

↑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 2015

1. The APAY General Assembly to be held as scheduled
2. Together for Gender Justice
3. APAY Green YMCA Awards 2014
4. ICF Human Rights Workshop in Cambodia Revises Curriculum
5. YMCA World Challenge 2015

Aug 1-7: APAY International Workcamp, Philippines  
Sept 7-11: 19th General Assembly & 3rd Youth Assembly

The APAY General Assembly to be held as scheduled

As we prepare ourselves for hosting the 19th General Assembly and 3rd Youth Assembly of APAY at Daejeon, South Korea scheduled to be held in September 2015, the news of the unexpected development of the MERS Virus outbreak in Korea has called for our serious consideration.

We had seriously discussed this issue at the APAY Board and with the National Council of YMCAs of Korea. We resolved that we shall conduct the 19th General Assembly as planned in September 7-11 (Youth Assembly, September 6-11) in Daejeon City, Korea as scheduled earlier.

The reasons for our decision were from:

\* A National Hospital specialist in MERS cautiously projected that by the end of July or at latest by the middle of August, MERS will be controlled totally.

\* There has been the International University Sport Festival held in the first half of July in Kwangju City, Korea and 12,000 athletes from 149 countries from the world gathering. It is reported that there has been no single person infected so far among those athletes. (below is the picture at the time of Opening Ceremony) photo from Dr. Song (APAY Vice President from Korea)

3. There was another big National event in Korea recently for the National Elderly Conference where over 3,000 elderly met.

We have reached the conclusion that we will conduct the General Assembly as planned. APAY with NCY Korea would appreciate your active participation in the APAY General Assembly. Please be assured that we will do our best to take every possible measure to prevent any MERS-related incident from taking place during the GA.

The registration will be requested soon so that we can prepare for the hotel and other programs

in advance. Thank you for your understanding the situation and for your positive participation.  
~ Kohei Yamada, General Secretary

## TOGETHER for Gender Justice

### Transformative Opportunities on Gender Equity; Taking on Holistic and Empowering Responses

The global issue on discrimination and subordination of one gender by another knows no social, economic and national boundaries. Worldwide, women and girls form majority of those exposed to violence and exploitation, faced to live in poverty, forced to work under arduous labor conditions, placed at greater risk in disasters and emergencies and excluded to make influences and decisions. On top of these, most of these women and girls experience the inequalities because of their ethnicity, nationality, religion, caste, sexuality and disability. In fact a UN Gender related report stated that one in three women will experience physical or sexual abuse in her lifetime.

During my participation in the 9th Gender, Diversity and Social Transformation Course organized by the Visthar Academy for Justice and Peace in Bangalore, India last May 4-30, 2015, similar manifestations of gender injustices were shared and reflected upon by the participants. Most of our individual river of life, this pertains to our shared personal stories during the training, form part and parcel of the lived experience on discrimination and subordination of women and girls. We specifically identified the following key issues that are either personally experienced or encountered by one of our family members and friends:

- \* Physical, verbal and sexual abuse at home and at workplace; marital and state forms of rape
- \* Powerlessness to address economic poverty and health risks
- \* Vulnerability to disasters, emergencies and armed conflicts
- \* Marginalization from political participation
- \* Religious and cultural restrictions such as forced early marriages, dowry, caste-based discrimination and denial of property rights
- \* Low wages and subordinate positions of women on work places

These facts accounts to the systemic discrimination and subordination on women. The gender relations that existed within the families, communities, churches, government, organizations and institutions undeniably perpetuate conformity to the norms imposed by patriarchal system. The male dominant social, economic and political structures relegate women at the 'margins' of the society thus exposes them to vulnerable situations. In addition, the global capitalist development approach that values capital investment more than human brought a more feminine face to poverty and violence. Women of this generation carry multiple burdens of both reproductive and productive roles in order to sustain the family and the society's survival.

These manifestations of gender injustices are evidently a violation of the fundamental human rights. After all, the call for gender justice is the call for basic right. It counters, as expressed in

the UN Declaration of Human Rights, the global recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family as the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. More importantly, these gender-biased traditions and practices undermine the core of our Christian ideal of equality and justice for all of God's creation. As expressed in Challenge 21, each YMCA member is called to build a human community of justice with love, peace and reconciliation for the fullness of life for all creation. We are called to specifically empower all, especially young people and women to take increased responsibilities and assume leadership at all levels and working towards an equitable society; and to advocate for and promote the rights of women and upholding the rights of children.

Following therefore the mandate of Challenge 21, we must envision working together, as a YMCA community, towards developing communities in which no one particularly women and other sexual minorities are excluded, marginalized or discriminated against because of their gender. As part of a wider social movement working for social transformation, we have the responsibility to protect a person's rights. And in doing so, we are respecting a person's dignity to live life to her/his fullest potential. The vision can be achieved if we continuously and consciously create, what I call, Transformative Opportunities on Gender Equity; Taking on Holistic and Empowering Responses (TOGETHER). Transformative opportunities refer to spaces and interventions that challenge the dominant culture of discrimination and subordination of one gender by another and the prevailing culture of silence. It aims to transform and not to conform as it addresses the gender strategic need of empowerment. In addition, together literally means collective, in harmony or in union with each other. Thus, responding together is an end goal in itself because the call for gender justice is not a separate work of, for and by women and other sexual minorities. Rather, it is a cross cutting agenda that contributes to the sustainable development of communities; and at the same time sustain the life and work of YMCA as a socially relevant movement. Achieving gender justice therefore calls for actions that would meet the following goals:

- \* To enable advocacy and promotion of women's (human) rights that would lead to changes in attitudes, ideas and beliefs about gender relations
- \* To ensure increased participation and strengthened leadership of women in institutions at all level
- \* To engage in community-based gender transformative opportunities that takes on holistic and empowering responses

Participants of the 9th Gender, Diversity and Social Transformation Course,  
Visthar Academy of Justice and Peace, Bangalore, India, May 4-30, 2015

~ Maria Cristina L. Miranda, Executive Secretary

## APAY Green YMCA Awards 2014

The Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs Green Team is continuously working towards promoting environmental programs in the YMCAs in our region. With a view to recognize and reward the YMCAs who are engaged in green activities in our region, the APAY Green Team

has launched the APAY GREEN YMCA AWARDS effective from 2013.

The APAY GREEN YMCA AWARD shall be presented in two categories, (i) one local YMCA and (ii) one national YMCA from the region of Asia and Pacific.

The awards shall be adjudged, considering the YMCAs involvement in the past year, in promoting programs and advocacy in one or more of the following areas:

- \* Creating Green Teams in local or National YMCAs.
- \* Considered the impact of their operation on the environment and planned for future improvement.
- \* Conducted training or awareness raising initiatives about ecological concerns & advocacy.
- \* Implemented positive initiatives in the provision of services and programs, specifically with environmental sustainability in mind.
- \* Has raised funds for green activities.
- \* Motivated local movements to initiate campaigns and advocacy
- \* Developed and documented environmental strategies and targets, specific to their community.

#### Time Table

National movements and Local YMCAs who are interested to take part in the program needs to submit their applications to the APAY Green Team following the guidelines (please see below) latest by 31st July 2015.

The APAY Green Team shall form an independent Selection Board to decide on the recipients of the Award. The decision of Green Team shall be final.

The Awards shall be declared and presented during the 19th General Assembly of APAY scheduled to be held during 7-11 September, 2015 at Daejeon, South Korea. The recipients of this award shall be presented with commemorative plaques during the General Assembly.

Please visit our website for the questionnaires for the local and national YMCA.

[http://www.asiapacificymca.org/joomla/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=408](http://www.asiapacificymca.org/joomla/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=408)

Applications needs to be reached to

Asia & Pacific Alliance of YMCAs

23, Waterloo Road, 6F

Kowloon

Hong Kong

or by email to

[office@asiapacificymca.org](mailto:office@asiapacificymca.org)

please write APAY Green YMCA Award

in the subject line of the email

latest by 31st July 2015

ICF Human Rights Workshop in Cambodia Revises Curriculum

Interfaith Cooperation Forum (ICF) continues to train a small number of its School of Peace (SOP) alumni as human rights resource people. The fourth workshop in this series of programs since 2012 was held from June 9 to 11 in Siem Reap, Cambodia, with participants from Sri Lanka as well as the host country.

One of the main thrusts of this workshop was to share the evaluation of the Southeast Asia subregional workshop that was conducted from Jan. 31 to Feb. 4 this year in southern Thailand, which was the first time that members of the human rights resource team had assisted the ICF staff. Two important conclusions of the evaluation was the need to expand the duration of the program and to emphasize how people can use the U.N. human rights covenants and conventions as well as know their content.

Based on this evaluation, the group meeting in Siem Reap consequently increased the length of future human rights workshops from five to six days. In addition, the workshop participants devised a one-day human rights curriculum that will be used for the first time during this year's upcoming SOP in September in Siem Reap.

Like the last workshop that was held in October 2014 in Phnom Penh, an input of this workshop included the General Comments produced by the various U.N. human rights committees that offer interpretations of specific articles of the U.N. human rights covenants and conventions. At the Siem Reap workshop, the focus was on the right to housing enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the issue of forced evictions, the absolute prohibition against the use of torture in the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) and the aims of education as contained in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), such as respect for human rights, equality, diversity, the environment and the culture of the child.

As part of the workshop, the participants made a field visit to the Monks Community Forest, which covers more than 18,000 hectares near the Thai border. The Buddhist monks explained their work for the past several years to educate people about why the forest should be preserved and to organize villagers surrounding the forest to help them patrol the forest several times per week.

One evening the workshop participants attended the performance of Phare, the Cambodian Circus. This circus group in Siem Reap uses the talent and skills of circus performers to tell stories built on social, economic and political themes that are based on the experiences of the creators and performers of Phare.

Buddhist monks explain why they are educating people about the value of the forest and how they are organizing villagers surrounding the forest to protect it with them.

~ Bruce van Voorhis, ICF Coordinator

## YMCA World Challenge

YMCA around the world was "Kicking Goals for Youth Empowerment" on YMCA's birthday on 6 June 2015. APAY officers attended YMCA World Challenge 2015 at King's Park Centenary Centre in Hong Kong. YMCA directors, staff, Y's Men, youth representatives and volunteers teamed up for an exciting Bubble Soccer friendly match. Another 200 young people—12 teams—competed in a soccer league. It was wonderful to celebrate with many happy and smiling friends. As we celebrated YMCA World Challenge, our global movement grows stronger

and the community grows bigger.

The Wave of Cheers before Goal Kicking.

~ Alvin KAN, Chairperson of Youth Committee

Not interested any more?