

↑Monthly eNewsletter of the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs

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Monthly eNewsletter of the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs
Dec 2019 & Jan 2020

1. 5th Leaders' Quadrennial Roundtable
2. 8th Asian Peace Practitioner Research Conference in Cambodia
3. Partners Support Group (PSG) Meeting for Cambodia YMCA
4. ICF held Program Committee Meeting back-to-back with Thematic Workshop

APAY ECM Postponed to:
1-3 July 2020

5th Leaders' Quadrennial Roundtable -
Strengthened YMCA for an Impactful Movement

“Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs envisions a strengthened YMCA and vibrant civil society that are empowered with and by youth to address social injustices faced by vulnerable groups in societies through creation of safe space and development of responsible leadership and governance that is anchored on Christian ideals of love, justice and peace.”

Through a series of discussions during the 5th Leaders' Quadrennial Roundtable held in YMCA Taipei, Taiwan last December 11-15, 2019, the 41 participants from 14 National Movements summarized the vision of the regional YMCA work for this quadrennial in the abovementioned statement. The meeting that was attended by YMCA key lay leaders, youth members and professional staff gathered to discuss the 'why' and 'how' of doing our Mission given the diversities and complexities of our context and time. It was a platform to develop a common vision and plan that translates the 20th General Assembly Mandate into mission responses for the Quadrennial 2020-2023.

The process started with a keynote presentation on Asia and Pacific social context and realities by Dr. Judy M. Taguiwalo, Professorial Lecturer at the College of Social Work and Community Development of the University of the Philippines. In her paper, she emphasized that the culture of individualism and isolation has for a long time replaced the culture of solidarity and empathy that many peoples of the Asia and Pacific region held. She added that this has led to the region's conquest by foreign interests, the rise of authoritarianism, the destruction of the environment, the abandonment of the most vulnerable and marginalized in our societies, the women, the children, differently abled people, our indigenous sisters and brothers among others, the rise of violence to stifle those who dissent and criticize. Given this social context and realities, the participants engaged in small group discussions on how each YMCA in the region, despite its diverse context, can find a common working ground to express mission into action, to build up its efforts on strengthening the movement and civil society; and to concretely outline its commitment to work in solidarity.

↑ APAY President Prof. Chen Chin-Seng giving his Opening Remarks

↑ Mr. Stephen S.S. Lee, President of YMCA Taiwan giving his Welcome Remarks

The following goals are identified as key areas of collective actions for this quadrennial:

- * To strengthen the YMCAs in the Asia and Pacific through capability and capacity building efforts related to leadership and governance, partnership and networking, and skills training
- * To understand and respond meaningfully to social issues that are relevant to the movement with the purpose of building civil society and social transformation.
- * To empower youth and build on their potentials at all levels.

The social issues identified during the meeting included environment and climate change, economic empowerment, mental health, and justice and peace. Many of the said issues represent a broader category to which existing programs/projects belong while there is also need to explore new areas of work in a practical way.

To achieve the set goals, the participants re-affirmed the effectiveness of the current strategies on conducting education, awareness raising, capacity and capability building, networking and partnership. Thus, those means must be strengthened. Nevertheless, other proposed strategies to meet the goals effectively include research and publication such as database gathering, monitoring and evaluation mechanism based on outcome and impacts. It was also shared that policy recommendation, lobbying and advocacy must be part of the YMCA programs alongside maximizing the use of technology with a view to multiplying the impacts of our work as a faith-based social movement.

↑ Group photo of the LQR participants

↑ Keynote presentation by Prof. Judy M. Taguiwalo

APAY is very much appreciative of the warmest hospitality and full support rendered by YMCA of Taiwan as the host of the LQR meeting.

~ Maria Cristina Miranda, Executive Secretary

APAY staff attended the 8th Asian Peace Practitioner Research Conference in Cambodia

Nam Boo Won, the APAY General Secretary, along with the ICF Coordinator, Muriel Orevillo-Montenegro, and the Program Officer, Baidido Saganding attended the 8th Asian Peace Practitioner Research Conference on December 6-8, 2019 at Regency Angkor Hotel in Siem Reap, Cambodia. They attended the conference upon the invitation of Dr. Emma Leslie of Centre for Peace & Conflict Studies (CPCS). The conference was an opportunity for the post-graduate students of CPCS to present their research and case studies. Their presentations revolved around the theme “Addressing Structural Violence Through the Lens of Ethnicity and Faith.” On the part of the APAY and ICF Team, the conference was an opportunity to learn what other people in Asia are doing in the area of peacebuilding.

The conference began with a reception and a formal opening program where Dr. Leslie welcomed more than two hundred peace activists and advocates from Asia, USA, and Europe. Dr. Jehan Perera, Executive Director of the National Peace Council of Sri Lanka gave the Keynote address. His works focused on education and advocacy on peacebuilding and transitional justice. Dr. Perera presented Sri Lanka's learning from their conflicts in the past and where they are now. Sri Lanka has a history of almost three decades of conflict that killed thousands of its population. On April 21, 2019, Easter Sunday, the coordinated suicide bombing killed and injured hundreds.

↑ Nam Boo Won, APAY GS & Kim Kyung Min, NGS of Korea YMCA shared updates of Korean Peninsula peace process.

↑ O Ryong Il, Presidium member of the North Korean National Peace Committee shared updates on the Korean Peninsula peace process.

↑ APAY staff with CPCS Executive Director, Dr. Emma Leslie, Kim Kyung Min, NGS of Korea YMCA, O Ryong Il and his colleagues from North Korea

↑ Group Photo of participants by the pool side of Regency Angkor Hotel

The different panelists presentations included their research and cases studies on women and peace, conflict and development in Kashmir, dialog in the IDP communities in Kachin State, identity issues among people in Myanmar, dynamics of conflict in Pattani, Thailand, the progress or non-progress of the reconciliation processes in the post-Khmer rouge Cambodia, interfaith peacebuilding effort among the youth in Morang, Nepal, the challenges of the federalization of Nepal police, and the issue of media coverage and narrative in conflict situations.

The participants also had the opportunity to hear updates on the peace process in the Korean Peninsula that O Ryong Il, a member of the North Korean National Peace Committee, had provided. Nam Boo Won, APAY General Secretary and Kim Kyung Min, National General Secretary of Korea YMCA shared updates from the South Korean perspective.

The Conference ended with a big circle where everyone gave just one word to describe their conference experience.

~ Baidido M. Saganding, ICF Program Officer

Partners Support Group (PSG) Meeting for Cambodia held at Phnom Penh YMCA office

The Partners Support Group (PSG) meeting was held on 18th January 2020 at the YMCA office in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The total of 12 participants – six from the PSG members and other six from the Cambodia YMCA were present. Among them were Mr. Hiroshi Satake, General Secretary appointee of Yokohama YMCA; Ms. Saito Yuriko, Chair of International Committee, Yokohama YMCA; Mr. Kazuki Yamane, International Secretary, YMCA Japan; Ms. Rosemary Cooke, the late Barnard Downey's widow, representing Nelson YMCA; Mr. Nam Boo-Won, General Secretary, and Mr. Lee Yun-Hee, Movement Strengthening Coordinator, APAY. From Cambodia YMCA, Mr. Libounna Ok, President and Mr. Bunthok Deth, General

Secretary were present along with the staff in charge of different projects/programs.

↑ The PSG members with Cambodia YMCA lay and professional staff

The meeting started with GS Bunthok's opening prayer. It was followed by the welcome remarks made by President Libounna Ok. He appreciated the PSG members joining the meeting coming from far away; emphasized the need to strengthen the leadership development; and shared the critical challenges in financial stability and management. He asked the PSG members to try to meet the definite needs of the Cambodia YMCA. General Secretary Nam also made his welcome remarks, appreciating the attendance of the PSG members from far and near. He expressed special thanks to Ms. Rosemary Cooke, widow of the late Bernard representing Nelson YMCA, New Zealand, for her presence. He reiterated the purpose of the PSG meeting to help strengthen Cambodia YMCA as a healthy and responsible faith-based social movement.

After each participant introducing themselves the minutes of the last PSG meeting were Reviewed and approved. Thereafter, reports on each and every project/program were made by the staff-in-charge: Youth Institute (YI) was reported by Ms. Rin Nimey; Old People Project (OPP) was reported by Mr. Som Chea; Alternative Tourism (AT) was reported by Mr. Hem Thel. After this report, Prof. Yuriiko Saito was invited to present her experiences on her university students' overseas learning project. Based on the Cycle (theory) of Experiential Learning, she emphasized post-volunteering study & presentation, and conceptualization of their learning which will lead to further action in more meaningful and relevant ways.

↑ YMCA Street Children Program at Siem Reap

In continuation, Siem Reap Street Children Program was reported by Mr. Bunthok and YMCA Learning Center (YLC) was reported by Bunthok as acting principle of the center as well. Bunthok also reported that a 'Teacher's Manual and Curriculum' was developed for more systematic and improved quality education. The PSG members identified collectively that YLC is the only and most potential income-generating program among others with a view to ensuring the financial stability of the Cambodia YMCA for the coming future. In this regard, there was a request to GS Bunthok and all the staff to focus on strengthening the overall quality of the YLC project so that it could generate more income to allow the headquarter operation costs to be covered by the YLC budget increasingly.

A financial Report on 2019 was made by Ms. Chhom Sochy, former Finance Officer (now a volunteer) and Mr. Bunthok. There was a comparison between the total budget planned & agreed at the last PSG meeting, and actual contributions made so far. In total, there was US\$11,000 shortage in actual contribution from the partners including the PSG fund, which resulted in a quite large deficit at the end of 2019. This was followed by the program and budget presentation by GS Bunthok for 2020. Thereafter, there were comments and discussions among the PSG members on how to ensure financial stability and sustainability of the CYMCA in the coming future. For the future sustainability of the YMCA particularly financially, a definite need was reiterated that Bunthok should focus on making the YLC grow strongly as the main income-generating program of the Cambodia YMCA with further R&D and possible investment. It was recommended that PSG support will also focus on increasing the financial sustainability of the YMCA.

↑ Discussion on Cambodia YMCA annual report 2019

↑ Sharing on the 'Old People Project' supported by Oxfam-Cambodia

At his closing remarks, President Libounna Ok expressed his deep thanks to all the PSG members for their solidarity and continued support for the strengthening of Cambodia YMCA. GS Nam also conveyed his gratitude to the PSG members. He also encouraged all the staff to keep up their good work in 2020. Mr. Satake, GS of Yokohama YMCA and Kazuki Yamane, International Secretary of Japan YMCA, and Ms. Rosemary Cooke from Nelson YMCA also expressed their expectation for Cambodia YMCA to grow more firmly in a more sustainable way through program and institutional developments. The meeting was closed with a closing prayer by Prof. Yuri Saito from Yokohama YMCA.

On the following day, PSG members with GS Bunthok and MS Coordinator Yun-Hee made a observation visit to Siem Reap Street Children project being supported by Yakohama YMCA, Japan YMCA and Singapore Alpha Chapter Y's Men Club.

~ Lee Yun-Hee, Movement Strengthening Coordinator

ICF held Program Committee Meeting back-to-back with Thematic Workshop

The members of the ICF Program Committee met on January 12-14, 2020 to assist the ICF staff in planning the details of the programs for the remaining project phase, as well as the activities for the next phase. Kuala Lumpur YMCA in Brickfields headed by Dr. Chee Loo Fong, the honorary General Secretary, and assisted by the Finance and Administration manager, Ms. Judy Ong, hosted the activities. Six (6) ICF Alumni, two from APAY (General Secretary and Executive Secretary), and the ICF Coordinator and Program Officer constitute the Program Committee. Unfortunately, only four members from the Alumni group could come, namely, Biplob Rangsa, Rina Krebru, Ranny Rith and Sirikanya Chaiwongkeaw. Fortunately, however, those who were invited to observe the Program Committee meeting as participants of the thematic workshop were there to help in the deliberations.

APAY's Nam Boo Won and Duncan Chowdhury led in the review of the background of APAY and ICF work, and also in the review of the Term of Reference to guide the Program Committee's work. This gathering also became an opportunity for the members to share updates on their work in peacebuilding. The ICF Coordinator shared with the Committee the results of the External Evaluation and their implications for the next project phase's work. The Program Officer facilitated the workshop on the Committee inputs for the next project phase in 2020-2023, and for the Peace Conference that is moved to May 2020.

The Committee and the Workshop participants enjoyed the hospitality of KL YMCA by providing for free their Board Room during the whole period of the meeting and workshop. Led by its president, the Very Reverend Philip Thomas, the KL YMCA Board treated the group to a sumptuous dinner as part of their hospitality.

↑ ICF Program Committee Planning

↑ Writeshop or Workshop in news and story writing

The thematic workshop held on January 15-17, 2020 focused on writing skills. The participants went through the exercise of writing news and their peacebuilding journey e in English. While some of the participants have had taken up the subject on news writing, ICF recognized that it

takes some time and a lot of practice for non-Anglophones to write articles in English. When asked why they cannot recall their English grammar in school, one participant retorted: “We have had English classes in school, but they were taught in our language.” While it sounded funny, but it is the reality for most young people in the Third World part of Asia. Only those who have the means to go to high class schools that teach English could speak and write good English. It does not mean, however, that those who speak English well are smarter than these young people. It is unfortunate that in Asia, people can only communicate to people from other Asian countries through the English language.

ICF envisioned that the young people will hone their skills in writing and that the outputs of this “writeshop” will be part of the planned e-book. This e-book will tell about the life-journey of these young people who committed to becoming peacebuilders in their respective contexts. The participants made the most of the very short free time with the help of the YMCA staff, Ms. Gen or Geneviève Liza M. Gage who served as the group’s guide.

↑ 17th Thematic Workshop Kuala Lumpur on News and story writing

~Muriel Orevillo-Montenegro, ICF Coordinator

Not interested any more?