

↑Monthly eNewsletter of the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs

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Monthly eNewsletter of the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs
March 2017

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May 21-27: International Green Ambassadors Training, Chiangmai, Thailand

Communiqué
Executive Committee Meeting
March 7-10, 2017, Hong Kong

The Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs (APAY) held its annual Executive Committee Meeting from March 7 to 10, 2017, in Hong Kong. This year 120 delegates from 22 movements in the Asia-Pacific region attended the meeting. Special guests included Peter Posner, President of the World Alliance of YMCAs (WAY); Antonio Merino, general secretary of the Latin American and Caribbean Alliance of YMCAs (LACA Y); former APAY presidents Philip Kwok, Chim Hou Yan, Park Jai Chang and Yau Chung Wan; Boon Chin Tan, Senior Associate Director of YMCA USA; two representatives of Y's Men International, including its immediate past International President, Wichian Boonmapajorn from Thailand; and ecumenical guest Sunita Suna, Regional Secretary of the World Student Christian Federation—Asia-Pacific (WSCF—AP).

With 2017 being the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation initiated in Germany by Martin Luther, a review of the Mission of the YMCA was an appropriate way to begin the annual Executive Committee meeting. This process involved linking the lessons of the 16th century Reformation to Mission in the 21st century, which was a key message brought about by Dr. David Suh, former President of the WAY, in his written presentation. Among these lessons was that the Reformation was a prophetic response to the Zeitgeist, or spirit of the times, that opposed the abuse of power and moral corruption of the Roman Catholic Church at that time. The actions of Luther and the other Protestant reformers was a testament of their conscience and an example of Christian faith in action to transform the Church and society. Their words and deeds stressed that all children of God are equal in the sight of God—an emphasis on human equality that laid the foundation for a respect for human rights and planted the seeds of democratic governance that germinated centuries later.

Similarly, the founding of the YMCA by George Williams in 1844 in London was a Christian

response to the Zeitgeist of the 19th century in which the Industrial Revolution, urbanization and colonialism were altering European society and the rest of the world.

This historical reflection poses a challenge to the YMCA and Christians today. What, for instance, is the Zeitgeist of the 21st century, and how will the YMCA respond?

In many ways, the issues of Luther's time and the issues today are not vastly different: the corruption of religion as manifested in today's religious extremism, poverty and other social ills. Moreover, many societies in Asia today are defined by division and polarization; there is a lack of peace between and within countries.

As for the response of YMCAs in the Asia-Pacific region, a series of questions offer challenging guideposts for further discussion and reflection: Where and with whom do we stand? Who is our neighbor? What does it mean to be a peacemaker today? What are the challenges that break God's heart, and what does God want us to do? Will the YMCA come out of its comfort zone?

Some responses to these questions arose out of the deliberations of the APAY committees.

The Gender Equity Committee, for example, stated that Gender Equity and Justice are not just the work of, for and by women. Awareness-raising among men and their integration in YMCA programs must be observed. Moreover, it was also emphasized that the diversity of gender must be explored in order to uphold the human dignity of everyone. This inquiry is in relation to the understanding that in the present social contexts of many parts of Asia sexual minorities are often marginalized and face discrimination.

As for youth, the Youth Participation and Leadership Development (YPLD) Committee believes that the Integrated Youth Representative and Change Agent program is a good attempt to provide a comprehensive and holistic approach to youth empowerment.

In the Mission Response Committee, the committee emphasized that the YMCA is not merely a commercial organization but is a service organization. Consequently, the Mission Response Committee is a vital component of APAY, given that it is responsible for assuring that the YMCA continues to remain true to its mission and live up to its branding. Thus, it is important to underline that the committee maintains the primary responsibility for ensuring the spirituality and Christian values in the work of the YMCA. It is necessary therefore to be steadfast in combining power and the power of love in fostering Asian spirituality in the work of APAY.

The Mission Response Committee also felt that the national and local YMCAs should be encouraged to observe the YMCA-YWCA World Week of Prayer that is held each year during the month of November. This annual event will help our YMCAs to promote ecumenical fellowship in their local communities.

Meanwhile, the Constitution Committee is proposing that a gender and youth representative, both of whom shall be under the age of 30, will be permanently added to the APAY Board.

During the morning devotions and Bible study on March 8, an emphasis was placed on the lives and role of women in the Bible to commemorate International Women's Day. Based on Luke 8:1–3, the discipleship of Mary Magdalene, it was highlighted that Joanna and Susanna as they left their families and homes to follow Jesus. Moreover, not only did they follow Jesus, but they also were his "donors," providing financial support for Jesus' ministry.

The Executive Committee Meeting returned to the same focus as it began—Martin Luther's Reformation—as APAY launched a new book, *Revisiting the Reformation*, that reflected on this significant period in history from several different dimensions: the perspectives of theology, the YMCA and ecumenical movement as well as a number of other lenses, such as gender, justice and peace, indigenous people and culture and protection of the environment. The book offers a reminder that Luther's Ninety-five Theses was an act rooted in his Christian faith. Putting

together these two words—faith and action—is the challenge and call that Luther makes to the YMCAs in the Asia-Pacific region today 500 years later.

~ Bruce Van Voorhis

First Partners Support Group (PSG) Meeting in Luang Prabang, Laos

After laying the groundwork for establishing a YMCA in Laos for quite sometime and the effort and cooperation of the local Y leaders and supporters, the very first PSG (Partner Support Group) meeting composed of YMCA of India, YMCA of Hong Kong, Yangsan YMCA of Korea with the participation of Mr. Shin Ho Lee, former national president and Kim Kyung Mee, member and Chiangmai YMCA, was held on March 20-23, 2017 in Luang Prabang together with the Y Laos Committee. In this very significant and momentous event, APAY General Secretary Nam Boo Won mentioned that the work would not be easy considering the political environment of the country but hopefully, in the months or years to come, the Laos government will see the beauty of the YMCA movement through the programs and services that it would promote which will truly benefit the people and the community. He said further that a lot of good wisdom from everyone would be needed on how to build good, meaningful and relevant programs and projects to help the Laos community , as well as serve the poor and the marginalized. . Pertinent to this, a detailed discussion on the Work Plan, course of action and strategies of the Laos Y were tackled and sharing of inputs , ideas and recommendation were given by the body. Some of the programs suggested that the Laos Y Committee could pursue are the GATN, their continued linkage with the school related to the Trash project and the Cleft Lip/ Palate Medical Services that would greatly help the poor children born with this deformity. All these programs/ services were recommended because of the resources available in the area and the people who are very much enthusiastic and willing to help as a show of their support to the development and growth of the YMCA in Laos. Along with these, the YMCA committee will constantly and relentlessly work on their membership recruitment to develop prospective leaders and committee members. They will also find a place for their office and before the year ends, training of the leaders and staff will be conducted by the APAY staff. To assist, guide and train the committee in YMCA operation, the YMCA of Chiangmai is requested to temporarily assign a fraternal YMCA staff in Luang Prabang for a certain period until such time, that the committee and the local staff are well- trained and have full grasp and understanding of the YMCA work .

It was acknowledged that the formal launching of the YMCA as well as its official registration would be delayed because of the political situation in the country as shared by Phetsamone Manola, Y Laos committee leader. However, she said that they will exert their best effort to connect with other government institutions and other NGOs so they could work officially as YMCA. Gradually, they will need to work too on the formulation of their Constitution which could be patterned on the APAY model constitution but it should be adopted depending on the context of Laos, its laws, culture and traditions. Mani Kumar, NGS of India and Peter Ho, GS of YMCA of Hong Kong both suggested to invite experts to help them.

↑ PSG members and APAY staff with the Y Laos Committee

↑ Visit to the school where the Laos Y Committee links their "Trash Project"

The whole day meeting ended with full of hopes and enthusiasm . Rev. Shin Ho Lee expressed his good wishes to the Laos Y committee encouraging them to go on promoting programs that would attract youth and children. A fellowship dinner followed. On the next day, visit to project sites and other interesting places was done. Our deep gratitude to the PSG members and to the Laos Y committee.

~ Thelma P. Juntereal

Gender Justice and Social Transformation Sub-regional Workshops

Following the mandate of Challenge 21, this quadrennial envisions working together, as a movement, towards developing communities in which no one particularly women and other sexual minorities are excluded, marginalized or discriminated against because of their gender. In the efforts of realizing the vision for gender justice, APAY will conduct series of sub-regional workshops that aims to empower women and men to work towards achieving gender justice and developing equitable society.

The series of sub-regional workshops will start with the South Asia Gender Justice and Social Transformation Workshop to be held in New Delhi, India on 29 April–3 May 2017 in which the National Council of YMCAs of India will act as local host. It will be followed by East Asia to be held in Hong Kong on 7-11 June 2017 in which the YMCA of Hong Kong serves as the local host. Both sub-regional workshops invite national movements to send lay leaders and staff, both women and men, who are engaged in gender related programs in their local and/or national movements. Moreover, the following YMCA Staff/Youth Lay Leader is expected to have:

- * awareness of the globalized world and recognizes diversities
- * critical thinking of the prevailing social realities and injustices faced by women and other sexual minorities
- * strong interest in actively engaging in activities and advocacies that address gender injustices
- * openness to explore, suggest and implement alternative approaches that will uplift the lives of women and girls in the society
- * willingness to work and/or volunteer in gender action oriented programs in the YMCAs

The Sub-regional workshops approach on gender justice and social transformation is designed to address the diversified culture and practices within the region that influences the understanding of gender injustices. As diversity has been expressed in various platforms, this approach also aims to provide opportunity for a wider reach of participants and learning experiences. Most importantly, it is an attempt to facilitate a contextualized understanding of the positions and conditions of women and men in the local, national and regional levels; and to recognize responses and solidarity actions from movements that share the same beliefs, values, and practices.

Interested participants are requested to send their registration form duly filled up and endorsed by the National General Secretary on or before 10th April 2017 at miranda@asiapacificymca.org. Likewise for matters related to participation, contact Ms. Maria

Cristina Miranda-LASTIMA, Executive Secretary for Programs, Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs through the same email address mentioned above.

~ Cristina Miranda-Lastima

Second NCY India National GATN Training

The NCY India and YMCA of Kolkata hosted the second National GATN Training conducted by the APAY from 28-31 March 2017. A total of 21 staff and board members from 17 local YMCAs completed the basic training on developing Alternative Tourism programmes at their respective YMCAs.

The National Training was inaugurated by Babu Markus Gomes, President of the APAY and Ch.R.P. Manikumar, NGS of the YMCA of India. In his inaugural speech, Gomes encouraged the participants to develop models of alternative tourism with creative, meaningful and ecologically sensitive activities that will also bring positive changes to the local communities.

The 3-day training sessions raised awareness of the unsustainable nature of consumerist tourism, particularly the high-carbon footprint in the activities and consumptions. The workshop also provided participants with tools and guidelines in building sustainable and responsible tourism programs.

GATN promotes tourism that is community based, ecologically friendly, non-exploitative especially in relation to women and children and economically beneficial for the local communities. Many YMCAs have also found this programme very relevant for their global citizenship education and movement strengthening work. Quite a few YMCAs have also been able to generate significant income from this programme.

One of the highlights of the training was a visit to the Calcutta YMCA Ranaghat Girls Home, home to about 50 young girls, former street children in Kolkata. Besides keeping these vulnerable young girls off the streets. The YMCA also provides opportunities for these girls to go to normal schools. The main purpose of our visit was to show how community projects such as the Ranaghat Girls Home could be integrated into the international service program of the GATN.

The Training concluded with participants presenting their plans for AT at their respective local YMCAs based on the principles taught at the workshop.

↑ Participants and special guests at the inauguration of the training workshop

↑ Participants warmly welcomed by residents of the YMCA Ranaghat Girls Home

~ Chan Beng Seng

4th International Green Ambassadors Training

Preservation of the nature & environment has become the biggest challenge for us in the post-modern era. In the name of development, we have plundered the earth with the dawn of industrialization, but the degree of destruction of our natural resources has surpassed all records since the last century. Carbon emission has reached new heights. Global warming has resulted in climate change which has poised much negative impacts in human lives. Concerted efforts of all quarters are required to reverse the situation in order to save the earth from the threat of imminent danger.

The APAY had always been a proponent to bring awareness amongst the people for the conservation of the nature. One of the flagship programs of APAY Green Team is the Green Ambassadors Training Program. The APAY Green Team initiated this program to educate young people to bring behavioral changes in order to reduce carbon footprints and also advocate for eco-justice, with an emphasis on reducing carbon footprints of the YMCAs also. The APAY has initiated a process of Recruiting and Training Green Ambassadors from various YMCAs in our region of Asia & Pacific. The Green Ambassadors are expected to take initiatives for awareness raising and Green Programs in their respective YMCAs, to reduce the carbon footprints of their YMCAs and eventually lead the YMCA to be Green YMCA and carbon neutral organizations.

The first Green Ambassadors Training took place in May 2012 in Chiangmai, Thailand, the second training took place in May 2013 in Hong Kong, the 3rd in March 2015 in Dhaka, Bangladesh. At present there are about 40 Green Ambassadors in our region.

In 2017, APAY and Sao Hin YMCA Chiangmai, Thailand are jointly organizing the International Green Ambassador Training in Thailand, which will be held during 21st May – 27th May, 2017, (including days of arrival and departure) at YMCA of Chiangmai, Thailand.

Program information and details of this training program has already sent to the national movements and are also available in the website of the APAY, in the Upcoming Events Section. National movements are requested to select the most appropriate youth candidates for the Green Ambassadors as per the criteria laid down and submit the registrations to the APAY Secretariat before 30th April 2017. If you need more information please feel free to contact Duncan Chowdhury, Executive Secretary for Programs at duncan@asiapacificymca.org
~ Duncan Chowdhury

Call for Inspiring Stories

As social media is a proven important tool for attracting and sustaining participation specially young people, the APAY Committees on Gender Equity and Youth Participation and Leadership Development launch its initiative to collect inspiring stories about how youth empowerment and gender related programs have influenced various constituents of our movement to advance the YMCA mission of youth empowerment and gender equity.

The Youth Journal and HerStory are collection of inspiring stories, through written article format while the #Ystory is through short video clips. Both format aims to showcase and share how YMCA has changed the life of young person, women and men in the movement. The initiatives specifically aim:

- * To recognize that everyone has a valuable story to share
- * To serve as an inspiration to the region/world especially to the young people
- * To be a platform to show how the YMCA has impacted the lives of young people, women and men

Both written and video clips stories shall start to follow the sequence below on structuring her/his article:

- * Self-Introduction

- * How did you know about the Y (involvement)?

- * How the Y changed your life by mentioning two-three concrete reflection/learning with brief explanation.

- * Call to action. Refers to your commitment to advance/promote youth empowerment work within and outside the movement.

We will be happy to receive your articles and video clips at miranda@asiapacificymcas.org. Selected articles will be published in the APAY e-news and video clips will be posted in the official you tube page of the YPLD.

~ Cristina Miranda-Lastima

Global Alternative Tourism Network (GATN)

Share Your GATN Stories Now

The GATN program is definitely one of the most memorable, meaningful and merry programs in the movement. Not only does it allow both the receiving and sending YMCA to build a relationship together, but it lets everyone to reflect and to contribute to the community in a fun way.

We know that everyone has something to share- be it photos, stories or reflections, and we are interested in seeing, reading and hearing them!

Every word, thoughts, and photo shared will surely help us to further promote GATN, inspire people, and encourage the community to opt to alternative tourism.

Interested in sharing your stories? Since we would like to present an authentic image of the experience of the writer, the stories or reflection to be written are not limited. However, here are some specific guidelines to aid everyone in their writing:

- * Topic is generally about your experience or reflection in a GATN program

- * It shall be 300-700 words, double-spaced and it shall be submitted as a Word document.

- * It has to be an original work of the writer

- * Articles shall be accompanied by at least one photo with a caption. The more photos you send, the better it is. If the photo is from someone else, do not forget to put the name of the photographer for proper citation.

- * Articles shall be written in English but we also encourage submitting articles on native language provided that it is accompanied by an English translation for the international audience who are interested in reading your stories.

- * Create a title for your work

* Articles must be submitted with the following information in the end:

* Name;

* E-mail address;

* Mobile telephone numbers (optional);

* Local YMCA

* Multiple articles may be submitted by a writer

All contents shall be submitted to karren@ymcatourism.org and as we are targeting to share articles on a monthly basis, contents must be submitted not late than third Friday of each month. Please note that some articles may also be chosen to be published on the monthly e-news of the APAY.

For questions and inquiries, please send an email to karrenf@asiapacificymca.org.

So, share what's on your mind, capture your stories and let us inspire the world one story at a time.

~ Karren Fetalvero

Not interested any more?