



Christian Conference of Asia



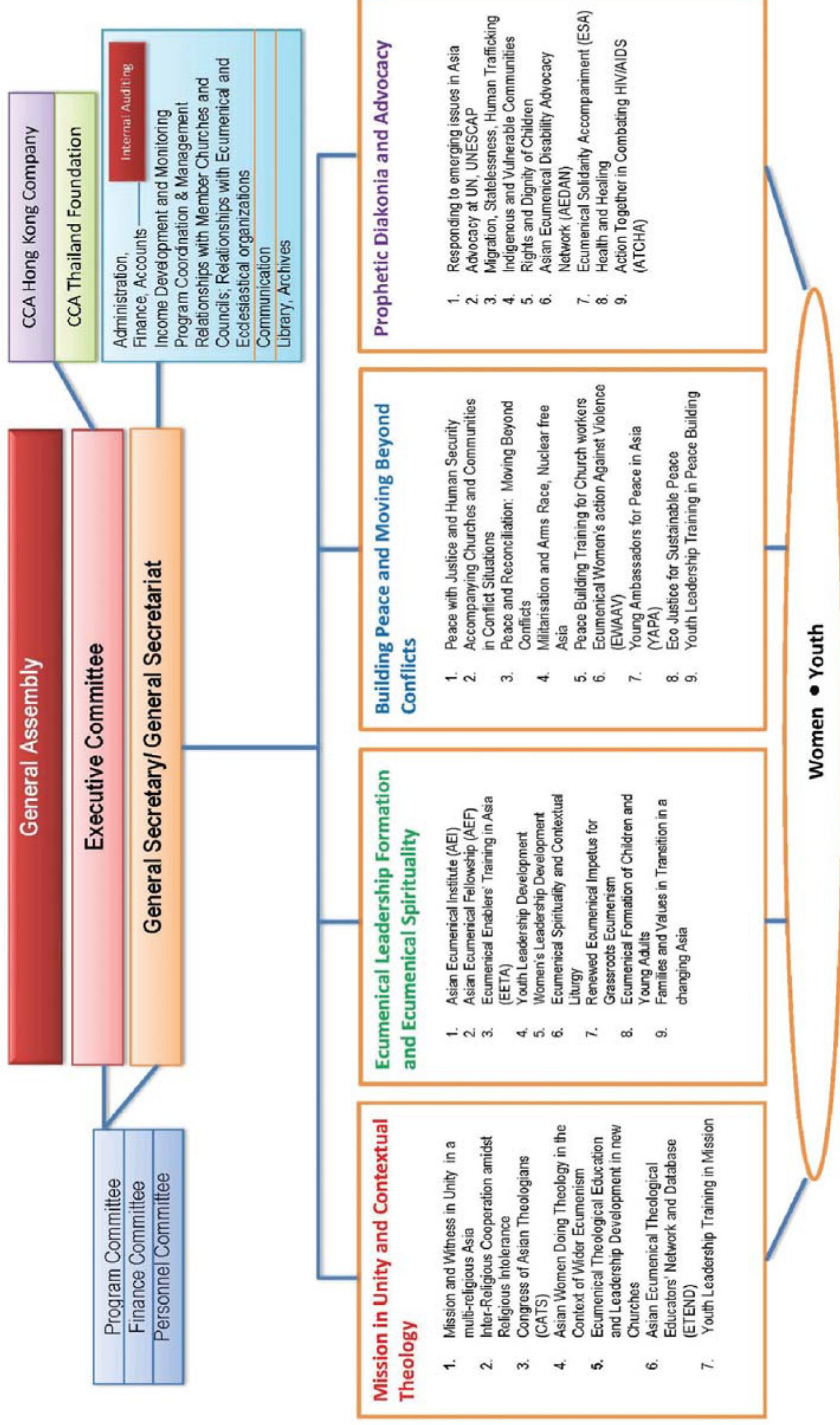
*'Towards
Wider
Ecumenism
in Asia'*

Programme Report **2018**

Programme Report 2018

Christian Conference of Asia

CCA Programme Structure 2015-2020



Foreword by the General Secretary

Towards Wider Ecumenism in Asia

For more than a century, the concept of ecumenism and the role of the ecumenical movement have been defined or understood in the context of church unity, although ecumenism in its real sense addresses the all aspects in the Oikoumene. However, this traditional concept is changing. Challenged by rapid changes in the world, churches and the ecumenical movement in the present day have recognised the need for rediscovering the value and relevance of ecumenism and the wider dimensions of the prophetic witness. The shift in ecumenical paradigm focuses on wider issues. Churches began to recognise the truth that God gathers all God's people to live as a new humanity. The Church, as the people of God and the body of Christ, needs to discover and recognise this truth continuously.

Today, churches around the world and the ecumenical movement have realised and recognised the fact that the world's problems are not Christian problems seeking Christian answers, but they are human problems that must be collectively addressed. The world needs opportunities to work across boundaries to overcome exclusiveness and to break every yoke that threatens humanity. So the questions and concerns pertinent to ecumenism are not debating about the semantics but on theological issues related to God's mission. Our responses to God's call for prophetic witnessing in today's world are the parameters of wider ecumenism. Biblically, our vision of the Oikoumene leads us to interpret, reclaim and rediscover the meaning of ecumenism in its wider framework and our role in 'prophetic witnessing' in the entire Oikoumene. The challenging question that comes to our mind today is whether reconceptualising, reinterpreting and reclaiming the meaning of oikoumene will make a paradigm shift and focus our role in prophetic witnessing.

As a matter of fact, prophetic witness in the context of wider ecumenism focuses on solidarity with the outcaste, the poor, the needy, the marginalized, the oppressed, the refugees, the migrants and the internally displaced people regardless of race, religion, faith, tradition, colour, gender or sexual orientation. The Church and the ecumenical movement need to address the wider issues in every emerging context. Asia and Asian situations are not exceptions to such emerging context and realities. In Asia, these issues and questions are more pertinent and there is a pressing need for radical resistance to the unjust systems or administrations, and constructive engagements in social, political, economic, religious, ecological and public issues. These pressing issues and contexts warrant the need for Christians to work together with other religious adherents for the well-being of the entire inhabited world. Our ecumenical call today is, by prophetic witness, to transform the forces of fragmentation of communities into a healing force and resources for the well-being of the entire inhabited world. Therefore, it is an imperative for the Asian ecumenical movement to search for the relevance of prophetic witness and ecumenism and continue to hold on to the real vision of the oikoumene in its full sense. The churches that are minorities in Asia and live amidst the adherents of majority religions need to reinterpret the theological bases of ecumenism and its vision.

The programmes and activities of CCA during the year 2018 were focused on wider ecumenism as prophetic witness, and aimed at helping churches in Asia to address the call to be God's faithful agents in the process of transformation, renewal and restoration of the entire oikoumene. This report narrates various activities carried out in 2018.



Mathews George Chunakara
General Secretary, CCA

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GENERAL SECRETARIAT

Coordination of Administration and Programmes

The General Secretary and the General Secretariat (GS) of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) are responsible for the coordination and administration of the CCA. The General Secretary, as the Chief Executive Officer of CCA, is mainly responsible for the overall coordination of programmes, administration, income development, finance, relationships, and communications.

Programmes and Coordination

The General Secretary, who is responsible for the overall coordination and supervision of the implementation and monitoring of all programme areas, provided leadership in programme planning and coordination in 2018 as well.

The General Secretary's mandates also included responsibility for strengthening relationships with member churches and councils, liaising with the governing board and advisory bodies, building relationships with governments and inter-governmental organisations. The General Secretary, with the assistance of other staff in the General Secretariat, shared and promoted the activities of the CCA with member churches and councils, and encouraged member churches and councils to plan and engage in joint action and ministries that manifest unity in Christ.

Several programmes and activities were initiated jointly with member churches and councils in 2018, and the member churches

shared resources to implement the programmes. The responsibility of the General Secretary and the staff in the Secretariat in 2018 also included accompanying churches in capacity-building.

As per the new constitution and the organisational structure of CCA, the General Secretary is mandated to build and strengthen relationships with other ecumenical organisations within the region and globally, as well as with other regional ecumenical organisations. The General Secretary has been taking a lead in maintaining a close relationship with the Roman Catholic Church in Asia through the Federation of the Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), and the Asia Evangelical Alliance (AEA). Special attention has also been paid to develop relations with the Pentecostal Churches in Asia. The General Secretary has made several efforts to develop churches that are not members of the CCA, including churches in Brunei, the Central Asian Republics, People's Republic of China, Vietnam, and Mongolia as well as civil society organisations and inter-faith organisations in Asia.

Governing Board and Advisory Committees

The General Secretary, who has the responsibility of liaising with the governing boards and advisory committees of the CCA, took the lead in conducting the Executive Committee and other sub-committees. The meetings of the Executive Committee and sub-committees of CCA were held during the year 2018 and facilitated by the General Secretary.

Executive Committee Meeting

1 - 4 July / Antelias, Lebanon

The Executive Committee of CCA met in Antelias, Lebanon from 1 to 4 July 2018. They were hosted by the Holy See of the Armenian Orthodox Church Cilicia on behalf of the Armenian Orthodox Church in Iran, a CCA member church from the West Asia region, which is part of the Armenian Orthodox Church, Holy See of Cilicia.

The Executive Committee in its various sessions received and discussed reports on programmes and activities, property development and financial sustainability plans.

The General Secretary presented the report outlining various activities and programmes conducted during the past one year and also

highlighted plans to hold major events in 2019 which included an 'Asian Inter-Religious Leaders' Summit on Building Peace and Moving beyond Conflicts', which would bring together at least 100 leaders of various religions from across Asia.

Referring to the proposed plan of building CCA headquarters as a priority, he told the annual session of the Executive Committee meeting to explore the possibility of linking the establishment of a full-fledged Asian Ecumenical Institute with the headquarters project.

The General Secretary also reported to the governing body of CCA that preparations were on for the Asian Ecumenical Women's Assembly (AEWA) in 2019 and the General Assembly in 2020.



CCA Executive Committee Meeting Opening Session; Beirut, Lebanon

“We are now meeting in the Middle East region, the cradle of Christianity. This is the first time that a meeting of CCA executive committee takes place outside the traditional orbit of the Asian ecumenical movement - by traditional orbit, I mean as we understand or have classified the Asian ecumenical movement thus far. We have been told or taught that this geographical area is the Middle East. Since time immemorial, especially since Biblical history presents the Middle East region as part of Asia, it was West Asia... For us, the churches in Asia, we have sentimental attachments to this geographical region. Ironically, the Middle East, which is experiencing such extreme chaos, wars and suffering was historically the birthplace of the world’s three major religions, Christianity (Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant), Islam (Sunni and Shi’a) and Judaism (Orthodox, Conservative and Reform), as well as a number of other smaller faiths. This is the cradle of Christianity. However, Christianity and the Christians in this region have been facing most difficult challenges during the past several years. The Christian communities in West Asia have survived 2,000 years of tumult and war. In some of these ancient Christian communities, prayers are still said in Aramaic, the language that Jesus used in daily life. These communities now tremble on the brink of destruction. Churches in many parts of the world expressed concerns on the plight of the Christians in the Middle East region. However, often I was wondering whether there had been a deafening silence from the part of Asian Christians about the plight of Christians, although this was happening within the traditional boundaries of Asia, in West Asia!”

- CCA General Secretary



Executive Committee Meeting



CCA Executive Committee

Finance Committee Meeting

The Finance Committee of the CCA met in conjunction with the Executive Committee meeting, which was held on 30 June - 1 July 2018.

The Finance Committee reviewed the current financial situation of the CCA and revised the existing budget of the year 2018 and worked out a framework of the budget for the year 2019.

As per the new Constitution of the CCA, the Finance Committee is appointed with experts by the Executive Committee. At present, the following members are serving on the Finance Committee: Mr. Augustine Deepak Karmakar, Certified Public Chartered Accountant, Bangladesh, Treasurer of the CCA; Mr. Patrick Yuen, Certified Public Chartered Accountant and Financial Advisor to the Hong Kong Christian Council and Hong Kong Christian Schools and Colleges; Mr. Isarael Paulraj, Financial Consultant and Director of Companies in Sri Lanka, formerly Treasurer of

the Anglican Church in Sri Lanka, NCC Sri Lanka and Honorary Treasurer of the CCA; Mr. Nuttee Kunlacharnpises, Financial Consultant and Pension Fund Manager of the Church of Christ in Thailand; Advocate Robert Bruce C., Treasurer of the Church of South India and Director of the CSI Trust Association; Rev. Diana Tana, Vice Moderator of the CCA, Methodist Church of New Zealand; Dr. Mathews George Chunakara, General Secretary, CCA

Sub-committee of CCA Headquarters and Property Development

The sub-committee of the CCA Headquarters and Property Development had a meeting in the CCA Headquarters on 8th June 2018 to discuss about a possibility of the development of the CCA property in Chiang Mai and construction of the CCA headquarters.

The subcommittee was composed of the following members: The Ry. Revd. Dhiloraj R. Canagasabey; Bishop Reuel N. Marigza; Dr.



Finance Committee Meeting

Wing Ze Tong; Ms. Supaporn Yarnasarn; Dr. Mathews George Chunakara.

CCA Company in Hong Kong

The CCA Company is registered and incorporated in Hong Kong as a private limited liability company (limited by guarantee) on behalf of the CCA to acquire, hold, administer, manage, improve, maintain, transact, and facilitate dealings in the CCA's movable and immovable properties, assets, investments, and funds. It is a constitutional requirement as per the provisions of Article 11 of the CCA Constitution and approved by the General Assembly of the CCA. The members of the Company are the members of the Executive Committee of the CCA and the Directors of the Company are appointed by the CCA Executive Committee.

CCA Foundation Thailand

The CCA Foundation Thailand is a legal entity registered in Thailand as per the Thai laws, under which the CCA has its functioning office based in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The CCA Foundation sponsors the visa and work permit applications of the international staff working at the Chiang Mai office. The Foundation has

a committee which consists of the CCA General Secretary as well as representatives of the Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT) who are Thai citizens.

The CCA Executive Committee appointed the following members of the Board of the CCA Foundation in 2018: Dr. Pradit Takerngrangsari, President; Mr. Surapong Mitrakul, CCT General Secretary; Mrs. Supaporn Yarnasarn, CCA Executive Committee Member; Dr. Rux Prompalit, President, Payap University; Dr. Prawate Khid-arn, former General Secretary, CCA; Dr. Chuleepran Srisoontorn, former member of CCA General Committee; Dr. Mathews George Chunakara, General Secretary, CCA

The CCA Foundation Thailand had a meeting in February 2018 at the headquarters of CCA in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

The following members were elected by the CCA Executive Committee to be members of the Directors' Board in 2018: Bishop Thomas Soo, Anglican Church in Hong Kong; Dr. Tong Wing Sze, Member of CCA Executive Committee; Rev. Eric So, Hong Kong Council of Churches of Christ in China; Rev. Prof. Lo Lung Kwong, Hong Kong Christian Council;

Rev. Dr. Kim Jong-goo, Methodist Church in Korea; Dr. Mathews George Chunakara (Company Secretary / Ex. Officio).

Investment Committee, Hong Kong

The following members served in 2018 on the Hong Kong-based Investment Committee of the CCA, which was constituted to oversee the investment of the CCA in Hong Kong, as decided by the CCA Executive Committee: Bishop Thomas Soo, Dr. Tong Wing Sze, Rev. Eric So, Rev. Prof. Lo Lung Kwong, and Mr. Patrick Yuen, a member of the Finance Committee of CCA; The Investment Committee met twice in 2018 and reviewed the details of CCA's investments in Hong Kong. CCA's investments in Hong Kong are now in shares, bonds, and fixed deposits.

Visits and Meetings

Taking into account the fact that ecumenical relationships can be effective only when there is a mutual exchange of information and sharing of responsibilities, the General Secretary and other staff members visited and participated in several programmes and activities as well as special events of member churches and councils during 2018.

Church and Ecumenical Relations

The General Secretariat facilitated and carried out the ecumenical relationships with member churches and councils, related ecumenical organisations, regional and global ecumenical organisations and world confessional bodies in 2018. The initiatives, as part of strengthening church and ecumenical relations, helped building stronger networks and also promoted the involvement and participation of CCA member constituencies with a greater sense of ownership.

The General Secretary attended various programmes, and delivered keynote addresses or thematic addresses at various church and ecumenical events in 2018. Visits to member churches and councils as well as participation in events as part of strengthening church and ecumenical relations by the General Secretary during the year 2018 included:

- Attended and addressed the International Conference in Celebrating the 30th Anniversary of the "88 Declaration" of the NCC Korea, March 2018.
- Participated and spoke at the Conference of NGOs (CoNGO) in consultative relations with the United Nations Regional Committee in Asia Pacific (RCAP) meeting held at the Siam University in Bangkok, May 2018.
- Visit to Kampuchea Christian Council, Cambodia May 2018
- Attended the 70th anniversary celebration of the World Council of Churches which was held in conjunction with the week-long Central Committee meeting of WCC, held in Geneva, Switzerland from 15 to 21 June 2018.
- Asian Inter-religious leaders' Summit on Religion for Peace, organized by the Foreign Affairs of the Federal Government of Germany in Berlin, June 2018
- Attended the General Assembly of United Church of Christ in Japan (UCCJ), October 2018
- Attended the General Assembly of Church of Christ in Thailand, October 2018
- Attended the General Assembly of the Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church, August 2018
- Attended the Senate of Serampore Bicentenary International Consultation, in Kolkata, India, August 2018
- Visit to Gereja Protestan di Indonesia bagian Barat (GPIB), Indonesia, August 2018

- Attended Thanksgiving Service of Centennial Commemoration of Hong Kong Council of the Church of Christ in China (HKCCCC) in September 2018
- Visit to Lao Evangelical Church, December 2018

Visits of Church Leaders and Ecumenical Partners to CCA Headquarters

During the year 2018, various church and ecumenical leaders representing churches and ecumenical organisations from around the world visited the CCA headquarters and had meetings with the CCA General Secretary and staff. Among the visitors were twenty five students and teachers from Madras Christian College, India; A twenty-member youth delegation of Jeonju Shin Il Church of Presbyterian Church of Korea; An eight-member delegation of YMCA – Korea led by

Rev. Dr. Jae Woong Ahn, the former General Secretary of CCA; A three member delegation from the Lutheran Church in Australia led by Bishop John Henderson; and Dr. WONG Wai-Yin Christina from Divinity School of Chung Chi College - The Chinese University of Hong Kong; representatives of USAID regional office in Bangkok; officials of ICRC, staff members from UNAIDS Bangkok; Dr. Johan Hasselgren, Church of Sweden; Ms. Katharian Gfeller and Programme Coordinators of Mission 21 Asia



Visit of Youth delegation of Jeonju Shin Il Church of Presbyterian Church of Korea



Visit of Australian Lutheran Church Delegation



Delegation of National YMCA- Korea



WCC-REOs Relations Working Group Meeting at CCA: Fr. Daniel Buda, Dr. Ani Drissi Ghazaryan of WCC and Mr. Jim Winkler of NCC USA with CCA General Secretary



Staff Meeting with Coordinators of Mission21 Asia Team



Ms. Katharina Gfeller and Mr. Christian Wagner from Mission21

Team; WCC Programme Executives Dr. Daniel Buda, Dr. Ani Ghazaryan Drissi and Rev. Jim Winkler, General Secretary of NCC-USA.

Relations with Ecclesiastical & Confessional Bodies

The CCA and the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) have been jointly working in various areas to try to strengthen the common witness.

Relations with evangelical and Pentecostal Churches in Asia also are being developed through meetings and dialogue.

Relation with the International Committee of the Fellowship of the Least Coin (ICFLC)

The 38th annual meeting of ICFLC was held in Bangkok, Thailand from 8 to 11 October and was attended by 20 delegates and guests from the ICFLC's constituency member organizations and partner organizations. The Fellowship of the Least Coin (FLC), initiated in 1956, and linked to CCA for the first several years, is now a worldwide ecumenical fellowship of prayer of Christian women for justice, peace and reconciliation. Jung Eun Moon, Grace attended the annual meeting of FLC on behalf of CCA in 2018.

Advocacy Initiatives at the UN

The CCA has been accredited with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) since 2003. The special consultative status enables CCA to facilitate the advocacy of Asian churches in various areas of their concerns through regional and international platforms such as UN Human Rights Council sessions, Universal Periodic Review of UNHRC, UN General Assembly, Security Council, UNESCAP, UNEP, and UNDP.

The CCA General Secretary attended and spoke at the Conference of NGOs (CoNGO) in consultative relations with the United Nations Regional Committee in Asia Pacific (RCAP) meeting, which was held in Bangkok at the Siam University on 8 – 9 May 2018.



Ecumenical Responses to Emerging Issues in Solidarity

The CCA tried to respond to emerging Asian issues and accompanied its member churches and councils that were either caught up in conflict situations or needed support on specific occasions.

- ***Condolences to victims of earthquake in Taiwan***

The CCA expressed its condolences to the bereaved families of those who were killed in the earthquake that struck Taiwan on 6th February 2018 and extended solidarity to the families of the victims, the wounded and the

survivors of the natural disaster. In his statement, the General Secretary appreciated the efforts of PCT to initiate relief assistance to the affected areas with the aid of indigenous churches and communities in those places. The severe earthquake with a magnitude of 6.4 claimed 17 lives, left more than 260 people injured and many missing.

- ***General Secretary's Statement on Inter-Korean Summit***

The CCA General Secretary issued a statement on 26th April 2018 urging its members and all peace-loving people around the world to pray for the inter-Korean summit that was to take place that week in Panmunjom, as the leaders of both Koreas committed to work together towards reconciliation and peaceful coexistence in the Peninsula. The CCA also reiterated its unwavering support to the call by the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCKK) to replace its 1953 Armistice Agreement with a Peace Treaty. The General Secretary said, "It is our fervent prayer and hope that the North and South Korean leaders will work out a suitable solution based on equality, mutual respect, mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence. It is also our sincere hope that a successful inter-Korean meeting will pave the way for a highly anticipated encounter between the North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and the U.S. President Donald Trump."

- ***Condemnation of attacks on churches in Surabaya, Indonesia***

The CCA condemned the bomb blasts that targeted three churches in Indonesia's second largest city, Surabaya on 13th May in which 14 people were killed and more than 40 people wounded. Three separate explosions had taken place at Santa Maria Tak Bercela Catholic Church (STMB), Diponegoro Indonesian Christian Church (GKI), and Surabaya Pentecostal Church (GPPS) in and around Surabaya. The General Secretary expressed deep condolences to families of victims and stated that the attack carried out

against worshipping communities during Sunday services was a heinous crime which was not justifiable by any religion.

While recollecting the reputed history of Indonesia's tradition of nurturing tolerance, harmony and unity among people and communities, irrespective of religious, ethnic and cultural divisions or identities, the CCA General Secretary said, "The attacks on churches in Surabaya are deliberate attempts by forces of evil in Indonesia that aim at destroying the country's long nurtured and cherished values of religious harmony and the foundation of the long-cherished 'Pancasila' principles, which accept religious pluralism and call for unity in diversity." He also appreciated the response by the leadership of Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI) to the prevalent situation in the wake of the attacks.

• ***Statement on the Release of Detained United Methodist Church Missionaries in the Philippines***

The Executive Committee of CCA that met in Lebanon in July 2018 expressed grave concern over the detention of the three young missionaries who were serving in the Philippines. The three young missionaries from the Global Mission Fellows programme of the United Methodist Church (UMC) namely, Mr. Tawanda Chandiwana (Zimbabwe), Ms. Miracle Osman Nkhata (Malawi), and Mr. Adam Shaw (United States of America), were taken into police custody and detained at several checkpoints in February 2018 when they were part of an international ecumenical human rights fact-finding mission in General Santos City.

The Executive Committee of the CCA urged the Government of the Philippines to release the detainees who were under detention. The General Secretary stated that the right of foreign missionaries to freedom of movement must be respected and that the government needed to consider the added value of the

committed work of the missionaries for the people of the Philippines. He also welcomed the decision of the government to deport the three UMC missionaries instead of seeing them languishing in detention.

• ***CCA's Message to Churches to Combat Human Trafficking***

On the occasion of the United Nation's World Day against Trafficking in Persons on 30 July 2018, CCA urged its member churches and councils to make every effort to combat human trafficking in their respective situations in Asia. The General Secretary stated, "Many Asians experience the worst forms of cruelty in the modern slavery of human trafficking. This should be arrested in all possible ways by governments and systematic advocacy measures should be undertaken to protect the dignity of victims of human trafficking."

He further added that in terms of the different types of trafficking outlined and identified by the UN, a vast number of people from several Asian countries were experiencing vulnerable situations. CCA, on its part, has been organizing Asia regional consultations annually since 2015 in order to sensitise Asian churches to combat human trafficking as part of regional advocacy initiatives.

• ***Appeal for Prayers and Solidarity with Victims of Floods in Kerala***

CCA offered condolences to the bereaved families and expressed solidarity with the affected people who suffered colossal damage to their lives because of the floods that ravaged the south Indian state of Kerala in August 2018. In an appeal, the General Secretary urged all CCA member churches and ecumenical organizations around the world to pray for the affected people and communities in Kerala and to come forward to express solidarity and respond urgently to the humanitarian crisis. All churches in Kerala, including several CCA member churches were actively involved in relief operations together

with other religious communities, civil society organizations and volunteers in the affected areas. Church buildings, schools, colleges and hospitals owned by churches were converted into temporary shelters for the affected people. The General Secretary said, "The impact of the devastation will remain long term. There is an urgent need to rebuild and rehabilitate the lives of the people and the communities and restore normalcy for which timely intervention and assistance are needed on a large scale." More than 400 people died in the floods and several thousand were rendered homeless in the state. Over a million people were displaced due to the most severe deluge that had affected Kerala in over a century.

CCA has channelled funds received from the United Church of Christ in Japan (UCCJ) and the Anglican Church in Japan to flood victim relief work in Kerala.

Income Development and Finance

The General Secretariat is responsible for the coordination of income development and

finance. In 2018, the responsibility of fund-raising was undertaken by the General Secretary in addition to all other responsibilities. Considering the vast operational area of the CCA in geographical terms (from Iran in West Asia to Japan in East Asia; Nepal in the North of Asia to New Zealand in the South), the number of member churches and councils, and the number of issues, concerns and themes that have to be addressed as part of ecumenical responses, the CCA needs more funds for effective implementation of programmes.

Asian Churches' Contributions to CCA in 2018

The General Secretariat's special efforts saw several Asian churches making special grants for the CCA. It was encouraging to note that the level of contributions from member churches increased in 2018.

In addition to this, a number of other member churches offered financial support to host programmes in the coming years.

There are several positive and encouraging responses from the member churches in terms of hosting programmes. This was evident recently also through the generous contributions and support CCA received from churches in Myanmar and Indonesia. Myanmar churches are rather financially weaker, but their contributions for hosting the AMC and the Diamond Jubilee celebration were so generous. They contributed U.S. \$44,912 for hosting the Asia Mission Conference and for the Diamond Jubilee commemorative event. In addition to this, their in-kind contributions provided additional support. Through the Protestant Church in Minahasa, Indonesia (GMIM), the Provincial government of North Sulawesi spent a substantial amount to host the AEYA-2018 which was held in Manado, Indonesia. The board and lodging of 400 participants, local transportation, international tickets of 35 participants and domestic tickets of almost 100 Indonesian participants from various parts of the country, printing costs, local transportation, expenses related to exposure programmes, etc. were covered fully by the local hosts. We have not yet received the details about the expenses incurred by the local hosts. Such positive responses are very encouraging. However, it is also disappointing that many economically well-off churches in Asia's rich countries are not generous enough to support CCA by way of adding more membership contributions or programme fund contributions.

- CCA General Secretary

Communications

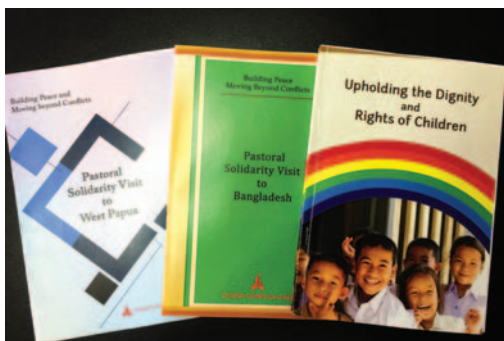
The CCA's electronic news releases continue to be the medium through which communications with CCA's constituencies, the ecumenical world, civil society and other world bodies are kept and sustained. The communication consultant and interns work on regularly publishing news releases on CCA's official website and send bulk e-mails via Mail Chimp to more than 5000 subscribers. They manage the official Facebook and Twitter pages of the CCA, and edit the content of the website. The interns, who are based at the CCA headquarters, work closely with the managers and developers of the website based in India.



CCA Social Media in Facebook



CCA Website



CCA Printing Booklets



AEYA Programme Daily Newsletter & Printing Matters



AEYA Media Team: Ismael Fisco Jr., Aju George Chris, Koko Alviar, Jeba Singh Samuvel, Ikwila Rewur, Rangga Mangowal, Gianina Fay Vecino & Mee Mee

CCA Staff

New recruitments and appointments of Programme Staff members were made; Dr. Ronald Lalthanmawia (India) was appointed as Project Coordinator of special programme

of ATCHAA (Action Together in Combating HIV & AIDS in Asia) and Mr. Jay Roy Tipayan (Philippines) as Advocacy Coordinator of ATCHAA.



CCA Staff 2018



CCA Staff Choir at Christmas Celebration

Identifying Young Ecumenical Talents in Asia: Training and Internship

One of the programme priorities of the CCA is to facilitate leadership development and capacity building of the youth of CCA's member churches and councils. The CCA's internship programme has been redesigned as a year-long leadership development training with intensive practical guidance. Through an annual recruitment process, selections are made to identify suitable candidates. The 2018 batch of interns were: Ms. Gianina Fay C. Vecino (United Church of Christ in the Philippines); Ms. Nant Myat Noe Aein 'Salome' (Church of the Province of

Myanmar); Ms. Rosiana Purnomo (Gereja Isa Almasih, Indonesia) and Ms. Navya Dinah Saji (Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, India).



CCA Interns 2018

In Memoriam

In 2018, the CCA received news about the sad demise of its close associates and prominent church leaders in Asia.



Bishop John Victor Samuel, Pakistan

Bishop John Victor Samuel, a former General Secretary of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) passed away in Multan, Pakistan on 30 August, 2018. Bishop John Victor Samuel, was CCA's fifth General Secretary from 1990 to 1995. He served the Church and ecumenical movement in various capacities for more than half a century. He was a member of CCA presidium from 1973 to 1977; member of WCC Central Committee, Moderator of Commission of Interchurch Aid, Refugee and World Service (CICARWS/WCC), President of NCC Pakistan, Presiding Bishop of Church of Pakistan, and General Secretary of the Student Christian Movement in Pakistan.



Rev. Dr. U Win Tin, Myanmar

Rev. Dr. U Win Tin, the former General Committee member of CCA, passed away in Yangon, Myanmar on 31 March, 2018. He had served Myanmar Council of Churches as President and also worked as General Secretary of National ECLOF.



Rev. Dr. Saw Mar Gay Gyi, Myanmar

Rev. Dr. Saw Mar Gay Gyi, former General Secretary of Myanmar Council of Churches, passed away in Yangon, Myanmar on 12 May, 2018.



Rev. Dr. Dong Sung Kim, South Korea

Rev. Dr. Dong Sung Kim, former WCC staff member passed away in Seoul on 25 March 2018. Rev. Dr. Dong Sung Kim served the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Geneva as a programme executive and worked as a secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Planning at the PCK General Assembly Office.



Rev. Dr. Yam Kho Pau, Myanmar

Rev. Dr. Yam Kho Pau, a member of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches and the immediate past General Secretary of the Myanmar Baptist Convention (MBC) passed away on Sunday 25 November 2018 in Yangon. Dr. Pau served the MBC as its General Secretary for six consecutive years, from 2011 to 2017.

Programmes and Activities in 2018

1.

Mission in Unity and Contextual Theology

Objectives

- To accompany churches in Asia to strengthen the Church's mission and witness in multi-religious contexts;
- To assist member churches and councils of the CCA in revitalising and nurturing the unity of churches and the ecumenical movement in Asia;
- To develop contextual theological undergirding for mission and witness while addressing emerging issues in Asia;
- To strengthen collaboration and cooperation among churches and various ecumenical actors in Asia and from other parts of the world who are engaged in mission and witness in Asia; and,
- To initiate, facilitate, and strengthen ecumenical theological initiatives in Asia.

Asia Mission Conference – National Follow-up in Pakistan: Consultation on 'Prophetic Witness to the Truth and Light in Pakistan'

19 – 21 February 2018 / Lahore, Pakistan



AMC National Follow-up in Pakistan

A National Consultation on 'Prophetic Witness to the Truth and Light', was organized by the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) and hosted by the National Council of Churches in the Pakistan (NCCP). This event was a follow-up of the AMC, which was held at the headquarters of the NCCP in Lahore, Pakistan.

About 60 participants from various member churches of NCCP and CCA in Pakistan attended the consultation.

CCA had extended invitations to 29 Pakistan church representatives to attend the AMC, but they were denied visas to Myanmar. This is the context in which CCA organized the first AMC follow-up consultation which was planned to be held in Pakistan.

In the opening address of the Consultation, Rev. Azhar Mushtaq of the Church of Pakistan stressed the importance of responding to the urgent call to churches in Pakistan to witness to the truth and light amidst dark realities and to follow Jesus Christ who could transform the world.

In a thematic presentation on Prophetic

Witness to the truth and light, Fr. Emmanuel Assis emphasized on the "necessity of listening while being engaged in prophetic witness." "Today we are used to speaking much. May be people are affected by noise pollution. Whatever happens in our surroundings, it is important to listen, and listening leads us to respond to the mission of prophetic witness. Listening is the first process to respond and participate in the prophetic witnessing."

Bishop Humphrey Peters, moderator of the Church of Pakistan, in his address on "Challenges to Prophetic Witness of the Churches in Pakistan to the Truth and Light" shared the real challenges from the day to day experiences and stories of struggles from Pakistan. "The stark realities of religious intolerance warrant the followers of Jesus Christ to be witnesses in the midst of challenges".

Territorial Commander Iver Telfer of the Salvation Army challenged the participants in his presentation on "Accompanying the People and Communities in Pakistan," and said, "The churches in Pakistan have massive

resources in the church, and we need to enable the people to achieve their God-given potential."

Bishop Irfan Jamil of Church of Pakistan Lahore Diocese reminded the participants to fulfill the need of servanthood as a priority in Christian life and witness. "We need five components in fulfilling our servanthood; first, proclaim the gospel boldly; second, continue to develop the discipleship which should be our ongoing process in the church life; third, have compassion on the people in need with action; fourth, keep your transforming spirit; fifth, remember our stewardship on God's creation; this works only when we empty ourselves (kenosis) trusting

the power of Holy Spirit who moves us into action,".

Dr. Farhana Nazir, a woman theologian in Pakistan said, "Although the fundamental religious movements are becoming stronger and religious intolerance continues to threaten the minority Christians in Pakistan, it is more effective to seek a way to live in harmony with other faiths rather than accusing each other". "The Consultation provided the participants a platform to articulate the emerging missiological concerns in Pakistan context and it was a very significant gathering of church leaders to affirm their unity and to reconfirm their commitment to be part of God's mission," stated Victor Azariah, the General Secretary of the NCCP.

Conference on Women Doing Theology in Pakistan

22 – 23 February 2018 / Lahore, Pakistan

Women Doing Theology is one of CCA's strategic programme priorities to promote a collective effort of study, analysis, and reflection among committed young Asian women theologians to address pertinent

Asian issues and contextual theologizing from a feminist perspective.

A National Conference on Women Doing Theology was held in Lahore, Pakistan from



Participants of Conference on Women Doing Theology in Pakistan

21 to 23 February 2018. It was attended by 33 women theologians from various churches, theological institutions and Christian organizations in Pakistan including the Salvation Army, Church of Pakistan, Presbyterian Church in Pakistan, the Roman Catholic Church, Gujranwala Theological Seminary, St. Thomas Theological Seminary, Christian Study Center, Open Theological Seminary, Maktaba-e Anaveem Pakistan MAP) – People's Forum for Contextual Theology.

While addressing the question of what was meant by 'doing theology in the Asian Context, especially in Pakistan', the participants echoed their concern that "men and women are equals before God, both bearing the image of God. God calls both men and women to fulfill the roles and responsibilities specially designed for them. However, in all spheres of Asian society, women are being dominated and de-womanized. In the Church and society women are being treated with bias".

The participants challenged the gender-based discriminations in the church and society and opined that "Biblical and theological exegesis often grants men fuller participation than women in the life of the church, and restrict the role of women to an inferior level".

"Women theologians are expected to play a crucial role to nurture the prophetic voice of women at all levels. Doing theology that empowers and liberates women in the Church and society will ensure upholding the dignity and equality of women in the Church and society", opined Pakistan's women theologians who came together on a common platform facilitated and organized by CCA.

"Gender based violence against women has its deep roots in the patriarchal social structure of Pakistan. It is important for the

churches to address the crucial issues women in Pakistan are facing; and a gender sensitization education is essential in Pakistan's Church and society", said Ayra Inderyas of the Church of Pakistan.

Jennifer Jag Jivan in a presentation on 'Empowering Leadership and Recognizing Women's Strength' invited the women theologians to meditate on their strength and weakness. She said, "From the very beginning of church history, women fulfilled a vital role in the churches. Women have passion and warm hearts to listen to other voices and understand others' needs. Women should strengthen their spirituality in order to develop their talents".

'Envisioning a Renewed Church in Pakistan', Dr. Farhana Nazir, professor at the Gujranwala Theological Seminary, told the participants to "be courageous to voice your presence to the people and show your capacity; otherwise nobody would recognize you."

Bible Study sessions were focused on affirming equality of women intellectually, socially and morally in the contexts of women re-reading the story of Leah, Rachel, Jacob and Christian Family Laws.

Pakistan's women theologians affirmed that re-reading of the Bible required them to act for justice and interpret the Bible in a way that affirmed the rights and dignity of women, children and all marginalized segments of society.

The participants affirmed that "equal opportunities for men and women to participate in mission and witness are occasions to rejoice and celebrate the gift of togetherness and life in its fullness".

Consultation on 'Towards Contextual Interpretation of Asia Mission Statement'

1 May 2018 / Yangon, Myanmar

A national consultation initiated by the Myanmar Council of Churches (MCC) to reflect on 'Towards Contextual Interpretations of Asia Mission Statement in the Context of Myanmar' was facilitated by CCA.

Organized by the Mission and Ecumenism Department of the MCC, the Yangon Conference was a follow-up of the Asia Mission Conference (AMC) organized by the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) in October 2017. The Consultation was held on 1 May 2018 in Yangon, Myanmar.

More than fifty participants representing 21 denominations of member churches and regional councils of the MCC, as well as representatives from Pentecostal and Evangelical Churches, attended the Conference.

Rev. Mahn Palmerston, the General Secretary of the MCC, in his opening address emphasized the importance of the Asia Mission Statement in the Myanmar contexts and the need for creative interpretations to be developed by the churches in Myanmar.

Rev. Dr. Ngur Liana of CCA focused on the contextual theological methods and reflections, and he explained the theological, missiological, ecumenical and contextual relevance of the Asia Mission Statement.

The participants affirmed the ways in which the churches in Myanmar would engage in the contextual interpretations of the Asia Mission Statement -2017, and how to take them as theological hermeneutics in Myanmar in order to engage meaningfully in prophetic witness.

The participants shared their responses to the Asia Mission Statement and affirmed:



AMC National Follow-up Consultation in Myanmar

- “The areas of mission concerns articulated in the Asia Mission Conference and the Statement are relevant to real situations and realities in Myanmar; it is our duty to contextualize them in our local context.”
- “Ecological issues are our urgent need in Myanmar and we need to theologize ecological concerns as part of our mission.”
- “Interfaith dialogue is one of the most important contextual issues in Myanmar today and missiological relevance of such an issue should be identified.”
- “Churches’ theological vision was to reinterpret and contextualize the mission concerns with an aim of going beyond the traditional mission paradigm. Their affirmations also underscored the value to engage in stewardship and kinship as a core thrust of faith; accompany refugees, those internally displaced; treat the excluded and marginalized in a fair

manner; build peace in the midst of conflicts and geo-political turmoil; stand for economic justice; nurture interfaith harmony and religious tolerance for peaceful coexistence in the country, and to be engaged in prophetic witnessing.

Kaythi Min Din, Associate General Secretary of the MCC, recalled the ongoing ecumenical relations between the MCC and CCA through collaboration, encouragement and mutual support, and she said that “the Asia Mission Conference and the Diamond Jubilee celebration of the CCA held in Myanmar were historic milestones of the Asian ecumenical movement to which Myanmar churches contributed significantly. The time has come now for the churches in Myanmar to reflect further on the mission and witness with an ecumenical commitment.”

National Consultation on ‘Embracing Strangers and Prophetic Witnessing’

19 – 21 June 2018 / Kottayam, India

As a follow-up of the Asia Mission Conference of the CCA held in 2017, a national consultation was organized jointly by CCA and *Vichara*, an ecumenical think-tank based in the south Indian state of Kerala. The consultation was focused on a sub theme of the AMC, ‘Embracing the Strangers and Prophetic Witnessing’ and was held at the Sophia Centre of the Orthodox Theological Seminary at Kottayam, Kerala from 19 to 21 June 2018. More than seventy participants from various parts of India attended the Consultation.

The discussion in the consultation observed:

“Our task is to open the closed doors to embrace the strangers, which is a liberative engagement. Contextually, there-interpretation towards embracing the stranger is not an

option, but a theological mandate to meet the needs”;

“Missiologically, embracing a stranger has been taken as one of the mission hermeneutical paradigms in the 21st century. Our understanding of mission has been changing, widening its scope and making paradigm shifts in different contexts. If this shift is taken seriously as mission hermeneutical paradigm in the Asian Churches, it will become a transforming mission not only in Asia, but also all over the world.”

“Churches in Asia make every effort to understand and embrace the vulnerable “strangers” who can be categorized as refugees, internally displaced people, victims of human trafficking, and migrant workers



National Consultation on 'Embracing Strangers and Prophetic Witnessing'

who are all deprived of their inherent rights and dignity”.

Bishop Dr. P. C Singh, president of the National Council of Churches in India (NCCI) and the Moderator of the Church of North India inaugurated the consultation.

Renowned Orthodox theologian, Rev. Dr. K. M. George said that there were changes in perceptions of hospitality in ‘embracing the stranger’ and the hospitality of God was unconditional, open to the strangers, the weak, vulnerable, oppressed and outcast, while our human hospitality had been conditional and limited. The challenge was to reinterpret the idea of hospitality, and to rethink the implications of hospitality in the face of increasing geo-political changes today.

Dr. Ngur Liana laid emphasis on the need for the theological vision to “engage in prophetic witnessing together for embracing the strangers” in the circumstances of escalating violence, terrorism and xenophobia. He shed light on God as a “migrant” God, Jesus Christ as a “migrant,” and a “refugee Christ” who

makes complete identification with the strangers. The Holy Spirit as “a God who is with the strangers, co-suffering in their suffering and giving hope in times of hopelessness.”

Dr. Michael Tharakan, a well-known social scientist, described the conflict between the nomadic and sedentary people. Dr. Tharakan analysed migration as “a strategy or combination of strategies that enhance access to resources; the rational approach to the issue would be to understand the dynamic relations that influence migration. An inclusive approach would lead to the admission that the world’s resources are open to all and that ‘the whole world is for the whole world’ thus enabling a cooperation between the sedentary and nomadic people.”

In a presentation on ‘Embracing the Strangers and Church’s Mission’, Rev. Dr. P. G. George, a professor of Old Testament, gave a refreshing understanding on migration from the Old Testament and the New Testament perspectives. He narrated how the strategically placed divides in the Bible could be interpreted in

the perspective of migrants. Dr. P.G. George added that "immigrant theology must be constructed or articulated as an Asian contextual theology as well as one of the contextual theological trends and see it from the perspective of the strangers."

In a session on 'Church and Prophetic Witness,' Rev. Christopher Rajkumar, Executive Secretary of the NCCI, elucidated that the

gospel affirming social justice should be preached to embrace everyone and "prophetic witness was not concerned with mere prosperity but of a holistic life and had social justice as its base. Prophetic is to affirm God's love through critical engagements to de-build and re-build communities, prophetic is to create equality and freedom but more importantly, it is holistic and multi-layered justice that leads towards absolute peace."



National Consultation on 'Embracing Strangers and Prophetic Witnessing'

International Theological Consultation on 'Wider Ecumenism as Prophetic Witness'

7 – 11 August 2018 / Bangalore, India

Jointly organized by the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), Association of Christian Institutions for Social Concerns in Asia (ACISCA), Board of Theological Education of Senate of Serampore College (BTESSC) and the Ecumenical Christian Centre (ECC), an international consultation on 'Wider Ecumenism as Prophetic Witness' was held at the Ecumenical Christian Centre, Bangalore, India from 7 to 11 August 2018. The ECC hosted the consultation.

The Consultation attended by 110 participants affirmed that

"Christians have to recognize God's image in

adherents of all religious traditions and Asian Christians must be sensitive to the tremendous contributions the other religions are still making to the shaping of Asian culture."

"Love is the essence of Trinity and the Trinitarian faith; engaging each other in interfaith dialogue should aim at strengthening our understanding on wider ecumenism as prophetic witness."

In his inaugural address Bishop Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius, Chairperson of the Ecumenical Christian Centre stated that ecumenism should always be understood in a context of wider realities arising in our



Participants of the International Consultation on Wider Ecumenism as Prophetic Witness

societies and communities and that prophetic witness was inseparable, especially in contexts where peace with justice was negated.

The General Secretary of CCA, Dr. Mathews George Chunakara in his introductory address at the opening session of the Consultation said “The wider dimension of ecumenism in terms of addressing emerging challenges was redefined and recognised globally in the past decades. However, as the shift in the ecumenical paradigm has been changing the traditional concept, the role of the ecumenical movement also should be reassessed, especially in terms of articulating the vision of ecumenism from a perspective of ecclesial unity to wider ecumenism.” “The imperative to search for the meaning of wider ecumenism as prophetic witness has to be recognised in order to hold on the vision of the Oikoumene,” added the CCA General Secretary.

Bishop Dr. Daniel Thiagarajah of Sri Lanka in a keynote address said, “We have come to a point where we cannot theologize apart from making relevant connections with the religions among which are placed.” “While it is encouraging that a number of churches are beginning to take note of interfaith cooperation, many still continue to focus purely on the western missionary preoccupation of numerical growth of the church, thus

ignoring the harmony of Asian society as well as dividing the Asian Christians”.

Prof. Dr. Mathew Chandrakunnel, Director of the Ecumenical Christian Centre stated that the thematic focus of the consultation and the platform provided for the Asian churches and Asian ecumenical organisations would strengthen a collective effort to wider ecumenism in Asia.

In the presentation on wider ecumenism as prophetic witness from a gender perspective, Dr. Naw Eh Tar Gay from Myanmar Institute of Theology focused on the role of women in prophetic engagement in the context of Asia.

Fr. Jose Kuttiani Mattathil of the Roman Catholic Church suggested a shift from classical western ecumenism to a God-centred Trinitarian ecumenism which would gradually lead to strengthening wider ecumenism in Asia.

Caroline Basutti of the Focalare Movement added that nurturing spirituality will strengthen wider ecumenism in all contexts.

While depicting the concepts of ‘realised catholicity and wider ecumenical vision’, Dr. Jakob Tronet of Church of Sweden stated, “Catholicity is not only a principle or collection

of doctrinal points but something that is made manifest in the life of the church: it is in the practices of the church that its catholicity becomes realised.”

In a panel discussion on ‘Reconfiguration of Ecumenism Beyond Christian Ecumenism’ Rev. Dr. Jayasiri Pieris of the Theological College of Lanka, said “a festival model of ecumenism which will bring friendship and solidarity with the victims will be most valuable in Asia.”

Rev. Dr. Santanu Kumar Patro of the Senate of the Serampore outlined the reasons for the failure of Church-centred ecumenism today and emphasised the need for wider ecumenism on the basis of a God-centred ecumenism which was more relevant to the Asian context.

Rev. Dr. Binsar Jonathan Pakpahan of the Jakarta Theological Seminary in Indonesia said, “Rooting ecumenism in love that maintains justice in journeying together with all people and other religions in Asia is required.”

Bishop Shourabh Pholia of Bangladesh discussed the need to include not only major religious traditions, but also tribal and aborigine’s religions in wider ecumenism. He added that Christians in Asia must learn from other religious traditions with the purpose of building healthy relationship and reaching not only academic circles but also grass-root level as well.

Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Thathapudi, Secretary of the BTESSC said, “The ecumenical movement has become rusty after half-a-century of its existence, and a move for a new form of ecumenism or wider ecumenism is inevitable in Asia.”

Venerable Khenpo Rimpoche of Tibetan Buddhism shared the values offered by Buddhism to transform painful situations into conditions that foster progress on the spiritual path. He said, “As much as we try, we cannot tailor the world to suit our own ways and unwanted circumstances may lead to feelings of frustration, victimization, or anger.”



Interfaith leaders of the International Consultation on ‘Wider Ecumenism as Prophetic Witness

Swamiji Mahagate, a Hindu monk from Nepal urged the participants to find the values of unity in diversity as one could not distinguish or discriminate other persons on the basis of their religious identity as they were absorbed in the infinite spirit. "One sees differences only on a lower level but from the pinnacle of God's love, all distinctions disappear," said Swamiji Mahagate.

It was observed that the participants had keen interests in the programme. Most of the

discussions addressed the main theme. A communique adopted at the end of the consultation stated that "Wider ecumenism and the *Missio Dei* have deep hermeneutical links and pave the way towards the unity of the entire oikoumene." This was a significant contribution towards Asian Churches as it paved the way to develop new ecumenical vision and to open Christian ecumenical engagement with other religious traditions in the context of wider ecumenism in Asia and the world.

Preparatory Meeting of the Congress of Asian Theologians IX (CATS-IX)

26 – 29 November 2018 | Chiang Mai, Thailand

Christian Conference of Asia organized the Preparatory Meeting for CATS (Congress of Asian Theologians) IX, on 26-29 November 2018 at the CCA Headquarters in Chiang Mai, Thailand. As to its background, Christian Conference of Asian had initiated the Congress of Asian Theologians (CATS) in 1997 with the

purpose of stimulating innovative theological thinking among budding and younger Asian theologians and to help articulate Asian theologies more clearly and sharply, to cultivate new methodologies of doing theology in the Asian context, and to polish the academic and professional training for



Preparatory Meeting of CATS IX

developing Asian theological scholarship. Briefly, the CCA initiated CATS in the mid-1990s, the first CATS was held in Suwin, South Korea in 1997 and the last one was held in Kochi, Kerala, India in 2016.

The main objectives of the consultation were to brainstorm and develop a relevant theme, the sub-themes with the biblical theological foundation, to identify issues and themes for workshop sessions related to the theme, to identify the possible speakers and to develop program schedule and flow of thematic foci of CATS IX in the emerging and challenging issues and realities in Asia.

The Advisory Committee of CATS consists of representatives of CCA, the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), Association of Theological Education in South East Asia (ATESEA), and Board of Theological Education of the Senate of Serampore Colleges (BTESSC) and they undertook extensive deliberations to finalise the theme, as well as to work out the modalities of various components of thematic and plenary sessions.

The Advisory Committee of CATS decided to propose 'Reconciliation, Renewal and Restoration: Divine Indicative and Human Imperative' as the theme of the ninth Congress of Asian Theologians (CATS-IX) which will take place in 2019. The proposed sub-themes are 'Reconciliation: Towards the harmony of creation,' 'Renewal: Towards the fullness of life' and 'Restoration: Towards affirming the will of God.'

In addition to four thematic presentations, CATS-IX will feature panel presentations, interfaith dialogue sessions, ecumenical conversations and dialogue on emerging Asian issues and Asian contextual theologies in specific contexts.

Dr. Mathews George Chunakara, General Secretary of CCA outlined the objectives of the Asian theologians' summit next year and stated that the "CATS-IX will be a premier interdisciplinary platform for budding theologians, researchers, practitioners and educators from ecclesiological diversities in Asia to present and discuss the most recent innovations, trends, and concerns in the field of Asian theologies in context."

CATS-IX will bring together 100 selected Asian theologians – theological educators, research scholars, especially young theologians and provide them space to exchange their experiences and research results related to Asian theologies.

The CATS-IX will be held in Kandy, Sri Lanka from 5 to 10 August 2019.

"CCA encourages theologians in Asia and Asian theologians in diaspora to contribute and present papers on topics related to the theme and sub-themes of CATS-IX", added the CCA General Secretary.

The CATS provides opportunities for Asian theologians including the Asian theologians in diaspora to come together in a common platform, debate common interests and form networks.

It was observed that the critical contributions of the participants made the program significantly meaningful reflecting Asian emerging realities and challenging issues. It is expected that CATS IX will make substantial theological contributions not only to Asian Christian communities but also to the world as well. In addition, it is hoped that CATS will deepen the theological foundations of the ecumenical movement in Asia by bridging the gaps between the Churches and the



Rev. Dr. Mery Kolimon at CATS IX preparatory meeting

Theological Institutions, by engaging in contextual theological constructions and in developing a new Asian ecumenical vision in Asia.

The program still needs several follow-ups to continue to identify and match the possible speakers for thematic presentations and interreligious issues, to select the contributors for Bible Studies which will become a resource

for Bible Study materials, to collect and finalize the relevant biblical verses in relation to the theme and its sub-themes, to continue to identify scholars for Panel discussions and to select facilitators for Bible Studies and Group Discussions, to invite and encourage younger generation of Asian theologians and to select the participants for the forthcoming Congress of Asian Theologians IX.

The Members of the CATS Advisory Committee:

Bishop Dr. Daniel Thiagajarah (CCA Programme Committee)

Rev. Prince Devanandan (CCA Programme Committee)

Bishop Dr. Kuriakose Mar Theophilose (CCA Programme Committee)

Rev. Dr. Mery Kolimon (CCA Programme Committee)

Fr. Dr. Clarence S. Devadass (FABC)

Rev. Dr. Jeaneth Faller (ATESEA)

Rev. Dr. Thathapudi M. Emmanuel (BTSSC)

Dr. Mathews George Chunakara (CCA General Secretary)

Invitees

Bishop Dr. Yacob Mar Ireneus

Rev. Dr. Kang-Hee Han

Rev. Dr. R. C. Thomas

Rev. Grace Moon

Rev. Dr. Ngur Liana

Ms. Rosiana Purnomo

2.

Ecumenical Leadership Formation and Ecumenical Spirituality

Objectives

- To assist the ecumenical formation of a new generation of leadership in churches and ecumenical councils in Asia;
- To develop human resources committed to the renewal of ecumenical spirituality and understanding Christian tradition; and,
- To provide ecumenical space for sharing spiritual life among member churches and national councils in Asia.

Preparatory Meeting on Asian Ecumenical Women's Assembly

15 – 17 March 2018 / Bangkok, Thailand

A planning meeting of the Asian Ecumenical Women's Assembly (AEWA) to be held in 2019, was organized by CCA from 15 to 17 March 2018. The meeting held at the Bangkok Christian Guest House was attended by different representatives of ecumenical women's organizations in Asia.

The meeting identified priority areas to deal with women's concerns and observed that "women, as image bearers of God, are called to be part of God's mission. However the churches in Asia are still slow to acknowledge and accept gender and women's concerns as a critical issue within the church. Many churches are still faced with situations where women are not accepted as leaders; women are often denied prominent roles in the church. Therefore, amplifying women's voices, expanding their involvements, and enhancing their leadership and influence are urgently needed both in the church and society".

In this context, the Asian Ecumenical Women's Assembly is planned to be held in 2019 in Taiwan which will provide a platform for the Asian women to *Encounter* each other, to *Hear and Learn* about their lives and wisdoms. To *Empower* each other as leaders of their own churches, communities, societies and nations, and to *Connect* with each other in building up their regional/national networks.

The proposed AEWA to be hosted by the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan is expected to provide a platform for the Asian women to come together in a common platform to hear, reflect and learn from different contexts and situations in Asia, and to build up wider ecumenical networks; provide the participants opportunities to learn, meet, worship, share and praise; reaffirm their faith and fulfill their Participation in God's mission; address the specific challenges women are facing; assist in building cooperation among the participants from various Christian traditions, ecumenical women's organizations and institutions to address key issues related to women's status in their own contexts; develop a common ecumenical network of Christian women in



AEWA Preparatory Meeting

Asia to build-up and strengthen mutual recognition in solidarity.

Through efficient and lengthy discussions in two-full day consultations, the participants could provide a programme frame with proposals on main theme and sub-themes for consideration. The main theme, sub-themes and others related to AEWA would be further discussed and decided.

The members who attended the Planning Consultation of AEWA were: Ms. Cindy Huang,

Executive Committee Member of CCA from Taiwan; Ms. Kaythi Min Din, Programme Committee Member of CCA from Myanmar; Rev. Lian Siong-Bi, Presbyterian Church of Taiwan; Rev. Moumita Biswas, National Council of Churches in India; Ms. Supaporn Yarnasarn, Asian Church Women's Conference (ACWC); Ms. Sunita Suna, World Student Christian Federation; Sr. Mercy Rosano, Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences; Rev. Jung Eung Moon Grace, Sunila Ammar and Rosiana Purnomo, CCA Staff members of the AEWA Organizing Team.

Ecumenical Leadership Development Training in Cambodia

20 – 23 March 2018 / Phnom Penh, Cambodia



Ecumenical Leadership Development Training in Cambodia

The ecumenical leadership development training organized by CCA and hosted by the Kampuchea Christian Council (KCC) was held at the headquarters of the KCC in Phnom Penh, Cambodia from 20 to 23 March 2018. The theme of the training was 'Arise, shine; for your light has come: Let Us Witness Together'.

Forty five participants representing grassroots congregations in Cambodia attended the training. The consultation helped the participants to contextualize their faith and witness. The trainers tried to enable the participants to understand that the articulation of theological vision in relevant ways would

overcome challenges and help to find new ways to participate in God's mission in unity.

As Christians in Asia, especially Cambodia, are a minority, their voices have been inadequate. However, it has had significant effectiveness in some places. Israelites had been called to witness to the entire Gentile world; Asian Christians are now called to arise, shine, and witness to entire Asia and the world as well. The participants were told that "God calls us to be in solidarity with the less privileged and transform injustices to justices that gradually enlighten the world. It is God's ongoing interventions for the restorations of the Asian

people, giving them new hope, new vision and empowerment through His Spiritual enlightenment".

The topics discussed in detail included the Asian interreligious contexts, Biblical values to engage in sharing of wealth and resources to the poor and the needy, and God's gifts to create justice and peace in the world.

Rev. Dr. Chuleepran Srisoontorn, Rev. Dr. Ngur Liana and Dr. Reynaldo Ty facilitated and coordinated the ecumenical enablers training sessions.



Ecumenical leadership Development Training in Cambodia

Asian Ecumenical Youth Assembly (AEYA-2018)

6 – 12 April 2018 / Manado, Indonesia

The Asian Ecumenical Youth Assembly (AEYA) focusing on the theme 'Lord, Send Your Light and Truth to Lead Us' was held at the Grand Kawanua International Convention Centre at Manado, North Sulawesi, Indonesia, from 6th to 12th April 2018. More than 400 young people from across Asia attended the AEYA. The AEYA, which was locally hosted by the *Gereja Masehi Injili Minahasa* (GMIM) and the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI), was the largest Asian ecumenical youth event organized by CCA since a major youth event was held in New Delhi, India, in 1984.

The week-long event provided a platform for young Asian Christians to discuss a wide range of emerging Asian issues and themes such as, 'Towards Shaping a Transformed World: Role of Asian Youths', 'Prophetic Witness to the Truth and Light: Biblical Theological Perspectives', 'Spirituality in a Digitalized World', 'Embracing and Appreciating Diversities and Human Dignity,' and 'Changing Family Values and Cultures in Asia: Intergenerational Voices.'

Youths in Dialogue Sessions addressed issues and themes such as 'Religious Intolerance and Politicization of Religion,' 'Artificial Intelligence: Future of Asian Youths,' 'Trafficking in Persons and People on the Move within and Beyond Asia,' 'Human Development and Technological Advancements in Asia, 'Are Young Asians Becoming Digital Nomads?' and 'Disappearing Values of Love and Care amidst Selfie Culture?'

On 7th April, with a solemn liturgical celebrative worship in a multicultural Asian context, AEYA was officially opened when North Sulawesi Governor Olly Dondokambey, Vice Governor Steven Kandouw and Indonesian Foreign Affairs Ministry Director General Cecep Herawon led the striking of the tetengkoran, a traditional Minahasa bamboo bell.

The ecumenical worship service began with a traditional Indonesian welcoming dance as the choir sang indigenous Asian Christian hymns. Prayers alluded to issues of the region; participants from different backgrounds and countries came forward to lead the worship.



Opening Inaugural Session



Director General of IDP , Cecep Herawan Opened the AEYA



Opening Worship of AEYA



AEYA participants in celebrations



Olly Dondokambey, Governor of North Sulawesi



Drs. Steven O.E. Kandouw, Vice Governor of North Sulawesi



Bishop Willem T.B. Simarmata, Moderator of CCA



Dr. Mathews George Chunakara, General Secretary of CCA



Rev. Dr. Hein Arina, Moderator of GMIM, the host Church



Bishop Dr. Soritua Nababan, First Youth Secretary of CCA





In a sermon delivered during the worship, Rev. Dr. Hein Arina, moderator of the host church Gereja Masehi Injili Minahasa (GMIM), said: “We as a Church are one strong and powerful institution to be a change; we have the power to bring great influence towards social change.”

“Light your candles,” said Bishop Dr. Willem T. P. Simarmata in his presidential address, and he asked the participants to rally behind the theme, “Lord, send your Light and Truth to lead us.” Bishop Dr. Simarmata also added that the times posed various challenges to young people, from falling prey to injustices to being trapped in an “individualistic, consumeristic and hedonistic” culture. He cited cases of religious intolerance, lack of education, poverty, gender-based injustices and environmental issues as opportunities to act.

Dr. Matthews George Chunakara, General Secretary of CCA in his introductory address said, “In the midst of complex realities, all of us are in search of guidance and we need divine guidance amidst the darkness, confusion and often chaotic situations... Through AEYA, the CCA tries to give a platform for young Asian Christians to come together at the regional level to address some of the most pertinent issues and wider Asian realities; and to evolve ecumenical responses for effective Christian witness... Many ecumenical leaders today are the product of youth and student Christian movements but today what we witness is a general decline of youth and student movements everywhere. The AEYA comes from CCA’s commitment to strengthen the Asian ecumenical movement with active youth participation and ecumenical leadership development for the future. CCA’s new program thrusts for 2015-2020 give priorities for youth participation at various levels, including long-term youth internships, the training of Young Ambassadors for Peace

in Asia, and the Youth Leadership Development and Ecumenical Formation programs at national and sub-regional levels.”

During the opening ceremony, prominent Asian ecumenical leader Bishop Dr. Soritua A. E. Nababan, who served as the first Youth Secretary of CCA (1963-1968), was felicitated for his services to the Asian and global ecumenical movement. Bishop Nababan was the organizer of the first Asia Youth Assembly held in the Philippines in 1964.

In the afternoon of 8th April, the AEYA participants, together with thousands of faithful from more than one thousand congregations and denominations of Christian churches in Indonesia, attended the Asia Easter Celebration in Tondano Stadium in the Minahasa region, North Sulawesi.

In the first panel presentation titled ‘Emerging Issues and Concerns in Asia,’ the three panelists brought to the floor powerful presentations drawn mostly from their own lives and work. Ruth Mathen, who belongs to the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church in India, spoke strongly about two issues which she felt needed urgent attention.



Ms. Ruth Mathen, India

“There are two main issues I feel strongly about. The first is that rise of religious fundamentalism and extreme nationalism in India curtails the expressions of Christian faith

and identities. The second is about the place and position of women within the church, which places a double burden on those under its ambit... We must recognise those rituals of practices and teachings that are firstly patriarchal, value males over females, and take the male as the norm of 'human' and defining women as relative dependent and inferior" said 20-year-old Ruth.



Rev. Jimmy Marcos Immanuel, Indonesia

Rev. Jimmy Marcos Immanuel from the Protestant Church in Western Indonesia expanded on Ruth's first point and spoke about religious intolerance, especially in South Asia. Pointing to some of the recent terror attacks around the world, he said "it not only created deaths, refugees, physical and economical losses, but also intolerance towards religions and religious identities." He also proposed that such religious intolerances were often exploited by local political parties to further their political agendas. He argued that development of technology had made it easier for radical and terrorist groups to spread their messages of hate. Over a period of time, they moved from fighting with guns and bombs to fighting with words and visualisations. He said that one of the main reasons why youth turned to religious intolerance was economic poverty. Jimmy pushed today's youth to not become a generation of 'job seekers' and instead show their political roles in societies to counter intolerance movements.



Ms. Minji Kim, Korea

Kim Minji, a young woman theologian from the National Council of Churches in Korea's (NCCCK) Human Rights Centre, beautifully touched upon how the power of youth could be channeled to make positive changes in society. She referred to the stories of South Korean protests, popularly known as the 'Candlelight Struggle,' which saw the ouster and later imprisonment of South Korean President Park Geun-Hye.

"What triggered the movement was the sinking of the Sewol Ferry, which resulted in the loss of 304 children's lives. The former president's inaction, which led to the huge loss of life, galvanised South Korean society like never before. Millions of people attended 20 candlelight vigils," she said.

She ended her presentation by challenging the Asian youth to reach out to each other and communicate more, and said "Asian youth should try to be interested in each other's issues and pains and that is the way forward to re-establish the dream of the Asian Ecumenical Movement."

On the third day of AEYA, two sessions focused on 'Light and Truth in Pluralistic Asia' for interfaith dialogue between religious leaders and scholars from Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism and Taoism and the AEYA participants. They reached a common ground to discuss relevant issues about religion and their implications to

the Asian society. The panelists — Swami Navananma Jnana Tapaswi (Hinduism); Venerable Dr. Phramaha Boonchuay Doojai (Buddhism); Prof. Chongfu Zhang (Taoism) and Dr. Media Zainul Bahri (Islam) — made presentations on the theme 'Light and Truth in a Pluralistic Asia' in the perspectives of their respective religion.



Swami Navananma Jnana Thapaswi, India

Swami Navananma, who started his presentation with a brief prayer in Sanskrit, took on questions of religious extremism by saying regional and geographical interpretations of different Holy Scriptures were dividing people instead of unifying them. He said that "instead of making people's lives more harmonious, interpretations of religious texts were being used to create more friction and rifts in society." He extolled the participants of AEYA to change "internally" so that the change could be reflected in their homes and society. "As time passes, the true sense of truth keeps fading. While it should be enriched, it should be done spiritually and not religiously. Once we do that, peace will automatically follow," he added.

Dr. Media Zainul Bahri, who represented Islam, said that wrong-doings in the 'name of Islam' were based on wrong interpretations of the Holy book. "Islam is known as a religion of peace, but unfortunately, there are a lot of extremist acts being carried out in Islam's name... People talk about Jihad. But what is



Dr. Media Zainul Bahri, Indonesia

Jihad? There is a great difference between Jihad and war. Jihad just means the 'struggle for a better life,' while war is war. Nothing good ever comes out of it. Jihad is never Islam's call to fight against others. Nothing connects Jihad with war."



Venerable Dr. Phramaha Boonchuay Doojai, Thailand

Venerable Dr. Phramaha Boonchuay Doojai was of the opinion that conscious steps needed to be taken towards building bridges with other religions and making friends. He spoke about one of his personal experiences. "A great way to understand others' religions is to visit their places of worship. Go to a church or a mosque and ask if you are allowed to enter. Once, I visited an ancient mosque in Phuket, Thailand. The Imam welcomed me and said I was the first Buddhist monk to have visited the mosque. I feel this is the first step we have to take if we are to see changes happening."



Prof. Chongfu Zhang, China

Prof. Chongfu Zhang, a scholar on Taoism, stated “we cannot change things over a few days or a few months. These are problems that grew over many years and generations. In the past, many suggestions were put forward on how to resolve ecumenical issues. But none of them succeeded. What could you possibly do to help resolve it? The first thing is to open your eyes. Many people refuse to do so and isolate their religion from the rest of the world. Secondly, respect others. Even though we may not be able to resolve things completely, we can contribute towards making things a little better. The AEYA

conference is a good beginning for people from different religions to exchange their views. That is why I think this meeting in Manado is a very important gathering”.

Dr. Mathews George, CCA’s General Secretary who chaired the session, summarised the whole interfaith dialogue with challenging words: “I am reminded of an ancient Indian adage ‘I believe I have the truth; you believe you have the truth; I will respect your truth, so you please respect my truth’”.

The third thematic session of the Asian Ecumenical Youth Assembly (AEYA) brought various perspectives on challenges to spirituality in a digitalized world and touched a chord among hundreds of young Asians who were in attendance. Two young Christian leaders — Ismael Fisco Jr. and Manna Prasad — from the Philippines and India respectively, kept the audience engaged in deep deliberations with their speeches and responses during a lively session titled ‘Spirituality in a Digitalized World: Responses of Asian Youths’.



Interfaith Dialogue Session



Mr. Ismael Fisco Jr, Philippines

The common thread between the two presentations was how digital media was becoming increasingly influential in the lives of Asian youth, often negating the values of spirituality. Ismael, a digital media company's operational director noted advances of digital technology in maximizing the ministry and programmes of the church and how it affected many areas of life. However, he also proposed that technology was not without negative implications especially in the understanding of youth's spirituality.

"We live in an era of increasingly pervasive digital technology. This is embedded deeply in the way we do things – in our church, ministry, work, organizations and even in our daily lives. These pervasive digital innovations are radically changing not only our approach of doing mission but our very understanding of spirituality and our reason-for-being as a church. Today's generation is called Generation C (for "connectedness") having the strong desire to be connected and present online. Digital technology has reached an 'inflection point' reaching into every corner of young people's lives. We spend unbelievable hours browsing online and playing with our gadgets, leading to shorter attention spans, information overload and anxiety among people. It has also led to increase in cases of cyberbullying, human trafficking and oppression of certain sectors of society. Fake news, which was a term which we had not heard a few years ago,

is all too common now. Private and political entities use it to propagate hate, prejudice and anger. A direct consequence of this is the rise of digital activism, which further decreases human interaction and sense of community".

"Churches around the world have started to invest more in reaching out to youngsters via social media and that has proved to be effective. But what it has also done is influence our understanding of Jesus Christ's ministry as something limited only to virtual reflections, inspirational YouTube videos and blogging," . "When Jesus commissioned his disciples to 'go and make disciples of all nations,' he was not constructively telling them to tweet about it or post something about him in their social media statuses. He intended them to go 'physically', to live and commune with the people, identify themselves with them and be one with them in their sufferings and struggles. Our present realities call for us young people to get out of the comforts of our churches to be present on the streets, in the margins, in war-torn communities, with the sinful and the most unloved sectors of our society to be their beacon of hope and light. Our church has always emphasized that spirituality shall liberate human beings. It must lead us to live a life of dignity and fullness. To promote spirituality is to embrace practices, trends and systems that we perceive to be of relevance to our existence



Ms. Manna Prasad, India

and everyday lives as human beings. But this should never be abused and used to diminish our sense of spirituality, and never be at the stake of human dignity.”

Manna Prasad, a digital media expert from India’s digital communication epicenter Bangalore, spoke about an alarming aspect of the proliferation of digital media in our lives by highlighting the ‘rise of virtual churches.’ “In countries like the USA, studies have revealed that fewer people are going to churches as they are busy logging on to the internet. Some shun going to church under the pretext that they can access church services and prayers on mobile applications. There is a real false sense of being comfortable with the ‘cyber-church,” she said. Manna strongly emphasized that ‘technology cannot replace human emotions’ by showing a short video clip about a crying child and his frustrated parents who were in different places and communicating via a mobile video call. While nothing online could stop the child’s cry, his father taking him in his arms immediately did so, a human touch making all the difference.



Dr. Farhana Anthony Nazir, Pakistan

Manna Prasad felt churches around the world had a duty to pass on its sacred teachings and heritage to youngsters in a language they understood. “The Church must not hesitate in passing on its sacred heritage to young people of our age. It can meet young people where they are and entice them with the message of Christ as well as the teachings of the Church through a new way of delivery. But having said that, technology in itself will not make you any more spiritual. It is a tool that will help and enhance you on your spiritual journey. One should understand that digital technology is not passive. It has somewhat become an extension of our life.”



Rev. Hui Young Han, New Zealand

She extolled AEYA’s participants to be change-makers by satisfying four conditions. “Be a change maker by being faith-bearers, God-seekers, risk-takers and gospel-sharers at places that we are planted”.

“In the digital age, information is available at our fingertips. So, there is very less of believing and more of knowing. But what we really need at this point is a spiritual direction, spiritual mentorship, spiritual programming and small faith-sharing groups. Despite all challenges of technology, there are still a number of unique opportunities presented by the modern age of digital lifestyles. The spiritual needs of the youths should be met in a digitized way”.

Both speakers encouraged the AEYA participants to be critical and responsible in using and consuming technology and to be on guard as to how it affected their sense of spirituality.

In the third thematic panel discussion on “Changing Family Values and Cultures in Asia: Intergenerational Voices,” three panelists echoed similar concerns that traditional family values nurtured over the centuries in Asia had changed and nuclear family system had been disappearing in many cultures in Asian countries.



Dr. Sawako Fujiwara, Japan

“The image of a family itself has been changed in Japan. A typical family today in Japan is like this: they are a dual-career couple. Harassments against working mothers, single parents and pregnant women exist. The young couple doesn’t live together with parents or relatives, and at the same time when parental care becomes a problem, they are always looking for a nursery school for their children.” said Dr. Sawako Fujiwara who is teaching at Tohoku Gakuin University, Japan. She also tackled one of the contemporary issues in Japan, the problem of “karoshi” (deaths related to overwork) which was happening due to the ‘Japanese Agenda’ that wanted to increase women in the workforce as a matter of money.

Lawrence Chong, an active member of the Roman Catholic Church’s Focolare Movement in Singapore, talked about the similar kind of changes that were happening in families across Asia. He zeroed in on some changes in the family landscape. Within 10 years, he said, traditional families will make up less than 50 percent in Asian countries. Year 2018 was

forecasted to see over 50 percent of Asia-Pacific’s population in urban areas, resulting in soaring prices for housing. Health costs will be a burden in Asia because of increase of cancer, stroke and dementia in the next decade. He also cited a study saying that between 2015 and 2034, the older population will grow by 22 percent in East Asia, posing an imminent labor force issue. Politics in those parts also cannot be ignored.



Mr. Lawrence Chong, Singapore

“The centrality of family and traditional family values is undeniably changing in Asia. However, family is still very deep in our culture as Asians” said Dr. Henriette Hutabarat Lebang, General Chairperson of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia. She added, “Family is an enduring character of Asian cultures. Asians are also very community-oriented, practice intergenerational cohabitation, value extended families, respect older people and see a mutual responsibility for the care of parents and children. However, the market economy has introduced high competition. There is a shifting of value in Asian society. Thus, people have been increasingly individualistic, exclusivist, and greedy. Face-to-face communication has taken a backseat because of new technology. Still, we have some positive values and we need to hold this: respecting differences, family ties, for example. If we miss this one, we will do the mistake of many parts of the world.”



Rev. Dr. Henriette T.H. Lebang, Indonesia

Lawrence Chong proposed some ways to respond to the changing character and needs of young people of Asia today. Among others, he said, parents must increase their engagement with their kids, find “new ways to love” and appreciate the new way of family. “If you do not engage the child, you lose the child,” he said. Traditional power structures were also bound to change because of the cultural landscape, said Chong. “Gender equality has to happen. Women are increasingly accessing information, quality education. Some places in Asia are moving. It is a complex situation, but... Asia is really moving.”

In the last thematic panel presentation on “Embracing and Appreciating Diversities in pluralistic Asia”, Rev. Stephen Arulampalam and Kaythi Min Din called for unity among Asian youths and inclusion of people with disabilities.



Ms. Kaythi Min Din, Myanmar

Kaythi opened her session by drawing the AEYA participants’ attention to a popular saying in Manado “Torang samua basudara”, which means ‘we are all one family’. Kaythi reflected on the vast diversity of Asia that made up the ‘one family’. “Embracing and appreciating diversities is very important because otherwise, social cohesion and peaceful coexistence will be threatened. We need to understand and appreciate the interdependence of humanity within the diverse community, promoting mutual respect between people from different ethnicity, religion, cultural norms, traditional practices and sexual orientation.”



Rev. Stephen Arulampalam, Sri Lanka

Rev. Stephen, who has been blind since the age of 14, spoke passionately about people with disabilities and the need to acknowledge and include them in society. “Jesus was someone who passed through the diversity of experiences of a disabled person before he died on the cross. Today, when you participate in the Holy Communion, you are celebrating the disabled body of Christ. I tell people to put their trust in the disabled God. Unfortunately, in many parts of Asia, stigma about people with disabilities is a part of culture and a reality. It cannot simply be changed overnight. One way to work on changing it is by educating people. Another way is to wait for changes to happen by people’s experiences.” He called upon AEYA

participants to embrace and encourage disabled people whenever they met them.

In the last session before the closing of AEYA, the participants of AEYA adopted the AEYA Manado Statement 2018, calling on churches to address the challenges of technology, migration, peace, inclusion and pluralism.

The Asian Ecumenical Youth Assembly 2018 came from CCA's commitment to strengthen the Asian ecumenical movement with active youth participation and ecumenical leadership development for the future.



Rev. Dr. Aris Margianto, Indonesia



Rev. Seo Young Kim, Korea



Stewards of AEYA with CCA's General Secretary

Asian Easter Celebration

Asian Easter Celebration in Conjunction with the Asia Ecumenical Youth Assembly Manado, Indonesia, brought together thousands of people in a public stadium on Sunday 8th April 2018





Participants of AEYA at Asian Easter Celebration



Participants of AEYA at Asian Easter Celebration



Participants of AEYA at Asian Easter Celebration



Participants of AEYA at Asian Easter Celebration



Participants of AEYA at Asian Easter Celebration



Participants of AEYA at Asian Easter Celebration



Participants of AEYA at Asian Easter Celebration



Honorable Dr. Yasonna Hamanangan Laoly, Indonesian Minister of Law and Human Rights address the public gathering



Dr. Mathews George Chunakara, General Secretary of CCA addresses the public gathering

Ecumenical Enablers' Training in Nepal

8 – 11 May 2018 / Kathmandu, Nepal

As part of the Ecumenical Enablers' Training in Asia (EETA) programme of CCA an ecumenical enablers' training for grassroots church representatives was organized in collaboration with the National Council of Churches in Nepal (NCCN) from 8 to 11 May 2018. The training was held at the Emmanuel Baptist Church in Kathmandu, and was attended by 90 participants from various parts of Nepal.

Although there are strict laws that ban religious conversion in Nepal, Christianity has been spreading rapidly over the last two decades in the nation and is one of the fastest growing Christian communities in the world. There has been a great need to upgrade and strengthen theological training in Nepal, where the spiritual leaders receive no formal theological education. This assumes greater importance now that churches are mushrooming across Nepal.

The CCA initiative EETA provides the church leaders, pastors and lay leaders there an

opportunity to equip themselves with a more holistic understanding of ecumenical theology and leadership. The need for the togetherness of Nepalese Christians as witnesses in God's mission and to seek ways in prayer to heal the divisions among Christian communities in Nepal was also a focus of the training. "We are here to confirm our calling as 'partakers' in God's mission, witnessing the Gospel, serving the people and transforming the communities. We have a great commission as God's servants to revive the Church in Nepal and embrace all in our communities as we journey together in our faith" said Mr. R. C. Acharya, the General Secretary of the NCCN.

Despite there being limited luxury in the venue of the training, due to the difficulties faced by the hosts after the earthquake, the hall of the Emmanuel Baptist Church had been full with over ninety enthusiastic participants throughout the training. Every session began with prayer, praise and invocation dance. Participants showed great interest and actively participated in the sessions, including



Ecumenical Enablers' Training in Nepal

the group discussions. Youth members of the NCC Nepal assumed great roles in organizing the training, facilitating the sessions and entertaining the participants.

Training sessions were facilitated by Rev. Dr. Roger Gaikward, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches in India, Rev. Vinod Victor of the Melbourne C.S.I Congregation / Anglican Church in Australia Melbourne Diocese, and Rev. Grace Moon, Programme Coordinator of CCA.

Asia Sunday

13th May 2018

Asia Sunday is observed every year on the Sunday before Pentecost and it coincides with the founding of the CCA, with celebrations focusing on particular themes every year. This reminds member churches and councils, as well as churches and ecumenical partners around the world, to offer special prayers and organize worship services as part of Asia Sunday. In 2018, Asia Sunday fell on 13th May and it was observed on the theme “Embracing the Differently Abled, and Upholding Their Dignity”. Members, however, had the liberty to observe Asia Sunday on a date of their convenience like previous years.

The theme “Embracing the Differently Abled, and Upholding Their Dignity” was selected to sensitize the churches and councils on the needs of the differently abled and to bring about a “caring, inclusive and accessible community”, while equipping the churches and various actors in the Asian ecumenical movement to renew their commitment to ecumenical advocacy on the differently abled in Asia.

The CCA staff members observed Asia Sunday with the Payap Church of the Church of Christ in Thailand on 13 May 2018. The sermon was given by Rev. Jung Eun Moon (Grace),

Programme Coordinator of CCA. She emphasized how everyone was created in God’s image, including those living with disabilities. She recounted the life of Moses, a person who can be seen as one with a disability, and the great purpose that God had for his life. There was a great need to embrace the differently abled and see the “otherness of people”. The liturgy was translated to the Thai language for the congregation. The worship was led by Elder Wasanchai Imoat of the Payap Church and was also attended by Rev. Teerapong Chaisri, pastor of Payap Church.

Korean churches observed Asia Sunday on 20 May 2018 at the Seomun Presbyterian Church, initiated by the National Council of Churches in Korea (KNCC). The KNCC translated the liturgy of Asia Sunday into Korean language and distributed it to all the member churches and Christian organizations in Korea.



Asia Sunday 2018

Rev. Yong Gyu Kang, pastor of Hanshin Church in his sermon stated, "We are all differently abled and disabled people, so we should help and respect each other. God called every one of us as his servant, although we are the weak and wounded..."

Mr. Lee Mun Hee, the chief director of Korea Federation of Organizations of the Disabled, shared his life story of how difficult it was to live with disabilities in Korean society. "It is heartbreaking that many disabled people are excluded from participating in the spiritual life of the church. The churches should be well prepared to welcome Jesus Christ in a wheel chair." Rev. Kyrie Kim, a chairperson of CCA's Programme Committee and Ms. Lizette Tapia, member of Programme Committee attended the Asia Sunday service as worship leaders.

In Pakistan, Asia Sunday was observed at Maraliwala Church Disst. Gujranwala on 13 May 2018. The liturgy was translated into the Urdu language and they sang Urdu songs that encouraged the weak and the differently abled. Mehwish Gulfam Gill led the worship

and the special prayer was led by Rev. Gulfam Hanif Gill. Disabled people from various villages were called to the stage to share their life experiences and pray. During the service, they were acknowledged as the "pride of the church" and as those with "many qualities to serve the church". Rev. Gulfam Hanif Gill delivered his sermon based on 2 Cor.12:9. He said, "We all are weak in body with sin but God enables us to do great things...God does not call a disabled person as weak; we should count them as blessings and learn to share in the community..."

Hong Kong Christian Council (HKCC) translated parts of the Asia Sunday liturgy into Chinese and distributed it to the churches in Hong Kong. St. John's Cathedral, the oldest Anglican Church in the Far East, observed Asia Sunday on May 13, 2018 and broadcasted the service on RTHK Radio 4. 'Prayers of the People' from the liturgy was used in the service. Asia Sunday was observed in some of the Chinese-language congregations of The Methodist Church, Hong Kong and The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong as well.

Asian Ecumenical Institute

15 July – 13 August 2018 / Chiang Mai, Thailand

The Asian Ecumenical Institute (AEI), an initiative of the CCA for ecumenical formation and leadership development, was held from 15 July to 13 August 2018 at the CCA Headquarters in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Twenty-six selected participants from CCA member churches, as well as Roman Catholic and Pentecostal churches from different Asian countries and Mauritius in Africa, participated in the month-long training course.

Focused on the theme 'Wider Ecumenism in Asia's Pluralistic Context', the AEI 2018 aimed at training a new generation of young ecumenical leaders in Asia, equipping them

to be committed to ecumenism and contributing members to the Asian and global ecumenical movement in the coming decades. The course outline and contents of the programme were designed to help participants envision a wider ecumenism with new theological insights, to expand their understanding for a more inclusive human community as well as the wholeness and integrity of all of God's creation.

Lectures and sessions were conducted by internationally acclaimed ecumenists, theologians, academics and social scientists and those who served on the faculty of AEI-



AEI-2018 Participants

2018 included Dr. Wesley S. Ariarajah, Emeritus Professor of Drew University in the USA who served on the staff of the World Council of Churches as Deputy General Secretary and Director of Inter-religious Dialogue (Sri Lanka/ Switzerland); Bishop Reuel Norman Marigza, formerly a professor at the Union Theological Seminary and the General Secretary of the United Church of Christ – UCCP (Philippines); Bishop Dr. Daniel Thiagarajah, CSI Jaffna Diocese and a New Testament Scholar (Sri Lanka); Dr. Joseph Deva Komar, Theological Seminary in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia); Rev. Dr. Pradit Takerngrangsarit, formerly the President and the Dean of the McGilvary College of Divinity of Payap University in Chiang Mai (Thailand); Dr. Le Ngoc Bich Ly of the Institute of Religion and Culture of Payap University (Vietnam); Venerable Dr. Phramaha Boonchuay Doojai of the Suanduk Temple and Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University; and Dr. John Suresh, a Development Analyst (India). The in-house members of the teaching faculty of AEI included Dr. Mathews George Chunakara,

General Secretary of the CCA and programme staff of CCA – Dr. Chuleepran Srisoontorn, Rev. Jung Eun Moon, Dr. Reynaldo Racaza Ty, Rev. Dr. Ngur Liana and Dr. Ronald Lalthanmawia.

During the period of AEI, the participants engaged in a range of activities, presentations, panels and thematic discussions with guest resource persons and CCA in-house members as the teaching faculty. They also participated in grassroots exposure visits, self-guided study and preparation of their personal assignment papers.

The AEI opening session commenced with a lecture given by Dr. Mathews George Chunakara, General Secretary of CCA on the topic, 'Ecumenism and Ecumenical Movement'. It covered a wide range of issues and emerging trends with regard to ecumenism especially from the perspective of wider ecumenism.

Dr. Wesley S. Ariarajah gave lectures on Christian Ecumenism and Theological

Pluralism, Ecumenism from an Inter-faith Perspective, Theory of Dialogue, and Mission and Witness in Asia's Multi-Religious Context. Participants were very receptive of the lectures and greatly admired his way of teaching. "The ecumenical movement needs renewed interfaith orientations when conflicting theological assumptions and presuppositions are posing challenges to authentic gospel values and Christian witness. Inter-religious dialogue is an attempt to understand people of other faith, not as people opposed to us or competing with us, but as partners within a pilgrimage. It is in the course of the pilgrimage and in the spirit of partnership that we share the message of Christ with co-pilgrims. Dialogue challenges us to change and renew. It beckons us to a whole new world of relationships. It urges us to re-examine our theology. It calls us not to give up our faith but to grow in our faith by living it with humility".

Bishop Dr. Daniel Thiagarajah from the CSI Jaffna Diocese in Sri Lanka spoke about Theological Hermeneutics on Ecumenism, Doing Theology in Asian Context, Conducting Contextual Bible Studies from Ecumenical

Perspectives and Ecumenical Perspectives on Political Ethics in Asian Context.

Dr. Joseph Deva Komar, Theological Seminary in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, gave lectures on the Challenges in Christian Mission Today, Ecumenical Perspectives in Unity and Mission, and Ecclesiology and Unity and Mission.

Bishop Reuel Norman Marigza, a former professor at the Union Theological Seminary and the General Secretary of the United Church of Christ – UCCP (Philippines) in his lectures encouraged the participants to be active as he taught on the Struggle for Justice and Peace, Poverty and Economic Justice, Our Common Witness for Justice and Peace in Asia, and Ecumenical and Prophetic Witnessing.

AEI participants visited Mae Sot, a district on Thailand and Myanmar border for an exposure trip. Participants stayed three days in the Mae La Refugee Camp where they learned more about the refugees and students from the Kawthoolai Karen Baptist Bible School and College. They joined the Sunday worship services of the community at the Tee Ger Nee



Dr. Wesley Ariarajah speaks on Christian Ecumenism and Theological Pluralism



AEI Participants in Dialogue at Buddhist Montasary

Church and rendered songs and testimonies. The group also visited the Mae Taw Clinic, the Hill Light Theological Seminary and the Shar Thoo Lei Migrant's School where they heard different stories of the people living near the border.

Dr. Saw Alwyn, Dean of the Kaw Thoo Lai Karen Baptist Bible School in the refugee camp said, "It is painful to live as refugees and it is not easy to live in a camp for more than four decades, without any official refugee status even. However, we have hope in God and believe that God has a plan for our young people." Dr. Alwyn further added, "We want to be free, we want to go home". He urged the visiting AEI participants from various countries to go back to their home countries with the voices of the refugees and take their message to the international community so that they may know the needs of the refugees; their pain, suffering, and desire for freedom.

"It was a human adventure where I learnt to go deep into the sense of the word "empathy" and be compassionate about what people of my generation are going through in this part of the world" said Julie Aurelie Babet, an AEI participant from Mauritius.

Allan Franco Jr from the Philippines said, "The experience was fulfilling and it was touching to see the people's undying hopes that one day they would return to the land of their ancestors, liberated from the political and social chains they are bound by now."

While presenting their research papers on a wide range of issues, the participants shared their views and affirmed to be engaged in building inclusive communities by nurturing youth leaderships, focusing on building peace, inclusivity and highlighting climate change and ecological justice in their respective churches.

The AEI provided the participants an opportunity to understand and analyse challenges, develop Asian and international ecumenical networks to pursue collaborative

ecumenical actions in the future, establish peer to peer networking and enhance individual capacity and leadership.



AEI participants with the students of Hill Light Theological Seminary in Maebla Refugee Camp

Contextual Theology Training for Burmese Refugees' Theological Institutions in Mae Sot, Thailand

6 – 10 November 2018 / Mae Sot, Thailand

To facilitate ecumenical formation at the grassroots, CCA organized the fourth ecumenical theological training for teachers of six Bible Schools located inside refugee camps on Thailand-Myanmar border.

The training was held from 6 to 10 November 2018 at the Hill Light Theological Seminary located at the *Huay Nam Khun* Karen village, near Mae Sot, a small township in west Thailand close to the Myanmar border.

During the first three days' sessions the participants reflected on the concept of wider ecumenism and ecumenical movement in Asia, interconnection and relevance of *Missio Dei* in Karen context, critical and contextual reading of the Bible from the Karen perspectives, construction of Karen Diaspora theology and the future of theological

education of Karen refugees and stateless people.

The Bible schools in refugee camps provide education facilities, which is the higher level education they can undergo while being confined inside the refugee camps. Many students enroll for three-year theological courses managed and run independently by refugees themselves through six Bible schools inside the refugee camps. Most Myanmar refugees and undocumented migrants are the Karen ethnic people who have fled armed conflicts and persecution in Myanmar. Although Karen refugees have lived in the camps for more than thirty years, they live only in temporary shelters inside the camps

The Karen Christians have maintained their strong sense of Karen ethnicity and Christian



Contextual Theology Training for Burmese Refugees' Theological Institution in Maesot

faith. They built their churches and Bible schools inside the refugee camps.

While sharing their experiences, the participants expressed their concern on the recent decision by the Thai government and UNHCR to close down all refugee camps on the Thailand-Myanmar border before the end of 2019.

Though Karen refugees were forcibly displaced from their homeland and settled in camps, they have made consistent efforts to maintain their dignity and hope. However, the Bible schools in six refugee camps are seriously concerned about the decision to close-down the camps.

The Kwathoolei Karen Baptist Bible School (KKBBS) which is the oldest and biggest Bible school in Maelah Refugee camp is exploring a possibility to build a new campus in Myanmar, but no initiative has been taken yet to concretize the plan.

"Many of us were born in the refugee camps and have never been to Myanmar. We suffer due to the serious confusion of our identity;

we will not be welcomed in Myanmar as we are stateless aliens in Thailand", stated the Academic Dean of KKBBS Dr. Alwyn. "Now we do not know where to find our new home. We need to be independent and develop our capacities to realize our visions for the Karen community. We trust God's mercy and guidance for the whole Karen people including the Karen diaspora", Alwyn added.

Rev. Dr. Ngurliana told the Bible school teachers, "Jesus Christ was a refugee, who was excluded, marginalized, and persecuted. We all follow the same Christ who lives in our midst and we need to believe that Jesus Christ is in complete solidarity with the Myanmar refugees, who are excluded, marginalized, oppressed and persecuted by the powers and principalities. ."

"God of Ebenezer will always be with you and guide you in your struggle and journey", Rev. Grace Moon told the participants during the opening session.

Thirty-five Bible school teachers from six refugee camps participated in the fourth

training programme annually organized by CCA since 2015.

The training was facilitated by CCA staff members Rev. Dr. Ngurliana and Rev. Grace Moon together with Dr. Thra Tee Toh, Director

on Mission of Kawthoolei Karen Baptist Churches, Dr. Wado and Dr. Alwyn of KKBBS, Dr. Yenyen, the Principal of Hill Light Theological Seminary, and Dr. Saw Shwe Gyan, Dean of Karen Baptist Theological Seminary.

Women's Leadership Development Training in Laos

29 November – 1 December 2018 / Vientiane, Laos



Participants of Women's Leadership Development Training in Laos

The annual leadership development training for church women in the Lao Evangelical Church (LEC) was held at the headquarters of the LEC in Vientiane from 29 November to 1 December and attended by 65 selected participants from rural congregations in 17 provinces of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (LPDR).

The training was organized in collaboration with the women's division of the Church and aimed to enhance women's leadership at the grassroots in Laos, a landlocked and longtime isolated country in South East Asia.

All religious activities were banned in Laos for decades, starting from 1975, but the country has experienced comparatively more religious freedom in recent years.

The Lao Evangelical Church is the fastest growing Christian church in the country with about 1000 congregations nation-wide. Approximately 20 percent of a total of more than 200,000 members of the LEC are women.

"Despite restrictions and hindrances faced by the Church, God has enabled us in witnessing the Gospel. However, we really feel the lack of trained pastors and lay leaders to lead our congregations. It is also an urgent need to strengthen women's leadership and their biblical-theological capacities to equip them to share the Good News and serve our people in Laos" said Rev. Dr. Khamphone Khounthapanya, Executive President of Lao Evangelical Church in the opening of the leadership training.

Pastor Nanivanh Aphaiyamath, President of Women's Division of LEC stated, "God calls

women to church ministry in our own communities. Whenever I visit our members in remote provinces, I am greatly moved by the tearful prayers of Christian women that come out of their own burning desire to serve God and help other members in the community. LEC's Women's Division has been organizing different programmes for LEC members in rural and marginalized villages, for which more women facilitators need to be trained."

"We need to focus more on increasing women's abilities and capacities which will help achieve gender equality in Laos too. We believe our initiatives, with the accompaniment of CCA, would help our women members to empower themselves and also other women in the villages", added Mrs. Aphaiyamath.

Synpone Lavanh, a social worker who led sessions encouraged the participants and told them, "We should make women's voices heard. We hear many sad news regarding female victims of domestic violence and human trafficking, particularly in the rural

areas. They get lesser opportunities of proper school education, health care and counseling support. To strengthen women's social status in Laos and overcome illiteracy, poor reproductive and basic health, food insecurity and economic backwardness, we must work together to rank the status of our women high and set the development priorities".

"As Christian women leaders, we can do much together to empower our sisters in villages through our nationwide network of LEC women's fellowship", encouraged Ms. Lavanh.

During the three day training, the participants were provided opportunities to reflect on the biblical/ theological basis of leadership, contextual reading of the Bible from Lao women's perspective, and women's engagement in God's mission relevant to Lao context.

Ms. Nany Boommy from Mit Sum Phum village of Sanamxay District, an area badly affected by the flooding from the recent dam collapse, shared stories of the plight of affected



Participants of Women's Leadership Development Training in Laos



Naly and Douayi from Namham Province of Laos; Laos-Vietnam Border

communities. She said, “As soon as we heard of the flooding, Mit Sum Phun congregation, the only church in my village, opened its church space to the victims for their temporary shelter. The church members also welcomed their victimised neighbours to their homes, providing food and clothes. For the last four months, we’ve been sharing what we have and helping each other. Now after participating in this training, I feel more confident that this is my new task given by God to help my neighbors in need. It was also a great opportunity to meet many women lay leaders from various provinces that I have never been to.”

Naly and Douayi, the youngest among the participants at 15 years old and both married, travelled continuously for two days from Namham Province to Vientiane to attend the training. They said, “We are very happy to be part of this training. We could not fully understand the sessions in Lao language since we only speak the Mong dialect but we learned a lot to share with friends in our village...and also a tip on how to teach the Bible to the Sunday school students.”

The CCA has been accompanying the LEC for past decades and has made several efforts,

especially since 1993 to bring the Lao Church to the mainstream of the Asian ecumenical movement. The Church in Laos had undergone traumatic experiences for two decades and this has affected proper leadership development within the Church.

The training was facilitated by CCA General Secretary Dr. Mathews George Chunakara, staff members Rev. Dr. Chuleepran Srisoontorn and Rev. Grace Moon together with Rev. Dr. Khamphone Kunthapunya, Pastor Nanivanh Aphaiyatham, Pastor Thephaivone Phouthene, and Ms. Synpone Lavanh.

Asian Ecumenical Fellowship (AEF)

The Asian Ecumenical Fellowship (AEF) is a residential program based at the CCA headquarters in Chiang Mai. It is designed to assist research scholars, ecumenists, activists, theologians and ecumenical practitioners from churches, ecumenical organisations and institutions who are from a wide range of disciplines and sectors. Asian Ecumenical Fellows are given opportunities to avail facilities and resources at the CCA headquarters for their study, research, and reflections.

3.

Building Peace and Moving Beyond Conflicts

Objectives

- To analyse the context of conflicts and develop methodologies for churches' participation in peace-building; and,
- To assist churches in their initiatives in responding to conflict situations and raise awareness through inter-religious platforms to contribute and sustain peaceful societies.

Accompanying Churches and Communities in Conflict Situations: Pastoral Solidarity Visit to Cambodia

1 - 4 February 2018 | Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Cambodia has transformed from a command economy to the free market economic model, after which it has experienced rapid economic growth. However, with corruption, lack of skilled labour, inadequate infrastructure, and high energy cost, economic, social, and political turmoil, Cambodia faces difficult situations. It is one of the poorest countries in the world.

The main human rights issues in Cambodia include corruption; human trafficking; inhumane treatment of prisoners; ineffective human rights bodies of the government; arbitrary suspension of the right to association and peaceful assembly in Phnom Penh; a partial and ineffective judiciary; and limits on the freedom of expression and of the press.

Members of the CCA team learned about the current situation through first-hand field visits to the different churches and communities, provided pastoral care to church people and leaders in Cambodia, and accompanied the suffering churches in Cambodia. Team members of this pastoral solidarity visit were Dr. Mathews George Chunakara, Dr. Rey Ty, and Dr. Ronald Lalthanmawia.



CCA Pastoral Solidarity Team with Cambodian Church Leaders in Phnom Penh

Visit to Local Ecumenical Fellowships in Cambodia

9 - 15 April 2018 | Kampong Cham, Kampong Spoe, Phnom Penh, and Siem Reap, Cambodia

From April 9 to 15 2018, the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) embarked on a solidarity visit to rural ecumenical fellowships in Cambodia. CCA General Secretary Dr. Mathews George, who was initially connected with CCA as its Indochina Coordinator, played the principal role in the establishment of the Kampuchea Christian Council (KCC) as well as the Kampuchea Women's Committee and the Kampuchea Youth Committee.

After years of neglecting the Cambodian churches, Dr. Mathews George rekindled ties with the Cambodian churches by visiting the KCC in January as well as organizing a Mission in Unity program at the KCC headquarters in Phnom Penh in March 2018. To strengthen, consolidate, and deepen CCA ties with the Cambodian churches, the CCA General Secretary has ensured that CCA shall visit the Cambodian churches on a regular basis.

To kick off the effort to develop new ties as well as rebuilding closer ties with the Cambodian churches, CCA staff members together with KCC representatives travelled to Kampong Cham, Kampong Spoe, Phnom Penh, and Siem Reap to visit churches as well as have a fellowship with church leaders. In Phnom Penh, CCA paid respect to senior church leaders by visiting them, having a video conversation, as well as organizing a fellowship gathering with senior church leaders, as well as young church leaders.

The church people with whom CCA came in contact belonged to different denominations as well as to different independent churches and home churches.

Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace (PJP) Asia Focus 2019 Planning Meeting

4 - 7 September 2018 | Chiang Mai, Thailand

The Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) convened a meeting to plan the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace (PJP) Asia focus of the World Council of Churches (WCC). The joint planning session organized by CCA and WCC of the General Secretaries of national councils of churches (NCCs) and other high-ranking church leaders from nine countries in Asia helped to brainstorm and develop the PJP plan from the bottom up, listening to the voices of Asian churches.

The meeting was held at the CCA headquarters from 4 to 7 September 2018.

Starting with an analysis on the overview of Asian situation by Dr. Mathews George Chunakara, the planning sessions identified a series of Asian issues that needed urgent attention of the Church and society such as ethnic conflicts, civil wars, political violence, religious intolerance; poverty; inadequate health care; economic exploitation; environmental degradation and exploitation of natural resources; militarization and arms build-up; nuclearisation; spread of small arms and light weapons; domination and intervention of major powers from outside and within the region; political unrest; torture



Participants of PJP Planning Meeting



PJP Planning meeting

and custodial death, extra-judicial killings, silencing of the media and critics of the governments, suppression of freedom of the press, interference in independence of judiciary; suppression of people's legitimate right to self-determination; and lack of rule of law and democratic governance.

Country reports presented by NCC General Secretaries during the three-day meeting helped to understand Asian contextual thematic focus of the PJP Asia focus 2019: "Building Peace and Human Dignity" or "Building Peace and Upholding Human Dignity". These themes cover a broad scope of challenges facing Asian countries.

The intensive brainstorming exercise was encouraging and productive, as the process was consultative.

Listening to grassroots voices is the key to understanding ground realities and needs which are fundamental for establishing a sense of ownership by the member churches and national ecumenical councils.

It was proposed to suggest WCC to organise Pilgrim Team Visits to India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, South Korea, Japan,

Indonesia, Sri Lanka and the Philippines, most of which are scheduled for 27 February-3 March 2019. Annual meeting of the PJP Reference Group will be held in Chiang Mai from 4-7 March 2019.

The CCA General Secretary summarised the outcome of the planning meeting at the end of the planning meeting "as the representatives of Asian churches have been brought together to initiate and plan the PJP Asia focus, as well as to identify the pertinent issues systematically from a local context and grassroots perspective, we now have a solid foundation in place for a successful PJP Asia focus next year."

The CCA General Secretary assured all support through CCA to make the PJP Asia focus a great success in 2019 with greater sense of ownership by the implementing bodies at the national and regional levels.



Ecumenical Women's Action against Violence (EWAV): Cambodia

10 – 12 May 2018 / Phnom Penh, Cambodia



Participants of EWAV Programme in Cambodia

As part of the Ecumenical Women's Action Against Violence (EWAV), a national consultation with participation of representatives from grassroots congregations in Cambodia was organised by CCA. The consultation was held at the KCC headquarters in Phnom Penh from 10 to 12 May 2018 and attended by 40 participants.

The consultation paved the way for initiating networks and coalitions of women in church and society at the grassroots to overcome violence and build peace with justice.

"Asia has a rich tradition and heritage of communities living together in peace. Traditional models of peace building existed in many Asian communities and those were effective models of conflict transformation. However, Asian communities need more concerted efforts to overcome violence and build harmonious societies where peace with

justice would prevail", said Dr. Mathews George Chunakara, General Secretary of the CCA at the opening session of the consultation.

The Biblical-Theological Reflections and the re-reading of selected Biblical narratives from the perspectives of women's concerns helped in stimulating the participants to reflect on the Scriptures from their own local contexts and developing new hermeneutical understanding.

The church leaders emphasised the significance of mobilising the synergies of women and men, both within and outside of the church, to cooperate and join hands with people of all faiths to combat violence against women.

Cambodia has an overall literacy rate of 74%. However, women and girl-children in many parts of the country still undergo social



Participants of EWAV Programme in Cambodia

discrimination, economic injustice, and lack of equal opportunities to partake in social and public life. Violence not only affects the physical and psychological well-being of Cambodian women but also destroys the social fabric of the community in particular

and of society at large. Dr. Mathews George Chunakara, Ms. Sunila Ammar, Rev. Oum Sovy, Rev. Eang Chuun, Ms. Sotheavy Srey, Rev. Sok Nev, and Dr. Rey Ty facilitated various sessions at the consultation.

Regional Consultation on Ecumenical Women’s Action against Violence

15- 17 November 2018 / Bangkok, Thailand

A three-day Consultation focused on the theme ‘Transforming the World and Building Peace’ was organised to empower women in church and society to combat gender-based violence.

“Women as victims of violence and as survivors have long mobilized themselves to resist violence, and they have proved effective in peace advocacy, social conciliation, and negotiation. Women are valuable partners of God’s incredible plan of gender diversity; they are created with a purpose and for a purpose.

They should not be discriminated on the basis of gender identity”, observed the participants during the discussion.

The Consultation was held at the YWCA in Bangkok, Thailand from 15 to 17 November 2018 and attended by 28 representatives, mostly from women’s divisions of CCA member churches and national ecumenical councils.

The participants representing church-related women’s organizations shared struggles of



Participants of the Asia Regional Consultation on Women's Action against Violence in Bangkok

grassroots women in combating violence. They emphasized the need for urgent actions for providing the tools and space for dialogue and deeper understanding about the increasing trend of gender-based violence.

Deekshya from Sri Lanka narrated the examples of how courageous women at the grassroots in her country, who as victims of violence and as survivors, have long mobilized themselves to resist violence by peace advocacy, social conciliation, and negotiation during the civil war period in northern Sri Lanka.

Quoting the statistics of a recent UNICEF survey which estimated 35% of Cambodia's 15,000 prostitutes are children under the age of 16", Srey Sotheavy, a Cambodian young Christian woman peace activist said, "In order to counter this situation in Cambodian society, the Church in Cambodia need to seek the support of civil society and other faith-based organizations to work together and combat trafficking of women and children".

Biblical theological reflections on women in Biblical narratives such as Ruth, Hagar, Deborah, and Vashti focused on how to engage and encourage Asian Christian women to re-read the Bible from women's perspectives.

"We need to find ways to re-write the stories of our own faith and witness in contemporary contexts, and we should not allow bitterness and disappointment to influence our lives", opined the participants.

Dr. Susan Thomas, a lay representative of the Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church in a presentation narrated the stories of the Biblical characters of Deborah and Vashti, and their examples of assertiveness and courage. "Deborah, who was an assertive woman leader exemplified the qualities of a prophetess, just judge and strong administrator, and she was as equal to any other prophet in the Bible. Women in the Biblical narratives who resisted violence and oppression also had to face difficult situations as they stood against

injustices. Together we can build peace, bring the change, and transform the world; hence we need coordinated actions to combat violence and oppression”, said Dr. Susan Thomas.

The participants urged the churches and ecumenical councils to encourage women and men to work together in a common platform

to achieve the goal of gender equality and elimination of violence against women.

The Consultation was the third in a series of annual regional consultations organized by CCA as part of a new programme initiative – Ecumenical Women’s Action against Violence (EWAAV).



Ms. Supaporn Yarnasam

Young Ambassadors for Peace in Asia (YAPA-2018)

14 – 20 October 2018 / Chiang Mai, Thailand

The third annual training programme of Young Ambassadors of Peace in Asia (YAPA) was held at the CCA headquarters at Payap University in Chiang Mai, Thailand from 14 to 20 October, 2018. The theme was ‘Peace with Justice and Human Security.’ The YAPA aimed to train a new generation of young peace activists and nurture their role in their respective societies as peace builders. Twenty-seven youth from CCA member churches and representatives

of Buddhist, Hindu, and Muslim organizations in Asia attended the programme. The week-long training empowered a cadre of young peace activists in Asia with a strong sense of commitment to peace and conflict resolution as well as to nurture interfaith and inter-ethnic harmony. It emphasized the links between intercultural and interfaith dialogue, human rights and conflict transformation as key elements in long-term sustainable peace



YAPA in Session

processes, while exploring and developing the participants' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values.

There were three phases in the YAPA programme. During the pre-departure stage, participants who were selected had been involved in volunteer service, including various types of peacebuilding activities. During the training program stage at the CCA headquarters, first, the participants shared about their country situation to which they had to respond. Second, they learned about various aspects of peace building as well as involved in preparing and presenting their action plans to build peace. After returning to their respective communities and countries, each participant was expected to implement a simple but doable peacebuilding volunteer community project.

Numerous thematic sessions explored the ways to empower civil society in its quest for social development, economic security, human rights, food security, environmental

security, community security and political security. Through a wide range of formal and informal interactive learning sessions, the participants were enabled to advance their skills in peace building initiatives and advocacy. Topics discussed elaborately at different sessions included Principles and Frameworks of Peace Building; Interreligious Perspectives on Peace with Justice and Human Security; Peace building: Where, When, and How; Understanding the difference between Conflict and Violence; Contextual Analysis of Situations; Conflict Resolution and Conflict Management at the Grassroots; Emergency Response to Conflict Situations and Initiatives for Peace-building; Peacemaking during Armed Conflicts: Role of Military and Civil Society; Strengthening of Civil-Military Relations in Conflict affected areas; Prevention of Religious Animosities and Spreading Flames of Hatred; Reconciliation in Peace-building in religiously and ethnically intolerant communities; Meaning of Non-Violence, and application of Non-Violence as a Spirituality in Action.

The achievements of the programme included participants having learned new knowledge, skills, and values. During the pre-test, 7 indicated that they had a great deal of knowledge (rank A) about the topics to be discussed, 14 high (rank B), and 2 good (rank C). At the post-test, there was a great deal of improvement: 13 (rank A), 9 (rank B), and 1 (rank C). The new knowledge cited included the following: human security vs. national security; conflict analysis and management; human rights; reconciliation, nonviolence, and dialogue; international humanitarian law; and stages of conflict.

Measuring outcomes, during the pre-test, 7 participants claimed that their organizations ranked very high (rank 1) on peace with justice and human security, 6 high (rank B), 7 moderate (rank C), and 3 poor (rank D). During the post-test, participants claimed that the new knowledge, skill, and attitudes they will

bring back will improve their organizations understanding and work on peace with justice and human security: 14 very high (rank A) and 9 high (rank B).

CCA received positive evaluation from the participants. A youth leader reflected: "It is a very good programme to encourage young people. I have learned so many things and topics from different resource persons. I am very much impressed with the topics peacebuilding and inter-religious works".

The participants of the YAPA affirmed at the end of the programme that, as a follow up activity in the post-training phase upon returning home, they shall implement and thereafter share their reports about the implementation of their volunteer community projects in the closed group on Facebook, complete with photos and captions. Among the projects proposed were: Ecumenical



Participants of YAPA

peace formation programme (Myanmar); interreligious listening and dialogue (southern Thailand); interfaith harmony (Pakistan); community immersion and theater (Philippines); theater (Nepal); volunteer teaching and playing with children (Cambodia); job counseling for the youth with the help of the church (India); preventing as well as awareness of violence against women (India); teaching Mathematics, Science, English, and Computer Technology in post-conflict areas in northern and north central provinces (Sri Lanka); workshop on peace with justice and

human security (Timor Leste); workshop on poverty: causes and solutions (India); children's art for the disabled (Sri Lanka); collect stories about conflicts (Myanmar); inclusive youth led activities (Myanmar); environmental stewardship (Philippines); planting trees (Thailand); video on peace with justice and human security (Nagaland, India); youth forum for peace and harmony (Sri Lanka); political identity (Indonesia); and, organic fertilizer training for survivors of human trafficking (Indonesia).



Participants of YAPA-2018

4.

Prophetic Diakonia and Advocacy

Objectives

- To empower Asian churches to be competent in responding to social, economic, and political issues through acts of prophetic witness at times of brokenness and human needs; and,
- To coordinate and facilitate ecumenical advocacy at the national regional and global levels on emerging issues in Asia, while expressing solidarity, as well as upholding human rights for human dignity.

Pastoral Solidarity Visit to U.A.E

28 - 30 June 2018 | U.A.E.

Of the approximately 22 million migrants who currently live in the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, a large number of them are from various Asian countries, mostly from South and Southeast Asia. In the United Arab Emirates (UAE), up to 90 per cent of its 9 million residents are migrants; “low-skilled” blue-collared workers from India make up the largest population (between 2.2 and 2.8 million), followed by workers from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and the Philippines.

The objective of the pastoral solidarity visit to the United Arab Emirates was to sensitize the churches to be concerned about the vulnerable conditions of migrant workers as well as to express solidarity with and advocate for the dignity and rights of migrant workers. A pastoral conference and a visit to the labour camp were organized to achieve this objective.

The CCA delegation was composed of thirteen persons, representing different Asian councils and churches. They visited churches and engaged in dialogues with Asian diaspora church leaders in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Sharjah in the UAE from 28 to 30 June 2018. Over a hundred people attended a meeting of the pastors and church leaders of Asian

diaspora church congregations in the Arabian Gulf during the visit of Asian church leaders in the CCA delegation. The meeting was held at the Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church at Jabalal. The Asian diaspora church leaders shared the plight of migrant workers.

The members of the team worshiped in different Asian diaspora congregations together with the Asian migrant communities during a worshipping day – Friday.

A group of Asian church leaders visited the Sonapur labour camps in Sharjah where Asian migrant workers live in deplorable conditions and witnessed their living conditions. During this visit, members of the delegation engaged in dialogue with the migrant workers, pastors, and church leaders of Asian migrant congregations, as a result of which they learnt more about the conditions, fears, aspirations, and demands of migrant labourers.

As a result of the Pastoral Solidarity Visit, the representatives of Asian churches were sensitized to the plight of migrant workers, committing to work for the dignity and rights of migrant labourers.

The concerns on migrant workers have been integral to CCA’s programme thrusts, for which reason it has a continuing programme



CCA's Pastoral Solidarity Team visit and meeting with Asian Diaspora Church leaders in U.A.E

that advocates for their dignity and rights. Through this programme, churches and church-related groups in sending and receiving countries are mobilised to lobby and advocate for the human rights of migrant workers in the Arabian Gulf and elsewhere in Asia.

Asia Regional Consultation on 'Upholding the Dignity and Rights of Children'

16 – 20 September 2018 / Jakarta, Indonesia

The years of childhood hold a special place in one's life. Childhood is the time for building the foundation of life. Therefore, children need to be physically and mentally healthy, protected from harm, and surrounded by loving and nurturing adults who help them grow and develop to their full potential.

Children have a right to survive, thrive and fulfill their potential, for the benefit of their growth and a better world.

The fact is, however, millions of children continue to be victims of the most egregious forms of exploitations such as violence, abuse and neglect. Poverty, sexual exploitation, sale and trafficking of children for sexual exploitation, pornography and forced labour have become serious concerns in several Asian countries. Impoverished children who are forced to live in vulnerable situations continue to face many inhuman and degrading experiences. Ethnic, religious, political and communal conflicts affect millions of Asian children. The impacts of digitalisation in all walks of life affect children negatively despite the many positive gains of technological advancements. Access to basic education,





Participants of Resource Persons

health care and essential factors needed to nurture and develop the talents of the future generation are limited in many situations. These factors continue to affect the protection and security of children, and their right to live with dignity in a secure atmosphere.

Many churches in Asia also have been silent when it comes to addressing the issues of children today. Considering these realities, the CCA initiated the programme on upholding the dignity of children with an aim to empower Asian churches in advocacy on upholding the rights and dignity of children.

The main objectives of the consultation was sensitising the Asian churches to be aware of the rights and dignity of children, addressing specific concerns and issues related to the rights and dignity of children such as displacement, forced migration, statelessness, poverty, disability, lack of education and health care facilities, etc. It also aimed at enhancing the capacity of Asian churches to be engaged in advocacy on the protection and promotion of the rights and dignity of children and providing a platform to build networking

of Asian churches and ecumenical organizations to uphold the rights and dignity of children.

Around 60 participants from 15 different countries across Asia attended the consultation held at the headquarters of the GPIB in Jakarta, Indonesia from 16 to 20 September 2018. In the first workshop session, the participants shared and discussed how to build coalitions and networks with civil society and faith-based organizations in national and regional context. Here, the participants identified national and regional organizations for mutual collaborations and advocacy. They came up with a conclusion that they saw the need for churches to participate in national/regional alliances and networks to further strengthen the responses in promoting and upholding the rights of children. The meaningful participation of children in the whole process of network building must be of utmost priority.

In the second workshop session, the participants shared and discussed how to be engaged in advocacy initiatives at

governmental and inter-governmental levels in respective national and regional context, and issues and concerns to be addressed for advocacy and identify priority areas. Some participants shared their work in their respective countries, how they collaborated with other churches and/or foundations. As a conclusion, they recognized that advocacy work was an integral part in getting the aim and message across to all, especially to call on the government to address emerging issues in their respective countries, which were contextual and varied from one another.

Towards the end of the consultation, the participants adopted a Communique and the Consultation:

- Urged churches and ecumenical councils in Asia to initiate advocacy to influence governments;
- Requested CCA to initiate and facilitate an Asian ecumenical network on upholding and protecting dignity and rights of children;
- Encouraged churches to develop policies of participation of children as an utmost priority, especially through Christian education programmes;

- Urged churches to be engaged in tactical action with governments, civil society organisations, faith-based networks and seek professional assistance as well as pool together resources within the churches to deal with juvenile justice system, issues of sexuality, drug abuse, etc.;
- Recommended Churches in Asia to develop curriculum for Child Protection training, and initiate pilot projects to understand state legislations of child protection measures and mechanisms;
- Suggested churches to initiate training of the trainers for developing and implementing best practices for child protection as well as to form children-friendly organisations and networks with an aim to sensitise churches on issues and international instruments to protect children's rights and dignity;

Archbishop Willem T.P. Simarmata, the Moderator of CCA inaugurated the consultation and stated, "As vast number of children in Asia are increasingly become victims of complex problems, a new way of working together with increased synergy to uphold the dignity and rights of children at all levels is required," He also emphasized call



Participants of Asia Regional Consultation on Upholding the Dignity and Rights of Children in Jakarta, Indonesia

for the churches, “Our churches and congregations must be friendly places for welcoming children at all times. Asian churches must cooperate with governments, national, regional and inter-governmental institutions as well as civil society organizations to protect the rights of children.”

In a keynote address delivered at the opening session, CCA General Secretary Dr. Mathews George Chunakara stated, “Despite technological advancements in the present digitalized and globalized world, millions of children all over the world are abused and exploited in tragic ways on an unprecedented scale, and Asia is not an exception to this trend.” He accentuated some emerging issues faced by children in Asia today, which include poverty, violence, war and conflict situations, trafficking and exploitation, forced labor, forced displacement and statelessness. Subsequently, he quoted some International Instruments in recognition of the dignity and protection of the rights of children. He said, “The dignity of human beings takes precedence over the many rights and duties which are bound up with being human. The dignity of the human beings is not itself a human right but a source and ground for all human rights.” Finally, Dr. Mathews George affirmed God’s call upon churches which is to be partners in His mission to restore the dignity of all human beings including children, recognize their worth and importance and affirm their fullness of life.

Mr. Ali Aulia Ramli of UNICEF Jakarta presented on ‘Children in a Digitalized World: Impact and Challenges to Child Protection’. He shared recent data showing that more and more children were using the internet, whilst some issues such as spread of harmful information, sexual abuse in any forms, and cyber bullying were still present and increasing. He emphasized the demand for a coordinated global response by government, technology

companies and civil society to deal with this issue. In conclusion, he recalled the Churches Commitments to Children, a joint document of UNICEF and WCC that outlined actions that member churches might take to respect and support children’s rights.

In a presentation on ‘Children in Conflict Situations in Asia: The Journey of Roslin Orphanage’, Mr. Budi Soehardi of Roslin Foundation in Kupang, East Nusa Tenggara shared the condition faced by the children around Kupang. He identified some issues, such as limited access to education and health care, poverty, weather condition that caused drought and health problem, and its rocky soil structure which affected their agriculture system. He also said that more awareness was needed among Asian communities to promote the concept that every child has the rights not to be subjected to torture or other cruel inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Ms. Yuyum Fhahni Paryani of ACWC for Children delivered her keynote address on ‘UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: Implementation in Asia Today’. She highlighted some concerns: civil rights and freedom, general implementation measures, survival and development, and protection. She also shared common issues faced by Asian countries, like birth registration, freedom of thought and religion, lack of data, less coordination among national bodies, also administration of juvenile justice. She urged the churches and national bodies to take actions, not just to have meeting without any significant follow-ups.

A thematic address on ‘Ending Violence against Children’ was delivered by Mr. Eule Rico Bonganay of Salinlahi Alliance for Children’s Concerns. Children tend to be more vulnerable to these vicious acts because they are physically weaker than adults and are still

in the process of developing their own competencies. Child rights advocacy has been downgraded to feeding child a diet of charity while we keep silent on the structural set up making children and their families' outcasts of this economic growth. It is about time that we step into the forefront and advance a genuine transformative agenda for children."

Rosiana Purnomo of CCA and Rev. Ali'itasi Salosa of the Methodist Church in New Zealand led the biblical theological reflections.

Dr. Ahmad Sofian of ECPAT Indonesia delivered a thematic address on 'Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children in Asia'. He exposed recent data showing current situation in Asia. Further, he revealed the modus used by offenders of child trafficking. He also explained

the factors and demands which triggered child trafficking.

A thematic address on 'Early Childhood Care and Character Development' was delivered by Ms. Henderina Corry of ACTS Montessori. She proposed the Montessori philosophy and approach in dealing with early children, as it had clear rules to maximize children's ability for learning and exploration. The same philosophy could be used to introduce God to children. "The family and teachers should introduce religious concepts in a living model. Therefore, both parents and teachers need to have a strong bond with the children, so they are able to learn about love and kindness through the presence of their significant persons."



Group Discussion

Mr. Ali Aulia Ramli, UNICEF Indonesia said, "This consultation is a good moment to share with churches and people, to strengthen the participation of churches with regards to addressing children's issues." Mr John Izaac Minotty Pattiwael, GPIB also mentioned, "I am looking forward for a stronger relation with CCA on the implementation of the Communique, particularly in the field of Juvenile Justice System, solely for the best interest of children. I trust that the valuable issues and action plans that have been recorded through the Communique will prove vital in the enhancement of the Church's role and goals ahead in upholding the rights and dignity of children. As Rev. Dietrich

Boenhoeffer stated (circa 1940), 'the test of the morality of a society is what it does to its children.'

The participants were actively involved in the discussions. GPIB as the hosting church gave their best effort to ensure that participants were comfortable and the whole consultation ran smoothly. The consultation also decided to translate the communique into different languages and also publish a booklet as a means of communication to member churches and councils. The consultation also decided to prepare a database for the Asia Advocacy Network on Dignity and Rights of Children (AANDRoC).

International Consultation on Asian Diaspora in the Arabian Gulf and Human Trafficking

11 – 15 November 2018 | Bangkok, Thailand



International Consultation on Asian Diaspora in the Arabian Gulf and Human Trafficking

Millions of Asians are on the move both within and beyond their national boundaries. Millions around the world leave their home countries in search of employment. There are presently over 15 million migrants living in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. Among the Asian migrant labour forces

present in the Arabian Gulf countries, a large number of them reached their Gulf destinations through human traffickers.

The Asian ecumenical movement has been engaging in global advocacy on uprooted people for a long time. CCA, knowing its

theological conviction based on the principle of love of Christ for the stranger and vulnerable, acts on its prophetic call. However, the advocacy on the issue of labour migration and human trafficking in the Arabian Gulf region in particular and in Asia in general needs to be strengthened and addressed more deeply in ecumenical platforms. Two consultations organized by CCA in 2015 and in 2016 shared the work and experiences of churches in combating and eliminating this modern day slavery. The churches are called to discover the plan God pursues for victims of human trafficking and forced migration. Churches need coordinated action to create public awareness and build the capacity of vulnerable groups and professionals working in the field of anti-trafficking; provide support and assistance; and advocate among civil society organizations, faith based organization, policy makers, and legislatures to address the concerns and issues related to human trafficking, forced migrations, and people lured to migration leading to human trafficking.

As part of sensitizing the churches to be concerned on the situation of migrant workers in the Arabian Gulf region, CCA organized an international consultation from 11 to 15 of November, 2018 on Labour Migration, Trafficking in Persons and Asian Diaspora in the Arabian Gulf which was held in Bangkok, Thailand. Fifty participants from Asian countries and representatives of the Asian diaspora from the Arabian Gulf states, such as Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, Dubai, Kuwait, Oman, Ras Al Khaimah, Saudi Arabia, and Sharjah attended the consultation. Compelled by an ethic of hospitality, the participants gathered around a shared commitment to learn about migrant workers and trafficked persons around Asia and in Asian diaspora churches, and how to accompany them and advocate for their dignity and human rights. The consultation sensitized the churches to build competent churches to respond to forced migration and human trafficking as well as affirmed and reinforced the responsibility of churches to accompany migrant workers in



Participants of Human Trafficking



Jiji Varghese, Saudi Arabia

their journey and advocate for their dignity and rights.

The deliberations of the Consultation focused on issues related to labour migration and trafficking in persons within and beyond Asia. Special emphasis was given to labour migration in the Arabian Gulf states and the Asian diaspora as well as churches' mission to the Asian diaspora in the Gulf region.

The thematic presentations and panel discussions reminded us of the pastoral and social commitments and Christian witness to accompany the migrant workers and the trafficked persons in their struggle as well as to advocate for upholding their dignity and human rights. As Paul urged believers to welcome one another just as Christ had welcomed us (Rom. 15:7), we are then further compelled that, being a faith community in various parts of the world, we need to revisit the theme "hospitality towards stranger" as it is a command of God from God's community. Jesus who lived both as an international and internal migrant teaches the importance of hospitality.

CCA General Secretary Dr. Mathews George Chunakara presented the keynote speech during which he stated that migration contributes to human development. However, in many instances, the human rights and human dignity of migrant workers are violated. With the surge in transnational migration, migrant smuggling and trafficking in persons take place with increasing frequency. The poor in Asia seek jobs abroad in order to escape extreme poverty during which migrant smugglers exploit the poor for profit. Transnational migrant workers are modern-day slaves who are overworked, underpaid, and work under harsh conditions. Migrant female domestic workers need to be given special attention, as many have to work under harsh working conditions and are deprived of basic rights. In response to the phenomenon of forced migration and human trafficking, several treaties have been ratified at the United Nations, among which are the Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, Slavery Conventions, Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its

Protocols and many others. Theologically, CCA prophetically witnesses and advocates for the rights of migrants and trafficked persons, based on Pope John Paul's *Erga Migrantest Caritas Christi*, as the love of Christ towards migrants.

Sharing from the different sub-regions of Asia provided insights into the extent to which migrant workers have their rights and dignity respected, government protect their welfare, and ecumenical groups promote and advocate for the well-being of migrant labor. In East and Southeast Asia, specifically Korea, Japan, and Taiwan, church groups and ecumenical institutions provide various types of services that benefit migrant workers. In Korea, for instance, about 600 organizations are involved in migrant mission work most of which deal with and address matters related to human rights violations. In Japan, several ecumenical and church groups work on migrant labour matters. In Taiwan, churches provide counseling and emergency shelter placement assistance service as well as assistance in labor relations, legal service, health care, education, and cultural activities. Philippine churches and non-governmental organizations are actively working to promote and safeguard the rights

of Filipino migrant laborers abroad as well as engaging in advocacy for the release of unjust imprisonment of wrongly accused Filipino overseas workers for crimes they have not committed.

In the Gulf states, many migrant workers overstay their original visa terms, enter the country on tourist visa and work without proper documentation, or change employers without proper authorization. Although embassies provide some assistance to these workers, they are only able to reach out to 5% of those who need help. Some churches in the UAE extend occasional assistance. More concerted efforts are needed to carry out work that benefits migrant labors. In Oman, some migrant workers are reported to be engaged in forced labor and sex trafficking as elsewhere, with excessive work hours, passport confiscation, non-payment of wages, food deprivation, and psychological and sexual abuse. In response, the Omani government wages a nationwide campaign to combat human trafficking. While Saudi Arabia does not fully meet the minimum standards to eradicate human trafficking, the government is making strides to improve the conditions of migrant workers by setting up





an inter-agency anti-trafficking work, investigating cases, and operating shelters for both women and migrant workers who need assistance.

Outcomes of the consultation include the increased awareness among church members and leaders about the realities of migrant labor and human trafficking as well as a passionate call for action that promotes and protects the dignity and rights of Asian migrant workers. Many participants expressed their gratitude for inviting them to share their insights, as in the process, they learned about the situation in other parts of Asia and realized the necessity for collective action to fight trafficking in persons. Many told the organizers that they appreciated having summaries after each session and for each day, as the issues were very complex and covered the whole Asian region with all its diversities.

In response to the appeal by the participants from the Arabian Gulf countries to initiate an ecumenical platform of Asian Diaspora Churches in the Arabian Gulf Region, CCA General Secretary Dr. Mathews George Chunakara said that CCA was committed to

accompany the Asian Diaspora in the Arabian Gulf region and the proposal would be presented to the next meeting of the CCA Executive Committee for necessary action. An action plan to create a task force was laid down to liaise among Asian Diaspora congregations in the Arabian Gulf states and CCA.

One of the outputs of the consultation was a communiqué which was adopted at the end of the Consultation. The participants urged that the Churches in Asia should not forget their commitment to articulate a “Theology of the Human Family,” and remember the ecumenical affirmation that “the Church is a sign of the coming unity of the whole human family.”

The Communique further reminded the churches that “being a faith community in various parts of the world, we need to revisit the theme hospitality towards the stranger as it is a command of God from God’s community. Jesus who lived both as an international and internal migrant teaches the importance of hospitality.”

Special Programme:

Action Together in Combating HIV & AIDS in Asia (ATCHAA)

HIV and AIDS has been a special focus of CCA programme priorities. Several skill building and advocacy programmes have been initiated by CCA to address the concerns along with efforts to build an HIV competent church and community in Asia.

In order to effectively respond to HIV and AIDS with the member churches and councils, CCA is continuing its journey in building capacity of its members to become inclusive and relevant for people living with HIV and AIDS through its ***Action Together to Combat HIV and AIDS in Asia (ATCHAA)*** programme.

Asia- Pacific is the region with the second highest number of people living with HIV in the world – an estimated 5.1 million in 2015. (UNAIDS 2016 The Prevention Gap Report).

In order to contribute to the initiatives of global, national and local bodies to combat the alarming trend of increase of number of HIV and AIDS affected people, CCA will join together with governments and UN agencies such as UNAIDS. CCA is engaged in working with and through its member constituencies in Asia at national and local levels.

The specific **objectives** developed by CCA include:

1. To **Build the Capacity** of CCA members by training facilitators at regional, sub-regional and local levels with exchange of learning and experiences.
2. To scale up the **Advocacy** initiatives among CCA member constituencies targeting member churches, governments and UN agencies.
3. To strengthen existing **Faith based Networks** and initiate new networks of faith-based groups in Asia in order to address the consequences of HIV and AIDS.
4. To play its role in an effective, efficient, responsible and sustainable way of addressing the problem of HIV and AIDS.

The **expected outcomes** are:

1. CCA programs make significant contributions towards the global HIV and AIDS goals of 'getting to zero': zero new infections, zero discrimination, and zero AIDS-related deaths within Asia.
2. CCA member churches and councils work more actively in solidarity with interfaith partnerships in advocacy for addressing care, support and treatment including Anti-retroviral Therapy.
3. CCA member churches and communities will be more competent in responding to HIV and AIDS and related issues, including human sexuality, Sexual Orientation Gender Identity (SOGI), reproductive health and human rights, based on faith values and inclusive principles.

STRATEGIES

- **Capacity Building** of Facilitators within CCA Network.
- **Self-Assessment of Churches** inclusiveness by using Appreciative Inquiry Methods.
- **Exchange of learning** and sharing of resources within CCA and Inter-faith Network.
- Addressing factors governing HIV vulnerabilities including **Human Sexuality and Gender**.
- **Documentation of good practices** and building resources for models of intervention within the network.
- **Motivating Youth** as change agents.
- **Specific Advocacy** related to prevention, care, support and treatment to global and concerned organization, development agencies and governments regionally and locally.
- **Dissemination of learning** at national and international forums based on first hand research.
- **Asian Interfaith Network on AIDS (AINA):**
 Inter-faith network will be strengthened at each country for exchange of learning, expertise and linkages for care and support within faith-based communities and organizations in Asia.
- Provides and facilitates **interfaith platforms** to address HIV and AIDS issues.

1. CAPACITY BUILDING

Workshop on 'Developing Module on Churches' Effective Response to HIV and AIDS in Asia'

12 - 13 March 2018 | Chiang Mai, Thailand

As part of the special HIV and AIDS programme, Action Together to Combat HIV and AIDS in Asia – ATCHAA, the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) gathered experts from member churches, councils and partner organizations to develop a module to help the churches and ecumenical councils in Asia to be engaged in an effective advocacy to combat HIV and AIDS. The workshop entitled “Workshop on Development of Module on Churches’ Effective Response to HIV and AIDS in Asia” was held from 12 to 13 March 2018 at CCA Hall, Payap University, Chiang Mai, Thailand.

Participants of the workshop included experts working in the field of HIV and AIDS advocacy. Nine participants from seven different organizations namely UNAIDS, National Council of Churches in India, National Council of Churches in the Philippines, Myanmar Council of Churches, Karuna Mission Social Solidarity, and Wesley Hospital Myanmar attended the workshop.

Dr. Salil Panakadan of the UNAIDS Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific gave a presentation about the situation of HIV and AIDS in Asia. Participants underwent appreciative inquiry process to understand the strengths and opportunities of the Churches and Councils in addressing the issue. Examples of assessment tool were presented for further development and discussion. After



Participants of Workshop on Development of Module for Advocacy

the appreciative inquiry and discussion, participants came up with an assessment tool that would include awareness and stigma reduction, prevention, care, support and treatment, outreach and churches' inclusiveness.

The workshop also focused on contextual Bible study highlighting the importance of the Church to be more inclusive for those in the margins. This was followed by presentations of the participant's organizations' best practices in addressing the HIV and AIDS epidemic. The presentations highlighted the churches' achievements and innovations regarding the issue.

The last part of the workshop was to draft the module content basing it from the previous activities that had been made. After a vibrant discussion and dialogue, participants' came up with the following: Introduction of the Module, Contextual Bible Study, Attitude analysis, Current Scenario, Appreciative Inquiry, Church Assessment, Action Plan (Self and for Church – Immediate, 6 months, 1 year), and Annexure which includes FAQs and Recommendation with process.

After 2 days of fruitful discussion, the workshop came to a close with a closing prayer. Follow-up activities have been lined-up to strengthen the work for HIV and AIDS.

The participants agreed that HIV and AIDS was in our Churches, communities and around us and we needed to be an instrument of healing for those infected and affected by the disease. They acknowledged that Churches, Councils and its members played an important role in reducing stigma and discrimination, providing psycho-social support and enable access to testing, treatment, care and support. They also emphasized that prevention initiatives had to be scaled up and addressed in an inclusive manner.

Skill Building for HIV Facilitators on Churches Effective Response to HIV and AIDS in Asia

14 - 16 March 2018 | Chiang Mai, Thailand

CCA organized a workshop for HIV facilitators from 6 different countries in Asia as part of its Action Together in Combating HIV and AIDS in Asia (ATCHAA) programme. The workshop title "Skill Building for HIV Facilitators on Churches' Effective Response to HIV and AIDS in Asia" was held from March 15 – 16, 2018 at CCA Headquarters in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

The workshop was attended by 19 participants from six selected countries.

Participants were given a knowledge quiz that addressed knowledge and attitude towards HIV and AIDS and followed by a discussion around each of the statements. The methodology creates a platform for exchange of learning and also updating information on HIV and AIDS. HIV and AIDS situation in Asia and Pacific were presented to update information regarding the issue. The workshop also included an exposure visit to three partner organizations - Church of Christ in Thailand AIDS Ministry (CAM), Project Radical Grace, and Caremat.

Participants of the Skill Building Workshop were given a pre-test questionnaire to determine their understanding about HIV and AIDS in Asia and related issues. First, it was evident that the participants were fully aware but lacked knowledge on how to properly respond to the issue. Second, it highlighted the participants' desire in knowing more about the vulnerabilities of HIV and AIDS such as Human Sexuality and Gender. Third, it confirmed that HIV and AIDS should be discussed along with Human Sexuality and Gender among churches to fully understand the issue. Fourth, it showed that participants who already had HIV and AIDS program



Skill Building for HIV Facilitators on Churches Effective Response to HIV & AIDS in Asia

wanted to dig deeper with their ministry such as expanding their services to testing and counseling.

At the end of the training, a post-test questionnaire was given and it reflected that the participants felt that they had a better understanding about HIV and AIDs and related issues and they can confidently carry out a workshop for their constituents. The post-test emphasized the roles of key players but it should be noted that the government had the

main responsibility and should work together with CSOs to properly address the issue. Some also stressed that it was everyone's concern so we should all take responsibility.

The two-day skill building workshop renewed the spirits of the participants in continuing their work in HIV and AIDS. They said that the activities in the workshop would be useful and help enlighten their constituencies. Follow-up activities are planned to strengthen their work in HIV and AIDS.

Youth Motivation Programme on HIV and AIDS

5 - 6 April 2018 | Manado, Indonesia

HIV and AIDS has been a special focus of Christian Conference of Asia, and several skill building and advocacy programs had been conducted to address the issues, as well as efforts to build an HIV competent church and community. As part of the ATCHAA initiatives, CCA organized a two-day Youth Motivation Programme as a Pre-Event of the Asian Ecumenical Youth Assembly 2018 at Novotel, Manado, Indonesia from April 5 – 6, 2018. There were 18 participants from 6 countries

across Asia. The youth motivation programme aimed to enrich the knowledge of youth on HIV and AIDS related issues to protect themselves and to build capacities of youth to be agents of change for HIV and AIDS.

The workshop started with an Opening Worship led by Mr. Jay Roy Tipayan. This was followed by contextual Bible Study on the role of the Church in Healing Ministry. Participants were divided into four groups and were given



Youth Motivation Programme on HIV and AIDS in Manado, Indonesia

the assignment of forming a bible passage into a movie, complete with a 'title' and a 'poster.' The participants then introduced the person next to them. This was followed by Pre-Test. Then knowledge quiz was conducted. The four teams were given a set of eight controversial statements and they had to answer true, partially true or false with it and state reasons for their choice. This generated discussions and better understanding of the topic.

Appreciative Inquiry exercise was also conducted to identify the strengths and opportunities in responding to HIV and AIDS. Mr. Gregarious Sumarjono from Indonesia shared about living with HIV and how he gets support from his church and the community. It was an inspiration for the participants who were of the same age as him. There was a lot of appreciation and encouragement from the participants. This was followed by Stigma Tree exercise to identify causes, action and impact of stigma and discrimination. The participants were also given HIV and AIDS Buzzword to

understand various terminologies related to HIV and AIDS.

The workshop ended with a feedback from some of the participants and a closing worship to reaffirm our commitment to respond effectively to HIV and AIDS in Asia.

Participants of the "Youth Motivation Programme on HIV and AIDS" were given a pre-test questionnaire before the start of the workshop to determine their level of understanding regarding HIV and AIDS issue. The first part focused on the awareness of participants when it comes to the basics of HIV and AIDS and related issues. It showed that most of them were aware in their specific contexts but lacked national and regional understanding. It highlighted the participants' lack of understanding in the interconnectedness of HIV and AIDS, Human Sexuality and Gender thus raising their desire in knowing and discussing more about the vulnerabilities of HIV and AIDS such as Human Sexuality and Gender.



Youth Motivation Programme on HIV and AIDS in Manado, Indonesia

Second part of the pre-test was an assessment about their attitudes towards People Living with HIV and AIDS. While it was clear that participants were united in their stand against stigma and discrimination, it should be noted that their level of perception drastically changed when they were put in the position of PLHIVs. They became uneasy which confirmed the impact of being stigmatized and discriminated.

The third part was to identify if there were existing services for People living with HIV and AIDS among the government, civil society organizations and churches. Data showed that government and CSOs had established their partnerships while churches were yet to catch-up with the collaboration. Many HIV and AIDS services are from the government sector and churches are lagging behind and to some extent, there are no programs. The last part was about the responsibilities being given to each sector. It was evident that their respective national governments and department of health should lead in advocating for HIV and AIDS with the support of CSOs and churches. Program officers and Church leadership should step up their efforts in addressing the issue.

At the end of the training, a post-test questionnaire was given. Post-test contained the same questions from the pre-test to see the relevance of the workshop among the participants. Post test results showed a significant increase in understanding HIV and AIDS in Asia and other related issues. It was clear that HIV and AIDS work was far from over and many issues related to it were yet to be discussed. Participants were very eager to delve into the complexities of the issue to know how to properly respond in a Christian perspective. A strong desire to incorporate HIV and AIDS to youth programs was evidently seen.

Skill Building for HIV Facilitators on Churches Effective Response to HIV and AIDS in South Asia

22 - 23 June 2018 | Kathmandu, Nepal

The Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) through its Action Together in Combating HIV and AIDS in Asia (ATCHAA) organized a skill-building training for prospective Facilitators of HIV and AIDS advocacy from churches and related organizations in South Asia.

The training was held from 21 to 23 June, 2018 at Greenwich Hotel Village in Kathmandu, Nepal. It was participated by five South Asian countries. A similar activity was conducted by CCA-ATCHAA for the Southeast Asia Region and participated by six countries in March 2018.



Skill Building Training for HIV Facilitators on Churches Effective Response to HIV and AIDS

Mr. R.C. Archarya, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches in Nepal (NCCN) welcomed the participants and expressed his utmost gratitude to CCA for choosing NCCN to be the host. He then mentioned that it would be a great opportunity for them to connect and reconnect with their neighboring countries and to strengthen their sub-regional ecumenical partnership.

Dr. Ruben Del Prado, Country Director of UNAIDS Nepal gave the HIV and AIDS situation in South Asia. He expressed his delight to be

part of a faith based workshop focusing on HIV and AIDS. He said that the initiatives of CCA such as this would be of great help in contributing to the sustainable development goal.

The participants had undergone a participatory learning process. They shared their work experiences in responding to HIV and AIDS from their own context and emphasized that churches should reflect on their works and assess if they were responding effectively.



Participants of the Skill Building Training for HIV Facilitators, held in Nepal

The participants expressed their commitment in actively engaging their churches and communities in journeying with the People living with HIV and AIDS. They also conveyed their appreciation to CCA's effort in getting them together to work as one in ending HIV. Follow-up activities have been planned as they go back to their churches respectively.

Twenty six participants from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Pakistan attended the workshop together with CCA staff members in charge of the programme.

Workshop on Churches' Effective Response to HIV and AIDS

4 - 5 July 2018 | Yangon, Myanmar

CCA in partnership with the Myanmar Council of Churches (MCC) organized a workshop on churches' effective response to HIV and AIDS from July 4 to 5, 2018 at the MCC headquarters, Yangon, Myanmar. It was attended by 50 participants coming from different member churches of MCC and CCA all over Myanmar.

The program commenced with an opening celebration led by Major Lalloengi of The

Salvation Army. It was followed by opening remarks from Rev. Zaw Win Aung, MCC-HIV & AIDS Chairperson. He talked about the MCC's ministry in HIV and AIDS throughout the years, then added that MCC had been partnering with positive groups and non-government organizations and yet churches still responded indifferently. He emphasized that MCC acknowledged the different forms of marginalization and discrimination of PLHIV all around Myanmar and pushed church leaders to be in touch with the PLHIV and to be a more inclusive church to everyone in need.

Dr. Tin Maung Zaw, Regional Officer of the National AIDS Program of Myanmar gave a presentation about the current HIV and AIDS epidemic in the country. All around Myanmar there are over 220,000 people who are infected and the numbers are continuously increasing. He said that the government was trying to help and advocate up to the grassroots.

Rev. Mhan Par Mar Satan, MCC General Secretary spoke about the efforts of MCC in combating HIV and AIDS. He said that MCC focused mainly on the Youth for education



Workshop on Churches' Effective Response to HIV & AIDS in Myanmar

and capacity building since they were the most vulnerable in their society; the youth were mainly the victims of drug abuse, guns trafficking and human trafficking. The church was fully responsible in addressing these issues. He concluded by calling the churches to level-up their responses

Mr. Ossuma Tawil, UNAIDS country director paid a visit in the workshop and expressed his joy to see church people working in a sensitive issue such as HIV and AIDS. He looked forward to having more collaboration concerning the issue.

The workshop also included an exposure visit to Mingalardon Hospital, Waibargi Hospital,

Shwe Hin Thar Yay Lel Monastery and NLD AIDS center. After the exposure, participants shared their experiences and said, "God loves every people regardless of their skin, ages, and gender". They saw that having peers was important in dealing with this kind of issue.

Action planning was done to facilitate churches in their way forward in responding to HIV and AIDS. They affirmed that participation of each and everyone in the church was significant. They added that the role of church leaders was really important to PLHIV, thus change in attitude among them should be addressed.

Workshop on HIV and AIDS Awareness of Churches' in Bangladesh

4 – 6 November 2018 | Dhaka, Bangladesh



Workshop on HIV and AIDS Awareness of Churches' in Bangladesh

The overall prevalence of HIV in Bangladesh is less than 1%, however, high levels of HIV infection have been found among injecting drug users (7% in one part of the capital city, Dhaka). Due to the limited access to voluntary counseling and testing services, very few

Bangladeshis are aware of their HIV status. Although still considered to be a low prevalence country, Bangladesh remains extremely vulnerable to an HIV epidemic, given its dire poverty, overpopulation, gender inequality and high levels of transactional sex.

The emergence of a generalized HIV epidemic would be a disaster that poverty-stricken Bangladesh could ill-afford. It is estimated that without any intervention, the prevalence in the general adult population could be as high as 2% in 2012 and 8% by 2025. Bangladesh is in a unique position to succeed where several other developing countries have not: to keep the AIDS epidemic from expanding beyond this current level by initiating comprehensive and strategically viable preventative measures, avoiding a gradual spread of HIV infection from high-risk groups to the general population.

As part of the ATCHAA initiatives, CCA in partnership with national Council of Churches in Bangladesh (NCCB) conducted a three-day Workshop on HIV and AIDS Awareness for Churches in Bangladesh at CCDB Hope Foundation, Savar, Dhaka, Bangladesh from November 4 to 6, 2018. The workshop was attended by 30 Church leaders from different Churches and associate members of NCCB from all over Bangladesh.

Objective:

1. To equip participants in developing a common knowledge and skill set for sharing information regarding HIV and AIDS.
2. To prevent a widespread epidemic in Bangladesh by containing the spread of HIV and AIDS through knowledge and elimination of stigma and discrimination against those infected and affected.

Expected Outcome:

1. Participants are equipped with the basic knowledge of HIV and AIDS and become confident in sharing the right information.
2. Participants are prepared in the elimination of stigma and discrimination against those infected and affected.

The Inaugural Session was held in the evening on November 4, 2018 where members of the NCCB attended the programme. A worship dance was presented by children of the NCCB Children's home. The participants were sensitized and challenged to reach out to



Opening of Workshop on HIV and AIDS Awareness of Churches' in Bangladesh

people living with HIV through a skit. Rev David A Das, General Secretary of NCCB affirmed that churches in Bangladesh had to be equipped to respond to the need of the people, and the church members had to be well prepared with knowledge, information and resources.

An Ecumenical Worship in the context of HIV was conducted. This was followed by a group work on Contextual Bible Study on the role of Churches in Healing Ministry. This was followed by the Inaugural Session. The participants were formally welcomed on behalf of CCA and NCC Bangladesh was thanked for the collaboration and arrangements.

Pre-test was conducted which was followed by Knowledge Quiz. The knowledge quiz addressed knowledge and attitude towards HIV and AIDS and there were discussions around each of the statements. This methodology created a platform for exchange of learning and also updating information on HIV and AIDS.

The situation of HIV and AIDS in Asia and the Pacific was presented and there were discussions around it. Appreciative Inquiry was conducted using Appreciative Star Tool. This methodology highlighted the strengths of the church in addressing HIV and AIDS.

On the last day, Contextual Bible Study was conducted highlighting the importance of the Church to be more inclusive for those in the margins. This was followed by a sharing by 2 PLHIV from Ashar Alo Society. They shared about their experiences and challenges as PLHIV. A discussion followed this. The situation of HIV in Bangladesh was presented, highlighting the challenges particularly in resources for Bangladesh.

Stigma tree exercise was conducted based on the stories of PLHIVs. The exercise helped the participants to identify the causes of stigma and discrimination. Each church represented made action plans on how they will address HIV and AIDS in their context.

Youth Motivation Programme in Combating HIV and AIDS in Cambodia

9 – 12 December 2018 | Phnom Penh, Cambodia

A three-day consultation held at Kampuchea Christian Council (KCC), Phnom Penh brought together 31 Christian youth of Cambodia to discuss their role in responding to HIV and AIDS in Cambodia. Jointly organized by CCA and KCC, the consultation was held from 9 to 12 December, 2018.

Cambodia has become a world leader in responding to the HIV epidemic. They have developed an enabling environment that supports human rights, eliminates stigma and discrimination and improved HIV policy. It has effectively responded to the HIV epidemic in terms of reducing stigma and discrimination and availability of anti-retroviral treatment for People Living with HIV and AIDS (PLHIV). Faith-based organizations have played a vital role in this response. Mr. Polin Ung, Community Mobilization and Networking Adviser of UNAIDS Cambodia mentioned that faith-based organizations were crucial in sustaining the positive response as they were present in the grassroots and the community.

The participants went through a participatory learning process to improve knowledge about HIV, to have empathy to People Living with HIV and to prepare action plans to respond as a church. They particularly highlighted the importance of having a contextual Bible study to reach out to people living with HIV through spiritual and holistic manners. They were



Youth Motivation Programme in Combating HIV and AIDS in Cambodia

delighted to know that the Bible could be read in the perspective of HIV.

Participants shared their first hand experiences of interacting with PLHIV in their community; they mentioned that the program had equipped them on specific actions they could take to help PLHIV in their community. They also highlighted the importance of prevention and spreading awareness among young people they come in contact with.

Joint efforts among the public, private and faith-based organizations have become an

effective implementation strategy. The role of faith-based organizations particularly in spiritual and emotional support has been instrumental in reducing stigma and discrimination for People Living with HIV.

CCA acknowledges the importance of mobilizing the youth to be change agents of the society. Their leadership, creativity and dynamism are key to bringing positive change in the world. Youth motivation program in combating HIV and AIDS is a continuous effort of CCA to promote, prevent, advocate and support PLHIV.

2. ADVOCACY

Observation of International AIDS Candlelight Memorial 2018

20 May 2018 / Chiang Mai, Thailand

The Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) joined the global community in the observance of the International AIDS Candlelight Memorial 2018 with a Sunday service together with CCT AIDS Ministry (CAM) and Chang Kham Church

in Hang Dong District, Chiang Mai. The service focused on this year's theme "Reflecting on our Past, Preparing for our Future!"

International AIDS Candlelight Memorial is an annual campaign held every third Sunday of May. It is being coordinated by GNP+ – Global Network of People Living with HIV. The first Candlelight Memorial was held in 1983 in San



Observation of International AIDS Candlelight Memorial 2018

Francisco and drew thousands of people, beginning a movement that would inspire countless others to call the attention of communities and national leadership in raising awareness on HIV and AIDS epidemic.

CCA's observance was led by Rev. Sanan Wutti of CAM, Rev. Dr. Chuleepran Srisoontorn of CCA and the local lay leaders of Chang Kham Church. The service was packed with lively singing, emotional testimonies and a welcoming and accepting presence. A young woman, who was an assistant pastor, gave a moving testimony about her stories of struggle and hope, being affected directly by the disease. She shared her experience on how God embraced her wholly without any prejudice. She ended her testimony challenging everyone to embody God's love by accepting and loving all of our brothers and sisters regardless of their status. Rev. Dr. Chuleepran preached about our relationship with God and how can it be experienced in

our everyday lives. She highlighted that "we Christians are often reacting to HIV and AIDS but do nothing and frequently find ourselves giving moral judgments". She particularly stressed that "our response as Christians in this issue should be exemplified by how God showed compassion, love and forgiveness to all." She concluded her sermon by underlining that "the love of God comes from our relationship with every human being. Thus, acceptance and compassion is the key".

Several related activities have also been conducted by CCA-ATCHAA's previous skill building and youth motivation workshop participants, particularly Myanmar and Philippines; Myanmar Interfaith Network on AIDS; Myoma Lisu Baptist Church, Mogok, Mandalay Division, Myanmar; Kalipunan ng Kristiyanong Kabataan sa Pilipinas (Philippine Ecumenical Youth Council), Iglesia Filipina Independiente and Christian Youth Fellowship of the United Church of Christ in the

Philippines. Others have scheduled their observance on a later date due to their church's schedule.

Church organizations have historically played an important role in delivering health and social services in developing countries. CCA continues to affirm its commitment to actively respond to HIV and AIDS and other related issues such as Human Sexuality, Gender Justice, Human Rights and Universal Access to health. HIV and AIDS is not just a health issue, it has economic, social and spiritual

dimensions. Thus, Churches and its constituent's plays an important role in reducing stigma and discrimination, prevention, care and support for People Living with HIV and AIDS.

Through its Action Together in Combating HIV and AIDS in Asia (ATCHAA), CCA continuous to light the torch in leading member churches and councils to take part in advocating to end stigma and discrimination and to work together for the universal access of quality prevention, treatment and care services for all.



Observation of International AIDS Candlelight Memorial 2018

Asia Regional Consultation on Human Sexuality and Reproductive Health

15 – 18 August 2018 | Chiang Mai, Thailand

Human sexuality includes aspects of the physical, psychological, social, emotional, and spiritual makeup of an individual. It is not limited to the physical or biological

reproductive elements and behavior, but encompasses the manner in which individuals use their own roles, relationships, values, customs, and gender. Human sexuality is the sum of a person's sexual behaviors and tendencies, and the strength of such tendencies, one's degree of sexual attractiveness and the quality of having sexual functions or implications.



Sharing Session in Asia Regional Consultation on Human Sexuality and Reproductive Health

CCA acknowledges the importance of addressing the vulnerabilities of HIV and AIDS in the community. Women, youth, commercial sex workers, men having sex with men are more vulnerable to HIV transmission. In order to combat the disease, it is important to address human sexuality and reproductive health and ensure the practice of safer sexual behaviors.

An Asia Regional Consultation organised by the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) on 'HIV and AIDS, Human Sexuality and Reproductive Health' explored possibilities of creating space for churches in Asia to discuss and be in dialogue with each other on concerns related to HIV and AIDS, human sexuality and reproductive health that include aspects of physical, psychological, social, emotional and spiritual make up of an individual. Organised as part of CCA's special programme on Acting Together in Combating HIV and AIDS in Asia (ATCHAA), the consultation held in Chiang Mai, Thailand from 15 to 18 August 2018 brought together representatives of churches and ecumenical organizations from 8 countries in Asia.

The participants who attended the consultation were specially invited from among the churches and related organisations that had

experience in addressing the concerns related to HIV and AIDS, human sexuality and reproductive health. There were representatives from Japan, Taiwan, Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, Myanmar, India and Pakistan.

The main objectives of the consultation were to develop strategies for positive dialogue with Churches and their members on human sexuality and reproductive health, to understand and advocate for prevention strategies for HIV transmission in relation to human sexuality and reproductive health and to collate and disseminate best practices in creating a conducive environment for dialogue.

Rev. Alfred Candid Jaropillo of the United Church of Christ, Philippines conducted the worship and reflected on the diversity of God's creation, and how we were beautifully made in God's image and needed to embrace each and every one.

Dr. Mathews George Chunakara, CCA General Secretary in his introductory remarks at the opening session stated that the pandemic of HIV and AIDS had now been recognized as an important issue to be addressed by the churches in Asia even though there had been hesitation by churches when CCA had initiated the work in this area in the early 1990's.

However, a comprehensive framework for achieving sexual and reproductive health and rights, including the prevention and treatment of HIV and AIDS was not on the agenda of churches in Asia due to various reasons. He added, "Asian churches need to address the concerns of widespread HIV and AIDS and its prevention as part of broader questions in relations to sexual and reproductive health as they are becoming more relevant in Asia today".

The contextual bible study facilitated by S N Among Jamir of Nagaland Baptist Convention in India highlighted the significance of reading and re-reading the Bible in the current context of inclusivity, welcoming the strangers, and how to be hospitable and not hostile to the strangers and the marginalised in society.

The presentation on 'Theological Perspective of Human Sexuality' by Rev. Stephen Suleeman of Jakarta Theological Seminary in Indonesia reflected on the HIV and AIDS situation in Indonesia and the need to understand human sexuality and reproductive health in vulnerable situations.

Dr. Ronald Lalthanmawia, Coordinator of HIV and AIDS Programme of CCA emphasized that the gamut of the problems related to human sexuality and gender in the medical field

needed to be understood in a context that everyone was created differently and it was imperative to have a common understanding amidst all diversities.

Pastor Carlene Nomorosa of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines explained the impact of the negligence in addressing sex and sexuality in society in a proper way which was leading to young people being dependent on information from the wrong sources and developing a misconception about human sexuality.

Young woman theologian and academic Dr. Sawako Fujiwara from Tohoku Gakuin University in Japan outlined the ecumenical responses on human sexuality over the years and the challenges and good practices of the issue in the context of Japan. "The ecumenical journey on addressing the topic of human sexuality had been responded to indifferently thus far and so there was a necessity to open-up spaces of dialogue to change the attitudes and perceptions", added Dr. Sawako.

Rev. Fr. Abin Abraham in his presentation highlighted how "a two-fold ministry of empowerment and sensitization has led to the success of the initiative of the transgender project of the Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian



Participants of Asia Regional Consultation on Human Sexuality and Reproductive Health

Church in India, in which more than 200 Transgender and Intersex were part of the project in Mumbai, India.” He expounded the experiences learned and how it was important to empower the churches and the marginalized community as well as the significance of addressing socio-economic needs of the transgender in society.

Participants pointed out the need to consolidate the efforts of various churches in Asia that had responded positively to the issue and they emphasized upon the importance of creating a common platform to facilitate sharing of resources and mutual exchange of learning. They suggested to have a continuous theological reflection in the Asian context and continue to build awareness and sensitize churches and its leadership.

The consultation identified the importance of

- Recognizing diversities in human sexuality as being part of our lives,
- Reflecting biblically and theologically on the issue,
- Responding positively in creating safe spaces among our communities and
- Reaching out to the affected communities to give them a sense of belonging.

The consultation ended by re-affirming that “we are all created in the image of God with all our inequities and differences. Following the footsteps of Jesus, we are called to prophesy among our brothers and sisters who experience injustices, violence and alienation due to their sexual differences that they should also have the fullness of life.”

3. STRENGTHENING NETWORKS AND COLLABORATIONS

Strengthening Network and collaboration with Churches and Interfaith network

1 – 4 February 2018 | Phnom Penh, Cambodia

By 2015, Cambodia was able to reduce new infections to fewer than 1,000 per year – a decrease of 96 percent from its peak. Cambodia also has the highest antiretroviral treatment coverage of any country in Asia, and one of the highest in the world. Cambodia has pledged to go even further and reduce new HIV infections to fewer than 300 annually by 2025 and effectively end the AIDS epidemic as a public health threat, five years ahead of the global goal. If Cambodia achieves these targets – and the country is on track to do so – it would set an important precedent for the rest of the world.

The main purpose is to advocate and establish linkages with churches, governments and like-minded organizations in Cambodia.

Discussion with Kampuchea Christian Council (KCC): A meeting was held with Pastor Oum Savy and members of Kampuchea Christian Council (KCC). The meeting was to discuss various aspects of HIV and AIDS initiative of KCC and discuss collaboration with CCA. They requested CCA to build the capacity of leaders especially the youth. Subsequently 7 youths were trained at Chiang Mai, Thailand and Manado, Indonesia.

Visit to Salvation Center Cambodia: A visit was made to Salvation Center Cambodia, which is a Faith Based Organization by Buddhist Monks in Cambodia. A meeting was held with Mr. Prum Thoeun, president and

founder of SCC along with Mr. Chneang Soranphaep and Som Chea (Project managers of SCC). There were discussions regarding collaboration with CCA especially for Interfaith Network of CCA.

Advocacy Meeting with UN Agencies and partner organizations

7 – 8 February 2018 | UNAIDS Office, Bangkok & Glory Hut Foundation in Thailand, Pattaya

As part of the ATCHAA initiatives, CCA will complement/supplement efforts by Governmental and UN agencies like UNAIDS by Fast Tracking HIV response ending AIDS by 2030 at country, regional and global levels by working with/through its member church constituency in Asia through Strategic interventions in Advocacy, Capacity building and Networking on Faith Based. CCA will encourage the Churches to be concerned on health, reconciliation, transformation and healing at international, regional and national forums especially WHO, UNAIDS, Global Fund to fight HIV and AIDS.

The main objective of the visit was to advocate and establish linkages and partnership with UNAIDS and Glory Hut Foundation in Thailand

Meeting with UNAIDS: A meeting was held on February 7, 2018 with Dr. Salil Panakadan and Dr. Maria Elena G Filio Borromeo (Dr. Marlyn) of UNAIDS Office in Bangkok. The various strategies for CCA – ATCHAA were shared. There were discussions regarding Asia Interfaith Network on AIDS as well.

The main discussion and collaboration with UNAIDS include:

1. UNAIDS will provide technical and programme input to CCA – ATCHAA
2. UNAIDS will be resource persons for CAA workshops and meetings

3. There will be combined programmes organized for resource mobilization
4. Interfaith network will be strengthened by CCA, supported by UNAIDS

As discussed at the meeting, the strategies for ATCHAA were shared and concept notes for the up-coming meeting were also discussed and shared.

Visit to Glory Hut Foundation in Thailand, Pattaya: A visit was made to Glory Hut Foundation in Thailand at Pattaya. A meeting with Rev Ponsawan Christpak and her sister was held at the centre. Rev Ponsawan was invited as resource person for up-coming programme of CCA – ATCHAA on Module Development and Skill Building workshops. The centre would provide exposure visits for other member Churches in Asia.

Participation at International Conference for Network and Advocacy

21 – 26 August 2018 | Hyderabad, India

There is a great need for setting forth the Christian perspective of health, healing, and wholeness in today's changing contexts. There are different models of health and healing ministries supported and sponsored by Asian churches. However, considering the growing need in different places, churches in Asia should take more responsibilities in their mission and witness towards health and healing. While recognizing the need and importance of health and healing ministries as an indispensable part of Christian calling, churches in Asia need to be equipped further in shaping their Christian witness in health and healing ministries.

CCA acknowledges the importance of understanding and reflecting on the relevance of Christian Hospital and Healthcare initiatives in today's context. In order to engage with

Churches, Christian Medical Association and Christian Hospital, CCA will conduct a consultation on 'Church's Response to Health, Healing, and Wholeness in Changing Contexts in Asia' in 2019. Representatives from health and healing ministries belonging to churches in Asia will be invited to attend the consultation. The consultation will also identify the ways and means to facilitate the sharing of the best practices that promote the ministries of the churches in Asia. Thirty participants who are concerned on health and healing ministry of different churches will be invited to attend the consultation.

As part of the preparation and networking, CCA participated at the International Christian Medical and Dental Association (ICMDA) World Congress 2018 held at Hyderabad, India from August 21 to 26, 2018. The main purpose was to establish network and collaborations with Christian Medical Association of various countries of Asia at the ICMDA World Congress 2018.

The ICMDA is an Association of National Christian Medical and Dental Societies. The Association is established by this Constitution to serve as a means of interchange of views and as a means of coordinating joint action among National Christian Medical and Dental Associations or their equivalents.

After the meeting, CCA collaborated with various National Medical Associations in Asia and Pacific to prepare for the Consultation on Health, healing and Wholeness for Asia and the Pacific in 2019.

National Consultation on Interfaith Response to HIV and AIDS in Indonesia

18 – 22 November 2018 | Jakarta, Indonesia

Asia and the Pacific is the region with the second highest number of people living with

HIV in the world – an estimated 12 million in 2017 (UNAIDS Data 2018). Three countries - China, India and Indonesia – account for around three-quarters of the total number of people living with HIV in the region.

In 2015, there were an estimated 300,000 new infections in the region. Though the period 2010 – 2015 saw an overall decline of 5% in new infections, progress in reducing new infections has slowed in recent years and new HIV infections are on the rise in some countries. The HIV epidemic varies widely from country to country and within certain countries depending on context and the region. This highlights the importance of tailoring responses to each country context.

About twenty representatives of different religions gathered at the Jakarta Theological Seminary in Indonesia from 18 to 22 November 2018 to discuss the role of faith-based institutions and organizations in responding to HIV and AIDS epidemic in the country. The consultation brought together Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, and Muslim religions as well as followers of Confucianism.

An interfaith prayer opened the consultation where faith leaders sought the guidance of the Divine for a productive and a relevant way forward in response to HIV in Indonesia. The interfaith worship service recognized religious and cultural expressions of different religions and celebrated the differences and diversities. The participants affirmed that each one's gift can be brought together for the caring of the creation especially those living with HIV and AIDS.

UNAIDS country director, Tina Boonto presented the current HIV and AIDS situation in Asia and the Pacific, highlighting the challenges of addressing the issue in Indonesia. While expressing delight in organizing a relevant, appropriate and timely interfaith

consultation in Indonesia where faith plays an important role in the lives of most people, Ms Boonto said, “even though the case of HIV is decreasing, there is an increasing stigma and discrimination due to restrictive and restraining laws”. She then emphasized that FBOs should reach out to the people, engage in partnership with like-minded organization, be relevant to the community and build capacity for leadership and advocacy.

Rev. Suhadi Sendjaja, Chairman of Parisadha Buddha Dharma Niciren Syosyu Indonesia presented the Buddhist perspective in responding to HIV and AIDS. He emphasized the teachings of Buddha towards the path of enlightenment. He said that suffering such as HIV and AIDS was part of one’s journey towards achieving the ultimate life and thus the wrong energies should be erased. According to their Buddhist teaching, suffering

was caused by ignorance that should be addressed with the right knowledge. Mr. Aan Djamian of Majelis Buddhayana Indonesia dari Papua also shared their ongoing efforts in responding to the epidemic in Papua.

Dr. Alpinus Kambodji, speaking on the Christian perspective mentioned that Christians were called to serve the least of their brothers and sisters and God’s greatest commandment was to love thy neighbor. He stated that the Christian faith had been responding to the issue since it started but there were no consolidated efforts and some doctrines and particular church teachings made it difficult to respond effectively. He emphasized that we need to use our scripture to promote life rather than judge others. He also mentioned the need to revisit our text and understand it to its context and relate it to the current context.



National Consultation of Interfaith Response to HIV and AIDS in Indonesia



Mr. Nur Arif presented the Cultural perspective in responding to HIV and AIDS in Indonesia

The Islamic perspective was presented by Mr. Agus Salim Chamidi from Institut Agama Islam Nahdlatul Ulama (IAINU). Islamic teachings view HIV as three concepts, namely: humanity, rehabilitation and prevention. Based on this concept, he emphasized the need to reach out to people, collaborate with other religion and academic institutions, make empowering groups and supportive communities and also promote prevention for HIV. Dr. Nur Arif from Natul Ulama added that HIV should be approached both as faith and cultural issue talking in the perspective of a Muslim community. In cultural approach, we need to start living with them, doing what they do and assist them in developing strategies to address the issue.

According to Hindu perspective, Mr. Ida Bagus Sutakertya of Ketua Parisadha Hindu Dharma Indonesia, all living creatures are brothers and sisters, You are I and I am You, not to hurt others, and living in harmony with the creation should be the principles of addressing HIV and AIDS. Hindus in Papua are collaborating with other faiths in order to effectively respond to the epidemic. They have generalized

their strategy thus creating an inclusive response to the general population not only concentrating to key affected populations.

Dr. Erwani Sutono from the MATAKIN (the supreme council of Confucianist in Indonesia) emphasized value learning and stressed on family relationships. Human's primary purpose is achieving harmony guided by Confucius teaching of "do not do unto others what you don't want others to do unto you". Confucianists respond to the epidemic by their wholistic approach of Human life. Taking into consideration the physical, mental and social made-up of a person. Continuous learning and re-learning is key in combating the stigma and discrimination surrounding HIV.

The participants discussed in a small group and identified the various challenges and key issues of HIV and AIDS in relation to their own faith. They highlighted the need to use the faith platform to bring awareness, to promote health and healing, to prevent HIV, to provide necessary care and support, and advocate within faiths and government.

During the deliberations the representative group of Indonesia's religions observed that: "Faith-based organizations (FBOs) have historically played an important role in delivering health and social services in developing countries. In Asia and Pacific, faith and religion play an important role in the lives of the people. FBOs not only provide spiritual guidance to their followers; they are often the primary providers for a variety of local health and social services. Situated within communities and building on relationships of trust, these organizations have the ability to influence the attitudes and behaviors of their fellow community members. Moreover, they are in close and regular contact with all age groups in society and their pronouncements are generally accepted and respected. In fact, in some traditional communities, religious

leaders are often more influential than local government officials or secular community leaders".

An action plan was developed by each faith group and affirmed their commitment to take it further in their faith community, sensitizing their influential leaders and mainstreaming HIV in the faith communities and religious institutions. The participants agreed to revisit their scriptures in the context of HIV and re-affirmed theology of compassion and inclusiveness. A united voice of interfaith in Indonesia acknowledged that faith and faith-based organizations played an important role in halting and reversing HIV epidemic in Indonesia. A united prayer of commitment closed the consultation.



Rev. Suhadi Sendjaja sharing the Buddhist perspective

Appendices

List of CCA Programmes and Activities – 2018

No.	Programmes/Activities	Venue	Date	No. of Participants	Reference Number as per 2018 Programme Plan
1	Pastoral Solidarity Visit to Cambodia Cambodia		1-4 February 2018	3	BP 1.1
2	Strengthening Network and collaboration with Churches and Interfaith network	Phnom Penh, Cambodia	1-4 February 2018	1	PD SP
3	Advocacy Meeting with UN Agencies and partner organizations : UNAIDS	Bangkok, Thailand	7-8 February 2018	1	PD SP
4	Staff team visit to Cambodian churches	Cambodia	9-15 April 2018	1	BP 1.1
5	Asia Mission Conference Follow-up Consultation in Pakistan	Pakistan	20-21 February 2018	60	MU 1.1.1
6	Women Doing Theology in Pakistan		21-23 February 2018	33	MU 4.1
7	Development of Module and Content of Sermon, Bible Study and Training Manual for HIV and AIDS		12-14 March 2018	9	PD SP
8	Skill Building Training of Facilitators of HIV and AIDS Advocacy		14-16 March 2018	20	PD SP
9	Planning Consultation of Asian Ecumenical Women's Assembly (AEWA)		16-17 March 2018	10	EF 5.2
10	Ecumenical Enablers' Training in Asia (EETA)		20-23 March 2018	45	EF 3.1
11	Youth Motivation Programme for HIV Prevention		4-6 April 2018	20	PD SP
12	Asian Ecumenical Youth Assembly (AEYA)		6-13 April 2018	350	EF 4.1
13	Asia Mission Conference – National Follow-up in Myanmar on 'Towards Contextual Interpretations of Asia Mission Statement in the Context of Myanmar'		1 May 2018	50	MU 1.1
14	Ecumenical Enablers' Training in Asia (EETA) in Nepal		8-11 May 2018	90	EF 3.2
15	Ecumenical Women's Action Against Violence (EWAV) in Cambodia		10-12 May 2018	40	BP 4.1
16	Asia Sunday 2018		13 May 2018		EF 6.1
17	Observation of International AIDS Candlelight Memorial 2018		20 May 2018	70	PD SP
18	Asia Mission Conference Follow-up Consultation in India		19-21 June 2018	90	MU 1.1.4

No.	Programmes/Activities	Venue	Date	No. of Participants	Reference Number as per 2018 Programme Plan
19	Skill Building Training of Facilitators of HIV and AIDS Advocacy in Nepal		22-23 June 2018	26	PD SP
20	Pastoral Solidarity Visit to UAE Labour Camps United Arab Emirates		28-30 June 2018	13	PD 3.1
21	CCA Executive Committee Meeting in Antelias, Beirut, Lebanon		1-4 July 2018	17	
22	Workshop on Churches' Effective Response to HIV and AIDS in Myanmar		4-5 July 2018	50	PD SP
23	Asian Ecumenical Institute (AEI) - 2018		16 July - 15 August 2018	25	EF 1
24	International Consultation on 'Wider Ecumenism as Prophetic Witness'		7-11 August 2018	110	MU 1.1.2
25	Consultation on Church's Role in Addressing Concerns on HIV/ AIDS, Human Sexuality and Reproductive Health		15-18 August 2018	13	PD SP
26	Participation at International Conference for Network and Advocacy		21-26 August 2018	30	PD SP
27	Planning Consultation of WCC-PJP Asia Focus 2019		4-7 September 2018	11	
28	Asia regional consultation on Upholding the Dignity and Rights of Children		16-20 September 2018	61	PD 6.1
29	Young Ambassadors of Peace in Asia (YAPA) -2018		15-20 October 2018	27	BP 5
30	Consultation on Christianity and Politics in Myanmar		20 October 2018	150	MU 1.1
31	Youth Motivation Programme in Combating HIV and AIDS in Cambodia		9-12 December		PD SP
32	Workshop on HIV and AIDS Awareness of Churches' in Bangladesh		4-6 November 2018	30	PC SP
33	Contextual Theology Training for Burmese Refugees' Theological Institutions on Thailand – Myanmar border		6-10 November	35	EF 7
34	International Consultation on Asian Diaspora in the Arabian Gulf and Human Trafficking		11-15 November 2018	50	PD 4.1
35	Asia Regional Consultation on Ecumenical Women Action against Violence		15-17 November 2018	28	BP 4.1
36	National Consultation on Interfaith Response to HIV and AIDS in Indonesia		18-22 November 2018	20	PD SP
37	Preparatory Consultation of Congress of Asian Theologians (CATS)- IX		26-29 November 2018	13	MU 3.1
38	Women's Leadership Development Training for Lao Women		29 November - 1 December	65	EF5.1

Report of the General Secretary to the CCA Executive Committee Meeting - 2018

1. It has been almost one year since we had the last meeting of the Executive Committee of CCA. Several changes have taken place during the past year in Asia, geo-politically as well as in the ecumenical and ecclesial settings. Some of those issues have been close to our hearts and minds as we all live in the midst of such realities.
2. Among the numerous geopolitical changes in Asia in recent times include the developments in the Korean peninsula. This issue has a special significance as the ecumenical movement has been focussing on the issue of peace, reconciliation and the reunification of the Korean peninsula. There are several other pertinent geopolitical changes that have been taking place in Asia during the past year. In fact, we can analyse them from various angles and then we can find rationale for our ecumenical involvements and actions. However, I am not making any attempts for such an analysis at this stage, but the focus of this report will be mainly on some of the most pressing matters related to CCA's vital role through our programmatic involvement as well as organisational matters.
3. **CCA Executive Committee in Lebanon in the "Middle East": a historic ecumenical milestone.**

We are now meeting in the Middle East region, the cradle of Christianity. This is the first time that a meeting of CCA executive committee takes place outside the traditional orbit of the Asian ecumenical movement - by traditional orbit, I mean as we understand or have classified the Asian ecumenical movement thus far. We have been told or taught that this geographical area is the Middle East. Since time immemorial, especially since Biblical history presents the Middle East region as part of Asia, it was West Asia. Today's classified or demarked area of Middle East and West Asia, as we know, are the same region, but the difference lies in the context we are talking about or considering. When we talk about Asia, it refers to the region we call the Middle east, but in the Map this is clearly marked as West Asia. The Europeans and Americans historically refer the region as the Middle East, because it is in the middle of East when it is looked at from their region. It is like China or Japan in the Far East.
4. Shayn McCallum, from Turkey's Bogazici University once wrote: Why are Western Asian countries known as Middle Eastern countries? Because of Eurocentric geography. British, French and German geographers divided the world according to its proximity to Western and central Europe. Even in Australia it is common to use this Eurocentric terminology even though for them the Far East should be South America, and the far North is China and Japan. West Asia is geographically the proper term for the so-called 'Middle East'. The United Nations actually started to use the term West Asia, but it is unclear if they use it across all of their documents. We can say that "Middle East" is a nickname, nothing more. West Asia is a geographical designation.

5. For us, the churches in Asia, we have sentimental attachments to this geographical region. Ironically, the Middle East, which is experiencing such extreme chaos, wars and suffering was historically the birthplace of the world's three major religions, Christianity (Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant), Islam (Sunni and Shi'a) and Judaism (Orthodox, Conservative and Reform), as well as a number of other smaller faiths. This is the cradle of Christianity. However, Christianity and the Christians in this region have been facing most difficult challenges during the past several years. The Christian communities in West Asia have survived 2,000 years of tumult and war. In some of these ancient Christian communities, prayers are still said in Aramaic, the language that Jesus used in daily life. These communities now tremble on the brink of destruction. Churches in many parts of the world expressed concerns on the plight of the Christians in the Middle East region. However, often I was wondering whether there had been a deafening silence from the part of Asian Christians about the plight of Christians, although this was happening within the traditional boundaries of Asia, in West Asia!
6. The sufferings of Christians in the West Asia should not be considered as an abstraction by other Asian Christians. As a Coptic Church leader recalled some time ago when speaking of the Holy Land's persecuted Christians, "We are members of the same Body. There is only one Body for us. It rejoices as one, it mourns as one, it also struggles as one."
7. CCA is now in this part of the world on the invitation of our member church in Iran, the Armenian Apostolic Church in Iran which is part of the Armenian Apostolic Church Catholicosate of Celicia. The Catholicosate graciously extended us the invitation to hold the Executive Committee at the headquarters of the Church, here in Antelias. This is a great opportunity for CCA to widen the horizons of the Asian ecumenical movement as well as widening our interactions with ecumenical movement in other parts of Asia and in the world.
8. **Programmes and Events since the last meeting of the Executive Committee**
 During the last year's executive committee meeting, we spent substantial time for discussion on the Asia Mission Conference (AMC) and the Diamond Jubilee celebrations of CCA. By the grace of God, both events took place in Yangon, Myanmar successfully. Those two significant events would be considered as milestones in the ecumenical history. I am sure, Yangon will be added as yet another mission conference destination in the global ecumenical map. We have received several positive responses from participants of the AMC, and the Diamond Jubilee celebration. More than 600 participants attended the AMC and more than 6000 people attended the Thanksgiving Service to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee, which was held on Sunday 15 October.
9. Another major ecumenical event CCA organised was the Asian Ecumenical Youth Assembly (AEYA), which will also be recorded in future as an historical milestone in Asian ecumenical movement. The AEYA took place after a gap of 34 years since the earlier one was held in 1984. More than 400 participants attended the AEYA.
10. A total of 37 programmes were organised by CCA during the year 2017 in four programme areas and the General Secretariat. The special project of HIV and AIDS advocacy was not

functional in 2017, as the project completed its earlier phase by the end of 2016, and the new phase started only in December 2017. We can see that a wide range of issues and themes covered while implementing various activities and programmes in 2017 with a focus on revitalising the Asian ecumenical movement. The overall thematic focus of the programmes was within the context of 'Prophetic Witness to the Truth and Light in Asia'.

11. The observance of Asia Sunday-2018 was on the theme, 'Embracing the Differently Abled, and Upholding Their Dignity'. As per the reports and responses we have received, CCA member churches and councils observed Asia Sunday-2018 in befitting manner. In some countries, it is still being observed.
12. **Asian Diaspora in the Arabian Gulf and Pastoral Solidarity Visit by the Ex Com Members**
A Pastoral Solidarity Team visit to the UAE in conjunction with the Executive Committee meeting took place from 28 to 30 June, enroute to Beirut. The thirteen member team of CCA visited Dubai and Sharjah in the UAE gave opportunities to understand the realities with regard to the life and work of Asian migrants in the Arabian countries.
13. People on the move, especially migration and migrant workers have been a special concern of CCA in the past. However, in recent years CCA did not pay much attention to this concern although the issue has been more alarming in different contexts. CCA's focus on migration issue has been by and large focused within Asian countries. But, the migration related to the Arabian Gulf countries has not been focused in the past. Asian migration to the Gulf has become more differentiated over the years. Large scale migration from Asian countries, mainly from South and South East Asia to the Gulf countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates) have been taking place since the oil price started rising in 1970s. In the 1970s, this involved mainly male migrants for construction, initially from India and Pakistan, then from the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand and Korea. Many of those projects were led by Korean construction companies. From the mid-1980s, as living standards rose, there was a progressive feminization of Asian migrant labour in the Gulf region, with a growing demand for domestic workers, nurses, sales staff and other service personnel. Females now account for about 40% of Asian migrants in the Gulf countries.
14. While many migrants remain low-skilled labourers, others are semi-skilled, professional or para-professionals. Overall, there are close to 30 million migrants in the Gulf region, and a large section of them are from Asia. These Asian migrants make major contributions to their Gulf destination countries where they make up around 40% of the population overall, and two-thirds of the labour force. Some 90% of private sector jobs in the Gulf are occupied by migrants. Among the issues identified were: non-remunerated overtime work; non-payment of wages; average working hours per week over 100 hours; little or no time off work; physical (including sexual), psychological and verbal abuse. The system for addressing foreign workers' complaints is inadequate or non-existent; labour laws generally do not cover female domestic workers because they are not considered employees; and domestic workers are also excluded from labour protection under any other national law. Trafficking of persons from Asia to the Arabian Gulf countries has become a common trend in recent times.

15. In this context, CCA is initiating a programme to focus on the Asian Diaspora in the Arabian Gulf. As a follow-up the recent pastoral, solidarity visit to UAE, CCA will organise a Consultation with focus on migration and human trafficking which will be held in November this year. We are hoping that this initiative will help CCA to be more engaged in advocacy on migrant workers and the human trafficking.

16. CCA's location and sustainability

The location of CCA's headquarters and the options for its relocation as well as the financial sustainability of CCA in the long run were our concerns for some time. You might recall that I raised a question in the General Secretary's report to the Ex.Com in 2017: "Where shall we fix our tent as we move forward?" We spent substantial time during the last meeting of the Executive Committee to discuss the development of CCA's Chiang Mai property, and the possibility of establishing a permanent headquarters for CCA. Although we decided to go ahead in principle with the plan of setting up CCA headquarters building in CCA's Chiang Mai as it was originally decided more than a decade ago, other options were also explored. There was also a proposal to look for another convenient land to construct a building with at least 8 floors. The sub-committee appointed by the Executive Committee to deal with the relocation and met and assessed various new proposals and looked into different options. More details about this will be shared later.

17. The most important aspect with regard to this proposal is that it would be appropriate to take a take a decision about the construction of the headquarters at the earliest. The original decision about the construction of the headquarters with adequate facility was taken in 2006, but due to various reasons the decision was not implemented and a proper decision making process was dragging. The fund designated for the construction was not properly invested and the value for the money was declining. At the same time we have been spending a good amount of money for renting the current office space at the Payap University. We also do not have adequate facilities in the current office space and we are facing several practical difficulties. Files and documents shipped from Hong Kong are still kept in the store room and remain unpacked. Thousands of photos which from CCA's history were undocumented and scattered on the floors or elsewhere in the office. How long we should allow this to continue even after 60 years of CCA's existence?

18. Income development and financial sustainability, an urgent priority

Although there will be a separate Finance Report by the Treasurer, I would like to update you about the income and dwindling finance situation of CCA. There are several positive and encouraging responses from the member churches in terms of hosting programmes. This was evident recently also through the generous contributions and support CCA received from churches in Myanmar and Indonesia. Myanmar churches are rather financially weaker, but their contributions for hosting the AMC and the Diamond Jubilee celebration were so generous. They contributed U.S. \$44,912 for hosting the Asia Mission Conference and for the Diamond Jubilee commemorative event. In addition to this, their in-kind contributions provided additional support. Through the Protestant Church in Minahasa, Indonesia (GMIM), the Provincial government of North Sulawesi spent a substantial amount to host the AEYA-2018 which was held in Manado, Indonesia. The board and lodging of 400 participants, local transportation, international tickets of 35

participants and domestic tickets of almost 100 Indonesian participants from various parts of the country, printing costs, local transportation, expenses related to exposure programmes, etc. were covered fully by the local hosts. We have not yet received the details about the expenses incurred by the local hosts. Such positive responses are very encouraging. However, it is also disappointing that many economically well-off churches in Asia's rich countries are not generous enough to support CCA by way of adding more membership contributions or programme fund contributions.

19. The income from the international ecumenical partners is not increasing in recent years and they have given us sufficient indications that it is time for CCA to stand on its own feet. It has become increasingly evident that the financial contributions from the non-Asian partners will be drastically reduced in coming years. It is in this context that I want to alert you again that it is high time for CCA to look for income from other reliable and stable sources. The property development or income development sources together with the CCA headquarters building project need to be seen as a priority before the end of the term of this Executive Committee.
20. **Leadership crises in Asian churches; capacity building**
Whether we like it or not, it is a reality that a large number of Asian churches and ecumenical councils are facing a leadership crisis. Some of the CCA member churches and NCCs are finding it extremely difficult to identify suitable leaders to lead their respective churches and the councils. In addition to this, churches and councils are facing problems with regard to good governance and accountability. Lack of ecumenical formation among the church leaders is widely evident. These situations warrant the need for ecumenical leadership development in churches and ecumenical councils. During the last meeting of the Executive Committee, we did discuss the need to strengthen the ecumenical movement at different levels, for which adequate human resources are needed.
21. During the past two years CCA has been focusing on the ecumenical formation and ecumenical leadership development at various levels including at the grassroots levels. For example, CCA's programme of ecumenical formation training for the Bible School teachers of eight Bible Schools in the refugee camps on the border of Thailand and Myanmar is an example for such grassroots involvement. No one came forward to undertake this task until we took the initiative. We organised ecumenical leadership development training in countries such as East Timor, Cambodia, Laos, and Nepal during the past three years; these are the forgotten areas in the ecumenical movement. We need to make special efforts for systematic long term training programmes in leadership development and capacity building. It is also important to arrange or support theological education training of young people from these countries. The countries that need special attention for ecumenical leadership development and theological training of young people in CCA constituencies are Bangladesh, Cambodia, Laos, Bhutan, East Timor, Nepal, Thailand and Pakistan. In the past, the WCC had special arrangements through CCA for some training and theological education assistance to some of these countries. But, it has been stopped for a while. The expense for a student to study at the Bossey Ecumenical Institute is more than U.S \$22,000 for a 5 month course. So the opportunities for students from Asia or other developing countries are fewer these days. The possibility of systematising

the ecumenical formation and leadership development through an Asian Ecumenical Institute was discussed during the last meeting. In this context, I would like to draw your attention again to this original idea we discussed.

22. **Asian Ecumenical Institute (AEI)**

CCA is now organising a month long training, an Asian Ecumenical Institute, which was started in 2015. During the past three courses we have provided month-long training for 75 young people. It has been proved that the AEI will be a potential platform to train young ecumenists, but a month long course is not sufficient to provide proper academic and practical training. I have shared some proposals earlier also about the possibility of developing an Asian Ecumenical Institute with a long term course. I am proposing this Executive Committee to concretise this original proposal and explore the possibility to link the AEI with the CCA headquarters and building project.

23. In addition to the AEI, there are other possibilities also to organise the training in different areas: in addition to a six month training in ecumenical formation annually for young pastors and church workers two other courses also can be initiated; a two month course for prospective missionaries with a focus on mission in a multi-cultural and religious contexts; and a training course on conflict resolution and peace building with three month duration. These training courses will be CCA's stable programmes which can generate funding support from different sources from churches and governmental funding or secular foundation funding. This will also provide scope for income generation as it will be a source to convert a large chunk of expenses as income from renting out CCA's own conference and accommodation facilities.

24. **Crises in Ecumenical Councils in Asia**

There are 15 NCCs that are members of CCA, and most of these councils are facing deep crises due to financial difficulties and lack of human resources. WCC and CCA has been accompanying some of these councils in the past through two ecumenical partnership programmes initiated jointly by CCA and WCC to assist the weaker NCCs, especially the NCCs of Nepal, Bhutan, Pakistan, Cambodia, Bangladesh, etc. Some other NCCs are rather weak in terms of staff capacity or lack of interest and sense of ownership by member churches. Among these the NCC Nepal and the Christian Council in Cambodia (KCC) are facing deep crises. CCA has been able to initiate processes in Cambodia and Nepal to reactivate the NCCs. The problem that exists in KCC is related to the land and the office belonging to KCC, which was originally purchased through CCA. Lack of proper leadership in KCC also a matter of concern. The leadership crisis is a matter of concern in NCC Nepal also. Certain initiatives have been taken by CCA and I just want to share this information with the members of the Executive Committee.

25. **Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace Asia Focus-2019**

As you know WCC initiated the pilgrimage of Justice and Peace (PJP) and called the member churches and partners "to walk together through collaborative engagement to address the issues of justice and peace, healing a world filled with conflict, injustice and pain". It is stated that "Churches together and with their ecumenical partners, both in their own context and cooperating internationally, will be the main actors of the pilgrimage. Still,

this pilgrimage is an invitation as well as an opportunity for individuals, parishes, and communities to participate in the movement of justice and peace. It is envisaged that this “process of transformation will include experience, sharing, listening, praying, penance, witnessing, awareness-building, reflecting and acting”. Although this invitation was extended to member churches all over the world five years ago, it has not made any impact among most Asian churches. In my own experiences in Asia whenever I was visiting and meeting CCA member churches and councils, I realised that the Asian churches have not recognised the PJP as a programme when it was compared with the programme of Decade to Overcome Violence (DoV), which was also initiated by WCC.

26. Meanwhile WCC has decided the PJP in 2019 with an Asia focus. The WCC leadership now approached CCA to facilitate the coordination of the PJP Asia Focus. It is proposed that nine pilgrimage visits will be organised to countries such as Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Thailand- Myanmar border, Sri Lanka, India, the Philippines, Indonesia, Japan and Korea. CCA will coordinate and facilitate the visits of international ecumenical team to visit these countries in collaborations with respective NCCs. A meeting of the NCC General Secretaries and representatives of NCCs will be held at the CCA headquarters to make further plans about each visit. I have already made a proposal that in each team visit at least one representative from the executive committee or programme committee of CCA also to participate as an Asian church representative. The annual meeting of the international Reference Group of the PJP will be held in conjunction with the Asia Focus and the proposed date for this meeting will be from 1-4 March 2019 and the venue will be in Chiang Mai.
27. **Asian Ecumenical Women’s Assembly (AEWA) – 2019**
Another major ecumenical initiative of CCA in 2019 will be the AEWA. The Presbyterian Church in Taiwan has extended the invitation and agreed to host the AEWA in Taiwan in August 2019. A preparatory meeting on AEWA was held and initial preparation was made to facilitate the AEWA. It is hoped that we will be able to bring together at least 200 women from Asia to participate at the AEWA-2019.
28. **Asian Inter-Religious Leaders’ Summit on Building Peace and Moving Beyond Conflicts**
Religious intolerance in Asia is on the rise with more and more countries falling foul of such acts. From Muslim extremism in Pakistan to Theravada Buddhist extremism in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Thailand as well as growing Hindutva fundamentalist ideology in India and Nepal, minority religions are finding themselves targeted. Politicisation of religion and religionisation of politics add more animosities among traditionally tolerant Asian societies and adding more and more political instability in different parts of Asia.
29. Although freedom of religion is guaranteed by most countries through constitutional provisions the situation with regard to intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief is alarming. In recent times, Asia has witnessed an increase in the level of religious intolerance and overt forms of disrespect and aggression. As a result of this trend, peace, security and justice are denied to a large section of Asians and they are persecuted because of their faith. CCA needs to address this concern with some urgent priority. In this situation, CCA has a responsibility to address this growing trend of religious intolerance. We are

now in a process of initiating an 'Asian Inter-Religious Summit on Building Peace and Moving beyond Conflicts'. Initial proposal has been worked out and efforts are being made for requesting special funds from non-traditional partners of CCA to make the event more visible and fruitful. During my recent visit to Berlin, Germany to attend the meeting of the Asian Religious Leaders on Responsibility of Religions for Peace, which was organised by the Foreign Affairs Ministry of Federal Government of Germany and the Foreign Affairs Ministry of Finland, I have had initial discussions with some of the officers of both governments about CCA's proposed Asian Religious Leaders' Summit. There were some positive signals from them to collaborate with CCA in organising this major Asian event. The idea is to bring together at least 100 leaders of various religions from all over Asia to a common platform provided by CCA. It is our hope and prayer that we will be able to accomplish our mission of prophetic witness towards this direction. This programme is now going to be part of our programme plan in 2019, and provision for allocation of budget also has been made for organising this event.

30. **CCA General Assembly Preparation**

The General Assembly, the supreme body of the CCA will have to meet once in five years. The last CCA assembly was held in May 2015 and in that case the next CCA assembly should normally take place in the first half of 2020. An assembly is such an important event to be held once in five years. It needs careful and adequate preparations, and we have to start the preparations at the earliest. As part of this preparatory process, a five member General Assembly Preparatory Committee comprising no more than five persons should be appointed by the Executive Committee. The immediate task is to develop the assembly theme as well as to identify the venue of the assembly, assembly worship preparatory team, etc. In order to develop the assembly theme, we shall organise a small theological consultation with the participation of selected Asian theologians. Perhaps this consultation could be organised in conjunction with the preparatory meeting of the Congress of Asian Theologians (CATS) which will be held in the first half of 2019.

31. With regard to the venue of the Assembly, the Church of North India (CNI) has already extended an invitation to CCA, with an offer that CNI would host the Assembly and cover all expenses related to board and lodging as well as other local expenses. We need to discuss this and take an appropriate decision.

32. **Towards Wider Ecumenism in Asia**

In this report I tried to share with you several important aspects related to the life and witness as well as some indicators about CCA's sustainability and also effectiveness of its programmes. The programmes and activities we have planned as per the strategic plan framework for the year 2018 focus on the theme is 'Towards Wider Ecumenism in Asia'. However, the concept of wider ecumenism has much more serious meaning in the Asian context. There are several contexts and instances that can testify how wider ecumenism in various Asian cultures and values of religious contexts also can be interpreted and applied more relevantly. Our task in this context is to search for the meaning of the shift or changing paradigms of ecumenism in Asia. In our learning process of understanding the wider dimensions of ecumenism, we are making many efforts at every stage of our ecumenical journey. As Catholicos Aram I reminded us yesterday, "Ecumenism is a

pilgrimage towards unity” and, “a call for visible unity”. In our search for attaining the goal of ecumenism we experience hopes, sacrifices, and risks. We need to be prepared for facing such realities. What we heard yesterday also reminded us to understand the issues related to the challenges to the ecumenical movement. Ecumenical movement as a whole is at a decisive point in history, but we are hopeful that the current realities of stagnation or uncertainty are not a permanent fixture. That is why ecumenism, for us, is hope in action. Ecumenism is a vital dimension of our faith and witness. As we move forward, let us pray and hope that our efforts to reaching the goal of the visible unity of all God’s people and all God’s creation will be attained through our humble and minor efforts in Asia. We recognise the fact that the small or minor effort has its own value. This is what we are reminded of a parable Jesus described; a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade. (Mark: 4: 31-32). Our efforts to participate in God’s mission of planting and nurturing ecumenism in Asia will be a small or minor effort at this stage. Yet we need to plant the small seed with the hope that it will grow and become a larger garden plant, or a bigger tree which might produce fruits in future. This should be our hope and this is the hope that gives us an impetus and motivation to move forward as we are journeying together in Asia.

Mathews George Chunakara

General Secretary, CCA



His Holiness Aram I presents a gift to CCA

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