

Inside this issue:

19 Youth Completed the SoP 2019 course	1
“SoP 2019 has given me so much”-Keziah Uli Simanjuntak	3
“I thought I would just be wasting my time.” - Phra Som	4
SoP is a “good platform and learning space for young people” - Saw Tun Lu	5
Dignity is humanity’s divine quality - Siman Garada	6
“ICF plays a vital role in establishing and promoting peace.” -Rinku Barnabas	6
SoP and the Challenge to the Task of Peacebuilding in Papua -Farid Elly Serpara	7
BftW Program Officer visited SoP 2019	9
APAY staff attended the 8th Asian Peace Practitioner Research in Cambodia	10

The Peacebuilders

“Keeping the ICF Circle informed; Connecting with Community of Interreligious Peacebuilders”

Vol. II, No. 6 Bi-monthly E-Newsletter of the Interfaith Cooperation Forum of Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs **Nov - Dec, 2019**

19 Youth completed the SoP 2019 course



The School of Peace 2019 graduates with the leaders of YMCA Chiangmai and some Alumni of SoP2018 and Peace Institute 2

Nine females and ten males — including three Buddhist monks — finished the School of Peace course and received their certificates of completion on November 20, 2019 from Interfaith Cooperation Forum. The School of Peace 2019 ran for sixty days beginning September 23, 2019 in Chiangmai and Chiangrai, Thailand. The nineteen participants come from eleven countries, namely: Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Timor Leste. They represented the four major living religions in Asia, namely, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism,

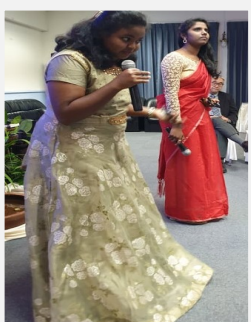
and Islam. These participants joined the SoP 2019 upon the recommendation of their National YMCAs and respective peace organizations. The SoP held its sessions in Thailand, at the YMCA Chiangmai and YMCA Chiangrai facilities. The School of Peace has been deemed the flagship of ICF.

ICF is a project of Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs (APAY). It organizes programs aimed to equip the young people of Asia in the hope that they will become peacebuilders and contribute to conflict transformation in their respective areas. It seeks

to help the young people not only to raise their consciousness about the challenges in Asian contexts. Like other ICF programs, it also seeks to help the youth cultivate values and attitudes proper and crucial for peacebuilders. The SoP 2019 follows the curriculum used in SoP2018 with minor variations. Generally, the curriculum has five main sections, namely:

1) Conflict, Peace, and Peacebuilding Frameworks. This section includes conflict studies and conflict analysis, peacebuilding frameworks (Lederach, Galtung, RPP), and skills, including nonvi-

19 Youth completed the SoP 2019 course



Mr. Rachan Maneekarn
NGS of YMCA Chiangmai

olent communication.

2) Religions, Practices, and their Teachings on Peace. This section includes indigenous spiritualities and indigenous people's struggles, and feminist perspectives of these religions' teachings that have implications on the role of women in religion. The participants studied religions such as Baha'i, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Sikhism.

3) Making Connections and Identifying situations as Peace Issues. This section challenges participants to examine issues such as terrorism, political economy and neoliberalism, alternative tourism, ecological crisis, human rights, and women's rights and grounding gender justice work on feminist theory and ethics. This also includes a session on health and disability as peace issues, but due to lack of time, the session was canceled.

4) Practical Skills. This section includes trauma healing, mediation and conciliation, peace education – pedagogies and module writing, basic news writing in English, and designing Workable plans (proposal writing) – anchored on conflict maps and theory of change. The participants are expected to implement their doable plans in their localities.

Week-end check-up quizzes encouraged the participants to take seriously the sessions on the above four sections. To enhance the learning on religions, the participants visited the mosque and church, had sessions in the Sikh temple, joined the Hindu ceremony in the Hindu temple, attended the celebration of the 200 year anniversary of the Baha'i, and went to several Buddhist temples including Wat Phra That Doi Suthep. They also had the opportunity to celebrate Loy Krathong, the Buddhist festival of lights –both floating in the bodies of water and floating lanterns up in

the sky – to honor the Buddha, and also, from the Hindu tradition – of thanking the Goddess of Water, Ganga, or in Thai, Phra Mae Kongkha.

A two-week community immersion and visits to different non-government organizations are important components of the School of Peace. The SoP 2019 participants visited the women's organization of the Foundation for Education and Development of Rural Areas (FEDRA), and Sao Hin YMCA. In Chiangrai, the group stayed in Had Bai village along Mekong River. The women in this village produced hand-woven cloths. The Network of Mekong School –Institute of Local Wisdom in Ngam Mueng village provided the SoP participants the people's struggle there to preserve the wetland area. In another village of Song Phee Nong, the participants participated in an interfaith ritual of tree ordination in the forest. The SoP participants also visited the Development Education for Daughters and Communities, a non-government organization that provides education for rescued girls and boys from human trafficking activities along the Mekong border. To further supplement the sessions the conference room,



Some guests during the SoP 2019
Closing Rite

Follow us at our
Facebook page:
Interfaith Cooperation
Forum.

19 Youth completed the SoP 2019 course

the participants visited the Underground Ancient City, the first capital of the Lanna Kingdom. The visit to Mae Teng Elephant Park was entertaining, but also an opportunity to learn about the life of the elephants, the issue of their survival and how tourism industry has treated them. The group also visited the Doi Pue Hmong Tribal and Hill Tribe villages.

In their own voices, here are what some participants said of the SoP2019:

“School of Peace is not only [a] school, but it is like a house teach

[ing] children to grow up and become a good resource person in society, ready to help each other... I feel very happy.”

– Thippachanh Phommavong, Laos

“This program [is] very important for [the] young generation . . . to have compassion, have knowledge about peace to [reduce] violence in society.”

– Farid Serpara, Jayapura

“All of the subjects were very useful for personal experience and [as] tools for [the] development of our home country.”

– Pye Ei Nyein, Myanmar

“I would like other monks to have an experience like I have, and share with their own community, at least, [even] for their own personal [growth].

– Phra Somrak, Thailand. 🙏🙏🙏



Kaushila and Amit from Nepal

“SoP 2019 has given me so much.”

Kezia Uli Simanjuntak
Indonesia

Note: Keziah shared this reflection during the closing rites of the School of Peace 2019.)



Good afternoon beloved guests, participants, and staff of the YMCA International Hotel.

First of all, I would like to say that I feel very honored to be able to give my thoughts and reflections on behalf of the participants of SoP 2019 here

in Thailand. I would like to thank Dr. Muriel, Ate Bai, Ma'am Im, and the staff of the YMCA International Hotel for all their hard work and dedication in facilitating the SoP. Coming from a country with so many problems regarding the identity of faith and religion, I had concluded in the past that faith was not a necessary component in achieving or sustaining peace. I believed that it established differences more than similarities. I had seen it mostly misused as a device to suppress and control; not liberate. To honestly reflect, I had carried this mindset in entering and participating in the School of Peace.

However, as I started actively participating, learning, and engaging in the SoP, I began noticing that my

attitudes and perceptions slowly wavered. Being together with diverse people of different faiths, backgrounds, and ways of thinking gave me a new-found sense of community. Our little SoP group made me understand that faith and religion were not just practiced in houses of worship. They were practiced and embodied in our everyday life, our community, and our environment. They were realized in how we use our understanding of the 'divine' to nurture, preserve, and sustain this world.

SoP 2019 has given me so

“SoP 2019 has given me so much.”

much. It has given me knowledge, perspectives, and a family that I'll always remember. What I have received here, I will take with me in my studies, my work, and my everyday life. I hope that in the future, I will be able to see my fellow par-

ticipants again. Hopefully, they will be continuing and furthering everything that we have studied and gained here in the School of Peace. Thank you all, for your time and attention. 🙏🙏🙏



Preparing for Loy Kratong

“I thought I would just be wasting my time...”

Note: Phra Som gave this reflection during the Closing Rites of the School of Peace 2019.

Sawadee Ka! Good afternoon everyone. First, I would like to thank the APAY and ICF that gave us an opportunity to participate in the School of Peace 2019, and to YMCA Chiangmai for giving us convenient accommodation. I would also like to thank Ma'am Muriel, Ajan Mea Im, Ate Bai and all the staff that assisted us and did their best to help us.



struck me the most was the subject on Mediation and the role-playing of conflict cases. As a monk, I would like to apply this to people who face unsolved problems. Most of the Lay Buddhists want to go to the temple for solace. The role-play activity helped me understand more the content and it was also fun.

I cherish our evening chats together in the lobby. As a Thai, I would like my country to have a contribution to respecting human rights and focus on the new generation to raise their awareness. I believe that if they know what their rights are, they can help more for the development of our society and our country, Thailand. 🙏🙏🙏

Before participating in this program, I thought I would just be wasting my time. But I decided to join because YMCA Chiangmai wanted more monk participants and I wanted to get a new experience to learn.

But when the program already started, I felt excited to study and got to know new friends coming from different faiths and cultural backgrounds. I learned so many things. But what

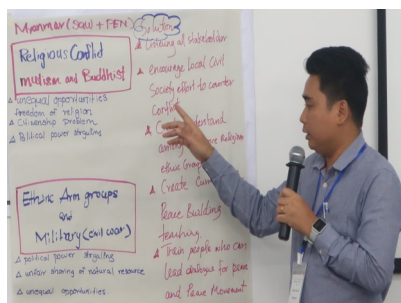
I appreciated that we had fun chatting outside but when we come to study, everyone looked serious, very determined, helping each other and respectful. It is a good memory for me.



It is Yoga time...

Please visit ICF's website @ interfaithforum.org

SoP is a “good platform and learning space for young people . . .” by Saw Tun Lu, YMCA Myanmar



I am Saw Tun Lu from Myanmar YMCA. I had a chance to participate in the School of Peace Program, a program of the Interfaith Cooperation Forum. It was held from 23 September to 21st November 2019 in Chiang Mai YMCA. It is a good platform and learning space for young people who are from different religious backgrounds from different countries. We learned about the analysis of conflicts with various tools and shared with each other our experiences. I did not know how to analyze the conflict, to understand it deeply to find the solution. Not only we learned the tools of analysis of the conflict in our country, but also, we knew the conflicts from Asian countries.

Nowadays, there are conflicts that are intra-religious, inter-religious, intra-ethnic groups and inter-ethnic groups in every country. Mostly, majority groups dominate the minority groups and indigenous groups. We knew the causes of conflict by analyzing every situation and found a way to get a solution.

We learned about the teaching

of peace from the Buddhist perspective, indigenous faith perspective, Christian perspective, Islam perspective, Hindu perspective, Baha'i perspective, and Sikhism perspective. Every religion taught human beings to work for peace and a sustainable environment, but people do not understand each other. Even if we are of different religions, beliefs, faith, skin color, and languages, we have deeply understood and empathized in communication with each other. We came to the training without knowing each other, but when we shared our experiences, difficulties, and realities of belief, it was already one step of the peacebuilding process among the young people in every country. Human Rights and Non-violence communication are very important for young people around the world. Whenever we communicate with each other we need to use non-violence communication at every level such as intrapersonal and interpersonal. These were among my favorite learning from that training.



All the topics and activities of the training inspired me very much. As a participant of the ICF SoP 2019, I must strive to be a peacebuilder in my family, in my organization, in my community and my country. I feel happy and satisfied because I learned all the topics that made me understand the peacebuilding practices and inspiration to me. I have planned to share my knowledge and skills with the young people from my community to reduce conflicts and to help make my society become a peaceful society. 🙏🙏🙏



SoP 2019 participants at the compound of the Blue Temple in Chiangrai

Dignity is humanity's divine quality

Siman Garada
Odisha, India



We may belong to different nations, different religions, different cultures and traditions in the world, but the very common wish is found within us is love, peace, harmony, equality, and prosperity. As we keep our faith alive in our daily activities, we need to respect our religion and others' religion. After all, we are all human beings. Our

dignity comes from our respectfulness and love for others. This love and respect that comes from the heart is a divine quality and it brings peace. The School of Peace organized by the Interfaith Cooperation Forum of Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs plays a vital role in establishing peace among different faiths and different nations in Asia. SoP teaches us to work for peace, and it includes the work for human rights and climate justice. The message of peace unites the world. It transcends the differences, and it shows the value of the culture and tradition along with ethics and morality. If there is love, there is harmony. If there is harmony, there is

equality. If there is equality, there is prosperity. When there is prosperity, there is peace.

It is therefore important for us, human beings to extend our hands towards humanity and build an unbreakable relationship in the world with love, harmony, and peace.

Thank you, ICF for accepting me as a part of peace messengers. 🙏🙏🙏

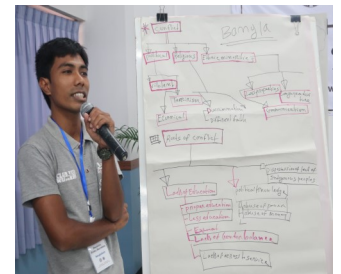


"ICF plays a vital role in establishing and promoting peace."

Rinku Barnabas Mankhin
Birishiri, Bangladesh

The School of Peace of Interfaith Cooperation Forum (ICF) is playing a vital role in establishing and promoting peace among different religions or faiths in the world. ICF is a project of Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs. ICF's program, the School of Peace is significant because it teaches us to embrace our

diversity. We, the participants have different skin colors, faiths, cultures, languages, and thoughts but we felt we belong to one family of ICF. I believe that all human beings are equal, and we would like to live in peace and harmony. I find ICF's School of Peace compelling because we were challenged to embrace our relationship with the bond



of camaraderie and unity. In SoP, the facilitators taught us to live in

Please visit ICF's website @
<interfaithforum.org>

"ICF plays a vital role in establishing and promoting peace."

Rinku Barnabas Mankhin

love and peace with all human beings. ICF cared for us as family and urge us to work for all living beings by living the message of humanity, love, justice, equality, freedom, unity and promoting knowledge.

When I first came to participate in the School of Peace program, I was a little bit nervous but also excited because the participants came from different countries and spoke different languages. Everyone was different from each other, but our goal is only one. We are all peacebuilders. Every

step of my life is a learning opportunity about life, faith and thoughts. The new ideas made my faith stronger and gave me courage to do new activities and to speak new ideas. This is the significance of the Interfaith Cooperation Forum. Now I believe that peace in the earth is about thinking and working for climate justice, human rights, equality or unity, and prosperity.

When I will go back to my community, I will share my experience and

knowledge to promote peace. I hope that as a family we will be able to promote peace in the earth. We need to start our work for peacebuilding. We can start with ourselves. Our diversity is our strength. As alumni of the School of Peace, I hope that we would be able to play a great role to bring peace in our community and society. As SoP graduates, we are messengers of love, justice, humanity and peace. 🙏 🙏 🙏

SoP and the Challenge to the Task of Peacebuilding in Papua

Farid Elly Serpara
Jayapura, Indonesia

Praise and thank God Almighty for having the opportunity to be able to write what I got while attending the School of Peace 2019.

First, I would like to say thank the YMCA Indonesia and ICF that have allowed me to represent the YMCA Papua to participate in the School of Peace 2019 activity held in Thailand. It was a great opportunity to learn and a challenge to the task of building peace in Papua where there is a prevalence of poverty and high levels of domestic violence. Most of the victims of violence are children and women. Political conflicts and a high level of corruption are more common than the welfare and security of the people. I want to share what I have learned, what I feel, and what I want to do.



23sept - 30sept (Workshop conflict, Conflict Analysis, conflict analysis tools Communication Without Violence)

I have learned about conflict and conflict analysis when ICF in collaboration with GKI in Tanah Papua held a thematic workshop in Jayapura in August. But in the School

of Peace School, we get a more complete and in-depth discussion on this lesson. We shared information about the problems or conflicts that occur in each country and applied the principles and tools of conflict analysis to assess the conflicts. This helped increase my understanding of what is conflict and how to analyze the conflict. In this School of Peace, I also know a lot about the problems that occur in other countries and how they struggle with the problems they are facing, and how nonviolent communication can be one of the bases in building peace. It was a meaningful experience during the first week of attending the School of Peace.

SoP and the Challenge to the Task of Peacebuilding in Papua

Farid Elly Serpara

I Oct-12oct (UN Declaration, Terrorist Understanding Terrorists, Neoliberal. Alternative Tourists, Indigenous Peoples, Women's and Children's Rights, Feminist Theory and Gender Equality.)

The lessons during these weeks were related to all the lessons that I have learned on conflict analysis. My focus and interest were on the lesson that called the Papuan people as Indigenous People. It was a new lesson for me. I hope I can share my knowledge with the community especially the Indigenous people. I was also interested to learn about the Human Rights of Women and Children. In my province, we have the highest levels of violence against women and children in Indonesia. The lack of knowledge about gender equality made me realize that there is still much work to be done concerning building peace.

Ngam Mueng Village
This is the First Village that we visited when we arrive in Chiangrai District. Most of the population are Christians. Their main occupation is farming. They are also successful in making their village conserve several

species of birds and fishes that are locally endemic. This invites local tourists and foreigners to come and visit. It also helped in the livelihood and income of the people. They have aggressively provided education to the public to advocate awareness in protecting the environment.

Had Bai Village & Song Phee Nong

In this village, the people welcomed us with traditional dances. The people were very good and unpretentious. They were farmers and most of the women are weavers of fabrics. Most of the people in this village are Buddhists. The participants of SoP 2019 observed the village activity of how to make basic materials in weaving cloth. Then on the next day, we went to a village that preserves



environment and tree from illegal logging by using the Buddhist tradition of ordaining the trees. This Buddhist teaching made me surprised and amazed that a Buddhist monk, a Christian pastor, and an Indigenous shaman presided over the ritual of tree ordination.

I hope that these interfaith efforts can also happen in Papua, and every religion can work together in protecting their environment.



Tree Ordination



An exercise on Human Rights with facilitator, Dr. Tirmizy Abdullah, SoP 2012 alumnus.

Please visit ICF's website @ interfaithforum.org

BftW Program Officer visited SoP 2019



SoP 2019 session with Christian Fischer

Mr. Christian Fischer of the Bread for the World came to on October 14-16, 2019 in Chiangmai to visit BftW partners there. He visited the School of Peace and shared with the participants the nature and work of Bread for the World, which is based in Berlin, Germany.

After the merger between the Church Development Service (Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst—EED) and the Brot für die Welt (Bread for the World—Protestant Development Aid Service) in 2012, the merger took a new name, the Protestant Agency for Diakonia and Development (Evangelisches Werk für Diakonie und Entwicklung).

From its inception, EED has been supporting APAY's project called Interfaith Cooperation Forum (ICF). At that time, until 2017, the project was jointly held by APAY and the Christian Conference of Asia.

At present, APAY is the sole project holder of ICF. Bread for the World continues to support APAY's projects, including ICF.

Mr. Fischer is the Program Officer for the the Worldwide, East Asia and Mekong Unit of the Bread for the World. During his visit to Chiangmai, he also met with other partners like the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) and the Sao Hin YMCA Environment and Energy Learning.

During the session with Mr. Fischer, the SoP 2019 participants were so engaged and asked a lot of questions. They were so eager to learn about what Bread for the World is doing. Naturally, they were thankful for BftW's support to a program that benefited them. 🙏🙏🙏



Chris Fischer with the SoP 2019 participants, and the leaders of APAY and YMCA Indonesia and Chiangmai, and ICF Staff

Credit: ICF

**INTERFAITH
COOPERATION
FORUM**

Asia and Pacific Alliance of
YMCAs
23 Waterloo Road 6/F
Kowloon, Hong Kong

Phone: +852-27808347

Fax: +852-23854692

E-mail:

APAY@asiapacificymca.org



Please send news about your Forums, Alumni programs, events or activities related to peacebuilding to the addresses below:
<muriel@asiapacificymca.org>
or to
<bai@asiapacificymca.org>

The Interfaith Cooperation Forum is a program of Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs. It values the significance of interreligious understanding and unity. Thus, it offers opportunities for study and appreciation of the different perspective of religions on peace, and discern the role of religion in peacebuilding. Yet, considering that unpeace is brought about by many factors, including the onslaught of neoliberal economic globalization, more people experience poverty, internally displaced people are increasing as communities are destroyed, native wisdom and values are overrun by Western and consumerist outlooks, patriarchy and racism persists, and climate change is now felt as the destruction of the Planet Earth seems unabated.

Peace is celebrated as a gift from the Divine, yet, we, the earthlings have the responsibility to make peace a reality. Although its contribution may just be like a drop of water into the lake, ICF seeks to equip young people of different religious traditions, especially from the marginalized communities of Asia and Pacific, to make waves of peacebuilding actions.

APAY staff attended the 8th Asian Peace Practitioner Research Conference in Cambodia

Nam Boo Won, the APAY General Secretary, along with the ICF staff Muriel Orevillo- Montenegro, and Baidido Sangingating attended the 8th Asian Peace Practitioner Research Conference on December 6-8, 2019 in Siem Reap, Cambodia. The conference was an opportunity for the post-graduate students of CPCS to present their research and case studies. The presentations revolved around the theme "Addressing Structural Violence Through the Lens of Ethnicity and Faith." The conference was, for APAY-ICF staff, a chance to learn what other people in Asia are doing towards peacebuilding.

During the opening program where Dr. Emma Leslie of Centre for Peace & Conflict Studies (CPCS), welcomed more than two hundred peace activists and advocates

from Asia, the USA, and Europe.

Dr. Jehan Perera of the National Peace Council of Sri Lanka gave the keynote address. He works on education and advocacy on peacebuilding and transitional justice. Dr. Perera presented Sri Lanka's learning from their conflicts in the past and where they are now. Sri Lanka has a history of almost three decades of conflict that killed thousands of its population. On April 21, 2019, 'Easter Sunday', the coordinated suicide bombing killed and injured hundreds.

The panellists presentations included their research and case studies on women and peace, conflict and development in Kashmir, dialog in the IDP communities in Kachin State, identity issues among people in Myanmar, dynamics of conflict in Pattani, Thailand, the progress of the reconcili-

ation processes in the post-Khmer rouge Cambodia, interfaith peacebuilding effort among the youth in Morang, Nepal, the challenges of the federalization of Nepal police, and the issue of media coverage and narrative in conflict situations.

The participants also had the opportunity to listen to updates on the peace process in the Korean Peninsula that O Ryong Il, a member of the North Korean National Peace Committee, had provided. Nam Boo Won, APAY General Secretary, and Kim Kyung Min, National General Secretary of Korea YMCA shared updates from the South Korean perspective. Three Hong Kong youth representatives also presented their analysis and hope amid the long-running protest on the Extradition Law Amendment Bill in Hong Kong. ㄟㄟㄟ
—Baidido M. Sangingating