



Interfaith Cooperation Forum Justpeace Newsletter

April, 2016

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Romlah Narithiwat and other participants of SOP 2010 participate in International Women's Day festivities in Bangalore, India in 2010.

## Celebrating the Unsung Heroes on International Women's Day

by [Rachel Bergen](#) on March 8

Women are unacknowledged heroes in the world. They are peacemakers, providers, self-sacrificing, and strong in the face of incredible adversity.

March 8 marks an opportunity to recognize all that women do to contribute to their communities, despite a lack of parity with males.

Earlier this month was [International Women's Day](#). It's a global day of celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating gender parity. This day has been celebrated for more than 100 years, and no one government, NGO, charity, corporation, academic institution, women's network or media hub is solely responsible for International Women's Day.

Interfaith Cooperation Forum has the privilege of working with amazing women from all over the world. We have seen them learn and grow through School of Peace to become agents of change in their communities. These women work tirelessly to promote justpeace and improve quality of life in their communities. These are just a few of the women ICF has the privilege of working with:

### **Romlah Narithiwat**

Romlah is a graduate of SOP 2010 and hails from Pattani, Thailand. She worked for years supporting villagers who have seen husbands, sons, and brothers sent to prison on suspicion of anti-State activity. Now her husband, Anwar Hajiteh is facing the same fate. Romlah visits him regularly, campaigns for his release from prison, and supports her own family as well as Anwar's.

Romlah says "I will keep fighting to free Anwar. If I am successful in bringing him home, other cases will have hope too."

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### **Elizarni**

Elizarni hails from Aceh, Indonesia and attended the first SOP in Bangalore in 2006. She is currently working on her PhD at Ohio State University studying Alternative Education. During her graduate studies, she used her SOP experience as an example of alternative education. Elizarni hopes to return to Aceh to work on developing a better education system in her home community.

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### **Suwarti Ningsih**

Ningsih, a SOP alumni from 2010 grew up in Poso, Indonesia during a conflict between Christians and Muslims. Ningsih works with an alternative women's school in which she visits different communities teaching about economic development. She also helps fundraise for the school.

Ningsih currently serves as the National Coordinator of ICF's presence in Indonesia.

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### **Suborna Poli Drong**

Poli is a Christian woman from Bangladesh who graduated from SOP in 2012. She works for a non-profit organization called Shanti Mitra and is a member of the ICF program committee. Poli has organized the Bangladesh Festival of Justpeace for the past three years and plays a significant role in spreading the message of justpeace in the region.

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## Laxmi Pathak

Laxmi is a Hindu woman from Nepal who graduated from SOP 2008. She currently works with a broad range of people, including child labourers, Dalits, and people with disabilities. These projects are holistic and involve child protection and participations, inclusive education, microfinance and livelihood, health support, and advocacy for policy implementation or policy change.

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ICF is struck by the following four women's work ethic and commitment to the cause.

"None of these women ever seem to run out of energy," SOP coordinator Max Ediger says. "They're very committed to their work for justpeace."

Today we encourage our network to celebrate the contributions of women, but also to stand up and call for gender parity.

## Indigenous Filipino SOP 2015 alumni begins work in community

by [Rachel Bergen](#) on April 1



Just a few weeks ago, Rene Bundozan, an Indigenous Filipino man from the Manobo Ilianen community graduated from the School of Peace. During his studies, Rene talked about working to preserve his culture so others can benefit from it.

Rene recently visited a Manobo community school run by a man named Father Raffy Teniaro. Father Teniaro said he was seeking

teachers to work at the school, and Rene asked if it would be possible to integrate Manobo culture, spirituality, and traditional ways into the curriculum.

"I shared with him my experiences in SOP and in this conversation he hired me as one of the teachers in that institution," Rene says.

Rene says he is concerned about the next generation and that they will forget their heritage, but hopes his new job will reverse the trend.

Rene also served as a guest speaker at the school's graduation on March 22.

According to Rene, the advice he got during SOP to learn more about his identity really pushed him in this direction.

“That pushed me seriously to get in this so I can make something to my tribes, to encourage, promote our tradition and culture,” Rene says.

*Pictured is Rene Bundozan praying in his traditional language at SOP 2015's closing ceremonies. Photo by Rachel Bergen.*



Ton Nu Tuong Vy is teaching her niece and nephew, pictured above, in her Sunday alternative education class.  
(Photo from Vy's Facebook page)

## SOP 2015 alumnus provides alternative education

by [Rachel Bergen](#) on April 1

Every Sunday SOP 2015 alumnus Ton Nu Tuong Vy teaches her nephew and niece things they aren't learning in school..

They are learning photography, how to read educational Japanese comic books, film analysis, how to take good notes, how to understand generation gap conflicts, traditional music, and philosophy.

Just like at SOP, Vy brings “experts” in to teach subjects that are out of her realm of knowledge.

Sometimes that means learning from guest teachers, sometimes they read important Facebook statuses about gender equality together.

“My nephew and niece never failed to impress me with their hard work, reflection, sensitivity and observation. It is happy to know more about my beloved ones and help them to develop their potential outside the classroom,” she wrote in a recent Facebook status.

“Grades at school do not reflect all your children's capability and potential. Scolding or discipline do not make them better as we expected. Therefore, instruct them to find their own way,” she added.



A class in penmanship at the Red Deer Indian Industrial School, Red Deer, Alberta, circa 1914 or 1919. From the United Church of Canada archives. Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission will visit the Kenora District Jail to gather stories from inmates there. Observers say the legacy of residential schools has affected the majority of the inmates there, as most of them are of First Nations descent. ([wherearethekids.ca](http://wherearethekids.ca))

## Reconciliation is a Journey

by [Rachel Bergen](#) on March 21

Miriam Sainnawap is a Cree-Ojibway Indigenous woman from Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada and is a School of Peace 2012 alumna. She recently attended a meeting on reconciliation in her hometown.

The reconciliation meetings are in response to Canada's history of residential schools. These schools were created for Aboriginal people in Canada and date back to the 1870s. “Over 130 residential schools were located across the country, and the last school closed in 1996. These government-funded, church-run schools were set up to eliminate parental involvement in the intellectual, cultural, and spiritual development of Aboriginal children.

“During this era, more than 150,000 First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children were placed in these schools often against their parents' wishes. Many were forbidden to speak their language and practice their own culture. While there is an estimated 80,000 former students living today, the ongoing impact of residential schools has been felt throughout generations and has contributed to social problems that continue to exist,” according to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission website.

For the last several years the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has heard witness to stories of people affected by these residential schools in the hopes that speaking truth will pave the way for reconciliation.

Check out Miriam’s account of her experience at the meeting [here](#).



Dooplawsoe “Kipho” Mora trains the next generation of video storytellers in Karen State. (Photo by Saw Mort)

## SOP alum gives video journalism training in Karen state

by [Saw Mort](#) on March 22

Dooplawsoe “Kipho” Mora, an SOP alumnus from 2010, gave video journalism training in Burma’s Karen state with the purpose of helping to make change. He always said that “our work is not to make music or video, but to make change.”

In the training, 13 participants from different Karen communities and organizations including Karen Student Network Group and Karen Woman Organization joined in.

Kipho said video is a good way to get people to think about something in a new way and act. He talked to the training participants that our role as peacebuilders is to tell the story to make people think and take action. He also shared what he learned from SOP about dialogue. He tried to clarify the meaning of debate, discussion, dialogue and engagement. Video is also a good way to get people to engage in dialogue.

Kipho said you have to change yourself before you tell others to change. In his training, he used only the Sgaw Karen language, even though sometimes it's hard for him and other to understand because of the technical video words, we didn't have in Karen, so he tried to develop them with the participants. Karen identity is very important for him.

After one week of video journalism training, the participants gained knowledge and skills and we can see the product of the work of the participants in Kwe Ka Lu, the Karen language media website.

Kipho says, "Start working to fulfill your dream, otherwise someone will put you in work to fulfill their dream."

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COMING UP  
Justpeace Events

**Indonesia Mini SOP** May 15-25 in Kasepuhan Ciptagelar village near Bandung in West Java Province.

**Indonesia National Forum** May 26-29 at an Islamic boarding school in Sukabumi District in West Java.



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