The Centre for Democratic Institutions’ inaugural Political Party Leadership Program (PPLP) was held in Canberra from the 21st to 25th May 2012. The PPLP replaces the Political Party Development course, which was run by CDI for six years, from 2006 to 2011. The one-week PPLP course was based at the ANU Commons Centre, at the Australian National University, and was presented by Dr Norm Kelly.

The PPLP is a peer-to-peer dialogue designed to encourage participants to:

- better understand the contribution that political parties can make to democracy and good governance;
- better understand political party leadership in South-East Asia and Australia;
- increase their knowledge of how to manage and promote internal party democracy, policy development and lay party/parliamentary party relations;
- better appreciate their role in leading the development and operation of their parties;
- develop strategies for successful party leadership; and
- establish peer support networks for continuous improvement.

Course Participants

Thirteen senior party officials from five Asian countries attended the program:

- **Burma / Myanmar (5)**
  Cin Pao Zam
  Tun Thein
  Than Nyein
  Than Nû Than
  Hla Saw Oo

- **Philippines (1)**
  Jose Luis Gascon

- **Malaysia (1)**
  Ooi Heng Ong

- **Indonesia (4)**
  Bima Sugiarato
  Luluk Nur Hamidah
  Wibowo Hadiwardoyo
  Binny Bintarti Buchori

- **Thailand (2)**
  Phongthep Thepkanjana
  Buranaj Smutharak
The PPLP had an Asian country focus in 2012, with a similar program planned for 2013 for Melanesian countries. The PPLP is the first CDI program to include representatives from Burma, recognition of that country’s transition to democracy.

Participants hold senior positions in their respective parties, and the group included several officials with current or previous parliamentary experience. The group included three women.

Structure

The emphasis of the PPLP is on peer-to-peer dialogue, and to facilitate this, meetings were arranged with Australian political parties. The group had half-day sessions with:

- **Australian Labor Party** (Peter Yates, international Project Officer; and Kyam Maher, South Australian State Secretary);
- **Liberal Party of Australia** (Bruce Edwards, International Secretary; and Julian Sheezel and Julian Sheezel, Deputy Federal Director); and
- **Australian Greens** (Brett Constable, National Manager; Indra Esguerra, ACT Campaign Manager; and Andrea Millsom, National Convenor)

Sessions were also held with ANU academic experts on the politics of the countries represented:

- **Dr Marcus Mietzner** - Indonesia
- **Dr Bjoern Dressel** – Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand
- **Dr Nicholas Farrelly** – Burma

The group visited Parliament House, and met with the Chief Government Whip, **Joel Fitzgibbon**, and Chief Opposition Whip, **Warren Entsch**. During their visit, the group also observed Question Time. The group also met with ACT Greens Parliamentary Leader, **Meredith Hunter**.

Further sessions and discussions on political leadership, policy development, internal party democracy, and women in politics were led by Norm Kelly, and Linda Reynolds.

Participants also used their time in Canberra to further their links with Australian parties and organisations, as well as interacting with their diplomatic and expatriate communities. New friendships were made within the group, and it is expected that participants will remain in contact into the future.
Conclusion

Due to the overall political party development program, of which the PPLP is a significant part, CDI is establishing very strong links with parties and government officials in the region, which is beneficial for identifying suitable applicants for future courses, and other potential in-country CDI activities.

The support and involvement of the Australian political parties and their parliamentarians is critical to the success of the course, and CDI acknowledges the parties’ participation. The PPLP sessions also help Australian parties to gain a better understanding of some of the issues and challenges that confront political parties throughout the region.

Seven Years of PPD/PPLP

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