

ARF Unit at ASEAN Secretariat during training on the use of ARF Web, April 14, 2005



Front: Amalia Hayati and Mr. Jun Abad
Middle: Retno Astrini and Farid Azis
Back: Pablo Torres



Front: Amalia Hayati and Nguyen Son Ngoc
Middle: Retno Astrini and Farid Azis
Back: Pablo Torres

ASEAN Regional Forum Website Final Report

SUBMITTED TO:

Sarah J. Tisch, Ph.D.
Chief-of-Party, dot-GOV
Internews Network, 1640 Rhode Island NW, 7th Floor
Washington, DC 20036

DEVELOPED BY:

Pablo Torres
RTI International
3040 Cornwallis Road
P.O. Box 12194
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709-2194

Subcontract GDG-A-00-01-00009-00

RTI No. 09450

April 26, 2005



Introduction

Under a subcontract to Internews Network, RTI worked with the ASEAN Secretariat to design and build a website to meet the communication and collaboration needs of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), a body of twenty-four member countries whose mission is to promote peace and security through dialogue and cooperation in the Asia Pacific region. The stakeholders involved in the ARF have envisioned such a website since 1998, when the members first endorsed the idea. In order to achieve its goals to encourage constructive dialogue and consultation on political and security issues of common interest and concern, ARF needs an efficient, fast, secure and effective way to share information across the twenty-four member countries. Use of the web is the most practical way for ARF to accomplish this information sharing.

RTI began working with the ASEAN Secretariat on the requirements for the ARF Website in October 2004 when RTI's project manager Eileen Reynolds held discussions with ARF Unit staff in Jakarta during a trip to assess requirements for the ASEAN Member Services website. Following this trip RTI staff continued to work with the ARF Unit remotely through email and phone on the requirements and design for the ARF Web. In January 2005 RTI web developer Pablo Torres and Eileen Reynolds traveled to Jakarta to deliver the Member Services website to the ASEAN Secretariat and to review preliminary website designs and requirements with the ARF Unit.

RTI built the ARF website during the months of February - March 2005 based on RTI's requirements analysis and needs expressed by the State Department and ASEAN Secretariat ARF Unit. Pablo Torres led this effort with support from other staff in RTI's International Development Group (webmail, mail server configuration) and Research Computing Division (custom programming of Dot Net Nuke modules).

Pablo Torres worked in Singapore and Jakarta April 4 - 14, 2005 with the ASEAN Secretariat ARF Unit to deliver the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) website and to conduct training for them on the use of this website.

The ARF Website is now installed and hosted at Singtel in Singapore, and the ARF email server is also operational at the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta. Pablo Torres trained the ARF website administrator, Farid Azis, and content manager, Amalia Hayati, on installation, configuration, site administration, and content maintenance. Mr. Torres trained all other ARF Unit staff on how to use the site and its tools, including posting documents, news, links, contacts, and calendar items, among other things.

The ARF Unit plans to first announce the website to the ASEAN Regional Forum at the ARF Senior Officials Meeting in Vientiane in mid-May and do the official launch of the website at the next ARF Annual meeting. The website address is <http://www.aseanregionalforum.org>, though the website is temporarily unavailable at this address (in the meantime, use <http://203.208.241.86>). ASEAN is working to resolve this problem and RTI will provide support as needed.

Scope of Work and Deliverables

RTI's scope of work for this project is the following:

Phase 1, (a) RTI will create a Web site based on the DotNetNuke (.net nuke or DNN) framework that incorporates features specified by ASEAN including: Discussion forum, chat, reference library, news, contact list and links. We will do this in collaboration with ASEAN Secretariat IT and ARF staff. The Web site will provide ARF working groups on Transnational Crime and

Terrorism, Peacekeeping, Maritime, Defence Colleges, and Customs the ability to manage their own sections within the website. The Web site would have some information/areas accessible to the public and areas restricted only to ARF members and available by logging in to the site. The reference library and contacts would be viewable by public, for example, while discussion forums would be restricted to members only. RTI will help ASEAN set up email accounts for ARF members and will integrate these accounts into the website so that there is a single sign on for members for email and the website.

(b) RTI will submit a pre-trip Web development plan and schedule to support collaboration with ASEAN management and ICT team.

Phase 2, (a) RTI staff will travel to Jakarta to build, configure, and test the Web site at ASEAN side by side with ASEAN IT staff; (b) RTI and ASEAN IT staff will conduct two in-house workshops for ASEAN Staff on configuration/customization, content building, use and maintenance of ARFnet. (c) RTI will create an ARFnet internal training manual.

Phase 3, RTI will submit a final report documenting assistance and development under Phases 1 and 2 and providing recommendations for ASEAN's on-going development of effective Web services for support of ARF.

Deliverables:

1. Working ARF Website to ASEAN.
2. Two in-house training workshops. RTI and ASEAN IT staff train ASEAN Secretariat staff who support ARF in ARF website maintenance- two in-house workshops. In these workshops ASEAN staff will learn how to add content and to customize certain aspects of the site as their needs evolve
3. ARF Website training manual
4. Final report

For the purposes of this document it is important to clarify the following terms:

- ASEAN Regional Forum: this includes the 24 member countries (3 officials per country) and the ARF Unit at the ASEAN Secretariat
- ARF Unit: this is one small part of the ASEAN Regional Forum, and it includes Mr. Jun Abad, Ms. Amalia Hayati, Ms. Retno Astrini and Mr. Nguyen Son Ngoc.
- ARF website: the website serving the collaborative and information-sharing needs of the ASEAN Regional Forum

Website Platform Selection

RTI built the ARF website using the DotNetNuke (DNN) (<http://www.dotnetnuke.com/>) open source framework. The reason for this was that ASEAN needed a low cost and easy to use website solution that is compatible with their Microsoft server platform and ASP programming skills. ASEAN can also add additional functionality to the site at relatively low cost by purchasing modules (see www.snowcovered.com for some of the most popular, reliable DNN modules available). ASEAN's Member Services (now called ASAP –“ASEAN Action Portal”) also uses the DNN framework so the experience that ASEAN Secretariat gains with the ARF Web can benefit ASAP and vice versa.

Requirements Gathering

RTI gathered the requirements for the website in face to face meetings and through email and phone calls with the ASEAN ARF Unit and with Internews from October 2004- April 2005. RTI met with ARF Unit staff at the ASEAN Secretariat in October 2004 and January 2005 to discuss the website requirements and design. From the early requirements discussions RTI produced a formal website requirements document for the ARF Website and presented this to Internews in January 2005. Internews then provided some requirements for the website based on communications with the State Department. These included:

1. all ARF members will have an @aseanregionalforum.org email account and address for communicating with other members
2. the ARF members should be able to specify how emails should be treated (including whether they should be faxed or mailed via postal service to the recipient)¹.
3. single sign on to both the ARF website and ARF webmail

RTI then presented the revised requirements document to ASEAN ARF Unit for review and approval on February 11, 2005. The feedback that RTI received from ASEAN mostly involved the website design and we went back and forth with ASEAN several times to find the right design for the home and sub pages. ASEAN did not have any changes at that time to the technical requirements for the website.

Website Development and Testing

Based on the requirements document RTI's Pablo Torres led the development of the ARF Website using the DotNetNuke framework. He used some modules purchased from www.snowcovered.com and some modules custom programmed by RTI.

In addition the RTI team identified an appropriate, low cost platforms for the ARF email server (hmail server, see <http://www.itsinthemail.com.au/hmail.html>) and webmail interface (squirrelmail - <http://www.squirrelmail.org/>). RTI tested these with the DNN framework to ensure compatibility.

Mr. Torres also researched e-fax services and located a possible service provider of e-fax services for ASEAN, EasyLink. He contacted EasyLink regarding the requirements and needs for ARF web to enable email-to-fax and fax-to-email communications between members. In response EasyLink sent RTI a proposal for these services. Mr. Torres passed this proposal along to ASEAN and tried to facilitate a meeting of the EasyLink representative with appropriate staff at the Secretariat. This meeting was not able to take place due to a death in the family of Mr. Azis. RTI recommended that ASEAN look into e-fax services as a way to facilitate communications not only for ARF but also for general Secretariat business, as this need was expressed to RTI by senior staff at ASEAN.

ARF Web Installation and Training

Mr. Pablo Torres and Mr. Farid Azis met in Singapore on Monday, April 4th, 2005 to install the ARF website at Singtel. Singtel (<http://welcome.singtel.com/>) is a very large, reputable, high-security hosting service provider in Singapore (among other services it provides). ASEAN selected Singtel as the hosting provider for the ARFWeb because of the quality of services offered and because ASEAN hosts its public website there. Mr. Azis physically transported the web server from the ASEAN Secretariat to Singapore.

¹ This was in effort to be as inclusive of possible of all ARF members even those in countries where Internet access is severely restricted such as North Korea and Myanmar
RTI ASEAN Member Services Final Report

Mr. Torres and Mr. Azis first installed the web server in the rack space allocated to ASEAN, added it to ASEAN's network, applied Windows patches to the operating system, and installed some preliminary software.

Next they transferred the website from Mr. Torres' development environment to the production web server. Mr. Torres configured the modules according to Mr. Azis' feedback, tested them, and then transferred some preliminary content from the "old" ARF website (<http://www.aseansec.org/arf>) to the "new" website. In addition, Mr. Torres installed, configured and tested the SSL Certificate (purchased by ASEAN from Verisign). The members-only pages of the ARF website are now being protected by 128-bit level encryption, the strongest possible level of encryption. Public pages of the ARF website were not secured due to the public nature of the information offered.

During the week of April 11 – 14, 2005 Mr. Torres worked at the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta. The purpose of this visit was:

- to check the configuration of the ARF email server (hosted at the ASEAN Secretariat),
- to gather feedback from Mr. Jun Abad, head of the ARF Unit on the features and functionality of the website, and to make improvements to the website accordingly
- to transfer content from the "old" ARF website to the new website, and
- to train ARF Unit staff in the technical administration, content management, features and functions of the ARF website.

Mr. Torres met with Mr. Jun Abad on Monday, April 11th, and once again on Thursday, April 14th. The meeting on Thursday was a training session and also included Farid Azis (webmaster), Amalia Hayati (content manager), Retno Astrini (content creator) and Nguyen Son Ngoc (ARF liaison with Vietnam).

Mr. Torres left the ASEAN Secretariat on Thursday, April 14, having trained ARF Unit staff and having received confirmation from Mr. Abad that he was impressed, pleased and satisfied with the ARF website.

Updated website requirements

The following feedback on website requirements and needs of the ASEAN Regional Forum was provided by Mr. Abad and other ARF staff during the week of April 11-14, 2005. Some features and functions differ from the original website requirements, including some requested by the State Department through Internews.

- 1) Currently, the ASEAN Regional Forum conducts all communication with its members via fax. Despite the fact that most (if not all) officials in member countries already have email accounts, email is not a reliable communication mechanism because most countries have poor or expensive Internet connections, which prevents ARF officials in those countries from checking their email frequently.
- 2) All ARF communications are shared with all ARF officials; everyone is included in all communications. For example, the ARF Unit would not normally send a communication to certain countries and not others.
- 3) The ARF Unit would like to have full control over the accounts for the ARF website (number of accounts, usernames and passwords). In order to facilitate administration of these accounts, one account was created for each member country, to be shared by three officials in such country. This implies there will be 24 country accounts on the ARF website. The ARF Unit will inform country officials of their username and passwords for

the ARF website (this will be done by phone, paper mail, or in person). The registration page was removed from the website since there will be no need for anyone else to register with the website (aside from ARF Unit staff, who will be registered by the webmaster). Mr. Farid Azis, as the ARF webmaster, will administrate (create, edit, delete) the website accounts. In case there is evidence that the security of the website has been compromised, new website accounts will be issued to all countries.

- 4) Because there are no personal accounts on the ARF website (for individual member country officials), and because there is no need to create new email accounts for ARF officials (given that most if not all of them already have one or more preexisting accounts), then there was no need to integrate the ARF website (<http://www.aseanregionalforum.org>) with the ARF webmail website (<http://mail.aseanregionalforum.org>). The State Department (communicated to RTI through Internews) proposed that user credentials would be synchronized between the ARF website and ARF webmail, so that:
 - a. members would not need to maintain their usernames and passwords in two separate places, the ARF website and ARF webmail website (updating a password on the ARF website would automatically update the password for the webmail website);
 - b. Single sign-on: members would not be asked to login to the webmail website if they had already logged into the ARF website.

The only feature that was needed in terms of email communication was for the creation of an email distribution list (also known as "listserv") to forward email communications to all the member country officials. For this, the email distribution list arf@aseanregionalforum.org was created. Mr. Azis will have to add the recipients email addresses to this list, so that when an email is sent to arf@aseanregionalforum.org, it gets forwarded to the personal email addresses (yahoo mail, government email accounts, etc) of all the ARF officials.

- 5) It was recommended that the ARF Unit contract Easylink, a global e-fax service provider, in order to setup email-to-fax and fax-to-email communication services for some of the member countries (a preliminary proposal was submitted by Easylink representative Charles Dunlap describing functionality and pricing). This would allow an official in a member country to use his fax machine to send email to other ARF officials with access to email. It would also allow an ARF official to use his/her email to send a fax to an official who does not have good access to email.

This means there can be two types of recipients added to the ARF email distribution list:

- a. Personal email accounts (johndoe@yahoo.com)
- b. Easylink e-fax accounts (faxnumber@easylink.com)

This way, when someone sends an email to arf@aseanregionalforum.org, certain ARF officials will receive the communication in their preexisting personal email accounts, while other will receive the communication through their fax machines.

- 6) It is also possible, if needed in the future, to create distribution lists for each country, in the form of countryname@aseanregionalforum.org.
- 7) It was also agreed that despite the fact that the original requirements called for discussions forums and chat rooms available to registered members, these features will not be enabled for the next 6-12 months. Mr. Abad would like to introduce the website in May 2005 with document management as the only collaborative tool for members, in order to not overwhelm the members with too many features and to create a positive first impression. It is important to note that the discussion forum and the chat tool are readily available for use as soon as the ARF wants to activate them (these two tools currently

only display to the website administrators). Mr. Torres trained ARF webmaster Farid Azis and content manager Amalia Hayati on how to activate these features when they are ready.

- 8) For the ARF Public Library, ARF Unit members mentioned that the presentation of the documents was displaying too much unnecessary information, such as author, date document was added, document version, document approval status, remarks, etc. The interface of the Public Library was hence simplified, so that it displays documents, categorized by ARF meetings (for example, Eleventh Meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum), and clicking on the document title immediately prompts the user to download the document.
- 9) For the document repositories for members-only, ARF Unit members stated that documents should be sorted by the date of acceptance of the document, not by the date that the document was added to the website, nor alphabetically. There also seemed to be interest in simplifying the presentation of the documents in the members section (no need to show author for example), but at the same time preserve certain features such as the ability to specify keywords and remarks for a given document. The ARF Unit did not make a definitive decision on the desired format of the document repositories for members.
- 10) For the ARF public Calendar, the ARF Unit members decided that the calendar-like format was unnecessary to display ARF events, and that there is no need for a day-view, week-view and month-view. Instead, all that is needed is a textual display of the ARF events, in such a way as to be able to list all the events for the year (estimated at about twenty), with a brief description and dates for each. Given these new requirements, Mr. Torres instructed Mr. Azis and Ms. Hayati on how to delete the current calendar and how to create a text version of the calendar. We considered the possibility of keeping the calendar-like view for members-only, in addition to the text view. Mr. Torres also instructed Mr. Azis and Ms. Hayati on how to do this.
- 11) For the ARF public Contacts List, RTI and ASEAN ARF Unit also looked for ways to simplify the display of contact information, and to be able to categorize contacts by country and by sector (terrorism for example).
 - a. Currently, too much contact information is displayed for each person in the contact list. The ARF Unit should determine what information it would like to include/exclude (person name, organization, title, mailing address, phone numbers, fax numbers, email addresses, etc). The unwanted data can be easily hidden from view when the ARF is ready to make the modification.
 - b. In terms of assigning individual contacts to specific countries and to specific sectors, this can easily be accomplished and Mr. Torres also instructed Mr. Azis and Ms. Hayati on how to do so.
 - i. For the country, an option already exists by default to specify a country when adding a contact entry. It is then possible to search the contact list by searching by country and entering a specific country name.
 - ii. For the sector, it is possible to create groups for each desired sector, and then assign people in the contact list to different groups. Then, the user can search the contact list by group.
- 12) For the ARF public Links, the RTI/ARF team was discovered that there is currently a limitation to length of the link title. Titles get cut off at 100 characters. Mr. Torres is currently researching a resolution to this problem, and it may be necessary for Mr. Azis to fix the Links tool once we know where the change needs to be made in the source

code.

- 13) For the ARF public Photo Gallery, the ARF Unit decided that instead of having one webpage with all the thumbnail photos in it for all the ARF events, it would be better to have an index page listing all ARF events, and then clicking on the link to one of the events would display a webpage with the thumbnail photographs for that event. This would make it faster for the user to browse through the photos and make them easier to categorize. Mr. Torres instructed Mr. Azis and Ms. Hayati on how to create the new web pages to divide the photo gallery.
- 14) Finally, the Search tool was not functioning properly on the day of the presentation/training. It was failing to return results properly. Mr. Torres resolved this issue before his departure and now the search tool works fine. It searches both database content and files.

Site Structure and Security Roles

The organization of the ARF website and the security roles supporting it are very simple. The website has two different “looks”: one for the public and one for the members. Though the graphics design of the website is the same for both public and members, the features and the navigational structure of the website are different for each.

The public has read-access to the following features:

- About Us page
- Public Library: a repository of public ARF documents
- News: ARF’s latest and archived news
- Calendar: a list of approximately twenty ARF events taking place throughout the year
- Contacts: contact information for the ARF Unit and the three officials in each of the twenty-four member countries.
- Links
- Photo Gallery
- Search: returns public content only

The members, once logged in, will see a different navigational structure, which is divided by ARF Bodies, as follows:

- ASEAN Regional Forum (also know as Ministerial Meeting)
 - o Current Documents
 - o Discussion Forums (inactive)
 - o Chat (inactive)
- Senior Officials Meeting
 - o Current Documents
 - o Discussion Forums (inactive)
 - o Chat (inactive)
- Intersessional Group on Confidence Building Measures
 - o Current Documents
 - o Discussion Forums (inactive)
 - o Chat (inactive)
- Intersessional Meeting on Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime
 - o Current Documents
 - o Discussion Forums (inactive)
 - o Chat (inactive)
- Other Meeting and Activities
 - o Current Documents

- Discussion Forums (inactive)
- Chat (inactive)
- Archives
- Calendar: a list of approximately twenty ARF events taking place throughout the year (this is the same list as in the public calendar)
- Search: returns private (member) content only

The above navigational structure for members indicates that each ARF Body, along with the Other Meeting and Activities, has its own repository of current documents, its own discussion forums (currently disabled), and its own chat tool (currently disabled).

The functionality is simple: each ARF Body uses its Current Documents section to store the latest version of the documents that will be used at the upcoming meeting for the given ARF Body (such as the agenda, participants, etc). The ARF Unit will then encourage ARF officials attending that meeting to download the documents, review them and print them in preparation to the meeting, thus drastically reducing this administrative responsibility of the ARF Unit.

Then, once the meeting has passed, the documents under Current Documents will be moved to the Archives by the website content manager.

The members will only have read-access to the member pages.

All website content will be maintained (adding, editing and deleting) by ARF administrators Mr. Farid Azis (webmaster) and Ms. Amalia Hayati (content manager).

Future Suggested Functionality for the Website

As mentioned earlier, it is possible that in the upcoming months (6-12 months down the road) the ARF Unit may decide to activate the discussion forums and the chat tool and make them available to the website members.

Additionally, it is also possible that in the future (longer term) the ARF Unit may choose to create individual accounts on the ARF website for each ARF official, as well as individual accounts on the ARF email server (whether or not individuals choose to have their ARF email forwarded). However, at this point in time, poor Internet connectivity in many of the member countries prevents the ARF from relying solely on email communication—members do not frequently check their email.

Recommendations to ASEAN for ARF Web

- 1) Develop a communications plan for ARF members including ARF Web.
- 2) Seek out ARF Members' feedback on the website and how they feel it can be best adapted to suit the needs of the ARF – do this proactively and soon in order to develop ownership, generate enthusiasm and gain insights into how to best take advantage of this communication mechanism.
- 3) Continue to develop the skills of the ASEAN Secretariat staff who can support the continuing development of the website, such as further training for IT staff in .Net programming.

Final impressions

Mr. Torres' final impressions after his two weeks of work with the ARF Unit of the ASEAN Secretariat are very positive. The reasons for this are several:

- 1) Given the revised requirements, the website now offers simple, easy to use, valuable features, both to the public and the members. The website will begin with simple document sharing, which meets an immediate and concrete need of ARF members.
- 2) The website has strong leadership behind it. Mr. Jun Abad, head of the ARF Unit, is responsible for the communication and promotion of the website. He will also decide what features to add or remove from the website, and he is in a good position to do so because of his close interaction with the members of the ASEAN Regional Forum.
- 3) The website has a professional look and design.

Once again, the website will be announced to the ASEAN Regional Forum at the ARF Senior Officials Meeting in mid-May. In preparation for this meeting, content will be uploaded to the website over the next couple of weeks.