



Interfaith Cooperation Forum Justpeace Newsletter

June, 2016

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Ramadan Mubarak!



by [Rachel Bergen](#) on June 01

We at ICF want to wish our Muslim friends a peaceful, generous, blessed Ramadan.

Ramadan is a month-long period where Muslims take time to pray, fast during daylight hours, give to charity, and practice self-accountability. Ramadan takes place in the ninth month of the Islamic calendar and is observed by Muslims worldwide to commemorate the first revelation of the Qur'an to the prophet Muhammed. Fasting is a pillar of Islam as it helps observers grow closer to Allah. According to the Qur'an, "Fasting is prescribed to those before you, so that you may earn self restraint."

Fasting is considered by many Muslims as a means to improve their moral characters and provides an opportunity for spiritual renewal.

Out of respect for our Muslim brothers and sisters, ICF does not host activities during the month of Ramadan. During this time we are taking the time to pray for the peace of humanity and how we can best work for justpeace in the world. Kul 'am wa enta bi-khair (may every year find you in good health)!



Indonesia mini SOP participants and some SOP alumni gather in an indigenous village in Kesepuhan Ciptagelar, West Java. (Photo courtesy of Lioni Tobing)

Indonesia hosts mini SOP in Java Indigenous community

by [Max Ediger](#) on May 26

From May 15 through May 25, fifteen young adults from different areas of Indonesia gathered in the village of Kasepuhan Ciptagelar, West Java for a Mini SOP organized by the Indonesian ICF National Forum. Kasepuhan Ciptagelar is a traditional Sundanese community which maintains their ancient traditions under the rule of a young king. The king, called Father by the villagers, is a humble man who spends much of his time listening to his people and responding to their needs.

The curriculum for this Mini-SOP covered areas such as identity, faith and religion, structural analysis and drama. However, the highlight of the days together was learning

about traditional Sundanese life and the very close relationship to rice. For the people of this village, rice is life, and it must never be sold in any form. Many festivals are held throughout the year to honor rice and the environment which helps it grow.

Surrounding the village three different forests exist. One is sacred and no one can enter without permission. Trees in the second forest can be cut if needed for houses or firewood. The third forest is available to everyone for collecting food or medicinal herbs. This strict tradition has protected the environment in this area for many centuries and it is still practiced so the future generations will also have a healthy place to live.

With the opportunity to live in the homes of the villagers, participants were exposed to the warm hospitality of the Sundanese people. Upon arrival, it was suggested that everyone take off their watches and stow them away as life here is not governed by the hour and second hand of modern life. When the sun comes up people rise and prepare to go to their fields. When they feel hungry, they eat. It is a life regulated by the natural rhythms of nature and there is a feeling of harmony and peace in the village.

This Mini SOP gave all a chance to see a new philosophy of living focused on nature, cooperation and respect for all life. As we analyze the communities and nations in which we live, and struggle to envision a new and more just society, Kasepuhan Ciptagelar gives us an example. This was perhaps the most important lesson from these few days together.

Indonesia National Forum meets in Islamic Boarding School

by [Rachel Bergen](#) on September 04

Following their Mini SOP, the Indonesia National Forum met at Pesantren Yasina, an Islamic boarding school, in Cigombong Kabupaten near Bogor, West Java. The pesantren is run by Haji Romdon “Donny” and his wife. Donny shared with the group that the pesantren is committed to interfaith dialogue and promoting “moderate Islam,” which advocates for acceptance of other religions.

The forum met over two days at the pesantren and made a number of decisions about its programming. The group decided to register with the government as SEKODI (Indonesia School of Peace). SEKODI will follow the mission and values of ICF and hopes to create youth as the agents of transformation in Indonesia. Their office will be in Bandung. The forum will eventually elect regional directors. In the meantime, Lioni Tobing, an SOP 2008 alumna will serve as director of SEKODI and will begin a two year term as national coordinator for the Indonesia national forum in 2017. She will succeed Suwarti Ningsih.



Front row, left to right: Lusianus Urwam, Lioni Tobing (incumbent National Forum Coordinator), Suwarti Ningsih (current National Coordinator), Rachel Bergen, Ade Nuriadin, Aten Sama, Rio Priandri Nugroho, Fira Tiyasning Tri Utari. Back row, left to right: Bruce Van Voorhis, Lidia Melles Cime.

The group also decided to hold their next national forum meeting in July next year. They hope to meet in Papua. They want to have regional mini SOPs and share resource people between regions.

Good luck to SEKODI and the Indonesia National Forum as they begin the process of becoming a registered national forum!



Gunawan "Wawan" Primastaya is a YSEALI fellow in the United States. (Photo courtesy of Wawan)

Update: Indonesian SOP Alumnus doing YSEALI Fellowship

by **Gunawan "Wawan" Primastaya** on May 12

I'm one of Indonesian delegates for [Young South-East Asian Leaders Initiative \(YSEALI\) professional fellowship program](#). It's one of my big accomplishments for this year. This a good opportunity for me to get more experience in improving my professional career goals and then working for my community through my organization Sikola Mombine (women's school) in my home country. I never imagined being able to stand with 25 other young leaders from ASEAN countries who come from different experience and professional backgrounds. Six years ago, when I attended School of Peace, was my first step towards this accomplishment and helped motivate me to serve my community through informal education. I found my passion was working for the development and education of women and children during my time learning in India at SOP in 2010.

I am lucky enough to be working with [the CARA program in Chicago, Illinois](#), a non-profit that prepares and inspires people to break the cycle of homelessness and poverty, transform personal lives, strengthen the community, and forge paths to real lasting success. Chicago is the third biggest city in the U.S. and struggles with problems like poverty, crime, homelessness, and drug addiction. CARA provides intensive training to help students develop skills and then links them to job opportunities according to their

skills and interest. The program also supports them to manage their finances and get more education.

Even though the issues in the community here are totally different with my own community, there are similar point, including education and economic development. My biggest goal during this fellowship is to learn about building a curriculum, strategising for organization sustainability, and the integration between informal education and economic empowerment programs. Those are strongly connected with my responsibilities as Program Director of the Women's School in Poso. Most of my work here with CARA is in the program department so i'm working with the curriculum staff, professional development staff and I'm gaining experience with students in the class activities.

I live with an American family and get to meet new people so we can share and learn from each other about culture and country issues. My experience in the ICF movement helps me a lot to share more about peace and justice issues in Asia especially within our movement. Through this opportunity I learn more about my own faith as a Muslim. I have been to visit some Muslim groups here in the Islamic Center. The mosque is not only place for worship but also an Islamic learning centre. It's a place to build a community and a place to access social services.

My time in the U.S. is reminding me of my big responsibility with my organization. I must learn more and come back to do more for my community in Poso. That is my biggest goal: to learn from the world to build up my homeland. I really appreciate those people who supported me to do this fellowship, especially the ICF family including Max, Bruce and Small. I also want to thank the SEKODI team, especially Elizarni and Ningsih. Thanks for standing by me in my life's journey.



Bangladeshi SOP alumni takes part in Visthar course on Gender

by [Rachel Bergen](#) on June 06

Bibek Shahi, an SOP alumni from 2006 just completed Visthar Institute's month-long Gender, Diversity, and Social Transformation class.

The course was held in Bangalore, India from May 2-28 and focused on various themes relating to gender, sexuality, social issues, and transformation in Asian and African contexts.

The course is accredited by the Xavier Institute of Social Services (XISS), Ranchi. It will include group discussions, case studies, role plays, audio visuals, input sessions, and exposure visits. The facilitators and resource people will build on participants' knowledge base and experiences.

ICF hopes to be able to use Bibek as a resource person so we can all glean some of the lessons he has learned through this fantastic program at Visthar.



Tirmizy Abdullah is a great resource person on faith and justice. He also hosts a radio talk show on Islam in Mindanao. (Photo from Facebook)

Philippines National Coordinator to participate in KAICIID Fellows Program

by [Rachel Bergen](#) on June 06

The King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID) selected SOP 2010 alumnus and current Philippines National Coordinator Tirmizy Abdullah to participate in the KAICIID Southeast Asia Fellows Programme for Religious Leaders as Practitioners of Interreligious Dialogue 2016.

Tirmizy is one of a couple of dozen applicants from important religious education centers for Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism studies, who were selected to participate in the upcoming series of in-person and online trainings on interreligious dialogue, coexistence, and pluralism over the course of the next year. He will also have the opportunity to develop and implement small-scale local and

international projects during the course of the programme, and will further organize and attend dialogues, lectures, and field visits.

Tirmizy is already a great resource on faith and justice for the forum. He also hosts a radio show in Marawi City on Islam and teaches at a local college. We at ICF know this experience will continue to add to Tirmizy's knowledge, skills and background in building interfaith relationships in the Philippines and in the region. Congratulations, Tirmizy!



Cambodia Mini SOP participants have a discussion. (Photo by Max Ediger)

Cambodia hosts mini SOP in Koh Kong Province

by [Rachel Bergen](#) on June 01

The Cambodia National Forum hosted a mini SOP for 19 participants in Koh Kong province in May. Of the participants, one was Christian, two were Muslim, and the rest were Buddhist, including three Buddhist monks.

According to Hem Sopharak “Small,” the themes consisted of identities and conflict, faith, religion and spirituality; and transformation, including structural analysis. The participants discussed these themes through the lens of development in the country. Cambodia is rapidly being lost to corporate interests. There is increasing deforestation, which severely impacts local Indigenous communities, and land grabbing, which affects marginalized people acutely. In Cambodia’s case, as in many countries, development is a violent word.

Small says he was impressed by the participants and how open they were to learning new principles. The Cambodia National Forum looks forward to working with the mini SOP alumni in the future.

Bangladesh hosts National Forum Meeting

by [Rachel Bergen](#) on June 01

Recently four members of the Bangladesh National Forum met in Mymensingh to discuss their plans for the future.

Of the groups many decisions, it resolved to get in touch with former mini School of Peace participants to invite their participation in upcoming events and meetings. The group also decided to start the process of a campaign for peace education which will hopefully include the participation of local NGOs, including longtime partner Shanti Mitra. Finally, the group decided to hold a follow-up session with participants of a recent workshop at the Birishiri YMCA on the topic of Peace and Identities.

COMING UP Justpeace Events

Burma Mini SOP July 1-15 in Siem Reap, Cambodia at the Metta Karuna Reflection Centre has been cancelled due to difficult visa requirements. ICF hopes to visit the Thai-Burma border to offer programming.

China Mini SOP July 21-28 in Siem Reap, Cambodia at the Metta Karuna Reflection Centre.

Announcements Exciting news from within the ICF family

Cambodian SOP 2012 alumnus Mey Sophany “John” and his wife Lay Linda recently welcomed a baby son into their life. Congratulations John and Linda on the birth of Visith Nathaniel!



Interfaith Cooperation Forum
#52C Street 123, Phnom Penh, Cambodia