

↑Monthly eNewsletter of the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs

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Monthly eNewsletter of the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs
Jun-Jul 2020

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Communiqué

Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs
Executive Committee Meeting
2–3 July 2020
(Online meeting)

↑ QPP Tree drawn collectively at the LQR meeting in Taipei, last December

The Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs (APAY) held its annual Executive Committee Meeting from 2nd-3rd July 2020. Due to travel restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, APAY held its ECM 2020 online via Zoom for two hours, from 3:00-5:00 pm (HKT) each day on 2nd and 3rd July 2020. One hundred four (104) registered delegates and representatives from 22 movements in the Asia-Pacific region attended the meeting.

Prof. Chen Chin-Seng, President of APAY, presided the meeting and assisted by Mr. Nam Boo Won, General Secretary of APAY. Special guests included former APAY President Chim Hou Yan and World Alliance of YMCAs Secretary-General, Mr. Carlos Sanvee. Fraternal messages were received from SG Carlos Sanvee, Mr. Tom Valentine, Vice President, Y-USA International Group, IPE Dr. Kim Sang Chae from Y's Men International, and AP Asia Pacific Area, Mr. David Lua.

Weighed down by the COVID-19 pandemic, APAY's Executive Committee is meeting at a very challenging and trying time in Asia, the Pacific, and around the world. Apart from health concerns, many YMCAs are struggling economically to survive due to the forced lockdowns and cancellation of programs and services. This ECM, too, had to be postponed from the original schedule in March and reorganized as an online meeting in July.

Within these contexts, the meeting started with a Mission Review Session with a view to

understanding the social relevance of the YMCAs.

↑ President Prof. Chen Chin-Seng chairing the ECM

↑ Rev. Dr. Hyunju Bae presenting her biblical reflection

Morning Devotions and Mission Review

The morning devotions and reflections focused on the themes of the social relevance of the YMCAs amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The Mission Review Session on the theme “Post-COVID-19 World and YMCA Response” became part of the Opening Worship Devotion on the first day to serve as the message. Dr. Hyunju Bae, a Central Committee member of the World Council of Churches & Executive Board member of NCY-Korea, and Mr. Carlos Sanvee, Secretary-General of the World Alliance of YMCAs reflected on the above theme.

Dr. Hyunju Bae pointed out that civil societies such as YMCAs are challenged to speak the truth to power and engage in good governance. YMCA must be a guardian of and advocate for democracy and work for a wider “earth democracy.” It should be a platform for a “stereo-advocacy,” encompassing various advocacies girded towards durable and holistic peace. The 20th General Assembly’s mandate demands that YMCA programs be aligned and grounded on the principles of Jesus being the way, the truth, and the life. YMCAs must not cringe in challenging the empires. National YMCAs and APAY should challenge their respective countries to “engage in a campaign to abolish nuclear weapons,” by signing and ratifying the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. APAY must take the prophetic imagination to make the world of peace and human security. APAY must be a harbinger of hope and peace in the region and the world.

Mr. Carlos Sanvee outlined how the outbreak of COVID-19 has presented unprecedented challenges to the YMCAs all over the world and the global village as a whole. It has exposed to our collective consciousness what has been already there for a long time as grave and accumulated problems for human and earth communities. Our neo-liberal capitalistic economy has been obsessed with maximizing the short-term profit even at the expense of climate change. This flaw of its short-sightedness and tunnel vision is being painfully demonstrated now. The face of the Post-COVID-19 world will depend on our response. The only sensible choice is to learn the lessons from our collective experiences, ripen them into a great awakening, and let them guide us to continue to transform our consciousness, lifestyle, and society with a comprehensive long-term perspective.

During the Worship Service on the second day, Dr. Bart Shaha shared his pre-recorded reflection on “COVID-19 – A Clarion Call for Urgent Action on Climate Change.” The reflection was based on two passages from the Bible, namely: Isaiah 41: 1, 5, and 10; Mark 4:35-41. Dr. Shaha challenged us to fathom what COVID-19 is trying to convey to us. He asked us all to reflect on the questions -- how did we come to this vulnerable stage? How is this experience of vulnerability transforming us now? He hopes that these sprouting of new consciousness will lead us, human beings, towards envisioning new systems and processes of how we organize and conduct our lives in the future in terms of politics, science, and economics, taking into account our learning and mistakes of the past.

The new Quadrennial Program Plan (QPP) 2020~2023

The main thrust of the Quadrennial Program Plan (QPP) of APAY is to empower people, especially the youth, to be servant-leaders and responsible citizens in YMCAs and societies. They should be able to respond to social realities and transform their communities through

creative and innovative approaches. The QPP 2020-2023 was the outcome of a collective, participatory process of deliberations during the “YMCA Leaders’ Quadrennial Roundtable” held at Taipei YMCA in December 2019. This QPP translates the Mandates of the 20th General Assembly into a concrete action plan of the APAY for implementation. The Quadrennial Vision of the APAY is “a strengthened YMCA and vibrant civil society that is empowered with and by youth to address social inequalities and injustices faced by vulnerable groups in societies through the creation of safe spaces and development of responsible leadership and governance that is anchored on Christian ideals of love, justice, and peace.”

The QPP 2020-2023 goals are the following:

- * To strengthen the YMCAs in the Asia and Pacific through capacity building and empowerment related to leadership and governance, partnership and networking, and skills development training
- * To understand and respond meaningfully to social issues that are relevant to the movement to build a vibrant civil society and social transformation
- * To empower people, especially the youth and women to build their full potentials at all levels.

The above goals will be achieved through the implementation of the eight (8) Program Areas: Christian Foundation and Movement Relevancy; Environment and Climate Change (through GATN and Green Ambassadors Training); Justice and Peace; Economic Empowerment (through GATN); Youth Empowerment; Mental Health; Gender Justice; Disaster Risk Management. As a product of the collective effort, these QPP goals will be our collective quest, task, and legacy. Various committees of the APAY have deliberated on their roles and responsibilities with regard to the QPP for the coming year.

The Executive Committee during the session has accepted the 2019 Audited Financial Report. However, anticipating the reduced fair share due to the impact of COVID-19, the Finance Committee presented a revised frugal budget for 2020. The Executive Committee has graciously approved the budget for 2020 with some comments and suggestions.

The recent travel restrictions due to the COVID19 pandemic have prevented us from holding face-to-face meetings. Thus, APAY resorted to alternative means like holding all statutory meetings online. Adapting to new procedures resulting from COVID-19, the Constitution committee proposed that the By-laws be amended to provide for validation of these virtual meetings.

↑ Ms. Nagako Okado, Board member of APAY, facilitating the devotion

↑ ECM participants via Zoom

Conclusion

The Executive Committee Meeting concluded with a call for the YMCAs to remain relevant at this Kairos time of the COVID-19 pandemic. The YMCAs are urged to respond to the Challenge 21 and our Assembly theme “Living Together within Nature on a Path to Peace.” As a faith-based movement, we need to anchor our actions with compassion and humility. Our motto “To serve and not to be served” will lead us to be in solidarity with all peoples, and to help shape the post-COVID-19 society that we want.

~ Drafted by Beng Seng Chan, GATN Coordinator and adopted by the ECM on 3rd July 2020

Myanmar YMCA's Collective Response to Covid-19 Pandemic

Since the impact of COVID-19 hits many ways in Myanmar, YMCA of Myanmar and local YMCAs merge together and has been taking action to response the situation as much as they can. At the same time, they have been working on two major objectives such as supporting facilities and assist in psychosocial support in community.

Supporting facilities

The contribution of Masks, Hygiene Kit, Purified Drinking Water and Household Needs are comprising in supporting facilities to community. In addition, every staff plays an important role as they are assigned to and serving their best.

↑ Hygiene kits support to Hospital Quarantine Centre by MUSE YMCA and Myanmar YMCA

↑ Hygiene kits support to Home Quarantines (Disabled) by collaboration of MUSE YMCA and IOM

Psychosocial Support

This activity mainly designed to heal the wounds as some people who have suffered many problems during COVID-19 and to restore the life back to normal. The activity divided into two sectors to carry out as delivering encouragement and supportive message through media leading by Religious leaders to promote interfaith community and prevent religious conflict. Besides, staffs and volunteers going from house to house to cheer, uplift and stimulate to those who are in need if aid.

↑ Home-based education & Psychosocial Support Program by Lashio YMCA

What Happened Today?

On 6 June 2020, all the YMCAs in Myanmar celebrated 176th YMCA day by participating Global Photo Challenge of World YMCA with YMCA T-shirts. Furthermore, "Praying Together" took place by each of everyone house starting from 9:00 am to 9:30 am especially for the YMCA and for those who are suffering tough time through COVID-19 in all over the world.

↑ Participating in the "World Challenge" of 176th YMCA Day

~ Maung Maung Win, NGS, NCY of Myanmar

The Indian YMCA holds YMCA Thanksgiving Service

On the occasion of YMCA Foundation Day, The National Council of YMCAs of India held a Thanksgiving Service on Saturday, June 6, 2020 on Zoom online platform. Mr. Bertram Devadas, National General Secretary, welcomed the participants at the beginning and Rev. S. Dhanaraj, Regional Secretary, South-Central India Region delivered the prayer of invocation.

Mr. Rajiv John, Director, YMCA Training & Leadership Department, shared a brief overview of the YMCA's contribution in the lives of young people throughout the world since 1844. Among the special invitees, Mr. Carlos Sanvee, Secretary-General, World Alliance of YMCAs, extended

greetings and good wishes to the Indian YMCA Movement. Mr. Nam Boo Won, General Secretary, Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs also extended greetings to the Indian YMCA Movement. He acknowledged the important role played by it over a long period. He wished the new leadership a successful innings.

Justice J.B. Koshy (Retd.), National President, in his message stated that the YMCAs in India have carried on its social engagements through various programmes and activities over the past 176 years. Several National Council of YMCAs projects and local YMCAs have come forward to provide relief to those affected by the COVID-19 Virus. Collaborative work have been carried on with Government agencies also.

Prof. Dr. John Varghese, Principal, St. Stephens' College, Delhi, shared a Biblical reflection. While stating that this is a joyous occasion, he acknowledged the role played by the YMCA in the community irrespective of caste, creed, colour, sex. In line with the Bible passages read, the YMCA serves all, and promotes unity among people. The Service closed with prayer and benediction by Rev. Sudhanshu Naik, General Secretary, YMCA Bhubaneswar.

~Bertram Devadas, NGS, NCY of India

Mr. Ryushi Kawamoto elected as President of NCY of Japan

We take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Ryushi Kawamoto, who has been elected as the President of the National Council of YMCAs of Japan. Born in 1956, he was a member of Nagoya YMCA camp program in his childhood and became a youth volunteer leader afterwards. He has been an Executive Committee member and a member of national cooperation committee of National Council of YMCAs of Japan since 2006, became a board member in 2018. He has been the president of Nagoya YMCA since 2017, an active member of Y's Men's Club, and volunteering for the after school camp for the children of the poor families many years.

Rev. Samuel Belo elected as President of YMCA Timor Leste

It is our pleasure to introduce Rev. Samuel Belo, who had been elected as the president of YMCA of Timor Leste on 6th April 2019. He is a pastor of Assembly of God Church in Timor Leste since 1992. Rev. Samuel was inducted as a member of YMCA of Timor Leste in 2008 and since then he had been volunteering for the YMCA in various ways and leading the YMCA towards sustainability. We thank him for his contribution for the YMCA.

Ms. Chularat Phongtudsirikul appointed as the National General Secretary of Thai Alliance of YMCAs

We are pleased to inform that the Board of YMCA Chiang Mai has unanimously resolved the appointment of Ms. Chularat Phongtudsirikul as the Acting General Secretary of YMCA Chiangmai, from 1st July 2020. She will also hold the position of the National General Secretary of the Thai Alliance of YMCAs.

Ms. Chularat Phongtudsirikul is currently an Associate General Secretary of YMCA Chiang Mai for Program Administration and International Relations. She began her journey with the YMCA Chiang Mai since her childhood days as a member and a youth volunteer. With her involvement, she formed a strong relationship with the YMCA, thus, she decided to be part of

the YMCA family as a full-time staff in 1979. She had extensive experience working with the communities and intended to expand the YMCA community centers in the Northern Part of Thailand. Moreover, she is also working closely with the international network in the YMCA movement and other activities. She holds a degree in Humanity from Payap University. Ms. Chularat succeeds Mr. Rachan Maneekarn who had diligently steered the YMCA for several years as its General Secretary. We wish Mr. Rachan Maneekarn a happy retired life and take this opportunity to congratulate Ms. Phongtudsirikul for assuming the highest executive position of the Thai Alliance, we wish her all the best in her YMCA career.

COVID-19: A Clarion Call for Urgent Action on Climate Change

This article is a Biblical reflection delivered by Bart Shaha, PhD, former WAY Secretary General and APAY General Secretary, during the APAY Executive Committee Meeting held last July 3, 2020 with reference to the biblical readings namely, Isaiah 41:1, 5 and 10 (“Do not fear, for I am with you.”) and Mark 4: 35 – 41 (“Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?”).

It was in September last year that I had the privilege of meeting many of you at the General Assembly of the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs in Tozanso, Japan. What a joyful occasion it was! The natural setting of the YMCA Camp with its evergreen tall trees, the gorgeous plants and flowers all around the campus with the amazing Mount Fuji in the distance, the Congregation of vibrant YMCA women and men from many countries and cultures, the varieties of exotic food, the lively music and the warmth of YMCA friendship – altogether gave us a feeling of Paradise!

Whoever knew at that time that just within four months, we would all face a deadly virus, a world-wide Pandemic! Who knew that a terrible Fear would descend and encompass every human being, living on Planet Earth! And even now, in many places we are under strict lockdown, unable to travel or move around freely even within our own cities! Millions of people have lost their jobs and livelihood, hundreds of thousands of people have died and are still dying. Indeed, this Coronavirus emerged so suddenly, so ruthlessly, so forcefully! Overnight, the entire population of the world felt like a major War had broken out. Along with the terrible Fear came the panic within each person, leading to unbearable anxieties with lingering questions of: Where am I to go? Who will take care of me? How will I survive?

We felt as if we were in a violent storm in the middle of a limitless sea! We felt much like the story in the Bible, we just heard, where the disciples of Jesus asks: “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” But, for many people this was not a surprise. Like the Prophets of old, they had predicted and warned that such a disaster could come, and it could come soon! So, in this Reflection let us try to fathom what Covid-19 is really trying to convey to us? What is this Clarion Call for? Why did we come to this vulnerable stage and how is it transforming us now? And, what is our Hope for the future?

1. Life Before Covid -19:

We must be very proud of the fact that for many decades now our YMCA Movement has been voicing about the global environmental changes induced by human activity leading to a severe deterioration of the natural world. There were grave warnings expressed about the possibility of major catastrophes if this damage continues. But did everyone hear this call seriously and become actively involved in any significant way? Did everyone hear the voices of other global bodies such as the United Nations (UN), environmental scientists or pandemic experts? We

know too well how people argued against the findings of science in regard to Climate Change, just to continue with their exploitative activities in order to enrich themselves! In the meantime, the world saw the extinction of a huge number of species of life, rise of concentration of greenhouse gases (mainly carbon dioxide and methane), global warming, rising sea levels, cyclones, storms and many other natural disasters.

In recent years many well-documented research on Climate Change were published, including 'Laudato Si' from the Vatican (2015) expressing the urgency of immediate global response. There was a consensus that we need an integrated approach on the issue by addressing poverty, restoring dignity of the excluded, and protecting Nature. But these voices were subdued by many other strong and powerful voices.

2. Life in the Pandemic Era:

Therefore, Mother Nature seems to have lost patience with human being's continued mistreatment of Nature, injustices to marginalised communities, selfishness and greed! The silent killer, Coronavirus, emerged and spread like wild fire! And now we live in constant Fear, struggling to survive as every new day begins. We are anxiously waiting for the immunologists and medical companies to come up with a vaccine that will work and keep us safe. What have we learned from our experiences of the Pandemic so far?

First and foremost, I think we have realised how vulnerable life is! Seeing the crucial effects of the Pandemic including the rapid and high number of deaths, even in advanced countries, people realized that nowhere is it absolutely safe! In the midst of fear and worry, people became more conscious about the importance of Nature and the limits of natural resources. Not being able to physically meet, people became more thoughtful about each other, more compassionate and kind. Hosts of doctors, nurses, care-givers, and other volunteers came forward to help out as emergency arose, putting at risk their own lives.

National and community leaders came forward with unprecedented action-plans to assist their citizens or community members who have lost their jobs or who are in dire need as entire economies were shattered. Although, at the same time, we also noticed how some people used this situation to further empower and enrich themselves. What transpired most in this Pandemic Era is the severe injustices towards marginalised communities, the homeless and poverty stricken. They are the ones who have been affected the most. The Pandemic also exposed the inadequacies of proper planning and allocation of resources to important sectors like Public Health which is so basic to life's security.

3. Living in Hope in a Renewing and Revitalising Earth:

We are aware that the Coronavirus is still very active and strong and that different areas of the world are experiencing various phases of the Pandemic. And so, the Fear of the disease is still very much alive. 'Fear' is one of the foremost emotions that human beings have. It makes us take precautions whenever we are faced with life-threatening issues. Fear also brings anxiety and depressing thoughts and it can cripple life. It is in these times that we need to be nourished by a deep Spirituality to regain courage and strength.

In the Biblical passage that we heard from Isaiah earlier, it says:

"Listen to me in silence, O coastlands,

Let the peoples renew their strengths...

The coastlands have seen and are afraid,

The ends of the earth tremble; ...

But you...

Do not fear for I am with you." (Isiah 41: 1, 5 and 10).

Then in the Gospel passage from Mark (4:35-41) that we also heard earlier, we see that after calming the sea and the wind, Jesus says to the disciples in the boat: "why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?"

From this we can understand that if we have Jesus with us (in our boat), then even when there is a dangerous and violent storm in the sea (like Coronavirus), we should not be afraid. Of course this does not mean that we can ignore the scientifically based guidelines of Public Health Officials on protection from the virus. They must be followed strictly and we must never be complacent about it. We need to remain ever vigilant as long as the virus is lurking around. But, we must also awaken to the occasion and move forward with care and diligence. The YMCA is a great Movement in this regard. It has always been creative and innovative in times of emergency and crisis!

We are witnesses of the fact that soon after Covid-19 emerged and people went into lockdown mode, everyone felt a dramatic change in the Environment. Suddenly, people could clearly see the mountains, the rivers, and could breathe fresh air! People could hear the twitter of birds and see the buds of spring appearing fresher and healthier! Similarly, there seems to have been a re-awakening of critical awareness amongst people everywhere. A new consciousness is sprouting as people, young and old, are appreciating more than ever before, the gifts of the earth like food water, vegetables and other resources. People are also becoming more and more action-oriented to other social issues that plagued their nations over centuries. Probably, the lockdown enabled them to give deeper thoughts to these issues now; whereas before they never had the time because of their extremely hectic schedules.

Hopefully, these sprouting of new consciousness will lead us, human beings, towards envisioning new systems and processes of how we organize and conduct our lives in the future in terms of politics, science, and economics, taking into account our learning and mistakes of the past. And in this, let the YMCA's 'Challenge 21' be our guide. Let it inspire us to take new action - steps to address Climate Change by evolving an ecological culture, a distinctive way of looking at things, an appropriate educational program and a life-style with a deep Spirituality.

May the deliberations of this Executive Committee Meeting bear many fruits! And May God bless each and every one of you and your families! Thank you.

APAY Yearly Program Calendar 2020

Yearly Program Calendar 2020

2020

Programs / Events

Platform / Venue

Tentative Dates

January

ICF Program Committee Meeting

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

12-14 January

ICF Thematic "Writeshop"

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

15-18 January

February

ICF Thematic Workshop

Jorhat, Assam, India

11-15 February

March

Special NGS Meeting

Zoom

26 March

April

Special NGS Meeting

Zoom

15 April

Youth Led Solution Summit Series
on Climate Change (APAY Team)

Zoom

2 & 17 April

2nd APAY Board Meeting

Zoom

29 April

May

Special NGS Meeting

Zoom

6 May

Youth Led Solution Summit Series
on Climate Change (APAY Team)

Zoom

8 & 21 May

June

APAY Green Team Meeting

Zoom

12 June

Youth Led Solution Summit Series
on Climate Change (APAY Team)

Zoom
11 & 26 June

3rd APAY Board Meeting
Zoom
29 June

July
Executive Committee Meetings
Zoom
2 & 3 July

APAY Green Team Meeting
Zoom
10 July

Consultation meetings with ICF Program Committee
and Alumni to Prepare for On-line Thematic Workshops

Zoom
2nd week - July

Youth Led Solution Summit Series
on Climate Change (APAY Team)

Zoom
July

August
GATN Task Force Meeting
Zoom
13 August

DRM Task Force Meeting
Zoom
18 August

Youth Led Solution Summit Series on
Climate Change (APAY Team)
Zoom
August

UN International Youth Day - COVID-19:
Safeguarding and Mobilizing Youth Series of Talks
Zoom
August

September

International Peace Week - ICF Book Launching:

Seek Peace and Pursue It: Daring to Take Small Steps

Zoom

21 September

Series of Online Talks - COVID-19: Its Impact on Women and Girls (Commemoration of 25th Year of Beijing Platform of Action)

Zoom

September

GATN e-Learning on Climate Change

Online groups

Sept - Nov

Youth Led Solution Summit Series on
Climate Change (APAY Team)

Zoom

September

October

GATN Managers Meeting / Training

Zoom

13 October

ICF Online Thematic Workshop

Zoom - 2 hours a day for 3 days

20-22 October

Development of Online Course on Gender

Inclusive Communication

Hong Kong

Oct - Dec

Global Youth Led Solution Summit

Virtual

October

November

YMCA Secretaries Basic Training Course

Zoom

8 - 21

November

ICF Online Thematic Workshop

Zoom - 2 hours a day for 3 days

10-12 November

GATN Climate Change Action Plans

Zoom

26 November

16 Days of Activism on Women and Peace (ICF) (2 hours each scheduled day)

Zoom

16, 23, 30 November

December

ICF Human Rights Day Celebration -

The Culmination of the 16 Days of Activism on
Women and Peace

Zoom - 2 hours

10 December

GATN Climate Change initiatives selection

12 December

Internal Evaluation & Review of ICF Programs 2018-2020 (SWOT)

Hong Kong

11, 14 December

Not interested any more?