

↑Monthly eNewsletter of the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs

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

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Nov 8-Dec 3: 34th Advanced Studies Program, Hong Kong

Consultation on Re-Envisioning
ICF Mission and Objectives

The Interfaith Cooperation Forum had recently organized a Consultation on Re-envisioning the mission and objectives of ICF. This was held in Hong Kong at the conference room of the Chinese YMCA of Hong Kong during 27-29 September 2016.

A total of 13 delegates, representing Christian Conference of Asia, Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCA, Interfaith Cooperation Forum and distinguished resource persons participated at the consultation. Dr. Mathews George Chunakara led the CCA delegation, Mr. Nam Boo Won led the APAY Delegation and Mr. Max Ediger led the ICF delegation. Beside them, Dr. Kim Yong Bock from Korea presented the keynote address and moderated the consultation while Dr. Ahn Jae Woong, former General Secretary of the CCA and one of the founders of ICF shared his experiences about the founding of ICF. Dr. Abubacar M. Datumanong a prominent Islamic scholar from southern Philippines and Ms. Anne Lapapan Supamanta a Buddhist scholar from Thailand also participated at the consultation and shared peace initiatives from their respective religious perspectives.

Dr. Kim Yong Bock in his paper "Towards a Common Vision of Peace for Life Together - How a Convergence of Faiths Can Make Peace from Below " pointed out that " In a world where the term "security" has become a synonym for protecting the elites in their pursuit of economic gains at the expense of human and ecological communities, and often by military and paramilitary means, activists have been increasingly emphasizing the need to advocate for a new international political paradigm: security for all people. "

He further reiterated that "Peace Pedagogy is our method for discussing and planning future movements of peacemaking in Asia, from local, national and transnational perspectives".

Dr. Ahn Jae Woong in his paper went down through the memory lane, describing the first interfaith consultation held under the auspices of the CCA and APAY at Prapat, Indonesia, during 5-10 April, 2003. There were 37 participants from 14 Asian countries from various

religious background who meet together to prepare the Asian response of the aftermath of 9/11. The fruit of this consultation was the formation of the Interfaith Cooperation Forum which has been successfully involved in mobilizing peace advocacy programs in various parts of Asia for the last 12 years through training youth enthusiasts, at places where peace is at threat.

Interfaith Cooperation Forum (ICF) is a joint initiative of Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs and Christian Conference of Asia, launched in the year 2004. The objective of ICF is to build up a regional network of individuals and groups from different religions who are committed to working for an interfaith movement for justice and peace. ICF holds regular programs in which regional interfaith activities take place focused on justice and peace issues.

After 12 years of operation, ICF, with respect for its good achievements to date, have now come to a threshold, where the need has been felt for more integration of ICF activities with the constituencies of the project holders, the CCA and APAY. The involvement of the constituencies of the project holders could bring more effectiveness in the program activities of ICF. The thrust of ICF is how the ecumenical organizations could go beyond the ecumenical circle, reach out in the interfaith sphere and work effectively in bringing out peace with justice in this volatile world. As we live in a pluralistic society, all our peace efforts should be of inclusive approach beyond our own circles. The rich experience of ICF in the peace building efforts could be a great help in this regard.

During the consultation the participants engaged themselves in brainstorming sessions in the quest of re-envisioning the mission and objectives of the ICF keeping in mind the original objectives of ICF. The consultation concluded with fresh recommendation to transform the ICF to a regional inter-religious platform which will be able to address local and regional peace issues in a more effective manner.

~ Duncan Chowdhury, Executive Secretary

Seoul International Forum on Fair and Sustainable Tourism
21-22 September 2016

Despite the positive socio-economic impacts, rapid tourism development has the potential to lead to degradation of cultural and natural resources. In addition, if local residents are excluded from the development process it can often result in unequal benefits and the underdevelopment of local economies. Cities are destinations where it has become increasingly important to maintain a balance between tourism development and upholding local residents' wellbeing. These issues have come to the forefront as the United Nations designated 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development.

The concept of "Fair Tourism" encourages fair relations between tourists and locals. This concept is derived from Fair Trade, in which the consumers and producers have greater equity in their partnership. Nevertheless, Fair Tourism should not simply be accepted as following the principles of Fair Trade. Instead, Fair Tourism considers fairness between the many stakeholders in the tourism value chain. The study of Fair Tourism examines tourism's social roles and values and involves discussions on the concept of fairness.

In Fair Tourism, all stakeholders, such as the tourists, locals and tourism businesses are included. To make tourism fair, the rights of tourists, locals, business-related entities and ecosystems should be protected. These rights mean that tourists should have the freedom to explore the destination, that the locals be able to live their daily lives, that business entities must

have fair opportunities of doing businesses, and that the ecosystem be protected for future generations. The wellbeing of local communities and the state of the ecosystems are the most vulnerable and to seek the balance between all these elements, all those rights should be ensured.

Fair Tourism should not harm the local environment but instead should instill harmony and bring benefits to the local residents and tourists. Sustainable tourism development and Fair Tourism ensures that 1) the natural environment is protected from damage and, at the same time, economic benefits are evenly distributed and contribute to the happiness of residents; 2) a safe tourism experience to all regardless of one's age, gender, wealth, nationality, ethnicity, religion, language, disability or other factors; 3) Tourism businesses practice fair business practices.

This was the concept of alternative tourism being discussed at the Seoul International Forum on Fair and Sustainable Tourism. GATN played an active role in the Forum - as panelist in the first session and as moderator of the second session.

In the first pannel discussion moderated by Mr. Xu Jing, the UNWTO Regional Director for Asia and Pacific Region, GATN's proposal to change the nature of the current mass consumerist nature of tourism with our CHANGE principles was well received by the participants. The CHANGE principles requires that alternative tourism be community centered, holistic in approach, advocating global citizenship among youth, nature and heritage conserving, gender and child sensitive, and finally, economically viable for both the visitors and hosting communities. We need to change our travel habits. We have the opportunity to leave a positive impact if we need to travelled responsibly. With the CHANGE principles we can develop a sustainable alternative tourism that empowers youth to help restore the environment and ecology, uphold local cultures and heritage, and promote a better quality of life for the local community.

↑ GATN proposing to change the nature of the current mass consumerist nature of tourism with our CHANGE

↑ Participants at the Seoul International Forum on Fair and Sustainable Tourism include city government officials, academics, civil society organisations and students

↑ Local residents in Bukcheon Hanook Village are beginning to feel burdened and overwhelmed by the large number of tourist coming to see their traditional Korean houses

~ Chan Beng Seng, GATN Coordinator

GATN Networking on
Responsible and Sustainable Tourism
27-30 Sept 2016, Bali, Indonesia

After a long and challenging negotiation process at the UNFCCC, the COP21 ended positively with the Paris Agreement. Hundreds of cities, regions, companies and organisations have proven their strong commitment to phase out fossil energies by mid-century. With the long term mitigation goal, a mechanism to dynamically scale up each country's action over time, a set of common transparency rules and a support package for the vulnerable, all necessary instruments are on board to move forward. COP 21 has been a milestone in the human story to

tackle climate change and gives us hope for a climate friendly, resilient and more equitable future.

Paris agreement was an ambitious one. In general, we can consider it a success; however, there was one serious shortcoming. The Paris Agreement did not make any explicit reference to emissions from international aviation and shipping that are each responsible for 5% of Global Warming. Under current policy and projections, assuming that the world's total carbon emissions fall by enough to prevent more than 2° of warming, by 2050 shipping and aviation could contribute 40% of our CO2 output. Failure to control these sectors will jeopardise the fulfillment of the Paris "well below 2°" ambition.

The United Nations World Tourism Organisation reported that the number of international tourist arrivals grew by 4.4% in 2015 to reach a total of 1.184 billion in 2015. Asia and the Pacific recorded around 5% growth in 2015, receiving 277 million international arrivals. According to the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) Visitor Arrivals Forecasts for the period 2015 to 2019, international visitor arrivals to Asia Pacific destinations will continue their growth momentum over the next five years. Preliminary estimates indicate that the rate of growth over that period will average between five and six percent per annum to generate an aggregate inbound count of more than 670 million by the end of 2019.

Such growth trends in mass tourism also raise serious concerns about the sustainability of our environment and complicate work to preserve our cultural heritage. It is in this context that the APAY is calling for a meeting to network with like-minded NGOs that are concerned with the future and sustainability of tourism.

Globally, mass tourism for pleasure is on the rise. It is not possible to stop the trend. But we can introduce better motivations for travel, raise awareness of carbon footprint in tourism and introduce responsible and sustainable travel activities and programmes. And hopefully, in the long term, change the whole concept/nature of tourism.

In the two day meeting, members of the GATN Task Force had very fruitful exchanges with national and regional NGOs linking responsible and sustainable tourism with issues of environment, peace, community development, social enterprise, Sustainable Development Goals and climate change.

Some of the NGOs invited for this meeting include the Joint Action Initiatives of the East Jerusalem YMCA; Alternative Tourism Group Korea; Thai Ecotourism and Adventure Travel Association from Thailand; Village Ecotourism Network in Bali; Korea Fair Travel; Peace Coffee from East Timor, and EQUATIONS.

GATN will continue to network and collaborate with similar minded NGOs in order to develop clear and strong advocacy and lobby work in responsible and sustainable tourism. A big "THANK YOU" to Margareta Andoea, NGS of Indonesia, for providing all the logistic support and hosting this event in Bali, Indonesia.

↑ Expanding our network with friends working on responsible and sustainable tourism - Fair Tourism, Peace and Solidarity Tourism, Ecotourism, Village Tourism, Peace Coffee and Social Solidarity Economy

↑ Dr. Park Jai Chang giving the keynote address on Responsible and Sustainable Tourism

↑ Nidal Abuzuluf sharing about peace and solidarity tourism in Palestine through the Olive Tree Campaign

~ Chan Beng Seng, GATN Coordinator

Mission trip to Luang Prabang, Laos

The possibility of formally establishing the YMCA in Luang Prabang was the primary purpose why I was tasked to visit the place. Prior to this trip, there were already initial assessment, meetings/discussions and orientation about the YMCA with a group of people done in the past by the APAY staff with the support of Chiang Mai YMCA staff as well as the Y's Men's Club. A core group was already created to start building-up and stimulating awareness about the YMCA in the community. They also came up with a "Trash Project" which aims to help contribute to solving garbage/ waste disposal in Luang Prabang.

I arrived in Luang Prabang on September 14 and stayed there until the 20th. I had meetings with the key people of the group as well as their other members to determine and ascertain whether they are now prepared and capable of forming a YMCA. My concern, however, is that, in all those meetings, there were only a few people involved. The group shared that they have tapped and recruited other people to join them, but because of other interests and preoccupation they could not commit themselves to the task. Ms. Phetsamon Manola, the leader of the core group expressed nonetheless, that even with their limited number at present, they could already start a YMCA to make the people/the community aware that there is such an organization. Thus, in one of our meetings, it was decided that an Ad Hoc Committee will be created to get the organization underway. They elected their officers and a temporary staff was also appointed. We discussed further the necessary requirements needed in establishing the YMCA which they will need to work on, as well as membership development and program of activities. Rev. Kingphet, an active church leader who assured his support to the committee emphasized to them the importance of their commitment to achieving their goals and become successful in their task. Similarly, the committee was challenged to keep on sustaining and maintaining each other's enthusiasm and interest and to give their full support to the undertaking.

↑ Planning session of the Ad-Hoc Committee

↑Rev. Kingphet (backrow, 1st, l-r), T.P. Juntereal (backrow, 3rd, l-r) with the Members of the Ad-Hoc Committee

We scheduled a day for planning on how they will promote and initiate some programs and activities to make the YMCA known to the community. This is apart from continuing the "Trash Project". There were several suggestions from the body but I encouraged them to start some simple initiatives first which is more practical and doable. The three remaining months of this year, October-December 2016, will be their time frame to see how they will progress in their work. On October 1, the Committee will have its meeting to tackle some important business like scheduling regular meetings, preparing some simple organizational guidelines, finalizing the programs/ activities to be initiated and who will be responsible for some tasks and other pertinent matters. Certainly, this will be a challenging process and tedious task. Much has to be done especially at this stage. Hopefully, as the Ad-Hoc Committee moves ahead, with their desire to make an impact in their community and contribute to making a difference, they will exert their best effort to address the challenge and pave the way for the emergence and development of a YMCA in Luang Prabang.

- Thelma P. Juntereal, MS Coordinator

ICF National Forum in Laos holds Human Rights Workshop

The national forum of Interfaith Cooperation Forum (ICF) in Laos organized a one-week human rights workshop from Sept. 12 to 16 in the Laotian capital of Vientiane. For most of the 17 participants from the Lao Disabled People's Association (LDPA), the Road Crash Prevention (RCP) team and Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), this program was the first human rights workshop they had attended.

Thus, most of the curriculum of the workshop, which was conducted by ICF staff member Bruce Van Voorhis and a School of Peace (SOP) alumnus from Cambodia, Hor Hen, sought to lay a foundation of what constitutes human rights by discussing the core U.N. human rights treaties on civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights as well as the U.N. conventions on the rights of women and of children. Because more than half of the participants were disabled, a major thrust of this workshop was presenting the U.N. human rights convention to define and uphold the rights of people with disabilities.

In addition to introducing these U.N. human rights covenants and conventions, the participants discussed religious freedom and the obstacles to human rights that people face in Laos and elsewhere in the region. Sessions of the workshop were also devoted to documenting human rights violations, advocacy and community organizing as a tool for people to identify their human rights problems and to respond to them.

The program included a one-day field visit to the Cooperative Orthotic and Prosthetic Enterprise, or COPE, that provides free rehabilitation services to people disabled by the U.S. bombing campaign that dropped an estimated two million tons of ordinance on Laos during the Vietnam War and that operates a museum about the effects of this war on the Laotian people. People even today are still affected by the "bombies" dispersed by cluster bombs during the war as up to 30 percent of the "bombies" failed to detonate, causing as many as 300 casualties per year. Children often think the unexploded "bombies" are toys, or farmers are injured while working in their fields.

During their field trip, the participants also visited a social enterprise operated by Asian Development with the Disabled Persons (ADDP), a Japanese non-profit organization, and LDPA to learn about their programs.

↑ During a field visit to the Cooperative Orthotic and Prosthetic Enterprise (COPE), the participants of the ICF human rights workshop learn about the hundreds of people in Laos who are still killed or disabled each year by unexploded "bombies" dispersed by cluster bombs by the United States during the Vietnam War.

~ Bruce Van Voorhis, ICF Coordinator

APAY Green YMCA Awards 2016

The Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs is proud to announce the APAY Green YMCA Awards 2016. The APAY Green Team is continuously working towards promoting environmental programs in the YMCAs in our region. With a view to recognize and reward the YMCAs who are

engaged in green activities, the APAY Green Team had launched this award program in the year 2013 and since then it has become an annual event of APAY.

This year this award shall be presented to a maximum of three local YMCAs from the region of Asia and Pacific. National YMCA movements operating with only one unit of YMCA shall also be eligible to participate in this award program. The awards shall be adjudged, considering the YMCAs involvement in the past year in promoting environmental programs.

The deadline for submission of entries is on 31st December 2016. The awards shall be declared and presented during the Executive Committee Meetings of APAY held during 7-10 March 2017.

In the past years the YMCA of Geelong, Australia, Chinese YMCA of Hong Kong and YMCA of Chiangmai, Thailand were the recipients of this award.

We urge the YMCAs who are proactively involved in environmental programs participate in this environmental award program. Details of this program will be available with the affiliated national movements and also in the website of APAY.

~ Duncan Chowdhury, Executive Secretary

New Interim CEO of YMCA Australia

Melinda Crole has assigned as an Interim Chief Executive Officer of the YMCA Australia since 3rd May, 2016. Melinda has been the Executive Manager, Licensing & Development for YMCA Australia in recent history. She has worked at the national level for nearly 10 years and previous to that was the CEO of a local YMCA for 4 years which specialised in the delivery of community and children's programs.

Melinda's roles with YMCA Australia have included the development and management of the Licensing and Compliance system. Management of the national insurance and risk schemes for the YMCA is also within her portfolio. Melinda has also held key roles nationally for the YMCA in the area of child protection practice development.

These roles are supported by tertiary qualifications in science, business management and social science. Melinda is a graduating member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and holds a position on the Federal Coalition of Organisations committed to the Safety and Wellbeing of Australia's Children and AUSTSWIM.

Not interested any more?