

↑Monthly eNewsletter of the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs

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Monthly eNewsletter of the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs
November 2019

1. 37th Advanced Studies Program Concludes Successfully
2. East Asia Peace Forum held in conjunction with the 3rd Korea Peace Forum
3. APAY Regional Green Ambassadors Training
4. 19 Youth participated at the School of Peace 2019
5. APAY Youth Internship

Dec 12-14: 5th Leaders' Quadrennial Roundtable, Taipei, Taiwan

37th Advanced Studies Program Concludes Successfully

It was the 37th batch of the Advanced Studies Program, which took place during 4- 29 November 2019 at Wu Kai Sha Youth Village, Hong Kong. YMCA professionals representing the YMCAs from Asia and beyond, from South America and Africa participated at the course who were 14 in number.

The participants were Ms. See Man-Yan Phoebe from Chinese YMCA of Hong Kong, Ms Ng Yuk Lin from Chinese YMCA of Hong Kong, Mr. Tam Tsz Wing Irwin from YMCA of Hong Kong, Mr. Ashis THORAT from Bombay YMCA, India, Mr. Pravin Kumar Daniel Mckenzie, from Poona YMCA, India, Mr. Koshy Alexander Vaidyan, from the National Council of YMCAs of India, Mr. Kazuki Yamane from National Council of YMCAs of Japan, Ms. Shin Kyung-suk from Jeongeup YMCA, South Korea, Mr. Baek Kyoung-rok from Daegu YMCA of South Korea, Mr. Tsikiniaina Andriherindrainy from the National Council of YMCAs of Madagascar, Ms. Claudia Maria Sandra Portocarrero Blaha from YMCA of Peru, Mr. Jegan Jeevaraj Jeevarednam from Batticaloa YMCA, Sri Lanka, Ms. Lin Hui-Chuan from Tainan YMCA, Taiwan and Ms. Jeannie Chen from Taichung YMCA, Taiwan.

↑ All the participants of the 37th ASP during their studies at Wu Kwai Sha, Hong Kong

Each participant expressed their keen interest in the subjects that had been dealt with during the program. The primary subjects of the course were YMCA Mission, Contextual Theology, Social Analysis, Biblical Reflection Approaches, Movement Strengthening and Global Alternative Tourism Network. The participants were also made acquainted with the topics of Peace Building, Conflict Resolution, Gender Mainstreaming, Global Citizenship Education, Social and Solidarity Economy, Organizational Review, Strategic Planning and Sustainable Development Goals. Dr. Chang Yoon-Jae, Mr. Orson Sargado, Dr. Hope Antone, Mr. Nam Boo Won, Mr. Chan Beng Seng, Ms. Cristina Miranda and Mr. Duncan Chowdhury conducted the sessions for the Advanced Studies Program this year.

↑ Dr. Chang Yoon-Jae, Professor of Ewha Womans University, Korea explaining Contextual Theology to the participants

↑ Mr. Chan Beng-Seng, GATF Coordinator of APAY, explaining the participants the negative impacts of mass tourism

The Inauguration Dinner for the participants was held on the evening of 4th November hosted by the YMCA of Hong Kong. Ms. Julia Ong, Vice President of the YMCA of Hong Kong welcomed all the guests at the ceremony. Mr. William Fu, President of the Council of YMCAs of Hong Kong delivered words of felicitations while Mr. Peter Ho, General Secretary of the YMCA of Hong Kong delivered words of inspiration for the participants. Mr. Yau Chung Wan, President of the Chinese YMCA of Hong Kong was also present at the ceremony and spoke words of inspiration for the participants. Mr. Nam Boo Won, General Secretary of APAY in his speech urged the participants to innovate programs of the YMCA which genuinely reflects the mission of the YMCA and respond to the needs of the communities.

The Graduation Dinner of the 37th Advanced Studies Program was held on 29th of November hosted by the Chinese YMCA of Hong Kong. Mr. Philip Poon, Member of the Board of Directors of Chinese YMCA of Hong Kong and Vice President of APAY, delivered the welcome address.

Mr. Ronald Yam, Treasurer of the World Alliance of YMCA and Chinese YMCA of Hong Kong and former Treasurer of APAY, spoke on the occasion, congratulating the graduates and spoke motivational words for the graduates. Mr. Karl Lau, General Secretary of the Chinese YMCA of Hong Kong was also present at the ceremony. Mr. Nam Boo Won especially mentioned Mr. Duncan Chowdhury, Executive Secretary of APAY and thanked him for successfully organizing the Advanced Studies Program for the last eight batches since 2012.

↑ The participants of 37th Advanced Training Program, Leaders of the Chinese YMCA of Hong Kong and APAY staff along with distinguished guests at the Graduation Dinner

The graduates pledged their commitment to the YMCA and were awarded with the course completion certificates. It was an unforgettable moment to have Mr. Grantham Fernando at the graduation ceremony as a special guest who had been a YMCA Secretary of Sri Lanka and was an alumnus of the YMCA Institute in Hong Kong graduated in the year 1974.

Though this year the political unrest has limited the participants' mobility in Hong Kong to some extent, still we are thankful to the Almighty that the course could be completed successfully without any hindrances and all the participants have now reached their home countries safely. APAY's Special thanks go to the Asia Pacific Area as well as Korea Area of Y's Men International for their generous and continuous support for this important leadership formation program of APAY in the spirit of genuine partnership. With the completion of the 37th ASP, the total number of alumni of Advanced Studies Program has now reached 472 since the beginning of this program in 1982, a majority of them are still serving their respective YMCAs with the renewed zeal and commitment they made at the ASP.

~ Duncan Chowdhury, Executive Secretary

East Asia Peace Forum held in conjunction with the 3rd Korea Peace Forum - Towards building "Civil Asia" based on the values of life, peace, human rights and ecology initiated by people

↑ A group photo of the participants at the opening ceremony

The East Asia Peace Forum (EAPF) was organized by APAY, hosted by Korea YMCA in conjunction with the 3rd Korea Peace Forum, jointly organized by Korea YMCA, CSOs Solidarity Network in Korea, and Civil Society Development Committee, on 10th to 13th November 2019 at KOICA Training Center, Seongnam city, South Korea. The EAPF took place at a critical historical juncture when Korean society celebrates the 100th anniversary of the March 1st People's Independence Movement against Japanese forceful occupation of Korea and the 101st anniversary of the end of the First World War. The theme of the EAPF was "Peace Building in the Korean Peninsula and East Asia by civil society initiatives".

Prof. Chen Chin-Seng, President of APAY, mentioned in his welcome address "I sincerely hope that the EAPF will be able to explore an 'enabling environment' in East Asia that would facilitate the ongoing peace process in the Korean Peninsula to gather stronger momentum towards building sustainable peace. At the same time, we should also seek relevant ways of creating a win-win condition under which a virtuous cycle for peace building could be created and strengthened in the region, and what contributions YMCAs and like-minded NGOs in this region could collectively make in this respect".

Dr. Emma Leslie, Executive Director of Center for Peace and Conflict Studies (CPCS), gave her keynote speech in paper, as she could not attend the forum due to her Dengue fever, on the 'current state of Asian conflicts and strategies for peace building in Asia'. In her paper, she suggested, based on her long-serving experiences, ten recommendations to the peace practitioners for an effective and impactful peace-building activities in Asia: "1) We must analyse deeply the drivers and dynamics of conflicts 2) We must be tactical, strategic, energetic and serious about addressing conflicts 3) We must embrace leadership, take on leadership, we must prepare and equip and accept the responsibilities of leadership. 4) We must practice the peace building values we stand for – to lead without ego, to serve tirelessly, to work across divides, to recognise human dignity, to listen to narratives which might not be our own. 5) We must challenge our own perceptions, prejudices and stereotypes. 6) We must take risks. Not crazy risks running into the line of fire, but the risk to understand, to think creatively, to try new things, meet and engage those different to ourselves. 6) We must build and sustain people's movements of accountability and clarity which demand change, expect change and equip leaders to create platforms of peace. 7) We must consider ourselves as mediators, facilitators embedded in the web of conflict. Not wait for those above us to act, but we ourselves must mediate. 8) We call it being in the middle by being on the edge. 9) We are not all appointed UN mediators, yet every one of us, if embracing the notion that we too can mediate a conflict thought our influence, connection and willingness to engage. 10) Above all we must channel the energy and clarity of vision and bloody impatience of Greta and Malala and the many other young people who now lead the movements for change in our world".

Her presentation was followed by three thematic presentations, namely, on "Overcoming the San Francisco System by citizens' initiatives" by Dr. Kim Young-Ho, former minister of Commerce, Industry and Energy; on "Building 'Civil Asia' and human rights" by Dr. Baek Tae-ung, Professor of Law at the University of Hawaii; on "Building peace system in East Asia and Korean Peninsula" by Dr. Wada Haruki, Professor Emeritus of the University of Tokyo. In the next morning, there were presentations on "Building lasting Peace in East Asia based on Culture of Peace" by Dr. Kim Yong-bock, Chair-professor, Hanshin University; on "The seed of Asia Civil Society and peace in the Korean Peninsula, the solidarity between civil societies of Japan and Korea" by Mr. Takata Ken, Japanese Civil Society leader and peace activist, followed by discussions on how to build Asian civil society and solidarity between Japan and

Korea, as well as building 'Civil Asia' Network.

The 98 participants from the nine (9) Asian countries who attended the Forum commonly recognized that one of the root causes of the conflict in East Asia, including the challenges the current peace process on the Korean Peninsula is facing, the conflict between Korea and Japan over the settlement of colonial history underlying the recent trade disputes, and many unresolved conflicts in East Asia, is the so-called "San Francisco System". They realized that it would be difficult to pave a way towards a new East Asian order based on peace and justice without overcoming the system. Participants also listened to and empathized with on-the-spot reports on urgent issues present in the region such as protest movements against the expansion of the US military base in Okinawa; re-opening of Kaesong Industrial Complex and Mount Kumgang tourism in North Korea. At the same time, participants were also alarmed by the increasingly intense inter-racial and inter-religious conflicts as well as the constant suffering of the people in South East and South Asia due to the increasing struggles between the superpowers against the common interests of the peoples therein.

After frank and intense discussions among the participants, they became to share a new prospect that the solidarity between Korea and Japan civil societies that being activated through mutual exchanges and solidarity in recent years, could be a seedbed for a people-initiated 'Civil Asia' that encompasses Southeast Asia and South Asia. This 'Civil Asia' will grow as a transnational network of citizens and civil societies beyond the limits of nation-states to be formed through the genuine participation and spontaneous solidarity of the peoples and citizens around Asia.

At the conclusion of the Forum, participants became keen to create an 'Asia Civil Society Charter (a tentative name)' as a starting project towards the construction of Civil Asia – including Digital Asia – based on the perceived values of people, including participatory democracy, human rights, peace with justice, life and ecology, and co-existence. They envisioned together that the Charter will be a civil charter that goes beyond the legal frame of the states and embraces the diversities of Asia, including those in religion, culture, and ethnicity, as well as the moral values for a new society preserved and strengthened by peoples to overcome the framework of modern states. It will also aim at constructing new systems towards people's direct democracy; thereby striving to overcome the emerging social challenges in Asia.

↑ Discussion on how to build up 'Civil Asia' by citizens' initiatives

↑ Q & A session on the keynote presentation

~ Nam Boo Won, General Secretary

APAY Regional Green Ambassadors Training

"Let's Act on Climate Change: Restore our Nature and Promote Sustainable Livelihoods and Peace" is this year's theme of the Regional Green Ambassadors Training held last 18-23 November 2019 in Chiangmai, Thailand. The training was joined by 22 participants from YMCAs, school partners and like-minded organization working on ecological preservation in Myanmar, Cambodia, Mongolia, Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand. Participants comprise of YMCA youth volunteer and staff, educators and students.

This training that is co-organized by Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs and Sao Hin YMCA to continue the mission for healthy and well protected environment supporting a sustainable living

aimed to have practical and incremental learning effects for all the participants by sharing good practices and providing a practical opportunity to better understand the concept and practice of climate change education. Thus the exposures on the following areas provided experiential learning:

↑ Tungalan, YMCA of Mongolia youth volunteer during work group presentation

↑ Regional Green Ambassador Training participants during the nature trail exposure

* Visit to Environment and Learning Center at Sao Hin YMCA where knowledge and ideas about ways to reduce the CO2 emission from daily habits were shared to help mitigate global climate change;

* Visit to Sanpatong Wittayakom School and community on energy and environmental conservation where green activities; electricity saving, waste segregation, and environmental conservation towards the low carbon society were observed

* A nature trail of Doi Inthanon National Park as inspiration to clean natural environment and on how multi stakeholders manage protected forest and biodiversity;

* Visit to Doi Inthanon Royal Project on Sustainable Livelihoods where promotion of agriculture development for the hill tribe people was introduced such as alternative crops, reduction of chemical use and support on marketing system which aims to solve the problems of deforestation and poverty.

↑ YMCA participants from Cambodia, Myanmar and Philippines during the Regional Green Ambassadors Training exposure

Together with these exposure visits, the presentation of good practices/case studies on environment and climate change education led to identification of environmental problems as a common concern for climate action. The participants then presented their action plans and commitments.

Danoy Long, a youth volunteer participant from YMCA of Cambodia expressed her commitment saying that, "Through this training I learnt the importance of changing my daily habits. Firstly, I say "no to single use plastic". Secondly, I will save energy by reducing the number of hours of using electricity and finally I will start using bicycle and public transport. I also believe that we need to engage in advocacy on policies and laws that will protect the environment and the people."

~ Maria Cristina Miranda, Executive Secretary

19 Youth participated at the School of Peace 2019

Nineteen participants – nine women and ten men, including three Buddhist monks – received from ICF their certificates of completion of two-month School of Peace course on November 20, 2019, in Chiangmai, Thailand.

The nineteen participants come from eleven countries, namely: Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Timor Leste. They were recommended by their respective national YMCAs, and some were recommended by their respective Peace Organizations. These participants represented four religions, specifically Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam. The program ran from September 23, 2019, until November 21, 2019, inclusive of arrival and departures. The SoP held its sessions in Thailand, at the YMCA Chiangmai and Chiangrai facilities.

The Interfaith Cooperation Forum of APAY organized this 60-day School of Peace (SoP) as its flagship. This program invests in the youth of Asia to create peaceable interfaith communities in their local contexts by providing them opportunities to cultivate peaceable values and attitudes and to gain knowledge and skills for peacebuilding.

The School of Peace curriculum has five main sections.

* Conflict, Peace, and Peacebuilding Frameworks. This section includes conflict studies and conflict analysis, peacebuilding frameworks (Lederach, Galtung, RPP), and skills, including nonviolent communication.

* Religions, Practices, and their Teachings on Peace. This section includes indigenous spiritualities and indigenous people's struggles, and feminist perspectives of these religions' teachings that have implications on the role of women in religion. The participants studied religions such as Baha'i, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Sikhism.

* Making Connections and Identifying situations as Peace Issues. This section challenges participants to examine issues such as terrorism, political economy and neoliberalism, alternative tourism, ecological crisis, human rights, and women's rights and grounding gender justice work on feminist theory and ethics. This also includes a session on health and disability as peace issues, but due to lack of time, the session was canceled.

* Practical Skills. This section includes trauma healing, mediation and conciliation, peace education – pedagogies and module writing, basic news writing in English, and designing Workable plans (proposal writing) – anchored on conflict maps and theory of change. The participants are expected to implement their doable plans in their localities.

↑ Phra Somrak with his making presentation of their conflict analysis using the Onion Ring

↑ Men's group preparing the Loy Krathong

Week-end quizzes supplemented the above four sections. To enhance the studies on religions, the participants visited the mosque and church, had sessions in the Sikh temple, joined the Hindu ceremony in the Hindu temple, attended the celebration of the 200 year anniversary of Baha'i, and went to several Buddhist temples including Wat Phra That Doi Suthep. They also had the opportunity to celebrate Loy Krathong, the Buddhist festival of lights –both floating in the bodies of water and floating lanterns up in the sky – to honor the Buddha, and also, from the Hindu tradition – of thanking the Goddess of Water, Ganga, or in Thai, Phra Mae Kongkha.

A two-week community immersion and visits to different non-government organizations are important components of the School of Peace. The SoP 2019 participants visited the women's organization of the Foundation for Education and Development of Rural Areas (FEDRA), Sao

Hin YMCA. In Chiangrai, the group stayed in Had Bai village along Mekong River, where women produced hand-woven cloths. They visited the Network of Mekong School –Institute of Local Wisdom in Ngam Mueng village that preserves the wetland area, and the Song Phee Nong village where the participants experienced an interfaith ritual of tree ordination in the forest. The SoP participants also visited the Development Education for Daughters and Communities, a non-government organization that provides education for rescued girls and boys from human trafficking activities along the Mekong border. To further supplement the learning experience in the classrooms, the participants also visited museums such as the Underground Ancient City, the first capital of the Lanna Kingdom. They went to Mae Teng Elephant Park to learn about the life of the elephants, the issue of their survival and how they are being treated by the tourism industry. Furthermore, the group visited the Doi Pue Hmong Tribal and Hill Tribe villages.

In their own voices, here are what some participants said of the SoP2019:

“School of Peace is not only a school, but it is like a house teaching children to grow up and become a good resource person in society, ready to help each other... I feel very happy.” – Thippachanh Phommavong, Laos

“This program is very important for the young generation . . .to have compassion, have knowledge about peace to reduce violence in society.” – Farid Serpara, Jayapura

“All of the subjects were very useful for personal experience and as tools for the development of our home country.” – Pye Ei Nyein, Myanmar

“I would like other monks to have an experience like I have, and share with their own community, at least, even for their own personal growth. – Phra Somrak, Thailand

↑ Photo taken after the Opening Ceremony on Sep 24, 2019

↑ Photo taken after the Graduation Ceremony on Nov 20, 2019

~Muriel Orevillo-Montenegro, ICF Coordinator

APAY Youth Internship

We are pleased to announce the opening for the post of APAY Youth Intern for 2020. The internship is for one year beginning from 1 March 2020 and will be based in the office of the APAY in Hong Kong.

Some of the main responsibilities of the intern will be to assist in planning and implementing GATN programs of APAY and to coordinate the e-Learning on Climate Change. More importantly, this internship is a training position. It provides a rare opportunity for the intern to observe and learn "from the inside the APAY" and also to travel and learn from other YMCAs within the Asia Pacific region. It is hoped that the intern will share the experiences back to his/her home YMCA.

Young people who are interested are encouraged to refer to our website for more information: www.asiapacificymca.org

Not interested any more?