

PROGRAM REPORT
October to December 2008



CHRISTIAN CONFERENCE OF ASIA
Chiang Mai, Thailand

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FOREWORD

We are pleased to present the Quarterly Program Report of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) from October to December 2008. The report highlights projects implemented along with reflections and comments.

We would be glad to have your suggestions on what you think we need to develop further to make CCA more visible in responding to emerging realities of Asia.

Together with the CCA staff I sincerely thank you for your concern and support to the life and work of CCA. Your interest in the mission of CCA is a great source of strength and blessing for all the members of the ecumenical movement in Asia. We earnestly hope for a continued partnership in doing God's mission here in Asia.

We wish you a blessed New Year.

Prawate Khid-arn
General Secretary

QUARTERLY PROGRAM SCHEDULE

October-December 2008

Date	Program	Venue	Program Area
October			
9-10	CCA-Asia Pacific Forum Joint Meeting	Chiang Mai, THAILAND	GS
29 Sept – 3 Oct	Asia Mission Conference	Tainan, TAIWAN	FMU
12-16	National Theological Workshop in Thailand	Chiang Mai, THAILAND	FMU
6-18	Asian Ecumenical Course October 2008	Salatiga, INDONESIA	FMU
November			
30 Oct – 1 Nov	Follow-Up Meeting on Article 9 (Japanese Constitution)	Tokyo, JAPAN	JID
8-10	Interfaith Cooperation Forum Meeting	Kuala Lumpur, MALAYSIA	GS
12-16	Program Area Committee Theological Workshop	Bangkok, THAILAND	FMU
17 – 20	Sub-regional Consultations for South Asia “Churches and Seminaries: Appraising Our Ecumenical Vision for Today’s World”	Kolkata, INDIA	FMU
18 – 22	South Asian Women’s Capacity Enhancement Training	New Delhi, INDIA	EGY
21	Ecumenical Lectures Series “Current Trends in Feminist Theology in Asia”	Serampore, INDIA	FMU
24 – 28	International Ecumenical Workshop on the Rights of Asian Migrant Workers	Lahore, PAKISTAN	JID
25 – 29	Sub-regional Consultation for South East Asia “Churches and Seminaries: Appraising Our Ecumenical Vision for Today’s World”	Manila, PHILIPPINES	FMU
December			
11 – 13	Workshop on Women's Spirituality and Health: Prevention Of HIV and AIDS	Dili, TIMOR LOROSA'E	EGY

GENERAL SECRETARIAT

Dr. Prawate Khid-arn, General Secretary
Rev. Dr. Rienzie Perera, Associate General Secretary

CCA-APF Joint Meeting

9 - 10 October 2008

Chiang Mai, THAILAND

The CCA-Asia Pacific Forum (APF) Joint Meeting was the first APF meeting outside North America. The meeting focused on ecumenical relationships between CCA and the denominational members of the Forum, with the following objectives:

- 1) To hear from CCA its view regarding the ecumenical mission and work of the North American churches in relation to the Asia region
- 2) To share with CCA the North American ecumenical context and to identify Forum members' ecumenical commitments in the Asia region
- 3) To listen to inputs from the wider ecumenical family (Myanmar Council of Churches, Pacific Conference of Churches)
- 4) To arrive at a creative and realistic way of collaboration between CCA and the Forum

There were 32 participants in the meeting, 19 of whom represented the denominational members of the Forum. The CCA president, general secretary, associate general secretary and other staff members constituted the CCA participants. The general secretary of the Pacific Conference of Churches and the general secretary of the Myanmar Council of Churches attended as resource speakers.

During this two-day discussion a common understanding on issues affecting both continents was reached. These issues -- to be reflected upon and undergirded by theological and missiological underpinnings - are the following:

- 1) Inter-religious issues related to peace and conflicts
- 2) Emergency and disaster response and management
- 3) Food and water security
- 4) Climate Change
- 5) Christian Unity (denominational competition)
- 6) Migrant workers, refugees and internally displaced peoples

The meeting came up with the following initial concrete suggestions, namely, that:

- 1) Forum members share with CCA about their bilateral relationships
- 2) CCA likewise share its bilateral relationships with the Forum

- 3) A CCA representative be invited to some of the Forum's regular meetings to keep the dialogue going and to strengthen relationships
- 4) An APF task force (represented by our co-chairs) act as liaison between APF and CCA
- 5) Finally, advocacy on specific issues (e.g., for Burma/Myanmar) be an initial area of partnership collaboration between CCA and APF
(Excerpted from the statement of the meeting).

ICF Working Committee Meeting

8-10 November 2008

Kuala Lumpur, MALAYSIA

The meeting of the Interfaith Cooperation Forum (ICF), a CCA-APAYMCAs and EED Joint Project was originally planned to be held in Penang but was shifted to Kuala Lumpur so that the members could attend the wake and funeral services in honor to Mr. Yip Kok Choong, the co-founder of the ICF and also the General Secretary of the Asia Pacific Alliance of YMCAs.

The Committee evaluated activities in 2008 and discussed various future plans for ICF in 2009 and beyond, including:

- 1) Issue-oriented Workshops. In 2009 ICF will focus on workshops for School of Peace (SOP) alumni. Each workshop will invite ten SOP alumni to participate. One important goal of the workshops is to build up the ICF regional network for advocacy.
- 2) ICF Internship. Designed to provide the SOP alumni an opportunity of learning and sharing their own experiences and knowledge with the host organization.
- 3) ICF Website and E-Newsletter
- 4) Fact Finding Missions. To highlight people's power (people's struggle) and their courage in order to get international community cooperation. For 2009, it will focus on Mindanao (Philippines), Sri Lanka and Burma.
- 5) Scholarships. Focused on the people in conflict situations and who work in conflict area.
- 6) Festival of Justpeace. The SOP alumni are encouraged to develop a festival in their own country. If there are already similar festivals being held, then SOP alumni will be encouraged to join those festivals to promote interfaith and justpeace work.

The School of Peace (SOP) is one of the major activities of the ICF. In the past two SOP, 49 young inter-religious leaders from nine countries attended the three-month training. Forty are in regular communication and share information on on-going national and local interfaith activities. The next SOP will be in 2010.

ICF is a joint program of CCA-APAY and EED, focusing on interfaith and inter-religious cooperation for peace education and peace building in Asian contexts. It is a follow-up endeavor of the recommendations from the joint CCA-APAY and EED consultation in 2004. The ICF functioned from 2005, and Mr. Max

Ediger from the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) has been requested to coordinate the program.

Ecumenical Relations

17-20 October

Dr. Prawate Khid-arn attended the 7th General Assembly of the Asian Conference for Religion and Peace (ACRP) held on 17-21 October 2008 in Manila, the Philippines. Around 370 participants representing fifteen religions and Christian denominations from 25 countries along with the observers addressed the theme "Peacemaking in Asia".

Dr. Khid-arn addressed the assembly and emphasized the role of religion in a time of conflict and war in many parts of Asia and around the world. He said:

"My appeal is that we encourage and let the communities of faith speak out with clear, prophetic and moral voices, calling for an end to the conflict and death bred by the war. The religious institutions and leaders today need to openly explore the extent to which dialogue is moving from the level of ideas and words, to the next stage of social, economic and even political advocacy to forge a peaceful society."

Ms. Moumita Biswas, Joint Executive Secretary for EGY-Women, also represented CCA in the ACRP Women's Pre-assembly Meeting on October 14-16, 2009. CCA was requested at the event to provide leadership to strengthen Asian women's inter-religious network.

It was also agreed that closer cooperation between CCA, ACRP and the World Conference of Religions for Peace (WCRP) be strengthened to promote peace and unity in Asia.

21-24 October

Dr. Prawate Khid-arn extended greetings on behalf of CCA to the 30th Biennial General Assembly of the Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT) held at Payap University in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Around 400 voting and non-voting delegates, local and international ecumenical guests participated in the assembly. The theme of the assembly "Unity in Mission" calls CCT and its member churches and individual congregations to address theological issues and challenges emerging in the national and international contexts.

17-19 November

As member of the Executive Committee, Dr. Prawate Khid-arn attended the General Assembly of the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (EAA) held in Rome, Italy, attended by about 120 participants representing member organizations, staff and observers were present.

The assembly made important decisions as follows:

- 1) Approval of the registration of EAA as an "Association" under the Swiss Law effective January 1, 2009.
- 2) Election of the eight members of the Board of Directors, a new governing body of the EAA
- 3) Continuation of the HIV and AIDS campaign for the next four years, 2009 to 2021
- 4) Conclusion of the campaign on the "Global Trade" issue
- 5) Agreement to begin a new campaign on the issue of "Food" for 2009 to 2012

The Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance, created in 2000, is a broad international network of churches and Christian organizations committed to a joint advocacy work on HIV and AIDS and food. Member organizations come from the Roman Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical and Orthodox traditions. The Alliance is governed by a Board of Directors and is now an Association under the Swiss law based in Geneva, Switzerland.

24-28 November

On behalf of CCA, Dr. Prawate Khid-arn welcomed participants to the seminar on "the Role of the Church and Christian Organizations in Society" organized by the Swedish Mission Council held at the Belle Villa Resort in Chiang Mai, Thailand on November 24-28, 2008.

Forty participants from eight countries including Sweden were invited to learn and to reflect together on church mission in the new global, changing contexts, and how the church responds to the life crises of the people in Asia.

ECUMENICAL FORMATION, GENDER JUSTICE AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

**Ms. Moumita Biswas, Joint Executive Secretary
Mr. Adam Anand Row, Consultant**

South Asian Women's Capacity Enhancement Training 18 - 22 November 2008 New Delhi, INDIA

The South Asian Women's Capacity Enhancement Training is an outcome of the South Asian women in 2007 at the Asian Women's Meeting in Bangkok with the theme, "*Challenges, Strategies and Struggles: Asian Women Building Inclusive Communities of Peace*". The South Asian women leaders formed a core group and asked CCA-EGY to facilitate a capacity enhancement training program in collaboration with the South Asian Ecumenical Partnership Program.

The objectives of the training are as follows:

- 1) capacity enhancement of young women church leaders in South Asia on women's human rights and advocacy skills
- 2) Multiplying impact of similar workshops in the local levels;
- 3) strategizing for a common action plan to promote and advocate for women's rights
- 4) empowerment of South Asian young women to break the culture of silence

Thirty-five South Asian church women from six different countries (Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka) participated in the training. Participants expressed increased awareness on human rights issues in their respective contexts; increased advocacy skills and enhanced the women's ecumenical networking for peace. The CCA member churches and councils became more aware of their responsibility for promoting women's leadership development in South Asia as they express solidarity in recommending appropriate participants and participate in planning and implementation of the project.

The Church of North India did not only host the training but fully participated in the program planning and implementation. Even National Councils in the respective countries in South Asia expressed solidarity with this training and in monitoring follow up activities in local communities. This shows a strong sense of ownership of the program by member Churches and member Councils.

Workshop on Women's Spirituality and Health: Prevention of HIV and AIDS
11 - 13 December 2008
Dili, TIMOR LOROSA'E

Thirty-three women from IPTL participated in this workshop held in Dili, East Timor on 11- 13 December 2008. The workshop was part of the CCA-EGY cluster's ongoing project, Women's Ecumenical Accompaniment Program for Vision and Empowerment (WEAVE) in East Timor. The main aim of WEAVE is to equip Church women with skills of peace building in conflict ridden societies. Dominica Faurillo, facilitates the program as full time ecumenical accompanier.

The objectives of the workshop are as follows: a) to create awareness among church women in East Timor to combat HIV and AIDS and stigmatization; b) to evolve a women's spirituality of healing and a grassroots church women's theology of the Dignity of Life.

Ms. Nina Naoyan facilitated the Bible Studies and morning devotions. Her Bible study on Women in the Bible and Jesus Heals Besides the Pool focused on the need for praxis and spirituality for healing and reconciliation ministry in the East Timor context. Rev Daniel Marcal - Director of Church World Service facilitated sessions on Awareness regarding HIV and AIDS, its prevention and combating stigmatization. Dominica Faurillo facilitated participatory sessions on Gender Justice and Overcoming Violence in the Home and Awareness on Health and Women's Bodies.

The outcomes include increased awareness among church women and church leaders about women's human's health rights, the need to support, recognize and encourage women's contributions in building communities of peace through healing and reconciliation ministry; and, the precipitation of grassroots Church women's theology of life through their participation and sharing of stories and spiritualities.

The challenge is that ITPL still does not have a women's secretary for the women's desk to facilitate activities and programs on gender justice.

Ecumenical Women's Networking

Annual Meeting of International Committee of Fellowship of Least Coin (ICFLC)
 25 - 30 October 2008
 Toronto, Canada

Ms. Moumita Biswas attended the annual meeting of ICFLC and as executive secretary of EGY is an official voting member and representative of CCA. The ICFLC comprises committee members representing different ecumenical organizations in the world dealing with women's empowerment, gender justice and justice issues. The ICFLC is a women's ecumenical prayer movement of healing and reconciliation. It meets every year to decide the project grants that will be given for life-affirming projects on women and children. This grant is mainly

from the least coin of members' currencies collected by every time women pray for peace.

Project grants were evaluated and grants were identified. The CCA - EGY women's concerns was granted a block grant of 10,000 USD for 2009. The project proposal submitted by WEAVE accompanier Dominca Faruillo for IPTL women's empowerment in the amount of 4000. USD was approved. However, Ms. Biswas asserted that East Timor needs more support. The committee decided to ask the ICFLC executive secretary Cora Tabing-Reyes, to communicate to Ms. Faurillo to re-do the proposal in consultation with IPTL and submit it with a new budget.

It was decided that the next annual meeting in 2009 will be held in Africa to be hosted by African Christian Conference.

ICFLC elected a new set of officers. The new Chair is Esther Kilaghbian from Lebanon representing the Middle East Council of Churches; Vice Chair is Shirley Maginley, representing the World Council of Churches; and treasurer is Pat Allison, executive director of WICC.

There was an elaborate discussion on young women's leadership development and whether there could be some ICFLC grant for supporting young women's education. A sub-committee was formed to look into scholarship grants and its corresponding requirements.

Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada (WICC)

Ms. Biswas was also invited to attend the 90th Anniversary celebration of WICC. WICC was formed in 1918 by Bessie MacMurchy who invited members of denominational women's missionary societies to organize prayer meetings. WICC'S 90th anniversary committee was led by former WICC President Claire Heron and Janet Anstead, President elect.

Ms. Biswas was also able to meet Nora Sanders, General Secretary of the United Church of Canada (UCC) and expressed her heartfelt thanks to her for supporting the Indigenous Women's Alternative Leadership for Transformation Project (IWALT). IWALT was a three year project supported by a UCC grant through WCC.

FAITH, MISSION AND UNITY

Dr. Hope Antone, Joint Executive Secretary
Rev. Dr. Sungkook Park, Joint Executive Secretary

Asia Mission Conference

29 September - 3 October 2008
Tainan, TAIWAN

The Christian Conference of Asia-Faith, Mission and Unity program area (CCA-FMU) sponsored a delegation to the Asian Mission Conference on *Beyond Edinburgh 1910 – Asian Reflections on Mission* which was co-organized by the Formosa Christianity and Culture Research Centre (FCCRC), Tainan Theological College and Seminary (TTCS) and the Methodist Theological University in Seoul, Korea. Part of a series of activities for the 100th anniversary of Edinburgh 1910 Conference, it was to encourage critical reflections on the significance of Edinburgh by Asians and to reconstruct the concept and practice of mission in view of the current socio-political and cultural changes taking place in Asia.

The conference topics and speakers were:

- 1) "The Church is God's Partner in Re-creation" – C S Song
- 2) "The Mission of Jesus is love of all living beings for fullness of life" – Kim Yong Bock
- 3) "Doing Mission from the Underside" – Huang Po Ho
- 4) "Relativism and Differences: Toward A Genuine Pluralism" – Wang Shik Jang
- 5) "New Paradigm Concepts of Mission" – Hope S. Antone; and
- 6) "Towards a Mission-Oriented Theological Education" – Chen Nan Jou

The CCA delegation consisted of Bishop Eliezer Pascua (general secretary of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines) who gave a response to the presentation by Dr. C S Song; Rev. Dr. Cung Lian Hup (a missiologist from Myanmar Institute of Theology) who gave a response to the presentation by Rev. Dr. Huang Po Ho; Rev. Dr. Joseph Deva Komar (missiologist from Seminari Theoloji Malaysia) who gave the reflection at the CCA-led morning worship; Ms. Nantiya Petchgate of Bangkok Institute of Theology, Ms. Elizabeth Enjut of Methodist Theological Seminary, Sarawak, and Rev. Dr. Erick Barus from the Communion of Churches in Indonesia.

Hope S. Antone made a critical presentation on the current practices of mission which are the by-product of the missionary enterprise. Building on the four shifts in mission thinking from Wesley Ariarajah, she presented six necessary shifts in order to evolve new paradigm concepts and practices of mission: (a) from an exclusive to an inclusive understanding of God's mission; (b) from conversion to healing as goal of mission; (c) from majority to minority as image of the faith

community in mission; (d) from mere doctrinal issues to deep spiritual concerns as content of mission; (e) from token partnership to genuine solidarity as methodology of mission; and (f) from overemphasis of one biblical passage to an emphasis of the total biblical message as the basis of mission.

Integrating the inputs from the earlier speakers, Hope S. Antone said, "If we must have them, we need a new breed of missionaries for today. We need missionaries who are: educators on the integral view of life; healers with holistic concept of healing; environmentalists (or environmental scientists) to help us detoxify and recover the sustainability of the earth; people who are critically conscious of power – not for power over, but for power *with* (shared power) and for drawing power *within* (empower); people who are religiously literate, knowing that to be Asian is to be interreligious." "We also need a mission moratorium in order for us to critically assess mission so that its tendency towards a narrow orientation can be checked. This means however a review if not revamp of mission curriculum in the seminaries and in the mission training centers," Antone added.

In the ensuing discussions, it was affirmed that while the Edinburgh 2010 process is a call to celebration, part of the Asian contribution is a call to confession of the distortions caused by narrow mission orientation – not only then but also now.

Asian Ecumenical Course

6-18 October 2008

Salatiga, INDONESIA

A total of 23 participants (9 women) completed the Asian Ecumenical Course 2008 with the theme, "Challenges and Opportunities for Ecumenical Formation in Christian/Religious Education". They came from 11 countries in Asia – Australia, China/HK, India, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand. Two were from evangelical Baptist churches in Indonesia and 1 was a Catholic from Australia. Participants included theology students, Christian/Religious Education teachers, ecumenical workers, pastors, and youth workers.

Resource persons included Daniel Nuhamara, dean of Satya Wacana Christian University in Salatiga and dean of AEC; Tabita Kartika Christini of Duta Wacana Christian University in Yogyakarta, Limatula Longkumer from Jorhat Theological College, and Hope S. Antone from CCA. Since this AEC is focused on Christian/Religious Education, Indonesia was chosen as the venue because of the presence of several Christian/Religious educators with doctorates and doing many things beyond the traditional framework of CE/RE.

Inputs by resource persons covered social analysis; wider ecumenism – relations involving intrafaith, interfaith, civil society, and creation; contextual, liberation and feminist theologies; multiculturalism, pluralism, feminism, ecological justice, conflict transformation and peacebuilding, and their implications on Christian / Religious Education. Input presentations were done in participatory manner –

presentations with interactive methods, then workshops or small group discussion and sharing at plenary. Immersion and exposure to Indonesian realities and analysis of Asian realities as a whole in relation to education; worship with local church, visit to historical sites such as Borobudur temple, and visit to the Muslim boarding school (Pesantren). Community building activities, discussion and workshops, worship and Bible studies – with participants taking turns in leading and being officers of the day. Action planning by participants – on what they would do with their learning after returning home from AEC. Each participant presented their plan to the rest of the group on the last day of AEC. Other participants listened, asked questions and helped to clarify or sharpen the action plan.

Participants' evaluation of the two-week program included the following: (1) "The whole activity exceeded my expectations. All topics are relevant and useful but what really impacted me are gender justice and Asian feminist theology, ecology." (2) "Participating in the AEC has enlarged my thinking as an Asian... I can never forget the fact that education can be a source of violence." (3) "I want to take back the broadening of ecumenical understanding and its relation to specific concerns."

Signs of ownership of AEC came in the following forms: (a) NCC Australia and Hong Kong CC covered the airfares of their two participants. (b) PROK contributed 50% towards the air fare of their participant. (c) BTE-SATHRI contributed 20% towards the international tickets of their two participants. (d) Central Philippine University covered the Philippines domestic flight ticket of their participant and gave US\$100 towards her international ticket. (e) MCC contributed 10% towards the travel cost of their 2 participants. (f) A church in Sri Lanka contributed 10% towards the international ticket of their participant. The hotel, which is owned by a church in Salatiga, gave us an equivalent of USD100 discount.

National Theological Workshop in Thailand

12-16 October 2008

McGilvary College of Divinity, Chiang Mai, THAILAND

Around forty participants gathered for the National Theological Workshop in Thailand. Thanks to the generous offer of Payap University, the workshop could be held at McGilvary College of Divinity of Payap University. The workshop was held under the theme: **"KINGDOM OF GOD: RECONCILIATION FOR THE WHOLENESS OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD (CHURCH CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARDS A SOCIETY OF WELL-BEING IN THAILAND)"**.

The workshop discussed and worked on the given theme in panels and small group discussions. Reflecting the reality in need of reconciliation and togetherness in the Thai society, the discussions were very lively and followed with great interest among the participants.

Panelists gave sufficient materials to discuss during the presentations at two panels. Field reports from special fields of ministry (e.g. HIV-AIDS, Elderly home

etc.) provided the discussions with concrete facts and background information. The discussions covered a large scope of sub-themes proposed by the panelists and sought a way for the churches and theologians to respond to and reflect accordingly on these issues.

Very significant was the engagement of the international students of McGilvary College of Divinity. They brought fresh and new perspectives into the discussion and showed their commitment towards the ecumenical movement and the future of churches in Asia.

The participants felt that this kind of workshop is very important to have on regular base. It was proposed to have the next workshop in 2010 at Bangkok Institute for Theology in Bangkok.

CCA-FMU Program Area Committee Theological Workshop

12-16 November 2008

Bangkok Christian Guesthouse, Bangkok, THAILAND

The Program Area Committee of Faith, Mission and Unity (FMU) had a theological workshop. Beside reports on programs of the past and plans for the future, the Committee brainstormed on the role of FMU for the future of the ecumenical movement and as expressed through the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA).

The committee generally shared the view that the ecumenical movement seems to be too far from the ground reality that many local congregations are facing. Analysis of this situation however showed that the diminishing of the ecumenical vision is due to the resurgence of denominationalism, and the change in the class character of the church. The committee identified as an important task to build bridges between the local grassroots congregation and the 'ideas of the church leaders'. In the meantime, however, emphasized the significance of the role of local church offices (NCCs, etc) and church leaders, as well.

To strengthen and deepen theological discourse in Asia, FMU was encouraged to continue its plan to organize "Theological Roundtable on Emerging Issues". Along with programs on theological concerns, efforts towards an 'Asian understanding of Mission' should be emphasized. Another important issue the committee was brainstorming on was the identity of a Christian movement / ecumenical movement through CCA. Being mindful the CCA cannot follow the practice of secular NGOs, there should be another, more developed concept of our 'Mission'.

Sub-regional Consultations for South Asia and South East Asia

Theme: "Churches and Seminaries: Appraising Our Ecumenical Vision for Today's World"

Dates & Venue:

- a. 17-20 November 2008 for South Asia; Venue: Schrachi Center, Kolkata, India
- b. 25-29 November for South East Asia: Venue: UCCP Shalom Center, Manila, Philippines

This series of consultations was conceived as a way to address the resurgence in denominationalism and a seeming aversion to ecumenism – which is not only true among the more conservative churches but also of some so-called mainline churches. The objectives of the consultation were to: (i) bring together heads of CCA member churches or councils and representatives of their church-related theological institutions in order to revisit our common ecumenical vision; (ii) appraise and assess our understandings and appropriations of this, our common ecumenical vision, especially in view of the challenges and realities of today's context; and (iii) come up with action plans to incorporate and mainstream our common ecumenical vision in our life and work as churches and theological education institutions.

In the South Asian consultation, the keynote speaker was the Rev. Dr. Rienzie Perera (CCA Associate General Secretary); Bible study leaders were Ms. Papiya and Dr. Limatula Longkumer; while facilitators were A Wati Longchar and Hope S. Antone. A total of 30 participants came from India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. They included church leaders, seminary lecturers and administrators, young pastors (recent graduates from seminaries) and ecumenical workers. Two Pakistani participants could not come due to visa problem. The Evangelical Fellowship of India was represented by two persons. Although invitation was extended to the Roman Catholic (through the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences or FABC), they could not send someone due to schedule conflict.

In the South East Asian consultation, the keynote speaker was Rev. Dr. Everett L. Mendoza (theologian of UCCP); Bible study leader was Rev. Dr. Robinson Radjagukguk (Indonesian New Testament scholar); while the facilitators were Everett L. Mendoza and Hope S. Antone. A total of 23 participants came from Indonesia, Myanmar, Thailand and the Philippines. They included church leaders, seminary lecturers and administrators, and ecumenical workers. The participant from Malaysia could not come due to sudden schedule problems. The Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences (FABC) was represented by one person. It was the request of the host, the National Council of Churches in the Philippines, to hold this consultation first with the representatives of churches and seminaries from the ecumenical circle – and to later expand the group to include the Evangelical and Pentecostal churches.

Other program contents were panel sharing on ecumenical vision – from church perspectives and seminary perspectives of each country delegation; sharing from NCC of each country on Challenges and Opportunities for a Common Ecumenical Vision; Small Group Discussions on the challenges/obstacles to ecumenism from the contextual realities of each country; envisioning together as churches and seminaries; Action Planning – suggestions for churches, seminaries

and ecumenical organizations; Worship and Bible Studies on (a) the basis of our ecumenical vision and (b) towards a wider ecumenical vision.

In both consultations, a number of participants expressed joy that they could attend a CCA program for the very first time and they considered it a special opportunity to be involved in such an activity. In the Kolkata consultation, the younger pastors (recent graduates from the seminary) especially felt happy for the opportunity to attend such a consultation. A number of the seasoned theologians and theological educators came from India. It became obvious for the South Asian participants that there must be more expression of solidarity between the stronger seminaries (e.g. in India) and the younger seminaries (e.g. in Bangladesh and Nepal) – and this can be through exchange of faculty or seconding some faculty from the stronger seminaries to the younger ones.

In the Manila consultation, participants realized the importance for seminaries and churches to come together to share their concerns and their ecumenical vision. Learning from Indonesia and Myanmar, the Filipino delegation realized the need for them to regularly come together – as there is no theological education association of seminaries in the country [although ATESEA is in the country there is still a need to have their own national association].

The consultations enabled participants to see the need for both churches and seminaries to share a common ecumenical vision – one that is wider than the traditional intra-faith or church ecumenism (which is lacking or still at the very elementary level of praying together for unity at a certain time of the year); instead, it should be one that embraces interfaith ecumenism – since Asia is a religiously plural region – as well as interconnectedness with all of God's creation – since we are now faced with serious ecological crisis and injustice.

Although these two consultations were not part of the plan in the 2008 funding requests of CCA-FMU, the generous grant from ICCO/Kerkinactie made it possible for me to plan and implement this program this year. I felt there was a need to bring together representatives of churches and seminaries because it seems that we do not share a common ecumenical vision. In practice, some seminaries seem to be more progressive than the churches that actually sponsor them; but some churches are also complaining that seminaries are not producing graduates who can actually serve the needs of local churches. So to hear comments like these was an eye-opener for both sides.

In the process, the role of the ecumenical movement became clearer – which is to remind both churches and seminaries of the wider ecumenical vision, which is bigger than the ecumenical movement itself. This was what I tried to impress upon the participants when I made an input presentation on CCA and its wider ecumenical vision.

It would be worthwhile for CCA-FMU to help facilitate the sharing of faculty between the stronger seminaries and the younger seminaries in South Asia – particularly in Nepal and Bangladesh. It would be worthwhile for CCA-FMU to also help and assist the formation of a national theological education

association in the Philippines and to encourage them to slowly widen the circle to include the Evangelical/Pentecostal and Catholic groups as well. It is much better to hold programs at sub-regional level – we get to have more people from neighboring countries with lesser expense for travel. Kolkata is a perfect meeting point for South Asia – travel of participants from Bangladesh and Nepal was so cheap. It is also good to make use of the facilities of our constituency – e.g. the Schrachi Centre which belongs to the Serampore College in Kolkata.

Ecumenical Lecture Series

Theme: “Current Trends in Feminist Theology in Asia”

Date: 21 November 2008

Venue: Serampore College, Serampore, India

Taking advantage of Hope Antone’s being in Kolkata for the South Asian sub-regional consultation of churches and seminaries, a day of ecumenical lectures was arranged at the Serampore College, with the facilitation of the Rev. Dr. A. Wati Longchar, director of the DMin program of Serampore College based in Kolkata.

The ecumenical lectures were given by Hope S. Antone (CCA joint executive staff) and Limatula Longkumer (vice principal of Jorhat Theological College). Hope Antone made a powerpoint presentation on “A Brief Survey of Trends in Feminist Theology: from Global to Asia” while Limatula Longkumer spoke on “Feminist Theology and Theological Education: Indian Experience.”

The lectures were delivered to a group of around 120 Bachelor of Divinity students and some faculty. The students came from all over India. A lively exchange of questions and answers followed the lectures. Among the questions that arose were the issues of dowry and women’s ordination. The two guest lecturers then shared lunch with the students and faculty and were later given a tour around the college.

JUSTICE, INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, DEVELOPMENT AND SERVICE

Rev. Freddy de Alwis, Joint Executive Secretary
Mr. Charlie Ocampo, Joint Executive Secretary

Follow-Up Meeting on Article 9 (Japanese Constitution)

30 October - 1 November 2008

Tokyo, JAPAN

Thirty representatives from Christian, Buddhist, and Islamic faiths gathered at the Korean YMCA in Tokyo, Japan, to look again at the recommendations from the first International Conference on Article 9 held in November 2007.

The follow-up meeting heard stories of resistance to militarism by communities in Okinawa and other parts of Japan, Korea and Thailand, where people are suffering under military occupation, of military forces deployed overseas to counter terrorism, and of scars left on people long after wars have ended.

The meeting also affirmed the various ways in which people of faith have responded to ensure that communities are warned against recent initiatives that contribute to a resurgence of war in the name of peace and security.

An international working group was organized, including representatives from Pax Christi USA, the Christian Conference of Asia, Asian Muslim Action Network, the Presbyterian Church of the Republic of Korea, the National Christian Council of Japan, the NCCJ Okinawa Branch, Article 9 Groups from Nebutsu and Shinsha-Otani, the Buddhist International Cooperation Network, Nippon-zan Myohi-ji, and the Risho Peace Foundation.

The Plan of Action includes:

- 1) writing a Letter to US President Barack Obama on Article 9 and its global implications
- 2) holding of a second Article 9 inter-religious conference in Korea in December 2009
- 3) sharing of information through publications and a website; 4) solidarity visits to Okinawa
- 4) promotion of peace education among children and youth
- 5) peace marches; 7) drafting of a mission and vision statement to be adopted at the 2009 Conference
- 6) coordination, networking and fundraising.

Charlie Ocampo, JID Joint Executive Secretary, represented CCA in the Meeting and was elected to the International Working Group. The National Christian

Council of Japan will temporarily house the secretariat until a more permanent structure has been established.

Solidarity Support

- 1) On the invitation of the National Council of Churches in India (NCCI), a pastoral visit to the churches in Orissa was planned but postponed for the first quarter of 2009 following the violence in Mumbai, India in mid-November 2008. A letter of concern and solidarity was sent to the Indian churches through the NCCI.
- 2) A letter of solidarity was also sent to the Middle East Council of Churches, expressing concern and offering prayers from the member churches and Councils in Asia in the wake of the bombings in the Gaza Strip in late December 2008.

International Ecumenical Workshop on the Rights of Asian Migrant Workers 24 - 28 November 2008 Lahore, PAKISTAN

The International Ecumenical Workshop on Rights of the Migrant Workers was held in Lahore, Pakistan and organized by CCA - JID in collaboration with the National Council of Churches in Pakistan.

The Workshop was conducted as part of the effort of the CCA - JID to launch actions in different levels, especially International, regional and national or country level, that aim to protect migrants against policies that violate their rights as well as to promote policies that will uphold these rights particularly of domestic workers.

The Workshop was attended by 20 participants from various countries in Asia including Thailand, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Philippines, Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Pakistan. Unfortunately, a number of delegates from other countries were not able to come due to fear and visa problems. Despite this situation, fruitful sharing and discussions on the situation of migrants and efforts to address the issues of migrants were done.

The first day of the workshop started with a morning worship led by the National Council of Churches in Pakistan. Freddy de Alwis of the CCA - JID explained the objectives of the workshop to guide the participants in the coming discussions.

Rev. Dr. Rienzie Perera, CCA associate general secretary led the first day's Bible Study by focusing on Exodus 3:7ff: "The Lord said I have indeed seen the misery of my people...I have heard them crying... and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them." He invited the delegates to explore certain biblical verses and concepts to understand the issues of human

labour. He ascertained saying that in our deliberations, we will be able to draw insights from the scriptures and traditions of other living Asian religions.

Mr. Victor Azariah, general secretary of NCC-Pakistan, gave an overview of the situation in Pakistan. He presented a brief history of Pakistan and the current economic, political and religious condition including basic information on the situation of Christians in the country.

Afterwards, Mr. Aaron Ceradoy, program coordinator of the Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants (APMM) based in Hong Kong, talked about the general situation of migrants in the region. He discussed how globalization has resulted to forced migration by putting sending countries in a worse crisis. He stressed that for many sending countries, the labor export policy is the lifeline of governments to prop up their sagging economies brought about by neoliberal globalization policies.

Mr. Ceradoy also said that the brewing international crisis also have grave impacts on migrants. The crisis will make sending countries more aggressive to export their human labor and promote the commodification of migrants. At the same time, it will also lead to attacks on the rights of migrants including their wage like what happened after the 1997 Asian financial crisis erupted.

He then outlined the general issues that migrant workers face such as low wages, lack of job security, overcharging of recruitment agencies and debt bondage, trafficking especially of women, different types of abuses, and lack of services and protection by the sending governments. Finally, he mentioned the efforts done already to address the plight of migrants most notable of which was the establishment of the International Migrants Alliance or IMA.

Participants in the group discussions further discussed the process of forced migration then outlined what they perceive as the needs of the migrants, and what churches and church-backed organizations can do to help alleviate the plight of migrants, including education and other services. Country presentations focused on the condition of the people in sending countries that leads to migration, the situation of undocumented migrants in receiving and the campaign churches there are doing.

The second day Bible reflection was led by Bishop Mano Rimal, who talked about how Moses and the leaders of Israel told people to remember that once they were aliens in foreign land, they should therefore do not discriminate foreigners.

Ms. Janjinda Pawadee of the Mekong Ecumenical Partnership Program gave inputs on the condition of migrants in countries from the Mekong region including Vietnam, Lao PDR, Cambodia, Burma/Myanmar, Thailand and the southern part of China. She emphasized, in particular, on the situation of Burmese migrants in Thailand, and reported on the different actions of the Thailand government to implement registration of the hundreds of thousands of refugees that enter Thailand. She added that even such registration procedures posed difficulties to refugees who had no financial capacity to shoulder the registration expenses.

Ms. Pawadee also relayed the different human rights violation committed against refugees in Thailand such as the absence of social services like health and education, lack of job opportunities for them, and the discriminatory stereotypes against refugees.

The topic "Role of Advocates in the Struggle for the Rights and Well-being of Migrants" was discussed by Mr. Ceradoy. He outlined the framework of advocates in addressing the plight of migrants including views on advocacy that may have negative impacts to the migrants such as having the "messiahnic" mentality (a savior of migrants) or just focusing on the economic problems of migrants. He shared concrete experiences on advocacy in different countries and how the actions of advocates in support of the efforts of the grassroots migrants have brought successes in terms of changing or scrapping policies that are detrimental to the rights of migrants. Finally, he said that at the end of the advocacy actions, it is important that grassroots migrants are empowered in the process.

Rev. Dr. M.P. Joseph from Taiwan gave a presentation on "Globalization and Disposable Labour from the Asian Perspective." He gave an overview on how migration can be viewed historically and how such is being changed by globalization. He talked about the impact of globalization in sending countries especially in rural areas, and the "de-peasantization" of people in rural areas that eventually lead them to leave their own countries and become migrants.

Dr.M.P joseph elaborated on how migrant labor as a social force is being used to destroy the organized labor ranks. Finally, he posed the challenge to churches and to participants of creating an alternative economic framework that will promote justice, and integrate migrant workers to the national unions, and in creating legal frameworks that will protect migrants.

The concept paper on the Public Hearing for Asian Migrant Workers to be held in Bangkok in June, 2009 was redrafted in collaboration with WCC – GEM, and future actions on the rights of migrants in local context were identified.

Reflections

The participants became more sensitive to migrant issues and seriously took the cause of Migrant workers back to their parishes and civil societies. The broad diversity of participants presented a challenge to the facilitators. The theological expositions were highly appreciated by the delegates.

The Administrative back-up food and accommodation was excellent and commendable, which was provided by NCCP. Handouts and other materials were provided within short notice and duly circulated. It is recommended that future hosts also should provide administrative support to CCA activities.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

A. Mekong Ecumenical Partnership Program

Ms. Janejinda Pawadee, Coordinator
Huh Chun Jung, consultant

Consultation on Migrant Workers and the Role of Churches

Chiangrai, THAILAND
1 – 3 December 2008

MEPP planned to implement two programs for October to December 2008. Unfortunately, a Symposium on Mekong Migration on Dec 1-3, 2008 was cancelled due to the airport closure in Bangkok, Thailand. Only the Consultation on Migrant Workers and the Role of Churches pushed through, in collaboration with the Social Development and Service Unit of the Church of Christ in Thailand (SDSU-CCT). The consultation is a follow-up activity of the first one held in Maesod, Tak province on August 25-27, 2008, in which MEPP was tasked to educate churches and migrant workers.

The objectives of the consultation are: a) to strengthen the role and capacity of churches to deal with and address the issues related to cross-border migration; b) to help churches along the Thai and Burma borders understand the situation of cross-border and migration and able to welcome migrant workers in their fold; and, c) to encourage churches to provide assistance to migrant workers and promote their rights and human dignity. The consultation adopted the theme of the first consultation, *“Equipping the Churches in its Mission to Address Cross-border Migration and Rights of Burmese Migrant Workers in Thailand.”*.

There were fifty-two participants from churches along the Thai-Burma border in Chiangrai, resource persons and facilitators including fifteen migrant workers and undocumented persons.

The program started by hearing voices of migrants workers to help participants understand the situation of migrant workers and their difficulties. NGOs working on migrant issues shared on their work and services and educated participants on the situation and challenges of migrant workers in Thailand. A para-legal training session was conducted by a lawyer. Participants also reflected on biblical teachings related to migrant issues.

Stories telling by migrant workers, church workers and NGOs reflected a situation /reality of push and pull factors. The push factors in Burma/Myanmar include poverty and human rights violation, while a pull factor in Thailand is a growing economic and job opportunities for migrant workers.

Migrant workers in Thailand are exploited and violated by employers and government officers including the police. They live in a crowded areas lacking sanitation which created health problems e.g., TB, malaria and diarrhea.

Both Thai and migrant workers participants admitted that they lack knowledge in laws and government policies on migrant workers. They need more training to enhance their knowledge and skills to deal with migrant work and related issues. Both Thai and migrant workers participants have learned more about migrant workers and human rights issues not only from a legal but also from a Christian perspective.

Participants especially the Thais were able to review the Bible to “welcome and love our neighbor,” (people from Burma/Myanmar) and to translate this into action. They learnt more to overcome misunderstanding, hatred, discrimination and prejudice against migrant workers from Burma/Myanmar.

Challenges. Churches are interested to continue to work on migration and migrant workers issues. They like the SDSU-CCT to organize more trainings. Churches need to enhance their skills to work on migrant workers and related issues, as well to exchange experiences and learn from NGOs. They also see a need for more collaboration with the country of origin and the Myanmar Council of Churches (MCC) to work on migrant workers issues effectively.

B. CCA – UN/ESCAP

Rev. Noel Ilagan, Consultant

The project activities during this period focused on sustaining and expanding the life skill training networks initiated in the previous period, Phase II of the project, as well as identifying the best practices in the project activities in each country. Monitoring trips to Cambodia, China and Sri Lanka were undertaken. The project officers observed that the NCOs were undertaking activities, with flexibility to suit the local conditions. National workshops were held in the Philippines and China to share the experiences of the project activities with other stakeholders at the national level. The national workshop for Cambodia is scheduled to be in January 2009 and that of Sri Lanka is scheduled to be in February 2009. A final survey has been started in each country, evaluating the impacts of the projects activities on the target group, disadvantaged youth, in local communities.

NCOs in each country continued the activities for Phase III, building on the community-based network developed in Phase II. In addition, they are engaged in monitoring 10 selected youth in each country to assess the impacts of project activities upon them. The outcome reported so far, in combination with the raw outcome of the final surveys, indicates that youth who have participated in the project activities have greater awareness of risks associated with high-risk behaviour, as well as more accurate knowledge regarding HIV/AIDS.

Typical Activities during this period include:

1. Stakeholder consultations were completed in China, Sri Lanka, Cambodia and Philippines.
2. The orientation programmes for various stakeholders, including local government officials (Cambodia, Philippines) and mothers of youth (Sri Lanka) were conducted to increase the understanding of the life skill training and the support for the project activities.
3. In China, parents of youth as well as community members, including Imams (religious leaders) were found to be supportive of the project activities.
4. Baseline surveys were completed in Xinjiang, China; Colombo, Sri Lanka; Kampot Province, Cambodia and Pasay City, Philippines.
5. National Counterpart Organizations were identified in all four participating countries.
6. Translation and adaptation of ESCAP life skills training materials were completed in Xinjiang, China; Colombo, Sri Lanka; Kampot Province, Cambodia and Pasay City, Philippines.
7. The Training of Trainers (TOT) programmes were completed in Xinjiang, China; Colombo, Sri Lanka; Kampot Province, Cambodia and Pasay City, Philippines. Regular community based life-skills trainings are being carried out in project communities.

Collated and Edited:

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