

# The Peacebuilders

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

Vol. III, No. 5 Bi-monthly E-Newsletter of the Interfaith Cooperation Forum of Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs **September, 2020**

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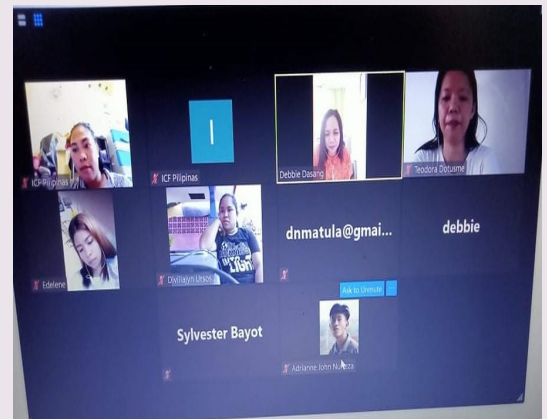
## Special Edition

### Filipino ICF Alumni Organized Psychosocial Support Activity

The ICF alumni in the Philippines organized an Online Psychosocial Support Activity on August 26, 29, and September 5, 2020. Thirteen alumni (five females and eight males) participated on August 26, the first-day session. Eleven alumni (four females, seven males) joined in the second session on August 29. On September 5, eight alumni (three females, 5 males) showed up for the third session. The participants were alumni from different ICF programs both held at the national level and international levels (Thematic Workshop, Peace Institute, and School of Peace). The Interfaith Cooperation Forum supported the activity through its small grant for the alumni.

The activity aimed to provide a venue for the alumni to connect, share their experiences during the lockdown and community quarantine, and to reflect on the pandemic effects on their lives. Ms. Debbie Satentes- Dasang, the Director of Guidance and Counseling Services of Southern Christian College served as a resource person in the said activity.

The first session started with an opening prayer and then followed by sharing of the activity objectives, getting to know each other, sharing of alumni's current involvement, and what ICF activity they attended. The resource person facilitated the listening activity



that gave space for the participants to share their experiences and feelings during the government-imposed lockdown and community quarantine due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants shared their worries, fear, and anxieties. They also realized the importance of life and the sharing of correct information, especially in social media. The participants found relief and comfort that they were able to share their anxieties and worries brought by this pandemic to their fellow ICF alumni.

The sharing continued during the August 29, 2020 session, and then Ms. Dasang gave her input on Stress Management. One of the participants shared his experience of depression and said that it is important to recognize the feelings and seek support from family, friends, or even professional psychological support when needed. During the third session on

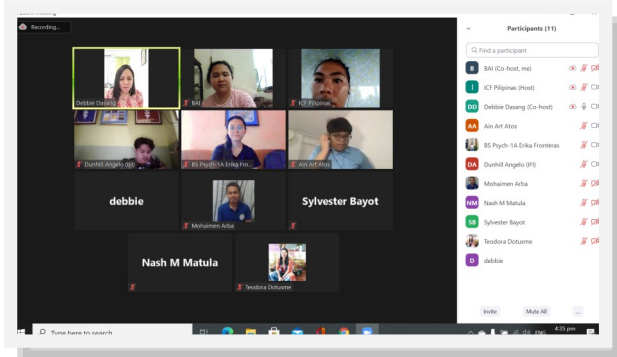
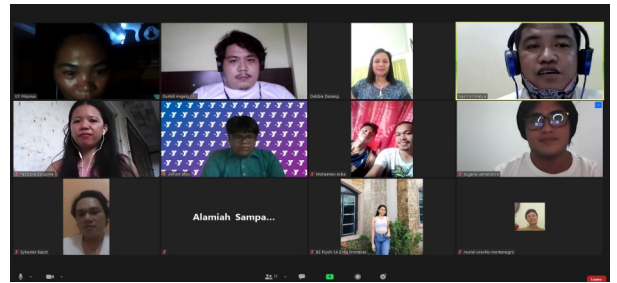
## Filipino ICF Alumni Organized Psychosocial Support Activity

September 5, 2020, the facilitator and participants focused their discussion on Basic Counseling.

Everyone who attended the session agreed that in advocating for peace especially in these times of the pandemic, it is crucial to recognize these issues that the young people face. 🙏🙏🙏

— Hamsiya Olimpain  
School of Peace 2019

📷 Hamsiya Olimpain



## Small Grants program supports Alumni Initiatives for Local Peace Education/Advocacy



The participants of the Mindanao Peace Youth Formation: Empowering Youth as Catalyst of Building Peace

📷 Tirmizy Abdullah

The ICF alumni conducted activities supported by ICF's small grants program in September. They are from Philippines, Nepal, Myanmar, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. On September 16-17, 2020, Tirmizy Abdullah, SoP 2010, conducted a two-day activity called Mindanao Peace Youth Formation: Empowering Youth as Catalyst of Building Peace in the main campus of Mindanao State University in Marawi City, Philippines. Twenty-seven young people participated in the said activity. The Marawi City siege has affected these young people. The activity provided a

safe space and venue to the young people where they could freely express their fears, hopes, aspirations, and experiences, especially during the Marawi siege.

On September 22-24, 2020, Nepal Unites led by an ICF alumnus Mohammad Ayatullah Rahaman, SoP 2017, conducted a workshop on Gender and Nonviolent Communication (NVC) in Old-Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal. Twenty participants joined the activity: nine females and eleven males. Among them, two are Christians; one is a Muslim, fifteen are Hindus, and two free thinkers. Kaushila Sunuwar, SoP2019 alumna, Sumitra Sunuwar, and Rajan Bhandari both participants of the online thematic workshops conducted in September 7-18 helped Mohammad in organizing


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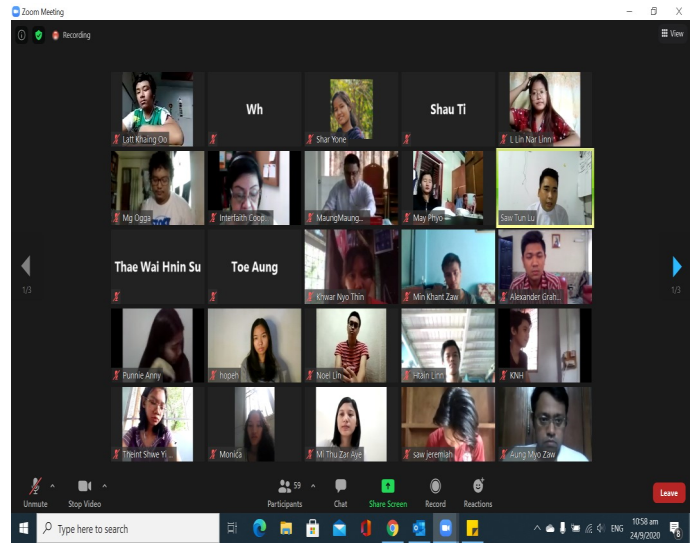
## Small Grant Program supports Alumni Initiatives for Local Peace Education/Advocacy

the activity. The three had the opportunity to share with the workshop participants their learnings and experience during the online workshop. Nepal Unites invited Mr. Mani Ram Kandel, a certified International Trainer of Center for Nonviolent Communication (CNVC) to facilitate the workshop on Nonviolent Communication. They also invited Mr. Yadav Kumar Bhattarai, a film director in Nepal to share his works and experiences working on his advocacy on gender thru films. The workshop ended successfully and participants shared that they want more days so that they can learn more on the topics given.



ICF alumni heading Nepal Unites held Gender and NVC Workshop in Baneshwor, Kathmandu  
 Mohammad Ayatulla Rahaman

The third activity that received ICF's small grant support was on Religious, Cultural Understanding and Peacebuilding for Youth. Saw Tun Lu, SoP 2019 organized this activity online in Myanmar on September 24, 25, 28, 29, and 30, 2020. . Sixty-eight young people participated in the online activity. Thirty-one of them are males and thirty-seven are females. Among the participants, twenty-three are Buddhists, thirty-three are Christians, eleven are Muslims, and one is Hindu. The participants were from Yangon, Region, Bago Region, Ayeyarwaddy Region, Kachin State, Mon State, and Kayah State. The original plan was to conduct a face-to-face activity on t September 14-18, 2020. However, due to the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in Myanmar, the organizer switched to online activity. The topics included were understanding the religions of Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Hindu,




Online Seminar on Religious, Cultural Understanding and Peacebuilding for Youth in Myanmar  
 ICF

and Baha'i. Saw Tun Lu also included among the topics Nonviolent Communication.

On September 25-27, 2020, Rinku Mankhin, SoP2019 organized the fourth activity on Interfaith Dialogue with the young people of Birisiri and Durgapur in Bangladesh. . Thirty young people participants joined the activity; fourteen of who are males, 16 females. Among the participants, nineteen are Christians, seven are Muslims, and four are Hindus. Rinku Mankhin worked with his team called "Challenge COVID19 group." On the first day of the activity, there was a dialogue between the three different



The participants doing an exercise during the Interfaith Dialog in Birisiri and Durgapur  
 Rinku Mankhin




### Small Grants program supports Alumni Initiatives for Local Peace Education/Advocacy

religions, namely: Christian, Hindu, and Muslim. They invited resource persons for this activity. Ms. Luida Ruma Sangma, General Secretary of Young Women Christian Association (YWCA) spoke on the Christian tradition, Emran Hassan Shimul, an artist and researcher spoke on the Islam religious tradition, and Asananda Shil, a teacher, spoke about Hinduism. The second day, the participants went for an exposure visit to different villages of Durgapur District where they also distributed food items to 150 needy families affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and the recent flood in Bangladesh.


The fifth activity was on The Usage of Social Media to Promote Peace held on September 26-27, 2020 in Legazpi, Albay. Ain Art Atos, an ICF alumna and active youth member of YMCA Albay organized the activity. Nineteen participants joined the activity. Six of them are males, and thirteen are females. The participants are all Christians.



The participants of the activity in Legazpi, Albay  
 Ain Art Atos

Meantime, Stella Shapnika Jayakaran, SoP2019 alumna, conducted two activities within September 19, 26, and 27, 2020 in Batticaloa, Sri Lanka. The first activity focused on Peacebuilding and Nonviolent Communication. The YMCA Batticaloa assisted her in organizing the activity. Nine participants




NVC Workshop Participants in Batticaloa  
 Stella Shapnika Jayakaran

joined the NVC workshop: five are females and four are males, and among them, seven are Hindus, one is a Muslim and one is a Christian. The second activity during the inclusive dates was the Youth Exchange Program as part of the peacebuilding activity of the YMCA. Twelve participants joined this activity, five of them are females, and seven are males.

Earlier in September 2020, on the first to the fifth day, Pyae Ei Nyine, School of Peace 2019 alumna, conducted an activity she called Yoga and Retreat for Healthy relationship in Mandalay, Myanmar. The activity was attended by twenty-three (23) participants, 11 of whom are females and 12 are males. The participants were Buddhists, Muslims, and Christians. The activity includes face-to-face gathering for the yoga exercise and a virtual session on Nonviolent



Pen facilitating the Yoga Exercises  
 Pyae Ei Nyine

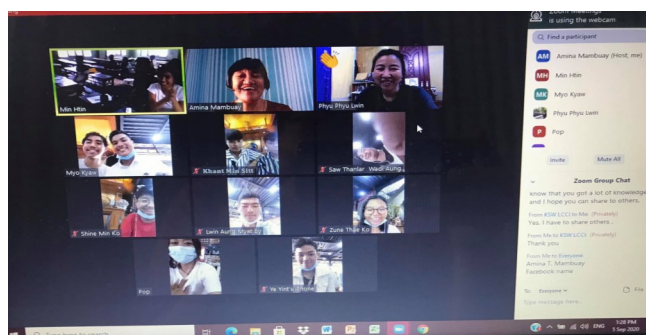
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## Small Grants program supports Alumni Initiatives



The set up for group zoom meeting  
 Pyae Ei Nyine



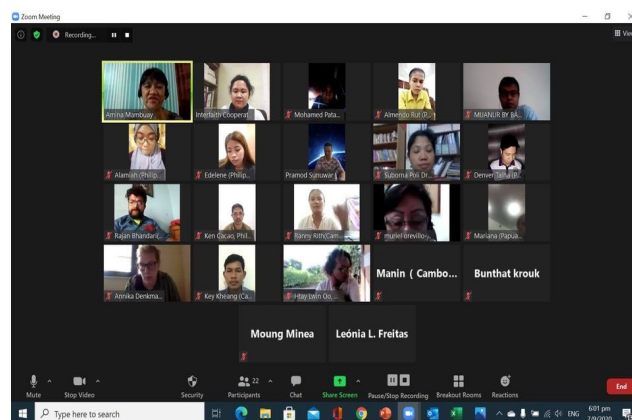
Communication. Pen facilitated the Yoga activity, and Ms. Amina T. Mambuay, a certified NVC facilitator served as the resource person.


The activities organized by the ICF alumni and supported by ICF's small grant program went successfully and well despite facing the COVID-19 pandemic and problem of weak internet connection. 🙏🙏🙏

- - Baidido Saganding

## ICF conducted Two Thematic Workshops Online

**A**dapting to the new normal, ICF conducted its Thematic Workshops thru zoom on Nonviolent Communication (NVC) and The Effects of the Pandemic on Women. ICF held the first online thematic workshop on Nonviolent Communication (NVC) on September 7, 9, and 11, 2020. 15 youth participants completed the three days online workshop; eight males and seven females. Among them, seven are Christians, one Hindu, four Buddhists, and three Muslims. The participants were from Bangladesh, Cambodia, Nepal, Myanmar, Philippines, and Timor Leste. The online activity started with an opening prayer led by Denver Talha, one of the participants from the Philippines. It was followed by the sharing of the workshop's guidelines and program orientation. ICF Coordinator, Dr. Muriel Orevillo-Montenegro presented APAY-ICF programs and works. Ms. Amina Mambuay, a certified trainer of Nonviolent Communication (NVC) from the Philippines, facilitated the workshop. She



Virtual Workshop on Non-Violent Communication  
 ICF

explained to the participants the background and concept of Nonviolent Communication. Her presentation includes the NVC Model, four steps to NVC, 2 steps of NVC, symbols of NVC, and four options for receiving negative messages.

## ICF conducted Two Thematic Workshops Online

The participants were interactive though faced with a weak internet signal. They wished that the workshop conducted face-to-face for them to learn and engage more with the resource person and the participants. But they also understand that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, conducting it online was the only option for now. The workshop ended successfully with an announcement from ICF on the processing of the internet subsidy refund and their small doable activity proposal.

After the workshop, the participants received the amount of USD 100.00 for their internet connection expenses subsidy. Those who also submitted proposals for a small doable activity for their community received USD 200.00, with the condition that they will submit a brief narrative and a financial report. Six participants submitted their proposed activity: four from the Philippines, one from Nepal, and one from Timor Leste. Their activities included the development of Information Education and Communication (IEC) materials on NVC, promotion of positive messaging thru digital thumbprint program, assisting public school teachers, distribution of school supplies to children, and distribution of food items to women and seminar on conflict resolution and awareness-raising on sexual harassment.

The second workshop on The Effects of the Pandemic on Women was held on September 14, 16, and 18, 2020. Eleven participants joined in the said activity. All of them were females from different religious traditions: two Hindus, one Buddhist, six Christians, and two Muslims. Annika Denkmann, a BftV seconded personnel from



Virtual Workshop on the Effects of the  
Pandemic on Women  
ICF

Germany served as the lead facilitator during the workshop. The workshop dealt with topics on the challenges faces by women during the pandemic, existing inequalities pose specific challenges on women, and identifying the spaces in their communities where they can assist the women. As in the first workshop, participants who completed the workshop receive the amount of USD 100.00 as a subsidy for their internet connection expenses. The participants also submitted small proposals for doable activities for their community. Three participants submitted their proposals: two from Nepal and one from Bangladesh. Their activities focused on responding to women that the COVID-19 pandemic has greatly affected.



—Baidido Saganding  
ICF Program Officer

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## Alumna from Batticaloa organized youth activities to Rebuild Society's Strength

The ICF alumna, in partnership with Batticaloa YMCA organized Youth activities in partnership with ICF on 19, 26, and 27 of September 2020 to rebuild peace and harmony among the community people. The activity had two components: the youth exchange programs and a nonviolent communication workshop. The youth exchange program was about going to Kudumpimalai, Mangalagama areas in Batticaloa District. Twelve (12) youth composed of five (5) females and seven (7) males from Negombo YMCA have taken part in this event. Three (3) of them are Christians, and nine (9) are Buddhists. The Batticaloa YMCA hosted the NVC workshop for schoolchildren. Nine (9) students from different schools in the Batticaloa participated in this activity. As a special note, the hearing- impaired students from Vaalvosai School that Batticaloa YMCA runs also participated in the workshop. Their presence added value to the event. The workshop was conducted with the sign language interpretation for these students.

The youth exchange component involved visits to the Kudumbimalai and Mangalagama villages on the 19th and 26th of September 2020. The program aimed to help young people overcome fear among the communities and creating goodwill and unity. The village people welcomed us with their cultural dances and arranged some cultural entertainment programs for us. In the Sinhala village, they shared their cultural foods. In the Tamil village, they shared their cultural foods with us. It helped us to create a healthy relationship with each other. We played some games to include everyone in this gathering. Through this



The youth visiting and bonding with the village people.

📷 Stella Shapnika Jayakaran

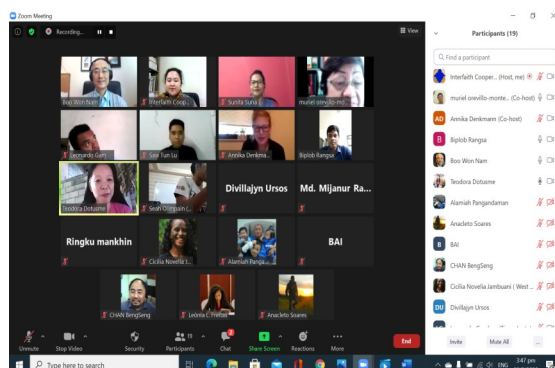
activity, we tried to rebuild the unity and friendship among the communities. The Negombo YMCA youths joined in the Mangalagama village visit program. On the next day, 27 September 2020, the Batticaloa and Negombo YMCA youths went to a small business outfit where they produce ornaments and crafts using the Palmyrah tree manually. Then we went to Ozanam to clean up the place and spent some time with the special kids there. After that, we went to the YMCA farm and planted coconut trees. Then, the youth went to Eravur, where most Muslim people live together, to see the Palmyra products and Mushroom plantation. Then, we went to Pasikudha beach and finally came back to the YMCA Batticaloa for the cultural programs. Vaalvosai school students performed a cultural dance. Mr. Jegan Jeevaraj, the general secretary of Batticaloa YMCA, made a presentation about the Tamil culture.

The workshop was a full day affair for the schoolchildren. It included interactive sessions with participants, with some useful activities to improve the skills of the participants. During the morning session, Mr. Jude Pio Navinthan facilitated the session on leadership and proper communication. He also arranged some activities to make the children get engaged in leadership activities. Later on, during the evening session, Mrs. C. A. Thayamathy discussed Nonviolent Communication. Through this session, the children gained knowledge and the basic idea of Nonviolent Communication. The exercises during this session helped the participants to understand more about the concept of NVC. They also learned to practice friendly communication with others. Throughout the sessions, the participants were able to work in a team and were able to create a strong bond among them. This activity has pioneered to remove the negative stereotypes that built among the young generation as well.

I am happy because these activities enabled us to rebuild a healthy and strong relationship among society. I hope it will be the first step for the expected change. 🙏🙏🙏

- Stella Shapnika Jayakaran  
School of Peace 2019

## ICF Launches e-book *Seek Peace and Pursue It: Daring to Take Small Steps*



Virtual E-Book Launching  
ICF

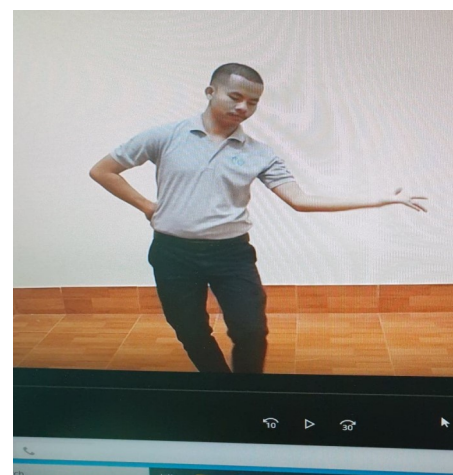
Generally, book launching programs intends to promote and sell the book. The Interfaith Cooperation Forum launched the e-book *Seek Peace and Pursue It: Daring to Take Small Steps* to promote the book as part of ICF's advocacy towards peacebuilding and to encourage the people - young and old - to step onboard and join in the efforts of building peaceable communities.

On September 29, 2020, the Interfaith Cooperation Forum held the virtual e-book launching at 3:00 p.m. Those who entered the virtual room had the change to exchange greetings with each other. The program formally started with the playing of the song "Let there be Peace on Earth," composed by Jill Jackson-Miller and Sy Miller in 1955, and performed by the School of Peace 2018 participants. The APAY General Secretary, Nam Boo Won

gave his words of welcome, followed by the greetings from the new Executive Secretary for Programs, Sunita Suna.

Muriel Orevillo-Montenegro, the ICF Coordinator, gave the background of the birthing of the book project and introduced the writers using PowerPoint slides. Then, Saw Tun Lu, School of Peace 2019 alumnus from Myanmar, shared his experience to respond to the call to write an essay in English. A thematic workshop alumna from the Philippines, and was struggling with her internet connection, Teodora "Dory" N. Dotusme, finally was able to show up and shared the process of mulling over a book cover design that will reflect the title of the book. Annika Denkmann shared that while she did some layout in the past, doing the layout for the book is her first time to do a big project.

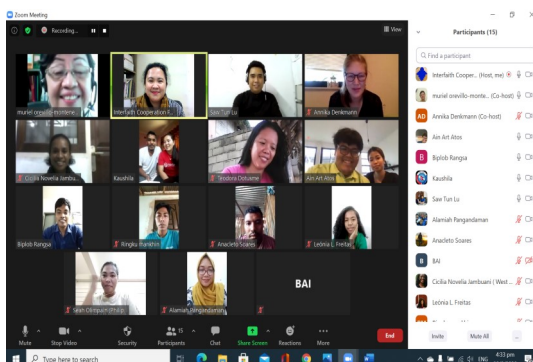
Thena Posysenthong, School of Peace 2018, gave the first intermission through his recorded performance of the traditional Laotian dance called Lao Ka Sae. After the intermission,



Thena executing the Lao Ka Sae dance

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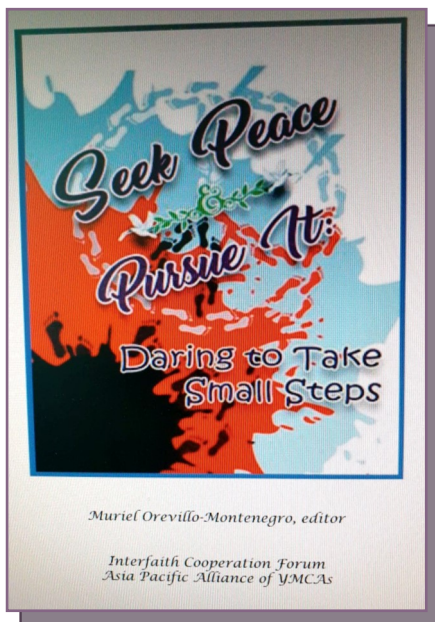




## ICF Launches e-book *Seek Peace and Pursue It: Daring to Take Small Steps*

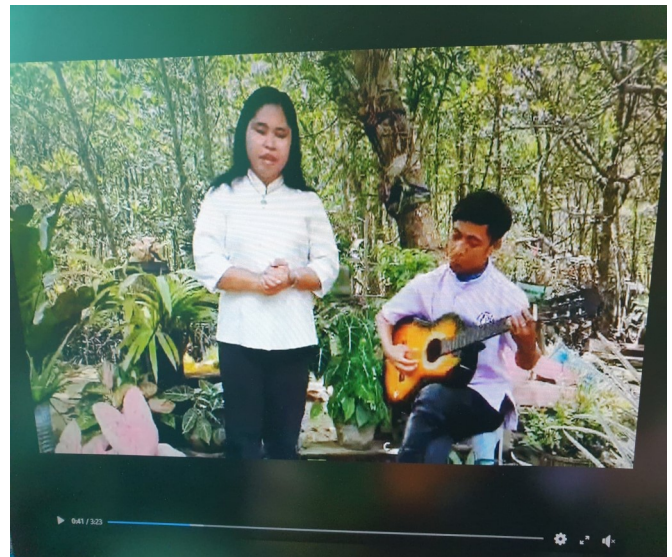
the ICF Coordinator presented the e-book, showing several pages of the front matter, especially the Table of Contents.

Divillajyn Ursos, a thematic workshop alumna from the Philippines, provided the second intermission, through her recorded performance of Dorothy Buchanan's 1972 "Peace Song." After this intermission, Cilia Novalia Jambuani, an alumna of Peace Institute 2 from Papua, Indonesia read a portion of her essay as a warrior's granddaughter. To end the program, GATN Coordinator, Chan Beng Seng, gave his closing remarks. We deemed it appropriate that he give the remarks, as



he is one who is most knowledgeable about the very beginning and conception of the Interfaith Cooperation Forum. The masters of ceremony, Baidido Saganding from the Philippines, SoP 2018, and Biplob Rangsa, SoP 2012, ably facilitated the flow of the program. Saganding is presently serving as ICF Program Officer, while Rangsa is the Program Office of YMCA Bangladesh.

Kaushila Sunuwar, School of Peace 2019 could not do her part in sharing her struggles in writing her essay because she came late as she could not connect to Zoom. The poetry reading was supposed to follow the



Divillajyn Ursos singing "Peace Song"  
accompanied Jayson Galo  
ICF

e-book presentation. Unfortunately, like Kaushila, the Nepalese poet, Srijana Shahi, and her English translator, Sunita Thapa, both SoP 2008 alumnae, could not connect to Zoom. During that time, many participants and guests could not join because of their poor internet connection. Some sent congratulatory greetings through Messenger, saying that rain was pouring heavily in their areas; they could not connect to the internet.

While the so-called "new normal" that the pandemic brought about, and forced people to hold virtual activities, the people in the Third World areas of Asia struggle with a poor internet connection. The vicissitudes of the Third World have even worsened with the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, despite this, ICF is thankful to the writers, the proofreaders, the book cover and layout artists, the APAY office staff for their contributions and help they have extended, in one way or another, to make the e-book and hardcopy of the book a reality. 🙏🙏🙏

— Muriel Orevillo-Montenegro  
ICF Coordinator

## The 2018-2020 Project Phase Ends and a New Phase Begins

The Interfaith Cooperation Forum is a project of the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs (APAY). As the project holder, APAY raises funds from its coffers to support ICF but also finds support from a partner-donor, the Bread for the World. The two-year-and-a-half project phase from 2018-2020 was ending on June 30, 2020. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Bread for the World graciously allowed the extension at no cost of the project up to September 30, 2020. This “extension at no cost” meant that the partner-donor does not give any extra funds for the three-month extension period, but allowed the project to implement the remaining programs according to the approved budget. Under the rubric of Movement Building, the project phase 2018-2020 included two sets of two-month-long School of Peace, two sets of two-week-long Peace Institutes, ten five-days thematic workshops, ten ICF alumni-initiated follow up programs on peacebuilding, and at least eight local peacebuilding and advocacy that the ICF alumni or youth peace activists initiate in various countries. A Program Committee composed of ICF alumni, ICF staff, and APAY personnel were to meet once a year. Under Advocacy, ICF programs include one Asian Peacebuilding Summit, maintain a website, publish six e-newsletters annually, and publish “at least three paper books.”

### Project Phase 2018-2020 Ends

The implementation of the programs went well as planned, except for the cancellation of the Asian Peacebuilding Summit due to the pandemic. Set finally in September, the preparations for the Summit had already been in place. However, before ICF could send the initial information and invitations to the participants and resource persons in March 2020, the Asian countries implemented lockdowns due to the pandemic.

ICF organized the School of Peace 2018 at Duta Wacana Faculty of Theology in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, and the School of Peace 2019 at YMCA, Chiang Mai, Thailand. The Philippines and Thailand hosted the two Peace Institutes, respectively. The countries that hosted the thematic workshops were the following: Cambodia, Timor Leste, and Nepal in 2018; the Philippines, Jayapura in Indonesia, and Tozanzo, Japan in 2019; Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and Jorhat in Assam, India in 2020. ICF held the other two thematic workshops in 2020 online due to the pandemic, and ICF opened these workshops to participants from different Asian countries.

The ICF Screening Committee approved in January the applications to avail of the Small Grants program in 2020, but the applicants had difficulty in their implementation, again, due to the pandemic. Instead of eight, there were thirteen (13) programs implemented for local peace education and advocacy. Instead of ten, there were only four (4) alumni follow-up program applications.

The projected publication of three (3) books within the two-year and a half project phase was rather ambitious. Fortunately, Bread for the World's Christian Fischer agreed that ICF could publish only one e-book. Thus, CF has published an e-book entitled *Seek Peace and Pursue It: Daring to Take Small Steps*. However, the hard-copy version of the book is also underway. This is a collection of articles written by

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## The 2018-2020 Project Phase Ends and a New Phase Begins

some APAY and ICF staff, but the bigger bulk of the book's content comprises the essays and poetry written by twenty-seven ICF alumni.

ICF also looks forward to a forthcoming book that it jointly publish with The Tribal Study Centre of Eastern Theological College. Its title *Just-Peace in Globalized Context: North East India Focus* indicates that this is a collection of the inputs of the resource persons during the thematic workshop in Jorhat in February 2020. ICF is also able to catch up with the number of publication in spite of the fact that the Coordinator joined ICF only in mid-2018. Overall, ICF has published fifteen (15) issues of the e-newsletter, *The Peacebuilders*, including this issue.

### The New Phase Begins

On October 1, 2020, the new phase begins. This three-year phase covers the period from October 2020 to September 2023. While the ICF Program Committee has set the plans during its January meeting in Kuala Lumpur, ICF obviously needs to adjust the program schedules, as the COVID-19 pandemic seems unabated yet in most Asian countries.

The month of October will see the ICF staff conducting internal evaluation and writing the final

report for the partner-donor. The staff also will prepare for the series of zoom conferences in November and December 2020 in place of a thematic workshop. Its e-newsletter, *The Peacebuilders* October-November issue will come out by the end of November, and a Special edition on December 2020.

There are plans for thematic workshops and Peace Institute as a training of trainers. However, ICF will finalize the schedules and send out the announcements as soon as the situation of the pandemic eases in most Asian countries.

With a sense of hope, we at ICF will borrow from former UN General Secretary Dag Hammarskjöld's words:

For all that has been,  
Thanks!  
For all that will be,  
Yes!

— Muriel Orevillo-Montenegro  
ICF Coordinator

## Alumni organized Skills Training as Peace Effort in Pandemic time

An Albay ICF Alumna organized a livelihood skills activity as an implementation of a small doable project that participants of the virtual thematic workshop on Nonviolent Communication were expected to do for their communities. Edelene Rosin, the lead organizer, had this activity tied up with Albay YMCA as a collaborative effort. Thirty-four (34) Persons with Disabilities participated during the two-day Plant Basket Skills Training on September 17-18, 2020, at Baranggay Bascaran, in the town of Daraga, Albay, Philippines. The Interfaith Cooperation Forum's response through the small doable project that participants of thematic workshops were to undertake



The Workshop  
Edelene Rosin



## Alumni organized Skills Training as Peace Effort in Pandemic time

during the pandemic indicates the view that peace is holistic and that economic peace is crucial in building a peaceable community.

“Due to pandemic, poverty heightened. The demand for an alternative source of income is urgently needed to sustain the daily living of struggling families. The local people of Daraga are gifted with talent on handicraft weaving, and, with the growing demand for plant baskets, YMCA launched the Livelihood Skills Training on Plant Basket Making to match the market and utilize the skills of the local people,” said Ms. Ianne Christine Aquino, Albay YMCA General Secretary.

For Norilyn, the program trainer, weaving has changed a lot of things for her, from being a participant in training in the past to accepting small weaving projects to being the President of Bukluran sa Kabuhayan Inc. (an organization for livelihood), and now working on big projects with the assistance of the Albay YMCA. She also added that the beauty of weaving continues to surprise her, and she would not stop sharing her skills and knowledge with the community.

“Due to the pandemic, I have lost my job and income. Our village official invited me to participate in the said training, and I did not hesitate to join since I badly needed an extra skill to make a living for my family. Two-day training is helpful to me. I have acquired enough skills and knowledge on how to make a plant basket and learned how to compute the input investment and sell the product,” said Racky. “I think I am now ready to accept orders and sell basket,” Racky added. “I have some sense of peace when I earn a little bit more for my family.”

An 18-year-old Eric Lirio, a resident of Namantao who participated in the activity, said, “I enjoyed working on my own basket.



Above: The abaca materials for basket weaving

Below: The process of weaving the basket Base

📷 Edelene Rosin

At first, I was confused how to start with the basket base until little by little I saw progress. It was fun learning indeed. I am thankful that I was able to attend the training and will be able to share the knowledge I have acquired to my friends.”

This program provided the community with an opportunity for an alternative source of income. The participants conveyed their appreciation for the skills they have acquired to help improve their lives. Moreover, the organizers also referred the participants to a local government agency that could provide the space to display their product and to receive orders. Through the pooled funds with other co-sponsors, the organizers were also able not just

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## Alumni organized Skills Training as Peace Effort in Pandemic time



Instead of Certificates, the participants received 5 kilograms of rice.

📷 Edelene Rosin

to provide education and livelihood skills training but also provided meals to the participants during the activity and some rice to take home. 🙏 🙏 🙏

- Edelene Rosin



Edelene with the finished product.

## Thematic Workshop Participant Reaches Out to Slum Children

After participating in the Online Thematic Workshop, I did a small doable project of distributing school supplies to the children in the slums area of Shanti Nagar, Kathmandu, Nepal. The Interfaith Cooperation Forum conducted the workshop on Nonviolent Communication on September 7-11, 2020. I submitted a proposal for a small doable project that will benefit the children in my community.

### My Activity

On September 27, I visited the Shanti Nagar community's slum area to look for a neediest child and that needs support. With the help of a friend, Jalpa Limbu, we listed the children's names and their school grade levels. Children these days do not experience peace because their parents could not buy them the school supplies they need. Initially, we listed down thirty (30) children to receive some school supplies. Then later, I learned that there were still more children who needed school supplies. As I did not want these children to feel bad, and following the "do no harm principle," I decided to reduce the number of school supplies for each child so that all the children on the list all receive the assistance.

### The Event day

On the following day at 4:30 in the afternoon, my friend



The distribution of School Supplies

📷 Rajan Bhandari

and I reached the venue. The children were already there. We helped the children to fall in line and called their names. Along with the school supplies, we also provide hand sanitizers and facemasks. We were able to provide to fifty children.

During the distribution, one of the children who received the support approached me and said, "I had never won the prize today. With the notebooks, colorful papers in this colorful kit, I feel

## Thematic Workshop Participant Reaches Out to Slum Children

that this time I won some prize in a school event.”

One of the parents said, “At this time that we are facing a lot of problems to look for the food we are not conscious of the education of our children. I pray for your best future and the organization that is involved in this event. Thank you from our side.”

He also added that if we can give to other people too, they would also be very happy.

### My Reflection

I am very happy to support the needy children during this pandemic. I am also a struggling student and I know very well how difficult to arrange all things in this pandemic. I facilitated a smile in that innocent child who is the future in building our nations. I fulfilled that innocent girl's unmet need that never got a prize to date. I tried to give hope for a better future for the family. Although I feel very difficult to

arrange all things in such a low budget in this pandemic, I am really satisfied with my work. I express thanks from my heart to Nepal Unites. This type of support was not possible to succeed without Nepal Unites Team, and I hope ICF will continue to partner with Nepal Unites in the coming days. 🙏🙏🙏



The writer, Rajan Bhandari, a Hindu, is a member of Nepal Unites from Kathmandu, Nepal

## TW participant gathered 35 people to Discuss Positive Messaging

A participant of ICF's Online Thematic Workshop on Nonviolent Communication (NVC), Denver Talha, held a post-workshop doable activity online called Promoting Positive Messaging through the Digital Thumbprint Program. Thirty-five (35) students, youth leaders, and fellow educators attended the online activity on September 29-30, 2020, in Midsayap, Cotabato. The Interfaith Cooperation Forum (ICF) gave some support for small doable projects about the workshop's theme. This activity is an attempt to address the proliferation of fake news, vulgar statements, profanity, and negativism in the online world. The project

calls for the promotion of positive messaging to drive towards upholding the positive powers of social media. It also aimed to equip the participants with the knowledge of promoting digital citizenship and creating positive messages online.

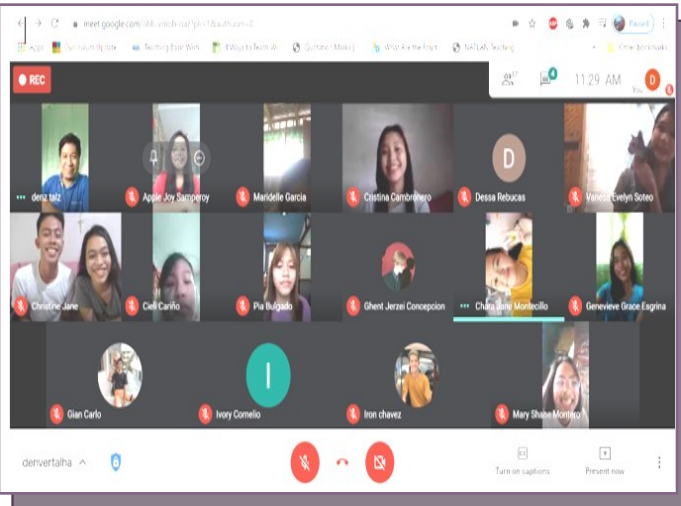
The activity had three groups, namely, Batch 1- High School Students, Batch 2 - Youth Leaders, and Batch 3- the Educators. The original schedule of September 15 and 24, 2020, was re-set to September 29-30, 2020, due to some issues with the host's availability. Instead of the initial plan

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## TW participant brought together 35 people to Discuss Positive Messaging



Students participating in the Online Activity on Positive Messaging  
 Denver Talha

to invite fifty (50) participants, the organizer invited only forty (40) people considering the budget for the subsidy for internet connectivity and data allocation for each participant. Each had to receive a subsidy of Php200 (USD 4.16). The online activity used Google Meet as a means to facilitate virtual learning through video conferencing.

The activity had three components. First is the Digital Insight that provides the activity's rationale. Second is the Digital Impact that focuses on the role of a Social Media Advocate in promoting Digital Citizenship. The third is Digital Ambition. This component summarizes the whole concept of the Digital Thumbprint Program.

The thumbprint symbolically represents the identity of a person. It is synonymous with the concept of digital footprint. Our behavior and interaction online - be it positively or negatively - shape our online personality. This personality is one's digital footprint. One's post, comments, views, shares in social media, browsing history, and information provided online contribute to a person's digital thumbprint.

Despite the issues on connectivity in the Philippines, the participants kept on coming back to the virtual meeting room to participate in the discussion. Before the webinar ended, the participants were able to create and conceptualize their respective advocacies that they will post online using various media formats and platforms. They were also thankful for the load subsidy provided them. It was a great help in the field of education, especially in the time of the pandemic. The Philippines' Department of Education is promoting distance learning, which includes online learning modality. 🙏🙏🙏




Denver Talha is a teacher in a public school in Region XII, Division of Cotabato. This Division partnered with Globe Telecom, a co-holder of the project, Digital Thumbprint Program. Under this project, he is the Lead Teacher and named DTP Ambassador.

## Nepal Unites members organized a Three-Day Workshop as ICF Alumni

Nepal Unites organized a three-day workshop on Gender and Nonviolent Communication on from 22 to 24 September in Old-Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal. The Interfaith Cooperation Forum of Asia Pacific Alliance of YMCA supported this activity under the Small Grants program for ICF Alumni and its peace networks. The organizers provided the participants with the workshop kit, hand sanitizer, and facemask, with the instruction to follow the hygiene protocol. The nineteen participants included 9 females and 11 males coming from different



Group Discussion on Gender  
 Md. Ayatulla Rahaman

## Nepal Unites members organized a Three-Day Workshop



NVC Workshop with Mani Ram Kandel  
 📷 Mohammad Ayatulla Rahaman

religious, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds. Two participants are Persons with Disability (PWD).

Rajan Bhandari, Mohammad Ayatulla Rahaman, Kaushila Sunuwar, and Sumitra Sunuwar, all being alumni of different ICF programs and are members of Nepal Unites, took turns in facilitating the activities during the workshop. Rajan took care of the introductions, objectives, and orientation on the program. He also shared what he learned during the ICF online Thematic Workshop on Nonviolent Communication. Mohammad facilitated the workshop on the analysis of the amount of time and work that women and men spend

in 24 hours. The discussion process yielded the realization that those “women’s work criteria” are social constructs that can be changed. Then Kaushila and Sumitra shared their learning from the online workshop on Gender. Kaushila shared the effects of the pandemic on the women in Nepal and Asia. Sumitra said that the online workshop improved her level of confidence and knowledge.

On the second day, Mani Ram Kandel facilitated the session on Nonviolent Communication. He is a registered international trainer at the Center for Nonviolent Communication (CNVC), a freelance facilitator on NVC (Nonviolent Communication). He has worked with the conflict, peace, and development sector in Nepal for more than a decade. He holds a double master’s degree in Conflict Peace and Development Studies (CPDS) and Sociology from Tribhuvan University.

He started the session with meditation and asked the participants about their past feelings and language. Did the language hurt others? Kandel focused on the language of life and proceeded to introduce the four steps of NVC, namely, observe, feel, recognize the



Sumitra Sunuwar sharing about the Effects of the  
 Pandemic on Women  
 📷 Mohammad Ayatulla Rahaman

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## Nepal Unites members organized a Three-Day Workshop as ICF Alumni

need, and learn to make a request. Exercises on the four steps followed.

On the last day, after the recap, the resource person was Yadav Kumar Bhattarai, a film director and champions for change. His film *Jhola* (Bag, 2014) was a critique of the sati system in Nepal. His film *Bhor* (Morning/First Light, 2018) points to the socio-economic culture of the dowry system prevalent also in Nepali society. Both films exposed the violence perpetrated against women in the Nepali society. His upcoming film is on society's discrimination against women because of



Kaushila handing Certificate of Appreciation to Yadav Kumar Bhattarai  
Md. Ayatulla Rahaman



Prem Raj Acharya  
Mohammad Ayatulla Rahaman

menstruation. He shared the role of films in social transformation, especially on the situation of women and for the citizens to act for change.

Another part of the day's session was the sharing of the experiences of people with disabilities. Prem Raj Acharya shared his own life story of struggles and challenges. This section aimed to help the participants connect with other people's stories.

At the end of the three days, the participants said that the workshop was short and wanted to extend two days more. 🙌🙌🙌

— Mohammad Ayatulla Rahaman  
SoP 2017, Coordinator

## Call for Contributions

ICF calls on the alumni and friends in the peace network to please submit your news articles. Write about the peace-related issues in your locations. Write about what you are doing as peacebuilders, and even your struggles and reflections. Send us your art works if you have any—a drawing, a poem, a photograph.

Please send a photo along with your article or poem, a photo of the activity, and/or a photo on the subject of your article. Please send also your own photo with a one-sentence blurb.

Please send them to the following addresses:

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We will be so happy to hear from you, and connect with other young peacebuilders. Keep well and stay safe!  
ICF Staff



## INTERFAITH COOPERATION FORUM

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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.



### From the Editor's Desk: Facing the Challenges of the Times

September 2020 marks the end of the project phase 2018-2020. Bread for the World has given ICF another phase of support for a three-year period ending in September 2023. Surely, ICF has to comply with the provisions as agreed in the contract. One of the challenges that ICF, along with its network of alumni and friends, is the stark realities that beset the Asian countries, especially in Southeast and South Asia. While ICF can help in the raising of consciousness among the youth through its workshops, institutes, and School of Peace programs, the youth have the responsibility to live and practice the principles learned during these workshops.

"Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me." This is the song that ICF alumni learned from Jill Jackson-Miller and Sy Miller. This song prods each youth and the older ones to learn peaceable values and embody them—live them out. Our choices—whether it is about food, or gadgets, or courses to take, or places to go to, or to live in—must be guided by values that undergirds justice and peace.

The youth is the hope of the future. But how will that hope be realized if our youth today allow themselves to be sucked by the capitalist values that

proliferate in society? How can Asian societies attain peace if the youth turn their gaze away from the realities of wanton corruption and abuse of power by people whom the citizens have entrusted the leadership?

Many leaders of nations have taken advantage of the situation of the pandemic to fortify their turfs and power over the poor and vulnerable sectors of society. Instead of using their power to improve the health care systems and the democratic processes, government leaders are creating laws that curtail the basic human and Earth rights.

In the workshops, ICF highlights the lessons from Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Education must be liberating. It must challenge complacency and kleptocracy. How do the alumni and friends of ICF think and behave in the face of the travesties done to their nations? ICF advocates definitely for peace, but that peace must be based on justice. Will ICF alumni and friends take the risk of applying theories into practice?

I pose these thoughts and questions for reflection as the phase ends, and the new one begins. The God of many names, of justice and peace bless our endeavors. 🙏🙏

Please send us news about your Forums, Alumni programs, ICF Partner events or activities related to peacebuilding to:

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