



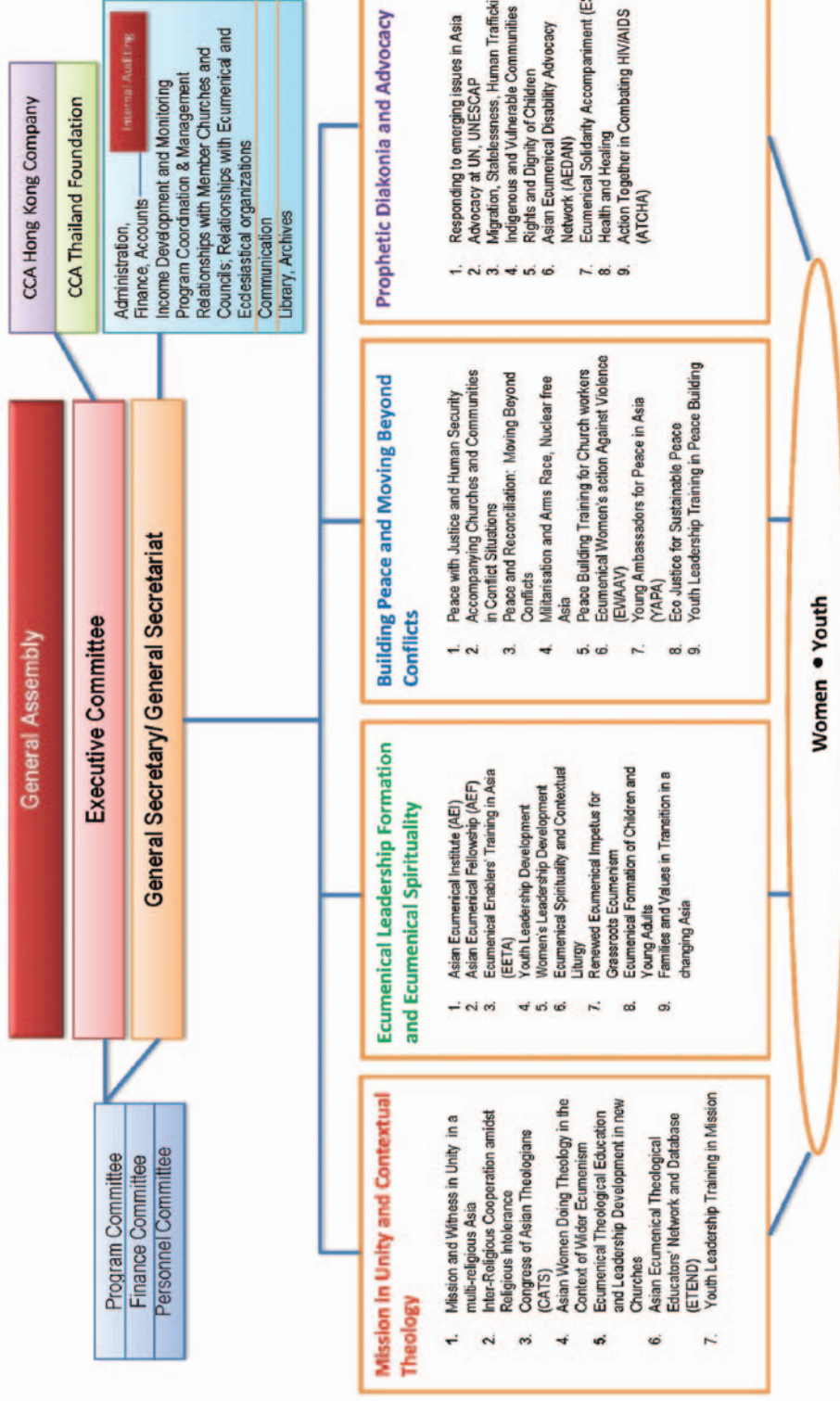
Christian Conference of Asia



Programme Report 2017

*'Journeying Together:
Prophetic Witness to the Truth and Light, in Asia'*

CCA Programme Structure 2015-2020



Foreword by the General Secretary

Journeying Together: Participating in God's Mission

The Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) celebrated the 60th anniversary in 2017. The CCA was the first Regional Ecumenical Organization founded in 1957 at the Asian Church Leaders' Conference on the theme, 'the Common Evangelistic Tasks of Churches in Asia', which was held in Parapat, Indonesia and was jointly sponsored by the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the International Missionary Council (IMC) in 1957. When CCA was entering into a new phase of its ecumenical journey, two historic events took place in conjunction with the culmination of the Diamond Jubilee; an Asian Mission Conference (AMC) and the Diamond Jubilee commemoration. Both events took place in Yangon, Myanmar from 11 to 17 October 2017. The theme chosen for these two historic events was 'Journeying Together: Prophetic Witness to the Truth and Light, in Asia'. Most of the programmes and activities of CCA planned and implemented during the Diamond Jubilee year also were focusing on various aspects of this particular theme. While planning and implementing programmes and activities throughout the year, CCA made several efforts in search of understanding the new dimensions of journeying together and the relevance of prophetic witness to the truth and light in Asian context.

The issues and themes addressed through different programmes of CCA during the diamond jubilee year helped to articulate the imperatives of a new vision for a relevant missiology, especially in a context where churches in Asia are called to witness amidst innumerable challenges. Those programmes organised by the CCA in 2017 also provided opportunities to review and reflect on the relevance of ecumenical witness and mission during the past six decades as well as seeking new ways and means for revitalising the Asian ecumenical movement in the years ahead.

The narrative reports outlined and compiled in this volume will be helpful indicators to assess the relevance and outcome of various activities of CCA in 2017 - workshops, seminars, conferences, studies, solidarity visits, discussions, and analyses of theological and missiological issues as well as socio-political, economic, ethical issues and concerns from Asian perspectives. It is our sincere prayer and hope that the outcome of all such efforts will be helpful as we continue to journeying together and participating in God's mission and prophetic witness.



Mathews George Chunakara
General Secretary

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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) is 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

As per the revised Constitution and new programme structure, the General Secretary is the overall coordinator and supervisor of implementation and monitoring of all programme areas.

The General Secretary is also responsible 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, shares and promotes the activities of the CCA and encourages member churches and councils to plan and engage in joint action and ministries that manifest unity in Christ; facilitates joint initiatives in sharing their resources to support the common ecumenical ministry through the CCA. It is also the responsibility of the General Secretary and the staff in the Secretariat to accompany churches in Asia to address their needs for

capacity-building and respond to emerging challenges.

The General Secretary also has the task of building and strengthening relationships with other ecumenical organisations within the region and globally; with related ecumenical organisations from other regions, and with the wider ecumenical family. For many years, the CCA has maintained a close relationship with the Roman Catholic Church in Asia through the Federation of 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. Several efforts have been made to develop and promote relationships with other ecumenical organisations and churches that are not members of the CCA, civil society organisations and inter-faith organisations in different countries in order to strengthen inter-faith relations and cooperation.

Governing Board and Advisory Committees

The General Secretariat is entrusted with the responsibility of liaising with the governing boards and advisory committees of the CCA. The meetings of the Executive Committee and other committees or sub-committees as mandated by the CCA Constitution are convened by the General Secretary.

The annual meeting of the Executive Committee was held at the headquarters of the CCA in Chiang Mai, Thailand from 13 to 15 July 2017.

Executive Committee Meeting

The Executive Committee of the CCA met at the CCA headquarters in Chiang Mai, Thailand from 13 to 15 July 2017.

The Executive Committee in its various sessions received and discussed reports on programmes and activities, property development and financial sustainability plans, and CCA's pastoral solidarity team visits to Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The Executive Committee also received reports from the local host committee of the upcoming Asia Mission Conference (AMC) 2017 and the Diamond Jubilee celebrations of the CCA to be held in Yangon, Myanmar. The Executive Committee endorsed the proposal of observing Asia Sunday 2017 on 15 October in a befitting commemoration with the local congregations of CCA's member churches, and keeping the CCA in their prayers.



General Secretary presents Report to the Excom 2017

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee of the CCA met in conjunction with the Executive Committee meeting, which was held on 9-10 July 2017.

The Finance Committee reviewed the current financial situation of the CCA and revised the existing budget of the year 2017 and worked out a framework of the budget for the year 2018.

The following decisions also were taken during the meeting, and recommendations were made to the consideration of the Executive Committee:

- The utilisation of the land owned by the CCA in Chiang Mai
- Review of the land feasibility report prepared by the architect and the appraiser
- Usage of two plots out of a total of four plots, utilizing 20,000 square feet of it for

the following purposes: CCA office space, library, meeting rooms, CCA staff accommodation and rental accommodation

- Developing an Asian Ecumenical Institute, a training centre with appropriate conference facilities and a cafeteria; and renting out the Conference Centre facilities for income generation.

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:

1. Mr. Augustine Deepak Karmakar, Certified Public Chartered Accountant, Bangladesh, Treasurer of the CCA
2. Mr. Patrick Yuen, Certified Public Chartered Accountant and Financial Advisor to the Hong Kong Christian Council and Hong Kong Christian Schools and Colleges
3. 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
4. Mr. Nuttee Kunlacharnpises, Financial Consultant and Pension Fund Manager of the Church of Christ in Thailand.
5. Advocate Robert Bruce C., Treasurer of the Church of South India and Director of the CSI Trust Association.
6. Rev. Diana Tana, Vice Moderator of the CCA, Methodist Church of New Zealand
7. Dr. Mathews George Chunakara, General Secretary, CCA

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 continued in 2017:

1. Dr. Pradit Takerngrangsari, President
2. Mr. Surapong Mitrakul, CCT General Secretary
3. Mrs. Supaporn Yarnasarn, CCA Executive Committee Member
4. Dr. Sompun Wongdee, President, Payap University. Dr. Rux Prompalit, President, Payap University (from June - 2017)
5. Dr. Prawate Khid-arn, former General Secretary, CCA
6. Dr. Chuleepran Srisoontorn, former member of CCA General Committee
7. Dr. Mathews George Chunakara, General Secretary, CCA

CCA Company 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.

The following members have been elected by the CCA Executive Committee to be members of the Directors' Board, who served on the Committee in 2017:

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. Po Kam Cheong, Hong Kong Christian Council

Dr. Kim Jong-goo, Methodist Church in Korea

Dr. Mathews George Chunakara (Company Secretary / Ex. Officio).

CCA Investment Committee, Hong Kong

The following members served in 2017 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. Po Kam Cheong, and Mr. Patrick Yuen, a member of the Finance Committee of CCA.

The Committee had a meeting in March 2017, and reviewed the investments in Hong Kong. CCA's investments in Hong Kong are now in shares, bonds, and fixed deposits.

CCA Staff

The introduction of a new programmatic structure and the completion of the terms of contracts of the Executive Staff necessitated new recruitments and appointments of Programme Staff members.

Rev. Dr. Ngur Liana (Myanmar) was appointed as Programme Consultant for "Mission in Unity and Contextual Theology" and Rev. Dr. Chuleepran Srisoontorn as Programme Consultant for "Ecumenical Leadership Formation and Ecumenical Spirituality".

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.

Five interns were recruited after a thorough screening process for the internship programme. The 2017 batch of interns were: Ms. Maureen Faumuina Akeripa (Methodist Church, New Zealand); Ms. Gianina Fay C. Vecino (United Church of Christ in the Philippines); Mr. Christopher Daniel Sonawane (Church of North India); and Ms. Nant Myat Noe Aein Salome (Church of the Province of Myanmar). Ms. Gloria Kalokhe (Methodist Church, India) joined in the beginning of 2017 and returned to her home country after her half-year internship. Mr. Jebasingh Samuvel (Church of South India, India) and Rev. Dedi Bakkit Tua Pardosi (HKBP, Indonesia) completed their internship and returned to their home countries at the end of May 2017.

Diamond Jubilee of CCA

The Christian Conference of Asia has completed six decades of its historic journey, serving and enriching the churches in Asia, and contributing significantly to the nurturing and strengthening of ecumenical vision and mission in Asia since it had its founding meeting at Prapat, Indonesia as the first regional ecumenical organization in the world. The Diamond Jubilee Celebration of CCA was held in conjunction with the Asia Mission Conference (AMC) in Yangon, Myanmar.

The theme of the AMC, "Journeying Together: Prophetic Witness to the Truth and Light, in Asia," was the theme of the Diamond Jubilee, which was helpful to reflect on the role and relevance of the CCA in the Asian context. It resonates with contemporary situations in Asia and in the world, that stressed the hope and trust in God's promises. The deliberations

and the choice of Yangon as the venue of the AMC and the Diamond Jubilee celebrations had great significance.

The Thanksgiving Service and the Diamond Jubilee commemorative public meeting of the CCA, attended by more than 6,000 people including 600 delegates of the AMC, was held on Sunday, 15 October 2017, at the Franc Auditorium of the Baptist Church in Myanmar. A Homily was delivered by Bishop Dr. Soritua Nababan, the only living participant of the 1957 Prapat Conference and a former President of the CCA.

CCA General Secretary Dr Mathews George Chunakara stated thus:

"Celebrating the milestone of 60 years with 600 participants for a week-long conference and 6000 attendees in a



Diamond Jubilee Thanksgiving Service



Participants of the Diamond Jubilee Thanksgiving Service and Public Meeting





Symbolic action of nurturing the ecumenical movement by way of watering the saplings of coconut tree by WCC General Secretary and CCA General Secretary during the service



CCA Moderator Bishop Willem T.P. Simarmata at the Diamond Jubilee Commemoration Public Meeting



Dr. Ahn Jae Woong, former General Secretary, CCA



Dr. Prwate Khid Arn, former General Secretary, CCA



Rev. Dr. Henriette Hutabaraat Lebang, former General Secretary, CCA



Mr. Augustine Dipak Karmakar, CCA Treasurer



Rev. Dr. Khamphone Kountapanya, former President, CCA



Mr. Israel Paulraj, former Treasurer, CCA



Ms. Susan Li-Shu Chang, former Treasurer, CCA



Rev. Rex B. Reyes, former President, CCA



Bishop Dr. S.A.E Nababan delivers the Homily at the Diamond Jubilee Thanksgiving Service



Diamond Jubilee Thanksgiving Service



His Beatitude Most Rev. Dr. Joseph Mar Thoma, former President, CCA



Rev. Kim Kyrie, Chairperson, Programme Committee of CCA



Rev. Diana Tana, Vice Moderator, CCA



Fr. Yohanna Farid Bestawros



Patricia Talbot



Cultural Presentations at the Diamond Jubilee Celebration



thanksgiving service is remarkable for an organization. When a person reaches the age of 60, he/she completes one life cycle. The number 60 means ending one cycle and starting a new cycle in many Asian cultures. This reminds us of our task and the continuation of our journey together in prophetic witness to the truth and light in Asia as CCA enters into a new phase of its life cycle.

We are reminded at this time of the Diamond Jubilee commemoration of our past, of the continuity of our common journey, the virtues of our resilience, ingenuity, commitment and trust in God's unwavering support and divine guidance through the past 60 years of CCA's history."

Rev. Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC), delivered the Diamond Jubilee message at the public meeting held immediately after the Thanksgiving Service.

Archbishop Felix Anthony Machado of Vasai, chairman of the Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), and Dr. Ja Bu of Myanmar Council of Churches delivered greetings and felicitations at the meeting.

Cultural presentations by different ethnic groups added flavour to the Diamond Jubilee celebrations.

Diamond Jubilee Commemoration Public Meeting



CCA General Secretary welcomes the participants at the Diamond Jubilee Commemoration Public meeting



WCC General Secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit delivers the Diamond Jubilee Address

The CCA completed 60 years of its founding in 2017. The Diamond Jubilee of the CCA was celebrated in a grand ecumenical setting in Yangon, Myanmar in the afternoon of 15 October. More than 6,000 people, including 600 delegates who attended the Asia Mission Conference, also attended the Thanksgiving Service and the Diamond Jubilee commemorative public meeting held at the Franc Auditorium of the Baptist Church.

The only living participant of the 1957 Prapat Conference, Bishop Dr. Soritua Nababan, delivered the homily based on the Biblical text Acts. 1: 8.

"We are grateful to God as CCA marks the 60th anniversary of its founding at Prapat in 1957, as the first regional ecumenical organization in the world. The Diamond Jubilee commemoration was a celebration of the journeying together of the Asian Churches and all members of the wider ecumenical family and fellowship," Dr. Mathews George Chunakara, General Secretary, CCA stated in the welcome address. In his speech, the General Secretary stressed the importance of the ecumenical movement while giving a brief background on the CCA's inception in 1957 in Prapat, Indonesia where, for the first time Protestant churches from 23 countries, discussed the theme, "Our common evangelistic tasks in Asia". "Celebrating the milestone of 60 years with 600 participants for a week-long conference and 6000 attendees in a thanksgiving service is remarkable for an organization. When a person reaches the age of 60, he/she completes one life cycle. The number 60 means ending one cycle and starting a new cycle in many Asian cultures. This reminds us of our task and the continuation of our journey together in prophetic witness to the truth and light in Asia as CCA enters into a

new phase of its life cycle," stated Mathews George, the tenth General Secretary of CCA.

"We are reminded at this time of the Diamond Jubilee commemoration of our past, of the continuity of our common journey, the virtues of our resilience, ingenuity, commitment and trust in God's unwavering support and divine guidance through the past 60 years of CCA's history," the CCA General Secretary said.

"The theme, "Journeying Together: Prophetic Witness to the Truth and Light, in Asia," which was chosen for the Asia Mission Conference that coincided with the Diamond Jubilee, was linked to the role and relevance of the CCA in the Asian context. It resonates with contemporary situations in Asia and in the world, that stressed the hope and trust in God's promises. The deliberations and the venue of the AMC, 'Yangon' and the Diamond Jubilee have great significance".

"As the theme resonates with the present realities in Asia, it will be helpful for Asian churches to reflect on the mission and prophetic witness of Asian churches in the midst of many adverse realities, and to emphasize the hope and trust in God's promises for all God's people in Asia," Mathews George added.

Rev. Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC) delivered the Diamond Jubilee message at the public meeting held immediately after the Thanksgiving Service.

Archbishop Felix Anthony Machado of Vasai, chairman of the Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the FABC, and Dr. Ja Bu of Myanmar Council of Churches delivered greetings and felicitations at the meeting.

Church and Ecumenical Relations

Ecumenical relationships with member churches and councils, related ecumenical organisations, regional and global ecumenical organisations and world confessional bodies are fundamental to the life of the CCA. Building stronger networks and promoting the involvement and participation of all CCA member constituencies contribute significantly to better cooperation and unity, and a greater sense of ownership.

Visits and Meetings

Taking cognizance of the fact that ecumenical relationships can be effective only when there is a mutual sharing of responsibilities, the General Secretary and other staff members participated in several ecumenical events and programmes during 2017.

Churches and Councils

CCA continued various efforts in 2017 to strengthen ecumenical relationships with member constituencies. The General Secretary attended various programmes, and delivered keynote addresses or thematic addresses at various church and ecumenical events in 2017. 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 2017 include:

- Attended the General Assembly (Triennial Synod) of the Church of South India, Kottayam, India, January 2017
- Participated in the Regional Ecumenical Organisation General Secretaries' meeting organised by the World Council of Churches, February 2017
- Meetings with the Director and Asia Team of Mission 21 at the WCC headquarters in Basel, Switzerland, February 2017
- Meetings with the Asia Team of the Evangelical Mission Work (EMW), Hanover, Germany, February 2017
- Delivered the keynote address at the Assembly of the Association of the Directors of the Association of Christian Institutes for Social Concerns in Asia (ACISCA), Bangkok, February 2017
- Visit to Myanmar Christian Council and CCA member churches in Myanmar as part of the preparations for the Asia Mission Conference, February 2017
- Visited the headquarters of the Convention of the Philippines Baptist Church (CPBC) in Iloilo City, Philippines on 21 March 2017 and had meetings with the leadership and staff of CPBC
- Visited the headquarters of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines and had meeting with the General Secretary and staff team, March 2017
- Visited the National Council of Churches in Korea and the headquarters of the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea on 24 March 2017.
- Addressed the Association of Theological Education in South East Asia's (ATESEA) General Assembly, held at the Central Philippines Christian University, Iloilo City, Philippines, March 2017.
- Attended the opening of the United Methodist Church of USA's Global Ministry Regional Office in Seoul, South Korea, March 2017
- Asia Mission Statement Drafting Group meeting, April 2017
- Interreligious Cooperation Forum on Peace, Singapore, April 2017
- Indonesian Christian Mission Conference, Manado, Indonesia, April 2017
- Delivered the thematic address at the Young Ambassadors of Peace in Asia (YAPA) training, Chiang Mai, Thailand, May 2017
- 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 2017

- Delivered the thematic address at the international consultation on 'Towards Revitalising the Asian Ecumenical Movement', Chiang Mai, Thailand July 2017
- CCA Executive Committee meeting, Chiang Mai, Thailand , July 2017
- Delivered the opening address at the General Assembly of the Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church, September 2017
- Attended the General Assembly of the Church of North India, New Delhi, India, October 2017
- Asian Ecumenical Institute, Yangon, Myanmar, October 2017
- Regional Consultation on Differently Abled People, Yangon, Myanmar, October 2017
- Asia Mission Conference, Yangon, Myanmar, October, 2017
- Diamond Jubilee Celebrations of CCA, Yangon, Myanmar, October 2017
- Programme Committee meeting of CCA, Yangon, Myanmar, October 2017
- Meeting with the Asia Team of the Bread for the World, October 2017
- Led a seven-member CCA delegation to the 28th Session of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the UN Human Rights Council on Pakistan, in Geneva, November 2017
- Pastoral Solidarity visit to labour camps and meetings with Asian Diaspora migrant workers in the UAE, November 2017
- Meeting with National Christian Council in Sri Lanka, December 2017.
- Participated in the commemoration of the CCA's Diamond Jubilee organised by the National Christian Council in Sri Lanka, Colombo, Sri Lanka, December 2017.
- National Consultation on Ecumenical Women's Action against Violence, December 2017.

Visits of Church Leaders and Ecumenical Partners to CCA Headquarters

During the year 2017, 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.

- Members of the Yonsei University, Seoul, South Korea visited the CCA on 11 January 2017.
- General Secretary of the Association of Christian Institutes for Social Concerns in Asia (ACISCA) visited the CCA on 21 February 2017
- A nine-member delegation of the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea visited the CCA on 4 September.
- About 60 participants – representatives of CCA member churches, councils and Asian ecumenical leaders – visited the CCA headquarters during an international consultation, July 2017.

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. CCA collaborated with the FABC in 2017 in the preparation of the AMC and of the Asia Mission Statement.

The CCA continued its close collaboration with the Young Men's Christian Association-Asia Pacific (YMCA-AP) in initiating a new phase of the programmes of the Interfaith Cooperation Forum. This was based on a Memorandum of Understanding signed between the CCA and the YMCA-AP regarding a joint collaboration and cooperation on interfaith peace-building.

A meeting of the Inter-religious Cooperation Forum (ICF) on peace building was held in Singapore from 19 to 23 April, 2017 whose aims were two-fold: first, to review the objectives and achievements of the ICF; and, second, to set the goals and plan for the next three-year phase. In this light, the participants of the meeting evaluated the programmes of ICF and also planned the major activities for the next phase of ICF for the years 2018-2020, as a follow-up of the outcome of the consultation held in September 2016.

Advocacy Initiatives at the United Nations

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 in conjunction with the 73rd session of the UN Economic and Social Council on 15-16 May 2017.
- A seven-member delegation of CCA representatives from Pakistan and other Asian countries participated in the United Nations' Universal Periodic Review (UPR) session on Pakistan held in Geneva, Switzerland from 12 to 17 November 2017.



CCA Representatives at the U.N Human Rights Councils in November 2017 for Advocacy on Rights of Minority Religions

Relation with the Association for Theological Education in South East Asia (ATESEA)

CCA General Secretary was invited to attend the General Assembly of the Association for Theological Education in South East Asia (ATESEA) which was held at the Central Philippine University, Iloilo, Philippines from 20 to 22 March 2017. ATESEA was founded in 1957 with 16 theological schools in Asia and now has a membership of 93 theological institutions in several countries and regions in Southeast and East Asia.

Relation with the United Methodist Church

The Global Mission of the United Methodist Church (UMC) opened its Asia Regional Office in Seoul, South Korea and had its dedication service on 23 March 2017 in the presence of a large number of national and international ecumenical and ecclesiastical leaders as well as the UMC's partners in mission from various Asian countries. CCA was represented by General Secretary Dr. Mathews George.

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.

Condemnation of Palm Sunday church bombings in Egypt

The CCA condemned the bomb attacks on two Coptic Orthodox churches in northern Egypt on Palm Sunday. The bomb explosions at the Saint George Church in Tanta and the Saint Mark's Cathedral in Alexandria on 9 April 2017 killed 47 worshippers and wounded at least

100 others. In a letter addressed to Coptic Orthodox Church Patriarch His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, the CCA General Secretary expressed deep distress over the loss of lives and offered prayers to the bereaved families and the wounded. He also added that the CCA was distressed by the ongoing sectarian persecution and violence against minority Christians in the country and that the CCA would stand in solidarity with Egypt's Coptic Christians who are yet again the target of violence.

Condemnation of the arrest and detention of Bishop Carlos Morales of the Philippine Independence Church

The CCA condemned the illegal arrest and detention of the Bishop of the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente* (Philippine Independent Church), Bishop Carlos Morales, on 11 May 2017.

In a statement, the CCA General Secretary said that "CCA considers the illegal arrest and detention of a religious and spiritual leader like Bishop Morales appalling and a violence of human rights" and urged the immediate release of the Bishop and his companions.

General Secretary's message to UN on Jerusalem's international status

It is regarded that the United States of America's move to veto the motion of the U.N. Security Council Resolution as well as a decision of incumbent U.S. President Donald Trump to shift the U. S. Embassy to Jerusalem (on 18 December 2017) would jeopardize the prospect of peace for Israelis and Palestinians. In CCA's letter to the U.N., the General Secretary stated that the U.S. President's unprecedented move to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel is part of a strategic move for the consolidation of Israel's settler colonialism and the practice of apartheid,

which effectively eliminated publicly the two-state solution. He further stated that Jerusalem is a microcosm of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. By excluding Palestinian voices from the Jerusalem debate, the U.S. supports Israel's position to close the doors for others and intensify gross human rights violations which impact on the lives of Palestinians. The General Secretary added that the position of CCA is that, "as Jerusalem is a religiously diverse city in which Jews, Christians, and Muslims cohabitate for millennia, the U.N. General Assembly should condemn Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and must reiterate unequivocally the U.N. position according to which the status of Jerusalem must be of an international city as it was intended to be, to which the three monotheistic world religions must continue to have free access."

Condemnation of terrorist attack against Christian Worshipers in Quetta, Pakistan

The CCA in a statement condemned the terrorist attack against Christians during a Sunday worship service in Pakistan which

killed at least nine people and wounded up to 56. The attack was made by two suicide bombers on a packed Bethel Memorial Methodist Church in Quetta, capital of Baluchistan province, in southwestern Pakistan on 17 December 2017. The General Secretary, in a statement, condemned in the strongest possible terms the cowardly acts to deter Christians from professing and practising their faith. He urged churches around the world to be in solidarity with the persecuted Christians in Pakistan, and offer prayers for the victims and their families. He further added that the CCA had called on the authorities in Pakistan to continue their commitment to protecting the well-being and rights of religious and ethnic minorities in the country.

Sri Lankan Churches' Commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of CCA

The National Christian Council of Sri Lanka (NCCSL) and its member churches commemorated the 60th anniversary of the CCA in a solemn function of thanksgiving held in Colombo on 1 December 2017. Organised



Bishop Dgiloraj Canagasabay and the church leaders in Sri Lanka

by the NCCSL, the thanksgiving service was held at the Christian Reformed Church in Galle Road, Colombo, incidentally being one of the oldest churches in Sri Lanka. The Thanksgiving and Holy Communion service was attended by about 250 representatives of various member churches of NCCSL and led by the heads of churches and heads of Christian organizations in Sri Lanka.

The NCCSL felicitated CCA General Secretary Dr. Mathews George Chunakara as well as CCA leaders from Sri Lanka who have made

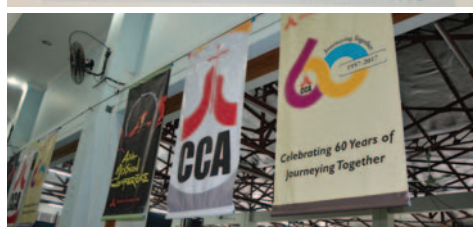
significant contributions to the ecumenical movement such as Ms. Chithra H Fernando, Rev. Duleep R Fernando, Rt. Rev. Kenneth M J Fernando, Mr. Israel Paulraj, and Mr. Vijaya W Vidyasagara.

A seminar on the Asia Mission Statement adopted at the Asia Mission Conference of CCA was held at the NCCSL headquarters on the morning of 1 December in which representatives of Sri Lankan churches as well as theological students and educators of various theological institutions attended.

Communications: Website, Social Media Publication

The CCA's electronic news releases continue to be the medium through which communication with CCA's constituencies, the ecumenical world, civil society and other world bodies are kept and sustained. The interns in charge of communications 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.



In Memoriam-Former CCA Staff

In 2017, the CCA received news about the sad demise of several of its close associates and former staff.

Prof. Dr. U Kyaw Than, former General Secretary of the CCA, passed away in Bangkok, Thailand on 30 April 2017. He was the coordinator of the 1957 Prapat Conference, Associate General Secretary of the EACC from 1959 to 1967, and second General Secretary from 1968 to 1973.

Kyaw Than was widely recognised as a stalwart of the Asian ecumenical movement, who represented his country and church for more than half a century at various Asian and global ecumenical bodies and international gatherings around the world.



Prof. Dr. U Kyaw Than, Myanmar

Rev. Kenichi Otsu, former Executive Secretary for Development and Service of the CCA, passed away on 22 June 2017 in Otawara, Tochigi prefecture, Japan. An ordained minister of the United Church of Christ in Japan (UCCJ), Rev. Otsu was widely recognised as a committed Asian ecumenical leader. Loved and respected by many in the ecumenical circles in Asia, he passionately served the ecumenical movement in various capacities. He was the CCA Executive Secretary



Rev. Kenichi Otsu, Japan

for Development and Service for eight years. Subsequently, he served the National Christian Council in Japan (NCCJ) as the General Secretary.

Bishop Dr. Yap Kim Hao, former General Secretary of the CCA, passed away in Singapore on 16 November 2017. Bishop Kim Hao served the CCA as General Secretary from 1973 to 1985.



Bishop Dr. Yap Kim Hao, Singapore



CCA Programme Committee Members

Programme Committee

The second meeting of the programme committee was held on 18-19 October 2017 in Yangon, Myanmar. The meeting reviewed the programmes implemented in various programme areas since the last meeting of the programme committee in December 2015. During the year 2017, the CCA organised a total of 37 activities.

Overview of CCA's Finance - 2017

Income Development and Finance

The General Secretariat is responsible for the coordination of income development and finance. In 2017, 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 2017

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 2017.

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

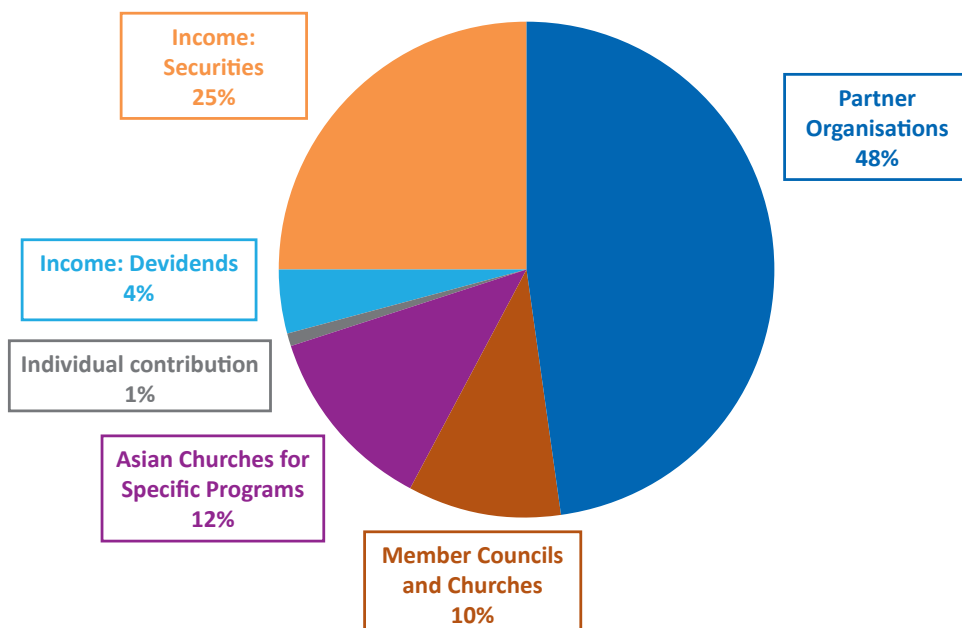
Asian Churches' Contribution to CCA in 2017

No.	Categories	Amount
1	Membership Contributions from member Councils and Churches	\$ 104,497
2	Contributions from Asian Churches for specific programs	\$ 117,025
3	Contributions from Churches and Councils through Individuals	\$ 12,557
Total Amount		\$ 234,079

Overview of CCA's Financial Status as on December 2017

	2017	2016
	USD	USD
Fixed / Current Assets	4,839,426.00	4,630,874.00
Current Liabilities	93,185.00	37,608.00
NET CURRENT ASSETS	4,746,241.00	4,593,266.00

Income - 2017

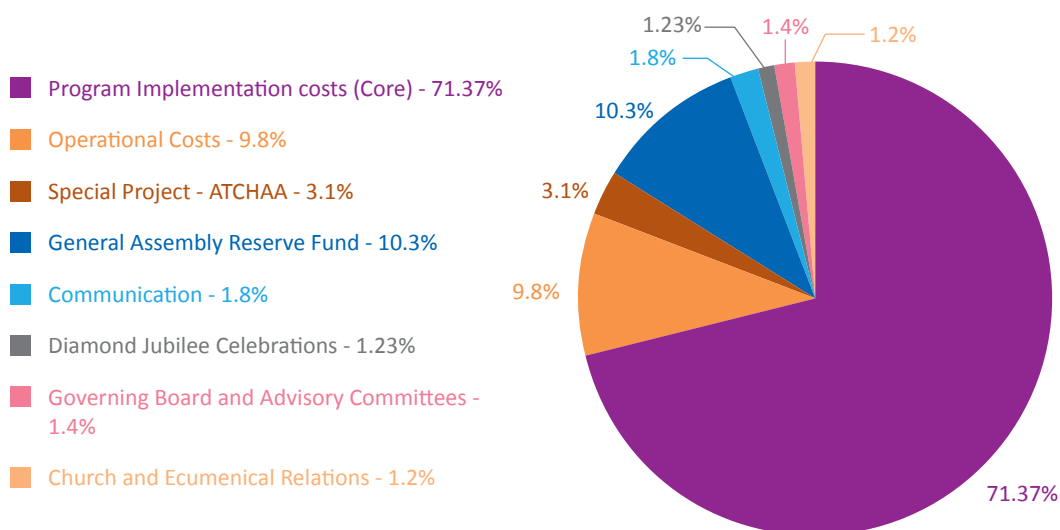


INCOME: Contributions from:	2017	2016
	USD	USD
Member Churches	86,674.00	83,883.00
Member Councils	17,823.00	36,446.00
Partner Organisations	471,241.00	461,479.00
Asian Church contributions for Specific Programmes	73,490.00	37,812.00
Churches, Councils and Individuals	12,557.00	22,551.00
Asia Mission Conference Registration Fee and Participants' Contributions	43,535.00	-
Special Project – HIV & AIDS	-	90,153.00
Publications	60.00	86.00
Interest from Fixed Deposits	925.00	1,081.00
Royalty	2,357.00	2,868.00
Miscellaneous Income	721.00	22,251.00
Investments (Dividends)	32,447.00	33,723.00
Investments (Securities)	243,131.00	36,304.00
Total Amount (in USD)	984,961.00	828,637.00

Expenses - 2017

EXPENDITURE:	2017	2016
	USD	USD
Programme Implementation Costs	691,966.00	443,451.00
Operational Costs	87,399.00	106,114.00
Communication	17,959.00	37,452.00
Governing Board and advisory Committees	13,061.00	31,713.00
CCA's Diamond Jubilee	12,000.00	-
General Assembly Reserve Fund	100,000.00	50,000.00
Church and Ecumenical Relations	12,133.00	10,043.00
Special Project – HIV & AIDS (ATCHAA)	30,000.00	127,041.00
Exchange loss and Fixed assets written off	90,114.00	36,710.00
Transfer from Designated Funds	-86,971.00	-
Total Amount (in USD)	967,661.00	842,524.00

Allocation of funds for Programmes - 2017



Programmes and Activities in 2017

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.



AMC Preparatory Meeting with Local Arrangement Committee in Chiang Mai, Thailand



AMC Preparatory Meeting with Local Arrangement Committee in Yangon, Myanmar

AMC Preparatory Meetings

16-19 February 2017 / Chiang Mai, Thailand

27 February - 2 March 2017 / Yangon, Myanmar

In order to map out specific plans for the AMC 2017, the CCA convened a meeting with AMC host committee coordinators and ecumenical leaders from Myanmar at the CCA headquarters in Chiang Mai, Thailand from 16 to 19 February 2017. As a follow-up process, another preparatory meeting with the Core

Group of the Organising Committee of the AMC was held at the headquarters of the Myanmar Council of Churches (MCC) in Yangon, Myanmar. The core group of the Organising Committee of the AMC discussed the composition of the local host committee and sub-committees of the AMC. Some practical affairs, like visas and board & lodging, were also discussed. In this meeting, it was agreed to appoint Rev. Saw Shwe Lin, the former General Secretary of the MCC, as the local coordinator for the AMC.



Working Group Meeting to draft the Asia Mission Statement



Working Group Meeting to prepare a draft Mission Statement of AMC

3-7 May 2017 / Chiang Mai, Thailand

The CCA organised a Working Group Meeting to draft the Asia Mission Statement which was held from 3 to 7 May. The meeting prepared the draft of the mission statement. After a lengthy discussion for two full days, the working group prepared a frame of the mission statement.

Ecumenical Theological Training for Pastors and Evangelists in Timor-Leste

*16-18 May 2017 / Dili, Timor-Leste
(East Timor)*

The CCA has been assisting its new member churches in countries like Laos, Cambodia, Nepal and East Timor, where it is asked to play a proactive role in developing leadership and ecumenical formation of pastors, church leaders, women and youth with a holistic sense of ministry, a perspective of ecumenism and an Asian contextual theologising.

In a country like Timor-Leste, pastors and churches lack proper leadership and ecumenical formation as they do not have access to seminaries and bible training schools. Members of Protestant churches are

also vulnerable targets of “aggressive evangelism” promoted by proponents of “freelance missionary evangelism” from outside of Timor-Leste. The CCA identified the urgent prerequisite to accompany churches in Timor-Leste and their pastors, as well as evangelists and lay leaders, especially those who serve in remote areas, to train them in Asian ecumenical and contextual theologising.

“CCA’s grassroots ecumenical theological training programme is very valuable in least developed countries, like Timor-Leste, as it is helping pastors and evangelists of Protestant churches in Timor-Leste to fill the void of ecumenical theological education and leadership development in churches,” commented the leaders of the East Timor Protestant Church or *Igreja Protestante iha Timor Leste* (IPTL) at the end of a training programme held from 16-19 May 2017 in Dili, the capital city of Timor-Leste.

Forty-five pastors, evangelists and lay leaders from CCA’s member churches of the IPTL, the National Council of Churches in Timor-Leste, the Bethel Church, the Adventist Church, Assembly of God and the Pentecostal Church in Timor-Leste attended the training.

In a session on “Mission and Evangelism and the context of Diakonia Ministry”, Rev. Thomas Liddle, Mission Co-worker of the IPTL



from the United Church of Christ in the USA, told the participants, “Church leaders at the headquarters level should not be directing pastors in their diaconal ministries from top to bottom. Instead, the pastors and congregation members must actively participate in their own ministerial work and programmes at the grassroots level to serve communities.”

Rev. Bobby Daniel and Rev. Nico Lumba Kaana from the Christian University in Kupang, Indonesia held interactive sessions on the contextual reading of the Bible and homiletics. Participants of the training observed that the sessions helped widen their theological perspectives and pledged to re-reflect on their ministries with missional and diaconal programmes to serve their communities.

The IPTL – CCA’s only member church in Timor-Leste – was the host and local organiser of the training. The IPTL, a small church in a predominantly Roman Catholic country, has been witnessing an important role for justice and reconciliation in the country ever since

the struggle for independence started in the 1970s.

The IPTL has also largely been involved in leadership training and the continuing education of its pastors. It has established a Christian theological training institute recently, the East Timor Christian Institute (ETCI) in Dili. In 2016, the CCA assisted the IPTL to develop a curriculum for theological training at the ETCI.

Consultation on Towards Revitalizing the Asian Ecumenical Movement

10-13 July 2017 / Chiang Mai, Thailand

The Regional Ecumenical Consultation on the theme, ‘Towards Revitalizing the Ecumenical Movement in Asia’ was held in Chiang Mai, Thailand on 11-12 July.

Sixty selected church and ecumenical leaders representing various churches, councils, and Asian and global ecumenical organisations: the Christian Conference of Asia, the World



Participants of the consultation on Towards Revitalizing the Asian Ecumenical Movement

Council of Churches (WCC), Council for World Mission (CWM), the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), the Asian Evangelical Alliance (AEA), Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF), the International Committee of Fellowship of Least Coin (IFCLC), the Asian Christian Women's Committee (ACWC), the Association of Theological Schools in Asia (ATESEA), etc, attended the consultation and several of them once actively participated in CCA's leadership starting from 1957.

The participants with their firm convictions of strengthening and revitalizing the ecumenical movement in Asia, have expressed concerns about a relevant mission of the Church, ensured and recognized the role of the ecumenical movement in Asia in fulfilling the gospel mandates: clarity on theological foundations; commitment for a shared vision,

goal, coherence; and honesty in its purpose need to be ensured at every level of our ecumenical journey in Asia.

The Consultation provided an open space to freely share means and ways to mobilize various Asian ecumenical organizations together with CCA member churches and national ecumenical councils; to reflect collectively on how to strengthen the mission and witness in unity of churches, councils and various ecumenical organizations in their common ecumenical engagements in Asia; to promote increased ecumenical cooperation and accompaniment in Asia among ecclesial, ecumenical and mission partners in a spirit of ecumenical solidarity in order to nurture greater coherence and coordination in the Asian ecumenical movement with the participation of all ecumenical stakeholders.

"For being the Church in Asia, we must together enter into positive relations with



WCC Deputy General Secretary Dr. Ioan Sauca, Former CCA General Secretary Dr. Park Sang Jung, CCA General Secretary Dr. Mathews George Chunakara at the thematic plenary session

people of other religions. This is where we can witness together. We need to face the challenges in Asia, especially when violence and terrorism plague Asia's multicultural and pluralistic societies today. This is the context which God has given us and in which we are called to be His witness," said Bishop Joseph Chusak Sirisut of the Federation of the Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) in a plenary session on 'Being the Church in Asia: Our Witnessing Together'.

A three-member panel, representing three major ecclesiastical and ecumenical bodies in Asia, the FABC of the Roman Catholic Church, the Asia Evangelical Alliance (AEA), and the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) emphasised in unison that the churches in Asia need to find more relevant and unique Asian ecclesiology in order to witness amidst diverse and pluralistic realities with a vision of seeking to build the Kingdom of God, at CCA's international consultation on '*Towards Revitalising the Ecumenical Movement in Asia*'.

The consultation, also, presented an opportunity for church and ecumenical leaders to engage in deliberations to construct a collective plan of action to promote increased ecumenical accompaniment among ecclesial, ecumenical and mission partners in Asia.

"A worldview that values power and domination and violence will see Christ's meekness and humility as a vice; in contrast, Christians see Christ as the very exemplar of virtue, and so we evaluate his meekness and humility as virtues to which we aspire. The telos for Christians is Christ: Jesus Christ is the very embodiment of what we're made for, of the end to which we are called. This is how we become human. This is what we're here for," said General Secretary of the AEA, Rev. Dr. Richard Howell.

Bishop Reuel Norman Marigza said, "Yesterday, we used the imageries and metaphors of "Walking Together" to describe the ecumenical movement. There is also repentance, not just finger-pointing or playing the blame game,

but a serious critical reflection of our past and present – a self-criticism process. I would call this our “Wailing Together”. By doing that, perhaps, the winds of the Spirit may once more breathe on us and rekindle the flame so that our lament and mourning may be turned into joy and dancing. Perhaps then we can, in God’s kairos, “Waltz Together” in celebration.”

The session on Migration and Human Trafficking presented by the Director of the Asian Migrant Centre, Dr. Reiko Harima, highlighted the major concerns for churches and the ecumenical movement in Asia and ways to engage the issue of the suffering people in collective ecumenical actions, while being engaged in our prophetic witness.

“Ecumenical education is limited to academicians, theologians and a few stakeholders. The concepts of ecumenism must go to people and not the other way around. We must go where they congregate

and declare the message boldly. We often talk about the tension between ecclesial-oriented ecumenism and secular-oriented ecumenism. We often put the word “versus” between them. I would rather see the word “and” instead. Can’t we by now, find a new paradigm which accommodates both, ” Ms. Nancy Caluya, an officer of the Association of Christian Institutes for Social Concerns in Asia (ACISCA) asked the question in her presentation on ‘Ecumenical Theological Education and Ecumenical Formation’.

The participants at the end of the consultation called on churches, councils, theological institutions, and various ecumenical organisations in Asia to be engaged in the process of revitalising the Asian ecumenical movement and to “ensure the coherence of the ecumenical movement in Asia and greater unity of the churches and work for all God’s people with a sense of togetherness, as well as to participate in God’s mission.”



Archbishop Sebouh Sarkissian speaks at the plenary session



Participants of Pre-AMC missional conversation in India

Pre-Asia Mission Conference: Indian Missional Conversation

23-24 August, 2017 / Ranchi, India

The Indian Missional Conversation initiated and co-organised by the CCA, the National Council of Churches in India (NCCI) in collaboration with the Church of North India Chotanagpur Diocese, the National Missionary Society of India (NMSI), and the India Missions Association (IMA) was attended by 100 delegates from 20 different Mission Boards and Organisations, eight Church Mission Boards and 10 Ecumenical Organisations and four Regional Councils including the Catholic Bishops Conference of India (CBCI), and the Evangelical Fellowship of India (EFI), and was held from 23-24 August 2017 in Ranchi, the capital of the North Indian state of Jharkhand.

The Indian Missional Conversation was organized to provide a common platform for Indian Christian mission organisations and churches to reflect on the theme of the Asia Mission Conference (AMC), 'Journeying Together: Prophetic Witness to the Truth and Light, in Asia.' It was also the first time several Mission Board representatives of the NCCI, IMA, NMSI, EFI, and CBCI came together to be involved in such 'conversation'.

The Indian Missional Conversation ended with an affirmation from the participants that "Churches cannot be silent spectators when injustice prevails at various levels in societies. Missiology has to deviate from 'Dogmatic Witness' to 'Prophetic Witness', based on 'Justice'; mission has to proclaim and practice 'Justice with Love', and respond to the problems of current societal realities. Hence, the Gospel of Christ has to directly confront social injustices, such as caste discrimination and other social divides."

Pre-Asia Mission Conference: Journeying Together: Prophetic Witness to the Truth and Light, in Asia'

26 August 2017 / Yangon, Myanmar

As the churches in Myanmar engaged in intensive preparations for hosting the AMC and Diamond Jubilee commemoration of the CCA from 11 to 17 October, the Myanmar Council of Churches (MCC) invited over 200 theologians, missiologists, theological educators and church leaders for a one-day consultation on the theme of AMC, stated as "Christians in Myanmar need to journey together with a common vision, and to build a common platform for effectively participating



Participants of Pre-AMC Consultation in Yangon, Myanmar

in God's mission of wider ecumenism. Positive transformations in areas of social, political, economic, and religious realms need to take place in order to be engaged in prophetic witnessing to the Truth and Light, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit." The Pre-Asia Mission Conference was held on 26 August, 2017 at Judson Church, Yangon, Myanmar.

Mr. Saw Patrick Loo Nee, President of the MCC, in his opening address underlined the vitality of the Asian Mission Conference, including past AMCs held in Prapat, Indonesia and Seoul, South Korea respectively. He affirmed the strength of ecumenical Asian Churches, and said that Myanmar was grateful and privileged to host the pre-events and AMC 2017 in Yangon. Rev. Shaw Shwe Lin, former MCC General Secretary and AMC Coordinator in Myanmar made a presentation regarding the issues that would arise at the Asia Mission Conference, Diamond Jubilee celebrations and current mission work in Asia. Rev. Dr. Ngurliana, Programme Consultant of Mission in Unity and Contextual Theology, presented the proposed Asia Mission Statement, "Journeying Together: Prophetic Witness to the Truth and Light, in Asia" within the context of Myanmar. Thereafter, he facilitated fruitful discussions and exchanges.

As part of analysing the proposed AMC Mission Statement, the participants opined that, "churches in Myanmar will have to envision new mission paradigm with a new vision in Myanmar, as well as in Asia". And in each of the sub-theme and areas of mission concerns, the participants found new missiological challenges and issues which are relevant and significant to the present context of Myanmar.

"A new understanding of prophetic accompaniment will enrich theological undergirding of mission. The prophetic witness and mission of Jesus who identified with the poor, the captive, the oppressed, challenge Myanmar churches to go beyond the parameters of their traditional missiological paradigm. The traditional missional paradigm, which is understood in Myanmar even today, is a concept that mission is for converting or proselytising. The churches in Myanmar must go beyond these traditional perceptions on Mission," echoed the participants.

In the discussions on "Affirming the Servanthood", participants observed a shift from the traditional understanding of servanthood to 'challenge to the hierarchical structure of society' which is a new

understanding of servanthood in Myanmar's context. The churches in Myanmar never understood servanthood as challenging the hierarchical structure of society. In fact, the traditional understanding is to obey and be silent rather than to challenge. It is, therefore, a new and radical understanding of affirming the servanthood as Mission, in Myanmar's context.

"Participating in the Reign of God", was discussed in the light of 'to see as God sees, to judge as God judges, to love as God loves'. The participation of Myanmar churches in the reign of God has been found inadequate, but the attempt to provide relocation for the internally displaced people in Myanmar may be one of the ways of participating in the reign of God as God is the God of the poor. Out of several ways, this has been understood as one of the ways to participate in the reign of God.

As to the areas of mission concerns, participants discussed the extent where the churches are going in terms of their prophetic call in social, political, economic, religious and ecological issues. It was observed that Myanmar is not free from ecological problems, and an awareness on ecological issues is urgently needed. The government of Myanmar has been exerting efforts in the conservation of land, forests and other natural resources, thus Church's participation is very crucial in the complete healing of God's creation.

Due to conflicts, violence and deforestation, Myanmar has encountered the problem of large-scale 'People on the Move' or internal displacement in the past decades. Participants noted that Churches do not yet have the capacity to embrace strangers. Thus, it is

essential to widen the scope of their mission. As for economic injustice, Myanmar is not free from the impact of globalization, which has been a challenging issue. The rich become richer and the poor become poorer like in any other Asian country. In this regard, economic justice is crucial but the churches' capability seems inadequate to stand against or to transform the negative impacts of globalization.

"As for religious intolerance, Myanmar is not free from religionization of politics and politicization of religion. With regards to these, it is discussed that the Myanmar churches must be free from religionization of politics and politicization of religion, thus encouraging interfaith dialogues and peaceful co-existence of all religions."

The participants discussed and hoped that peace would be the greatest mission paradigm in the 21st century not only in Myanmar and Asia, but also all over the world.

Rev. Saw Shwe Lin, coordinator of the AMC local committee, stated that the representatives of various churches who attended the consultation affirmed that "the hope of the churches in Myanmar is that the AMC will be a platform for Asian Churches to engage in journeying together for prophetic witness to the Truth and Light, bringing positive impacts in social, political, economic, religious and ecological arenas in Asia."

Myanmar churches' call for envisioning the relevance of Mission in the context of wider ecumenism in the light of the proposed Mission Statement of the CCA that was to be adopted at the Asia Mission Conference.

Asia Mission Conference

11-17 October 2017 / Yangon, Myanmar

The Asia Mission Conference (AMC) was held in Yangon, Myanmar from 11 to 17 October 2017 on the theme, 'Journeying Together: Prophetic Witness to the Truth and Light, in Asia'. More than 600 participants representing member churches, councils, ecumenical partners, missionaries, missiologists, theologians, theological students, interfaith leaders and others from Asia and around the globe as well as locally attended the AMC. It was hosted by the Myanmar Baptist Convention (MBC) and the Myanmar Council of Churches (MCC).

This was the fourth time that the CCA organised a major Mission Conference in its 60 years of history; the last Asia Mission Conference of CCA was held 23 years ago in 1994 in Seoul, South Korea. The Mission Conferences have been a crucial part of Asian churches' efforts at contextualization of theological thinking and articulation of missiological issues in Asia.

The first meeting of the CCA held in Parapat in 1957 itself was focused on the theme of 'The Common Evangelistic Task', which shows the CCA's engagement in its mission and witness of Gospel with the churches in Asia.

"While being engaged in its mission and witness, the CCA has journeyed through the past six decades to fulfill its mandates of serving and enriching the churches in Asia. We ardently pray and sincerely hope that the Asia Mission Conference - 2017 and the Diamond Jubilee celebrations of the CCA, will facilitate deeper discussions, and will lead to greater dedication and to relevant and meaningful recapturing and re-articulation of our commitment to the mission, the act of the Almighty God", said General Secretary Dr. Mathews George Chunakara.

The AMC started with a celebrative worship service and ceremony held at the Franc Auditorium in Yangon, Myanmar. The opening service of the mission conference, led by a group of Asian ethno musicologists and liturgists, included moving litanies of prayers,



Participants of the Asia Mission Conference

lamentations, cries and hopes from the churches in different corners of Asia. An Indonesian dance troupe from the Jakarta Theological Seminary presented a performance during the worship service.

Attended by more than 600 registered delegates and participants representing CCA member churches and councils as well as representatives of ecumenical organisations and mission partners, the week-long AMC focused on the theme, 'Journeying Together: Prophetic Witness to the Truth and Light in Asia'.

Archbishop Willem T.P. Simarmata, moderator of the CCA, in his opening address spoke about the challenges Asia and Asian churches face today, and he called for Asian churches' participation in God's mission and prophetic witness.

In his introductory address, Dr. Mathews George Chunakara stated, "Every moment we realize and recognize that Christians do not have the monopoly of God's mission. What we experience today is a mission in the midst of missions. Several Asian countries have become missionary battlefields and are experiencing aggressive missionary evangelism. This situation urges us to be seriously and constantly engaged in reflecting on God's mission in this world. The AMC organised by the CCA is a humble effort for Asian churches to come together in a common platform to contemplate and dialogue with each other on mission and witness of churches in Asia."

Vice Moderator Rev. Diana Tana, in her homily at the opening service, asked, "What does the Lord require?" She emphasized the need for partnership to find the new right path and the importance of listening to God's voice for the



AMC Opening Worship



Inter religious Dialogue Session at AMC: Dr. Musdah Mulia, Swami Navananma Jhana Thapaswi, Rev. Prof. Dr. Sang Chang, Venerable A Shin Pannajota

challenges ahead and for liberation from oppression.

Sr Sudha Varghese, a Roman Catholic nun, social activist and a 2006 recipient of India's fourth highest civilian honour Padma Shri, who has been working for over two decades among the most downtrodden and oppressed Musahar community (rat eaters) in Bihar state of India, shared her struggles while leading a life in servanthood. Speaking on "Journeying Together: Mission as affirming the Servanthood", Sr Sudha, narrated stories on how she stands and serves the poor and vulnerable as a selfless Christian. For Sister Sudha, the foremost concern in her 32 years of service and work among the downtrodden in underdeveloped areas of the Bihar state has not been to preach Christianity among the Musahar people – a community of rat-eaters with no access to land or basic government welfare measures – but to make them fully human beings first by giving them

the right to dignity, food, clothes, education, housing and so on.

On the second day of the AMC, October 13, there was a hearing session on "Witness to the Truth and Light: Religious Perspectives" and three religious scholars from Hindu, Buddhist and Islamic faiths were the invited speakers. "Truth and light are the two key components of spirituality surpassing all forms of religiosity, which most people are not aware of. Thus, all need to strive to attain a spirituality that liberates human beings. This can enable all to lead a life of peace, unity, love and happiness which are propounded by different religions," stated Swami Navananma Jhana Thapaswi, Director of Santhigiri Ashram, Kerala, India.

Speaking on "Buddhist Perspective on Truth in life", the Venerable A Shin Pannajota, lecturer at Sitagu International Buddhist Academy, Yangon, said every one wishes to



AMC Plenary Discussion



Women participants of AMC

possess peace and happiness but there is no being that does not face familial, political, social, economic, racial and religious problems. It is hard to bring an end to these problems. However, nowadays most people are trying to solve these problems with the help of religions. To liberate people from all problems and sufferings, spiritual leaders of the world teach their doctrines to their respective followers. Today the world witnesses the unfair competitions based on racial and religious sensitivities. People belonging to different faiths attack, fight and quarrel with each other without considering the real reasons. So there is a need to understand the sufferings and problems as facts clearly and completely and face and eliminate them, he added. People who do not observe the noble

teachings of their respective religions cannot experience peace and happiness in human society and its surroundings. Today human world is mentally poor because of people who lack knowledge about the essence of their respective religions and fail to observe them. So all spiritual leaders must strive to lead people in the right direction in order to make them mentally rich, said Pannajota.

Speaking from the view point of Islam on "Witness to the Truth and Light", Professor Musdah Mulia, Council of Indonesian Ulema, said injustice is a common enemy that religions have in society. Religions could be a strong basis for the promotion of any nation in maintaining peace and establishing a solid civilization. Muslims, Christians and others

need to work together to continue the efforts of cultural reconstruction through education beginning from family and proceeding to formal educational institutions stressing on the efforts to promote peace, respect, tolerance and inclusiveness. This will help reduce prejudice in society and embrace multiculturalism, so education is a means to a harmonious intercultural society, she said. People of different religions needs to collaborate on reform laws and public policies which are not only conducive to the establishment of peace and justice but also in upholding human rights and democratic principles, Mulia added.

Speaking on "Shining a light on hope: embracing and accompanying migrants" during a plenary session on the third day of the AMC, Dr. Gemma Tulud Cruz, a theologian

and academician from the Australian Catholic University, said that "there is a need to accompany migrants, trafficked, stateless and indigenous peoples and communities and give them hope in situations of despair. The church has moral and pastoral obligation and responsibility to embrace and accompany migrants as a missionary imperative in today's world." "The Church needs to address migrants' loneliness, isolation and the various forms of injustices that plague those who are forced to leave their homes, families, communities and countries they come from. The search for greater opportunities and a better life binds all people on the move. This quest for well-being is the enduring theme of wave after wave, generation after generation, of migrants worldwide," said Cruz. "According to the UN report – 2013, Asians represented the largest Diaspora group residing outside



Rev. Dr. Wesley Ariarajah delivers the thematic address



Bishop Andrew Chan (The Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui)



Sr. Sudha Varghese (Nari Gunjan in India)



Rev. Dr. Naoya Kawakami (United Church of Christ in Japan)



Rev. Dr. Haung Po Ho presents Asia Mission Statement



Prof. D. Mammen Varkey explains the process of Mission statement drafting and follow-up



Dr. William Stanley, Social Activist at the plenary session



Rev. Dr. Ronald Laldinsuah from the Asian Evangelical Alliance at the plenary session



Dr. Gemma Tulud Cruz at the plenary session



Rev. Dr. Hong Jung Lee at the plenary session



Rev. Stephen Arulampalam at the plenary session



Rev. Dr. Septemmy Lakawa at the plenary session



Archbishop Stephen Than Myint Oo delivers the sending out message at the closing session



Rev. Sonia Carolina Parera Hummel at the closing session



Representatives of Asian Ecumenical Disability Advocacy Network (AEDAN) present the Communique from the Pre-AMC Consultation at the AMC plenary session



Myanmar Council of Churches President Patrick Loo Nee Welcomes the participants



Rev. Mahn Palmerston, General Secretary of Myanmar Council of Churches



Myanmar Baptist Convention General Secretary Rev. Dr. Yam Kho Pau Greets the AMC participants



Rev. Mahn San Thein Tun, Treasurer of Myanmar Baptist Convention



AMC Stewards

their major area of birth, accounting for about 19 million migrants living in Europe, some 16 million in Northern America and about 3 million in Oceania. Churches have to network with governments, people of good will and civil society groups to work for the migrant workers across Asia and the globe at large," she said.

While giving the fourth thematic presentation at a plenary session of the AMC, Bishop Reuel Norman O. Marigza, head of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, mentioned that "Participating in the reign of God requires living in tension between the despair of now and the hope that is within us; at the future deliverance and the present suffering". Bishop Marigza reaffirmed that the theme of the Reign of God or the Kingdom of God is a central theme of Scripture, tying the essence of the Biblical messages together. He also stated that "the Reign of God is a mystery,

that it is not a human project but God's project, and that God uses human beings and human institutions to work out the divine purpose and will". He likened the Reign of God to the leaven used to change the whole character of dough. Like the leaven, the reign of God works from inside. It works unseen. The kingdom is on its way. He further added that "true religion is never dope; real Christianity is the most revolutionary thing in the world and can work revolution in an individual's life and society. Just as Jesus was crucified because he disturbed orthodox habits and conventions, Christianity has been persecuted because it desired to take both people and society and remake them". Bishop Marigza invoked all to examine if we are on God's side or not. He said, "Based on the emphasis of the teachings and mission of Christ, we are to be more kingdom-centric than church-centric. We must always be a Church in mission".



AMC participants

Jakarta Theological Seminary professor and a missiologist from Indonesia Rev. Dr. Septemmy Lakawa told the audience that “dance symbolises the role of arts and of communities in healing trauma suffered by Christians who witness violence. Dance is an artistic form embodying the spirituality of the cross – it is a broken symbol, the beauty that testifies to the wound.” While citing stories of three

women victims of human trafficking, she focused on the social and historical dimensions of trauma. She offered the perspective of the cross as a multifaceted site of wound, rupture, resilience and resistance which contests the understanding of the cross as merely a site of redemptive suffering. As a site of rupture, the cross stands as a stark reminder that suffering remains. For Dr. Lakawa, mission as embodying



AMC Worship Team

the spirituality of the cross begins at the site of the disembodied lives of the victims, survivors and witnesses of traumatic violence, and continues as churches and Christian communities bear witness to the trauma that affects people because of violence, discrimination and war. Performing an Indonesian fusion dance at the end of her presentation, Dr. Lakawa showed how the dancer testifies to the presence of the Holy Spirit through her breathing in and breathing out. In conclusion she said, "Let us dance with churches, communities across differences to witness to the possibility of life, justice, peace and healing in our own contexts and beyond".

One contributing factor of AMC was the Asia mission statement document, which "articulates our self-understanding of mission, missiological convictions and emerging mission concerns in Asia's pluralistic, multi-religious and multi-ethnic context". Following a review process in all CCA member churches, the document was further discussed in group sessions at the AMC, after which it was adopted.

The Yangon AMC was a splendid opportunity to mobilize and revitalize the ecumenical movement at the grassroots level and also an opportunity to promote unity and inculcate the idea of ecumenism in the participants' minds as part of their witness.



CCA Staff Team worked for AMC

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.



Participants of Workshop on Worship and Liturgical Traditions in Asia

Workshop on 'Worship and Liturgical Traditions in Asia'

26-30 January 2017 / Yangon, Myanmar

A group of specialised Asian liturgists and musicians were brought together for a workshop organised by the CCA in Yangon, Myanmar from 26 to 31 January 2017 to reflect on developing ecumenical spirituality, and nurturing the contextual liturgical traditions in Asia. Focused on the theme *'Worship and Liturgical Traditions in Asia'*, the workshop also initiated the process of developing worship resources for AMC 2017.

The workshop, co-hosted by the Myanmar Council of Churches (MCC), developed the theme song of the Asia Mission Conference as well as worship resources including hymns in accordance with the theme and four sub-themes of AMC 2017. The workshop helped the participants to draw experiences from

various Asian church traditions to develop liturgical resources for AMC 2017.

During the workshop, the process of developing worship resources helped the participants to understand the rich Asian liturgical and musical traditions that are deeply rooted in Asian spirituality. Rev. Dr. I-to Loh, a veteran Asian specialist on Music and Liturgy provided the leadership.

Ecumenical Theological Orientation Training for Ecumenical Enablers in Cambodia

24-26 April 2017 / Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Ecumenical Enablers' Training in Asia (EETA) is a program designed to develop ecumenical leadership at various levels, especially for young pastors and lay members from CCA's constituents across Asia. The EETA has been

organised at sub-regional and national levels, especially where there is lack of ecumenical theological education, as well as in contexts where pastors are not trained or equipped with proper theological training.

The Church has survived against all odds in Cambodia. From 1975 to 1979, the country suffered a tragic era under the control of the Khmer Rouge when thousands of people were tortured to death for their beliefs. This time also witnessed an absolute wipe-out of Christianity from the country. It wasn't until the 1990s that Cambodian churches re-opened and began to spread to other provinces. However, as a society still struggling from the spectre of guerrilla warfare, it severely lacks mature leadership for its churches. Many new Christians, unprepared to undertake the responsibilities, took up leadership in local congregations. With the recent change in the landscape of Christianity in Cambodia and a drastic increase in the numbers of Christians, the country faces the dire need of ecumenical theological education.

In this context, the CCA developed the '*Ecumenical Theological Orientation Training for Ecumenical Enablers in Cambodia*' with an aim to serve the purpose of the theological education of budding Christian leaders in the country. The training was held from 24 to 26 April 2017 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia to equip pastors, church leaders, and youth and women leaders of the Kampuchea Christian Council (KCC) through non-formal theological education by broadening their theological understanding and sensitising it to ecumenical issues, including intra-faith, inter-faith, gender ideological and ecological issues and to incorporate new learning in their pastoral ministries.

Thirty pastors, evangelists, youth and women were trained for a widened theological perspective and ecumenical vision. The

participants pledged to be a part of and maintain a network to nurture their ecumenical ministry in the local context, and built action plans to enable their theological learnings.

Women Leadership Development Training in Cambodia

27-29 April 2017 / Phnom Penh, Cambodia

The Household of God requires the participation of women with the full use of their abilities at all decision-making levels. Even after several initiatives by the ecumenical movement for women's empowerment and leadership development, the churches in Asia are still slow to acknowledge and accept gender and women's concerns as a critical issue within the Church. In many Churches, women are still not accepted as leaders and are often denied prominent roles in the Church.

In Cambodia, women constitute more than half of the country's population (51 percent) today; yet, their ability to contribute to the development of the country as equal partners is severely constrained. Conservative traditional norms value women to be less than men resulting in the diminution of female education. Domestic violence, a current and escalating social concern for women in Cambodia, is fuelled by poverty and traumas linked to landlessness, drug and alcohol abuse and gambling, resulting in a number of suicides and murders of women. Additionally, human trafficking for both sexual and labour exploitation poses grave dangers for women in the country.

To overcome the current cultural barriers hindering women in Church and society, the CCA, in collaboration with the Kampuchea Christian Council (KCC), co-organised a national '*Women Leadership Development*



Participants of Women Leadership Development Training in Cambodia

Training' from 27 to 29 April 2017 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Forty-seven women participants worked together during the course of the training to identify common concerns, and develop methods to enhance women's leadership in churches, and more significantly, to strengthen the national network of Christian women in Cambodia. During the training, the participants learnt the importance of gender equality and women's rights and how to get legal protection for their rights. This training empowered the participants to be directly involved in identifying their common concerns and issues in Church and society and develop their insight and discourse in building action-plans to empower women leadership in their local context.

Ecumenical Theological Training for Young Pastors

22-25 May 2017 / Chiang Dao, Thailand

Through various programmes as part of the EETA, many Asian churches and ecumenical councils have been able to train new ecumenical and church leaders and help them enhance their leadership. EETA is to reach out to more people in their own local contexts, thereby enabling more participants directly in nurturing ecumenism in local contexts. The aim of EETA is to introduce to participants the ecumenical vision, mission, and ecumenical witness of promoting unity among the churches and people of Asia. It helps train pastors and evangelists at the grassroots levels as well as helps young people build a strong national network of churches for mission and evangelism, and to share a sense of ownership of the ecumenical movement in Asia.



Participants of Ecumenical Theological Training for Youth Pastors in Thailand

With the Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT) which represents half of the Protestant community in Thailand, the CCA conducted an ecumenical theological training for young pastors of the CCT together with the Pastoral Training unit of the CCT from 22 to 25 May 2017 in Chiang Dao, Thailand.

One of the main discussions during the training was about the question of interfaith contexts and Christian witness. Although freedom of religion is legally and constitutionally guaranteed, Thailand is known as a nation of the adherents of pious and strict Theravada Buddhism. In addition, although Thailand has followed a broad-minded policy regarding other religions, it remains committed to preserving Buddhism and it follows a policy that effectively limits the expansion of other religions. Over 95 percent of the Thai people are members of the Theravada Buddhist faith and Christians constitute only one and a half percent. However, theological education in the country is mostly undertaken with evangelistic and charismatic emphasis with the patronage of Western Christian fundamental groups and parachurches involved in mission

activities. The theological emphasis of mainline churches, including CCA's member constituency, is directed more towards very conservative theological emphasis rather than any ecumenical theological convictions or orientations.

The training emphasised on an ecumenism that has made efforts to move towards common witness through dialogues that promote mutual understanding and cooperation in society and in the Church with the pluralism and diversity of modern times. Among the various sessions, a strong focus was given to topics on Worship, Liturgy and Spirituality in Asian Traditions, Ecology and Peace, Gender Equality in the Household of God and Prophetic Diaconia.

Forty-five pastors and evangelists from 20 districts of the CCT attended the training. Participants of the training observed that the sessions helped widen their theological perspectives and pledged to re-reflect upon their ministries holistically to serve better their respective communities.



Participants of Ecumenical Formation and Leadership development, Indonesia

Ecumenical Formation and Leadership Development for Young Ecumenists

26-27 May 2017 / Jogjakarta, Indonesia

"Young people are important agents in the transformation of the ecumenical movement in Indonesia, and Asia at large. It is hoped that through them, the Church and the Asian ecumenical movement will experience a paradigm shift," Rev. Mazmur Gibrany of the *Yayasan Pendidikan Dwituna Rawinala*, told participants of the Ecumenical Formation Training of Indonesian Youth Leaders.

The leadership development training, held from 26 to 28 May 2017 at the *Huria Kristen Batak Protestant* (HKBP) in Jogjakarta (Yogyakarta) city, was attended by 27 youth leaders. The main objective of the training was to facilitate the ecumenical formation of Christian youth in the country. The training also focused on enabling youth engagement in advocating social justice through ecumenical youth networks.

The training programme was designed in a context where more and more young people are forced to migrate to other parts of the country or beyond its borders in search of jobs, making them vulnerable to racist intolerance and inhuman treatment in their new surroundings.

The participants of the training programme observed that even though many young people had contributed in the past to shaping the modern ecumenical movement in Indonesia as well as in other parts of Asia, at present the involvement of young people beyond local levels is limited.

Various sessions of the training programme focused on Christian youth in a multi-religious Asian context and on the strengthening of Asian ecumenism at the grassroots level. In a presentation on *Contextual Church Life*, Rev. Amin Zaitun said, "It takes a vital, re-actual, visionary and transformational leader with a managerial, ethical, spiritual and local leadership to develop a contextual church life." The participants testified towards the

end of the programme to contextually understand wider issues in ecumenical perspectives as well as to bring a paradigm shift in the ecumenical movement. They affirmed they would engage in building inclusive communities by nurturing youth leaderships in their churches and communities.

Asian Ecumenical Institute (AEI)

25 September - 20 October 2017/ Yangon, Myanmar

The Asian Ecumenical Institute (AEI), aimed at training a new generation of young ecumenical leaders in Asia and equipping them to be committed to ecumenism and contributing to the Asian and global

ecumenical movement in the coming decades, was held from 25 September to 20 October at Mary Chapman Deaf School, Yangon, Myanmar. The month-long intensive course, attended by 22 participants from various Asian countries, focused on the theme "Journeying Together: Prophetic Witness to the Truth and Light, in Asia'." The participants of 2017 AEI had opportunities to attend the Asia Mission Conference (AMC) and other related events including the Diamond Jubilee celebrations of CCA.

The AEI provided participants precious learning opportunities to envision wider ecumenism with new theological insights which empowered them to understand the



Participants of AEI 2017 with the Leaders of Myanmar Council of Churches



AEI participants at the AMC



Group Presentation



AEI participants attending Sunday Service of Myanmar Christian Fellowship of the Blind Church



Cultural Evening during AEI



Group Presentation

concept and scope of ecumenism from a strong sense of rootedness in their own Christian faith, tradition, heritage, as well as involving them in crossing of boundaries across denominational/confessional, cultural, social, economic and political strata. It also provided the participants unique experiences to learn the real meaning of living together in inter-cultural and inter-denominational settings, while worshipping together and learning together the emerging realities and identifying the ways of developing ecumenical response contextually. Conducted by a variety of experts and resource persons, the participants were engaged in a range of activities such as presentations, panels and thematic discussions, grassroots exposure visits, self-guided study and preparation of research papers. Through interaction with one another in a setting of common worship, Bible study, social analysis, and theological reflection, the AEI participants who could go

on to become key leaders of Asian churches in future, were rewarded and strengthened with a greater clarity and commitment to a common ecumenical vision and the role of the Christian community in service of that vision in Asia.

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, upholding the dignity of women, children and people with disabilities, and highlighting climate change and ecological justice in their respective churches. The participants could 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.

“The Asian Ecumenical Institute 2017 was an unforgettable experience for us. We learned that our societies label people based on their cultures and beliefs. However, coming together and sharing our lives, as we have done during the AEI, can open the door for dialogue and collaboration in Asia. The AEI has taught me that ecumenism is a bridge for obtaining peace and justice.”

“The Asian Ecumenical Institute has provided us with a wonderful opportunity to enhance our understanding of ecumenism. It has enriched our knowledge regarding the struggles and challenges of the people in Asia and beyond. We have gained fresh insights, which will help us see the contemporary challenges in Asia in a new light. We are deeply grateful to the CCA for bringing a diverse group of people together. This convergence has enabled a diverse set of voices to tell their stories of struggles and successes. Without CCA’s commitment to ecumenical empowerment this might not have been possible.”

Ecumenical Theological Orientation Training for Bible Schools in Refugee Camps

13-17 November 2017/ Maesot, Thailand

An Ecumenical Theological Orientation Training, conducted at the Hill Light Theological Seminary from 13 to 18 November 2017, was attended by 35 Bible school teachers from eight refugee camps on the Thailand-Myanmar border.

Along Thailand’s border with Myanmar on the west, there are nine refugee camps which are overseen and run by the Thailand Burma Border Consortium, a union of 11 international non-governmental and ecumenical development agencies and organizations that provide food, shelter and non-food items to refugees and displaced people from Myanmar. The Kawthoolei Karen Baptist Bible School & College (KKBBS) was started in June 1983 with four teachers and six students in the Mae La refugee camp which is the largest refugee camp among the nine camps. Over the last 34 years the KKBBS has attained great

development and improvement in its education system accommodating around 460 students. Every year the number of refugees are increasing, so also is the number of students in the Bible schools since these schools are the only institutions providing higher education to refugee students. The students are IDPs (internally displaced people) and many of them were even born in the refugee camps. However financial support for the refugees have drastically gone down over the last few years and the Bible schools face difficulties in finding resources to maintain the schools. They are also struggling much to develop their theological education programmes and curriculums within their limited human and financial resources.

During the training, the various sessions focused on the issues of developing theological education programmes and curriculums, and participants shared their ideas and suggestions to strengthen the cooperation and co-supporting systems among the Bible schools, such as exchange of teachers and students, sharing teaching materials and library

resources, and getting academic accreditation from internationally recognized higher education organizations.

Asia Sunday 2017

15 October 2017/ Yangon, Myanmar

Every year, the CCA celebrates Asia Sunday on the Sunday before the Pentecost. Special liturgy and special resource materials are produced and shared with CCA's member churches and councils every year. With the CCA completing 60 years of its founding in 2017, the Executive Committee of the CCA decided that the theme of Asia Sunday 2017 would be the same as that of AMC 2017. The office bearers of the CCA decided to propose and encourage CCA member churches and councils to observe Asia Sunday 2017 on 15 October, which coincided with the commemorative celebration of the Diamond Jubilee of the CCA and focused the theme of Asia Sunday on *'Journeying Together: Prophetic Witness to the Truth and Light, in Asia'*.

Various congregations of the member churches of CCA and MCC observed Asia Sunday on 15 October 2017. Participants of the AMC attended the Asia Sunday services in various churches in Yangon. Several Asian churches in different countries also observed the Asia Sunday in 2017.

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.

Rev. Dr. N. B. Gladstone Robert from the Church of South India spent a week at the CCA headquarters to collect the historical articles and references of CCA's history. Dr. Gladstone Robert earlier published his book titled *'Mission and Ecumenical Concerns of the Christian Conference of Asia: The Reformulations Comprehending Socio-Cultural and Religious Life of the People of Asia'*.

Rev. Diana Tana from the Methodist Church in New Zealand spent her one-month sabbatical as an Ecumenical Fellow doing her pastoral research and study at the CCA library in Chiang Mai and providing leadership training and counseling to CCA staff members.

Rev. Kyoung Gyun Han, the mission co-worker of the Presbyterian Church in New Zealand benefited from this Fellowship, using the facilities at the CCA library at the CCA headquarters.

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.

Ecumenical Women's Action against Violence (EWAV) International Women's Day Celebration

8 March 2017 / Lahore, Pakistan

International Women's Day was celebrated among various networks of EWAV in Asia to affirm the rights and equal participation of women in all walks of life. Following are some stories:

The CCA together with the Ecumenical Women's Fellowship of Pakistan - a fellowship of women from the Presbyterian Church, Salvation Army, Catholic Church, Church of Pakistan, and National Council of Churches in Pakistan - organized an event to celebrate womanhood on International Women's Day at the Ecumenical Center, National Council of Churches, Lahore, Pakistan. More than 150 women came together to express solidarity with their sisters. The theme chosen was "Be Bold for Change; Women Empowering Women".

Dr. Farhana Nazir, a professor of Gujranwala Theological Seminary, delivered a theological reflection narrating stories from the Bible of women empowering women.

The participants opined that those women who can empower other women teach goodness with 'Visible Integrity' especially the godly who lives by what they teach and encourage others to be good servants in the household of Christ. Interfaith youth group of Raiwind Diocese of the Church of Pakistan presented an interactive play on "Honour Killing". The interactive methodology gave participants a chance to share their opinions on the issue of honour killings in the society and also encouraged them to change the story and its ending. Participants affirmed that all women have a right to life and a marriage of their choice. However we need to educate

our boys and girls to respect each other and strengthen families.

Another topic of discussion at the meeting was the proposed amendments in the Christian Family Law and Divorce Act, currently a topic of debate among the Christian community in Pakistan. The Act in its current form grants divorce or nullifies a marriage on grounds of proven adultery only. Because of the stringent requirements, many couples or especially women are forced to live together in an unhappy marriage. Recently, on directions from the government, church leaders came together to address the issue on the basis of Biblical teachings in order to protect families in Pakistan. As this law affects women the most, it is important that women know the law and its proposed amendments. It is also important that women's voices are heard when changes are made in the law. To encourage women's voices and points of view, Advocate Alia Malik described the law to the participants and said that this law is very old and needed to be ratified to address the needs of people.

Interfaith Cooperation Forum Consultation on Peace Education Training in Asia

19-23 April 2017 / Singapore

The CCA and the Asia Pacific Alliance of the Young Men's Christian Association (APAY) jointly facilitated a workshop on Interfaith Peace Building Perspectives as part of developing the next stage of the the Interfaith Cooperation Forum (ICF) programmes and activities. The workshop was held in Singapore from 19 to 23 April 2017 with an aim to to review the objectives and achievements of the ICF; and, second, to set the goals and plan for the next three-year phase.

After two days of deliberation, the meeting ended with the stakeholders agreeing to



CCA and YMCA-AP Joint Working Group planning meeting in Singapore

embark upon implementing the following medium-term plans. First, in two and a half years, there will be two Schools of Peace (SOPs), each of which will last for three months. Second, two mini Schools of Peace, each of which will last for two weeks, shall take place at the regional level. Third, thematic workshops will be conducted four times per year, one in each of the four sub-regions of Asia, namely: Mekong or mainland Southeast Asia, insular Southeast Asia, East Asia, and South Asia. Fourth, seven national workshops shall be organised. Fifth, an ICF Annual Forum shall take place yearly.

Ecumenical Pastoral Solidarity Visit to Bangladesh

7-12 May 2017 / Bangladesh

The communal conflict Bangladesh is facing today, which breeds religiously motivated terrorism, is a product of political conflicts. If extremism were to be reduced, the political conflicts, which include discrimination and land-grabbing, must be addressed and put to a halt. There is an urgent need for all the people who are committed to peace to work together here and now for communal harmony in Bangladesh. Interfaith dialogue and joint actions are needed in order to ensure communal harmony and peace based on justice in Bangladesh.

The ecumenical movement in Asia has been concerned about the attacks on religious minorities in Bangladesh, including Christian minorities. Hence, the CCA, in collaboration with the National Council of Churches in Bangladesh (NCCB) organized a Pastoral Solidarity Visit to Bangladesh from 7 to 12 May, 2017 with a view to learn first-hand the conditions of ethnic and religious minorities. Currently, Bangladesh is going through grave difficulties including violence that abuses the human rights of the people and disrupt the conditions of peace in the country.

The CCA team met with and listened to leaders and members of various civil society, church, non-governmental, as well as governmental secular, Christian, Muslim, and interfaith organizations and institutions to learn about the current situation in Bangladesh. Legal and underground religious extremists persecute religious minorities, including land-grabbing and the killing of tolerant-minded bloggers. Stateless Rohingya Muslims are allowed to stay only in refugee camps, which are in dismal shape. In addition, violence against women has increased in Bangladesh.

The CCA Pastoral Solidarity team was composed of Rev. Dr. Henny William Booth Sumakul (of the Christian Evangelical Church of Minahasa or GMIM) and Dr. Rey Ty (CCA Program Coordinator for Building Peace and Moving Beyond Conflicts). On 8 May, 2017, the CCA team paid a courtesy call to the Church of Bangladesh (CoB), and met with its leadership. They discussed the current situation in Bangladesh, especially challenges Christians face in the country.

At the country's National Human Rights Commission, the CCA team discussed the current human rights situation with its Chairman Kazi Reazul Hoque. The Commission investigates human rights abuses, including

that of religious minorities, and presents its reports to both the government of Bangladesh and the different UN bodies. The team then proceeded to the Bangladesh Islamic Foundation (BIF) where it learned from the BIF Director-General about the Bangladesh government's fight against religiously inspired terrorism. The team was assured that the government of Bangladesh is opposed to religious extremism.

The Bangladesh Mahila Parishad (Bangladesh Women's Council) welcomed the Pastoral Solidarity Team members for a sit-down and in-depth discussion about the role of Bangladeshi women in society and in effecting social change throughout current history. The women advocates of the Council had been at the forefront of the struggle for independence and continue to work for women's rights. At the time of the visit, a women's empowerment program was going on, and CCA team members were able to take a peek at the efforts of the women's organization to advocate for the rights and dignity of women in Bangladesh.

On May 9, 2017, the CCA team paid a courtesy call to the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Bangladesh (CBCB). Both Bishop Theotonius Gomes and Bishop Shorot Francis Gomes gave the CCA team an audience, and shared insights about the situation on the ground in Bangladesh currently. In the afternoon of the same day, the CCA team met with office bearers of both the YWCA and YMCA. They along with other staff members shared their insights about the good work these two institutions engage in to promote interfaith harmony and peace.

The CCA team took part in a major inter-religious consultation that the NCCB had organized. The consultation attendees included Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and Christian leaders who all gave frank

assessments of the situation in the country and offered suggestions to improve the situation of religious minorities in Bangladesh.

During a visit to the Bangladesh Baptist Church Sangha, the team had discussions about the situation of religious minorities, including Christians, in the country.

By listening to individuals as well as through community dialogue with several leaders of church-based institutions, secular organizations, and interfaith groups, the Pastoral Solidarity Team members learned about the economic, political, and cultural situation in Bangladesh today. The team members were in solidarity with the churches and communities facing persecution and religiously motivated violence in Bangladesh.

International Mother's Day

14 May 2017 / Lahore, Pakistan

The Ecumenical Women's Action against Violence initiated a campaign to create awareness on health concerns of women/mothers on International Mother's Day.

The Ecumenical Women's Fellowship of Pakistan organized awareness sessions on

breast cancer and cervical cancer on Mother's Day in different congregations in Lahore; these included the Naulakha Presbyterian Church, the Holy Trinity Church and the Salvation Army. It was a month-long campaign and different health awareness sessions were organised in different churches. It also collaborated with United Christian Hospital in Lahore to offer discounted rates for different medical tests and health check-ups for women from May 14- 21, 2017. Community members were also encouraged to plant trees for their mothers on the last Sunday of May.

Young Ambassadors of Peace in Asia (YAPA)

28 May - 3 June 2017 / Chiang Mai, Thailand

The second Young Ambassadors of Peace in Asia (YAPA), a week-long training programme initiated by the CCA as part of its new programme thrust, was organised from 28 May to 3 June at the Payap University in Chiang Mai, Thailand. YAPA training programme sought to facilitate the role of young people as ambassadors of change in peace-building processes, and to build a network of young peace builders in Asia bridging the missing links in promoting peace



Participants of YAPA - 2017

*YAPA Training Session*

in society. The training programme consisted of interactive sessions on non-violence and peace with justice through theological foundations of peace from various religious perspectives, skill development to peace implementation programmes at the grassroots level. The programme further buoyed up the young people to be peace makers not among humans alone but the whole creation commencing from one's own inner self.

The YAPA-2017 theme was based on peace with justice in the different religious traditions. The different sessions dealt with interfaith perspectives of peace in the community, peace with the Earth, and peace among the peoples. For one week, 25 Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, and Hindu participants from different parts of Asia, between 20 and 30 years old, interacted not only with resource persons but also among themselves, building bridges of mutual understanding. The participants from Bangladesh, Indonesia, India, Myanmar, New Zealand, Pakistan,

Philippines, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Taiwan and Thailand interacted with representatives from the Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim communities who are committed to promoting interfaith collaboration in peace-building and conflict resolution. Dr. Mathews George Chunakara gave the keynote speech about "Peace with Justice in the Household of God: Asian Perspectives," by which he set the tone for the week-long program.

The participants spent one day visiting different places of worship in order to hear first-hand accounts from the religions about various issues related to justice and peace. During the field visit day, the group visited the Wat Pra Sri Suphan Buddhist temple, the Hindu Devi Mandir, the Sikh Gurudwara as well as the Seven Fountains Christian Center; the Asian youth experienced interfaith religious services and engaged themselves in question-and-answer sessions with religious leaders from the different faith groups. Dr. Suchart Setthamalineee gave an in-depth

presentation on "Peace with Justice: An Islamic Perspective." Phra Kanchai Muninkam, who was one of the two Buddhist monks who participated in YAPA, discussed the Buddhist perspective of peace and also led the group in practising sitting and standing meditation on campus.

The Biblico-Theological Reflections for this group centered on "Peace with Justice in the Bible." Each YAPA participant presented a country report about the economic, political, social, and cultural situation obtaining in their communities and countries, which covered diverse issues, among which were the following: land issues, militarization, human rights, religious conflicts, and geopolitical issues.

Brig. Dr. V. A. Abraham of India lectured on "Peace and Conflict Transformation," "Peace-building: Practical Approaches," "Peace and Conflict Resolution through Education," and "Practical Approaches to Conflict Settlement." The interactive sessions provided an orientation to conducting volunteer community service as well as preparing action plans, after which each participant prepared their concrete action plans for community projects that promoted justice and peace in their communities. The projects were implemented at the latest three months after the participants returned to their home countries. The participants also shared their reports in a closed group in social media, in which they shared information and photos about the implementation of their projects, problems to which colleagues provided helpful suggestions, best practices, and lessons learned for peace activists.

At the end of the program, all the participants learned about peace based on justice across religious lines. One participant gave a feedback which praised the programme for the quality of its content and organization. One of the

participants opined that "this program is very much what I want to do in my area of work. I learned not only the way you organized it but also the content. Some lecturers were fascinating and eye-opening. I was also very interested in the field trip. This trip is necessary if we want to get in touch with other religious communities."

National Consultation on 'Ecumenical Women's Action against Violence' – (EWAV)

2-3 June 2017 / Dhaka, Bangladesh

Violence against women and girls in Bangladesh is a harsh reality and deeply rooted in its historical, social, and political contexts where structures and functioning of government, social institutions, and the law contribute to its persistence. Women and girls in Bangladesh face a wide range of violence throughout their lives. These include: intimate partner violence, domestic violence, child abuse, sexual harassment, child marriage, and trafficking. Other issues that are particularly constant in Bangladesh and other South Asian countries are high female child mortality, honor crimes and dowry-related violence. Religious institutions and norms across the region also reinforce unequal gender relations and contribute immensely to violence against women. Many governmental policies and services continue to reflect a gender bias. Despite having legal protection against several forms of violence, legal systems are still struggling to overcome barriers that obstruct reform. They also have to contend with significant structural deficiencies that prevent women from accessing justice.

The violence that women and girls are subjected to throughout their lives prevents them from realizing their rights as human beings and as equal citizens. Women suffer direct consequences of their physical, sexual, and emotional health. Violence affects girls'



Participants of EWAV Bangladesh National Consultation in Dhaka

and women's abilities to fully benefit from and participate in schooling and employment, thus limiting their opportunities for an education and a career. Patriarchy in South Asian societies creates other circumstances that perpetuate social norms conducive to continuing violence against women and girls.

As a step towards strengthening the ecumenical initiative of church women against violence, the CCA in collaboration with the National Council of Churches in Bangladesh (NCCB) organized a one-day consultation on "Ecumenical Women's Action against Violence" and a solidarity visit to different church women groups in Dhaka, Bangladesh from June 2-3, 2017.

A session dealt with the theme "Sustainable Development Goal for Achieving Gender Equality"; it was observed that the 2030 Agenda offers a real opportunity to drive lasting change in women's rights and equality, and to bring transformative change in women's and men's lives. Full implementation of Goal 5, – achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls – matters because it has the potential to transform unequal power relations between women and men and address structural barriers impeding

progress. We need to pledge collectively to create awareness on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), develop international and national mechanisms for women's empowerment and prevention of violence against women, urge concrete commitments, and position gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment at the centre of the national, societal and church agenda. The Church must join hands with governments to achieve these goals.

Education is a basic human right, but Bangladesh as a developing country needs to pay special attention to female education. It is a common practice among rural households in South Asian countries not to send young girls to school as the general perception is that females are born merely to run households and take care of family and children. It is highly important to give education to young girls as we need educated women to run our society and country.

Women participants also had active discussions specially on re-reading the Bible/ feminist theology. They appreciated CCA's efforts in organizing a national program for women in Bangladesh and equipping them with the skill to re-read the Bible through a

woman's eyes. They also agreed on creating awareness on SDGs, international and national mechanism for women empowerment and prevention of violence against women.

Sub-Regional Consultation on 'Ecumenical Women's Action against Violence and Building Peace'

16-20 July 2017/ Bangkok, Thailand

Violence against women and children is the most pervasive violation of human rights. At least one out of every three women around the world will be beaten, forced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime, according to studies by the UN. Violence against women ruins lives, fractures families and communities, and halts development. Economic hardship, coupled with discrimination and inequality, heightens women's vulnerability to violence, keeps them dependent and limits their options. Statistics paint a horrifying picture of the social and health consequences of violence against women and children. For

women in the 15 to 44 age group, violence is a major cause of death and disability. Rape and domestic and intimate partner violence are higher risk factors for women in this age-group than cancer, motor vehicle accidents, war and malaria, says the World Health Organization.

In South and Southeast Asia, the widespread prevalence of violence against women is a serious issue, particularly with regard to domestic violence and marital rape, child marriages, and trafficking in women and girls. Despite considerable progress in establishing policies and programs, implementation has been slow. This gap is largely the result of deeply entrenched cultural values, attitudes and practices that are rooted in gender stereotype and ultimately justify exploitative behavior and violence against women.

The CCA aims to provide maximum opportunities for women to engage in the ecumenical movement and facilitate networks of women in church and society to come together on a



Participants of Regional Consultation on 'Ecumenical Women's Action against Violence and Building Peace' in Bangkok



Participants of Consultation on 'Ecumenical Women's Action against Violence and Building Peace'

common platform with the agenda of promoting a culture of peace by preventing violence against women, and increasing women's participation and leadership in peace-building initiatives in Asia.

In order to create these local and sub-regional networks of ecumenical women in South Asia and South East Asia for effective advocacy for the rights and dignity of women, the CCA organised a sub-regional Consultation for the Church women of South and Southeast Asia on "*Ecumenical Women's Action Against Violence and Building Peace*" from July 16-20 2017, at Bangkok Christian Guest House, Bangkok, Thailand. 29 church women leaders from South and Southeast Asian countries participated in the consultation.

The consultation took off with an opening worship and theological reflections led by Rev. Krise Gosal, Associate General Secretary,

Communion of Churches in Indonesia. She said that patriarchy is deeply rooted in Indonesian culture for centuries and give power to men over women. She quoted John Calvin, a Protestant Reformer, to emphasize that women and men are both created in the image of God, "the image of God exists in the soul: For although God's glory shines forth in the outer human, yet there is no doubt that the proper seat of his image is in the soul". People in some ways reflect God the way a mirror reflects images; it manifests in their relationship with each other as well as with people in communion with God. Karl Barth, the Protestant theologian, commented "when two people share in communication and love with one another or with God, they are doing the activity of the trinity. The better the human relationship, the more closely they reflect the members of the trinity". Humans are made in the image of God, thus it is imperative for us to look beyond our qualities

and reflect on our doings as we follow God's will. We as co-workers and creation will be responsible for realizing God's plan and purposes. The moral implications of the doctrine of image of God are apparent in the fact that if humans are to love God, then humans must love other humans as each is an expression of God. Thus our life is an "imago dei" celebration, celebrating God's appreciation of us; God created us to reflect God's attributes to our fellow human beings and other fellow creatures. The Church is called to continue God's work of salvation for the world, liberate the oppressed and participate in the mission of God as co-workers.

Participants shared the stories of women struggling for peace from their national and local contexts. It was also shared that various ecumenical actions have been taken by women in their local settings.

Bible studies with women's perspectives were one of foci of the programme, which was led by Rev. Moumita Biswas, Executive Secretary of the National Council of Churches in India. The theme of her presentation was titled "Discerning Dinah's Voice" from Genesis 34: 1-31. She talked about honour killings, sexual violence and human trafficking in the context of "Giving Voice to Unnamed Unheard Sisters of Esther".

The consultation was also an avenue for the participants to reflect on the various contemporary issues in Asia that affects women adversely.

Ms. Kathy Taylor, Manager, Partners for Prevention: Working to Prevent Gender-based Violence, a joint programme of UNDP, UNFPA, UN Women and UN Volunteers for Asia and the Pacific, told participants that "Women are at risk of physical and/or sexual violence by

intimate partners (current/former boyfriends and husbands) and non-partners". Most non-partner perpetrators of physical violence are male family members (fathers, step-fathers, and brothers) and in-laws (mothers- and fathers-in-laws). Non-partner perpetrators also include male acquaintances and strangers. Majority of women who experience intimate partner violence (IPV) often experience multiple forms of violence and endure repeated acts of psychological, physical, and sexual violence from their husbands/boyfriends. Violence against women or VAW have negative economic, individual and societal impacts. VAW causes death, disability and poor health of women; reduces access to education, water and sanitation; limits women's mobility and safe use of public space; and perpetrates a culture of impunity that affects countries' economies.

Women often experience multiple forms of violence and hence the solution to address violence should work across all levels of society; individual, relationships, community and societal. The use of gender transformative curriculums and an education that promotes a critical reflection about masculinity, inclusive participation of girls and women, and reinforces positive gender roles and relations can be helpful. The effective implementation of VAW specific laws will reduce impunity and empower women and girls.

Domestic workers are vulnerable to sexual and physical violence as well as excessive working hours and other mistreatment, even if not initially intended. Vulnerability of domestic workers is compounded by their isolation and the informal nature of their work – lack of contracts or contract substitution. Cases of women and children being beaten or starved to death at domestic work locations have been noted in a number of countries.



Participants of Consultation on Ecumenical Women's Action against Violence in Lao PDR

National Consultation on Ecumenical Women's Action against Violence

27-28 November 2017 / Vientiane, Laos PDR

A national consultation on "Ecumenical Women's Action Against Violence" for the women leaders of the Lao Evangelical Church (LEC) was organised from 27 to 28 November 2017 in Vientiane, Lao People's Democratic Republic (LPDR). This consultation was a follow-up of the regional consultation held in July 2017.

About 50 women – pastors, church workers and lay leaders – from different parts of Laos attended the training which aimed to address issues of violence faced by women pastors and church workers in their local context, to nurture ecumenical and women's perspective in their missionary work and to provide non-formal theological education.

Consultation started with a vibrant opening worship led by the women's committee of LEC and was followed by a theological reflection by Rev. Dr. Khamphone Kounthapanay. He encouraged all participants to stand up against the violence that is shattering our communities and build peace by embodying the work of Christ. Rev. Chuleepran Srisoontorn introduced the CCA and its involvement and leadership in the ecumenical movement in Asia. It was then followed by interactive sessions on understanding gender and gender-based violence which gave the participants confidence to share and speak about their issues in the context of Laos. Elder Kummool and Rev. Dr. Chuleepran led a theological discussion on women's leadership in the Bible: through re-reading the story of 'Deborah'. It helped participants to understand our Call and to be prophetic as Deborah to lead our nation today. Re-reading the story of 'Leah' and 'Dena' helped participants to understand violence against women in



families and the story of Vashti gave them the courage to break the silence in Affirming their Rights and Dignity. The story of Ruth and Naomi was the perfect example of women's solidarity and support for each other.

Various sessions of the workshop covered ways of empowering communities for overcoming increasing violence against women in Lao society. The experiences shared by the participants analysed how violence affects women's general well-being negatively and prevents them from fully participating in society. Violence has negative consequences not only for women but also their families, the community and the country at large. The participants shared local experiences of violence against women in Laos and highlighted the importance of mobilising church women to be engaged in advocacy on ending violence against women using national, international and regional mechanisms/instruments at various levels.

"The Lao Church women will participate in efforts for strengthening ecumenical women's networks in partnership with local communities and organisations to combat violence against women and build peace in communities,"

affirmed the participants of the workshop at the closing session.

National Consultation on Ecumenical Women's Action against Violence

29 - 30 November 2017/ Colombo, Sri Lanka

After decades of civil war, Sri Lanka is making great progress in terms of health and education. However violence against women is on the rise. The Women's U.N. Report Network says 30 to 40 percent of women in Sri Lanka today suffer from some kind of violence, while more than 60 percent of women across Sri Lanka are victims of domestic violence. Women are routinely harassed both verbally and physically while traveling by bus, train or even while walking on the street.

The national consultation organised by the CCA on "Ecumenical Women's Action against Violence: Post-War Situation in Sri Lanka" in collaboration with the National Christian Council in Sri Lanka (NCCSL) was held in Colombo on 29-30 November, 2017.



Participants of National Consultation in Colombo, Sri Lanka

Twenty-five women from various churches and different parts of Sri Lanka participated in the consultation; they belonged to Sinhala, Tamil and other ethnic groups. The focus of the consultation was analyzing the present situation of violence against women in Sri Lanka and highlighting the churches' stance on its prevention; mobilizing church women in Sri Lanka to be engaged in advocacy on violence against women using national, international and regional mechanisms/instruments at various levels and strengthening ecumenical women's networks and action against violence at national level.

Addressing the participants, CCA General Secretary Dr. Mathews George Chunakara introduced the CCA's new programme thrust of empowerment and ecumenical leadership development of women. The General Secretary further added that CCA will organize an Asian Ecumenical Women's Assembly (AEWA) in February 2019, which will be hosted by the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan.

The consultation provided various sessions and opportunities for participants to deeply and critically analyze the situation of women and the difficult challenges they face in the post-war situation, especially the situation of war widows and women working in the plantation sectors.

"Despite far-reaching economic, social and political developments in Sri Lanka over the last century or so, Sri Lankan women continue to occupy a subordinate status," said Ms. Deekshya Illangasinghe, Executive Director, South Asians for Human Rights. She added that while women are not subjected to extreme forms of oppression, many adverse structures and forces contribute to the continuing subordination of Sri Lankan women. For example, the patriarchal social structure, woman's role in the family, traditional values, rituals and myths, the

division of labour and unequal pay, and women's lack of participation in politics.

Entering a public or private workplace, one would see a fairly large number of women, sometimes outnumbering men. Many Sri Lankans interpret this as an indicator of the status of women in Sri Lankan society, and some also argue that women have equal status and independence in the society. However, the hidden reality is that, on the whole, women hold minor positions with low status and low pay in the work force.

The high incidences of gender-based violence including rape, gang rape and murder of women has been documented over several decades in research, and has received a great deal of media attention during the armed conflict and even very recently. Participants from different parts of Sri Lanka shared stories of how in recent months the country witnessed a wave of women-led protests in the north and east of Sri Lanka. Women's campaigns have focused on lack of reform in the security sector; the impunity that greets gender-based violence and demands for truth about missing people. Tamil women in the northern and eastern parts of Sri Lanka, households headed by women, single women, internally displaced women, war widows, and female combatants continue to suffer discrimination, sexual and gender-based violence, harassment and abuse, from within their own community and from the authorities including at the hands of the military. In the transnational justice process, the participation and consultation of women victims has been negligible. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in its 2017 review of Sri Lanka expressed concerns about the under-representation of women in peace-building, reconstruction and reconciliation process.

There is no/minimum protection of women working in the informal sector including

women's access to social security and other benefits. There is minimum reproductive health education, accessible to all women, including to internally displaced women and women in less-developed and conflict-affected areas. Migrant women continue to suffer exploitation, gender-based violence and abuse perpetrated by their employers. While honor killings are not reported, the virginity test at marriage is a violation of the rights of women. The unemployment rates of women are more than double that of men at all age levels. There is a large concentration of economically active women in unpaid family labour, particularly in agriculture (ADB, 2015 report). The Muslim community, especially in rural communities, practices female genital cutting (FGC) extremely secretly. The practice is purely to control female sexuality because of the community's belief that if the women do not experience sexual pleasure, they will abide by their husbands and reproduce only for their husbands.

Christ affirmed women and treated them with dignity, respect and honour. They were equally called to the ministry. When we read the gospels, we see a strong band of women who were with Jesus and who surrendered their time, skills, wealth and life at the feet of Jesus. They were with him at the most crucial times in his ministry - birth, ministry of teaching and healing, triumphal entry, crucifixion, burial in the tomb and the resurrection. The early church would not have thrived if not for the women who opened their homes for the house churches.

The participants also shared experiences of women in post-war Sri Lanka and reported that about 40 per cent of women in Sri Lanka today suffer from some kind of violence, while more than 60 per cent of women across the country are victims of domestic violence and at least 85,000 widows have been identified

in Sri Lanka's conflict-affected areas since the end of the civil war.

The church is also not an exception. Violence exists in the church too. There are women clergy but no conversation towards women bishops. Many churches expect women to do stereotypical roles such as arranging flowers, making tea, teaching in the Sunday school, singing in the choir and keeping the church linen clean and in order. In many convents, nuns are responsible for making the altar linen and vestments for the male clergy.

The participants highlighted the importance of mobilising women and men in the church and working beyond the church boundaries to change gender roles and engage in advocacy on violence against women and gender equality using biblical and theological rationale; and national, international and regional mechanisms at various levels. A plan of action developed by the participants proposed to continue the journey of empowerment and justice for women, and committed to create a network and coalition of women at the local level to give awareness and transformation of communities. The participants opined that increased theological, conceptual, moral, and practical awareness was required among churches to ensure gender justice, equity, and equality to combat the increasing violence against women.

Pastoral Solidarity Visit to West Papua

4-8 December 2017 / West Papua

A long-delayed pastoral solidarity visit to Papua was an expression of the CCA's commitment to its member church Gereja Kristen Injili di Tanah Papua (GKI) and the people of West Papua.

The situation in West Papua has been precarious due to various reasons. Churches in West Papua need pastoral and solidarity



Members of the delegation of the Pastoral Solidarity Team visited West Papua with the leaders of GKI

accompaniment, especially when they live in vulnerable situations. The CCA organised pastoral solidarity team visits to West Papua in 2017.

The ongoing repression of human rights in West Papua includes the passing of laws that suppress freedom of the press, freedom of speech and freedom of association. Peaceful demonstrations are dispersed by force. In many instances, non-violent participants have been arrested and tortured, while others have been killed. Many prisoners and human rights activists have died while in detention. Reports of torture and ill treatment of political detainees have also increased. Violations of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights are going on. The majority of indigenous Papuans continue to suffer as their lands have been confiscated; natural resources have been exploited by non-Papuans settled through government's transmigration policies

over the years. About 80% of the indigenous Papuans, the original sons and daughters of the land, now live in poverty without access to medical care, safe drinking water or education. They are constantly under attack by security forces.

Upon the invitation of CCA's member church, Gereja Kristen Indonesia (GKI) (Indonesia Christian Church), the CCA organized a Pastoral Solidarity Visit to West Papua. The objectives of the visit was to accompany churches and communities in conflict-ridden and post-conflict countries and express solidarity with the suffering and struggling of people and communities; to assist the Asian churches in understanding the situations by listening to grievances of affected communities; and, to advocate for the redress of the grievances of people in conflict situations.

During the visit, Jan Bastian Rumbrar and Dr. Fransina Yoteni graciously accompanied the members of the CCA team, which was composed of Bishop Daniel Thiagarajah from Sri Lanka, Rev. Cindy Huang from Taiwan, and Dr. Rey Ty from Thailand. The three-member team heard stories of grave human rights violations and repression against the indigenous West Papuans in their own homeland. The visit of the CCA delegation included meetings with members of the Papuan Parliament, the Office of the Governor of Papua, interactions with the faculty members and students of the Izaak Samuel Kijne Theological College, GKI Jayapura Presbytery, the GKI Synod Board and staff members and also meetings with leaders of different churches and communities in Sentani.

Upon arrival after a long journey from different countries on December 4, 2017, the team paid a courtesy visit to the board members of the GKI Synod at its headquarters in the morning. In the afternoon, the team had several meetings with faculty, staff, and students of the Izaak Samuel Kijne Theological College. In the evening, the team attended a Christian party for Papuan schoolchildren which the Theological College students in the Christian education program organized. The Theological College provided a rare opportunity for less fortunate students to enjoy Christmas without breaking the bank. The children belonging to different age groups were aglow with excitement.

The team paid courtesy calls to both the Office of the Governor of Papua and the Papua Parliament, during which representatives from both bodies confided that the situation is dismal for the indigenous Papuans, who only get crumbs, especially as most of the jobs and resources are in the hands of trans-migrants and spontaneous migrants from

other islands. The efforts at autonomy have failed miserably.

After meeting with government officials and elected representatives, the team had dialogue with many members of non-governmental and civil society organizations. Some shared testimonies of their personal sufferings, experiences, and the hardships Papuans face, while others talked about the need to move forward, plan, and implement actions locally, nationally, regionally, and internationally that promote the well-being, dignity, and rights of the indigenous Papuan people. "Impunity for the human rights abuses by the police and the military is a growing concern; the Special Autonomy Law is a dismal failure, as it did not meet the basic needs of the indigenous people of West Papua", noted the community leaders and civil society representatives.

The team heard stories and experiences from the local Papuans. They learnt that, "the Indonesian government systematically restricts the right to freedom of the press as well as the initiatives of West Papuans who come forward to monitor human rights violations. Many indigenous West Papuans are being arrested and detained for non-violent expressions of their political opinion. The indigenous West Papuans constantly face discrimination as well as violent attacks. Peaceful demonstrations are often dispersed by force. In many instances, non-violent participants have been arrested, detained and tortured, while others have been killed. Many prisoners and human rights activists have died while in detention. Reports of torture and ill treatment of political detainees have been increasing. Civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights are being violated".

As a result of the pastoral solidarity visit, the delegation learned first-hand about the pain and suffering of the people of West Papua.

There is now an increased sense of solidarity and commitment by Asian churches about churches in conflict regions and situations. There is a heightened awareness and empathy among members about the issue.

“CCA’s visit to West Papua was an opportunity to express solidarity with the struggling West Papuan indigenous people and listen to their grievances on behalf of CCA’s member constituencies and the Asian ecumenical movement”, said Bishop Dr. Daniel S. Thiagarajah from Sri Lanka, a member of CCA’s programme committee.

The delegation was informed that many indigenous West Papuans and others are infected with HIV/AIDS. The delegation visited the Walihole HIV/AIDS Clinic and the GKI Women’s Center. The church responds to the epidemic by setting up an HIV/AIDS clinic that serves people in need of care. The church plays an active role in empowering the indigenous West Papuan women.

During the meetings, the CCA delegation was told by West Papuan community leaders that the international community should come forward to implore the Indonesian government to stop human rights abuses in West Papua and to respect and protect the human dignity of West Papuans; to support the appeal of West Papuans to the government of Indonesia to open the doors for dialogue in order to seek a just and dignified political solution and respect the rights and dignity of the indigenous people of West Papua to determine their own future through an all-inclusive Papua-Indonesia national dialogue.

End Violence Against Women and Children

16 Days of Activism, 10 December 2017 / Lahore, Pakistan

From 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, to 10 December, Human Rights Day, the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign is a time to electrify action to end violence against women and girls around the world. These two dates highlight that violence against women is a human rights abuse. During these 16 days, ecumenical organizations around the globe, churches and communities coordinate or participate in an event to unite in the struggle to end violence against women. The international campaign originated from the first Women’s Global Leadership Institute and was coordinated by the Center for Women’s Global Leadership in 1991.

In 2017, the UNiTE Campaign marked the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence under the overarching theme, “Leave No One Behind: End Violence against Women and Girls”— reflecting the commitment to a world free from violence for all women and girls around the world.

The CCA joined the Ecumenical Women’s Fellowship in Pakistan in a workshop on December 10, 2017 introducing the UNiTE Campaign and 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence to the women fellowship of Presbyterian Church at FC College, Lahore.

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.

Consultation on Rights and Dignity of Manual Scavengers and Advocacy on Abolition of Manual Scavenging in India

23-28 April 2017 / Chennai, India

Manual scavenging, which includes the removal of human waste from dry latrines, is prevalent in Indian cities and villages. Manual scavenging involves moving the excreta, using brooms and tin plates, into baskets, which the workers carry to disposal locations, sometimes several kilometers away. The workers, called scavengers, wear practically no protective equipment. The term is mainly used in the Indian context only. In 1993, India prohibited through law the employment of manual scavengers to empty “dry toilets” and it was extended ten years later to include insanitary latrines, ditches and pits. According to Socio Economic Caste Census 2011, 180,657 households are engaged in manual scavenging for a livelihood. The 2011 Census of India found 794,000 cases of manual scavenging across India. Maharashtra, with 63,713, tops the list with the largest number of households working as manual scavengers, followed Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Tripura, and Karnataka.

In 2014, the Supreme Court of India estimated that 9.4 million dry latrines were being cleaned by people belonging to the Dalit community. With this in mind, the CCA, in collaboration with the National Council of Churches in India (NCCI) and the Church of South India (CSI), organised a consultation on the abolition of manual scavenging. The goal of this programme was to build awareness among churches about the plight of manual scavengers and to create an international platform for global advocacy on the abolition of manual scavenging in India. Forty-eight persons from various member churches of the CCA and NCCI in India attended the meeting. Several manual scavengers

themselves shared their personal stories of discrimination, struggle, and work for human dignity and rights.

The delegates participated in the worship service specially prepared for the conference. Rev. Asir Ebenezer, the Director of CSI SEVA, explained the agenda of the conference. Rev. Christopher Rajkumar, the Executive Secretary of NCCI, gave the vote of thanks at the inaugural session.

The keynote was delivered by Mr. Bezwada Wilson, Magsaysay Award Winner of 2016 and founder of the Safai Karmachari Aandolan, an Indian human rights organisation that campaigns for the eradication of manual scavenging. In his address, Mr. Bezwada stated that, “the bottom line of the mission mandate is to defend and advocate for human rights, and affirm the life of every human with respect and dignity.” “Although the mission of the Church is to find the lost, it needs to intensify its missional interventions by relocating its mission from the centre to the margins with needed and relevant strategies,” Mr. Wilson said. He further added that the Church has a lot of infrastructure and human and financial resources and that it would be appropriate for the churches to pool in their resources in order to abolish inhuman and un-Christian ideologies like casteism and practices like manual scavenging.

The consultation was opened jointly by NCCI general secretary Rev. Dr. Roger Gaikwad and CSI General Secretary Rev. Dr. Ratnakar Sadanand. “The practice of manual scavenging is a sin against God and God’s people,” Rev. Roger Gaikwad said. Rev. Ratnakar Sadanand reminded churches of their call to propagate the gospel of justice, peace and love, and invited churches to expand their missional interventions by joining hands with, and accompanying, secular liberation movements. Dr. Rey Ty (CCA Program Executive on

Prophetic Diakonia and Advocacy) brought greetings from the CCA and stated that there should be a clear idea what the Indian church people need from the grassroots and what the Church could do to tackle and abolish manual scavenging in India. Dr. Esther Kathiroti, Secretary, Tamil Nadu Christian Council (TNCC) affirmed that the TNCC was ready to join hands in the fight to abolish manual scavenging. She avowed that manual scavenging would inevitably be abolished once the caste system is abolished.

During this consultation, participants belonging to different churches from different parts of India became aware of the concerns to uphold the dignity and human rights of communities that are engaged in manual scavenging. The participants urged churches to take the lead in ensuring the effective implementation of a law passed by the Indian Parliament in 2013 to end manual scavenging practices in the country. Specifically, they became aware of "The Prohibition of working as a manual scavenger and their Rehabilitation Act 2013" and the impediments in implementing the Act.

The CCA emphasised the importance of international advocacy on the abolition of manual scavenging, including resorting to the UN human rights mechanisms. The issue of manual scavenging should be addressed within the human rights and human dignity perspectives.

As a result of a closing workshop, participants planned a course of action to accompany persons subjected to manual scavenging and their families to an alternate life in fullness, by extending education, employment opportunities and other accompaniments that will be required. The participants called for the acknowledgement of the practice of manual scavenging as a sin and strongly advocated the 2013 Act, and its effective

implementation at all levels. They worked out an advocacy plan to monitor the implementation of the 2013 Act through church and community mobilization processes, including pushing for adequate implementation mechanisms and processes to operationalise the 2013 Act.

"Churches should not be silent witnesses to manual scavenging and should work collectively to abolish the employment of manual scavengers and accompany them towards gaining their full respect and dignity, following Jesus' model of ministries as a faithful response to affirm life, dignity and respect of all created in God's image," affirmed the participants.

In the valedictory address on the third day of the consultation, Dr. Mathews George Chunakara emphasised the importance of an international advocacy on the abolition of manual scavenging, including the UN human rights mechanisms. "The issue of manual scavenging should be addressed within human rights and human dignity perspectives and the CCA is committed to facilitate and accompany such advocacy initiatives," the CCA General Secretary added.

Dr. Rey Ty facilitated workshop sessions on how to be engaged in advocacy on the issue of manual scavenging from the Human Rights Framework. Ms. Deepthi Sukumar, Rev. Christopher Rajkumar, Rev. Asir Ebenezer and Rev. Logan Samuel Rajakumar facilitated various workshop sessions.

The consultation ended with a communiqué that declared manual scavenging as the worst surviving symbol of caste-based discrimination, a sin against God and God's people, and a grave abuse of human rights and dignity. The participants pledged to accompany the manual scavengers with missional and diaconal expressions, such as education,

health care, and new skills to support alternative livelihoods. About 48 participants attended the consultation from various member churches of the CCA and NCCI in India.

Asia Consultation on Migration and Human Trafficking: A Call for Decent Work

8-11 October 2017 / Yangon, Myanmar

The CCA has been organizing consultations on an annual basis since 2013, on the alarming trend of human trafficking. In 2017, the focus was on migration and human trafficking within the framework for calling attention on decent work.

In the massive movement of people struggling to survive, the rights of people for decent work are being denied and neglected; forced migration and labour trafficking, especially in the Asian region, become the norm. In this context, the CCA, the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP), Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants (APMM), and the Myanmar Council of Churches, organized a consultation on “Migration and Labour Trafficking in Asia: A Call for Decent Work”. The consultation identified common issues in the region that define the relationships between human labour trafficking and the policies that ensure temporary labour migration in the host countries vis-à-vis the labour export program of the sending countries. The need for establishing stronger ties between churches, civil society organisations (CSOs) including service providers, and grassroots migrants was emphasized in calling for decent work for migrants and at the same time addressing the concern of human labour trafficking in the region. The participants developed a common statement reflecting the importance of the demands of migrants for decent work and its linkages to combat human labour trafficking.

Rich with stories and experiences to share, the 40 participants in this consultation came from Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand, the USA, and Vietnam.

Dr. Mathews George Chunakara gave the keynote speech on “Migration and Human Trafficking: A Call for Decent Work.” Trafficked victims are often required to work long hours; their wages are withheld; they are deprived of overtime pay; and, often have their passports and other vital documents confiscated. They are paid less than the local workers in similar jobs, are at greater risk of industrial accidents and are without access to adequate medical treatment or compensation. Migrants live at the mercy of their employers and face restrictions in changing jobs, making them particularly vulnerable to all forms of abuse (sexual, physical and emotional) and exploitation.

The first panel discussion centered on “The Drivers of Migration and Temporary Work.” Panelists shared information about the root causes of forced migration and how migrants in many receiving countries are treated as temporary workers. It speaks volumes about the realities of migration in the Asian region - migration is rooted in the poverty, unemployment and landlessness suffered by millions of people in many underdeveloped and developing countries in Asia. Existing migrant policies in many receiving countries limit the space, mobility and opportunity of migrants to enjoy their basic human rights. They are often discriminatory and worsens the already vulnerable situation of migrants.

The mother of Mary Jane Veloso, a human trafficking victim from the Philippines who is now languishing in a prison cell in Indonesia, gave a haunting testimony of an actual case of human trafficking. Through an interpreter,

her mother narrated how Mary Jane was victimized, the ordeal she now faces at the hands of the criminal justice system in Indonesia, and the efforts of several church groups and NGOs in Indonesia, the Philippines, and globally, to obtain clemency for her.

Participants from different parts of Asia presented their country reports. They talked about the human trafficking problem in Cambodia, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam.

The second and third panel discussion sessions focused on "Experiences on the Ground in Combating Labour Trafficking in terms of service provisions to victims". Representatives from different organizations shared their insights; among them were the Mission for Migrant Workers (MFMW-Hong Kong), Humanitarian Organization for Migration Economics (HOME Singapore), Migrant Workers' Rights Network (MWRN Thailand), TENAGANITA Malaysia, Rev. Marie Sol Villalon of the Philippine Movement Against Human Trafficking (PMAHT), South Korea, and Krise Gosal of Persetuan Gereja Indonesia (PGI). Speakers shared their experiences and challenges in combating labour trafficking and the need to empower and journey with victims to reclaim their human rights and dignity. Human labour trafficking or forced labour that victimizes migrants in the region is strongly related to illegal recruitment practices that include the collection of excessive placement fees from the workers in exchange for work abroad. Recruiters charge monstrous job placement fees that lead to situations of debt bondage of migrant workers. Human labour trafficking comes in various forms, and capitalize on the need of people to escape poverty and find decent work that can give them a decent living.

The panel discussion that dealt with the issue of "Global & Regional Initiatives on Decent Work" were led by representatives from International Migrants Alliance (IMA) – Glorene Das; TENAGANITA, Malaysia; Churches Witnessing With Migrants (CWWM) – Rev. Dr. Liberato C. Bautista; Assistant General Secretary, General Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist; and Global Alliance Against Trafficking of Women (GAATW). The panelists expressed their convictions according to which global and regional initiatives in supporting the struggle of migrants for decent work, as a response to forced migration and human trafficking for labour, are important. They recognized the strength of grassroots movement in carrying the campaign against human labour trafficking from the grassroots level up to regional and global levels.

At the end of the consultation, a communiqué was issued that called for churches, ecumenical and faith-based organizations together with different migrant-serving institutions, grassroots migrants and trade unions in Asia to manifest their solidarity to the struggle of migrants. We must combat human labour trafficking by joining the call for decent work both at countries of origin and receiving countries. Participants attended the human trafficking consultation as a pre-event, after which they all joined the Asian Mission Conference, both of which were held in Yangon, Myanmar.

Asia Regional Consultation on 'Disabled People; Strength in Weakness and Quest for Dignity: Ecumenical Advocacy in Asia'

9-11 October 2017/ Yangon, Myanmar

One in every six persons in Asia has some form of disability, and they number about 650 million. This number is expected to rise over the next few decades due to ageing



Participants of AEDAN Consultation in Yangon

populations, natural disasters, conflicts and war, chronic health conditions, road accidents and related injuries, poor working conditions, and other factors. Despite the constant increase in their numbers, persons with disabilities tend to be unseen, unheard, and uncounted. They are often excluded from access to education, employment, social protection services, and legal support systems, and are subject to disproportionately high rates of poverty and sexual abuse. They continue to face barriers in their participation as equal members of society. Disability affects hundreds of thousands of families in Asia. The two-way link between poverty and disability creates a vicious circle. Poor people are more at risk of disability because of lack of access to good nutrition, health care, sanitation as well as safe living and working conditions. Disabled people face barriers in education, employment, and public services. In many contexts, churches also have not properly recognized people with disabilities in their congregations or communities. They face

isolation from friends and family members as well as from members of their community. Such exclusion isolates them from active involvement in spiritual life. The Church should be a “caring and inclusive” community for them. But often, people with disabilities are unable to enter church buildings or church-related institutions in most Asian countries because the buildings do not have access facilities such as ramps and lifts.

The issue of disability has not been addressed by the CCA with as much importance as it should have been. In 2005, the CCA and the WCC’s Ecumenical Disability Advocacy Network (EDAN) with the support of WCC Asia Desk organized a consultation to initiate an advocacy network of disabled persons from Asian churches. However, it was not followed up and the initiative became defunct. A revival has come about recently and the new strategic programme direction the CCA identified the ecumenical advocacy on the disabled as a priority programme. The Asia

Regional Consultation on 'Disabled People; Strength in Weakness and Quest for Dignity: Ecumenical Advocacy in Asia' initiated and facilitated an Asian Ecumenical Disability Advocacy Network (AEDAN). The consultation, from 9 to 11 October 2017, was held in conjunction with the AMC in Yangon. The participants of AEDAN attended the five-day AMC too; their presence was a reminder for Asian churches to be more actively involved in this special ministry of witnessing together for the dignity and fullness of life of these otherwise abled people in our churches and communities.

Every day's programme during the AMC started with unique morning devotions. On one day, blind participants composed a chorus and sang to everyone's delight. On another day, deaf participants used sign language for the morning worship and songs. On both occasions, other participants learned, through prayers and Gospel music, something new about people with different abilities.

The consultation had a combination of lectures, discussions, and sharing. Rev. U Thein Lwin, who is with the Myanmar Christian Fellowship of the Blind and a member of the Public Relations Committee of the Myanmar Council of Churches, gave the Biblico-Theological Reflections titled "Disabled People: Strength in Weakness and Quest for Dignity". Ms. Lee Ye-Ja from South Korea presented an overview and the state of the disabled in Asia. Rev. Prof. Stephen Arulampalam, who is a faculty member of the Theological College of Lanka, discussed "Missiological Understanding of Advocacy on Disabled Persons and Their Dignity". Prof. Irwanto of Indonesia discussed the "Rights and Dignity of People with Disabilities: Prophetic Witness of the Church". Three women from the Mary Chapman School for the Deaf in Yangon, Myanmar, namely Principal Daw Nyunt Nyunt Thein, Naw Bway Say Wah, and Naw Shay Myar, gave a joint presentation on "The Image of God in the Disabled."



Sajayakumar, a participant without hands draws a picture with his leg at the AEDAN Consultation

The participants came from Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, and Thailand.

At the end of the consultation, four concrete matters were achieved. One, church people who attended the consultation realised the need to recognize and empower people with disabilities who are often rendered invisible, if not marginalized, in society. Two, an intersection of people with disabilities and church people created a network that supports an Asian ecumenical disabilities advocacy. Three, persons with disabilities were elected and tapped to be members of a core group, which will continue planning and implementing actions for the recognition of the dignity and rights of people with disabilities. Four, a consultation communiqué was issued, which called for the sensitisation of Asian churches and their duty to be mindful and concerned about the special needs of people with disabilities and uphold their dignity as children of God in “caring and inclusive communities”.

Human Rights in Pakistan and Advocacy at the United Nations

11-17 November 2017/ United Nations, Geneva

Since 2003, the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) has accredited the CCA with special consultative status as an international non-governmental organization (NGO). With this status, the CCA facilitates the advocacy of Asian churches in the various areas of concern through regional and international organizations such as the United Nations.

The Constitution of Pakistan guarantees minorities the right to practise their religions. Yet, they face discrimination in law and in practice. Extremist and sectarian groups target religious and ethnic minorities - Hindus, Shiite Muslims, Sufis, Ahmadis, and Christians

- who face high risks, including systematic discrimination, cultural prejudices, intimidation, harassment, persecution, threats, physical attacks, abduction, enforced disappearances, violence against women, rape, forced conversion, forced marriage, misuse of the blasphemy laws, land grabbing, brutal sectarian violence, suicide bombings, extra-judicial killings, and judicial injustice. Religiously motivated violence must be investigated. The right to life and religious freedom of ethnic and religious minorities must be protected. Religiously motivated violence has been on the rise, but law enforcement agencies rarely conduct investigations. Impunity of perpetrators must be curbed, and they must be brought to justice.

Discrimination against religious minorities is embedded in several laws and the Constitution. While some legislative efforts to support minorities exist, effective implementation is lacking. Blasphemy laws strengthen and sustain discriminatory attitudes against ethnic and religious minorities, serving as an institutional and legal platform for religious extremist non-state actors to discriminate against them. Political participation of religious minorities is absent, as the positions of President, Prime Minister, and Speaker of National Assembly are constitutionally reserved only for Muslims.

The CCA is concerned about the plight of ethnic and religious minorities in Pakistan and the high incidence of violence against them and the impunity with which perpetrators act. It has called on the government of Pakistan to adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, which prohibits all forms of discrimination on any ground and provides for effective remedies for victims of discrimination, including within judicial and administrative proceedings. It needs to adopt measures to prevent the misuse of blasphemy



CCA's advocacy on Pakistan human rights at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva

laws, forced conversion and forced marriage. It needs to investigate and prosecute abuses committed by extremist groups. The government must protect minorities all over the country. People who incite violence against religious minorities must be held accountable, the CCA felt.

In 2017, the United Nations accredited a seven-member CCA delegation from Pakistan and other Asian countries to participate in the 28th session of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the Working Group to be held at the UN headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland from 12 to 17 November, 2017. The UN recognised Dr. Mathews George Chunakara as the Chief Executive Officer. Along with him, other Permanent Members are Rev. Kyrie Kim and Dr. Rey Ty, all of whom have Annual Passes to the UN. Other members of the team obtained Temporary Passes, including Bishop Philip Huggins, Bishop Humphrey Peters, Cecil Chaudhry, and Sobia John.

The human rights situation was under review at the United Nations session from 13 to 17 November, which CCA attended.

The CCA organized a side event titled "Rights of Religious Minorities in Pakistan" during which Pakistani members of the CCA delegation served as panelists to discuss the current human rights situation in Pakistan, specifically focusing on the plight of Christian and other minorities who experience persecution in many forms. Bishop Philip Huggins acted as the moderator. Sobia John talked about the human rights abuses committed against Christian and other religious minorities, while Cecil Chaudhry discussed flaws in the educational system which promotes religious inequality. Bishop Humphrey Peters concluded the panel discussion by suggesting some policy recommendations to improve the rights of religious minorities in Pakistan. Members of the audience interacted with the panelists by

asking questions to which the Pakistani members of the CCA team responded.

The CCA has been engaged in international advocacy against the persecution of Christians in Pakistan. The objective was for church people in Pakistan to present their reports on the state of affairs in Pakistan with respect to the human rights of religious minorities and their violation. By doing so, CCA accompanies the Pakistan churches in lobbying and advocating for the human rights of the Christian minority in Pakistan. The Side Event was arranged in cooperation with the World Council of Churches. This side event, which was arranged under UN auspices, provided a democratic space for the sharing of ideas, exchange of information, and open discussion of human rights issues with representatives of governments and NGOs, including members of permanent missions to the UN. Through these efforts, the CCA brings the attention of the international community to the harsh realities under which Pakistani Christians and other religious minorities live in the country.

Rights of Migrant Workers: Pastoral Solidarity Visit

*17-21 November 2017/ Labor Camps in
United Arab Emirates*

The mistreatment of blue-collar workers or manual labourers is widespread in the member countries of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (also known as the Gulf Cooperation Council or GCC). GCC countries include Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Many of these workers come from Asia, especially Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Nepal, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka. They construct the magnificent edifices that characterise the desert kingdoms and provide precious services that make business and family life pleasant. However, many reside in appalling and squalid conditions in labour

camps, where up to a dozen persons are crammed in a regular-sized room. Some reforms are in place, but are insufficient to guarantee the well-being of migrant workers. Migrant workers, who comprise around 90% of the private workforce in the UAE, continue to face exploitation and abuse. Many Asians, Southeast Asians, Central Asians, and East Europeans who go to GCC countries, especially the UAE, see it as a magical destination or a transit point to emigrate to the West. However, some of them are victims of labour and sex trafficking.

Apart from South and Southeast Asia, the male work force, recruited globally, also come from other parts of the Middle East, while a small percentage come from East Africa, some of whom are subjected to forced labour in UAE. Women from these countries go to the UAE to work as domestic helps, massage therapists, beauticians, hotel cleaners, or other jobs in the service sector. Some of whom are subjected to forced labor through illegal withholding of passport, limitations on movement, non-payment of salaries, intimidations, and corporeal or sexual abuse. Sponsorship laws limit their ability to leave a current employer; employers can control foreign domestic workers' movements, annul residence permits, deny workers the ability to change employers, deny authorization to leave the UAE, and intimidate employees through misuse of legal processes, thus making them vulnerable to exploitation. They remain tied to employers under the *kafala* sponsorship system and are denied collective bargaining rights. Trade unions remain banned and migrant workers who engage in labour strikes face deportation and a one-year ban on returning to the UAE.

As a large number of them are from India, the Philippines, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Nepal, the CCA General Secretary organized a Pastoral Solidarity Visit

to the UAE in an expression of support for them. Dr. Mathews George Chunakara and Dr. Rey Ty visited Asian diaspora migrant workers in the UAE and also identified and communicated with church and lay leaders and workers in the UAE who are working on the ground for the welfare of Asian migrant workers. They visited different labor camps in order to see for themselves the actual conditions under which the workers live. They learned about the conditions and laws affecting migrant workers in the Gulf states, and witnessed and accompanied Asian migrant labourers in order to address their concerns. The team members initiated a

conversation with the Asian diaspora member churches of the CCA in the UAE, including pastors and lay leaders of various denominations, which helped them to learn about the situation of migrant workers in the region. The CCA General Secretary explored the possibilities for initiating and facilitating a second Pastoral Solidarity Visit to the UAE by different Asian church leaders, with the participation of CCA Executive Committee members in 2018, and also for organizing a consultation on 'Migration and the Asian Christian Diaspora in the Arabian Gulf Region' in 2018.

Special Programme:

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

The Christian Conference of Asia's special programme on HIV and AIDS Advocacy has been in partnership with Bread for the World, Germany – (Protestant Development Service). The previous phase of the project came to an end in 2016.

A new proposal was developed and submitted in 2017 to Bread for the World and was approved. The main component of this new phase include

- Capacity Building of member Churches and Councils
- Advocacy with Churches, Councils, UN Agencies, Government, Like-minded organizations and
- Strengthening Network and Collaborations including Interfaith Networks.

The process of recruitment of Coordinators was done during this period.

Appendices

Appendix 1.

CCA Programmes and Activities - 2017

No.	Programme/Activity	Date	No. of Participants	Reference Number as per 2017 Programme Plan
1	Workshop on 'Worship and Liturgical Traditions in Asia' in Yangon, Myanmar	26-30 January 2017	12	EF 6.1.
2	AMC Preparatory Meeting in Chiang Mai, Thailand	16-19 February 2017	6	MU 1.1.
3	AMC Preparatory Meeting in Yangon, Myanmar	27 February - 2 March 2017	13	MU 1.1.
4	International Women's Day Celebration – Women Empowering Women in Lahore, Pakistan	8 March 2017	over 150	BP 4.
5	Investment Committee in Hong Kong	March 2017	5	GS 2.
6	Interfaith Cooperation Forum Consultation on Peace Education Training in Asia, in Singapore	19-23 April 2017	8	BP 2.1.
7	Consultation on "Rights and Dignity of Manual Scavengers and Advocacy on Abolition of Manual Scavenging in India", in Chennai, India	23-28 April 2017	48	PD 5.1.
8	Ecumenical Theological Orientation Training for Ecumenical Enablers in Phnom Penh, Cambodia	24-26 April 2017	35	EF 3.
9	Women Leadership Development Training in Phnom Penh, Cambodia	27-29 April 2017	47	EF 5.
10	Working Group Meeting to draft the Mission Statement of AMC in Chiang Mai, Thailand	3-7 May 2017	11	MU 1.1.
11	Ecumenical Pastoral Solidarity Visit to Bangladesh	7-12 May 2017	2	BP 1.1.
12	International Mother's Day in Lahore, Pakistan	14 May 2017	150	BP 4.

No.	Programme/Activity	Date	No. of Participants	Reference Number as per 2017 Programme Plan
13	Ecumenical Theological Training for Pastors and Evangelists in Dili, Timor-Leste	16-18 May 2017	45	MU 3.1.
14	Ecumenical Theological Training for Young Pastors in Chiang Dao, Thailand	22-25 May 2017	45	EF 3.
15	Ecumenical Formation and Leadership Development for Young Ecumenists in Jogjakarta, Indonesia	26-27 May 2017	27	EF 4.
16	Young Ambassadors for Peace in Asia (YAPA) in Chiang Mai, Thailand	28 May - 3 June 2017	25	BP 5.
17	National Consultation on 'Ecumenical Women's Action against Violence' (EWAV) in Dhaka, Bangladesh	2-3 June 2017	60	BP 4.
18	Finance Committee in Chiang Mai, Thailand	9-10 July 2017	6	GS 2.
19	Consultation on "Towards Revitalizing the Asian Ecumenical Movement" in Chiang Mai, Thailand	10-13 July 2017	60	MU 1.2.
20	Executive Committee Meeting in Chiang Mai, Thailand	13-15 July 2017	29	GS 1.
21	Sub-Regional Consultation on "Ecumenical Women's Action against Violence and Building Peace" in Bangkok, Thailand	16-20 July 2017	29	BP 4.
22	Pre-Asia Mission Conference: Indian Missional Conversation on "Journeying Together: Prophetic Witness to the Truth and Light, in Asia", in Ranchi, India	23-24 August 2017	71	MU 1.1.
23	Pre-Asian Mission Conference: Journeying Together: Prophetic Witness to the Truth and Light, in Asia', in Yangon, Myanmar	26 August 2017	over 200	MU 1.1.
24	Asian Ecumenical Institute (AEI), in Yangon, Myanmar	25 September - 20 October 2017	22	EF 1.
25	Asia Consultation on "Migration and Human Trafficking: A Call for Decent Work" in Yangon, Myanmar	8-11 October 2017	40	PD 4.
26	Asia Regional Consultation on "Disabled People; Strength in Weakness and Quest for Dignity: Ecumenical Advocacy in Asia", in Yangon, Myanmar	9-11 October 2017	36	PD 7.

No.	Programme/Activity	Date	No. of Participants	Reference Number as per 2017 Programme Plan
27	Asia Mission Conference in Yangon, Myanmar	11-17 October 2017	600	MU 1.1.
28	Thanksgiving Service of CCA's Diamond Jubilee in Yangon, Myanmar	15 October 2017	6000	GS 7
29	Asia Sunday 2017 in Yangon, Myanmar	15 October 2017		EF 6. 2.
30	Human Rights in Pakistan and Advocacy at the United Nations, Geneva	12-17 November 2017	7	PD 2.1.
31	Ecumenical Theological Orientation Training for Bible School Teachers of Kawthoolei Karen Baptist Church in Maesot, on Thailand-Myanmar border	13-17 November 2017	35	EF 3.
32	Rights of Migrant Workers: Pastoral Solidarity Visit to the UAE	17-21 November 2017	2	PD 3.1.
33	Ecumenical Women's Action against Violence: National Consultation in Vientiane, Laos PDR	27-28 November 2017	50	BP 4.
34	National Consultation on Ecumenical Women's Action against Violence – Post-War Situation in Colombo, Sri Lanka	29-30 November 2017	25	BP 4.
35	Pastoral Solidarity Visit to West Papua, Indonesia	4-8 December 2017	3	BP 1.1.
36	Ecumenical Women's Action Against Violence: End Violence Against Women and Children, in Lahore, Pakistan	10 December 2017	40	BP 4.
37	Asian Ecumenical Fellowship (AEF) in Chiang Mai, Thailand		3	EF 2.

Appendix 2.

Report of the General Secretary to the CCA Executive Committee Meeting - 2017

1. It was about one year ago that the last meeting of the Executive Committee was held in Medan, Indonesia. This year, when we are meeting at the headquarters of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), we have a wide range of items on the agenda that need to be dealt with at this meeting. This Executive Committee meeting has a special significance since it is being held in the Diamond Jubilee year of the CCA.

1.1 There are a number of issues to be reported and dealt with in detail at this meeting. It is a little bit hectic this time to sit on a series of sessions, especially immediately after a very important international consultation focused on the theme 'Towards Revitalising the Asian Ecumenical Movement' in which all committee members present at this meeting have participated.

1.2 The General Secretary's report is expected not only to introduce business matters, but also to introduce a number of other pertinent regional issues in the context of emerging geopolitical as well as ecumenical and ecclesiastical issues. Although, there are a wide range of issues and situations that are emerging in recent times, I shall not venture to address all such issues. We have already covered a wide range of issues from Asian perspectives during the past two days in the successful deliberations of the consultations. I am sure those discussions really enriched us and in this situation, I don't think we need additional discussion; what we do need is to discuss the follow-up in the near future.

2. Programmes and Activities

The CCA's programmes and activities have been implanted during the past one and a half years under thematic groupings of four areas. The overall emphasis of our programmes and activities was focused on 'Shaping a New Ecumenical Paradigm in Asia'. In 2016, we organised 33 programmes and during the first half of 2017, we organised 16 programmes. These programmes cover a wide range of activities. Some of the new programmes we have initiated as part of the new programme structure have already proven to be very successful and encouraging. The way our constituencies have welcomed such programmes and activities are really encouraging for us as we move forward.

2.1 The Asian Ecumenical Institute (AEI), a month-long intensive course; the Young Ambassadors for Peace in Asia (YAPA), a week-long training; ecumenical formation and leadership training programmes at the national and sub-regional levels; Ecumenical Women's Advocacy against Violence (EWAV); Accompanying People and Communities in vulnerable situations, especially in minority contexts in Asia; Advocacy at the UN,

the year-long internship programme, etc., are some such examples. Several other programmes, such as migration, statelessness, human trafficking, and strengthening of ecumenism at the grassroots in Asia have also gained momentum in the post-Jakarta Assembly period.

- 2.2 The last three-year phase of the HIV and AIDS Special Project ended in December 2016. We are currently in the process of negotiations and discussions with our partners to initiate the next phase of this Special Project for another three-year period. It is agreed by the main partner of this project to support the CCA for initiating the project from October 2017 to September 2020.

While implementing all programmes and activities, we are conscious of our responsibilities to ensure the quality of each programme and activity. This is being appreciated, and the feedback we receive at the end of each programme and the subsequent responses from the participants, received by my colleagues from time to time, also testify to this.

- 2.3 We have a strategic programme plan for five years and every year, we filter it and select more relevant activities for the following year. Often, we discuss emerging concerns and priorities at the Executive Committee level also. During the last meeting of the Executive Committee, held in Indonesia, we spent some time deliberating about the growing trend of religious extremism in Pakistan, which has become a serious threat to peace and security in the country. As a follow-up of our discussion, we organised a pastoral solidarity team visit to Pakistan in November 2016, in which three members participated under the leadership of Bishop Philip Huggins of the Anglican Church in Australia and the President of the National Council of Churches (NCC), Australia. Mr. Victor Hsu of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan and CCA Staff member Dr. Rey Ty were the other members. The three-member pastoral solidarity team visited Pakistan and met with a wide range of people, conflict-affected communities, civil society groups, and interfaith leaders. The National Council of Churches in Pakistan (NCCP) and the Presbyterian Church in Pakistan (PCP) made arrangements for the visit, and we are extremely thankful to Mr. Victor Azariah, General Secretary of NCCP, and Rev. Arshad Gill, Executive Committee member of CCA, for their assistance. In a similar way, we sent another pastoral solidarity team to visit Bangladesh on 7-11 May 2017, another majority Islamic country where Christians and other minority religious communities are facing enormous threats and challenges. NCC Bangladesh made necessary arrangements for the visit and our thanks are due to the staff of NCCB, especially to its General Secretary Rev. David Doss. Detailed reports of both these visits are now available.
- 2.4 Reports and instances shared with us from different corners of Asia add to our anxieties as we realise that Asia is increasingly becoming a breeding ground for growing religious intolerance. The long nurtured and cherished value of social and communal harmony is in peril in different Asian countries, whether it is majority Muslim or Hindu or Theravada Buddhist countries. The adherents of minority religions in Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Indonesia, the world's most populous majority Muslim nations

minorities in Hindu-majority countries such as India and Nepal; and Theravada Buddhist countries such as Myanmar, Thailand, and Sri Lanka are undergoing traumatic experiences.

The recent situation in Indonesia has been a matter of serious concern as the rise of political Islam demonstrated its worst head, when a Christian Governor of Jakarta was accused by hard-line Islamic groups of making an alleged blasphemous statement. The worry now is whether the country will slip into the hands of fundamentalist Muslims, led by forces unleashed by this sorry saga, and may emerge during the time of Presidential elections in the country two years later. For the sake of the stability and progress of the country and the region, those who use religion as a political card must stop it.

Indonesia, a traditionally liberal Islamic country which always upheld the values of its Pancasila principles, is now experiencing deep mistrust amongst the Christians and the Muslims. The politicisation of religion is pervading every area in the country. This was evident through the highest voter turnout in the history of the gubernatorial elections in Jakarta to elect a new Governor. The record breaking level of participation at the polls was largely believed to be the result of high religious tensions running throughout the election campaign. It was evident that religious sentiments, which were fostered throughout the campaign period, were effective in mobilising voters in the name of religion, and the voters were brainwashed to cast their ballots as part of their duty to defend their religion, on the principle conceded or driven by a doctrine that mandates Muslims to vote only for Muslim candidates, if it was not so, it would be a sin. The churches in Indonesia need accompaniment and our prayers during their time of high anxiety.

3. Round Table Meeting with the Ecumenical Partners

A round table meeting of the CCA with the Ecumenical Partners was held at the headquarters of the CCA at Payap University, Chiang Mai on 25-26 October 2016, in which 11 representatives of partner organisations and churches from Europe and North America attended. The main focus of the discussions centred around various topics such as new programme directions in the post-Jakarta Assembly, CCA's financial profile, budget and income development strategies within Asia as well as the challenges to CCA's mission and witness in Asia.

4. CCA Diamond Jubilee and Asia Mission Conference (AMC)

You might recall that we spent a substantial time during the last Executive Committee meeting to discuss about the AMC and the Diamond Jubilee celebrations. In last year's meeting, we had detailed discussions about the proposed plan of the Diamond Jubilee of the CCA. We noticed at that time how important it was to celebrate 60th anniversaries in our Asian cultural contexts. About one year ago, when we discussed it, we had only wild dreams and certain proposals we were asking your advice for, and mandates to move forward. We were not sure about how we would materialise those dreams and ideas. Now, when we meet again after a year, I am happy to report to you the developments since that time.

- 4.1 Sixty years ago in 1957, when the Asian church leaders met at Prapat, Indonesia, they focused on the theme, 'Our Common Evangelistic Tasks in Asia'. The CCA was born at the Asian Church Leaders Conference which was actually focusing on Asian churches' missionary tasks. Sixty years later, in 2017, when the CCA commemorates its 60th anniversary, the member churches and councils of the CCA will gather together again in the context of another Mission Conference and this will be an opportunity for us to give thanks to God almighty for Asian churches' journeying together during the past six decades. We will be engaged in the important task of reflecting upon our ecumenical journey within the context of a missiological theme from an Asian perspective. This special engagement, a reflection of the Asian ecumenical journey is going to be a historic milestone. As such, the Asia Mission Conference has been planned in conjunction with the Diamond Jubilee as yet another milestone in the history of the Asian ecumenical movement. It will be an important occasion for us to reflect on our mission and witness in a changing Asia since the last AMC was held in 1994.
- 4.2 Although we discussed our plans and ideas one year ago in July 2016, we did not take any final decisions on the theme of the AMC. The Executive Committee gave the mandate to the General Secretary to develop and finalise the theme later with the Officers. In order to follow up the recommendations and the decisions of the Executive Committee meeting last year, we organised a workshop to initiate the process of developing the AMC theme. An expert group composed of theologians, missiologists, including representatives of the 'Mission in Unity and Contextual Theology' working group of CCA's Programme Committee, representatives of the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences (FABC), and Asia Evangelical Alliance (AEA), were invited to be a part of these reflections. After three days of intensive discussions, the group developed a thematic framework for the AMC and based on that decided to recommend the theme, 'Journeying Together: Prophetic witness to the Truth and Light, in Asia'.
- 4.3 The AMC theme is based on the Biblical verses from the Gospel of St. John:
- "I have come into the world — to bear witness to the truth." (John 18:37).
 - "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me, will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (John 8:12).

This theme resonates with the contemporary situation in Asia, and in the world. As the world faces grave realities, the theme 'Prophetic Witness to the Truth and Light' will greatly oblige reflections on the Christian witness in the midst of adverse realities, and to emphasise the hope and trust in God's promises. The significance of this theme is also that it is linked to the role and relevance of the CCA in the Asian context, especially when it celebrates its ecumenical journey of 60 years. The CCA, as an instrument of God, working on behalf of the Asian churches, is called to bear prophetic witness in Asia.

The prophetic witness to the Truth is on the basis of the vision of the kingdom of God, Jesus proclaimed. The truth in this context implies ultimate freedom and liberation for all God's people and the entire cosmos; it is the essence of the message of the Gospel.

4.4 The four sub-themes developed within the broad framework of the main theme cover the thematic thrusts in the contemporary contexts of Mission. They are:

- Prophetic Accompaniment (Ref. Isaiah 61: 1-2, Matthew 25: 35-40, Micah 6: 8);
- Affirming the Servanthood (Ref. Matthew 20: 28, Luke 17: 7-10, Luke 24: 27);
- Participating in the Reign of God (Ref. Romans 12: 2, Matthew 5: 17-20); and,
- Embodying the Spirituality of the Cross (Ref. Matthew 16: 24, Philippians 2:5-8, Luke 6: 35, Hebrews 12:1-3).

4.5 In Asia, we are facing numerous problems and we are highly concerned about innumerable issues. However, six specific areas of concerns have been identified for deeper missional involvement by the Asian churches: Groaning of Creation: Stewardship, People on the Move: Embracing the Stranger, The Excluded and the Marginalised: Accompanying People and Communities, Economic Injustice: Prophetic Witnessing, Religious Intolerance: Nurturing Interfaith Harmony, and Geo-Political Turmoil: Building Peace.

4.6 During our last meeting, we discussed various options for identifying a suitable venue for the AMC and CCA's Diamond Jubilee celebrations. Out of the four priority venues we were deliberating upon the last time (Yangon, Myanmar; Jabalpur, India; Chiang Mai, Thailand; and Taipei, Taiwan), we selected Yangon, Myanmar to be the venue. The Officers, in a meeting held on 24 October 2016, decided to accept the proposal of the General Secretary as the Myanmar Baptist Convention (MBC) graciously offered to host both the events. The Myanmar Council of Churches (MCC) agreed to coordinate the logistics in Myanmar, especially the visas, local transportation and arrival/departure formalities of the guests, visits to local congregations, etc. Both the MBC and the MCC are now working together for the success of the AMC and the Diamond Jubilee celebrations. The events will be held from 11 to 17 October 2017, which is the same date the Executive Committee favoured and agreed upon during the last meeting. It is expected that 400 delegates will attend the AMC in different categories. It is also expected that 5000 people will attend CCA's Diamond Jubilee commemorative events on Sunday, 15 October 2017.

4.7 The venue of the AMC in Myanmar itself is very significant. As we know, this Asian country has remained a closed-door society for more than half a century. Churches in Myanmar have been undergoing traumatic experiences during years of military dictatorship and isolation. Churches and Christians in the country have suffered tremendously. In a country where Theravada Buddhism has been enjoying the official patronage of the ruling military junta, Christians have suffered religious persecutions led by fundamentalist Theravada Buddhist groups and innumerable cruelties inflicted by the military, although the Christian mission in Myanmar has a history of more than

two centuries of existence. Amidst ongoing civil wars, ethnic strife, gross and systematic violations of human rights and the denial of freedom of religion, churches in Myanmar have been faithfully engaged in mission and have been agents of peace with justice and reconciliation.

- 4.8 Today, the Church in Myanmar is vibrant and actively participating in proclaiming the Gospel. The MBC, the host of the AMC, is spread all across the country. The MBC has more than 5000 congregations in different parts of the country. Despite the Christians in Myanmar being economically disadvantaged, the MBC has come forward to host the AMC. They are engaged in generating substantial funds for hosting the AMC and for the celebration of the Diamond Jubilee of the CCA. Other CCA member churches in Myanmar are also whole-heartedly participating in the preparations for hosting the AMC and the Diamond Jubilee celebrations, through the coordination of the MCC.

5. Mission Statement in the context of AMC

Although the CCA has been organising AMCs and missiological consultations ever since the first one in Prapat in 1957, it has not aimed at any time in the past to come up with a 'Mission Statement'. As part of the AMC, a preparatory process to draft a Mission Statement has been initiated. A drafting group was identified by the General Secretary, and the members of the group were invited to come to the CCA's headquarters for a reflection on the proposed Mission Statement. The initial draft prepared by the group has undergone several revisions and subsequently, it was shared with the member churches, councils, and ecumenical networks, including theological institutions in Asia, with an aim to initiate discussion and invite comments. It is expected that this initial draft will be discussed and reflected upon at different levels, before it is revised and presented at the AMC for a final round of discussion and adoption. The purpose of initiating the Mission Statement will not be for developing any concepts with theological theories, but it is expected that the Mission Statement will inspire churches in Asia and help reflect on sharpening their missiological convictions.

6. The Challenges of the Mission and our Hope

As we are preparing for the AMC and reflecting upon journeying together, we need to also undertake a serious reflection about the role of the Church in Asia and our participation in God's mission. Today, mission is understood and talked about differently. In most contexts, mission is understood as offering the sharing of Gospel or Good News to others, as we have been traditionally repeating since the days of the Western missionary era. The images of Jesus that would have developed in Asia, whether it is through paintings, statues, or interpretations of Jesus and his ministry, are all replicas which we have patterned since the days of the Western missionary era. With the images and the identity in the West, we were taught either to a conquering community identity of "Christ the King" or to private emotional piety like "the suffering Christ". Michael Amaladoss, a Jesuit theologian of the Vidya Jothi faculty, says, "Such an interpretation that the image of Christ the King helped to legitimise civil and ecclesiastical authority and justify its abuses." At the same time, the image of the Christ who had realised in his own life the readiness for total self-gift, even unto death, is not talked about often. The Christ who dared to tell the truth to the powerful, who did speak about the real problems of

the marginalised, who did not hesitate to criticise the rich and the powerful when they became oppressive, who promoted the spirit of caring, sharing, equality, justice, and propagated the message of brotherhood, forgiveness and reconciliation would have found more appeal in Asia. However, none of these images have been sketched in our propagation of the Gospel and its message. This raises the cardinal question, when are we going to interpret the message of the Gospel with a more comprehensive understanding of the mission mandate that goes beyond the traditional missionary era interpretation? When are we going to tell the truth, envisage the message of mission and emphasise the concept of salt, light, and heaven?

We have noticed that the challenges confronting the Church and the ecumenical movement in Asia are many, as millions of people in Asia are looking for a new future, where their aspirations for peace with justice and overall well-being will be realised. The greatest challenge we are now facing is to kindle hope in the hearts of millions of Asians. They are looking for a ray of hope which will light up their lives and make all their struggles meaningful. What Asia needs at this stage is the redemptive message of Christ; a message of hope for which the Church in Asia must become more of an animator, facilitator, and accompanier rather than a dominator.

The Church and the ecumenical movement in Asia will have to become a prophetic witness to proclaim the Truth and hope in order to fulfil God's mission in Asia. Paul Puthanangadi of the Roman Catholic Church in India says, "In the fulfilment of our role in the mission, we should stress the aspect of Christ as the proclaimer of a new hope than as another avatar of the divinity calling for adoration and worship.... The new way of fulfilling the mission necessarily will demand a new way of being the Church because it is the mission that determines the being of the Church." Let the AMC-2017 and the message of the Diamond Jubilee celebrations help us proclaim the message of new hope.

7. Asia Sunday 2017

As per the suggestion of the Myanmar churches, and as decided by the Officers, the Asia Sunday-2017 will be observed on 15 October 2017, on the same theme of the AMC. Preparations are under way to formulate and facilitate the special Asia Sunday liturgy. CCA member churches and councils as well as the partners of Asian churches worldwide have been alerted on the change of date and encouraged to observe this year's Asia Sunday on 15 October 2017 as a commemoration of CCA's Diamond Jubilee.

8. Location or Relocation of CCA's headquarters

- 8.1 During the past six decades, the CCA has experienced different statuses – homeless, refugee, internally displaced and now again, for the past 11 years, as an asylum seeker. After the Prapat conference in 1957, there was no headquarters as such for its joint operation; then it was located in a car shed on the campus of the Bangkok Christian College in the 1960s; later in the 1980s as rented office space in Singapore; subsequently, scattered in different Asian cities - Manila, Osaka, Hong Kong, and Chiang Mai during the late 1980s and early 1990s - after the expulsion from Singapore. Everybody could come together later under one roof from 1992 to 2006 in Hong Kong. It has been

debated and discussed whether the decision to sell the property in Hong Kong in 2006 and shift the headquarters from Hong Kong, a global city, to Chiang Mai in Thailand was an appropriate and/or wise decision. Whatever the reason was at that time, there is no point in crying over spilt milk now. Instead, it is high time that we decide about the location of the headquarters of the CCA. Since the CCA headquarters was shifted to Chiang Mai, the Committee of the CCA has been discussing various options, but no concrete decisions have yet been taken. This is the third Committee that is entrusted with the responsibility and mandate to decide about the future location of the headquarters of the CCA.

- 8.2 The question before us is whether we prefer to stay in Chiang Mai or decide to move out and find a new location. Whatever it might be, we need to move ahead with a proper decision, especially now, when we have reached the age of 60. There are several pros and cons for our rationale to stay in Chiang Mai or to set up a new location elsewhere in Asia. The fact is that, as D.T. Niles had stated in his report in the 1968 Bangkok Assembly, that there is no Switzerland in Asia for the CCA. He said this half a century ago, when the CCA was only 10 years old. He was pointing out the practical difficulties in Asian countries at that time. Today, when the CCA has reached the age of 60, the situation is no better, if not worse, compared to the scenario 50 years ago.

9. Where shall we fix our tent as we move forward?

Today, we have limited choices as we look around to find a proper place for CCA's headquarters, although Asia remains the most diverse region due to various reasons. In terms of cost of living, Asian cities continue to climb up the global ladder, accounting for half of the 10 most expensive cities in the latest Worldwide Cost of Living Survey by the Economist Intelligence Unit. Singapore and Hong Kong continue to be the most and second most expensive cities in the world respectively. Tokyo, Osaka and Seoul are the other most expensive countries in Asia; however, the cheapest cities also are in Asia. Cities such as Colombo, Kathmandu, New Delhi, Chennai, Karachi and Bangalore represent the best value for money in Asia and are among the 30 cheapest in the world because of lower incomes and closer links to agriculture and manufacturing chains. However, cheap living costs alone cannot be the reason for setting up CCA's permanent headquarters. Several other factors also have to be considered, including the visa and work permit, freedom of religious organisations to operate independently, banking facilities, permissions for using or dealing with hard currencies, and foreign currency exchange facilities. We need to look into various options in the near future and as we move forward we need to club together another important aspect, the financial sustainability of the CCA. This will also lead to another important matter - to decide on the use of CCA's land, purchased about 10 years ago.

10. Financial Sustainability and Development of CCA's property in Chiang Mai

Ever since I assumed responsibility as the General Secretary, I have been engaged in discussions with several committee members about the future of CCA's financial sustainability. As a person who was coordinating CCA's financial contribution mechanism, through a WCC-coordinated round-table platform of Western ecumenical and church partners for 10 years, I have gathered

information from my predecessor and also in the past few years during my conversations with several ecumenical partners in Europe and North America that the CCA's financial support will be ending in the near future. In that case, we need to think of a scenario in which the CCA can find maximum resources generated within Asia.

The Executive Committee and the Finance Committee engaged in an exercise of evaluating the pattern of membership contributions to the CCA from its members as well as the possibility of requesting member churches to increase each member's contributions in the future. I wrote to member churches and councils, and approached them personally during my visits as well as spoke to some of them over the telephone. There are a number of positive responses and as a result of such efforts, several churches and councils have increased their contributions, while others have promised that they would increase membership contributions in the coming years. Although such promises are helpful indicators, this support alone is not sufficient to keep the minimum level of programmes and operational costs of an REO like the CCA.

The Finance Committee of the CCA which met in October 2016 and July 2017 engaged in serious discussions about the future financial sustainability of the CCA. During the discussions, it was suggested to explore various options, including the option of developing the property to generate income. The land purchased in 2007 has not been utilised yet. The value of the land when it was purchased was about US \$550,000 has increased now. It is more than US \$ one million now. As per the decision of the Finance Committee, we have taken certain measures to make a feasibility study to assess the value of the land. One company estimated the market price at 40 million Thai Baht which is more than 1.1 million Baht. The Finance Committee also decided at its meeting in October 2016 to explore the possibilities of certain options to either use part of the land or the entire portion for income generation. We will be discussing some of these options today and tomorrow. A company which studied this has already shared its findings and different options with the Finance Committee in its meeting on 10 July 2017. The Finance Committee after some detailed discussions decided to forward some proposals for more detailed discussions in the Executive Committee. This will only be the beginning of an exploratory or study process before we can arrive at a proper decision within the next one or two years.

The sale of this land, as it was decided by the Executive Committee in the past, or the development of this property for income generation should also be another option considered in the near future. There are other options also before us based on my conversations with Church leaders in Sri Lanka, Indonesia and most recently in Hong Kong. I am exploring the convenient time for a meeting of the sub-committee constituted by the Executive Committee to hold a meeting in the near future.

11. Towards a Revitalised Asian Ecumenical Movement

The consultation we have just organised gave us lots of opportunities and food for thought to revitalise the Asian ecumenical movement. We have heard numerous stories about the trends related to ecumenism and the ecumenical movement in Asia and beyond. We received first-hand information about several important issues in which ecumenical responses are warranted. So the tasks and challenges awaiting us ahead are numerous. The question before us is: How

to move forward? How to reposition ourselves? And how to motivate and sensitise our constituencies to be engaged in a meaningful mission of revitalising the Asian ecumenical movement and partaking in God's mission?

Mathews George Chunakara
General Secretary, CCA

Appendix 3

Executive Committee Members 2015 - 2020

OFFICERS

Moderator

Archbishop William T. P. Simarmata

Vice Moderator

Rev. Diana Tana

Treasurer

Mr. Augustine Dipak Karmakar

General Secretary

Dr. Mathews George Chunakara

Members

Rev. Arshad Gill
 Rt. Rev. Diloraj Canagasabey
 Ms. Huang Shin-Yi
 Ms. Ithrana Lawrence
 Rev. Kim Jong-goo
 Rev. Kim Kyrie
 Rev. Kingphet Thammavong
 Rev. Moises Antonio de Silva
 Bishop P. C. Singh
 Rt. Rev. Reuel Norman Marigza
 Archbishop Sebouh Sarkissian
 Rev. Shoko Aminaka
 Ms. Supaporn Yarnasam
 Rev. Terence Corkin
 Dr. Tong Wing Sze
 Mr. Za Uk Sang

Programme Committee Members 2015 - 2020

Rev. Kim Kyrie
 Bishop Philip Huggins
 Prof. Martha Mary Marwein
 Ms. Lizette Galimia Tapia
 Rt. Rev. Dr. Daniel Thiagaraja
 Rev. Dr. Henny William Booth Sumakul
 Mr. Victor Wan Chi Hsu
 Ms. Molina Karmaker
 Mrs. Mary Thomas
 Rev. Prince Devanandan
 Rev. Evelyn Ruth Bhajan
 Rev. Dr. Mery Kolimon
 Ms. Kathy Min Din
 Ms. Srey Sotheavy
 Ms. Agatha Abrahamian
 Ms. Tso Hiu-tung, Jessica
 Ms. Sawako Fujiwara
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