

↑Monthly eNewsletter of the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs

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August 2020

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'No Youth Should Be left Behind': Risks in Economic Opportunities

“The webinar is very relevant during these hard times to get in touch with the youth and how we are feeling right now.”; “The topics and discussions gave me a new perspective.”; “Very informative and helpful to understand our current situation.”

--Participants' feedback

↑ NYSBLB participants during plenary

The first online regional conversation among young people that discusses the socioeconomic impacts of COVID19 held last 26 August was attended by 60 participants from 12 national movements namely, Australia, Bangladesh, Japan, Hong Kong, India, Korea, Myanmar, Mongolia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Sri Lanka. This online talk dubbed as 'No Youth Should Be Left Behind', focused on the risks that young people are facing in terms of economic opportunities- loss of job, less opportunity to employment and loss of livelihoods.

This regional conversation is an attempt to know the socioeconomic impact of COVID19 to youth; to listen to the stories /experiences of youth from our region; to learn about the YMCA responses; and to explore other social interventions that our movements can adopt in its effort to protect and encourage youth during the pandemic and even in the recovery phase. By addressing these needs of youth and communities particularly in the most vulnerable situations, we are attempting to contribute to the social safety nets that reduce the vulnerability of young people through our immediate response and in a long term goal of building a more resilient and equitable society.

The regional conversation included youth testimonies from Seng Moon Pan Maji, APAY GATN, Intern and YMCA Myitkyina, Myanmar Volunteer; Thena Posysenthong, Interfaith Cooperation Forum (ICF) Alumni, and Law Ying Ting Isabella, Volunteer, YMCA of Hong Kong; Student Affairs Assistant I, University of Hong Kong. It also included input presentation on COVID19 response from Eleonor Lam, Deputy Chief Executive Officer / Deputy Secretary General, Red

Cross Hong Kong; an overview of the youth situation in areas of economic opportunities from Rochelle Porras, Ecumenical Institute for Labour Education and Research (EILER); and a closing remarks from Karren Fetalvero, WAY Executive Member from APAY.

The online talk is led by the APAY Committee on Youth Participation and Leadership Development (YPLD) in its endeavour to address the region's youth empowerment objectives of increasing knowledge and deepening understanding on social issues affecting students and youth; and nurturing a sense of responsibility towards their communities. This session was moderated by the APAY Committee on YPLD Members Stephanie Cheung and Daniel Zadkiel Cheong.

~ Maria Cristina L. Miranda, Executive Secretary

International Conference for Korean Peninsula Peace

- APAY was invited to be co-host with CPCS, GPPAC and KNPC

↑ Korea Peace Conference participants via Zoom

Initiated by Center for Peace and Conflict Studies (CPCS) – a renowned Cambodia-based institute and APAY's working partner on peace-related issues – International Conference for Korean Peninsula Peace was held from 10th August to 13th August via Zoom platform. To this Conference, APAY was invited as one of the co-hosts along with CPCS, Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) and Korea National Peace Committee (KNPC) – a North Korean organization working with international NGOs on peace issues.

The objective of the Conference was to convene a diverse audience of stakeholders, with experts from inside and outside of the Korean Peninsula, to analyze and explore possibilities to support peace interventions. The conference gathered a strategic group of 50 or so analysts, researchers, diplomats, and peace practitioners with expertise on the Korean Peninsula to engage in critical analyses and deep, frank dialogues about the challenges and opportunities related to a peace process on the peninsula. During the four-day conference, various presentations and ensuing discussions focused mainly on impediments to peace and ways to overcome them; sustaining peace initiatives in the context of changing political environments; the role of the United Nations, and potential roles for other regional actors - the European Union, and non-state actors; the role of civil society and women-led peace movements; the role of economic cooperation in building and sustaining peace.

Main programs of the conference include: (on the 1st day) Welcome and introduction by Dr. Emma Leslie, Executive Director, Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies; Blessing Remarks by Dr. David Suh, Professor Emeritus, Ewha Woman's University & former President of World YMCA, followed by Opening Keynotes on "OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES OF PEACE IN KOREA" by Mr. O Ryong Il, Presidium Member, Korean National Peace Committee of DPRK (Due to Covid-19 pandemic, he delivered his speech by pre-recorded video clip.) and by Mr. Kim Kyung-Min, National General Secretary, YMCA Korea and finally by Mr. Keith Luse, Executive Director, National Committee for North Korea, USA. (On the 2ND day) Impact of Sanctions on Public Health and Everyday Life in DPRK by Dr. Kee Park, Director of DPRK Programs, Korean American Medical Association, Role of the United States on Korean Peninsula Peace by Ms. Christine Ahn, Founder & International Coordinator, Women Cross DMZ. (On the 3rd day) "What's wrong with the EU policy towards DPRK and How to fix it?" by Dr. Tereza Novotna, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow, Free University Berlin; Role of the UN on

Korean Peninsula Peace by Mr. Samuel Martell, Political Affairs Officer of Asia and the Pacific Division, UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations. (On the 4th day) “Synthesis: What have we discussed and learnt?” facilitated by Ms. Meri Joyce, Northeast Asia Regional Liaison Officer, GPPAC & International Coordinator, Peace Boat. And Closing Remarks was delivered by Nam Boo Won, General Secretary of APAY.

↑ Mr. Kim Kyung Min, NGS of YMCA Korea

↑ Mr. O Ryong Il, Presidium Member, Korean National Peace Committee

By and large, the conference was productive, meaningful and relevant, with updated information on the current situation, as well as inspiring messages from diverse key players, think tanks, experts and practitioners on the Korean Peninsula peace process. Towards the end of the conference, participants felt a collective sense of urgency towards a common action amid the current stalemate in the peace process. That is to say, though the peace process on the Korean Peninsula is in a stalemate at the moment, the challenge is how to co-create a “momentum” for breaking through this stalemate.

In short, a strong need to forge a global network of stakeholders was identified with a view to engaging more comprehensively in the Korean Peace Process. Along with strong initiatives by peace movements and other like-minded civil society actors in Korea, the imminent task of the network would be: firstly, to launch a global campaign including the Korean Peace Appeal, People’s Peace Treaty Campaign, Humanitarian and Anti-sanction Campaign, etc. which were recently initiative by peacebuilding NGOs and ecumenical organizations of South Korea; secondly, to plan and implement a strategic advocacy utilizing ‘Track II & Track I.5’ in a creative way. The co-organizers also hope that an ensuing gathering will take place sooner or later in order to make a collective resolution towards creating a common platform for actions at global level. (If you want to receive the papers presented at the conference, kindly contact APAY office office@asiapacificymca.org.)

~ Nam Boo Won, General Secretary

Task Force on Disaster Risk Management holds its First Virtual Meeting

The APAY Task Force on Disaster Risk Management held its first virtual meeting last 18 August 2020 to connect with task force members despite limitations for a face-to-face meeting due to the global health crisis on COVID19. This virtual connection served as a platform to continuously discuss and plan for coordinating and mobilizing risk management system to achieve greater impact on the efforts of rebuilding lives and communities. Members of the Task Force engaged actively in the discussion on how the region can strengthen its response on disaster management, highlighting the importance of mitigation in reducing the risks that translate the 20th General Assembly Mandate. The task force also adopted its terms of reference which describes its purpose and the works to be done.

↑ DRM Task Force meeting onb Aug 18, 2020

The task force will focus on:

* Advancing the APAY Regional Coordination Guidelines on Disaster Risk Management for

effective, efficient, and appropriate responses.

* Ensuring that a relevant disaster risk management system is in place to address the needs of the most vulnerable people affected by disasters to maximize the impact on the lives of the people.

* Organizing and mobilizing national/local movements to strengthen its good governance structure with built-in accountability to all stakeholders involved.

* Compiling knowledge and good practices for the development of DRM plans and to strengthen collaboration/networking among various stakeholders.

The members of the task force include Margaretha Andoea (Indonesia), Katsumi Jinbo (Japan), Jegan Jeevaraj (Sri Lanka), Shena Awatin (Philippines), and Gilbert Chin (Taiwan).

~ Maria Cristina L. Miranda, Executive Secretary

ICF Alumna organized Yoga Retreat and Healthy Relationship Workshop

Pyae Ei Nyine, known as “Pen” to her friends, a School of Peace 2019 alumna implements her project for Local Peace Education and Advocacy on September 2-5, 2020. This small grant project focuses on Yoga Retreat and Nonviolent Communication. Pen held the activity at the Mandalay YMCA Child Care Center. Twenty-three participants joined the workshop: 11 females and 12 males whose ages ranged from 14-25 years old. The participants were Buddhists, Muslims, and Christians. Yoga exercises, coming from a Hindu practice of meditation, help in removing the clutters of one’s mind. It helps a person attain peace of mind and body, and to be able to focus. Healthy relationship starts with a good flow of communication, specifically nonviolent communication. Thus, Pen combines these two aspects in her local peace education project.

↑ Yoga session with Pen

This project used a blended approach or what Min Htin, calls a “semi-online” approach for the sessions. Pen, who is a Yoga teacher, facilitated the face-to-face session on Yoga in the first half of the time in the morning. Then the virtual session on Nonviolent Communication (NVC) follows, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 noon using the Zoom platform. Ms. Amina Mambuay, a certified NVC facilitator served as the resource person.

Myanmar has some challenges in internet connectivity, thus, Pen has to use a projector so those who have no internet connection could see the faces of the participants. When a participant speaks to raise questions or share reflections, the person has to go in front of Pen’s laptop for the others to see and listen to her. Those who had connections using their mobile phones participated in the session from their homes.

The first day was a little slow because this is the first time everyone used Zoom as a platform. However, on the subsequent days, the young people easily adjusted to the technology. Phyu Phyu Lwin does an excellent job as a translator-interpreter. The sessions are lively because the participants were actively engaging with the resource persons by asking questions, sharing experiences, giving comments, and reflections.

This experience with the Mandalay group is inspiring. It is also heartwarming that Pyae Ei Nyine launches this small project in this challenging time. The technical support of Min Htet and Nay Win, the NGS of Mandalay YMCA along with NGS Maung Maung Win of Myanmar YMCA are invaluable in making this project a success.

↑ Participants of the virtual workshop on NVC

~ Muriel Orevilla-Montenegro, PhD., ICF Coordinator

Crowd Funding for Green Projects

Many crowd funded projects have been funded around the world over recent years. One type of project that people support is a green project, one that reduces cost for a community organization and reduces greenhouse gases. Projects that achieve both of these include upgrading lighting and installing solar PV. The photo is used for marketing purposes; it is both a 'thank you' to the individual or organization making the donation, in this case a Y Service Club, and it's also used to promote the crowd funding campaign.

↑ Y Service Club of Bendigo

Social media such as Facebook is used extensively to promote crowdfunding campaigns. Supporters are asked to like and share widely to increase public exposure or awareness of the campaign. Posters with eye-catching graphics should also be used where possible. As Y Green Ambassadors, developing a project to upgrade lighting and/or install solar PV at your YMCA is worth considering.

~ Colin Lambie, Member of APAY Green Team, Member of YMI Green Team

ICF Philippines alumni organized an Online Psychosocial Support Activity

The ICF alumni in the Philippines, through the initiative of Hamsiya Olimpain, a School of Peace 2019 alumna, organized an Online Psychosocial Support Activity for the ICF Alumni on August 26, 29, and September 5, 2020. ICF, as a project of Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCA, supported this initiative through its small grant program. Thirteen alumni participated in the first session. Five of them were females and eight are males. During the second session, four females and seven males, or, a total of eleven alumni joined during the second session. These alumni come from Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. These alumni were participants of different ICF programs such as the Thematic Workshops, Peace Institutes, and the School of Peace. They come from Christian and Muslim faith traditions. This activity aims to provide a venue for alumni to share their experiences during the lockdown and community quarantine due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. The activity also provides a platform for alumni to connect with each other and reflect on the effects of the pandemic on their lives.

↑ ICF Alumni on Psychosocial support 2nd session

The session started with the preliminaries, such as the opening prayer, orientation on the objectives, and introduction of the participants. Ms. Debbie Statentes-Dasang, Director of

Guidance and Counselling Services of Southern Christian College served as the resource person. During the sessions, the participant shared their current involvements, their jobs, and the specific ICF activity they have attended. Then, Ms. Dasang led the participants into the exercise of listening. The participants listened to the sharing of experiences of each one during the imposed lockdown and the community quarantine due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants shared their worries, fear, and anxieties during the pandemic. They realized that it is important to appreciate life. They expressed concern over the proliferation of fake news. As ICF alumni, they expressed that it is crucial to share the correct information, especially on social media platforms. The ICF alumni were happy that through the activity, they were able to reconnect with each other and meet new friends who are within the ICF circle. They expressed that somehow, the activity has lessened their anxieties and worries, if not relieved completely because they were able to share and unload their burdens with their fellow alumni.

After the sharing, Ms. Dasang gave a brief input on Stress Management. During the discussion, one participant shared that he experienced depression. The participants recognized that it is crucial to recognize our feelings, seek support from family, friends, and if needed, seek support from a counselor who can provide psychological support. To continue advocating for peace especially in these times, it is crucial to recognize these issues confronting the youth.

~Muriel Orevilla-Montenegro, PhD., ICF Coordinator

Joint National General Secretary for the Singapore National Council

Ms. Phyllis Tan Hwee Sim and Mr. Steve Loh have been appointed Joint National Secretary for the Singapore National Council on 22 July 2020 at the Annual General Meeting of the National Council of YMCA of Singapore.

Ms. Phyllis Tan is the Executive Director & CEO (Group) of the Metropolitan YMCA of Singapore. She joined the Metropolitan YMCA from 1 Feb 1990 and undertook roles in Personnel & Training and Corporate Planning. She was appointed CEO in March 2007. Phyllis was qualified as a lawyer from NUS, holds a Graduate Diploma in Personnel Management, and attended the APAY Advance Studies Programme in Hong Kong, the LKY Senior Management Programme for Non-Profit Management (LKY SMPNP) as well as the Social Leadership Singapore (SLS) Programme.

Mr. Steve Loh joins as General Secretary & CEO of YMCA of Singapore on 15 August 2018. He brings with him a unique blend of management, entrepreneurial and leadership experience gained from global missions, social service as well as from the media industry. He has garnered substantial expertise in managing operations, instituting governance and conducting business restructuring, while emphasising the need to value and develop people. He graduated from the University of Arizona with a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in Journalism & Political Science. He is married with two children and attends St John's St Margaret's Anglican Church since 1976, where he serves as a Home Cell Group Pastor since 2005.

Not interested any more?