonstrate that much of the real struggle still happens on the ground. He asked whether the deeply personal experiences of repression and organizing in their countries shape this grounded engagement.

Responding to this insight, Ms. Misu explained that in Myanmar, social media has become a powerful advocacy tool, especially for reaching the international community and younger generations. Activists have studied effective social media campaigns (such as those of Zohran Mamdani) to improve their communication and outreach, especially in reaching the international community. However, she stressed that online work must always be balanced with on-the-ground organizing: “we cannot neglect the algorithms, but we also cannot abandon the grassroots.”

Mr. Rahmadi echoed this, noting that social media played an important role in Indonesia’s campaign against militarism. While online organizing was effective, it also exposed many young activists to state surveillance and arrests. He noted that “around 2,000 young people were raided by police because of their online activism.” He emphasized the need to build and plan alternative economic and social solutions for youth who face limited opportunities due to unemployment, expensive education, and unaffordable housing.

A grassroots participant from Cambodia asked why the Myanmar government continues to harm its own people despite claiming to pursue national

development. Ms. Misu responded that the Myanmar government is effectively controlled by the military, which seeks to preserve its political and economic interests. “The generals and their families own major businesses across the country. They hurt their own people to protect their wealth and power,” she explained.

Mr. Martinez closed the discussion dedicating the session to Afif Maulana, a 13-year-old Indonesian youth who was killed by police brutality, and to Roni of KPRI, whose art displayed in this conference, captures the spirit of resistance and solidarity of MASSA.

Peoples’ Vision for Alternatives in Southeast Asia

The session was facilitated by Leo Soares of Uniaun Agrikultores Ermera (UNAER), who guided participants through a collective visioning on MASSA and its role as a people-centered alternative regionalism in Southeast Asia.

Before facilitating the group discussion, Mr. Soares shared some contextual insights to illustrate why Timor-Leste’s participation, for example, in MASSA is significant—not only for Timor-Leste itself, but for the broader Southeast Asian region. He hopes that this sharing can be used by participants in answering the questions to be posed later.

Speaking from his experience with UNAER, a peasant union based in the municipality of Ermera, where coffee farming is a primary livelihood, Mr. Soares highlighted the ongoing land conflicts faced by farming communities. He stressed that being part of the Southeast Asian region is crucial because of shared culture, history, and values. Despite colonial divisions, he noted that these shared cultural foundations have continued to unite the peoples of the region. He described culture and collective values as key resources that must be preserved and actively promoted in order to strengthen unity and regional solidarity among Southeast Asian peoples.

Mr. Soares further underscored that meaningful transformation in the region must be grounded in the realities of marginalized and minority groups, particularly peasants and farmers. He reflected on Timor-Leste’s recent formal accession to ASEAN as the 11th member state this October, noting that while this milestone is often framed as progress, it also raises serious concerns

for peasant organizations. For farming communities, ASEAN Integration opens the door to intensified neoliberal policies and competition: systems in which those with economic and political power are best positioned to benefit, reinforcing oligarchic structures. He warned that under neoliberal regimes, farmers and grassroots communities become vulnerable to land grabbing and land disputes. Drawing from his organization's experience, Mr. Soares shared that approximately 40 percent of land in his municipality has been illegally occupied and remains under dispute. He cautioned that without strong resistance and solidarity, similar patterns of dispossession could reoccur in the next 10 to 20 years, describing this process as a form of neo-colonialism.

For Mr. Soares, these realities underscore why peasant unions must actively engage in platforms such as MASSA and strengthen ties within the Southeast Asian community—to collectively advocate for people-centered public policies, defend land rights, and build regional solidarity among farmers and marginalized sectors.

Following the contextual inputs, participants were divided into five discussion groups. Each group was tasked to reflect on and respond to the following guide questions:

- What does it mean to be part of Southeast Asia? What is our view of regionalism?
- Why is solidarity within the region important? What is the basis of solidarity within the region?
- Looking at the region, what are the cross-border issues we commonly face?
- At the individual or collective level, what can we do to address some of the issues discussed?
- What role do you see MASSA playing in the region? How do we feel about coming and acting together?

Group Presentation and Answers

Following the breakout discussions, participants reconvened in the plenary to share the outcomes of their group reflections. Each group appointed a rapporteur to articulate their conversations and answers to the questions posed by Mr. Soares.

■ **Presented by Raine Melissa Riman (APPGM-SDG) on behalf of Group 3**

Speaking on behalf of Group 3, Raine Melissa Riman articulated the group's shared understanding of Southeast Asia as a region bound by common ancestry and cultural roots. The group drew on the concept of “Serumpun”—a Bahasa Indonesia/Malay term meaning “shared roots”—to describe the deep historical, cultural, and social connections among Southeast Asian peoples. These shared roots were reflected in similarities in culture, food, textiles, and everyday practices across the region.

Alongside these commonalities, the group emphasized shared struggles, including land conflicts affecting indigenous and small-scale farmers, biodiversity loss across agrarian landscapes, and the erosion of indigenous knowledge systems. Colonialism was identified as a key historical force that fragmented what was once a more unified region, while simultaneously producing similar structural conditions across Southeast Asia.

In discussing solidarity, the group framed it as a collective strength grounded in shared history and humanity. Solidarity was understood as the ability of communities to empower one another—at both small and large scales—by recognizing common struggles and acting collectively.

With regard to cross-border issues, Group 3 emphasized that regional challenges should not be narrowly framed through national boundaries. Examples raised included informal cross-border trade, smuggling, and the movement of fisherfolk across maritime borders. Drawing from lived experiences in border regions such as Borneo, the group explained how communities often share resources across borders due to kinship ties, highlighting how state-imposed borders frequently contradict social and cultural realities.

In terms of action, Group 3 emphasized amplifying grassroots voices through collective organizing, identifying MASSA as a concrete example of such a platform. Additional proposals included developing shared manifestos, creating digital countermaps that challenge colonial cartographies, strengthening political education within communities, facilitating spaces for dialogue, and sharing best practices—particularly around solidarity economies. The group stressed the importance of cooperation rather than competition among countries producing similar goods and emphasized the need to foreground similarities rather than differences, noting that colonial legacies have historically amplified division.

Group 3 Written Answer - (Timor, Malaysia, Indonesia)

What does it mean to be Southeast Asian?

- “*Serumpun*” (sharing roots): we share a lot of similarities of culture, food, and language
- Sharing the same conflicts (land conflict, loss of biodiversity as agrarian countries)
- Separated by colonialism
- Loss of indigenous knowledge

Why solidarity matters?

- Same root = strength/unity
- Humanity to empower our own community

Cross-border issues

- Human/wildlife smuggling
- Other countries’ fishermen entering Malaysia

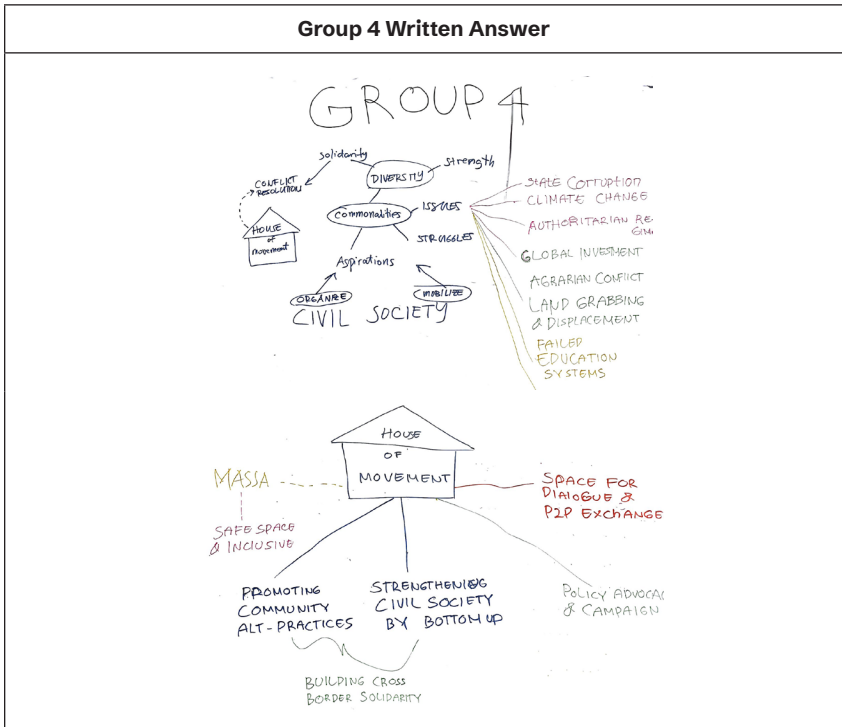
What can we do

- Voices from grassroots are needed (e.g. through organization)
 - Collective voices through manifesto
 - Digital countermapping of alternatives
- The need to educate our own community why we should address the issue
- Sharing of best practices between countries in Southeast Asia
- Solidarity Economy
- Focus on our own similarities instead of differences

■ Presented by Mitzi Muros (KATARUNGAN), on behalf of Group 4

On behalf of Group 4, Mitzi Muros described Southeast Asia as a “house of movements,” where diversity serves as a source of strength and solidarity. The group emphasized that despite differences in nationality, culture, and context, peoples across the region share common struggles, aspirations, and a collective pursuit of justice. The group identified recurring regional issues such as corruption, authoritarian governance, climate change, and agrarian conflict, noting that these challenges are present across multiple countries. These shared conditions underscored the need for strong civil society organizing and mobilization.

In response, Group 4 emphasized promoting alternative practices, strengthening civil society, and engaging in coordinated policy advocacy and campaigns. MASSA was highlighted as a vital space for cross-border solidarity, dialogue, and shared learning, particularly through people-to-people exchanges. The group also stressed the importance of maintaining inclusive and safe spaces where movements can connect, share experiences, and build trust across borders.



■ Presented by Monica, on behalf of the Khmer Group

Speaking on behalf of the Khmer group, Monica shared several key reflections that emerged from their discussion. In answering what regionalism means to them, the group emphasized equality, diversity, and dignity. Diversity was understood to include culture, livelihoods, and struggles across the region. Dignity was highlighted as a core belief—that people in the region deserve to live and struggle with dignity. The group also noted that many Asian countries share a history of colonization, which continues to shape regional realities.

Additionally in the discussion of regionalism, the group reflected on power dynamics, particularly issues of inclusion and exclusion in decision-making processes. They observed that even within regional spaces, decision-making often excludes certain groups or voices. Despite the diversity of sectors and identities, the group emphasized that solidarity exists across struggles. For example, peasants and garment factory workers may be in different sectors, but both experience exploitation, and therefore have reason to support and uplift one another. Respect for culture and shared values was emphasized, alongside the belief that people continue to rise through struggle.

On the importance of solidarity, the group stressed that solidarity is essential because it amplifies voices across borders. They expressed the belief that collective solidarity enables people to address shared issues more effectively. Organizing was identified as central to this process, with solidarity rooted in shared struggles and experiences.

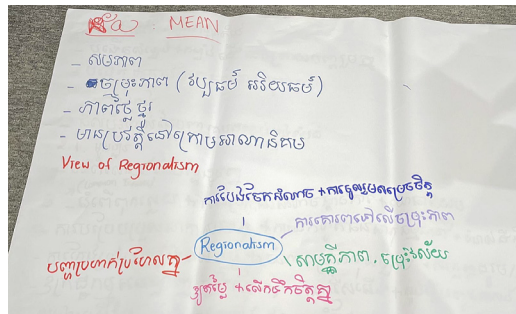
The group then proceeded in identifying several shared issues across the region, including corruption, militarism, and the abuse of military power, as seen in contexts such as Burma. Climate change—linked to natural resource extractivism—was also highlighted, particularly its impact on land conflicts and communities. Other common concerns include labor exploitation, illegal immigration, human trafficking, cross-border online scamming, discrimination and race hatred during border conflicts, civil war, genocide, and the shrinking of civic space.

On the importance of solidarity, the group emphasized that it amplifies voices across borders and enables collective responses to shared issues. Organizing was identified as central to building solidarity, rooted in common struggles and experiences. In terms of collective action, the group proposed prioritizing public education and knowledge-sharing between communities, ensuring that experiences and lessons are exchanged. They also emphasized the importance of intergenerational dialogue (that some of them have been doing) to sustain learning and strengthen responses to ongoing issues. Creating and maintaining spaces for sharing was identified as essential to this process.

Regarding the role of MASSA, the Khmer Group emphasized strengthening cross-border solidarity. They suggested that MASSA could provide technical, human resource, and financial support for creative movements, as well as support documentation efforts that capture the experiences and struggles of people affected by conflict. An artist from

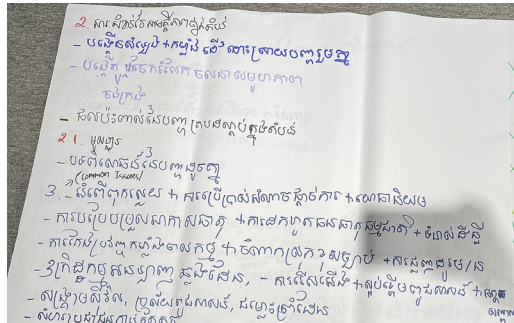
the Khmer group further contributed to answering the guide questions by sharing her artwork (see fourth picture) conveying the idea of a “collective/joined voice.” The piece symbolized both physical and creative expressions of collective struggle, representing the diversity of Southeast Asian peoples and underscoring art as a tool for political awakening, collective action, and liberation.

Khmer Group Written Answer



Translation:

- Mean: Equally, Diversity (Culture and Civilization), Dignity, Had been under colonialism
- View of regionalism: Share power and participation in decision-making, respect diversity, solidarity, diverse sectors
- Common issues: Give value, encourage each other



Translation:

- 2. The importance of regional solidarity
 - Increase voices and strength to solve problems together
 - Create, document, or share collective movement
 - The impact of the issue to the regional community
- 2.1 Foundation
- 3. Common issues:
 - Corruption + using authoritarian power + militarism
 - Climate change + deprivation of natural resources + land dispute
 - Labor exploitation + illegal migration + human trafficking

■ Presented by Mia (SINDIKASI), on behalf of Group 2

Presenting the collective reflections of Group 2, Mia first focused on the similarities that other groups have already presented: first, the resurgence of authoritarianism across the region and the shared experiences of colonization, criminalization, and social division. Their group emphasized that borders are not only geographic but also social and gendered, reinforcing binaries and exclusions within societies.

As for the solutions, she shared a point that was not yet mentioned with other groups: they proposed freer movement across borders, including more flexible visa regimes, as part of rethinking regionalism from a people-centered perspective. They critiqued dominant Western frameworks of regionalism and called for alternative imaginaries that reflect Global South realities and extend beyond rigid regional boundaries. Colonialism was then discussed not only as a historical process, but as an ongoing force shaping political, economic, and social thinking. In envisioning alternatives, the group emphasized the need to challenge colonial and capitalist logics embedded within existing systems.

Group 2 also emphasized expanding MASSA as a platform for alternative regionalism, strengthening links with youth movements, fostering collective care, and deepening communication and exchange learning. They highlighted the importance of mutual support during moments of crisis and stressed the need to counter misinformation and discrimination across the region: she cites for example, in Indonesia, there are a lot of anti-Rohingya sentiment without even knowing why it was there in the first place: this just illustrates how the lack of accurate information fuels prejudice. The group concluded by underscoring the importance of sustained dialogue (intensive communication) and coordinated action in confronting shared regional challenges.

Group 2 Written Answer

- Poor
- Burma/Myanmar military junta as a cancer cell in the region
- Different background but the same value of solidarity is important
- Modality: same values
- Means: Networking and strengthen advocacies
- Context: Marginalization, criminalization, border dividing us, artificial boundaries
- Spaces for marginalized voices
- NEN: feels like more part of SEA – affinity, commonalities, and similarities
- Visa free: we cannot meet each other as South Asia
- Cooperation among peoples
- Regionalism – more western concept; more economic
 - Alternative regionalism is the way (shared histories of colonialism, capitalism, of struggles)

Why solidarity?

- Authoritarianism
- Colonialism → translates to the way of our thinking (across race, class, identity)
- Capitalism, Migrant issue (Labor)
- Discrimination, criminalization through regulation

Why solidarity?

- Spread information about MASSA and connect with young peoples
- Building peoples' alternatives
- Collective care

- Countering misinformation-disinformation about the situation in the region
- Intensive communication
- Supportive to one another, support the statement of one group
- Exchange, learning together

■ **Presented by Ravio (Westminster Foundation for Democracy), on behalf of Group 1**

Ravio shared the group's discussion, echoing many points raised by others, particularly around shared kinship and shared roots in Southeast Asia. Alongside these positive ties, the group emphasized the region's shared pain, especially the common history of colonization—albeit with different degrees and exceptions. Despite differences in nationality, religion, and ethnicity, the group observed a sense of warmth and familiarity among Southeast Asians, rooted in these shared historical experiences.

The group noted that the impacts of colonization, dictatorship, and oligarchy continue to linger in society. Even when such systems formally end, their effects persist. Across different countries, similar political patterns emerge, particularly the persistence of political dynasties—such as the Suharto family in Indonesia, the Marcos family in the Philippines, and the Shinawatra family in Thailand. While faces may change over time, the underlying problems remain, despite claims of progress.

From this, the group's main point centered on the need to rethink and reinvent how Southeast Asians define themselves. While it is important to acknowledge histories of colonization and hardship, the group emphasized that regionalism requires moving beyond narrow national identities. Instead of defining oneself solely as Indonesian, Filipino, or Thai, the group argued for a collective reimagining of identity at the regional level.

On the importance of solidarity, Ravio explained that shared challenges across countries exploit similar social and political vulnerabilities. Platforms such as MASSA were identified as spaces that enable people-to-people and cross-border solidarity, where issues are no longer framed from a single national perspective but understood as shared regional problems requiring collective solutions.

The group also discussed economic justice and regional resilience, noting that many Southeast Asian countries—except a few such as Singapore—

remain heavily dependent on extractive industries. This development model fuels environmental destruction, resource scarcity, cheap labor, and low wages. As companies move operations from one country to another—Malaysia to Myanmar, then to Vietnam—the same cycle of exploitation repeats. Without a regional approach, the group warned that these problems will continue indefinitely.

Finally, the group emphasized shared knowledge and interdependence, particularly the need to promote Southeast Asian languages. Despite not coming from the Global North, English remains the primary medium of communication in regional spaces. The group questioned why learning neighboring languages—such as Thai in Indonesia or Khmer in Malaysia—is uncommon, arguing that this reflects a lack of regional valuation. Language was described as a gateway to understanding history, political systems, and lived experiences. Without shared language and knowledge, misunderstandings persist, limiting solidarity.

The group concluded that reimagining Southeast Asia begins with Southeast Asians reimagining how they see themselves. Genuine solidarity, they argued, should go beyond declarations and conferences and take the form of everyday, responsive regional support—where events in one country naturally prompt awareness and action in another.

Group 1 Presentation Slides
What does it mean to be Southeast Asian? ■ Family and warmth – Kinship beyond borders, built on empathy and hospitality. ■ Shared pain and history – Colonial legacies, wars, and struggles for independence. ■ Diversity and unity – Languages, faiths, and ethnicities intertwined in one region. ■ Forced divisions – Borders drawn by empires, not by peoples. ■ Shared culture – From Batak to Khmer, we have shared rhythms of life and ritual. ■ Reinvention – Redefining what it means to belong, beyond state or nation. Why solidarity matters? ■ Against colonial, oligarchic, and corporate alliances – Challenge structures that exploit and divide.

- Peoples' solidarity – Build counter-networks of cooperation and care.
- Economic justice – Break extractive dependency and low-wage traps.
- Regional resilience – Stand together in climate, crisis, and recovery.
- Shared knowledge – Become a hub for mutual learning and collective power.
- Interdependence – Our fates are intertwined; our survival is shared.

What can we do?

- Promote Southeast Asian languages – Celebrate regional tongues, not just global ones.
- Build shared knowledge – Learn from each other's histories and struggles.
- Name common challenges – Understand the systems that divide and exploit us.
- Everyday solidarity – Choose cooperation over competition; empathy over indifference.

"To reimagine a new SOUTHEAST ASIA, we must first reimagine how we see OURSELVES"

Open Floor Discussion

Following the group presentations, Mr. Soares thanked the participants for their contributions and formally opened the floor for comments and reflections from the plenary.

Mr. Ma'ruf commended the quality of the group presentations and raised a critical question on transformation, particularly the need for rapid and collective learning, especially among younger generations. He emphasized that transformation must not stagnate, as this poses a key challenge for movements in the region. Drawing from situations in Timor-Leste, Myanmar, Laos, the Philippines, and Indonesia, he highlighted the importance of fast, shared learning grounded in community realities, rather than relying solely on viral or surface-level information. He underscored the need for mechanisms that enable communities to exchange vital knowledge across borders in real time.

Kornkanok "Pup" Khumta built on earlier group discussions by emphasizing that Southeast Asia possesses sufficient resources to ensure that no one goes hungry or remains poor. However, she pointed out that regional elites and political leaders continue to hoard resources, reinforcing one another's power and depriving people of their collective wealth. For her, alternative regionalism must confront this reality directly, including the necessity of dismantling oppressive leadership structures.



Photo 10. Khmer participants, during one of the moments on the Day 1, engaging in a breakout session for the visioning exercise on alternative regionalism

Ms. Khumta argued that revolution cannot succeed through isolated, country-by-country struggles. Using examples from Thailand and Myanmar, she stressed that siloed resistance leads to exhaustion and slow progress. In contrast, cross-border revolutionary solidarity—such as Thai movements standing with Myanmar’s ethnic minorities—could accelerate democratic transformation. She imagined a future where victories in one country strengthen struggles in another, emphasizing that liberation in one context can materially support others.

She also reflected on the limitations caused by language barriers and political silos, noting that many Thai people remain disconnected from regional struggles due to linguistic isolation. Despite this, she shared that progressive constitutional visions in Thailand already include regionalist principles, such as migrant rights, access to education and healthcare, and political participation regardless of nationality. She emphasized that future revolutionary movements across Southeast Asia must similarly center cross-border human rights and regional interdependence, recognizing that the peoples of the region are fundamentally interconnected.

In closing, Mr. Soares thanked all participants for their active engagement, noting that the discussion contributed to a more dynamic and participatory session. He expressed hope that the reflections shared would help shape and strengthen MASSA as a regional movement, deepen its commitment to social justice, and further consolidate peoples’ solidarity across Southeast Asia.

Reclaiming our Bodies and Inner Space: Conversations on Collective Care and Solidarity

The session titled “Reclaiming Our Bodies and Inner Space” was facilitated by Yuli Rustinawati of the ASEAN SOGIE Caucus, who opened the space by inviting participants to reconnect with their bodies. Ms. Rustinawati encouraged participants to move, dance, listen to music, and feel the moment. She emphasized embodiment as a necessary starting point for collective reflection.

Ms. Rustinawati framed the discussion as a shared reflection, clarifying that she was facilitating rather than serving as a resource person. She noted that collective care, while sometimes newly articulated in spaces like MASSA, has long been central to feminist and LGBTQIA+ movements, and invited participants to share how they understand and practice it in their communities.

Participants shared diverse reflections rooted in their community experiences. A Cambodian participant described collective care as taking responsibility for one another, including standing together—particularly among farmer communities—against land disputes and abuses of power. Chandy Eng emphasized that caring for each other is especially difficult under capitalism, yet essential among those who share struggles for social justice and equality. Others highlighted that collective care enables people in movements to sustain life, dignity, and commitment amid long-term struggles.

Ms. Khumta underscored the importance of economic and emotional support among comrades, especially given uneven living conditions within movements. She shared experiences from Thailand, including cases of mental health crises and suicide among young activists, and described efforts such as psychological first aid trainings. She also noted the precarity faced by women activists due to funding cuts and job insecurity, stressing that collective care prevents burnout and disengagement from movements.

Several participants reflected on cultural and traditional forms of care. Ms. Mia of SINDIKASI shared practices such as social gatherings, collective farming, and mutual support during the COVID-19 pandemic and periods of political fear. Cambodian participants described care as emotional attentiveness, expressed through actions rather than words—such as parents showing love

by providing food and constant concern. Other examples included community care for animals in villages, shared responsibility for mental health, and joint family systems where elders and children are cared for collectively. Ananeza Aban of AltDev shared the concept of *dayong* in Mindanao, meaning to carry, a form of collective care among neighborhoods in rural Philippines that extends even until somebody dies. Communities altogether contribute labor and resources for burial—an act of solidarity “until death do us apart.”

Participants from Timor-Leste reflected on collective care as a return to past practices that can guide future movement-building, while also cautioning that care must be practiced thoughtfully. Maria Loretha who lives in Flores, Indonesia shared their tradition of *sarawi*, where communities support the sick through visits, medicines, and shared resources—a practice she shared, that had declined but is now being revived. Another participant described MASSA in their home country/community as Mutual Aid, Solidarity, Support, and Assistance, providing collective responses to crises such as illness, disasters, and death.

Ms. Rustinawati affirmed that all contributions reflected a feminist ethic of collective care, where communities are responsible for one another’s physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. She emphasized that these practices are not new, but deeply rooted in community histories across the region. Ms. Rustinawati further contextualized the urgency of collective care within shared structures of oppression—patriarchy, heteronormativity, militarism, and oligarchy—which fragment communities and exhaust movements. She spoke candidly about the exclusion faced by LGBTQIA+ people within families that adhere to gender binaries and heteronormativity, the prevalence of gender-based violence, and the risks faced by human rights defenders, including imprisonment, displacement, burnout, and trauma.

She stressed that caring for oneself is not separate from caring for the collective, but a prerequisite for it. Movements, she argued, must practice power within rather than power over, rejecting dominant models rooted in control and violence. Participants were reminded that rest, joy, and embodiment are political practices. The session concluded with Ms. Rustinawati affirming that even amid struggle and revolution, joy, dance, and pleasure are essential. Quoting a well-known feminist refrain, she emphasized: “If I can’t dance, it’s not my revolution.” Collective care, she concluded, enables movements not only to survive, but to imagine and build alternatives grounded in dignity, joy, and solidarity.

Culture of Resistance and Solidarity

Following Ms. Rustinawati's session, the panel on re-imagining culture, began with an explainer from Christian Ramilo, a Filipino cultural activist, songwriter, and community arts practitioner based in Australia. Mr. Ramilo has worked in community arts and cultural development for over forty years and is committed to democratizing cultural production. He is the Executive Officer and Creative Producer at Darwin Community Arts and a member of Asian Music for Peoples' Peace and Progress (AMP3).

Solidarity Video: Bong Ramilo (AMP3)

Bong Ramilo emphasized that social movements for alternatives and solidarity in Southeast Asia, like all movements, inherently possess cultural and artistic dimensions. Community arts, he asserted, are integral to developing and deepening these solidarities among communities in the region. Defined simply, community arts involve communities collectively making art.

However, Mr. Ramilo critiqued the dominant definition of community arts—which frames it as a collaboration between professional artists and communities (often considered non-artists)—for reinforcing hierarchies between the “artist” and the “community.” He argued that both “community” and “artist” are fluid concepts, historically and socially constructed in diverse ways. For him, community is a dynamic, evolving space of belonging and co-creation, and everyone who makes art—whether professionally or out of passion—is an artist. He noted that being an “artist is a role, not a job.”

Mr. Ramilo proposed an alternative definition: community arts as the collective desire of a group of people to make and share art together. In this democratic imagination, “the community is the artist.” This vision challenges the traditional dichotomy of artist versus audience and asserts that communities create art with or without professional or institutional intervention.

Drawing parallels to the idea that “the people make history,” Mr. Ramilo underscored that if history is made by the people, then art too is made by the people. He invoked Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which recognizes the right of every person to participate in cultural life and to create art. “Every human being has the right to make art,” he emphasized, asserting that this right is fundamental to being human.

Mr. Ramilo reflected on the transformation of the audience in the digital age—what Jay Rosen called “the people formerly known as the audience.” He noted that new media technologies have blurred the distinction between producers and consumers, empowering ordinary people to create and share art in both virtual and physical spaces. From karaoke and community theater to online collaborations, he observed that community arts embody the spirit of participation—“bums off seats”—as people actively engage in creative production.

For Mr. Ramilo, art is not merely a tool for achieving social justice but its very heart and soul—a sine qua non of the struggle for justice. Movements for social justice, he said, always generate their own art that expresses peoples’ pains, hopes, and visions for a better world. Community-created art thus carries a distinct value in representing collective participation and imagination, beyond what professionalized “creative industries” can offer.

He stressed that grassroots movements must ensure that everyone can participate in art-making, framing this as a question of cultural justice inseparable from social justice. “Art is too important to leave to a few professionals,” he declared.

Mr. Ramilo concluded by situating community arts within the current era of climate crisis. In the Anthropocene, he warned, “there is no community, no art, on a dead planet.” He called for community arts responses to the recurring disasters in Southeast Asia, such as the devastation wrought by recent typhoons, linking artistic creation to both relief and resistance.

Finally, Ramilo highlighted Asian Music for Peoples’ Peace and Progress (AMP3) as an example of community arts in practice. AMP3 builds solidarity among socially engaged musicians across Asia—spanning Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Timor-Leste, and Thailand—whose “peoples’ music” is rooted in the struggles and aspirations of farmers, fishers, indigenous peoples, workers, and artists.

He ended with a powerful invitation: *“If you have come because your art is bound up with mine, then let us make art together—for a better world. Let us sing and fight together.”*

Panelists: Leonard Reyes (Philippines), Chanthanva Syhakhang (Laos), Sang Sok Serey (Cambodia)

After Bong Ramilo's presentation, the on-site speakers creatively kicked off the panel with music that expresses peoples' struggles, shape collective consciousness, and build solidarity across borders.

Leonard Reyes from the Philippines opened the discussion by reflecting on how his art is deeply rooted in everyday experience. Having worked for ten years in a non-government organization (NGO) in Manila, he commuted daily on public transport—an experience that inspired him to write songs that capture the public sentiment about life in the city. His music, he explained, serves as an indirect commentary on the social and political conditions that shape urban hardship. He said: "We are in this mess because public funds are not being used well." His song highlights how the lack of reliable public transportation reflects broader issues of governance and inequality. Through his work, Leonard seeks to transform ordinary experiences into spaces for reflection, awareness, and ultimately, collective action.

From Cambodia, the Messenger Band shared why they chose music as their main contribution to the movement and the reason they performed their song "Wake Up." A member reflected that while singing had always been their passion, this was the first time they truly sat down to think deeply about the meaning of their songs. Members of this band believe that music is one of the gentlest ways to advocate a message. At the same time, it can push people to take action. The band explained that music can both soothe and awaken—it helps people reflect on their frustrations, understand social realities, and find courage to speak out. Their song "Wake Up" was chosen as a reminder for people to stay alert and aware, to "wake up" to the injustices around them and take part in changing society.

Representing Laos, Chanthanva Syhakhang spoke about the power of music as a non-violent form of resistance. "I fight without violence. We fight with music, with lyrics," he said. For him, music is a means to give knowledge and awareness to the people, turning art into education and social consciousness. Through his songs, Mr. Syhakhang hopes to reach audiences who may not engage with political discussions but can be moved and informed through melody and rhythm.

After Mr. Syhakhang sharing, Sang Sok Serey, a rapper from Cambodia, shared why she chose rap as her primary genre and about the challenges of being a

woman in a male-dominated field – she explained that hip-hop culture often privileges male voices, but rap offers her greater freedom to tell her story. “Music is very powerful: even if people don’t like it, they still notice it,” she said. As a female rapper, she uses this power to amplify her voice and inspire others, especially women, to speak up. Rap, she emphasized, gives her the freedom to express her advocacy and confront social realities with honesty and strength.

Together, the artists’ stories underscored the transformative potential of music as both a language of emotion and a tool of resistance. Whether through song, reflection, or rhythm, Mr. Reyes, Ms. Serey, and Mr. Syahkhang demonstrated that art in Southeast Asia is not merely for entertainment—it is a living, breathing form of struggle, consciousness, and hope.

Following the panels’ sharing, participants asked if you created a joint song, what would it be? Mr. Reyes shared that ASEAN could be seen as “a village in the making,” emphasizing that collaboration was already underway among participants. On her part, Ms. Serey expressed interest in collaborating with the Cambodian group on themes such as women’s empowerment and human rights, noting a desire to learn from them.

They were also asked if they had ever submitted their work to government officials and whether they had experienced support or threats. Ms. Serey explained that the Ministry of Culture and Women’s Affairs initially collaborated with her but later attempted to censor her work. She declined further engagement and released the song through community support, noting that authorities had attempted to intimidate her. The Messenger band shared that they had not sought government collaboration, posting their work on Facebook and YouTube instead. They observed that authorities often ignored their live performances, sometimes assuming the group was associated with opposition politics based on song titles. They reported no direct threats to date.

DAY 2

Orienting the Present, Planning for the Future Towards Common Goals

Body Movement and Collective Care Session



Photo 11. Yuli Rustinwati of ASC instructing the participants to move and tap their bodies as an expression of self-care.

The session titled “Body Movement and Collective Care” was facilitated by Yuli Rustinawati who guided participants through a series of body-based grounding and self-care practices aimed at restoring energy, easing physical strain, and fostering collective well-being after emotionally and intellectually demanding discussions.

The session began with gentle self-touch and body awareness exercises. Participants were invited to slowly touch and massage different parts of their bodies—starting with the palms, face, neck, torso, and back—emphasizing attentiveness to bodily sensations. The facilitator highlighted the importance of caring for often-neglected areas such as the lower back and hips, particularly in recognition of the physical strain experienced by activists and organizers who spend long hours sitting or under stress. Light tapping and massage were

introduced as simple techniques to release tension, stimulate warmth, and reconnect with the body.

Participants were also guided through warming practices, including gentle tapping of the forehead, nose, cheeks, and ears, as well as stretching movements such as reaching upward, bending toward the knees, and slowly returning to an upright position while coordinating breath with movement. These exercises aimed to promote circulation, relaxation, and embodied presence, concluding with collective breathing to center and ground the group. Ms. Rustinwati emphasized that such body-based practices are essential modalities for activists and community workers, noting that chronic pain, fatigue, and emotional distress are common experiences within movements. She underscored that caring for one's own body is a necessary foundation for sustaining collective care and solidarity within communities.



Photo 12. Words and images of solidarity created by the conference participants to become the Freedom Wall.

Solidarity Wall Activity

Following the movement exercises, participants were invited to take part in a Solidarity Wall activity. Reflecting on ongoing struggles across communities and the region, Yuli encouraged participants to express messages of hope, care, and solidarity for their sisters, brothers, comrades, and families affected by repression, displacement, and social injustice. Participants were given time to write messages or create drawings, which were collectively displayed on the Solidarity Wall as an expression of shared commitment to humanity, democracy, and regional solidarity.

Grounding Practices for Emotional Well-being

The session continued with a focused grounding exercise addressing emotional regulation and anxiety, particularly in the context of movement work. Drawing from her personal experience, Ms. Rustinawati shared how simple tactile practices can help manage anxiety, fear, sadness, and anger. Participants were guided through finger-touching techniques, where each finger was associated with a particular emotional state—such as worry, fear, sadness, nervousness, and happiness—highlighting the connection between emotions and the body’s nervous system.

Participants were invited to close their eyes, relax their bodies, breathe slowly, and gently touch their fingers, palms, arms, and other parts of the body at their own pace. The facilitator emphasized that these practices are practical, accessible, and can be done anywhere, especially in moments of heightened stress or emotional intensity. The session concluded with a reminder that self-love and self-care are integral to sustaining long-term movement work. By grounding themselves physically and emotionally, participants are better able to care for one another and continue their collective struggles with resilience.

Updates on MASSA Activist School

Dr. Andrew Aeria began his presentation by offering a “gift” grounded in regional solidarity: a packet of pepper seeds he had received at a global palm oil conference the previous week. He used this symbolic gesture to surface a staunch contradiction in Southeast Asia’s development trajectory—as the monocrop agribusiness industry such as the oil palm plantations exponentially expand across borders in Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, and beyond, farmers’ sovereign control over seeds is increasingly threatened.

He contextualized this issue through the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV), an international convention established in 1961 that promotes seed patenting and intellectual property rights. Dr. Aeria cautioned that accession to UPOV compels states to allow seed trademarking and patenting, effectively criminalizing farmers’ age-old practices of saving, exchanging, and reusing seeds. Under this framework, a variety of seeds, whether rice, pepper, sorghum, or vegetables—can be owned and controlled by corporations, forcing farmers to repurchase seeds and pay patent fees each planting cycle. He underscored this as a pressing regional issue threatening food sovereignty and farmers’ autonomy across Southeast Asia.



Photo 13. Dr. Andrew Aeria of Pemangkin Research presenting to the plenary the land in Bangunkarya donated by SPP to MASSA: the site of the future MASSA Activist School.

Dr. Aeria then reflected on the origins of MASSA, which emerged approximately eight years ago from sustained critiques on ASEAN as an inter-governmental body. He explained that MASSA was formed out of frustration with ASEAN's elite-driven, profit-oriented regionalism, which prioritizes big business while sidelining the needs of ordinary people. He cited ASEAN's persistent failure to address environmental crises—such as the recurring transboundary haze since 1997—as evidence of its prioritization of profit over people and ecological sustainability. ASEAN, he argued, lacks accountability to marginalized communities and routinely fails to protect human rights. Many participants, he noted, have personally experienced human rights violations simply for their identities or political beliefs, often at the hands of Southeast Asian states themselves. This exclusion is reflected in stark inequalities between elite urban centers and the deteriorating conditions of public services such as healthcare, water systems, and infrastructure. In this sense, ASEAN functions as a tool of elite control rather than genuine regional cooperation.

As a response, MASSA articulates a vision of regionalism grounded in mutual benefit, solidarity, and people-to-people cooperation, inspired by the spirit of Bandung. Dr. Aeria emphasized the need to transcend nationalism, ethnic divisions, and rigid national borders in favor of a shared regional identity rooted in common histories, cultures, and struggles. He illustrated Southeast Asia's deep interconnections through language, food, and scripts—from Sanskrit-influenced writing systems to shared culinary traditions—arguing that nationalism often artificially inflames divisions between neighboring peoples.

MASSA's alternative regional identity centers human needs first and upholds human rights, religious and cultural diversity, environmental conservation, sustainable development, equality, and collective care. Food security emerged as a key concern. Despite being major exporters of commodities like palm oil, many Southeast Asian countries lack food self-sufficiency, particularly in staple crops such as rice. Dr. Aeria highlighted this contradiction as a structural outcome of export-oriented, neoliberal development.

Dr. Aeria traced MASSA's early work in documenting alternative practices across the region. Through six years of research, UP CIDS AltDev produced four major publications on cross-border regionalism, solidarity, and reimagining development in Southeast Asia. These documented diverse grassroots initiatives, including agroecology, community-based health systems, alternative education, renewable energy projects, people-oriented housing, cultural work, food sovereignty efforts, seed preservation, women's programs, and legal aid initiatives. However, he acknowledged the limitations of documentation alone, noting that books—while important—have limited reach and impact.

A turning point came when the SPP, a farmers' union in Indonesia, proposed moving beyond documentation toward building a living alternative. In a significant act of solidarity, SPP offered 15 hectares of land in Pangandaran, West Java, to MASSA—freely and without conditions. Dr. Aeria emphasized that such a gift did not come from elites or corporations, but from ordinary farmers who recognized shared struggles across borders. This land, described as hilly and near a river, was offered to nurture alternative perspectives on regional development and to promote people-to-people exchanges. He framed the gesture as a profound expression of grassroots solidarity across Southeast Asia.

■ Early Planning and Emerging Questions

Following the land donation in October 2024, MASSA convened its first planning meeting in Manila in February 2025. Initial discussions rejected the idea of a conventional university in favor of a community-based, alternative school focused on development, vocational learning, and political education. Key questions emerged around human resources, funding, institutional character, curriculum, government permits, division of labor, and reciprocal responsibilities to the local farming community that donated the land. Dr. Aeria stressed that the project must be genuinely participatory and benefit both regional movements and the host community.

In June 2025, MASSA conducted a site visit to Pangandaran with a landscape planner to assess possibilities for construction and land use. The emerging vision includes climate-friendly infrastructure, potentially bamboo-based buildings constructed with community participation. Dr. Aeria issued an open call for volunteer architects, landscape designers, and builders aligned with these principles.

■ Toward a Decentralized and Inclusive Learning Hub Model

The discussion also explored decentralized and hybrid models of learning. Beyond a central school in Pangandaran, Andrew raised the possibility of MASSA “mini-schools” or programs in other parts of Southeast Asia, as well as online learning platforms. He highlighted the experience of Burmese youth-led online education initiatives as an example of collective learning under repression. As MASSA moves forward, he outlined key next steps: forming planning teams, ensuring financial sustainability, securing permits, designing programs with strong emphasis on collective care and women’s leadership, and broadening participation from organizations across the region. He proposed holding MASSA conferences every two years, with intervening years dedicated to planning meetings to translate dialogue into concrete action.

Dr. Aeria invited participants to actively engage with the MASSA project—not merely as conference attendees, but as co-builders of a regional movement of alternatives and solidarity. He emphasized that MASSA’s evolution: from listening and documenting to building and practicing alternatives, was made possible by unexpected acts of trust and generosity from grassroots communities, and that honoring this trust requires collective commitment and action.

Erni Kartini of SPP also provided context on the SPP’s collaboration with MASSA and the political significance of the land donated for the proposed MASSA school. She recalled that two years prior, she and SPP Secretary-General Agustiana attended the MASSA conference in Manila, Philippines, where they encountered the movement’s vision of people-centered regionalism and solidarity across Southeast Asia. It was through this engagement that the SPP decided to make a concrete contribution to MASSA, not for institutional recognition, but as a gesture of solidarity for the peoples of Southeast Asia. The decision to hand over 15 hectares of land was intended to give material form to the commitments and shared aspirations articulated during the 4th MASSA Conference, translating dialogue into practice.

Ms. Kartini emphasized that the land offered to MASSA is not an ordinary parcel of land. It is land that was reclaimed by the community after years of dispossession, following a protracted struggle against a Dutch company that previously controlled the area during colonial times. The process of reclaiming the land spanned 25 years of sustained resistance, organizing, and collective sacrifice. As such, the land embodies the history, dignity, and resilience of the peasant community. She stressed that by donating this land, SPP is not merely providing a physical space but is sharing the very struggle that made its recovery possible. This history of resistance, she noted, is what SPP seeks to offer to the people of Southeast Asia through MASSA—an inheritance of collective struggle, not charity. Ms. Kartini expressed hope that the land will generate benefits not only for communities in Indonesia but also for peoples across the Southeast Asian region. She underscored that the envisioned MASSA school should be self-financing and sustainable, ensuring its long-term viability without compromising its political and ethical commitments.

To this end, she shared that villagers have already planted more than 500 coconut trees on the land as part of income-generating initiatives. These activities intend to support the financial sustainability of the school and demonstrate how community-based economic practices can directly sustain educational and political projects. She concluded by reaffirming SPP's commitment to ensuring that the land serves both as a site of learning or knowledge building, and as a living testimony of how reclaimed land, collective struggle, and regional solidarity can be woven together to build concrete alternatives.

Parallel Sessions: Vision to Praxis – Community Planning and MASSA Core Group

The conference transitioned into “Moment 8: Visioning to Praxis,” focusing on collective action and the practical application of ideas discussed in previous sessions. Ms. Sangva introduced the structure for the parallel breakout sessions, aimed at enabling participants to collaboratively explore what can be done as a community. Participants were informed that a MASSA Core Group (CG) session was designed for evaluation and planning of MASSA, especially concerning the next steps of the MASSA Activists School. The core group was guided by Ms. Aban and Dr. Aeria. It was emphasized that the MASSA Core Group would serve as a space for strategic planning and evaluation, and

encouraged all who wished to contribute to the development of the MASSA School initiative to participate actively in shaping the project's future direction.



Photo 14. During the meeting of the MASSA Steering Committee from left to right: Ricky Amukti, Dr. Dulce Natividad, Ananeza Aban, Leo Soares, with GTA's Madhuresh Kumar.

Meanwhile, other participants were divided into four breakout groups. Based on language preference and discussion from the previous day, one group was designated for Khmer-speaking participants, while the rest of the plenary was divided into three break-out groups. They were tasked to answer the following questions: (1) What kind or forms of actions, projects, or collaborations should MASSA undertake in the next 2–3 years?; (2) What key issues should MASSA focus on?; (3) How can we strengthen the organization? The inputs gathered in the plenary will be integrated as the CG plans strategically MASSA's direction and organizational structure.

■ **MASSA Core Group Composition (later called the MASSA Steering Committee)**

- Dr. Aeria (Pemangkin Research – Malaysia)
- Ms. Castillo (SPELL – Philippines)
- Ms. Rustinawati (ASC – Indonesia)
- Mr. Ma'ruf (KPRI – Indonesia)
- Ms. Ros (FGS – Cambodia)
- Ms. Eng (GADC – Cambodia)

- Ms. Ngorn (GADC – Cambodia)
- Mr. Amukti (KPRI/Pantau Gambut – Indonesia)
- AltDev – MASSA Secretariat (Dr. Tadem, Dr. Natividad, Mr. Dimalanta, Ms. Santiago, Ms Aban, and Mr. Martinez)
- Mr. Soares (UNAER – Timor Leste)
- Ms. Kartini (SPP – Indonesia)
- Mr. Reyes (AMP3 – Philippines/Laos)
- Mr. Saythalat (PAKA – Laos)
- Ms. Julian (Freedom from Debt Coalition – Philippines)

MASSA Core Group Session Highlights and Consensus

For the MASSA Core Group Session, below are the following points and highlights of the session.

■ **MASSA needs a clearer structure and defined programs.**

The absence of a formal structure makes roles, contributions, and decision-making unclear – The core group/steering committee emphasized the need to outline specific thematic programs (e.g., gender, climate, youth), establish a core committee, and clarify the level of institutionalization needed. As an action point, the body established “working groups” (refer below) and made a (2) Steering Committee Group Chat that will be used for regular communication.

Working Groups	Person/s-in-charge to lead the process
People-to-People Exchanges	Anwar “Sastro” Ma’ruf (KPRI)
Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion (GEDSI)	Ananeza Aban (AltDev), Gender and Development for Cambodia (GADC)
Research and Documentation	Eduardo C. Tadem (AltDev)
Youth Collective	To be proposed to the plenary session (nominations: Pup, Su, and Ravio)
MASSA Activist School	Andrew Aeria (Pemangkin Research)

Working Groups	Person/s-in-charge to lead the process
Fundraising (to be embedded in working groups)	Ricky Amukti
Secretariat	AltDev

The working groups were formed based on MASSA’s past activities and from the inputs of parallel sessions mentioned above (e.g. wanting to build a youth collective, proposal to know more about MASSA — this portion will be elaborated in the succeeding section). The CG also agreed that the MASSA Steering Committee/Core Group should meet regularly/monthly, and must be composed of people from different countries.

As for hosting the 7th conference to be held in 2027, this will be a continuing discussion.

■ **MASSA should focus on translating conference outputs into concrete actions**

The CG generally agreed that instead of organizing another big conference next year, MASSA should prioritize deepening past work: through the MASSA Activist School, small-scale activities, community engagements, documentation of alternative practices – translating conferences’ outcomes into small projects and activities. As an action point, conferences will be held every two years, in-between are small-group planning. The next planning will be held in Penang, Malaysia (2026). Plenary meetings regularly/monthly (to be held online) are also raised in the session.

■ **Strengthening membership, collaboration, and expansion across Southeast Asia is a shared priority**

The CG acknowledged the growth (of membership of) MASSA and agreed on the need to deepen member understanding of MASSA, assess existing members, and ensure new groups can effectively utilize and contribute to the network. In line with this consensus, the creation of an internal baseline dataset was raised during the discussion—to map (1) members that are known, (2) those that have been actively participating, and (3) those whose status remains unclear. However, the CG emphasized that all MASSA members (both current and prospective) must uphold the principles of alternative practices, and that member assessment should remain guided by openness and flexibility.

■ On MASSA Activist School

The CG agreed not to return the land to the SPP and instead proceed with the establishment of a foundation in Indonesia, which will serve as the legal and operational base for the school. The foundation must be constituted by three Indonesian board members. In addition, Ricky Amukti emphasized the need to finalize the foundation's structure, including the appointment of the board and the formation of an Ethical Advisory Board for fundraising purposes. The Ethical Advisory Board will guide decisions on resource mobilization and ensure adherence to an ethical funding policy, which specifies the types of funding MASSA will accept, and not accept.

In terms of input from the parallel session, the main themes identified and integrated in the core group discussion were as follows: there is an expectation for MASSA to facilitate people-to-people (P2P) learning exchanges on various issues (such as gender, youth, climate, and advocacy) across the region; to establish a MASSA youth collective; and to ensure a more inclusive and democratic leadership structure. Participants also noted that MASSA's direction remains unclear—whether it aims to function as a political party, a network, or a non-governmental organization. A key proposal from the plenary was to strengthen awareness and understanding of MASSA by developing an online platform or website. This connects to the need to establish baseline data about MASSA: its composition, activities, and ideological grounding.

The plenary further suggested that MASSA could be transformed into a school, which could take a more informal form, such as a virtual university, fellowship, or scholarship program. Participants also emphasized the importance of language as a tool for building solidarity. The idea of creating a Language Learning Hub was raised, given that communication across Southeast Asia is often mediated through English. Participants highlighted the need to foster communication in Southeast Asian languages and to explore the development of a common regional language, promoting linguistic diversity as part of MASSA's broader agenda.

Parallel Sessions

Collective Visioning of Alternative Regionalism into Praxis Detailed Outputs

Participants engaged in a “museum walk” during the parallel sessions on Day 2, where two representatives from each group report their outputs while others move around to view and interact with each group’s work.



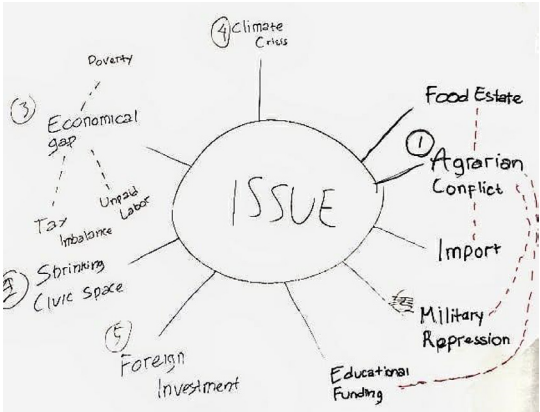
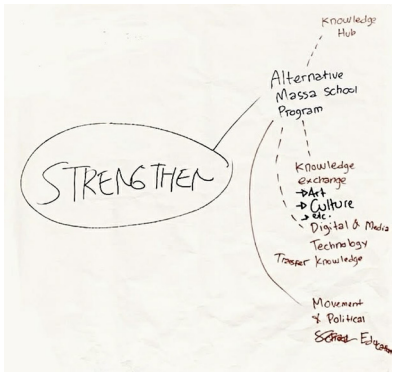
Photo 15. The MASSA Steering Committee with Kumar of GTA in a dialogue with young activists Ravio and Misu, who were presenting on behalf of the “Newbie” group (see their collective response below)

Newbie POVs		
Democracy ■ HRDs + Women ■ Protests ■ Dialogues ■ Activism ■ Safehouses ■ Elections	Inclusion ■ Women’s rights ■ Sustainable livelihood ■ Gender ■ Psychosocial support ■ Women’s political leadership ■ Economic resilience	Education ■ Environment ■ Climate change ■ ‘Alternative education’
In the next 2-3 years...		
Learning exchanges with successful reformers on economic resilience	Develop a collective protection protocols/emergency assistance for HRDs activists/collaborators	Includes: shelters, travel plan, meals, communications, physical safety, digital safety, legal aid

Newbie POVs		
Build a MASSA youth collective + give decision-making influence	Facilitate working groups to coordinate agendas and activities.	Establish a collective adaptive funding pool to use during emergency/ risky situations
Build a database of initiatives/organisation/ expertise of MASSA	Have a holistic multi channel communications strategy	Organize a regular language exchange activity online
Establish parameters/ criteria for ‘membership’ of MASSA (Screening)	Co-create a set of guiding principles and values	Design an alternative leadership structure that accommodates the need for ‘new’ decision-making model in MASSA
Where is MASSA?		
■ A political party? ■ An NGO? ■ A School?	■ A farm? ■ A “new” ASEAN? ■ Something unknown now	



Photo 16. Jagat of Penabulu Oxfam (Indonesia) presenting on behalf of the ‘Kelompok’ group. See their answers below:

Kelompok IV (From Vision to Praxis)	
	■ Economy (alternative) ■ Based on locality
	■ SPP Alternative School ■ Agrosorgum School (Formal and Informal) in Flores ■ Popular Agroecological School ■ Political Courses

Focus on the Global South (Cambodia)
What issues should MASSA focus on? ■ To have wealth tax campaign/tax the rich, not the poor; environment issues/climate justice ■ No to false solutions (wind mills, hydropower) ■ Clean energy ■ Land, food sovereignty, agrarian justice ■ Renewable energy ■ Free social protection ■ Education system – big gap in the rural – teacher’s pay is lower ■ Domestic unpaid care work ■ Social solidarity economy/solidarity economy

Focus on the Global South (Cambodia)
How can we strengthen the organization? ■ (Re)define/clarify the org/structure, mandate ■ Clarify the legal identity of the org ■ Formalize membership criteria ■ Monitoring and evaluation system
What kind of actions/projects/collaborations do you suggest MASSA to undertake in the next 2-3 years? ■ Exchange learning about sustainable living (agri practices) ■ Cross-generation dialogue ■ Solidarity festival □ Products □ Arts (music, dance, contemporary) □ Practices ■ MASSA Website/Online platform □ Stories □ Regional members □ Advocacy action/campaigns ■ Solidify MASSA's campaign issues



Photo 17. Socheata of Focus on the Global South (Cambodia) presenting their group's answers to other Khmer participants.

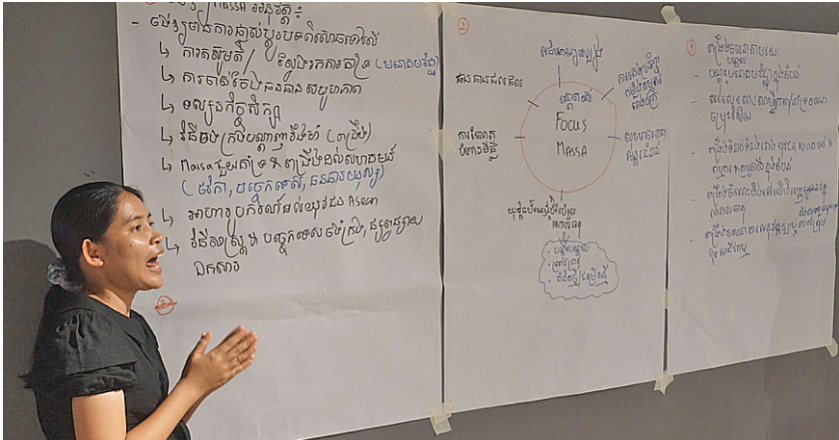


Photo 18. Khmer Group responses - see their answers below:

Khmer Group	
Translation: Want MASSA to practice: Wanna have an exchange experience on: □ Advocacy (ideology) □ Collective resource arrangement □ Field visit □ Network mobilization (strengthening) □ Support from MASSA and strengthening community (funding, technical and human resource) □ Scholarship for ASEAN youths □ Methods and technical on mobilization, disseminating documentation	
	Translation: Strengthening movement through: □ Ideology training in regional □ Solidarity message/supporting diverse movement sector □ Strengthening relationship between youth, community, and workers in the region □ Strengthening knowledge on climate change, financial □ Strengthening movement on law implementation and responsibility of cooperation Text translation by: Seavmey Norn of GADC

Simultaneous Activities and Networking Activities

Aside from the praxis activity, networking sessions were also conducted afterwards. Hirzawati Atikah Mohd Tahir presented the ongoing work to integrate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) initiatives across Southeast Asia. She shared the journey of the ASEC SDG–SSE Roadmap, which began with the 2024 Kuala Lumpur Conference, followed by a series of regional activities including webinars, the publication *Building Inclusive Communities through SDG–SSE Initiatives*, and collaborations with the International Labour Organization and ACSC/APF. The initiative culminated in the ASEAN SDG–SSE Forum 2025, where a Memorandum of Understanding was signed among 21 organizations from Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and other Southeast Asian countries. Ms. Tahir invited participants to contribute feedback as the roadmap is still being finalized, emphasizing the importance of collective regional voices in shaping sustainable economic models and strengthening state–civil society partnerships. The roadmap, grounded in the ASEAN 2045: Our Shared Future framework and aligned with the five SDG pillars—People, Planet, Prosperity, Partnership, and Peace—aims to empower grassroots communities through five strategic areas: policy regulation, financing, impact assessment and data, capacity building, and institutional and relational arrangements.



Photo 19. Hirzawati Atikah Mohd Tahir of APPGM-SDG from Malaysia presenting the ASEAN SDG–SSE Roadmap (2026–2030).



Photo 20. Chanthanva Syhakhang from Laos and member of AMP3 singing a song for the plenary during the arts session.



Photo 21. Art session during the conference, facilitated by Indonesia youth artists from KPRI.

Closing Sessions and Summary of Discussions



Photo 22. Ananeza Aban (left) and Raquel Castillo (right) present to the plenary the consolidated highlights of the Steering Committee's (formerly Core Group) discussion and the results of the parallel session of the four break-out groups

The closing session, facilitated by Raquel Castillo of SPELL, Andrew Aeria of Pemangkin Research, and Ananeza Aban of AltDev, provided a synthesis of discussions from both the core group and parallel sessions.

First, Ms. Castillo presented the consolidated highlights from the group sessions. She noted several common themes emerging from participants' reflections across the four discussion groups:

1. **Deepening Understanding of MASSA** – Participants expressed the desire to know more about MASSA's vision, structure, and ongoing initiatives, especially among first-time attendees.
2. **Clarity on Structure and Processes** – There was a shared call for greater transparency regarding decision-making, coordination mechanisms, and leadership roles within the movement.
3. **Learning Exchanges** – Many participants emphasized strengthening inter-country learning exchanges as a way to deepen solidarity, share practices, and sustain the movement's grassroots connections.
4. **Language as a Tool for Solidarity** – A proposal emerged to establish a Language Learning Hub as an entry point for regional collaboration, enabling translation and mutual learning across Southeast Asian languages.

5. Youth Engagement and Intergenerational Work – Participants underscored the importance of involving youth in leadership and action, proposing the formation of a MASSA Youth Collective to foster intergenerational solidarity.

Ms. Castillo further elaborated that while the movement remains hesitant to adopt rigid institutional structures, there is a need to systematize processes. MASSA affirmed its identity as a movement and a network, not a traditional organization, emphasizing collective care and shared leadership.

Proposed Working Groups

To operationalize the outcomes of the conference, the following initial working groups were proposed and their corresponding leads:

1. People-to-People Exchanges – Led by Mr. Ma'ruf (KPRI)
2. Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) – Ms. Aban (AltDev) and GADC
3. Research and Documentation – Dr. Tadem (AltDev)
4. MASSA School – Dr. Aeria (Pemangkin Research)
5. Youth Collective – To be co-led by Ms. Khumta and Ms. Misu
6. Fundraising and Resource Mobilization – Embedded across all working groups, will be led by Mr. Amukti (Pantau Gambut)
7. Secretariat – AltDev as the coordinating body of all working groups

Ms. Castillo also noted that the Term of Reference (ToR) for the working groups will be developed within two weeks. Participants were encouraged to volunteer and take active roles in their areas of interest.

Conference Planning and Next Steps. Dr. Aeria announced that MASSA Core Group agrees that the conference will be held biennially, alternating with planning meetings to assess progress. The next planning meeting (2026) will be hosted in Penang, Malaysia, and the next MASSA Conference (2027) will be confirmed in subsequent discussions.

Ms. Aban opened the floor for proposals to host the 2027. While Laos expressed interest, security conditions remain uncertain. Tentative offers came from Laos and Timor-Leste. Solidarity-based fundraising was also highlighted as a defining feature of this year's conference. Organizations including GADC, Focus on the Global South, AltDev, APHEDA, KPRI, and GTA (Global Tapestry of Alternatives) were recognized for their collective mobilization efforts.

At this point, Mr. Kumar from GTA clarified the financial and organizational relationship between GTA and MASSA. He emphasized that the solidarity funds used to support the conference and related activities did not come as external aid from GTA as an institution. Rather, the funds belong to MASSA itself, held within GTA's shared pool of movement resources. He explained that MASSA is one of the GTA "weavers," meaning MASSA plays an active role in weaving together transformative initiatives across regions. As a weaver, MASSA is not a recipient of funding but a co-creator and co-holder of shared resources, contributing to and drawing from the collective pool that sustains transnational solidarity work. He also noted that discussions are ongoing for MASSA to potentially host the next GTA in-person assembly, with Indonesia (through the KPRI) as a possible venue or Philippines.

Before closing, Ms. Sangva shared logistical reminders for the following day's field visits:

1. Encounter 1: Trapang Svay Community
Facilitators: Sopheak (GADC), Loy (SACD), Sophea (SACD)
2. Encounter 2: Phnom Krom and Khlang Toek Tomnoub 78 (Water Reservation) Communities
Facilitators: Molika (SACD), Socheata (SACD), Vongkheang (GADC)
3. Encounter 3: Beautiful Life Organization, Siem Reap
Facilitators: Seavmey (GADC) and Sivath (BLO)

DAY 3

Field Visits and Solidarity Night

Encounter 1: Trapang Svay Community

Facilitator: Sopheak (GADC), Loy (SACD) and Sophea (SACD)

The Trapang Svay community is located in Angkor Thom District. The community has been engaged in a longstanding land conflict since 2005 involving a Buddhist nun. The broader Angkor Thom area is characterized by multiple land-related disputes, particularly in relation to government conservation initiatives and heritage protection programs under the Apsara Authority, which have significantly shaped local land tenure dynamics. During the visit, participants were exposed to the community's ongoing struggles to assert and defend their land rights amid overlapping institutional claims and development pressures. Despite these challenges, Trapang Svay continues to sustain its traditional and collective farming practices. These include indigenous seed saving, reduced dependence on agribusiness and market systems, and collective agricultural work that also supports their legal struggle in court.



Photo 23. A Trapang Svay community leader explaining the community's land struggle and traditional farming practices to conference participants.

■ Reflections from Hirzawati Atikah

This community has been involved in a land conflict with a Buddhist religious nun since 2005 and has been pursuing their land rights through court cases. Despite their struggle, they continue to practice traditional farming, including native seed saving. Although the yield from their farming is insufficient to cover the needs of the whole community, their resilience and courage allow them to continue. This commitment is crucial because farming helps support their expenses for the continuing court battles.

■ Reflections from Madhuresh Kumar

Trapang Svay – Land, Seeds, and the Politics of Survival. In Trapang Svay, participants met communities that have spent nearly two decades resisting capture of their farmland from a Buddhist religious nun, since 2005. Their area in Angkor Thom is known for many land conflicts, including government programs of preservation and tourism around the ancient temples, which is under the Apsara authority. Yet this story is not only about resistance and loss. It is also about the renewal of community knowledge. Farmers here save native seed varieties, refuse chemically intensive agriculture, and cultivate food collectively and meet the legal fees together. They also organize Seeds Festival, as an assertion of their sovereignty and right to the land and a refusal to surrender their future to companies, markets, or ministries.

In a region where agricultural land is rapidly disappearing into concessions, plantations, and speculative ventures, Trapang Svay stands as a reminder that the fight for land is the fight for democracy. A regionalism that does not begin with those who cultivate and protect the soil would be regionalism without roots.

Encounter 2: Phnom Krom and Khlang Toek Tomnoub 78 (Water Reservation) Communities

Facilitators: Molika (SACD), Socheata (SACD), Vongkheang (GADC)



Photo 24. Conference participants on a boat, moving through the Phnom Krom and Khlang Toek Tomnoub 78 water reservation area during the field visit, with a community representative sharing his efforts to protect shared resources, including the water reservation area and local biodiversity.

Phnom Krom is located approximately 10 kilometers from Siem Reap City. The site visit involved engagement with two closely connected communities: the Phnom Krom land community and the Khlang Toek Tom Noub 78 community. These communities have been working in solidarity, supporting one another in various court cases and collective efforts to protect their shared natural resources, particularly the water reservation area and local biodiversity. Participants were hosted within the water reservation area, where the communities shared their experiences and ongoing struggles. The discussion highlighted their longstanding land and resource rights issues, with particular attention to the important role of women in community organizing and resistance. The visit also surfaced both their partial successes and continuing challenges in defending their territory and livelihoods.



Photo 25. Conference participants pose near the water reservation area.

■ **Reflections from Raine Melissa Riman**

The dam called the 78 Dam, which was hand-dug during the Khmer Rouge era in 1978 is still sustaining 260 farmers and over 5000 hectares of rice fields. The dam lies at the center of community life, supporting biodiversity and anchoring generations who have farmed the land for centuries. Paddy fields are delineated through collective memory, with families managing land and water largely without government support, while corporations and private actors have created ongoing disputes over resources.

■ **From Madhuresh Kumar**

Phnom Krom and the 78 Dam Communities – Belonging in a militarized landscape, the visit to Phnom Krom offered another layer to this understanding. Here, families live on the shifting floodplain of the Tonle Sap, cultivating rice in the dry months and fishing when the waters return. Their relationship to the land is ecological rather than administrative; the lake's rise and retreat determine their rhythms far more than any map.

Yet their lives are marked by repeated displacement; first during the Khmer Rouge period, then during the 1987 conflict with Vietnam, and again in the decades that followed. When they attempted to reclaim their original land in 2014, the military blocked them, citing “security concerns,” even as parts of the same land were sold to private interests. Houses were destroyed; families rebuilt. Each act of reconstruction was met with further intimidation.

What sustains the community is collective resolve. Women stand at the frontlines during confrontations, forming protective circles. Neighbors rebuild homes together. They continue to cultivate rice, maintain the check dam, and organize petitions even when authorities refuse responsibility.

Their struggle complicates every tidy idea of citizenship, legality, or sovereignty. They have lived and labored on this land for generations yet remain “illegal” in the eyes of the state. In their determination, we glimpse what Gandhi called a moral compass: when in doubt, choose the path that protects the poorest and most vulnerable. If alternative regionalism means anything, it must begin here with people who refuse to be erased from their own histories.

Encounter 3: Beautiful Life Organization, a LGBTQ Community in Siem Reap

Facilitators: Seavmey (GADC) and Sivath (BLO)



Photo 26. First picture is taken in front of Beautiful Life Organization's office, second picture is taken inside their office during a learning session with participants.

The Beautiful Life Organisation (BLO) is a locally-registered non-governmental organisation in Siem Reap, Cambodia. It runs a drop-in center called “A Place to be Yourself,” which is a safe space for LGBTQIA+ individuals to meet, learn through peer support about their gender and sexuality, and access information about healthcare (both sexual and mental), available counselling services for them, and their rights in Cambodia. BLO advocates alongside LGBTQIA+

individuals to promote exposure, challenge stereotypes, and decrease stigma across social, familial, and professional realms.

■ Reflections from Eunice Santiago

At the Beautiful Life Organization, participants were introduced to the organization's history and its longstanding work in providing direct support and counselling to LGBTQ individuals, alongside preventive education and workshops on sexual and reproductive health, particularly about HIV.

Beyond these formal programs, a key highlight of the group visit was the organization's office itself, which functions as an inclusive and welcoming safe space. Open to anyone regardless of SOGIESC,³ the space allows people to come together, spend time on their hobbies, or engage in conversations about their everyday life, personal struggles, and community concerns. The visit also enabled meaningful exchanges between BLO and SINDIKASI, a labor union based in Indonesia regarding strategies on how to address gender-based violence within labor unions, approaches to policy advocacy especially in the inclusion of the LGBTQIA+ community, and ways of engaging with government institutions. This is particularly significant in light of Indonesia's conservative political context, where advancing inclusive workplace policies often faces resistance.

■ Reflections from Madhuresh Kumar

The third field visit, to APTBY (A place to be yourself), only LGBTQ safe-space in Siem Reap, operated by Beautiful Life Organization, revealed a different dimension of marginality. While some countries in Southeast Asia recognize queer rights on paper, many do not; and even where legal protections exist, stigma, surveillance, and violence persist.

Inside the center, participants saw what solidarity looks like when the right to exist is constantly under threat. APTBY provides HIV services, mental health support, crisis shelter, and community programs for transgender and queer youth who often face family rejection, workplace discrimination, and police harassment. For many, this small centre is the only place where

3 SOGIESC stands for Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sex Characteristics

they can speak freely, dress as they wish, or simply exhale. In a region where patriarchal norms and religious conservatism often shape public policy, such spaces are radical by their very existence. They model a kind of regionalism grounded not in state alignment but in shared vulnerability. Queer networks across Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, and the Philippines already support one another informally; not through treaties, but through trust, lived experience, and the exchange of safety strategies.

Annex

Reflections on the 6th MASSA Conference

Madhuresh Kumar

Written by Madhuresh Kumar, a member of the Facilitation Team of the Global Tapestry of Alternatives; for a complete copy of the published article, see “Weaving a Region of Hope: Alternative Regionalism in Southeast Asia” published in the *Radical Ecological Democracy*, December 4, 2025, <https://radicalecologicaldemocracy.org/weaving-a-region-of-hope-alternative-regionalism-in-southeast-asia/>.

Introduction

Across the region, civic space is shrinking, authoritarianism is deepening, and ordinary people are pushed into ever more precarious lives. Myanmar’s coup continues to send thousands fleeing; Thailand grapples with cycles of crackdown; Cambodia has closed off dissent; Laos and Vietnam remain tightly controlled; and electoral democracies like Indonesia and the Philippines face erosion from within and cycles of protests against corruption and growing inequality. At the same time, climate disasters – typhoons, floods, droughts – cross borders as if to remind us that the region’s ecological survival is inseparable.

Yet woven through this bleakness is a quiet insistence on solidarity. Young activists send each other food during protests; queer networks share safety strategies; farmers learn seed practices across countries; and artists circulate songs of dissent that travel faster than repression. A different Southeast Asia already exists in glimpses, carried in acts of collective care, resistance, solidarity, and imagination.

It was this undercurrent that surfaced in Siem Reap, in the backdrop of the majestic Angkor Wat complex, where nearly eighty participants from people’s movements, communities, and civil society organisations gathered for the Conference. They were not there merely to analyse the region’s problems; they came because something deeper is at stake; how to imagine a regional future that honours people’s dignity when states fail to do so.

It was out of this same impulse that MASSA came into being in 2022 but the process started in 2018 where the idea of people's alternative regionalism or regional integration came out of the two conferences on the alternatives. Movements across the region recognised that engaging ASEAN or attending parallel civil society forums was no longer enough; the depth of the crises demanded something more rooted, more ambitious. MASSA emerged as an attempt to move beyond state-centred regionalism and to build, instead, a people's regional integration grounded in the alternative practices already nurtured by Southeast Asian communities. It is a long-term vision, one that cannot be realised overnight, but it carries the patient commitment of movements that know real transformation begins from the ground up.

Imagining Alternative Regionalism

If the political map of Southeast Asia once promised stability, today it reveals its limits. ASEAN, the region's flagship institution, remains bound by a doctrine of non-interference that often functions as non-responsiveness. It facilitates investment, trade, and elite diplomacy, but remains structurally incapable of addressing democratic breakdowns, refugee crises, or cross-border conflicts. When people flee Myanmar, or when repression intensifies in Cambodia or Vietnam or border disputes flare up between Thailand-Cambodia, ASEAN's silence is not neutrality, it is abandonment of principles of Multilateralism.

Yet a deeper reason compels us to rethink regionalism: the region's lived realities have long preceded the borders that states now defend. Benedict Anderson described nations as imagined communities, identities that feel natural only because we rehearse them. If that is true of nations, it is equally true of regions. Southeast Asia was never simply a tidy collection of 11 states; it has always been a cultural and ecological continuum shaped by rivers, migrations, colonial ruptures, and shared struggles. James Scott's idea of Zomia reminds us of this. The highlands stretching across Northeast India, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, and four provinces of China form a region not because states designed it, but because communities there have historically lived, moved, and organised in ways that evade state control.

Crises today merely expose what has always been true. Climate shocks cross borders without hesitation. Migrant workers sustain economies far from home yet remain criminalised at borders. Fisherfolk on one side of the Mekong depend on decisions made hundreds of kilometres upstream. Indigenous communities hold knowledge systems that predate modern states altogether. And in every country, the same patterns of resource extraction, land dispossession, crony

capitalism, political corruption, and authoritarian consolidation recur with uncanny similarity.

In short, the region is already deeply interconnected, just not in ways recognised by official institutions. This is where alternative regionalism enters the picture. Instead of treating regional integration as a diplomatic project, it looks at the region through the lives of those who carry its burdens: women in informal economies, migrants crossing borders under threat, communities displaced by conflict, farmers defending land, queer networks carving out safety, and young people imagining futures beyond the ones imposed on them.

Much of Southeast Asia's political life unfolds in spaces where people have long resisted being fully absorbed into state power – not only through open confrontation, but through mobility, autonomy, ecological knowledge, and social practices that make control difficult. Seen this way, state-led regionalism may appear paralysed, but a people's regionalism is already emerging through forms of life that refuse to be governed in the usual ways: food sovereignty, indigenous stewardship, feminist organising, mutual aid, cross-border digital solidarity, and cultural exchange. These are not simply reactions to repression; they are the building blocks of another regional imagination.

To imagine alternative regionalism, then, is not wishful thinking. It is recognising the region that already exists beneath the borders drawn on maps. It is rooted not in treaties but in relationships, not in sovereignty claims but in shared vulnerability and shared hope. The MASSA Conference gathered precisely because this recognition is gaining strength. The task now is not to argue for an alternative, but to understand how people are already bringing it into being.

Weaving the Region: Lessons from the Assembly

By the end of the Assembly, a set of lessons emerged – threads that connected discussions, field visits, and personal testimonies into a coherent regional picture. They pointed toward a simple truth: Southeast Asia already contains the foundations of an alternative regionalism; the task is to weave them together with intention.

The first lesson is that democracy in Southeast Asia can no longer be imagined within the boundaries of the nation-state. Crises, whether political, economic, or ecological, move across borders freely, and people's lives move with them.

Migrant workers sustain economies far from home, refugees flee repression into neighbouring countries, and climate disasters touch multiple nations at once. A regional future built solely on state sovereignty is already out of step with the realities of everyday life.

The second lesson is that the region's most enduring solidarities come from below, not above. Where ASEAN remains limited by its non-interference doctrine, communities have built their own forms of cooperation, informal yet resilient. Farmers exchange seeds and strategies; queer networks share safety pathways; artists collaborate across borders; youth collectives coordinate online; and land defenders teach one another how to navigate legal systems stacked against them. These networks may be invisible to formal diplomacy, but they are the living tissue of the region.

The third lesson is that culture and care are not peripheral but central to how people imagine political futures. The songs, food, fabric, rituals, and shared everyday practices circulating across Southeast Asia do what official regionalism cannot: they create a sense of connection rooted in feeling and memory. Care networks, meanwhile, keep movements alive under pressure, offering emotional and material solidarity where states fail.

The fourth lesson is that the margins are the region's moral and political centre. The struggles of Trapang Svay's farmers, the resilience of Phnom Krom's floodplain community, and the dignity nurtured in the APTBY LGBTQ safe-space show that the real work of regional democracy is happening far from capitals. These sites reveal how land, identity, labour, ecology, and survival are already cross-border issues. They also embody what Gandhi's talisman insists: when imagining the future, we must start with those who have the least, not the most.

The fifth lesson is that knowledge must be reclaimed as a commons, not a commodity. The People's University is not only a training centre; it is an attempt to anchor the region's shared struggles in an institution built from below. It treats people's lived knowledge as the basis for regional learning, something no formal university or government platform currently does.

Together, these lessons suggest a shift away from regionalism as a state project and toward regionalism as a people's practice. They offer a vision grounded in everyday resistance, cultural memory, ecological interconnectedness, and cross-border solidarities that emerge not through treaties but through shared vulnerability and shared hope.

What the Assembly made visible is that alternative regionalism is not an abstract ideal; it is already unfolding in fragments across the region, and MASSA thrives in the cracks of the ASEAN empire. It is not trying to invent it, but to recognise it, nurture it, and weave it into a more coherent and democratic whole. If another region is possible, it will not emerge from the top down. It will be woven from below through care, resistance, culture, memory, and the unwavering demand to live with dignity.

Solidarity Videos

‘We teach life sir’ by Rafeef Ziadah

I'll start with this poem. I wrote this poem when the bombs were dropping on Gaza and I was the media spokesperson for the coalition doing a lot of the organizing and we had stayed up to about six o'clock in the morning perfecting every sound bite and by the end if you're Palestinian you know most Palestinians get tired and start pronouncing our P's as so we become Palestinians by the end of the day so I was practicing my P's all night and the next morning one of the journalists asked me don't you think it would all be fine if you just stopped teaching your children to hate. I did not insult the person. I was very polite. But I wrote this poem as a response to these types of questions we Palestinians always get.



Today, my body was a TV'd massacre.

Today, my body was a TV'd massacre that had to fit into sound bites and word limits.

Today, my body was a TV'd massacre that had to fit into sound bites and word limits filled enough with statistics to counter measured response.

And I perfected my English and I learned my UN resolutions.

But still, he asked me: "Ms. Ziadah, don't you think everything would be resolved if you would just stop teaching so much hatred to your children?"

Pause.

I look inside of me for strength to be patient, but patience is not at the tip of my tongue as the bombs drop over Gaza. Patience has just escaped me.

Pause. Smile.

We teach life, sir.

Raf, remember to smile.

Pause.

We teach life, sir.

We Palestinians teach life after they have occupied the last sky. We teach life after they have built their settlement and apartheid walls after the last skies. We teach life, sir.

But today, my body was a TV'd massacre made to fit into sound bites and word limits.

And just give us a story, a human story. You see, this is not political. We just want to tell people about you and your people, so give us a human story.

Don't mention that word "apartheid" and "occupation." This is not political. You have to help me as a journalist to help you tell your story which is not a political story.

Today, my body was a TV'd massacre.

How about you give us a story of a woman in Gaza who needs medication? How about you? Do you have enough bone-broken limbs to cover the sun? Hand me over your dead and give me the list of their names in one thousand two hundred word limits.

Today, my body was a TV'd massacre made to fit into sound bites and word limits and move those that are desensitized to terrorist blood.

But they felt sorry.

They felt sorry for the cattle over Gaza. So, I give them UN Resolutions and statistics, and we condemn, we deplore, and we reject. And these are not

two equal sides: occupier and occupied. And a hundred dead, two hundred dead, and a thousand dead.

And between that war crime and massacre, I vent out words and smile: "not exotic, not terrorist." And I recount, I recount a hundred dead, two hundred dead, a thousand dead.

Is anyone out there? Will anyone listen?

I wish I could wail over their bodies. I wish I could just run barefoot in every refugee camp and hold every child, cover their ears so they wouldn't have to hear the sound of bombing for the rest of their life the way I do.

Today, my body was a TV'd massacre.

And let me just tell you, there's nothing your UN Resolutions have ever done about this. And no sound bite, no sound bite I come up with, no matter how good my English gets, no sound bite, no sound bite, no sound bite, no sound bite will bring them back to life.

No sound bite will fix this.

We teach life, sir. We teach life, sir. We Palestinians wake up in the morning to teach the rest of the world life, sir.

'Close The Sky Lullaby' (covered by) Phyu Phyu Kyaw Thein



If you don't close the sky, I will die. If you don't close the sky, mom will cry.
 If you don't close the sky, he lose home.
 If you don't close the sky, they'll be doomed
 If you don't close the sky, the sky will still fight.

If you don't close the sky, we feel the night.
 If you don't close the sky, he might win.
 So look in these eyes and think again. If the planes can't fly, they cannot bomb.
 If the jet fuels are banned, we can go home.

In the last slide caption of the video: In Myanmar, the sky holds monster that tears families apart. #BanJetFuelExports to Myanmar

Video about the Burma/Myanmar Struggle



Say your prayers. God will save you. Don't worry – you can say them out loud.

Duck down, duck down.

2024. 2023. 2022. 2021 February.

Nearly a decade sharing power with civilians, Myanmar's military staged a coup.

People are running for their lives. They are repeating or worse.

In trying to gain control, the Junta unleashed 29,770 attacks that killed over 7,900 civilians.

Within three (3) years, over 2.5 million were displaced by conflict and atrocity crimes.

The regime launched 1,050 airstrikes that mainly targeted civilians, IDP Camps, schools, hospitals, and places of worship.

Miles has admitted carrying out air strikes that have killed at least 100 people. The attack happened on the village of Masi and Sanjong province and is one of the deadliest since it ceased power in 2021.

My daughter has not grown out yet – how could they do that to her? She was only 7.

11 Apr 2023: The junta killed 160 people including 38 children in Pa Zi Gyi Village. It was the worst airstrike recorded. Over 19,900 political prisoners are in prison. Over 160 were sentenced to death. Some already have been executed.

“What is happening to the populations there – we’ve got 8 million children out of school, 40% of people living below the poverty line, 15 million dangerously short of food. So the country is stuck in this really dreadful status quo. What everyone’s been waiting for is some sign that we’re going to recognize.”

The junta’s corruption, greed, and incompetence have caused economic chaos. Many are struggling to survive. Some international community have shunned the regime.

“I think it’s time that the international community really wakes up and and sees that what he’s doing has been a decade’s old trick and will not get him far enough.”

“Biden: We’re freezing US assets that benefit the Burmese development system.”

While others have not.

“The government’s reform programs is withheld action from the international community to immediately end the military group to stop oppressing the innocent people to return the state power to the people and to restore the democracy.”

Resistance grew stronger despite junta’s violence. Resistance forces took over 400 junta bases. Hundreds, including junta generals surrendered. Political reforms are being set-up.

“We are now united with a common enemy and a common goal. A federal democratic union that is truly inclusive and peaceful for all people of Myanmar.”

People continue to help each other. Solidarity is strong. The diverse people of Burma/Myanmar are ready to build a democratic future. Will you stand with them?”

On MASSA's Common Convention

We, the peoples of Southeast Asia movements, and weavers of alternatives across Southeast Asia and beyond,

Bound by our histories of resistance and by the kinship of our struggles, we unite to deepen solidarities that affirm the values of cooperation, solidarity, mutual benefit, commons principles and joint development. We reject patriarchy, neoliberal capitalism, sectarianism, colonialism, the domination of the nation-state, and the culture of anthropocentrism and the polycrisis of the present.

In their place, we weave a new regionalism from below built on the foundations of alternative practices of marginalized peoples.

This Assembly exists to nurture a living network of alternatives, grounded in the wisdom of communities, and to foster a kinship that transcends colonial borders. It is a space for dialogue, co-learning, and collective action grounded in mutual respect, where diverse voices come together to imagine and build just and life-affirming futures.

The Assembly shall meet in the spirit of equality and solidarity, with respect for local cultures and sensitivities.

The Assembly's covenant is respect — for time, for voice, for silence, for translation, and for the dignity of all participants.

Actions arising from this Assembly shall strengthen autonomy and self-determination, nurture people-to-people solidarity, and chart a shared path forward.

Let this convention be a living guide that reminds us of our present while illuminating the aspirations of the future of Southeast Asia that we strive to build.

Additional Photos



Conference participants on Day 1 (top photo) and Day 3 (bottom photo) of the 6th MASSA Conference, who were around 75 representatives from Southeast Asia and South Asia; the top photo was taken at Siem Reap House, the conference venue; the bottom photo shows the closing moments and solidarity night held at Angkor Palace Resort.

Center for Integrative and Development Studies

Established in 1985 by University of the Philippines (UP) President Edgardo J. Angara, the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS) is the policy research unit of the University that connects disciplines and scholars across the several units of the UP System. It is mandated to encourage collaborative and rigorous research addressing issues of national significance by supporting scholars and securing funding, enabling them to produce outputs and recommendations for public policy.

The UP CIDS currently has twelve research programs that are clustered under the areas of education and capacity building, development, and social, political, and cultural studies. It publishes policy briefs, monographs, webinar/conference/forum proceedings, and the Philippine Journal for Public Policy, all of which can be downloaded free from the UP CIDS website.

The Program

The Program on Alternative Development (AltDev) aims to look at paradigms, policies, practices, and projects that are largely marginalized and excluded from the mainstream. As they challenge dominant modes, they do not figure prominently in the national and international discourse.

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