



Interfaith Cooperation Forum Justpeace Newsletter

March, 2016



ICF national coordinators and staff. Back row left to right: Julio Martins da Costa (Timor Leste), Mijanur Rahman Biplob (Bangladesh), Khom Chan That "Nary" (SOP participant from Cambodia), Khammon Say (Laos), Bruce Van Voorhis, Keo Vichith (Cambodia), Hem Sopharak "Small." Front row left to right: Santosh Kumar Yadav (Nepal), Tirmizy Abdullah (Philippines), Max Ediger, Suwarti Ningsih (Indonesia), Sukkriyah Baheh (Thailand), Saw Mort (Burma). Photo by Rachel Bergen.

National Coordinators meet in Siem Reap

by **Max Ediger** on March 1

The purpose of this meeting is to plan local activities for the coming year. Many of these planned activities are still tentative as they must be approved by all forum members. Coordinators will return to their homes and call forum meetings as soon as possible so the details of activities can be worked out. When possible, one or two of the ICF coordinators will join these activities and then also meet with the forum members for reflection and evaluation.

A major discussion was held to decide if ICF forums are ready to participate in regional-level campaigns. While there was interest, coordinators asked for time to discuss with their forum members. As all forum members are very busy with their own local activities, they must decide if they can provide sufficient time to make a regional campaign successful.

After doing some brainstorming about possible themes for a regional campaign, the idea of doing something for International Peace day was proposed. If forum members agree, they would help collect art and writing from children in their area reflecting their dreams of peace. Rachel suggested that the theme could be “Pieces of Peace” with children reflecting on their “Dreams of a Peaceful Society.”



Back row, left to right: Duncan Chowdhury (APAY), Bibek Shahi (Program Committee member), Bruce Van Voorhis (ICF). Front row, left to right: Rachel Bergen (ICF), Ebenezer Dharshan (Program Committee member), Max Ediger (ICF), Acharn Pradit (CCA), Nam Boo Wan (APAY) Mathews George (CCA), Hem Sopharak “Small” (ICF).

Working Committee meets in Kuala Lumpur

by **Max Ediger** on March 1

The annual ICF Working Committee (now called the Program Committee) was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from February 25 to 26. During these two days the Joint

Working Committee (JWC) made up of the two project holders, Christian Conference of Asia and the Asia Pacific Alliance of YMCAs and the ICF coordinator also met. During these meetings ICF shared a report on the activities of 2015 and plans for 2016. The JWC requested more information about the planned activities before giving approval.

Following the meeting, some of the participants took the opportunity to explore Kuala Lumpur for one day before all returned to their homes.



Participants of World Interfaith Harmony Week in Cambodia plant a tree for peace. (Photo courtesy of Keo Vichith)

Cambodia National Forum participates in World Interfaith Harmony Week

by Keo Vichith on March 1

On February 4, I took part in organizing World Interfaith Harmony Week with national networks including the Ministry of Cult and Religion, Danmission, The Catholic Church of Cambodia, The Evangelical Fellowship of Cambodia, Muslim Aid, Mekong Dialogue Institute and other faith-based organizations. The theme for this year was “The Role of Religions in Cambodia in Social Development” which aims to strengthen interfaith harmony in Cambodia and to enhance interfaith cooperation on social development.

More than 100 participants from Buddhist, Christian, Muslim, and other faiths were represented in this program. The program included an interfaith peace prayer and the discussion on action plan for 2016 that was put together as a joint statement that groups

will carry out for the whole year and will report back at the next World Interfaith Harmony Week in early 2017.



Recent SOP alumni Nary participates in Cambodia's World Interfaith Harmony Week celebrations. (Photo courtesy of Keo Vichith)

The Minister of Cult and Religions reviewed the joint statement from previous years and encouraged all religious faiths to promote their faiths by respecting other faith values. He also recommended all faith-based organizations to get registered from the ministry, to continue their work on social development, and to put the results of this discussion into action for the sake of harmony.

The celebration followed by interfaith prayer and the join-statement as below:

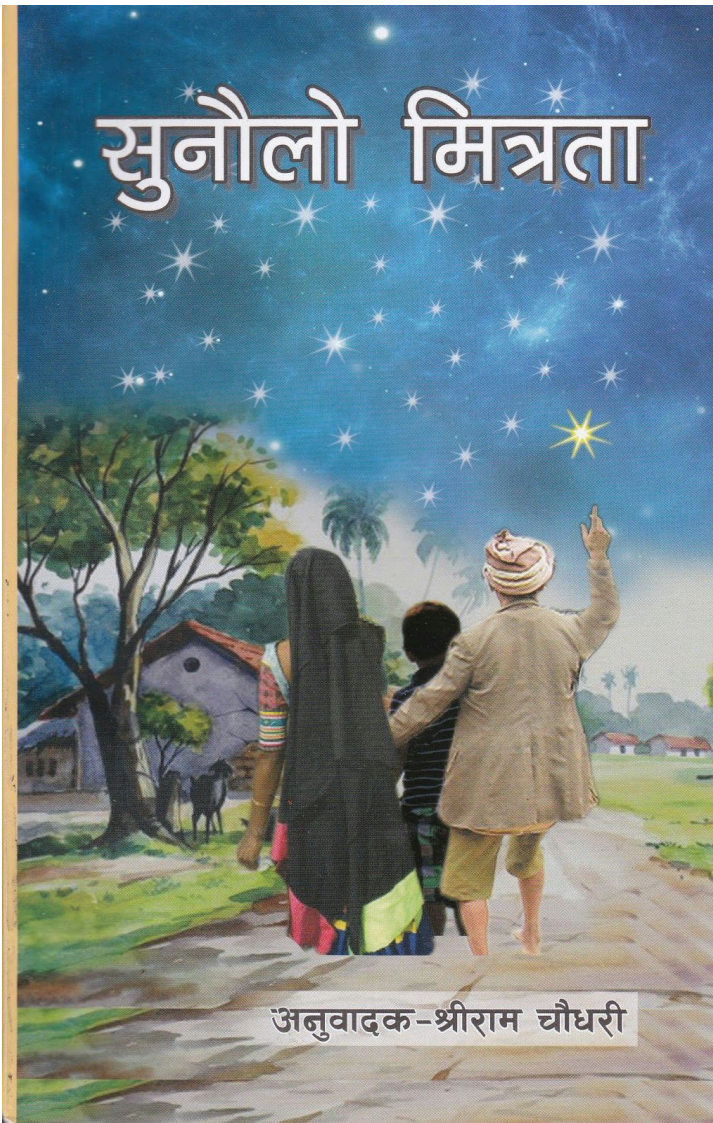
- All faiths continue to be involved in social development, humanitarian work and improving livelihood of community people without forcing or trying to convert them to believe in their own faith.
- Participate in tree planting and protection to respond to the climate goal
- Organizing interfaith workshops at least once a year
- Engage in intra-faith and interfaith dialogues on specific themes
- Organize interfaith prayers and peace walks with uniforms of each religious faith
- Enhance interfaith cooperation and activities by rotate hosting in each religious place
- Increase understanding on own faith and interfaith to prevent religious violence
- Continue action on health care, morality, spirituality, and skill trainings
- Preserve culture (Khmer literature, customs, and buildings as state and religious identities)
- Integrate interfaith peace building into state curriculum (long term goals)

- Promote peace, national regulations, nonviolence, and respect the state laws

Through this collaborative event, one of the results from the discussion was that in the following years, this celebration will be hosted by different religious groups in their places of worship to increase the sense of ownership and more cooperation in the future.

“Friendships of Gold” Republished in Nepali Language

by **Rachel Bergen** on March 1



Max Ediger's self-published novel, “Friendships of Gold” was recently translated and republished in Nepali.

“Friendships of Gold”, which was published in 2001, follows the story of Tony, a former soldier who fought in Vietnam. Tony feels incredible guilt for his role in the war, and eventually moves to Asia and rents a small house in a Bangkok slum where he hopes to live out his days in solitude. But as the people in the area begin to befriend Tony, he is drawn into their fight against a looming eviction and ultimately realizes he is struggling with an inability to forgive himself.

The translation was done by 2006 School of Peace alumni from Nepal, Shree Ram Chaudhury. It will be sold in Nepal to raise money for forum activities.

Chaudhury took a great deal of time and effort to translate the book because he believes the

story is an important resource to help people understand the importance of community organizing.

“Friendships of Gold” has also been translated into Thai.

Organization seeks compassion-based works of art

by [Compassion Anthology](#) on March 1

The [Compassion Anthology](#) is seeking compassion-based works of visual art, essays, stories, poems and video. We are interested in works about compassion in all its meanings, such as: kindness, courage, healing, forgiveness, mercy, hope, sacrifice, social justice, education, and empathy in human and/or animal interactions as well as environmental conservation (including nature writing) and interfaith dialogue. We are especially interested in works that feature mindfulness and meditation and how these instill compassionate tendencies. New work is published in the anthology every summer and winter. For submission guidelines see the "Submission Guidelines" page. All new accepted work is eligible for our exhibitions. For exhibit submission information, see "Submissions Guidelines" at the bottom of the page.



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