

On April 25, in advance of the main conference, a three-hour meeting was held for grass-roots delegates. There was a real buzz as the room filled up with veteran campaigners and people new to the ban asbestos network. As individuals gave a brief introduction of their background and expertise, it became clear that despite a lack of asbestos knowledge, most of the newcomers had a wealth of experience in related issues such as occupational health and safety, workers' rights, environmental and community campaigning.

To bring them up to speed, it had been arranged that experienced Asian campaigners would be on hand to review the development of ban asbestos activism in Asia and key issues that would need to be addressed during the conference. The principal speaker was Sugio Furuya from the Ban Asbestos Network, Japan. He described how working nationally, bilaterally, regionally and internationally, the ban asbestos movement in Asia had developed.

National victims' initiatives on asbestos had included the establishment of the Japan Association of Mesothelioma and Asbestos-Related Disease Victims and their Families (2004), Indian asbestos victims' groups (2004), the Korean National Network of Asbestos Victims and their Families (2009) and community support for asbestos victims in the Philippines, Hong Kong and Taiwan.

Making common cause with NGOs such as IBAS, global labor federations, national trade unions and regional cam-

paigning groups like AMRC and ANROAV had resulted in a number of joint initiatives which had raised public awareness of asbestos issues: GAC 2000 (Brazil), GAC 2004 (Japan), AAC 2006 (Thailand), Yokohama International Asbestos Conference 2007 (Japan), Asbestos International Conference and satellite events 2008 (Korea).

High-profile policy papers and resolutions on the asbestos menace issued since 2006 by international agencies – the International Labor Organization, the World Health Organization and the International Social Security Association – had made a major contribution to national asbestos debates and reinforced the positions adopted by grass-roots groups following multilateral workshops and meetings in Bangladesh (2006), Korea (2007), Indonesia (2008) and Taiwan (2009).

Research projects spearheaded by Japanese and Korean victims' groups on contamination posed by asbestos textile and mining operations in Indonesia and Taiwan had identified occupational and public health risks and stimulated outrage amongst local people at the invasion of their communities by such hazardous technology.

Following this presentation, there was a lively exchange of ideas on how best to progress the ban asbestos campaign throughout Asia, and how to maximize the opportunities offered by the conference due to formally commence the next day.

Outline Conference Agenda

April 26

09:00-10:10	Welcome Session	
10:10-11:10	Plenary Session 1	Asia's Asbestos Time Bomb
11:30-13:45	Plenary Session 2	Tackling the Aftermath of Asia's Asbestos Consumption
14:45-16:45	Workshop 1	The Basic Facts about Asbestos
14:45-16:45	Workshop 2	Medical Session
14:45-16:45	Break-out Session 1	Potential Asian Claims on U.S. Asbestos Bankruptcy Trusts
17:00-19:00	Break-out Session 2	Building the Asian Ban Asbestos Network
17:00-19:00	Workshop 3	Practical Considerations for Minimizing the Asbestos Hazard

April 27

09:00-11:15	Plenary Session 3	Country Reports
11:30-13:30	Plenary Session 4	Meeting the Needs of Asbestos Victims
14:30-16:00	Workshop 4	International Transfer of Asbestos Industry to Asian locations
14:30-16:00	Workshop 5	Shipyards, Ship-breaking Industry and Railways
16:00-18:00	Plenary Session 5	Building the Global Ban Asbestos Network
18:00-19:00	Plenary Session 6	Going Forward: Consolidation and Closing Session