

↑Monthly eNewsletter of the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs

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Monthly eNewsletter of the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs
January 2018

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Mar. 14-18: Executive Committee Meeting

Mar. 19: 20th General Assembly Planning Committee Meeting

Bangladesh YMCA Rohingya Refugee Relief Response

There are already 600,000 Rohingya refugees that have fled and took temporary shelter in Ukhiya Upazila under Cox's Bazar District situated at the southern-east part of Bangladesh since a crackdown by Myanmar's military on 25 August 2017. The Rohingya community is mostly Muslim minority in Buddhist majority Rakhine state of Myanmar. The Rohingya refugee said that huge number of Rohingya civilians began fleeing over the border of Bangladesh due to the burning of their villages and attacks to Rohingya civilians by Burmese troops that are backed by local Buddhist mobs.

The Rohingya Refugee Relief Response project assisted 1,500 refugee households in Hakimpara camp under Ukhiya Upazila. National Council of YMCAs of Bangladesh (NCYB) selected Hakimpara Rohingya camp of Ukhiya Upazila after learning that this is a newly established camp with around 7,000 refugee households and that aid agencies are helping other bigger camps. As most national and international aid agencies started their relief works with food items, Bangladesh YMCA considered providing blankets and baby warming clothing during this winter season. This decision was also based from the needs assessment done during the field visit last November 2017.

The Relief Operation Team was composed of staff members of NCYB and few Local YMCAs General Secretary's and Lay Leaders. The 1,500 household were each given a double size blanket and one set of baby warm clothing. The final selection of beneficiaries was done one week earlier with the help of Hakimpara military camp . Each selected household, priority given to female headed household, was issued with a relief card by the military and mazi (Rohingya camp volunteer) two hours prior relief commodities distribution. The District Relief and

Rehabilitation Officer of Cox's Bazar and Ukhiya Relief Operation Control Room headed by military and government officers (all aid agencies are obliged to follow this procedure introduced by local government in responding Rohingya Refugee projects) cross-checked the relief goods before those were distributed with the help of the Hakimpura military team and mazi.

A significant number of children came at the distribution spot with relief card to claim the items on behalf of their parents. The children returned to their families with happy and smiling faces. The beneficiaries told the relief team that the items received addressed their need as they need protection from the cold weather. They also expressed their sincere gratitude for this assistance and love.

The Relief Operation Team on behalf of the NCYB acknowledged that this project indeed gave the tremendous opportunity to stand beside the Rohingya refugees with Christian neighborhood love and compassion. Bangladesh YMCA expressed its gratitude to all the National Movements, WAY, international YMCA partners and APAY for the generous financial support. Most importantly, NCYB extends its appreciation to APAY for the guidance and support of the APAY on how to help those affected with this human crisis.

~ Nipun Sangma, NGS, NCY Bangladesh

7th China-Japan-Korea YMCA Peace Forum

(This article is based from the Youth's Common Declaration on the 7th China-Japan-Korea YMCA Peace Forum and written on behalf of all the youth participants.)

The 7th China-Japan-Korea YMCA Peace Forum was held on 16-20 December 2017 in Gwang Ju, Korea- a city which is a symbol of Korean democracy movement and where many youth sacrificed for making a better society. The youth from the three countries shared their vision on creating a society of justice and peace. Through this peace forum, the youth shared the non-peaceful situations and reached an understanding on their common peace issues, based on which the joint tasks could be carried out.

The situations related to peace issue that poses threats to youth can be categorized into the following. Firstly, the threat to youth's daily life. The youth in Korea, China and Japan face challenges in terms of youth employment with overly long working time, high cost of living and heavy burden of family. These factors make them lose their presence of mind and vision for future, leaving them with no more alternatives for a better life and no more energy for attending important political and social matters. Secondly, the threat to war in Northeast Asia. Northeast Asia has been in a temporary armistice since the end of Korean War. However, North Korea's recent development of nuclear weapons and missiles has thrown a gloom of war over the region. Also, the THAAD missiles stationed at South Korea created a tension between Korea and China. In addition, the major political party of Japan is trying to change the pacifist Constitution, which pulls the region closer to war.

Despite these non-peaceful situations, the youth wants to make a peaceful future for all. The peaceful society that the youth envisions and expects is a society in which youth are able to freely express their opinions and actively exert political influence; a society in which people treat each other fairly without judgments; and a society that is open and friendly to minority groups.

The Korean, Chinese, and Japanese youth proposes and commits to the following joint actions:

Action Plan:

* Establish a YMCA Youth Committee for Peace in Northeast Asia that will coordinate peace activities, share different perspectives on the common history of Northeast Asia region, and take part as a youth working group for the preparation of the peace forum. The Youth Committee will be composed of youth representatives from three countries who meet at least once a month online.

* Run a Peace Weeks Relay Program for young people from the three countries. The plan is to take actions in successive three weeks in May, selected dates shall bear special significance to peace, that aims to promote awareness on current peace issues among young people. Information about the actions undertaken will be shared in effective and creative ways such as making a video clip.

* Advocate for integrating peace education into joint youth programs. With the support from national and local YMCAs, the Youth Committee advocates for inclusion of peace education into existing and newly established joint youth programs. The peace education includes common history from perspectives of the three nations, peace challenges and concerns shared by young people, and peace issues that are specific to the hosting cities of the programs.

↑ Youth delegates representing China, Japan & Korea attend YMCA Peace Forum

↑ Representatives of the youth delegation lead the ringing of the Peace Forum of the "peace bell" during the opening ceremony

↑ Delegates of the 7th China-Japan-Korea YMCA Peace Forum share expressions of peace and love

The youth confirmed that this forum's top priority is to keep our eyes to the history of East-Asia region and keep striving for making justice and peace. The youth also suggest that the topic of the next peace forum should include History Recognition and Youth's Indifference to social injustice. To handle these topics, the youth are expected to be aware of voices of the marginalized people's and the sins of ignoring such cry. The youth believe that tackling these issues will result for peaceful Northeast Asia countries.

~ Goshi Ito, National Council of YMCAs of Japan

ICF National Forum in Nepal Organizes Human Rights Workshop

The national forum members of Interfaith Cooperation Forum (ICF) in Nepal organized a five-day human rights workshop from Dec. 15 to 19 in Pokhara. The 17 participants consisted of School of Peace (SOP) alumni and others that the national forum invited. Many of the participants work at the grassroots level and thus had numerous experiences and incidents to share with each other about human rights conditions in the country. Among the issues the group identified were bonded labor, human trafficking, child marriages and various types of discrimination based on caste, class, gender and religion. The participants explained that some of the causes behind these problems were political instability, corruption, poverty and patriarchy. This exchange of views had been preceded by an introduction to what are human rights and an outline of its historical development.

Based on this understanding of human rights and the country's human rights challenges,

discussions then focused on human rights from a legal perspective with presentations about the U.N. human rights system and a number of U.N. human rights covenants and conventions related to torture, the rights of women and children and civil and political rights as well as economic, social and cultural rights.

Human rights was also examined from a moral perspective based on the teachings and values of Asia's faiths, and the participants shared their ideas about why there is so much violence in the name of religion in the region if the values of Asia's faiths—love, kindness and compassion, justice, peace, etc.—form the foundation of human rights norms and standards.

↑ Laxmi Pathak, a 2008 SOP alumna, conducts a session about the rights of women.

↑ Bibek Shahi, leads a one-day presentation about community organizing

Other meaningful discussions were held about the link between corruption and human rights, the way in which some cultural practices deny people's rights and various obstacles to respect for human rights.

The workshop concluded with presentations about how to respond to human rights violations, including community organizing, and a sharing of thoughts about how to foster a deeper human rights culture and nurture a stronger human rights movement in Nepal.

On the sidelines of the workshop, the national forum members met and decided to register their national forum with the government under the name Shanti Nepal [Peace Nepal].

~Bruce Van Voorhis

APAY Conducts GATN Task Force and Mentors Meeting

The Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs (APAY) held its GATN Task Force and Mentors Meeting on 5-9 December, 2017 at Taichung, Taiwan where task force members and mentors from Australia, Korea, Thailand, Philippines, Singapore, and Taiwan gathered to share information and discuss the Alternative Tourism programs of the YMCA. The meeting was hosted by the YMCA of Taichung. Our delegation was warmly welcomed by Mr. James Tou, NGS of YMCA Taiwan and Mr. Thomas Kuo, GS of Taichung YMCA.

In the meeting, a review on the framework of the GATN was conducted where the practitioners of Alternative Tourism shared important components of their GATN programs. The members of the GATN Task Force reviewed and evaluated the work of GATN in the last year based on the programs conducted by the APAY and the results of the survey conducted among the receiving and the sending YMCAs. The Task Force also reviewed the GATN checklist to provide the necessary updates and revisions. The checklist will be used by local YMCAs to self-assess their Alternative Tourism programs and it will also be used as a preparation for the major evaluation program that will take place at the end of the year.

Towards the end of the meeting, YMCA of Taichung provided the participants a comprehensive experience on the tea drinking which is an important part of the culture in Taiwan. Participants visited tea plantation, observed the process of roasting tea leaves and storing, had tea tasting and finally a tea ceremony hosted by the parents of Steve Chiu.

The Task Force and Mentors Meeting is an annual meeting conducted to discuss policy-level review and initiatives for the GATN programs.

↑ Na Hyoo Woo sharing "Strategies to strengthen marketing and networking"

↑ Members of the GATN Task Force and Mentors

↑ Lessons for a "Tea Connoisseur"

~Karren Joy Fetalvero

My Amazing Journey with the YMCA

Hi everyone! My name is Michael Cheong. I'm a Malaysian Chinese living the lush tropical islander life in Penang in which climate is warm, and the food is fantastically tasty. Perhaps that explains my tummy size and why Penang will always be my beloved home. I'm a staff of YMCA Penang and I am passionate about empowering others. I'm also into photography, development, drumming and always seem to have time to meet new people.

Before YMCA, I was working as a real estate negotiator and was also involved in a local sports club where I played an active role in youth committee. Life was excellent and I was always on the move. I helped organize social gatherings and crazy disco party events. Although, I am a quiet introvert, organizing events somewhat sparked a flame of excitement in me. I just loved how people from all walks of life get together to plan something bigger than themselves. The fruits of this labor always left me wanting more and kept me thinking, "what if instead of a one-off party, I could impact the lives of people and journey with them?"

I found answer to this question with the YMCA. I left my budding career in Real Estate in 2012 and after job hunting, I was invited to join the YMCA. I thought of YMCA as good temporary work place until I find something else better. Without any knowledge of YMCA and with all the attraction around me, the Y didn't seem to stand out. I honestly thought it was just a convenient place for good dining and clean, affordable accommodations. However, I did not know that I am in for a life-changing journey.

Working in the Y was a totally new experience. I was no longer a volunteer but a related staff in a community service setting. I had to work with different committees, had to learn to deal with people of different characters and personalities and had to change mindset from "to be served" to "to serve". It was strange, awkward and I struggled. However, it made me realize that there is a special joy in putting the needs of others before my own.

This realization came when I had the opportunity to serve the underprivileged children during a YMCA Christmas party. Being new to community service, I got different sorts of blunder despite working tirelessly on the program. I got angry and frustrated and was almost ready to give up the job until a young boy came and hugged me as I was leaving the premises. With a shy expression, he said, "thank you" and quickly ran away. That moment, I fell in love with what I do and realized that I could be a force for change.

Since then, I had to relearn my intentions of profit-making into selfless giving. With the Y, I am reminded that the relations with people could live a long lasting impact and the community should get the most benefit. My family and friends thought I went crazy to pursue this job. However, the Y for me was more than just a job. I love it! It's a journey towards a more meaningful and fulfilling life. It has taught me humility and self-perseverance. I was greatly empowered with the support, guidance, and mentorship I received from everyone involved in Penang YMCA. I now find myself soaring higher than I potentially thought I could. I have met new people and traveled far beyond my imagination to connect with like-minded amazing people - people who care for the underprivileged sectors in the community.

Today, some of my friends and family members are volunteers at Penang YMCA. Together, we

can impact the community. As an Assistant General Secretary now, I am even more committed on a journey to empower the lives of other young people. The passion will continue to burn within me as I see youth or community empowerment as a blessing to share unto others. I would encourage especially all young people to take a chance and do the same. You can certainly fly higher, even more so with the support and opportunities from the YMCA.

~ Michael Cheong, YMCA Penang, Malaysia

20th General Assembly Planning Committee

It is our pleasure to announce that the 20th General Assembly of Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs to be held during the month of September in 2019.

General Assemblies are held at every fourth year, where the leaders of the YMCAs gather to evaluate our work of the past quadrennial, introduce good practices, discuss and implement changes in the governance system if required, introduce new leadership and to decide the thrust areas of APAY for the next quadrennial.

During the Executive Committee Meetings of APAY held on March 2017, the offer of YMCAs of Japan to host the General Assembly was considered and the GA Planning Committee was formed. The preparation for the 20th General Assembly commenced with the formation of the GA Planning Committee.

Now, the first meeting of the 20th General Assembly Planning Committee will be held on Monday 19th March 2018, immediately after the Executive Committee Meetings in Hong Kong. Members of the GA Planning Committee are requested to prepare their travel arrangements accordingly to attend the meeting.

New Leadership of National Council of YMCAs of China

Rev. Xu Xiaohong

President of National Council of YMCAs of China

Rev. Xu Xiaohong joined the National Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Churches in China (TSPM) in May 2002. He has been the Vice General Secretary, later the General Secretary, and now the Vice Chairman & the General Secretary of TSPM. He has been appointed as the President of National Council of YMCAs of China since April 2012.

Rev. Hao Zhiqiang

Vice President of National Council of YMCAs of China

Rev. Hao Zhiqiang joined the Fujian TSPM in December 2007. He has been the Vice General Secretary and now the General Secretary of Fujian TSPM. He has been elected as the board member of National Council of YMCAs of China in April 2012.

Mr. Wu Jianrong

General Secretary of National Council of YMCAs of China

Mr. Wu Jianrong has been the General Secretary of Shanghai YMCA since September 1991. He has been elected as the board member of National Council of YMCAs of China since April 2012.

Salamat po! (Thank you!)

About a year ago, I left home to embark on a year-long journey with definite uncertainty of what to happen. And now, after almost a year of exploring, learning, and seeing the works of the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs, I am coming home with a full heart because of the people and experiences this season has brought me.

I would like to start this by expressing a gigantic thanks to everyone who has helped me in the journey. From the start of 2017, I have felt the big supportive family of the APAY who relentlessly answered my questions and requests for GATN stories and information to be put on the YMCA Tourism website; the patient mentors of the e-learning who were with me in securing that their mentees finish the e-learning on Climate Change; the E-learners- mostly composed of the Change Agents- who, probably, at one point got satiated with my tenacious reminder to finish the e-learning; my local and national YMCA, YMCA of Makati and YMCA of the Philippines, for the unending trust and confidence which I hope I delivered justice to; and of course, APAY colleagues and mentors who I learned a lot of things from, and most importantly, never let me go hungry.

It was truly a multi-cultural experience starting from living with many different nationalities in a flat to visiting different places each boasting an incredible amount of culture I would be interested to know more about. The experience has opened my eyes more on the importance of cross-cultural communication and respecting the different cultures and way of life of the people. But I think, the most important realization I've had is the deeper sense of appreciation with the programs pursued to achieve the mission of the YMCA- the effort put by the staff and the people who make things possible and all the complexities there are before a certain program comes to life, this is a first-hand encounter I would always remember.

↑ Ecology Walk during the GATN Site Sampling in Kuala Lumpur Malaysia

↑ Regional Conference on Climate Change-Concluding program of the e-learning in Daegu, Korea

↑ Late Night Noodles with the Change Agents during the Regional Training in Gotemba, Japan

The program I was working with, the Global Alternative Tourism Program, is full of possibility and principles. I enjoyed working while having in mind the best result this initiative would yield to. It awakened my commitment in travelling responsibly knowing that my happiness should not put in jeopardy the lives of the people in the community who have welcomed me with open arms. It was enriching to see many people from different generation working for the mission of the YMCA and I am glad to have also met many young people who are devoted to a cause greater than themselves- the community.

Truly, it was an empowering and humbling experience to meet people of different generations from different walks of life who continue to contribute in the movement in different ways possible and maintain the disposition of a true servant leader. To end, the challenge for me now, I have come to realize is to let what I learned flow to more people for the true consummation of empowerment I have resolved is to be an instrument of empowerment to other people.

The year-long journey has come to its last destination and though leaving is hard, it is necessary. I carry with me a packet full of memories, learning and people who have made the journey truly wonderful. And yes, it is not goodbye because I know that at one point, we will all meet again. Maraming salamat po (Thank you very much)!

~ Karren Fetalvero

APAY New Youth Intern

A warm welcome to Ms. LEE Ji Yoon who has been appointed as APAY Youth Intern. Ji Yoon was formerly Secretary at Youth Empowerment Department of the NCY Korea. She was responsible for the Korea University YMCA work and she also managed various types of youth projects with government and corporation Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) departments.

Ji Yoon is a double majors graduate in International Relations and Library & Information Science from the prestigious Seoul Women's University.

Ji Yoon will join the APAY from February 2018 till January 2019.

As Youth Intern, Ji Yoon's major responsibility will be to help with work related to the focus area of Global Alternative Tourism Network. She will assist in planning and implementing programs of GATN and to coordinate the e-Learning program on Climate Change.

Not interested any more?