

↑Monthly eNewsletter of the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs

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Monthly eNewsletter of the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs
July 2016

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July 12-16: APAY NGS Conference Yangon, Myanmar

July 19-25: Asia and Pacific University YMCAs Regional Conference, Hong Kong

The APAY Conference on Climate Change:
Youth working to combat climate change

The Conference on Climate Change of the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs was held during 21st to 23rd June 2016 at Chiang Mai YMCA, Thailand. The Conference was the final and concluding activity of our e-learning on Climate Change. The main objectives were to provide additional information on issues related to combating climate change that were not covered by the e-learning, to share and report on their e-learning action plans and to evaluate the e-learning on Climate Change and Tourism.

A total of thirty two participants including twenty two youths had participated at the conference. These participants represented the YMCAs of Bangladesh, China, India, Japan, Korea, Macau, Mongolia, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. Two YMCA contact persons from Laos were also invited to participate in the Conference.

Ms. Patcharin Sugunnasil, Board Member of Chiang Mai YMCA inaugurated the conference, while Mr. Nam Boo Won, General Secretary of APAY delivered the welcome speech in the inauguration session.

The sessions of the conference started with morning devotions each day. Rev. Anucharn Siroros and Rev. Dr. Pradit Takerngrangsarit, President of the Christian Conference of Asia Foundation, led the morning devotions. This conference was a learning space for the participants on various issues of climate change. Ms. Annegret Zimmerman, representing Bread for the World, Germany gave an update on the Climate Change international negotiation process. Dr. Hope Antone in her sharing explained Climate Change from the Gender perspective. Dr. Chitchol Phalaraksh and Dr. Wasan Jompakdee from Chiang Mai University presented a talk on Climate Change and Food & Water Security and Mr. Duncan Chowdhury explained the UN Sustainable Development Goals in relation with Climate Change and Tourism.

The participants had also the opportunity to visit the Energy Learning Center at Sao Hin YMCA

and gain practical knowledge on different aspects of environmental protection, about various types of energy we use in our daily life, energy efficient appliances and reusing and recycling materials.

The APAY had launched an online e-learning course on Climate Change last year. The APAY Youth Representatives who had successfully participated at the online e-learning course had been invited to participate at the conference. The conference was a good opportunity for the participants to effectively evaluate the process of the e-learning course, share their difficulties in pursuing their studies and the pros and cons of the present course. These feedbacks will be useful for APAY to streamline the e-learning course.

The youths also show-cased their youth oriented environmental action programs during the conference which they had accomplished in their respective YMCAs. APAY had also financially supported some of these programs.

On the final day of the conference, the participants were unanimous in expressing their commitment and conviction to combat against climate change and drew up programs in their own YMCAs for the mitigation and adaptation of climate change.

We thank Mr. Kohei Yamada, past General Secretary, for participating at the conference from Japan. Mr. Yamada was one of the mentors of the e-learning course along with Ms. Ianne Christine Aquino who also attended the conference from Philippines. Special thanks for Mr. Christian Fisher, Program Officer of Bread for the World and Ms. Annegret Zimmerman, Policy Advisor for Responsible Tourism and Mobility of Bread for the World for their accompaniment throughout the conference and expertise inputs on climate change. Mr. Nam Boo Won, General Secretary and Mr. Duncan Chowdhury, Executive Secretary of APAY also attended the conference while Mr. Chan Beng Seng, GATN Coordinator of APAY was overall responsible to organize the conference.

We thank the YMCA of Chiang Mai for hosting this program, particularly Mr. Rachan Maneekarn, Ms. Chularat Phongtudsirikul, Ms. Patcharin Aviphan and all the staff members of YMCA of Chiang Mai.

~Chan Beng Seng, APAY Coordinator for GATN

↑ Conference group photo in front of Chiangmai YMCA

↑ Learning about the importance of trees for water catchment at the Sao Hin YMCA Environmental and Energy Learning Center

Anniversary Celebrations of the Kerala Region of India:

Mr. Babu Markus Gomes, APAY President,

to inaugurate YMCA International Centre for Peace Studies

The South West Sub Region of Kerala of the National Council of YMCAs of India had celebrated its Diamond Jubilee Anniversary on June 5, 2016. Mr. Babu Markus Gomes, President of Asia & Pacific Alliance of YMCAs attended the celebrations as chief guest of honor. This was held at the sub-regional headquarters of NCY India in Alwaye, where he was felicitated by His Grace Metropolitan Mar Chrisostham. Mr. Babu Markus Gomes then inaugurated the George Williams Center at YMCA Parakode, the Computer Division of YMCA Kulanada and he graced the closing ceremony of the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations at YMCA Kottarakara.

On 172nd World YMCA Day, June 6, 2016 Mr. Babu Markus Gomes inaugurated the YMCA International Centre for Peace Studies at UNESCO Heritage Site, Bodhgaya, Northern India. This is a project of the National Council of YMCAs of India. Bodhgaya is the place where the Lord Buddha attained enlightenment under a peepal tree at around 6th Century BC. This is a holy site for Buddhists and a famous place of pilgrimage. Mr. Ch. R.P. Manikumar, National General Secretary and Mr. Jacob Rajkumar, National Vice-President besides several notables and eminent personalities of Bodhgaya town including many Venerables of Monasteries were present before a large gathering that evening. The YMCA International Centre for Peace Studies has been dedicated to Nobel Laureate Jean Henri Dunant, the founder of YMCA Geneva besides the International Committee of the Red Cross as also the Geneva Convention. The ceremony was presided by Mr. Kiran Lama, Secretary, International Buddhist Council. In his welcome address the National President, Dr. Lebi Philip Matthew reflected on the enormous significance of this prestige project in the fond hope of making 'peace' more than an emotive issue but a living concept and one that is to be lived, loved and made enduring for all times to come.

Mr. Babu Markus Gomes, President, APAY, in his inaugural address as Chief-Guest on the occasion felt proud to be present at the historic happening, not only of the Indian YMCA movement but the Asia Pacific and World YMCA movement as a whole. He opined that this is a tremendous boost to the YMCA movement's endeavor worldwide to build communities of peace and reconciliation in a world driven with discord and disunity.

~ Duncan Chowdhury, APAY Executive Secretary

Visit to DRR Project Site in Tapacon Barangay, Iloilo Bingawan:
Also Meeting with Y Philippines Board on Common Concerns

As new General Secretary of the APAY assuming the responsibility of monitoring a project funded and supported collectively by international and local partners, this visit was made on 5-8 June to understand better the context, situation and realities the people where APAY DRR (Disaster Relief and Rehabilitation) project is being implemented since July 2014. The visit was accompanied by Mr. Pablito A. Tabuccol, NGS of Y Philippines and Ms. Elsie Borreo, the Project Manager.

The main event at the project site was a Stakeholders' Testimonial Program with representatives from Women's group of Livelihood participants, Youth Leadership Summit alumni, Head Teachers from High School and Elementary, a Head teacher of Agbao Elementary School (neighbor barangay of Tapacon), Agrarian Reform Cooperative Officers and Members, Barangay Council Officials and members, Mayor of Tapacon barangay, Commanding Officer of the 61st Infantry Battalion with other officers, and many volunteers and staff. This program briefly presented the processes that they have undertaken to prepare the community to respond and take actions on their needs after typhoon Yolanda devastated their community in 2013. The testimonies of the stakeholders include:

* Profiling of the heads of households in Tapacon and Needs Assessment research through series of meetings with barangay representatives and stakeholders.

* Establishing a Coordinators' group representing the seven (7) zones. This was intended for livelihood (hog-raising) social preparation, capacity building, effective implementation and

monitoring.

* Working on the lot donation, Deed of Usufruct for the use of the lot where the YMCA Center was built. The lot was leased for free for at least 25 years, renewable for another 25 years.

* Repairs, rehabilitation of Jovita-Rivera Alfaras National High School Ceiling and electrical installations; repairs and improvements of two classrooms of Elementary School; re-building of Agrarian Reform Cooperative Production Center, building of a two-classroom YMCA building, a water source and pipeline with reservoir, laboratory kitchen, baking facilities, small store for livelihood products and provision of all furnishing and needed equipment and vehicle;

* Conduct of vocational trainings such as: Cooking for Vending; Baking for local business, carpentry, cosmetology, culinary and baking arts; welding with 2 batches of graduates already; 35 are currently employed on welding with Hanjin Shipyard, Subic, Olongapo and other 30% of graduates of other skills are locally employed.

* Conduct of Life skills training such as: Youth work Camp with output of building peripheral fence at Elementary School; Adolescent Reproductive Health Training of Trainers and series of similar training by trained trainers; DRR Medical First Responder with Water Search and Rescue Training, DRR and Climate Change Community Orientation, Youth leadership Summit: Youths for Peace; 2 medical missions in two separate barangays or communities; A total of 1,980 direct participants have benefited from all programs and projects of the YMCA.

* Building of Rain Water harvesting projects by youths; community extension support dialogue for peace and development with Barangay Katipunan.

During this stakeholders' testimonial program, representatives from different sectors were asked for their witnessing of YMCA impact to them individually and the group they represent.

After the visit and participation at the testimonial meeting, a mid-term evaluation meeting was held among the three visiting staffs. The project was observed indeed a success showing economic viability for those who have been reached, particularly the livelihood support and vocational/skills training have been received well by the participants and are still being offered. It was obvious that YMCA image perceived by the people in the area are positive. They have respect and warm regard to Elsie, Project Manager, who has worked with them very closely and open-mindedly. The important issue at stake is how to ensure the sustainability of the ongoing works by continuing good partnerships and collaboration with different agencies and organizations. The meeting concluded with several recommendations which include: organizing, in consultation with and by the guidance of Y Philippines, an independent local YMCA in Bingawan with base in Tapacon; developing more community-based youth programs; inviting Dr. Inday Morales in her capacity as President along with NGS to witness the on-going developments in the area and to explore the possibility of forming a local YMCA; and preparing a budget re-alignment for sustainability implementation scheme for discussion with YCI and other partners.

After the visit to Tapacon, a meeting with board members of the Y Philippines was arranged by Dr. Morales, President and Mr. Pabs, NGS at the YMCA national office. Attended by 10 board members including the President, some of the common concerns between Y Philippines and

APAY were discussed. Mr. Nam shared his positive impression on his visit to Tapacon DRR project with the board members. Some concerns were raised on the lack of participation from the Y Philippines in the management of the Tapacon project. There was a request for national staff be trained in NGO management. A need for exploring funding possibility for the YMCA Rizal Leadership Training Institute was also discussed. A strong consensus was made to ensure sustainability in youth empowerment as well as youth representation in governance. The APAY deeply thanks the Y Philippines, Manila YMCA and Makati YMCA for their warm hospitality rendered to Mr. Nam Boo Won during his visit.

↑ A tree planting activity with youth members and volunteers from Tapacon Barangay

↑ A Dialogue session with youth who participated in Youth Leadership Summit

~ Nam Boo Won, General Secretary, APAY

SOP Alumni in Indonesia Outline Future Plans

School of Peace (SOP) alumni in Indonesia held the annual meeting of their national forum from May 26 to 28 at Pesantren Yasina, an Islamic boarding school, in the small town of Cigombong Kabupaten Bogor in the province of West Java. Like previous meetings, the 10 SOP alumni who attended the meeting shared with each other about their work in Jakarta and the provinces of West Java, Central Java, Central Sulawesi and Papua. They also shared about recent issues in their communities, such as intolerance in Bandung in West Java toward a drama involving the country's past communist history; attacks by an Islamic fundamentalist group in Yogyakarta on a transgender pesantren; militarization in Poso in Central Sulawesi as a reaction to terrorism as well as sexual abuse against children and unwanted development; and land-grabbing in Papua.

At the meeting, the SOP alumni of the Interfaith Cooperation Forum (ICF) network also outlined their plans for the national forum for the next five years. These plans included conducting mini-SOPs and holding training for trainers workshops in a variety of areas—drama, writing, music, photography, videography, community organizing and issues related to development and the environment.

Other initiatives that were discussed involved creating an internship program with, for example, an SOP alumni from Jakarta working in Papua with an SOP alumni there. Exposure programs throughout the country was another idea that was proposed. Lastly, operating social enterprises is a new area of interest for the national forum, and it was suggested that they could learn from the YMCAs in South Korea which have a wealth of experience and expertise in creating and developing social enterprises.

~Bruce Van Voorhis, Coordinator, ICF

↑ Suwarti Ningsih, ICF National Coordinator, left, explains about the activities of the National Forum in Indonesia to an interfaith gathering in Bogor during a field visit to learn about the problems a Protestant church has had for more than three years to build a church in Bogor and the support they've received from people of other faiths.

Indonesia Hosts Mini-SOP in Java Indigenous Community

From May 15 through May 25, 15 young adults from different areas of Indonesia gathered in the village of Kasepuhan Ciptagelar in the province of West Java for a mini-SOP organized by the Indonesian ICF national forum. Kasepuhan Ciptagelar is a traditional Sundanese community which maintains their ancient traditions under the rule of a young king. The king, called Father by the villagers, is a humble man who spends much of his time listening to his people and responding to their needs.

The curriculum for this mini-SOP covered such areas as identity, faith and religion, structural analysis and drama. However, the highlight of the days together was learning about traditional Sundanese life and their very close relationship to rice. For the people of this village, rice is life, and it must never be sold in any form. Many festivals are held throughout the year to honor rice and the environment which helps it grow.

Surrounding the village, three different forests exist. One is sacred, and no one can enter without permission. Trees in the second forest can be cut if needed for houses or firewood. The third forest is available to everyone for collecting food or medicinal herbs. This strict tradition has protected the environment in this area for many centuries, and it is still practiced so the future generations will also have a healthy place to live.

With the opportunity to live in the homes of the villagers, participants were exposed to the warm hospitality of the Sundanese people. Upon arrival, it was suggested that everyone take off their watches and stow them away as life here is not governed by the hour and second hand of modern life. When the sun comes up, people rise and prepare to go to their fields. When they feel hungry, they eat. It is a life regulated by the natural rhythms of nature, and there is a feeling of harmony and peace in the village.

This mini-SOP gave everyone a chance to see a new philosophy of living focused on nature, cooperation and respect for all life. As we analyze the communities and nations in which we live and struggle to envision a new and more just society, Kasepuhan Ciptagelar gives us an example. This experience was perhaps the most important lesson from these few days together.

~ Max Ediger, Project Manager, ICF

↑ Indonesia mini-SOP participants and SOP alumni gather in an indigenous village in Kasepuhan Ciptagelar in West Java Province.

Ms. Thelma P. Juntereal
appointed as Movement Strengthening Coordinator of APAY

After a long time search for a suitable staff with needed experiences and expertise for the job, Ms. Thelma P. Juntereal, immediate past General Secretary of Manila YMCA, Philippines has been appointed as Movement Strengthening Coordinator effective from 1st July 2016.

Ms. Thelma, a long-time friend of APAY, is equipped with rich experiences as General Secretary as well as professionally trained and certified YMCA Secretary throughout her long career in the YMCA of Manila. Starting as Community Service Secretary in 1981 in the said YMCA, she has served consecutive 34 years in Manila YMCA at different positions before she was appointed General Secretary in 1998. Apart from her attendance of the 7th Advanced Studies in 1997, she was trained in various areas such as social welfare, women in

development and gender mainstreaming, camp counsellors program, leadership development, etc.

Thelma is expected to work as home-based part-timer focusing on movement strengthening of the weaker or emerging YMCAs in the region of Asia and Pacific including YMCAs of Timor Lester, Mongolia, Cambodia, Indonesia, and Laos YMCA as an emerging one. She will visit and stay at the target YMCAs for strengthening the movement as well as institutional viability including mentoring staffs in the areas of membership building, program development, financial management, strategic planning, day-to-day operation of the YMCA office, etc. The spirit of inter-movement cooperation (IMC) will be further activated and strengthened in our region with the appointment and ensuing work of Thelma as Coordinator for Movement Strengthening. Along with her MS work just begun, there will soon be an invitation from APAY to all the national movements to join a new Partners Support Group (PSG) for Laos YMCA.

Not interested any more?