

↑Monthly eNewsletter of the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs

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January 2016

1. Towards a 'Strengthened Movement" : 4th Leaders' Quadrennial Roundtable
2. A Peace Education Curriculum to be developed: 6th Sino-Japan-Korea YMCAs Peace Forum
3. Cambodia YMCA Progressing
4. What's next for YMCA after Paris Agreement?

March 8-11:
Executive Committee & Related Meeting, Hong Kong

Towards a 'Strengthened Movement':
4th Leaders' Quadrennial Roundtable

↑ Participants of the APAY 4th Leaders' Quadrennial Roundtable held in Chiangmai YMCA, Thailand, 3-6 December, 2015

Forty-one participants from 14 National Movements gathered at the 4th Leaders' Quadrennial Roundtable held in Chiangmai, Thailand last December 3-6, 2016 to work together towards a strengthened movement. As a conference of YMCA key lay leaders, youth members and professional staff, it was a time and space to discuss the 'why' and 'how' of doing our Mission given the diversities and complexities of our context and time. It was also an opportunity to renew the movement's mission and develop a common vision and plan that translates the 19th General Assembly Mandate into mission responses for the Quadrennial 2015-2019.

The process of reflection started with the input presentation on mission renewal. Despite the physical absence of Rev. Dr. Yoon-Jae Chang, keynote speaker, he inspired the participants in his paper presentation entitled Justice, Peace, and Life: An Ecumenical Trinity Agenda for YMCAs in Asia and the Pacific which was read by the APAY staff. In his paper, he repeatedly reminded everyone that YMCA is a movement organization working to establish God's kingdom on Earth, as such following Jesus' Movement. He emphasized that God's reign on earth concretely means the reign of God's justice, peace and life in which everyone is called:

* to form solidarity with our poor neighbors and social minorities to bring about a just world where there are no tears, sorrow, poverty, hunger, discrimination or isolation;

* to denounce all wars and violence while healing the wounds of violent conflict and confrontation, so that all living beings will be at peace in a relationship of love and respect;

* to take time for fundamental self-reflection to work hard to create a world where all may share

and enjoy the abundant life that Christ gives us.

He called upon the movement to move from actions of charity and service to serious engagement with the forces of injustice and to a vocation of advocacy, solidarity and partnership with those struggling for peace.

Thus, the Quadrennial Program Plan 2015-2019 developed through a consultative process, calls for each movement in the local, national, sub-regional and regional levels to be catalysts in creating opportunities for youth empowerment, social relevance and institutional viability in order to realize our vision of a strengthened movement where justice, peace and life reign.

~ Maria Cristina Miranda-Lastima, Executive Secretary

A Peace Education Curriculum to be developed :

6th Sino-Japan-Korea YMCAs Peace Forum held in Nanjing YMCA, China

- * The achievements for the past 12 years be summarized as a brief history of the Forum.

- * A website be created as space for communication and discussion

- * A peace education curriculum be developed applicable to youth in the three NMs

- * The three YMCAs to support their young people to take initiatives in their networking in the future

The above are main outcomes of the 6th Sino-Japan-Korea YMCAs Peace Forum, which was held in Nanjing YMCA, China on 19 -23 December 2015. A total of 74 delegates from the three national movements(NMs) including 34 youth participated in the Peace Forum. Nanjing was unanimously decided at the preceding Peace Forum held in Hiroshima YMCA, Japan in November 2013.

Throughout the past 12 years, the Peace Forum has evolved to a “transnational citizens’ network” based on our common mission for peace and reconciliation. The Nanjing Peace Forum had a couple of special features compared to the previous ones. One is the historical sensitivity of the city with unimaginable scars made on Chinese people during the Japanese military invasion in the late 1930s. Exposure of the participants to the Nanjing Massacre Museum spurred deep reflections and honest dialogues among the participants, particularly those youth on how to reconcile and work together for peace building between countries and nations. Another feature is that there was, for the first time, much of youth participation in the name of “youth peace pilgrimage” as a parallel meeting to the forum of adults. Another is that participants agreed with a sense of urgency the need to develop a peace education curriculum applicable to the youth of the three countries. The curriculum will include a component of what to learn from the historical past. “Forgive but never forget” was an invaluable lesson shared by the participants throughout the forum.

The forum was consisted of a welcome dinner, opening worship, opening ceremony with a speech by the vice mayor of Nanjing city, a keynote speech by Prof. Liu Cheng, Nanjing University on ‘peace education on the perspectives of globalization’. This was followed by a visit to Memorial Hall of Victims in Nanjing Massacre, group sharing sessions, visit of historic inter-cultural sites and a Buddhist temple where inter-faith dialogue with Buddhist priests took

place. There was also a presentation of Nam Boo-Won, GS of APAY on peace issues from APAY perspectives and closing worship. Apart from the Forum, liaison meetings between the NMs were also held to strengthen the partnership between them. During the closing worship, the NGSs and youth representatives from the three NMs rang the peace bell together as a symbol of collective commitment to working together for peace-making in our region. Participants expressed deep thanks to the host movement – National Council of YMCAs of China and Nanjing YMCA. Finally, Gwangju YMCA, Korea was decided as the venue of the 7th Peace Forum in 2017.

↑ Group photo at closing ceremony

~Nam Boo Won, General Secretary, APAY

Cambodia YMCA Progressing

The Cambodia YMCA is progressing with various relevant programs and by the full support of the PSG (Partners Support Group). The PSG met in the Cambodia YMCA office on 11-12 Nov. 2015. The meeting was attended by Kazuki Yamane (NCYJ), Ayako Takamura (Yokohama YMCA), Lo Chee Wen, Andrew Leo and James Ji Jiayu from YMCA of Singapore, Diana Versace (CFO of Perth YMCA), Bernard Downey (Board of Nelson YMCA) and Kohei Yamada and Nam Boo-Won from APAY. From Cambodia YMCA, new board members; Rev. Son Srun, Ms. Mary Mounng (VP, Government worker), Rev. Dara, Ms. Mamali (Medical student) were with the PSG together with the YMCA staff including Bunthok, General Secretary. The new President Rev. Ok Libounna (Director of CWS) joined at the evening dinner.

In the meeting, the ongoing programs of Cambodia YMCA were shared by Bunthok and appreciated by the PSG that include Street Children Project, Youth Development Program, Alternative Tourism Project, Service to the poor elderly, and Education for Children. It was also reported that a Siem Reap Project started for children and women there from fall 2015 by the support from Yokohama YMCA, Japan. A new program called 'Youth Institute' will begin early 2016. It aims at creating a safe and positive place where youth can learn to respect and help others in needs apart from their learning to build social, academic and computer skills. Through this process, they gain confidence, and as the result, they will start social enterprises for income generation.

The plans for 2016, proposed by Bunthok, was reviewed thoroughly and agreed upon by the PSG. The PSG agreed that Cambodia YMCA is now at a start of gradual self-reliance regarding financial sustainability. However, the YMCA still needs support regarding the long-term sustainability of its infrastructure and the stability of income-generating programs. A strong recommendation was to produce a master-map of all the inter-related programs so that they will serve effectively to strengthen the movement as well as serve their communities more relevantly. There was an emphasis on the need for strengthening its membership base as a key indicator of movement strengthening. The progress of Cambodia YMCA will be shared more in detail at the coming ECM in March in Hong Kong.

~ Nam Boo Won, General Secretary, APAY

What's next for YMCA after Paris Agreement?

Being present in person at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of Parties (COP 21) was in many ways an emotional experience to the YMCA delegates –not only because of witnessing the reaching of a global agreement but also the journey of how YMCA was involved. Mr Beng Seng CHAN (APAY staff), Mr Alvin KAN (Hong Kong China), Mr. Sukhen Joseph Gomes (Bangladesh) and other youth from our region were among 50,000 participants from government, intergovernmental organisations, UN agencies and civil society at the UN conference venue at Le Bourget from 30 November to 5 December 2015.

What is COP 21?

The story began in 1992 when the international response to climate change started with the “Rio Convention”. It set out a framework for action aimed at stabilising atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases to avoid dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. The main objective of the annual COP is to review this Convention’s implementation. In 2015, COP 21 achieved a legally binding and universal agreement with the aim of keeping global warming well below 2 degrees Celsius.

What happened in COP 21?

After a long and challenging negotiation process, the Paris agreement has delivered a universal accord and support package. Hundreds of cities, regions, companies and organisations have proven their strong commitment to phase out fossil energies by mid-century. With the long term mitigation goal, a mechanism to dynamically scale up each country’s action over time, a set of common transparency rules and a support package for the vulnerable, all necessary instruments are on board to move forward. COP 21 has been a milestone in the human story to tackle climate change and gives us hope for a climate friendly, resilient and more equitable future.

World YMCA Resource Group on the Environment (RGE) was very active in following the negotiation process, taking part in the media and actions along with many other non-governmental organisations. Every day, the YMCA delegation arrived at the COP 21 venue at around 7am to get ready for the YOUNGO meeting. YOUNGO, or the UN constituency of Youth Non-Governmental Organizations, provided a platform for youth organisations to be involved in the UNFCCC process. We have the common goal to safeguard the interests of young people and future generations within the Paris Agreement. With the focus on Youth Rights, we have also established collaborations on Intergenerational Equity and Gender Equality. Each YMCA delegate joined at least one of the YOUNGO working groups. Those YMCA members who did not have accreditation to enter the COP venue supported the advocacy work as “outside team” in Paris. At the end of each day, the inside and outside teams met at 8 pm for updates and strategic discussions. We developed a YMCA position paper on climate change and evaluated the negotiation process.

What came out from COP 21?

The COP21 ended positively with the Paris Agreement. Some important elements of the Agreement include:

* a long-term goal of keeping global temperature increases below 2°C. It also set a more ambitious aspirational target of capping global warming at 1.5°C degrees.

* all countries are required to provide the “information necessary to track progress in implementing and achieving its nationally determined contribution.”

* \$100 billion Climate Fund each year will be set up to provide financial resources to assist developing countries with respect to both mitigation and adaptation.

* there will be a first global stocktake in 2023 and every five years thereafter

Weak elements

In order to stay below 2 degrees of global warming, the global emission must be reduced by 90 to 100% by 2050. These significant numbers were not included in the agreement, which made it weak in emphasising how the goal should be reached. In particular, scientists calculated that the existing INDCs account for only a 2.7 degrees global warming control, which is obviously not enough.

Another weak element of the agreement is the fact that it does not include international aviation and shipping. No countries are at this point responsible for emissions from airplanes or ships that cross borders, or operate in international areas. The official explanation to this is that it is controlled by other UN-bodies that are not part of the negotiation. However, we know the actual reason is that no country wants these emissions to blow up their own carbon budget. This emission accounts for a considerable amount of the world's emissions (over 1/20) which is an issue worth pursuing.

What's next for YMCA?

Paris agreement was an ambitious one. In general, we can consider it a success but... this is for us the beginning of a long journey and we will not give up until we reach nothing less than ambitious and measurable targets.

Civil society and the YMCA have been strong, important and visible in Paris. We have pressured world leaders into being more ambitious, and we have made our voices heard. YMCA should keep up the good work on an international scale as well as making strong national movements as well. Local YMCAs must now work with our ecumenical partners and civil society to ensure the compliance and commitment of our Governments to the Paris Agreement.

Traces of the climate effort emerged across YMCA—education and advocacy—that laid the bedrock for progress. In education, YMCA has done local activities and campaigns in our communities to deepen public understanding and to stimulate discussion in climate change. Local advocacy efforts were made through a series of green forums and alternative tourism programmes, with outcomes submitted to the relevant general assemblies for consideration. Internationally, APAY began taking part in the UNFCCC climate negotiations. There, our youth played a key role in the international climate movement and empowering young people's engagement at the United Nations climate talks. This is important for strengthening the connections between green movements in civil society at international, regional and national levels.

↑ World YMCA delegates at United Nations Paris Climate Change Conference

~ CHAN Beng Seng, Coordinator of GATN & Alvin KAN, YPLD

Not interested any more?