

↑Monthly eNewsletter of the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs

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Monthly eNewsletter of the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs
July 2020

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APAY Youth-Led Solution Summit Group and Green Team lead online discussion on Climate Action

Youth-Led Solutions Summit: Climate Action

The Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs in its preparation to join the World YMCA, in collaboration with YMCA of the USA and the YMCA of San Francisco and other partners series of Youth-Led Solution Summits coming October 2020, has started to engage its APAY Youth-led Solutions Summit Series Team in an online dialogue since March 2020. The APAY YLSSS Team comprises of youth from the region who has taken part in climate change action in their local context through their involvement to APAY Green Ambassadors Training and e-learning on Climate Change. The team meets once or twice a month to share each national context on climate change and the current responses done by their local/national YMCAs. The sharing also facilitates discussions on how to learn more about the national situation and actions. This on-going discussion is in support to the YLSS vision to amplify youth solutions that positively impact local and global sustainability, the development of just and equitable communities, and the well-being of all people.

Green Team 2020-2023

The YMCAs in the region during its 20th General Assembly committed to reducing carbon emissions and taking effective steps to become carbon neutral by 2030. Part of the initiatives under this Environment and Climate Change program thrust is to strengthen its existing Green Team that will support regional work in the development of policies and environmental programs. As such, APAY Green Team has been engaged in online meetings and currently designing the upcoming Green Ambassadors Training coming October 2020. Likewise, the members have committed to share knowledge, experience and good practices through written articles which will be shared through APAY e-News.

APAY Green Team 2020-2023 includes Colin Lambie (Australia, Y's Men Int.), Panha Chhem (Cambodia), Lee Man Key (Hong Kong), Mariko Ikeda and Koichi Sakata (Japan), Da-eun Yang

(Korea), Saw Tun Lu (Myanmar), Pablito Tabucol (Philippines), Niranga Fernando (Sri Lanka), Rita Hettiarachchi (Sri Lanka, Y's Men Int.), Patcharin Aviphan and Narupacha (Thailand), Nam Boo Won And Cristina Miranda (APAY).

↑ Team APAY YLSSS on-line discussion

↑ Green Team participants via on-line meeting

~ Maria Cristina L. Miranda, Executive Secretary

YMCA's Path towards Green Community

All people like to live in a beautiful nature where there are green trees to provide shade, clear water to drink, clean air to breathe and safe food to eat. We prefer to be in the community where people love, care and share with each other. With all these elements present, we will live in a happy community and a peaceful society.

But nowadays, the problem of global warming and climate change limit us from enjoying the gift of nature. Thus, it is necessary that we all take care of nature and not over consume the resources more than what we really need. In doing this, we must continue education and raising awareness of people. This initiative will increase understanding on how to protect the environment, its impact to people and on how to help take care of each other.

Sao Hin YMCA in Chiang Mai Thailand has cooperated with Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs (APAY) to organize Green Ambassador Training since 2012 for member countries of APAY to promote formation of YMCA Green Team and take green action to reduce carbon emission as response to climate change.

Sao Hin YMCA also has set up an Environment and Energy Learning Center to provide education to youth, teachers and YMCA friends. It is also aimed to organize various kinds of training, workshops and exhibition; and to promote visitors to have environmentally friendly lifestyles. We also work with schools and communities on environment conservation, waste reduction, green consumption, electricity and water saving and tree planting.

In Khun Lao Village and Huay Pong Village, Chiang Rai Province in the northern part of Thailand, where people ensure water security by protecting forests, villagers are aware of environmental enrichment by practicing low carbon lifestyle. Thus, in order to help their home limiting its carbon emission, Sao Hin YMCA organized the training for the villagers on carbon calculation and how to use energy efficiently as well as help them to upgrade light in their home and community.

Sao Hin YMCA got a support from Green Fund of the Y's Men International and provided two (2) LED lamps for each family to replace the fluorescence. This in turn helped reduce carbon emission from electricity consumption of the 105 household beneficiaries in both villages. They became to be the model for other families.

During the follow up to the villages, we found out that the electricity consumption was reduced after the upgraded light. Moreover, the villagers changed their behavior such as switching off and unplugging the electricity devices when not used. They would like to take part in carbon emission reduction to slow down global warming and climate change.

↑ Villagers of Ban Huay Pong in Chiangrai Province joins Sao Hin YMCA, Y's Men

International and Green Ambassadors Training participants in tree planting

↑ Khun Lao Villagers happily receives LED lamp sponsored by Y's Men International after their participation in the Energy Conservation Training.

↑ Mr. Phongnarin Suwanma, Sao Hin YMCA Staff teaches Carbon Calculation to villagers of Khun Lao, Chiangrai Province during the Sao Hin YMCA organized training.

Let's join together to save energy and change our lifestyle to be more GREEN.

It is also a challenge for YMCA to GO GREEN and move towards Green Community.

~ Patcharin Aviphan, Sao Hin YMCA, Chiangmai, Thailand

ICF is Catching-Up with "New Normal" in Times of the Pandemic

The Interfaith Cooperation Forum, a project of APAY, was supposed to end its two-and-a-half-year program phase in June 2020. There were still program activities lined up before June 2020 but these were not accomplished because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Travels were limited, as most Asian countries imposed a travel ban. Fortunately, ICF's donor-partner, Bread for the World understood the difficulty and willingly granted ICF an extension-at-no-cost until September 2020. This means ICF could implement the remaining programs although BftW does not give more funds for the extended period. In this context, ICF reconfigured its plans within the extension period. It canceled its plan for the Asian Interfaith Peace Summit that was set to happen in Manila in mid-September. Two thematic workshops in Bangladesh and Cambodia were also postponed. The plan to start the new phase with the School of Peace in Kathmandu had to be postponed also.

↑ SOP participants via on-line meeting

Considering that face-to-face gatherings for workshops are not possible within the year, ICF planned for virtual meetings as part of the "new normal" way of doing things. It organized online meetings through Zoom as a platform. On July 9, 2020, ICF held its first online meeting with the School of Peace 2018 and 2019 alumni, along with some members of the ICF Program Committee. Then, on July 16, 2020, ICF also held an online meeting with the alumni of the Peace Institutes. The objectives of these meetings were to provide an opportunity for the participants of the different activities to get acquainted with each other. It was also an opportunity for all to share updates on each one was doing and planning especially during the pandemic. The online meeting also gave ICF the chance to present its plan within the year. During the School of Peace meeting, ICF introduced Annika Denkman, the personnel seconded by Bread for the World to ICF. We also introduced Sunita Sumati Suna as the new APAY Executive Secretary to take the post vacated by Duncan Chowdhury. Both Annika and Sunita gave their greetings to the group.

↑ Peace Institute participants via on-line meeting

ICF did not, however, get a one-hundred percent attendance. The School of Peace meeting only had 14 and the Peace Institute had 11 people showing up. Those who could not participate have given reasons, other than personal matters, that will serve as lessons for ICF to reflect

upon.

First, many of the participants did not have a good internet connection. If they do, they have limited access due to the scarcity of funds to pay for a sustained connection, especially in using platforms such as Zoom. In some cases, the connection is very weak. The participants from Cambodia said that if it rains the internet connection gets disrupted. Others who live far from the cities do not get an internet connection at all.

Second, the ICF needs to consider the time element for the meeting. There is a high probability that a day-time meeting was not conducive to the participants. Most of these young people are trying to find ways to earn a living during the pandemic. Some of them and their parents have lost their jobs. Some are still studying and their online courses got in conflict with the schedules that ICF had set. In this light, ICF may explore evening meetings to address this issue.

Third, some participants still need to learn how to participate in online meetings. This is a minor difficulty though, as ICF can send tutorial videos to help those who have good access to the internet learn the ropes of joining a virtual meeting.

These three basic but crucial reasons gathered from the first two online will have implications on the planned online thematic workshops in the next months. However, these do not deter ICF from taking steps to connect with the youth in Asia for peacebuilding. ICF will continue to explore ways within the context of the “new normal.”

~ Muriel Orevilla-Montenegro, PhD., ICF Coordinator

ICF met with Small Grants Recipients through Zoom

↑ On-line meeting with ICF Program Committee Members

On July 17, 2020, ICF held a zoom meeting with the Program Committee members, the existing recipients and potential recipients of small grants for alumni follow up and local peace education projects. The agenda included the sharing of updates and plans on the implementation of their small project proposals. Those whose applications were approved were set to conduct their activities with the period of March to May 2020. However, these were postponed due to the lockdowns and government restrictions on social gatherings in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

From the ICF Program Committee, only Biplob Rangsa from Bangladesh was able to attend, along with the ICF staff, Dr. Muriel Orevilla-Montenegro, and Baidido Saganding. The small grants are intended to assist the ICF alumni to hold an activity, either for alumni-follow up, or, for local peace education and advocacy. ICF could grant the amount ranging from USD 500 – USD 2,000, depending on the kind of activity. A Screening Committee approves the proposals.

Present were those whose applications have been approved in January. They were Stella Shapnika Jayakaran, SoP2019, who was assisted by Jegan Jeevaraja of the YMCA Batticaloa in crafting the proposal. Their proposal was on Peacebuilding and Nonviolent Communication workshop with the students in Batticaloa Zone. The workshop was postponed from March to April, and now, indefinitely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The government ordered the closure of all schools in Sri Lanka to protect students from being infected by the virus.

From Myanmar, Saw Tun Lu proposed a local peace education on Religious Cultural Understanding and Peacebuilding for the youth in Yangon. The plan was to hold it on April 27-May 01, 2020, but it was also postponed due to pandemic-related government restrictions.

Hamsiya Olimpain of the Philippines applied for support for an alumni follow-up activity entitled

“Most Significant Change Seminar-Workshop” for the ICF Philippines alumni. It was set in May but was postponed due to imposed lockdown in the entire country.

Absent from the meeting were Tirmizy Abdullah from Marawi, Philippines, and Pyae Ei Nyein from Mandalay, Myanmar. Tirmizy Abdullah is a member of the ICF Program Committee who submitted a proposal on the Mindanao Youth Peace Formation. The activity was to be conducted in March but was also postponed due to the pandemic-related impositions. Pyae Ei Nyein submitted a proposal to hold a workshop on Peace and Yoga.

ICF invited some alumni from countries who have not availed of the small grants, specifically from Indonesia, Laos, Thailand, Timor Leste, and alumni follow-up, Myanmar. They were invited so that they will have an idea of how to apply and avail of the small funds. Unfortunately, only Thana Posysenthong from Laos and Hein Thura Theit from Myanmar attended.

During the meeting, the attendees explored the possibilities of pushing through with the planned activities adopting the “new normal.” While they have difficulties in imagining how to conduct the activities online, they are also positive that it is possible while the pandemic-related regulations are still in effect. Saw Tun Lu shared that in Myanmar, the government does not allow a gathering beyond five persons. Hamsiya Olimpain shared that while the Philippine government has relaxed a bit its protocol on the social gathering, people must still undergo the fourteen days quarantine when entering another province. Since a face-to-face gathering of participants from different provinces is not possible, the attendees noted that they will explore alternatives of having it online by using zoom or other social media platforms. They also are not limiting their plans to face-to-face meetings, but they will ensure the following of the government guidelines on social gatherings such as wearing masks, washing or sanitizing hands, and practicing physical distancing during the activity. They are aware that the effectiveness of an online meeting in terms of output is not the same as a physical meeting. However, since the end of the pandemic is not known, waiting is not an option for young people.

On his part, Biplob Rangsa, citing the case in Bangladesh, asked about the possibility for ICF to provide support to the most vulnerable groups who are greatly affected by the pandemic. Certainly, everyone is affected and some of the alumni also lost their jobs. Their parents also lost their jobs. The ICF staff expressed understanding about the situation and agreed that there are immediate needs that must be addressed. However, the ICF staff also expressed the limitation of ICF as a project, and that it cannot provide for the needs of each country. Given this limitation, ICF staff challenged the attendees to think creatively, strategize, and share their “out of the box” ideas to provide help for the most vulnerable people. In the end, the attendees agreed that they must adapt to the “new normal” in conducting their activities. With that note, ICF urged the proponent-attendees to revise their proposals considering the “new normal” situation and implement their projects before the month of September ends. Overall, it was a fruitful discussion and the meeting culminated with a Buddhist prayer led by Thana Posysenthong.

~Baidido Saganding, ICF Program Officer

Repairing Travel and Tourism

There was a nice COVID graphic circulating in the social media, and it says... “When fishermen cannot go to sea, they repair their nets.... Are you repairing yourself during this lockdown?”

Much of what GANT is all about travel. And travel is very much a part of the life of the YMCA – meetings and conferences; work camps and cultural exchanges; internships and exposure

programs; solidarity fact finding missions and disaster relief outreach; etc. etc. However, during this COVID-19 pandemic and with travel restrictions imposed in almost all countries worldwide, all these activities came to a full stop. Not only did travel related activities come to a sudden stop, all the other activities of the local YMCAs were also affected by health and social distancing requirements. Not to be beaten down... many local YMCAs continued to live up to the motto "Not to be served, but to serve". We received many stories of YMCAs working hard to provide relief to their local communities that are struggling under this pandemic.

On the economic front, the travel, entertainment and hospitality industry have been the most badly hit by this COVID pandemic with reports of over 95% drop in the travel/tourism industry – flights, hotel bookings, tour packages, theme parks, etc. In one webinar organised by the ASEAN Travel Association, participants from the travel industry discussed on the new normal for the tour industry but at the same time were planning to return to the good old days of growth, focusing on economics and development.

What is the new normal and should the new normal be for the travel industry?

The current trends in tourism are not sustainable. Apart from overtourism and excessive consumption, the travel industry – air travel and cruise tourism – have a very huge carbon footprint and are responsible for 10 of the global warming. This global travel restrictions enforced by the COVID pandemic is good time to repair our nets. This is good time for us to repair the travel and tourism industry and to redefine travel and tourism in the new normal.

↑ GATN Managers' Meeting via on-line

In July, 17 GATN Managers met in an online platform recently to discuss how to repair the travel and tourism nets. In the post-COVID new normal, we would like to try to change the nature or traditional understanding of travel and tourism by developing and promoting responsible and sustainable perspectives and practices on travel and tourism. GATN managers discussed three strategies to repair the travel and tourism net.

- a) Global campaign on Responsible and Sustainable Tourism
- b) Network with Universities and Colleges of Hospitality and Tourism Management to promote Responsible and Sustainable Tourism
- c) Develop a handbook and code of conduct for travel in the new normal.

Given the strong endorsements of Governments and the UNWTO for tourism, it is not possible to stop tourism or campaign against tourism. However, it is possible to work to change the nature or traditional understanding of tourism by developing and promoting responsible and sustainable perspectives and practices on tourism. The short term impact is to promote and offer alternative ways to travel responsibly and sustainably. The long term impact on tourism is changing the mind-set of people on tourism and starting a new trend of traveling responsibly and sustainably.

Strategy of the Asia Pacific Alliance of YMCAs is to work through the YMCAs and Academic Institutions to have lasting effect and impact in the lives of the young people.

1.Changing the behaviour and lifestyle when traveling – by introducing responsible and sustainable activities at the destinations – focus on low carbon activities and carbon mitigating activities

2.Changing the motivation and outlook about traveling - abandon the pleasure and "bucket list" mind-set of traditional tourist – to have more meaningful travel interactions and are interested in giving something back as they travel.

~ Chan Beng Seng, GATN Coordinator

A Declaration for the People's Korea Peace Agreement

(In commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the ending of the Korean War, the following statement was proposed by NCC-Korea and NCY-Korea and like-minded ecumenical organizations in Korea, and widely endorsed by many churches and ecumenical organizations in the region and world).

The Korean War, which broke out on June 25th, 1950, cost millions of lives and left the Korean Peninsula in ruins. The 1953 Armistice Agreement led not to a peace treaty. Thereafter, the disastrous confrontation settled into a consolidation of the barrier between the two Koreas, and between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the United States of America (USA), and thus has amplified inter-Korean conflicts and military confrontations.

Ending the Korean War and concluding a peace agreement must be the first step toward ending this conflict and the military confrontation which threatens life and consumes all upon the Korean Peninsula. This is the path to a permanent peace that guarantees the safety of the people. This will also shine a ray of hope on those dreaming of co-existence and the co-prosperity of Northeast Asia and the world. Assured of this, Korean civil society has campaigned not only in Korea but also in the United States of America and other neighboring countries to urge for the conclusion of a peace agreement. People around the world have also sent support and pledged solidarity with this struggle. These efforts constitute a response to the demands for breaking down the walls of the unending Cold War and opening a new horizon for a community of life based on the new standards of co-prosperity and peace.

Therefore, we declare an end to the Korean War and proclaim a 'People's Korea Peace Agreement' (hereafter Peace Agreement). As those connected to the political and military power centers turn a blind eye to the people's desire for peace, protecting their own vested interests, the people will seek transformation themselves. This is a declaration that the people deserve an end to the years of excessive violence and hardship, an end to the unending war now in the form of the Armistice System, and that the people deserve to enjoy peace. While those who want to benefit from the division of the Korean Peninsula attempt to perpetuate the division under various pretexts, the people themselves are trying to move beyond division to reunification. This is the amalgamation of the scars engraved upon our bodies for 70 years, the overflow of tears within our hearts, and it is the cry bursting out of a longing for a world of peace.

This People's Korea Peace Agreement, declared on the 70th anniversary of the outbreak of the war, should lead then to an official declaration of a complete end to the Korean War, and for the establishment of lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula and throughout Northeast Asia. This Peace Agreement should then serve as the legal and institutional basis for the new birth of a formal peace agreement to be concluded before July 27th, 2023, the 70th anniversary of the signing of the Armistice Agreement. Now we declare a 'People's Korea Peace Agreement' and urge the related countries to start negotiations as soon as possible, reflecting the following principles and contents of the Peace Agreement:

Basic Principles of the People's Korea Peace Agreement

- The signatory parties to the Armistice Agreement, the Republic of Korea (ROK-South Korea), the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK-North Korea), the People's Republic of China (China), and the United States of America (USA) sign this Peace Agreement on the

Korean Peninsula to achieve a complete end to the Korean War and a permanent and sustainable peace on the Korean Peninsula. (slightly changed)

- The contracting parties to the Peace Agreement should abide by the Charter of the United Nations, respect existing agreements on peace and reunification on the Korean Peninsula, support efforts for peace and reunification between the South and the North, contribute to world peace, and faithfully implement the contents of this Peace Agreement.

- This Peace Agreement should be signed in accordance with the Panmunjom Declaration, the Pyongyang Joint Declaration, and the Singapore Joint Statement adopted between the leaders of the two Koreas and between the DPRK and USA, including the process of simultaneously implementing a step-by-step realization of a peace regime and complete denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula based on improved relations and trust between the parties. (slightly changed)

This Peace Agreement for the Korean Peninsula includes the following:

1. The contracting parties shall completely end the Korean War with the effectuation of the Peace Agreement.

1. The military demarcation line stipulated in the 'Military Armistice Agreement' shall be the boundary line between the ROK-South and the DPRK-North, and the boundaries not stipulated in the Armistice Agreement (according to international law) shall be determined by agreement between the two Koreas.

1. The ROK-South and the DPRK-North shall convert the existing Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) into a peaceful ecological zone.

1. Between the parties to the Peace Agreement, there shall be no threat of attack or use of force under any circumstances; neither between the DPRK-North and the ROK-South, nor between the DPRK-North and the USA.

1. The DPRK-North and the USA shall normalize diplomatic relations and stop mutual slander, pressure, and sanctions..

1. The ROK-South and the DPRK-North shall implement the existing agreements and shall form and operate permanent high-level talks to support those agreements in order to create overall political and military trust.

1. The ROK-South and the DPRK-North shall mutually reduce their military spending. To that end, they shall form and operate a joint inter-Korean military committee.

1. The DPRK-North shall dismantle its nuclear weapons program, and the ROK-South and the USA shall remove its nuclear umbrella from the Korean Peninsula. The contracting parties shall ban all military and technical actions that could pose a nuclear threat to the Korean Peninsula.

1. After effectuation of this Peace Agreement, the UN Command shall be dismantled and foreign troops withdrawn in a step by step process.

1. To implement this Peace Agreement, an Inter-Korean Joint Committee for Peace Management and a Coordination Committee for Contracting Parties shall be organized and operated respectively.

1. The contracting parties shall organize and operate an International Peace Watch Group to facilitate the implementation of this Peace Agreement.

A peace regime on the Korean Peninsula should be promoted based on the participation of the people. We will use every endeavor to realize this declaration.

July 27th, 2020

Proposed by:

- * Reconciliation & Reunification Committee, National Council of Churches in Korea
- * National Council of YMCAs in Korea
- * National YWCA of Korea
- * The Headquarters National Unification Movement of Young Korean Academy
- * Peace Network
- * Solidarity for Peace and Reunification of Korea
- * South Korean Committee for the Joint Implementation of the June 15 Declaration
- * People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy
- * Civil Peace Forum
- * Pax Christi Korea
- * Catholic Bishops for Peace Meeting (Seoul)

Endorsed by:

- * World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) Asia-Pacific
- * Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs
- * National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP)
- * Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT), under discussion
- * Korean Christian Church in Japan (KCCJ)
- * Conference of NGOs, under discussion
- * Center for Peace and Public Integrity, Hanshin University, Korea
- * National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCCCUSA)
- * General Board of Global Ministries - The United Methodist Church
- * General Board of Church and Society – The United Methodist Church
- * Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Status with the United Nations (CONGO)

- * United Church of Canada (UCC)
- * Bishop Petra Bosse-Huber, Rev. Ostarek Claudia/ Protestant Church in Germany
- * Protestant Church in Hesse und Nassau (EKHN)
- * Evangelical Mission in Solidarity (EMS)
- * German East Asia Mission (DOAM)
- * Mission 21
- * Mr. Yoichi Noguchi (Niwano Peace Foundation)
- * Mr. Steve Pearce (Methodist Church Britain)
- * Rev. David Grosch-Miller (The United Reformed Church)
- * Rev. Mienda Uriarte [Presbyterian Church (USA)]
- * Mr. Victor Hsu (PCT)

Ms. Sunita Sumati Suna, new Executive Secretary for Programs at APAY - Mr. Duncan Chowdhury leaving after serving more than 8 years

By the decision of Executive Committee meeting held on 2nd and 3rd July 2020, Ms. Sunita Sumiti Suna has started working at APAY on 1st August as new Executive Secretary for Programs. Until recently, Ms. Suna has worked more than 8 years as Regional Executive for the Asia Pacific of World Student Christian Federation (WSCF). She also served as Global Program Leader for Identity, Diversity & Dialogues (IDD) Program at the WSCF. Prior to this, among others, she took the responsibility as Regional Women's Coordinator of the WSCF Asia Pacific. As Lutheran by confession, Ms. Suna has rich experiences in many areas of ecumenical and mission-oriented work through her diverse careers. That includes leadership development, gender justice and women's participation, eco-justice, peace-building and overcoming violence at national, regional and global levels, as well as developing and strengthening movements and networking on various levels.

APAY, with its twenty four (24) affiliated National/Territorial Councils of YMCAs warmly welcomes Ms. Sunita Suna to her new journey with YMCA movement in the region of Asia and the Pacific. May God bless her and guide her so that she will settle down in the new post without difficulties, getting ready for a collective navigation with other APAY staff and volunteer leaders towards fulfilling the mission of YMCA. For those who wish to contact her, the APAY email address of Ms. Suna is: sunita@asiapacificymca.org

On the other hand, Mr. Duncan Chowdhury, outgoing Executive Secretary for Programs, has left APAY at the end of July after serving more than eight years in the post. APAY greatly enjoyed his hard-working commitment as well as his incomparable devotion to YMCA mission and movement building. APAY will, for a long time, feel and witness big footsteps left by Mr.

Chowdhury over the years. We hope and pray that he will continue to serve YMCA in a different capacity in the near future. May God bless and protect him and his family – Sylvia and Rachael as they begin a new journey in life in the United States.

~ Nam Boo Won, General Secretary

"Post-COVID-19 World and YMCA Response"

(This paper was presented by Rev. Dr. Hyunju Bae, Central Committee member, World Council of Churches and Executive Board member of the NCY-Korea, on 2nd July 2020 during the opening devotion of the APAY Executive Committee Meeting.)

I. Root Causes of the Pandemic Crisis

The outbreak of COVID-19 has presented unprecedented challenges to the global village. It has exposed to our collective consciousness what have been already there for a long time as grave and accumulated problems for human and earth communities. The experts diagnose climate change and global warming as the root causes of this pandemic. The industrial revolutions that fed on fossil fuels and the ruthless drive of capitalistic development underlie these root causes. The forests and the habitats of wild animals have been destroyed, and the result is a suicidal boomerang effect of zoonosis among people. Virus travels with the animals emigrating into human territories. Unlike the previous cases of epidemics, such as SARS in 2003, Ebola from 2014 to 2016, and MERS since 2013, the COVID-19 gave rise to the halt of the global economy, due to the speedy spread of virus that travels following the road of accelerated globalization. As a corollary, the fallout of COVID-19 came to dissect the globalized chains of industry and trade.

The neo-liberal capitalistic economy has been obsessed with maximizing the short-term profit, and the flaw of its short-sightedness and tunnel vision is painfully demonstrated now. The planet is not to be monopolized and exploited by certain superpowers and multi-national conglomerates. It is the oikos (house) of all life on the planet. It is the commons not only for Homo Sapiens, but also for animals, plants, and all the creatures including microbes.

Now we are all waiting for the invention of vaccines for the COVID-19. Yet, what if the variations of coronavirus were to come around only to defeat the effect of newly-found vaccine? We hope that this would not be the case. However, the futurists expect the rolling waves of COVID-19 and the more frequent outbreaks of epidemics in the coming years. Some countries have experienced the flattening of the curve, but the situation varies up to the national context.

The face of the Post-COVID-19 world will depend on our response. As we are called to humbly acknowledge that our civilization suffers from the disease unto death and that human species is standing at a crossroads, backsliding is not an option. 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. Does the world have a will to make a difference? Then, it will take an all-out confrontation with our ailing civilization to prepare ourselves properly for such a bleak future as a series of virus attacks and massive-scale natural disasters. Given the urgent and grand nature of this task, the importance of the role of the Third Sector, that organizes the citizens and empowers the communities, becomes all the more evident.

II. The Role of the Civil Society Movement

1. Speaking Truth to Power and Engaging in Governance

The world has slipped into the pandemic-induced economic recession. If any attempt to

stimulate economy ignores the lessons we have learned from the crisis of COVID-9, the result would be extremely unfortunate. We have learned that the present economy is not sustainable and even suicidal. Scientists' warning has been there for decades that we are on the road towards the extinction of human species. When our house is set on fire, who can be safe within it? It is the short-sightedness and anthropocentrism driven by the greed for limitless profit that makes this simple truth invisible.

The most important long-term response to the pandemic is to strengthen immune system of all the members of the society and to build a robust resilience. The structural inequality that prevents the poor and the marginalized from the rights to healthy food and housing, however, would not serve this end. The economy of greed perpetuates an unequal and cruel society. Everyone is susceptible to coronavirus, but it is the poor and the marginalized that bear its sharpest brunt. Certain groups such as the poor living in a densely populated environment, foreign workers, migrant workers, indigenous people, refugees, displaced persons, and those in the blind spot of social welfare system don't receive proper protection and remain vulnerable. The Rich Man wouldn't be able to enjoy a virus-free world unless he succeeds in transforming the present unequal socio-economic structures and strengthening immune systems of many Lazaruses. In order for the world to deal with virus attacks successfully, it is essential to build a social safety net committed to the public health and subsistence security for all. The principle that no one should be left behind is ultimately for the sake of everyone. "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere"(Martin Luther King Jr.)

The civil society movement needs to speak truth to power, that is, the policy and decision makers in government and business and the leaders of all sectors of church and society through diverse channels and modalities. We should not underestimate the force of the law of inertia on the side of those with vested interests in the status quo. The Green New Deal is not always green enough even in the midst of the crisis of pandemic. We need to keep vigilant against the nostalgic, habitual, and mindless regression in order not to lose the perspective.

Building green economy for the 'communities of communities' in both rural and urban areas, as well as finding jobs for the unemployed in the era of the IT revolution is not an isolated project, but requires a coordinated collaborations of many sectors of society motivated by a common direction for eco-justice. In this regard, the civil society movement should play a vital role in good governance between the governments and the communities of people.

2. Advocate and Guardian of Democracy

During the crisis of pandemic, we have been watching the governments grow big. Some steps taken by the government for quarantine are quite necessary for the restoration of health security for people. At the same time, there are worries and concerns that the emergency measures to respond to the crisis are misused as a ready-made excuse to suppress the political opponents, censor the press, ban public assemblies, and enlarge the role of the military in enforcing the lockdown. The rise of domestic violence during lockdown is also to be noticed.

History gives lessons that dictatorship could try to make use of the rise of fear, and trade the national economic discontents into a bellicose militarism. The powerful governments are to be counterbalanced by a strong democracy. The hierarchical and hegemonic forces are to be replaced by a dynamic operation and culture of horizontal and collaborative power. People's power could hold governments accountable for the principle of transparency, which is crucial for an effective wide-ranging collaboration during emergency. Informed citizens in a strong democracy can collaborate to prevent the governments from regressing into totalitarian and authoritarian regimes that would exploit the system of digital surveillance. For a workable

democracy, the traditional patriarchal and androcentric norm is to be replaced by the egalitarian culture of just communities of women and men.

The civil society movement is expected to make precious contributions as advocates and guardians of democracy in both public and private realms. Our social democracy with platforms of trust, openness, and communication is a prerequisite for the "earth democracy" (Vandana Shiva) towards which our new civilization is to move.

3. Platform for Stereo-Advocacy

Going local is an imperative to help local communities to build green economy and social economy and to live a sustainable, self-supporting and participatory life. Yet any attempt to deal with the contemporary huge challenges of climate change and nuclear weapons, and the advent of AI and BT, finds a coordinated global collaboration indispensable as well. The civil society movements, specially those with their network at local, national, regional, and global levels, like the YMCAs, have a special role to play for stereo-advocacy in dealing with such immense challenges. As an African proverb says, "if you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." Going 'glocal' is at stake.

III. The Response of YMCA

In the Mandate of the 20th General Assembly of Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs, held with the theme of "Living Together Within Nature on a Path to Peace" in Tozanso, Japan, September 3-6 in 2019, I find many crucial items for the role of civil society movement on the road towards a new civilization: ecological concerns, youth empowerment for justice, community development and social transformation, gender justice, interfaith cooperation, disaster response, alternative tourism, the active use of both e-platforms and other traditional means for communication, and the will for humanizing encounters and experiences. All these are truly essential building blocks for the promising future in the Asian-Pacific region and the world. Although the 20th General Assembly took place before the outbreak of the pandemic, I think that its Mandate already formulated a roadmap for the YMCA response to the Post-COVID-19 world.

Based on the theme, "Living Together Within Nature on a Path to Peace," the Assembly focused primarily on the issue of environment protection and peace restoration. The keynote presentation emphasized on the need to work for a peace culture by holding on to the goal of universal health and well-being, and the non-violent resolution of conflicts to the satisfaction of all parties. The YMCAs were challenged to consider two immediate tasks: one, to abandon industrial agriculture, radically reduce reliance on petroleum, and build self-supporting and sustainable communities by working with and not against nature; and two, to engage in a campaign to abolish nuclear weapons. YMCAs were also urged to focus less on money, and more on a common mission, larger than the YMCA itself. To do this, we must look to Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

1. Jesus and Empire

The Christian faith tradition derives from the memory of Jesus of Nazareth, who proclaimed and embodied the reign of God who shows a preferential concern for the Least, the Last, and the Lost. Jesus the Galilean observed the care of God the Creator for the birds of the air and praised the glory of the lilies of the field (Mt 6:25-34). The political and religious establishments in the Roman Empire crucified him, but Jesus Christ was raised from the grip of death. God vindicated Jesus' Way, hodos or Tao, as the true way to eternal life. The disciples of Jesus Christ in the earliest church came to be called "those who belong to the Way" (Acts 9:2).

However, the Way of Christ has been often confused with that of Caesar throughout the history. Jesus Christ led a reign of God movement as a non-violent revolutionary. Yet Christian

religion or its symbols have been frequently misused and abused to legitimate violence. On June 1, Donald Trump posed for photos with the Bible in hand in front of St. John's Episcopal Church. The USA president prepared this political theatre by the attack of peaceful protestors through the use of tear gas. He used the Bible "as if it were a prop or an extension of his military and authoritarian position" (Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington Mariann Budde). I cannot but call it a sacrilege, and a mockery of the Bible and Christian tradition that affirm the values of human dignity, holistic salvation, community, healing, reconciliation, peace, justice, and abundant life for all. These values form a counter-culture in stark contrast to the imperial mindset that takes light or for granted the sacrifice of human lives (Rev 18:13), especially the lives of the ordinary, the oppressed and the vulnerable. Churches could be part of problems, not their solution, if they neither discern nor follow the Way of Jesus, qualitatively different from the way of the empire. Those who belong to the Way of Jesus advocate for a sane culture of Mutually Assured Desire for conviviality and fullness of life for all. The military doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction is not an option for them.

The 'Paris Basis' (1855) declared that the YMCAs seek to unite those young men who regard "Jesus Christ as their God and Saviour according to the holy scriptures." This core formula was later used for the basis of other ecumenical organizations, such as the World YWCA (1894), the WSCF (1895), and the WCC (1948). It is crucial that the YMCAs find their anchor, sense of direction, and fountain of life energy in Jesus in implementing projects and deploying activities. At the same time, it is worth recognizing that the APAY, while taking root in the Christian tradition, is endowed with rich cultural backgrounds from Asian, Pacific, and indigenous traditions. These traditions offer highly valuable spiritualities and philosophies attuned to the cosmic, biospheric, and eco-friendly sensibilities that pay due attention to the fact that all living beings are interconnected and embedded in the web of life.

2. Joining the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)

One of the two immediate tasks that seek consideration in the Mandate is "to engage in a campaign to abolish nuclear weapons." The TPNW was adopted by the UN in 2017. To date, 81 countries have signed it and 38 countries have ratified. Once 50 states have ratified it, it will enter into force. Currently the ICAN, the WCC, and the other global peace networks are campaigning to reach the number of 50 states, commemorating the 75th anniversary of the nuclear attack on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan which led to a few hundreds of thousands of casualties, including Korean victims.

With the help of the information provided in the website of the ICAN, I found out that the 24 countries under the APAY umbrella could be roughly classified into four categories: 1) nuclear-armed states; 2) nuclear-weapon endorsers; 3) nuclear-free state that has signed but not yet ratified the TPNW; and 4) nuclear-free state that has both signed and ratified the TPNW. The most probable candidates for filling the gaps of 12 countries are found in the category 3). If the YMCAs of the 11 countries in the APAY in this category can appeal to their own government, together with other like-minded churches and civil movements, to take a final step of ratification, it would signal a great contribution to the peace and human security of the world as well as a faithful implementation of the Mandate.

We find four nuclear-weapon states in Asia. The Pacific region has too long suffered from nuclear tests. Jennifer Philpot-Nissen, a Programme Executive of Human Rights and Disarmament in the WCC, argues as follows:

The impacts of the current global health crisis share similarities with those of any future nuclear attack. Like the COVID-19 pandemic, the health, environmental and economic consequences of

a nuclear explosion could not be contained in the city or country where the attack took place. Nuclear tests have demonstrated that radiation can spread into the atmosphere, oceans, plants and animals, and into whole populations. The pandemic has demonstrated - more than ever - how closely linked our economies are, and how interruptions in one place can impact whole chains of production throughout the world. The same consequences could be expected from a nuclear attack anywhere in the world.

Although we didn't have any preventive medicine or don't have vaccine for COVID-19 yet, we do have the TPNW, which is the answer for preventing a nuclear attack. Together the APAY can be home to a prophetic imagination to envision the world of peace and human security, free of war and mass killings. Together the APAY can debunk the "myth of deterrence" and the doctrine of "the balance of terror" which are two ideological pillars of nuclear regimes. Together the APAY can offer the hope to the world by playing a key role in filling the gaps of 12 countries, and thus making the TPNW to enter into force.

IV. Closing Remark

Our time is characterized as a kairos moment. The 'new normal' related to the Post-COVID-19 world is not to be a mere empty rhetorical device, but should mark a fresh and sincere beginning towards a new civilization. An exodus out of the shadow of death begins with metanoia, a conversion from idolatry worshipping Mammon and human hybris enslaved by an obsessive craving for the erection of innumerable Babel Towers on the shaking ground. Together we are called to find out the road leading to life for the sake of all, especially for the vulnerable and the marginalized, and also particularly for and with our children and the next generations.

For such a time as this, it is a blessing to know that we are not alone in our mission commitment in walking the Way of Jesus Christ, the Crucified and the Resurrected, who remains as our hope and source of empowerment in our pilgrimage of justice and peace. I hope that the YMCA movement could continue to function as a trustworthy guardian of values advocating the fullness of life for all and also as a protector and promoter of human security and safe space for all. May the APAY keep inspiring and leading the region by example! Thank you!

Not interested any more?