

Foreword

We are pleased to present you the fourth quarterly program report of Christian Conference of Asia from October-December, 2007. We are presenting this report to update you on the implemented programs. The report also highlights ecumenical involvement in the struggles of Asian churches and people.

We will be happy to receive your feedback and comments, on how we can build our strengths and be more visible in response to the new emerging contexts and realities of Asia. On behalf of CCA team, I sincerely thank you all for your concern and support. Your continued interest and support for the mission of CCA is a great source of strength for our member churches and the ecumenical movement in Asia.

While starting the New Year, we pray that God's blessings be with you all.

Prawate Khid-arn
General Secretary

General Secretariat

Asian Religious Leaders Conference

(13-15, November Chiang Mai, Thailand)

Asian Religious Leaders Conference (ARLC) was another special event, when fifty-six religious leaders from Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Hindu faiths got together to address the theme 'Being Peacemakers in Asia Today'. The conference affirmed the role of faiths, religious leaders and individual believers in building peace and transforming the conflicts. It was another milestone in CCA programs providing inspiration for wider interfaith dialogue and cooperation.

The main objective of the conference was to bring issues related to peace and reconciliation into the context of religions. Also to pay attention to the call of religious responsibility in supporting, motivating and enhancing the 'holistic ministry' by equipping faith communities adequately towards solidarity and initiating a proactive role in building peace and justice.

During the conference, participants also took part in building two houses for the poor in Doi Sakhet District in Thailand. The activity was hosted by the Habitat for Humanity. This provided another practical experience and atmosphere to interreligious communities for expressing solidarity with the people.

Statement ratified by the conference affirmed, 'Basic thrust of religion is to nurture life and provide [a society] for human beings to live in harmony with one another and nature. Religions in different ways have laid down the spiritual basis for a just and moral human order. Religious communities have also kept alive social networks of solidarity with all, including the marginalised, discriminated and oppressed.'

Following areas were identified for continued action:

- Strengthening interreligious networks at local, national and international level
- Working towards sensitising general public in their own religious tradition for becoming agents of peace and reconciliation
- Advocating policies for good governance, respect for human rights, especially women and children and care for nature
- Equipping people to stand against communal, religious, ethnic and gender based violence
- Exchanging information among religious communities for promoting cooperation and solidarity
- Sharing human and financial resources for promoting a culture of peace
- Forming Interreligious Task Force for advocating and promoting human rights

- Organising events to lobby with international forums and institutions, like UN and other similar bodies for more ethically inspired foreign policies
- Responding to policies issued by multilateral institutions, such as World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Trade Organisation (WTO)
- Negotiating with religious communities and governments, in countries where minority communities feel insecure and for implementing effective policies and initiating peace processes

Participants agreed that CCA sets up a follow up team and design necessary mechanism that can bring recommendations into practice. The full document of the statement can be read on CCA website at www.cca.org.hk

Thai National Environment Day

(December 4-5, Chiang Mai, Thailand)

CCA together with other thirty-five governmental and non governmental organisation coordinated a special event to celebrate the Thai National Environment Day 2007. Over 3,000 people representing schools, colleges, universities, religious organisations, churches, governmental and non governmental organisations marched on the roads in Chiang Mai to commemorate National Environment Day. It was the biggest joint event on environmental concern held in Chiang Mai. The issue of focus this year was ‘Climate Change and Global Warming’.

The event was presided by the Vice-Governor of Chiang Mai, who read the ‘Statement of Commitment’ for public about the control of greenhouse gases and global warming. He said, ‘Environmental crisis and global warming raise ethical concerns. It is everyone’s responsibility to handover a better environment to our children.’ Dignitaries such as the consul general of U.S.A., China and Japan were also present at the event. They were invited to plant trees as symbol of solidarity and support for the cause.

Various activities were organised for public education and campaign including cultural performances, picture drawing contest, digital photo contest, thematic discussions, seminars, bicycle rally and exhibitions.

On 4 December, more than 900 people joined the bicycle rally to bring the issue of climate change into community attention and to seek support for a better and healthy environment in the world.

The coordinating team and representative of partner organisations met again at YMCA Santitham, on 12 December 2007 to evaluate the event. The team strongly recommended that raising public awareness and participation on climate change-global warming is needed at all levels. A program coordinator will be appointed to keep the network and programs moving forward.

Future program planned for 2008 include:

- Information sharing- leaflet, e-newsletter, website, etc.

- Knowledge and capacity building in schools and communities
- Public events: International Environment Day (June 5) and Thai National Environment Day (December 4), etc.

Ecumenical Relations

16-30 October: CCA Team visit to partners in Europe

As part of CCA's ecumenical relationship, five leaders including Ms. Manju Baroi (President), Bishop Thomas Soo (Hon. Treasurer), Mr. Anthony Row (Committee member), Dr. Hope Antone (Executive Secretary for FMU) and Dr. Prawate Khid-arn (General Secretary) visited twenty ecumenical organisations in six countries of Europe including Switzerland, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Germany and the United Kingdom. The visit was jointly coordinated with the World Council of Churches-Regional Relations for Asia.

The objectives of the visit were:

- To enhance CCA profile among European churches, ecumenical partner organisations and specialised ministries;
- To exchange views and common concerns pertinent to the ecumenical movement, particularly in Asia and Europe;
- To identify common concerns and issues by interacting/discussing during the meetings and visits;
- To share common ecumenical concerns and interact with churches/organisations and ecumenical leaderships in the visited countries.
- To explore ways and means to strengthen cooperation between CCA, Asian churches and their counterparts in Europe (churches, ecumenical bodies, specialised ministries) in future.

During the visit, some important global, regional and national issues were brought to attention to further ecumenical cooperation, namely:

- Churches' mission to reach out the deprived and suffering and to work towards poverty alleviation, social and economic injustice.
- Environmental issue especially the climate change and global warming.
- Concern about migration and the integration of people from other countries in European society.
- Political confrontation and human right abuses in Asia especially in Myanmar and Sri Lanka, their challenge to churches and ecumenical movement for pro-active involvement and participation.
- Intra-faith as well as interfaith relations and dialogue to provide wider ecumenical perspective.

21-25 November: The General Secretary attended the 22nd General Convention of the NCC-Philippines on "Weaving the Patchwork of Justice and Peace in a Broken World"

held at Iglesia Evangelica Metodista en las Islas Filipinas (IEMELIF) Retreat Centre, Quezon City in Manila, the Philippines. He also extended greetings to the convention saying,

“We at Christian Conference of Asia recognise and appreciate the immense contribution of NCCP and for your tireless efforts to call for genuine peace and justice on the issue of extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances and other forms of political repression in the Philippines.

“Our Lord Jesus Christ calls the church to stand in solidarity with the poor. This call means that the life of every church here in the Philippines, Asia and the world must reflect spirituality that witnesses our solidarity with the poor and those who need justice. It also includes resisting every form of abusive powers by means which reflect the power of love.”

Prior to the general convention, CCA general secretary also presented in the press conference presided by WCC general secretary Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia on Extra-Judicial killings in the Philippines.

Pastoral visit to churches in Myanmar

(November 30- December 2)

The General Secretary and Mr. Tony Waworuntu, Joint Executive Secretary for JID had a pastoral and solidarity visit to member churches in Myanmar from 30 November-2 December 2007.

Listening to the church leaders made us understand the unique role of churches in the peace movement. They shared on how they had been contributing to the struggles since the Buddhist monks started public demonstrations in September. They had been appealing churches and ecumenical organisations around the world to pray for the peace solutions in Myanmar.

Church leaders need CCA’s support in facing the difficult time in Myanmar. Following recommendations were made for CCA:

1. CCA should help MCC in disseminating information to the world regarding the situation in Myanmar and what the churches in Myanmar are doing regarding their tasks and their prophetic role in the country;
2. CCA should work closely with the national council of churches and other sources in ASEAN Countries, so that they can influence their own governments to put pressure on the Myanmar government so that they could move towards a peaceful resolution in the country;
3. CCA should also pay attention to Burmese refugees, migrant workers and asylum seeker issues in countries like Thailand, Malaysia and others;

4. CCA should continue its program in Myanmar particularly on theological education, peace building and socio-political issues;
5. CCA should carefully consider if there is an attempt from the international community to put sanctions on Myanmar.

Other than meeting Christian leaders, CCA delegation also visited Bethany Theological Seminary run by the Independent Presbyterian Church of Myanmar on 1 December 2007. The faculty members shared about their life and work and expressed interest to have closer relationships with CCA for theological education and development with a wider ecumenical perspective. The next day, general secretary and Tony Waworuntu also attended the first Advent and AIDS Sunday worship at the Holy Cross Church, a congregation from Church of the Province of Myanmar (CPM).

Faith, Mission and Unity (FMU)

Quarterly Report for October-December 2007

CCA-FMU staff: Hope S. Antone

1. 3rd Asia Conference of Theology Students (ACTS 3) (October 8-12, Davao City)

A group of fifty theology students attended the 3rd Asia Conference of Theology Students (ACTS 3) jointly organised by CCA - Faith, Mission and Unity program area and the Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences (FABC-OEIA) in Davao City, Philippines. It was hosted by Archbishop Fernando Capalla, the chair of FABC-OEIA office, who hails from Davao City. Acting on the recommendation made at the Fourth Asian Movement for Christian Unity (AMCU 4) seminar in June 2007, some places were allotted to theological students from the Evangelical Fellowship of Asia (EFA). Unfortunately, no one could come from the EFA. Of the Fifty participants, twenty-five came from CCA's related seminaries. FABC's twenty-five participants included a number of priests and nuns as well as lay from Africa and the Pacific studying in the Catholic formation centres in the Philippines. One difficulty in organising ACTS 3 was that the dates clashed with the examination period of most of the theological institutions in Asia. It was therefore suggested that holding the next ACTS should not be during the exam period.

With the theme, 'Doing Theology Ecumenically in Asia Today', ACTS serves as an occasion of exposing theology students to Asian contextual theologising in terms of Asia's realities and challenges. The objectives of ACTS 3 were:

- To gather Christian theology students from church-related theological formation centres of CCA and FABC; also inviting some theology students from the EFA and Muslim theological schools in southern Philippines – for an experience of living and studying ecumenically together;
- To expose theology students to contextual and ecumenical theologising and to issues faced by CCA, FABC and EFA in their life and work.

Some components of the conference were: (a) sharing of faith journeys by all participants facilitated by Fr. Tom Michel of FABC; (b) participatory input in Asian contextual theologising led by A. Wati Longchar; (c) sharing of ecumenical visions of CCA and FABC – led by Emerald May Fernandez and Fr. Tom Michel, for CCA and FABC, respectively; (d) inputs on Asian feminist theologising by Sr. Clemens Mendonca and Dr. Muriel Orevillo-Montenegro; (e) interreligious dialogue – experience of the Bishops-Ulama Conference by Archbishop Capalla and Bishop Hilario Gomez; and (f) a panel on peace and why it is important by a group of young Muslim professionals from Mindanao. The resource persons represented the Catholic, Protestant and Muslim perspectives. [Emerald May is a youth member of CCA-FMU program area and hails from Cagayan de Oro City in Mindanao, Philippines. She presented the CCA ecumenical vision prepared by Hope S. Antone.]

“Our different denominations did not restrain us to interact with one another. It was a good sign of hope for unity for the glory of God,” wrote one participant on the evaluation form. Another one wrote, however, that the segregation among the churches was still noticeable in the way participants sat together by denominations. All the participants appreciated the topics and presentations – especially on contextual and feminist theologising and interfaith sharing. But they also felt that there was too little time for small group discussion and interaction.

2. Visit to Ecumenical Partners in Europe

(16-31 October)

Hope S. Antone was part of the CCA delegation that visited ecumenical partners in Europe. The visit was a good opportunity for her to share about CCA’s work on challenging the traditional concepts and practices of mission and the need to broaden them in view of the Asian plural contexts. She wrote a narrative report (for the team of five) and a short critical reflection on this visit, which was shared with the CCA Executive Committee. (See the General Secretariat report for more on this visit).

3. Contextual Theologies and Bible Reading in Cambodia

(5-9 November, Kampong Som, Cambodia)

To help enhance the capacity of pastors and church workers in Cambodia and introduce them to new ways of reading the Bible, doing mission and practices, CCA-FMU organised the second part of a two-year training program for pastors at Kompong Som City in Cambodia. A total of twenty-six leaders completed the two-year program and were therefore given certificates of completion.

The issues covered in this training program were suggested by the participants themselves during the last program in 2006. Four resource persons from outside Cambodia took turns in facilitating the training: H.S. Wilson, Executive Director of the Foundation for Theological Education in South East Asia whose inputs included “Doing Mission in Asia Today”, Wati Longchar, CCA-WCC consultant for Ecumenical Theological Education who gave inputs on “Contextual Bible Study”; Hope S. Antone, CCA Joint Executive Secretary for Faith, Mission and Unity who facilitated sessions on “Reading the Bible from Feminist Perspective”; and Solomon Rongpi who lectured on “Effective Leadership and Church Administration”.

The participants expressed that contextual and feminist readings of the Bible were a totally new experience for them. Yet, they were very open to the new learning. The participants felt that the methods of the resource persons are applicable in Cambodian context. The training provided foundation for further study of the Bible and doing contextual theologising. The small group discussions, interactive community participation, and contextually based Bible study methods were very relevant that the participants hope they could apply them in their situations and contexts.

The participants suggested that twenty people should be selected from the two groups for further training on contextual reading of the Bible. The duration should be at least ten days and focus more on new interpretation of the Bible. The participants could be given more home work or assignments and given space for practical sessions. They recommended that the CCA and KCC explore continuing education for pastors on short term basis with Phnom Penh Bible College. This will enhance leadership capacity of pastors and lay leaders.

4. Asian Religious Leaders' Conference (12-16 November, Chiang Mai, Thailand)

Although all the CCA staff were expected to be present at the Asian Religious Leaders' Conference on "Be Peacemakers in Asia Today" held in Chiang Mai, Thailand on 12-16 November, Hope S. Antone ended filling up for a Christian presenter at a panel on "Is Religious Fundamentalism a source for Violence?" and for the moderator of the same panel. She also led a group that prepared and facilitated an interfaith closing act at the end of the conference. [See the report of the General Secretariat for more on this activity.]

5. Church Leadership Development: What's Working and What's Not (22-25 November, Bangkok, Thailand)

The CCA-FMU co-organised with the World Council of Churches staff for the Scholarship Program, the Church Leadership Development training program for Asia on 22-25 November in Bangkok, Thailand. The program consisted of inputs on "understanding the ecumenical movement" by Dr. Mathews George Chunakara of WCC, "ecumenical formation within the Asian region" by Hope S. Antone of CCA-FMU. Tara Tautari, staff of the WCC Scholarships Program, facilitated sessions on "church leadership development – for what purpose" and "ecumenical formation opportunities, scholarship program, policies and procedures." Hope Antone led the opening worship, while Jing Zhang from the China Christian Council and a lecturer at Nanjing Union Theological Seminary led two Bible studies. A total of twenty-one participants were present at the program coming from Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Switzerland, Taiwan and Thailand.

6. Networking: ATESEA 50th Anniversary (26-28 November, Singapore)

Hope S. Antone was one of the two speakers at the 50th anniversary celebration of the Association for Theological Education in South East Asia (ATESEA), held at the Trinity Theological College in Singapore, which housed the ATESEA in its early beginnings. The theme of the celebration was "Journeying Together into a New Era of Theological Education in Asia". Using a power point presentation, Hope titled her presentation, "Some Food for Thought on the Journey." The other theme speaker was Rev. Dr. Thu En Yu who is the current chairperson of ATESEA. Other activities in the celebration were

workshops on the following topics: re-reading the Bible from disability perspective, global warming, religious fundamentalism, sexuality and spirituality, conflict transformation, and visiting the past and envisioning the future. A thanksgiving service was also held at the TTC chapel with Anna May Say Pa, ATESEA vice-chairperson, as speaker. [Hope's theme presentation is published in the December 2007 issue of CTC Bulletin.]

7. Publications:

- The December 2007 edition of *CTC Bulletin* features selected papers from the program "Empowering the Church for Multicultural Ministry and Solidarity".
- Work on the Asia Sunday 2008 is ongoing. It will focus on Japan and the struggle of peace loving Christians to keep Article 9 in the Japanese constitution.

Justice, International Affairs, Development and Service

Quarterly Report for October-December 2007

CCA-JID staff: Tony Waworuntu and Freddy De Alwis

1. 11th Annual Human Rights Training

(3 – 9 November 2007, Chiang Mai and Huie San Akha Village Chiang Rai, Thailand)

The training aimed to provide opportunities for pastors, church workers and lay leaders to study human right concepts from Christian perspective and analyse the emerging human right trends in Asia. It also equipped the participants with updated knowledge and skills in dealing with human right issues.

Twenty-nine participants including pastors, churches workers and lay leaders from fifteen Asian countries participated. The speakers included Rev. Dr Rienzie Perera, CCA-Associate General Secretary for Finance and Relationships, Ms Mandy Tibbey, a barrister from Australia and Ms. Kim Soo A from Korea working for Asian Human Rights Commission in Hong Kong.

Program content:

4 November: During the 2nd session Rev. Dr. Rienzie Perera led participants through a biblical reflection on human rights in Asia. He addressed how important it is for churches and Christians to be evangelists and not to proselytize (force Christianity upon disadvantaged either through reward or punishment). He raised important questions regarding Christian participation in demonstrations, submission to authority and how it can be questioned through biblical means and the significant role of local churches for upholding human rights.

Ms. Mandy Tibbey, speaker in the next session spoke about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and conducted an interactive activity regarding to the articles of human rights charter and declarations. She discussed various UN treaties and covenants such as Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, Convention on the Rights of the Child, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights as well as the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous People.

Another session had Ms. Kim Soo-A from Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) who spoke about “Dealing with Human Rights Issues in Asia”. She talked about the role of the AHRC and social justice issues at local and international level. She explained the process and systems, through which UN and other international bodies work. She also conducted an exercise on how to be sensitive to the victims and to understand and develop the process of research and interview with sensitivity.

Preparing human right national report

For this activity workshop participants were divided into three groups consisting of participants from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Japan, Hong Kong, Korea, East Timor and the Philippines.

Each group presented on the local situation in their countries and identified common issues. This included freedom of expression, gender-based discrimination, child rights, educational rights, freedom for choice of marriage, arbitrary arrests, corruption, minority issues, lack of freedom of expression, indigenous issues, violence against women and social justice issues. It was discussed how churches, faith based organisations, NGOs, human rights organisations, and government sectors can protect and preserve the human rights.

An exposure trip to Akha Youth Development Centre in Huai San, and two villages in Huai San took place at the end of the training.

Recommendations:

- Prayer services for Pakistan in home churches with local congregations
- Organising demonstration in front of Pakistan consulate.
- Working in collaboration with international bodies (AHRC and CCA).
- Developing articulate understanding of political situations and background before taking a position on human right issues.
- Supporting discriminated and disadvantaged communities and defending their rights
- Recognising International Human Rights Day and organising events and programs for it.

Strengths and weaknesses

Following are the strengths and weaknesses of the training based on evaluation by the participants:

- Good resource persons
- Positive outcomes in terms of working group time management, discussions and deliberations on applying human right instruments in accordance with international documents
- Feasible accommodation and logistic arrangements
- Lack of time for in depth discussions

2. Training of Trainers - School for Peace Building and Conflict Transformation in Southeast Asia

(12 – 19 November 2007, Bali-Indonesia)

Nineteen participants from Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines and East Timor attended the training. This included there resource persons from Canada, Australia and CCA.

Objectives:

- Equipping participants to help churches develop better working relationships with the state and other religious communities.

- Capacity building of participants to deal with the challenges faced in religiously plural societies.
- Help participants recognise and resolve conflicts in their communities

Program content:

In relation to peace building and conflict transformation, the training content included win-win approach, creative response, empathy, appropriate assertiveness, cooperative power, managing the conflict, willingness to resolve and mapping the conflict, designing options, negotiation, mediation and broadening perspectives. Understanding conflicts from socio-political perspective, the root causes of conflict, theological understanding and reflections on peace building and conflict transformation were also part of the program content.

Strengths and weaknesses

- Well organised, good training facilities, accommodation and food
- Good resource persons
- Systemic approaches in the methodology of learning
- Diverse and creative worships
- Positive communication and relationships during the training
- Insufficient time for detailed study of the materials
- Few participants from Thailand, Australia and New Zealand

Recommendations:

- CCA should continue such trainings in future
- National councils and local churches should utilise their own resources to conduct such training in their countries;

3. Mission Trip to Myanmar

30 Nov – 2 Dec 2007

From 30 November - 2 December 2007, Dr. Prawate Khid-arn and Tony Waworuntu visited Myanmar to express solidarity and concerns with member council and churches. The purpose of the visit was to see and listen directly to our constituency on how they feel and respond to the political turmoil in Myanmar. Another purpose was to know how they expect CCA to support them in the current political situation of the country.

1 December: First day started with a visit to Myanmar Council of Churches office in Yangon. CCA met with thirteen people including officers, executive staff and church representatives of MCC. We shared on the current situation in Myanmar and the church's response to it. It was discussed how MCC and CCA can come closer and work together to address the emerging issues in Myanmar. MCC emphasised the need for CCA's

solidarity and support for the churches in facing the difficult time in Myanmar. Therefore, MCC put following recommendations in the meeting before CCA:

6. CCA should help MCC in disseminating information to the world, regarding the situation in Myanmar and how it can support the churches to play their prophetic role in the country;
7. CCA should work closely with the national council of churches and other organisations in ASEAN Countries, so that they can influence their own governments to put pressure on Myanmar government to move towards a peaceful resolution in the country;
8. CCA should pay attention to Burmese refugees, migrant workers and asylum seekers in countries like Thailand, Malaysia and else;
9. CCA should continue its programs in Myanmar particularly on theological education, peace building and socio-political and economic issues;
10. CCA should take into consideration if there is an attempt from the international community to put sanctions on Myanmar.

After the meeting at MCC, Bethany Theological seminary run by Independent Presbyterian Church of Myanmar was visited. Meeting with Principal Dr. Pa Sang and its faculty members at their campus were held. While sharing, they explained about the programs running in the seminary. We were informed that the seminary is fully funded by the Presbyterian Church in Singapore. They also expressed their wish to have a closer relationship with CCA for the development of theological education with a wider ecumenical perspective.

After visiting Bethany Theological Seminary, we continued our journey by making a courtesy call to meet Archbishop of the Church of the Province of Myanmar, which is an Anglican Church by denomination. The Archbishop San Si Htay is also the President of MCC, who was accompanied by the general secretary of the church in our meeting at the Bishop court. We shared our mutual concerns and understanding about the role of churches in Asia, particularly in Myanmar and how CCA and the churches can work together to face up the challenges in Asia.

Later Myanmar Baptist Convention was visited, which is the largest member church of CCA in Myanmar. We were received by the General Secretary of MBC, Rev. K.D. Tu Lum before proceeding further to meet representatives and staff of MBC. We expressed our concerns on the situation in Myanmar and asked them to share about the recent political situation and how churches plan to respond in this regard.

MBC shared with us how their members participated in the demonstrations lead by the Buddhist monks in September 2007. This was a sign of solidarity from the churches with the Buddhist monks and civil society. It was discussed how CCA can work together more closely with MBC in future. MBC also showed its willingness to host CCA's programs in Myanmar, where they showed willingness to bear the cost of boarding and lodging.

2 December: The Sunday worship was attended at the Holy Cross Church, a congregation from the Church of The Province of Myanmar. It was a great opportunity to meet with parishes and worship together. The visit continued to the Theological Seminary run by CPM. They shared about their educational programs and curriculum. It was impressive to observe how most of the teaching staff had Master's degree. However the seminary mainly had Anglican students and other denominations were not much represented.

The visit to Myanmar was considered significant in terms of time and the need for the support to the churches. According to our member council and churches in Myanmar it was a meaningful and successful visit. They expected CCA to continue with its role to support and encourage the churches, as they felt that it was much needed in the difficult times of Myanmar.

4. The UN Conference on Climate Change

(3-14 December 2007, Bali, Indonesia)

The conference, hosted by the Government of Indonesia, brought representatives of over 180 countries together with observers from governmental and nongovernmental organisations and media. The two week event included the sessions with Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), its subsidiary bodies as well as the Meeting of the Parties of the Kyoto Protocol. JID staff Freddy de Alwis represented CCA in the World Council of Churches (WCC) delegation, which comprised of twelve members from different parts of the world. In its stance WCC focused on promoting the importance of a practical post Kyoto option that allows for economic growth, continued poverty alleviation and a reduction in Global Greenhouse gas emissions.

Observations

Following are the observation and analysis made in terms of content and outcomes of the conference:

It was evident during the conference that the concrete steps and actions depend on how developed countries meet their protocol commitments to provide finance and technology to the poorer countries. Year 2012 is particularly significant as the first commitment period of the developed countries ends with that time period. The protocol has a mandate for further commitment period. The second commitment period starts in 2013.

In the first week of conference negotiations we began to hear bizarre statements and how large developing countries must be asked to contribute substantially to resolve the situation. If not then the second phase of commitment for developing countries to cut greenhouse gas will be jeopardised. It is true that all countries need to contribute to resist grave implication of climate change crisis, but greater responsibilities lies upon developed countries to prevent things from worsening. This can be done when developing countries are ensured to be assisted in planning and implementing a development path way. In other words sustainable development is the key to fight against

climate change. Observing the negotiations of the first week, the signs of this happening could not be seen. Delegates were obsessed with the post 2012 climate change regime, which may have made the developed countries ignore the urgency of current situation and the need to commit to the implementation of technology transfer, funding for adaptation, and deforestation.

After years of discussions between Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA-a body under UNFCCC) and the Experts Group on technology Transfer (EGTT), developing countries asked for the issue to be discussed at the Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI-another body under UNFCCC) to move forward to concrete implementation. President of the Conference of Parties (COP), Rachmat Witoelar, having heard no objections during the plenary, ruled the point. However, during the SBI sessions developed countries objected to it. It was clear and evident how developed countries were reluctant to commit to technology transfer.

One reason was a hope for future framework that could convince US to participate. Secondly, to target some developing countries such as China, India, Brazil, South Africa and others to have binding emissions cut, under the guise of the need to provide content to common term but with different responsibilities. Third, this being used to shift public attention to the fact that developed countries have not fulfilled their commitments as yet under the UNFCCC and the Kyoto protocol, not only in technology transfer and adaptation fund but also on emission cut.

Therefore world need to ask 38 rich countries (grouped under Annexure 1) on what commitment they make for 2008–2012, their existing commitment, and how it will be implemented, should be elaborated and bear more (if not equal) burden. The question comes, as how can further commitment be entrusted, when the implementation of the present commitment are not visible yet. Developing countries and the world need to ask these countries to create a roadmap for implementing their commitments in 2008 – 2012 as a priority.

Ecumenical Formation, Gender Justice and Youth Empowerment (EGY)

Quarterly Report for October-December 2007

CCA-EGY staff: Moumita Biswas

1. Women's Meeting- 'Challenges, Strategies and Struggles: Asian Women Building Communities of Peace'

(9-12 October, 2007 Bangkok, Thailand)

In the context of increasing violence in Asia and its adverse impact on women, children and vulnerable communities it is essential for CCA-EGY to promote gender justice. Thus EGY in partnership with The Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT) organised meeting for women desk/commission secretaries of national councils and women church leaders from regional organisations. Twenty-seven women leaders and three men leaders from Asia and Australia attended this conference.

Objectives:

- Strengthen ecumenical networking to strategise together to promote gender justice in local context.
- Develop common agenda for action plan women's leadership development to overcome violence against women, children and vulnerable communities in local context.
- Participatory decision making about what should be the relevant contextual focus of the projects of EGY- CCA in 2008 and methodologies for participatory implementation.

Outcomes:

- To promote advocacy dissemination of information, and facilitate networking among women's group, and ecumenical partners took the decision to launch a regular e- newsletter *CCA Women's Voice*. It was decided that Australian Council of Churches and National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical Commission (NATSIEC) will help in the process.
- Decision was taken to re launch *Women's Link* EGY- women, gender justice concern ecumenical magazine and to document unheard voices and stories to promote and articulate Asian women's stories, spiritualities and theologies.
- Decision about preparation of gender justice training manuals relevant to the Asian context, a committee was formed to identify people with the relevant skills from around the region to further this project.

Comments: EGY is grateful to 'General Board of Global Ministries' especially 'International ministries with Women, Children and Youth' and 'International Committee of Fellowship of The Least Coin' for supporting this women's meeting.

2. Ecumenical Accompaniment for Vision and Empowerment (WEAVE)

(October-December 2007, East Timor)

This is an ongoing project of CCA- EGY. WEAVE is a project of assisting CCA member churches and councils in capacity enhancement of women in their leadership and organisational development. It is done through a full time ecumenical accompanier facilitated and supported by CCA in partnership with sending and receiving member church. The context of the program is rooted in violent conflict history of east Timor, where women are the worst victims of violence. This project aims to strengthen East Timor women's ecumenical movement and build communities of peace.

Main goals of WEAVE:

- To accompany church women of East Timor and help them with ecumenical leadership development, organisational and program management skills.
- To facilitate building up a collective support mechanism for ecumenical women's movement in East Timor to support women in conflict situations
- Encouraging member churches to support new churches for building communities of peace.

Specific Objectives from October-December 2007

- Identifying a target group of church women in East Timor, who will be accompanied, mentored and trained till the end of this project. (15-20 women).
- Facilitating the target group to engage in ecumenical capacity enhancement of church women.
- Networking with ecumenical organisations that support women's leadership development in East Timor.
- Starting the process of documentation of East Timor women's stories, voices and spiritualities.

Activities:

- Orientation of WEAVE Project to 'Igreja Protestante Iha Timor Loro Sae' (IPTL) General Secretary and Staff by Dominica L. Faurillo (Ecumenical Accompanier).
- Visitation of churches and women groups by Ecumenical Accompanier.
- Orientation for the coordinators about WEAVE and discussing possibility of organising an ecumenical group of women by Ecumenical Accompanier.
- Ecumenical Accompanier providing English Training Classes in International Christian University in East Timor for capacity enhancement of women.

Outcomes

- Formation of church women's ecumenical core group from IPTL, Pentecostal Church, Apostolic Church, and Chinese Church to promote women's ecumenical movement in East Timor.
- Formation of adhoc committee of women from IPTL to facilitate the process of promotion of gender justice and ecumenical formation.

Women's Networking:

(a) CCA Representation and Participation in 27th Annual Meeting of ‘International Committee of the Fellowship of the Least Coin Movement’

(22-27 October 2007, Kingdom of Tonga)

One aspect of such ecumenical networking is promoting peace building through promoting Fellowship of Least Coin Movement (FLC). The Executive Secretary of EGY is the CCA representative of ICLFC, which annually meets every year to share and review the work and impact of women peace building process. CCA–EGY shares about such contributions and challenges in the Asian region. This year the 27th Annual Meeting of ICLFC was held in Kingdom of Tonga from 22-27 October 2007. The theme of this meeting was ‘Living the Jubilee in Changing and Challenging World’ Moumita Biswas-Executive Secretary EGY represented CCA in this meeting

Objectives:

- Networking to promote FLC Movement.
- Information sharing from different Regional Ecumenical Organisations (REOs) about how FLC movement is facilitating and uniting women in different regions for peace building, healing and reconciliation process.

Activities:

- Monitoring the regional work and activities of women and ecumenical organisations to promote justpeace, healing and reconciliation.
- Participatory decision making and evaluation of utilisation or project grants given to regional organisations in 2007.

Outcomes:

- Concrete discussion and deliberations with some women’s ecumenical organisations like Asian Church Women’s Conference (ACWC) and Women’s Inter- Church Council of Canada about the scope of partnership with CCA- EGY for promoting gender justice and women’s ecumenical leadership development in Nepal and East Timor.
- Confirmation of project grant form ICLFC to CCA for the year 2008 to promote women’s peace building process in Asian region.

(b) Participation and Contribution in ‘Regional Ecumenical Organisation Women’s Meeting’

(19-23 November 2007, Geneva, Switzerland)

This meeting was organised by World Council of Churches- ‘Women, Church and Society’ program. It aimed to coordinate women’s concerns and visions in the ecumenical movement by offering opportunity to speak and share about visions in order to contribute to society and ecumenical movement. The EGY-Executive Secretary Ms Moumita Biswas was invited to represent CCA, participate and contribute in the meeting.

Objectives

- To develop common agenda for action for the work related to women.
- To share the challenges as well as plan for collaborative work in regions.
- To reflect on methodology for dialogue among women of various traditions, regions and ages.

EGY's Contribution:

- Presenting the Asia scenario especially different issues of violence and challenges women are facing in the region.
- Sharing of the work of CCA- EGY in partnership with member churches, councils and ecumenical organisations in promoting gender justice and promoting ecumenical movement in Asia

Outcomes of this networking:

- Discussions and scope for joint ecumenical endeavours and WCC's solidarity for the scholarships for women's leadership development especially for 'Asian School for Ecumenical Formation for Gender Justice' in 2008.

Youth Networking:

(a) CCA- WSCF- AP Networking: There were sharings between Ms Necta Montes Rocas, WSCF- AP General Secretary and Ms Moumita Biswas Joint Executive Secretary about relationship, partnerships and joint programs between WSCF-AP and CCA in Chiang Mai on 7th November 2007. However such ongoing discussions will further be concretised later in a formal meeting in 2008. EASY net matters were also discussed.

(b) Regional Ecumenical Organisation Youth's Meeting'
(19-23 November 2007, Geneva, Switzerland)

Since Ms Chang Chung Chi – Joint Executive Secretary of Youth has left CCA; it was Ms Moumita Biswas who attended some sessions of this meeting organised by WCC as she was participating in the REO Women's meeting in Geneva at the same time.

Mekong Ecumenical Partnership Program (MEPP)

Quarterly Report for October-December 2007

CCA-MEPP staff: Janejinda Pawadee

Program Activities:

1. 4th Lay Mobilisation Training in Cambodia

(30 October–1 Nov, 2007)

MEPP along with Kampuchea Christian Council (KCC) jointly organised the 4th Lay Mobilisation Training in Svay Rieng Province, Cambodia. The theme of the training was ‘Pastoral Care for church members’. Around thirty-three lay leaders and pastors from the first three modules attended the training. The training was the fourth event in the series of five held over a period of one year. The series is part of the leadership training project for the KCC member churches.

The HIV/AIDS and human trafficking issues were also part of the training. It was for the first time that the participants had the opportunity to learn about HIV/AIDS and human trafficking. Their participation in the training was positive, as the issues were based in the context of their communities. There are organisations working for these issues in Cambodia, yet KCC did not have a chance to educate congregations about these issues.

2. Cross Border Migration Workshop

(10-12 November 2007, Chiang Mai, Thailand)

Twenty-three participants and facilitators included seven women and sixteen men took part in the ‘Cross Border Migration Workshop’. The participants comprised of church workers and members of related organisations from Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand. Participants from Southern China and Vietnam were not being able to attend the workshop.

MEPP coordinated this workshop with the Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT) and the Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand (EFT). Seven pastors from CCT and EFT were invited to present a case study on migrant workers and church ministries working for migration issue. The cooperation among the two organisations will continue for future collaborations to work for migrant issues.

Program outcomes:

- Church leaders and related organisations in Mekong countries gained more knowledge and understanding about cross-border migration and human rights work.
- Participants from Myanmar and Thailand developed their relationship, partnership and established a future plan for cooperation, to respond to human right issues in relation to cross-border migration.
- MEPP created a wider network especially with the Myanmar churches in Thailand with EFT.

The activity had a positive impact in terms of enhanced relationships among different denominations in Thailand, after they shared and learnt from each other in the workshop. Participants from CCT said that they have learned much from Burmese churches belonging to EFT. The commitment to work together and networking on migrant workers issues was established between CCT and the Burmese churches of EFT.

The participation during the workshop was positive and interactive though language problem proved to be a barrier for some. Participants from Thailand and Myanmar shared their experience on cross border migration issues as this is one of the major challenges they faced with in their countries. Participants from Laos and Cambodia did not have the same experience about cross border issues however they had a positive learning experience and they committed themselves with the cause of cross border migrant issue.

3. MEPP Working Group Meeting

(16-17 November 2007, Chiang Mai, Thailand)

Nine participants attended MEPP working group meeting in Chiang Mai. The participants were divided into four working group comprising of members from Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand. Two other members representing Vietnam and Southern China apologised for not being able to attend the meeting. The meeting was led by MEPP coordinator and two advisory committee members.

The MEPP working group meeting was an opportunity for church leaders of each country to share about their ministry, their work and plans for the future. This also gave MEPP a chance to see how to support churches in Mekong countries especially on capacity building.

It was observed that churches in Mekong countries still need help and support in capacity building on many issues especially HIV/AIDS and sustainable development.

Meetings and other activities:

1. Helping the World Council of Churches –Asia Desk to organise the Asia Workshop on Human Rights in Bangkok, Thailand from 3-7 October 2007.
2. Attended CCA- HIV/AIDS workshop in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and made a presentation on HIV/AIDS issue in Mekong countries (19-24 November 2007).
3. Assisted Global Warming Network to organise a two-day activity in Chiang Mai (3-4 December 2007).
4. Attended World AIDS Day and Christmas service with People Living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA) on 7 December 2007 in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The service was organised by CCT's AIDS Ministry together with CCA and MEPP.
5. Attended a Christmas service with CCT's Indigenous Women organised by CCT Women Desk on 8 December 2007.

Program challenges:

- Churches in Mekong countries need to be empowered to promote women leadership. They also need to be more encouraged to share information and news.
- Need for closer cooperation among churches in Myanmar and Thailand to share information, experience in order to work together on cross border issues. Different denomination should not be a barrier to work for democracy and human rights in Myanmar.
- MEPP working group need to be reconsidered in term of gender balance and its role of supporting MEPP. Evaluation should be done by MEPP working group in order to determine the impact of the programs on the stakeholders and the feasibility of programs.
- Language continues to be a barrier, which slows down the process of networking and capacity building within Mekong countries.

CCA – UNESCAP Project
Strengthening of Life Skills for Positive Youth Health Behaviour
Quarterly report for October – December 2007

Shirley Susan
CCA-UNESCAP Consultant

Introduction

The present four-year project (2005 – 2008) on life skills for disadvantaged youth aims to empower them with essential life skills so that they are better able to protect themselves from the threat of HIV/AIDS and drugs.

The project is implemented in four countries: Cambodia, China (Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous region), Philippines and Sri Lanka. It focuses on developing community-based life skills training networks to reach young people and foster their positive health behaviour.

Outcomes:

- Disadvantaged youth participating in the project adopt positive health behaviour and healthy lifestyles.
- Disadvantaged youth are equipped with life skills make informed and responsible choices about their health, particularly on HIV/AIDS and substance use.
- A more supportive environment is created to facilitate positive behaviour development among disadvantaged youth.
- Evidence on effective community-based life skills interventions is available as a reference source for policy and programme improvement.

Updates on work progress during July - September 2007

- Monitoring mission to Manila, Philippines from 8 – 13 October to study the progress of community based life-skills training interventions undertaken by the national counterpart organisation (NCO).
- Preparation and conduct of the Mid-term Review Meeting from 5 – 6 November 2007.
- Preparation of Letter of Agreement (LoA) for the third phase of interventions in all four countries.

Project activities during January – March 2008

- Booklet on positive youth health behaviour
- Publishing of bi-monthly e-newsletter “Youth for Health” (January 2008 issue)
- Signing of Letter of Agreement (LoA) to continue interventions as part of the third phase.

1. UNESCAP and Centre for HIV/STI prevention and control of Xinjiang CDC, Ministry of Health, China
 2. UNESCAP and Ministry of Youth and Sports, Kingdom of Cambodia
 3. UNESCAP and Sarvodaya, Sri Lanka
 4. UNESCAP and Pasay City Government , The Philippines
- Expansion of life skills training activities to cover more disadvantaged youth in the same community.
 - Develop and strengthen local youth life skills training networks.
 - Capacity building in policy advocacy and social mobilisation.

Monitoring Mission to Manila, The Philippines

Monitoring Mission to Manila (8 – 13 October 2007): Shirley Susan, Consultant, CCA-UNESCAP undertook a monitoring mission to Manila, the Philippines.

Aim

- To monitor implementation of project activities in Pasay City.
- To undertake stakeholder consultations on technical implementation modalities.

Key activities

- Met with the Mayor and Vice Mayor of Pasay City;
- Met with the City Councilor, Pasig City Government;
- Met with representatives from Public Employment Service Office and TESDA (Technical Education and Skills Development Authority);
- Met with representatives from faith based organisations(FBOs);
- Met with representatives from the Legend Hotel International Corporation (LHIC);
- Met with representatives from UN-Habitat;
- Visited project sites in Pasay City;
- Discussed technical implementation modalities on community-based life skills training networks with the staff of the Cooperative Development Office, Pasay City Government. Discussed with the partners various operational aspects of the project, progress in meeting targets as well as the Mid-term Review of the project scheduled for 5 - 6 November 2007 in Bangkok.

Observations made in Pasay City, the Philippines:

- The average family size is 6 – 8 children. Therefore parents do not have sufficient resources to meet the basic requirements (food, shelter, clothing, education etc.) of the family.
- The partnership between the Pasay City Government and faith-based organisations (FBOs) has helped the FBOs to go beyond traditional and institutional structure and to become more inclusive in reaching out to the out-of-school youth in the community. The life skills program has particularly assisted in breaking down religious barriers between the church and the people in Pasay City.

- Recognition of the potential of out-of-school through programs such as games, quiz competitions, story telling sessions, sports fest, music concerts etc has helped in drawing the attention of many out-of-school youth to the faith-based and community organisations in Pasay City.
- There has been an increase in the awareness level on the negative impacts of smoking, alcohol, drug use and early sex.
- Discussions with out-of-school youth revealed that the mode of transmission of STIs and HIV prevention knowledge has increased. Facilitators of the life skills training reported that a few of the out-of-school youth who were present at the session on STIs confided with the facilitators that they were experiencing certain symptoms of STIs. The facilitators have then referred the youth to the Social Hygiene Clinic, Pasay City Government.

Out of 792 out-of-school youth who were trained as peer educators during the last four months, 316 have been referred to take part in the livelihood training programs offered by TESDA. About 137 peer educators have been referred to the Alternative Learning System, an informal education system to enable out-of-school youth to complete high school.

Vocational training courses will be initiated by Cooperative Development Office (CDO), Pasay City in joint collaboration with the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), The Legend Hotel International Corporation (LHIC), The Market Place Christian Church Multipurpose Cooperative specifically for out-of-school youth.

Response from out-of-school youth, parents, religious leaders, government officials and other stakeholders in the community to current project interventions:

- Out-of-school youth find the participatory method of learning life skills interesting and appealing. Discussion with the facilitators, faith-based and community organisations showed that the out-of-school youth who had completed life skills training understand themselves better, have gained confidence in themselves, feel accepted and cared for by the faith-based and community organisations. They have shown interest and are keen to participate in the youth activities undertaken by the FBOs and other youth associations.
- Many young women and men said that they have refused to take drugs when approached by their peers.
- Prior to participation in the training programs, the youth stayed at home or were found loitering in the community. On completion of life skills training, they have now enrolled themselves into the vocational training programs or the Alternative Learning System (ALS).
- Parents who have observed certain behavioural changes in their children are now encouraging them to take part in the life skills training programs.

Challenges on building community- based life skills training network:

- Youth who have not completed high school are not recruited into the vocational training courses run by TESDA as they do not fulfil the minimum requirements for enrolment. Therefore there is a need to explore alternative training programs

to upgrade the skills of out-of-school youth in order to help them find suitable jobs.

- To sustain the current initiative of life skills trainings with regular follow-up programs to maintain the interest and momentum of out-of-school youth.
- Access to community centres, library facilities, play grounds, counselling facilities or public health centres is an urgent need.

Recommendations for follow-up:

- Link the current project interventions with the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK), elected by the Local Youth Development Council in the identified barangays in Pasay City.
- Lobby for a recreational space/community resource centre for youth activities and continue with action oriented programs for the energetic youth in the community.
- Link project interventions with the Bayanihan Banking Program (BBP), a community based savings scheme for urban poor.
- Youth friendly services including counselling facilities require attention.
- Organise regular meetings with the various stakeholders (various government departments, religious leaders – Christian and Muslim, teachers, health workers, NGOs, vocational training institutes, etc).
- Strengthen follow-up activities post life skills training programs.
- Focus on over all well-being of the community. Foster collaboration among stakeholders and strengthen the community to deal with the determinant factors.

MID-TERM REVIEW

The Mid-term Review on the UNESCAP project “Strengthening life skills for positive youth health behaviour” was held at the United Nations Conference Centre from 5-6 November 2007. The Health and Development Section (HDS), Emerging Social Issues Division (ESID) organised the workshop.

Objectives

The workshop aims to:

- Review the outcome of the current interventions that are being undertaken in the participating countries of the project;
- Allow country teams and project partners to exchange information; and
- Offer the opportunity to discuss plans of activities for the forthcoming Phase III of the project, to be carried out in 2008.

Opening address

In her opening statement Ms Thelma Kay, Director, ESID, UNESCAP said young people in Asia-Pacific, in spite of the fruitful opportunities which many of them face, are often exposed to the risks of HIV infection and drug abuse.

UNESCAP, she said, was encouraged by the positive feedback it had been receiving from the national counterpart organisations that were implementing the “Strengthening life

skills for positive youth health behaviour” project regarding the effectiveness of their activities, including the training of trainers and generating greater awareness of health risks among out-of-school youth.

The mid-term review workshop, she said, offered an opportunity to strengthen networking among the country teams who are seeking to equip disadvantaged young people with life skills to make informed and responsible choices about their health, particularly on HIV/AIDS and substance use.

In his opening address Dr. Prawate Khid-arn, General Secretary, Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) pointed out that faith-based organisations are in a unique position to contribute to the campaign against the HIV/AIDS epidemic. “Prevention of HIV and AIDS as well as addressing its socio-economic impacts requires the active involvement of faith communities and their leaders,” he said.

Therefore, according to Dr Prawate, strategies to address the disease at a global, regional and community level require an understanding of all religions and inter-faith strategies should ideally incorporate all religious views and attitudes towards HIV/AIDS for maximum impact.

Mr Heiner Knauss, Head, Asia-Pacific Desk, Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst (EED) expressed solidarity with all those in Asia tackling important social issues such as the problem of HIV/AIDS and said that his organisation would continue to support such initiatives to the best of its abilities

Overview of community based life skills interventions

In his overview on community based life skills interventions Mr. Guennadi Fedorov, Chief, HDS, ESID, UNESCAP said that the ultimate beneficiaries of the project would be thousands of disadvantaged youth from the lower socio-economic strata of society without opportunities to learn essential life skills who are vulnerable to HIV/AIDS and drug use. More specifically, out-of-school youth were being targeted in Cambodia, China and the Philippines while in Sri Lanka the youth were from low-income settlements.

There were presentations by United Nations agencies (UNODC, UNICEF and UNESCAP) followed by the National Counterpart Organisations (NCOs).

Presentation by national counterparts organisations (NCOs)

Cambodia

First, members of the Cambodian country team explained the reason for choosing the province of Kampot as the project site. The selection of Kampot was due to its proximity to the border with Viet Nam and the presence of large number of migrant workers attracted the economic opportunities and abundance of natural resources. The province also has a high number of out of school youth, and the poverty in the area has resulted in a large number of young girls joining the sex industry.

As part of networking with various state and non-state agencies in the province who have a relevant role in empowering youth, the following agencies were contacted, 1) National Authority for Fighting Against HIV/AIDS and STDs, 2) National Authority for Fighting Against Drug, and 3) School health department. As part of the Training-of-Trainers (ToT) program a team of 25 Core-Peer Educators was selected from among those trained in the ToT program in each district of Kampot province. An orientation for various local authorities was also conducted to make them understand the impact of drugs and HIV/AIDS on development of community as well as society on the whole.

Among the lessons learned through the experience of implementing the project activities was the need for strong support from leaders of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and other agencies working with youth on HIV/AIDS. Strong support was also required from other authorities such as the provincial governor, district governor, chief of commune council, chief of village and family to conduct activities in the community.

It was also felt that collaboration, coordination and communication are very important mechanisms for sharing project information and encouraging project staff to work more effectively and efficiently, as well as a way to get support from local authorities and other stakeholders.

Among the challenges faced during project implementation were the low level of education among members of the community, their lack of knowledge about safe sexual practices and the problem of drug abuse.

Some of peer educators who had limited education also slowed down the ability of the team to convey their messages properly. There was also a shortage of posters and supportive material such as soap and tooth paste which was not enough to distribute to the villagers who wanted to participate in the outreach programs.

According the Cambodian country team, they are hoping to reach over 6,500 youth by December 2007.

Among the recommendations made by the Cambodian country team were:

- The project should be widened to other districts, to ensure that a greater number of vulnerable youth benefit from its activities;
- Meetings of three or four days duration should be organised to exchange experiences among peer educators in different districts;
- Study tours to other countries, where the project was being implemented, should be arranged;
- The Cambodian government should establish a national youth policy as soon as possible;
- Youth should be involved at all levels of project implementation, which includes project design, IEC development and peer education.

The Philippines

Background

The Philippines country team first presented the results of the baseline survey of Pasay city, the site of the UNESCAP project. According to the survey the sections of the population most vulnerable to HIV infection were sex workers, Men who have sex with men, Injecting drug users, Overseas Filipino workers and young people.

The major stakeholders in the implementation of the UNESCAP life skills project were:

- a. Faith Based Organisations in Pasay, mostly evangelical churches, which are actively involved in various social projects in the city since the 1980's.
- b. Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) – a national government agency that takes care the skills training requirement of the working group.
- c. Department of Education – a national government agency that offers both formal and non-formal education for elementary and high school level
- d. Pasay Employment Service Office –which facilitates the meeting of the industry's manpower requirements with job hunters.
- e. The Manpower Cooperative, a private/ business organisation which facilitates placement of jobs among qualified OSYs.
- f. OSYs themselves, who come forward to learn and enhance their life skills, improve their employment opportunities and act as peer educators.

Activities

In addressing the vulnerability of OSYs with regards to issues of HIV/AIDS the Filipino country team felt that a two pronged approach was needed, consisting of a behavioural and structural approach. Thus the H.O.P.E.S strategy was formulated with the intention of helping youth implement both these strategies. H.O.P.E.S means:

H – HIV/AIDS prevention thru Life Skills Seminars

O – Outsourcing livelihood skills

P – Placement of Jobs or gainful employment

E – Education through ALS

S – Sports, Arts and Culture development

H- HIV/AIDS prevention thru Life Skills Seminars

The Filipino representatives explained that they do not look upon OSYs as 'beneficiaries' but as partners in their program.

The partnership in the project with Faith Based Organisations came in for some questioning by other participants at the workshop particularly in the light of the Catholic Church's disapproval of using condoms, one of the main means of protection from unsafe sex. The Filipino country team explained that the FBOs they worked with did not have a conservative attitude on such issues and were useful to take on as partners due to their influence and networks among both community and decision makers.

In a moving testimony one of the OSYs from Pasay told the workshop participants about how her life transformed for the better after she joined the life skills training project.

“There was no value at all in my life before I joined the training,” she said referring to her habits in the past of imbibing alcohol. She further said that her husband had left her with a 2 year old child and she was in much distress when she heard about the life skills training being provided to OSYs and decided to join.

The lessons offered she said were very relevant to her situation and now there was guidance and her faith in life had returned.

People’s Republic of China

Following an overview of the findings of the baseline survey of Yining and Kashgar cities in Xinjiang province of the People’s Republic of China the delegation from China gave an account of their experience in implementing the project.

Trainings

Training workshops were organised with the objective of building capacity amongst young people who are regarded as local key opinion leaders to enable them to provide peer based support to young people in the community.

The participants, to be trained as peer educators, were aged between 15-25 years. They were chosen for training as they were relatively less mobile, had completed high school and were influential among other local young people.

The workshops were organised taking a modular approach. In total 70 workshops were conducted. Most of the participants were Uyghur, so the training was provided in the Uyghur language. Many local examples were cited to enhance participants’ understanding of the concepts used as part of the training.

After the life skills training workshop, different kinds of activity in both Yining and Kashgar were organised.

“Life Skills training centres in community” were built at both sites. These centres can be used as training rooms and/or reading rooms. As part of the project a book corner has also been set up at these centres, with different themes such as science, agriculture, sex education and so on. Athletic equipment e.g. Ping pong, battledore, skipping rope, basketball, football and so on were also provided to the centres.

Conclusion

The targeted youth understood the transmission channel of HIV very well, but the understanding of VCT and the measures of prevention were not so ideal. HIV/AIDS prevention knowledge and skills also need to be strengthened.

The leisure time activities for most local young people were isolating, most of them never participated in community / social activities. To be a success, the project should organise more positive, colourful and healthy activities, encourage more target population to be

involved in social activities to promote and reinforce their responsibility to themselves and their community.

Discussion

In response to various questions asked by other workshop participants the delegation from China provided further information about various aspects of the project's implementation.

For example the delegation revealed that 50 per cent of the peer educators trained were female, even though most of the drug users in the project areas are male.

Special mention was also made of the fact that since a bulk of the population in Xinjiang province is of the Muslim faith there was a concerted effort to involve local religious leaders in the efforts to impart life skills training to young people. Muslim preachers or Imams, due to their influence, for example were very useful as a means of conveying important messages to lay people.

HIV related issues were discussed by Imams during their weekly sermons with their congregation. The Imams often went directly to the community also to talk about HIV and the threat it posed to society.

Sri Lanka

The country team then explained the special nature of the implementing agency in the Sri Lanka component of the UNESCAP project where unlike other project sites where government agencies were involved here it was an NGO.

Lanka Jatika Sarvodaya Shramadana Sangamaya, is Sri Lanka's biggest charity, dedicated to making a positive difference to the lives of rural Sri Lankans. This grassroots movement now reaches 15,000 villages (out of the 48,000 in the country) in 24 administrative districts with 1,500 full time staff and more than 250,000 volunteers throughout Sri Lanka. Founded by a Sri Lankan schoolteacher in 1958, Sarvodaya's philosophy is based on Buddhist-Gandhian philosophy and it works across all ethnic and religious communities.

According to the Sri Lankan team, the "Strengthening Life Skills for positive youth Health Behaviour" project was a new experience to even Sarvodaya whose vast experience in community development was mainly in the rural set up and even the instances where it did work in the urban set up it was certainly not with the youths of the under served settlements.

Activities

Orientation programs for local stakeholders.

Since the target group is very diverse and distributed along a large geographic area it was decided to have a series of orientation programs for different groups of people at different sites and times. The religious leaders, Government officials, officials from NGOs, community leaders and most important, parents and young adults for the area attended the meetings.

Issues that surfaced at these programs included the fact that youth had no recreational facilities to be engaged in during their free time. The small play grounds and places used as libraries that were available in the past (provided by the local Government) are now occupied by temporary shelters for people displaced by tsunami. There are no plans at the moment to relocate these displaced people to permanent residencies else where and thus the chances of the youth of the area regaining there play grounds and libraries were remote.

The youth of the area wanted body building equipment (weight lifting) to build their physique which the elders thought is a good idea since it will lead to building of their character as well. The Sri Lankan team also feels that this is a good idea as it will help to keep the youth from getting involved in substance use because they have all ready seen around them and realised that most drug addicts are people with wasted physiques.

The mothers were of the opinion that the young girls will be benefited by learning to sew and cook which will keep them occupied during their free time and also help them in a small way to earn some money. This they felt that will keep them away from getting involved in various undesirable activities to find money to fulfil their needs.

Given the fact that most Sri Lankans are used to be dependent on hand outs our experience was that they were expecting material benefits from us than looking at the objective of the programs. But the project team decided to meet their requests half way to get them involved in the process. For example to get them the basic required parts of the weight lifting set and encourage them to buy the other parts required, themselves.

TOT program on life skills and peer education

Initially a 5-day TOT workshop was held from 30th January 2007 to 3rd February with the participation of Mr. Daewon Choi and Ms. Shirley Susan from the UNESCAP.

The 26 participants (12 – Leaders from the community and 14 representatives from among other organisations involved in HIV / control and prevention (2 Public Health Inspectors & 8 Health instructors from MOH Office, 2 from Family Planning Association, 1 from NCCSL,) activities took part.

Though it was a very valuable training for the trainers the expected outcome of those trained going to the community and training of peers did not happen to the extend we expected. Even the few who continued to work with the project did so by organising gatherings of youths from the community for resource persons from out side to go and do the awareness raising activities.

Having realised the mistakes done by them at the selection of trainers the project team decided to have another training, where the trainees were those selected among the peer educators and the identified youth leaders from the community.

They became a very involved set of young people after their capacity about the HIV /Aids and use of substance abuse was raised at this TOT programs.

The project team now meets with them on a monthly basis to discuss the positive and negative impact of their interventions at community level as well as to further develop their capacity about the diseases and in fields like community development and empowerment.

The project team realised that it gave much better results when the “natural leaders” among the youth, who did not care very much to get involved in project activities, were recruited, though with difficulty than to train the traditional leaders as trainers.

Preparation of IEC materials

Having being not so successful in trying to get the youth from the community to prepare educational and information materials the project team decided to reprint materials done by other organisations on the subjects of Alcohol and substance abuse and HIV / AIDS. Some organisations were good enough to provide materials prepared by them free of charge to be distributed among the youth. Usage of materials produced and tested by other organisations was a more cost effective way than reinventing the wheel again. This was especially because there were a lot of good materials available and those who produced them were willing to share them with others.

A fair number of these materials were reprinted which helped in dissemination of information and increasing the knowledge of the youth. Leaflets were given to the peer educators who used it at their respective environments to increase awareness amongst the youths of the area.

After the target audience (the youth) were well sensitised to the facts delivered through community level activities by the peer educators and the health educational leaflets distributed, a set of posters prepared along Behaviour Change Communication guide lines were given to the peer educators asking them to report on the experience they were faced with in distribution of the posters. The contents of the posters were not much on the scientific information on the disease but tried to get the person to think of the results of their actions and to take precautions and be careful or not do the act at all. These posters are supposed to created an intuition in their minds which, whenever they thought about a sexual act, unconsciously they were also made to think about the consequences of their actions and take appropriate precautions. Four such posters were produced.

The behaviour change posters were given to the peer leaders who underwent the TOT. They were asked to study the responses from the people who viewed the posters. The responses to the posters varied from total rejection by very few, mostly adults on grounds of morality but well accepted by a majority especially those who mattered the most, the youth. The peer leaders were also instructed to start a dialogue about the contents of the

poster without making the other realise that it was they who pasted them. From the feed back from them, the posters seem to have started a new wave of thinking among the youth on sexuality and HIV / AIDS.

Monthly life skills training activities for youth on prevention of substance use and HIV/AIDS

Sarvodaya being an organisation which works mostly on the determinants of health with a holistic and participatory approach was able to carefully cater to the needs of the youths in the community to keep them out of smoking, substance abuse, alcohol and HIV / AIDS.

To achieve the end result of prevention and control of smoking, alcohol, substance abuse and HIV / AIDS the approach we took was a little different from the conventional strategies, because we concentrated on addressing the determinants which causes them to fall an easy prey to pressures of the environment.

For example when the youth wanted a set of weights to improve their physique we got them the basic necessities to do so, knowing very well that we were preventing them from smoking and substance abuse as they were already well aware that smokers and drug users had poor physiques. The youth even went further by organising a sports club with a set of rules which made youth who wanted to join them to give up there self destructive behaviours.

When the young mothers were interested in body fitness, we sent a physical instructor to help them, gave them lessons on BMI and its relationship with diseases, thought them how to relax. This led in to a better and harmonious environment at home which made the children undergo less stress because of the disputes between the parents.

Involvement of peer educators in the monthly training activities

Involvement of peer educators in the monthly training activities became much more than just a learning exercise on technical information about smoking alcohol, substance use and HIV /AIDS. They were given training on media literacy, on how to mobilise communities and encouraged to find local solutions to problems. The idea was to give them the ability to mobilise communities to react and respond as communities and not as individuals. We feel that this approach is much more valuable than changing individuals because the changed individual now has to go back to the same adverse environment which made him behave in the way he was behaving.

Mobilising communities to foster collaboration among stakeholders

The project team was able to get the assistance of Government institutions like the Health Education Bureau, Family Health Bureau and National STD/AIDS Control Program to come and do their interventions once the project team was able to gather the youth into interested groups.

The project team is in contact with two well known Non Governmental organisations, the Family Planning Association of Sri Lanka (who do active interventions for youth on sexuality and sexual problems) and “Melmadura” (who are doing interventions in smoking and alcohol and substance abuse) extending their support for active involvement in the area.

“Melmadura” started their interventions by employing two outreach workers to the area. These two outreach workers started social mobilisation together with the youth trained as peer leaders by the project. This intervention has created lot of positive results and is becoming very popular among the community. As part of one of the activities, the youth were to go to one of their friends’ houses and make a list of the cost per day for the household on smoking and alcohol. They did not do any thing more than this. Now the households have started to discuss what a wastage it is and how, and what better results they can obtain by spending their money wisely.

The youth service council of Sri Lanka has also come forward to join hands with us as they are also implementing programs with urban youth though not in the same locality. This project team feels that this will be an association which would be beneficial to both organisations.

Vocational skills training programs, including employment opportunities for youth

The vocational training Authority under the Ministry of Vocational Training has agreed to come to the area and conduct trainings after doing a needs assessment. They have already conducted a needs assessment and once they identify the needs they plan to either direct the youth to the two already established training centres in the vicinity or start a few centres in the locality.

One problem is that those who attend school cannot join the vocational training courses as most of the courses conducted by the Vocational training authority are full time courses. The paradox is that from the past experience and according to the teachers it is well known that these children’s achievements at school are far below the expectations.

Conclusion

As the duration of the project is only one year, it is very difficult to show an impact. The country does not have a tool to do monitoring and evaluation in skills development. To measure the impact of life skills development is a difficult task and has interfered in evaluation. The lack of proper indicators to monitor and evaluate the progress has been a recurrent topic at various forums. The project team is now working towards building indicators, both long and short term, and action has been initiated have consultative meeting with all stake holders and professionals interested in this aspects to decide on indicators for the country.

Overview of activities in Phase III

Ms Yu Kanosue, HDS, UNESCAP and Ms Shirley Susan, Consultant CCA-UNESCAP in their presentation on the proposed activities during Phase 3 of the project said that there were three main tasks that would be taken up as part of the last phase.

Task 1 involved Community-based life skills training which would be taken up by the NCO from January – December 2008. The task would include:

- The expansion of life skills training activities to cover more disadvantaged youth in the same community.
- Development and Strengthening of local youth life skills training networks
- Capacity building in policy advocacy and social mobilisation
- Organising a national-level good practice workshop in each participating country
- Developing a strategy plan for follow-up activities
- Project process documentation

The national-level good practice workshop organised by the NCO would aim to share experiences and lessons learned and highlight importance of community-based life skills education for out-of-school youth. It would also help scale up interventions at local and national level and advocate for life skills training policy and programs for out-of-school youth.

Among the expected outcomes of Task 1, by the end of 2008 was that:

- Community leaders support life skills development for disadvantaged youth
- Creation of facilities for disadvantaged youth to learn life skills
- Integrate life skills into existing programs to address health risks that disadvantaged youth face
- Local partners have developed plans for collaboration to build the sustainability of life skills training programs.

According to Ms Kanosue Task 2 involved completion of the end line survey by the selected research institution from August 2008 – January 2009. The end line survey was to assess impact on the knowledge attitude, skills and behaviour among the youth target group and would result in a final end line survey report.

Task 3 involved the final evaluation by UNECAP, from October – March 2009 to determine project impact on positive development of knowledge, attitude, skills and behaviour of youth target groups. This would be followed by a final regional advocacy workshop for policy makers, project partners, local stakeholders to share experiences learnt for advocacy on life skills training policy and program for youth.

Task 3 would help develop approaches to community based life skills training programs and good practice publication on community based interventions for youth life skills development.

The expected outcome of this task was the development of model approaches on community-based interventions for life skills development are available as a reference source for policy and program improvement.

CLOSING OF THE WORKSHOP

In his concluding remarks Mr. Fedorov, Chief, HDS thanked all the participants for their excellent presentations and lively discussion during the mid-term review workshop.

Bi-monthly Newsletter – Youth for Health

The *Youth for Health is a bi-monthly e Newsletter* is intended to share and inform on the on going work being undertaken by our National Counterpart Organisations (NCO) in Xinjiang (Uygur Autonomous Region) China, Colombo, Sri Lanka, Kampot Province, Cambodia and Pasay City, Philippines.

It is intended that the sharing and reflection will help build effective strategies to promote positive health behaviour for out-of-school and disadvantaged youth in the participating countries.

The second issue of the e Newsletter was launched in October 2007. The link to the e-newsletter is

http://www.unescap.org/esid/hds/projects/lifeskills/files/Enewsletter_19July07.pdf?id=785

Booklet on Positive Youth Health Behaviour

The findings of the baseline survey, missions undertaken, discussions and outcome of the Mid-term Review workshop is included in the booklet. After the post-intervention evaluation, the booklet will be updated and finalised.

The link to the draft booklet on Positive Youth Health Behaviour is

<http://www.unescap.org/esid/hds/projects/lifeskills/files/MTRReviewreport140108.doc>