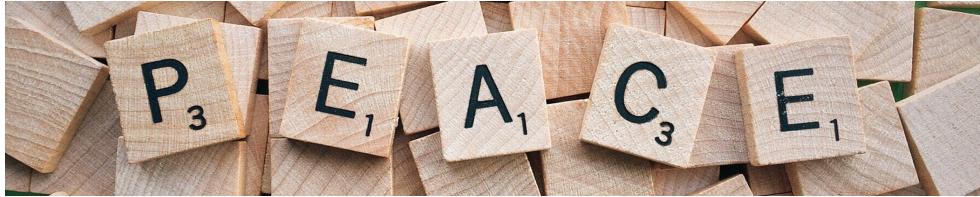




THE PEACEBUILDERS

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

Bi-monthly E-Newsletter of the Interfaith Cooperation Forum of Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs



Call for Application: ICF Small Grant Proposal

The Interfaith Cooperation Forum (ICF) programs, such as the School of Peace, Thematic Workshops, and Peace Institutes are venues to spot out and train potential persons to become trainers and facilitators of peacebuilding programs in their local or national contexts, and even in ICF activities. ICF encourages these alumni to take the initiative of holding follow-up activities for the ICF Alumni. Moreover, ICF expects the alumni to practice what they have learned by organizing peace education, advocacy, and networking for the youth on the local or national level in their respective countries.

In this light, ICF will provide a support fund to the ICF national forums, if any, alumni clusters, and ICF peace networks to support their programs that promote peace education, peace advocacy, interfaith communal harmony, training on peacebuilding, and other related themes.

The Deadline for this Call for Application is the 15th of July. Details on the term of reference, the application form and the report, that needs to be handed in after the activity was conducted, can be found [here](#).

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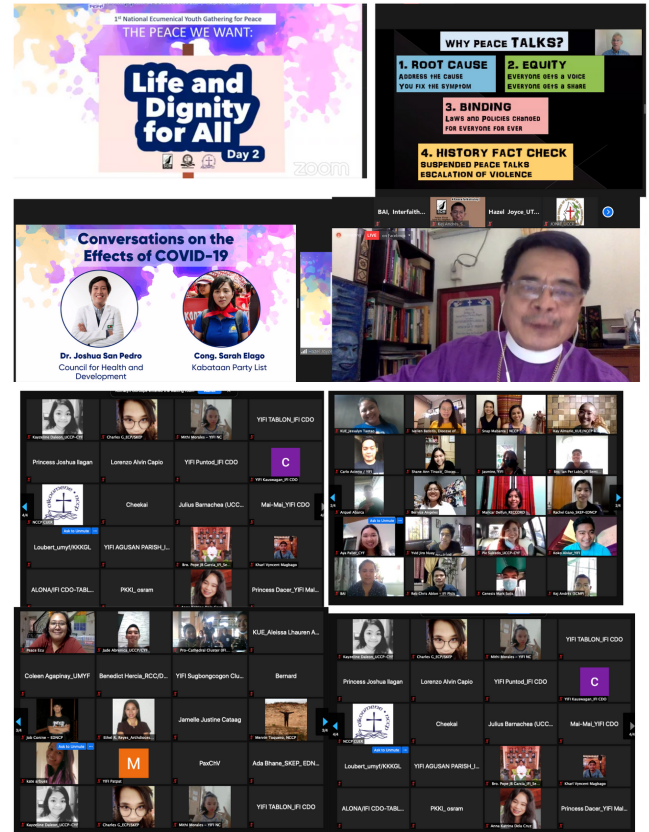
ICF staff and ICF alumni in the Philippines attended Youth Peace Summit

ICF Staff and some ICF alumni in the Philippines attended the 1st National Ecumenical Youth Gathering for Peace with the theme: "The Peace We Want: Life and Dignity for All". The Philippine Ecumenical Peace Platform (PEPP) organized the summit on May 22-23, 2021 thru zoom. More than a hundred participants from different faiths attended the said activity.

The summit aimed to gather young people to mainstream the call and work for a just peace and the resumption of the peace talks. It also sought to listen to the youth's perspectives and insights on the national issues that are specifically relevant to peace and conflict transformation. Another objective was to put human dignity in the center of the discourse for a just peace. Lastly, it challenged the youth to respond pro-actively to the call of the times through a sustained though loose network formation of young peace advocates geared towards sustained peace initiatives.

Pastor Carlton James Palm was the keynote speaker. He explained the reasons for the need to pursue the peace talks. After his presentation, a conversation followed on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic with Kabataan Party List Congresswoman Sarah Elago and Dr. Joshua San Pedro of the Council for Health and Development. Professor Francis Alvarez Gealogo, a historian from Ateneo de Manila University discussed the history of peace talks and the role of churches in the peace process.

The first day of the summit ended successfully.



On the second day of the summit, the co-chair of the PEPP, Bishop Rex Reyes Jr. shared the Biblico-Theological Reflection (BTR). In his reflection, he focused on the role of young people in the peace process. Calling on the youth to learn lessons from the current situation in Myanmar, he urged them never to allow again the military to rule the Philippines. He mentioned that the peace process is a major step in ending the war, and it is the least expensive and least deadly way. He concluded that the Peace Ecumenical Peace Platform (PEPP) continues to call for the resumption of peace talks between the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army-National Democratic Front (CPP-NPA-NDF) and the Government of the Philippines.



The sharing of the narratives and cries of the poor followed. Four young people from the different sectors, namely, the Lumad or Indigenous Peoples, Informal Settlers, Workers, and Peasant spoke about their experiences in their respective communities during the pandemic, especially the abuses in their communities are facing. They also shared their experiences in mobilizing their sectors and their communities. They further emphasized the importance of the resumption of the peace talks, highlighting the great role of the young in pursuing peace.

In addition, different young people's organizations in the Philippines expressed their support and called for the resumption of the peace talks between the CPP-NPA-NDFP and the Government of the Philippines. The PEPP expressed their gratitude to the young people who participated in the summit and further challenged them to continue the call for peace.

The summit ended successfully with the participants calling for the resumptions of peace talks. ICF hopes that the ICF alumni who attended the summit will share their learnings with other young people in their communities. **#ResumePeaceTalksNow**

Baidido Saganding
ICF Program Officer

All Systems Go: ICF Program Committee Hit the Start Button

On May 21, 2021, the ICF Program Committee convened virtually to concretize the plans and actions form implementation in the next 12 months. The ICF Program Committee and the ICF Staff were in unity on the agenda and finalized the calendar of activities for the remaining months of 2021.

The Program Committee agreed to commit to the tasks set in achieving the objectives of the ICF. Most importantly, ICF Program Committee members were able to define the importance of their roles in rolling out the ICF programs and activities.

Amid the ongoing pandemic brought about by COVID 19 that hampered the movements - both domestic and international, people and organizations tried to make a way to cope up with the situation. ICF believes that any pandemic should not stop peace work. The meeting is essential for the continuous implementation of the programs of ICF even in this challenging time. To pursue its mission and vision, the ICF program committee meeting pushed through. The members present were Rangsa from Bangladesh, Mohammad Ayatulla Rahaman from Nepal, Cicilia Jambuani from Indonesia, Dunhill Angelo Maraya, and Dory Dotusme from the Philippines. The ICF staff was also present during the meeting.



It is worth noting that before the formal business of the meeting, Muriel Orevillo-Montenegro, the ICF Coordinator, briefly discussed the basics of conducting meetings following the parliamentary procedures, especially on making decisions and actions. The new knowledge will help the ICF Program Committee members deliberate on the agenda speedily, freely, and democratically.

For the moving forward, Baidido Manalasal Saganding, ICF Program Officer, presented the calendar of activities drafted by the Committee during the previous meetings. The Committee reviewed and discussed the calendar of activities and affirmed their support for the implementation. The Committee members also agreed that each member would actively participate in the program implementation. The final version of the calendar of activities is tangible proof of the desire and commitment of the Committee members to work hard for the actualization and realization of the mission and vision of ICF.

Moreover, the Committee members committed themselves to attend and actively participate in Committee meetings. They affirmed that they would attend, participate, and assist in facilitating at least one ICF virtual activity. The active participation and ownership of the program committee members to the programs and activities of the ICF would greatly

contribute to the success and greater outcome of the programs.

On the continuing networking and reaching out of ICF alumni, Annika Denkmann, a BftW Seconded Personnel, presented the concept of the Alumni Survey. The survey aims to understand better the relevance and impact of the offered services of the ICF, from the alumni's perspective. The program committee promised to help and contribute to developing the survey guide questions.



TRACER STUDY
Interfaith Cooperation Forum



On the matter of its composition, the Committee discussed the need to fill the existing vacancy while ensuring the balance of membership based on gender, ethnicity, race, and faith. Consequently, the committee helped in identifying new members and alternates from Bangladesh and Nepal with the hope that their dedication and skills will greatly contribute to the mission of ICF.

Finally, with the renewed dedication and service of the Program Committee members, we are proud to say that we are now “All Systems Go.”

Dunhill Angelo Maraya
ICF Alumni

Alternate Program Committee member





Virtual Thematic Workshops 2021

July	ICF 4 th Thematic Workshop: Online Training for the Youth on Writing Project Proposals	Virtual	July 5 - 9, 2021
	ICF 5 th Thematic Workshop: The Internally Displaced Peoples (IDP) and Refugees in Asia in the Context of the COVID pandemic and the impending Civil War in Myanmar	Virtual	July 26-30, 2021
August	ICF 6 th Thematic Workshop: Uncovering the Plight of Indigenous People's Rights and Access to Health Care during the COVID pandemic	Virtual	August 23-27, 2021
Sept	ICF 7 th Thematic Workshop: The Impacts of the Coronavirus on the Rights and Situation of Local, Migrant, and Self-employed Workers in Asia	Virtual	September 13-17, 2021
Oct	ICF 8 th Thematic workshop: "No One is Left Behind:" Children Rights and Welfare, and the Pandemic	Virtual	October 25-29, 2021
Nov	ICF 9 th Thematic workshop: - 16 Day of Activism against Gender-Based Violence *Nov. 25 - Grounding Women's Rights on the Feminine Images of God in Religions' Sacred Texts and Indigenous Spiritualities	Virtual	November 25, 2021
Dec	Continuation - ICF 9 th Thematic workshop: 6 Day of Activism against Gender-Based Violence *Dec. 2 - Ecofeminism as Activism in defense of Mother Earth *Dec. 9 - Remembering the Trailblazers for Women's Rights and Passing on the Torch to the Women of Today	Virtual	December 2 and 9, 2021

ICF holds Online Basic Training on Writing a Project Proposal

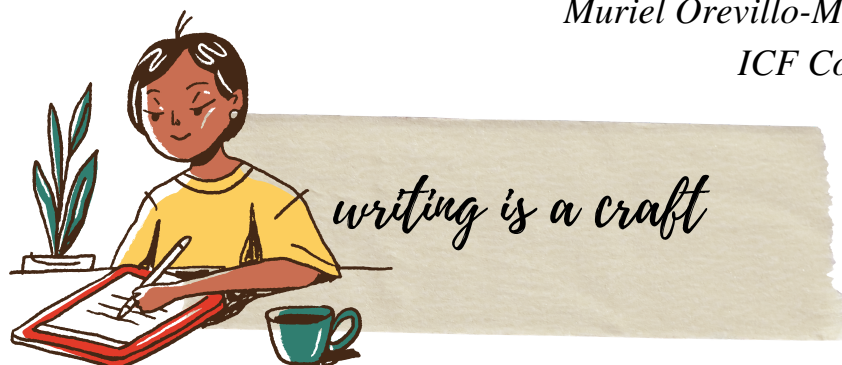
On July 5-9, 2021, at 7:00 – 9:00 p.m. Hong Kong time, ICF will hold an online training on the basics of writing a project proposal. The intended participants are young people within the circle of the Interfaith Cooperation Forum and Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs. ICF had extended the deadline for registration from June 25 to June 29, 2021, to accommodate those who decided at the last minute. The first two-day sessions would focus on the principles, concepts, and elements of the project proposal. The third day would be the time for the participants to write their proposals. Then, in the remaining two sessions, the participants, as clusters, will present their proposals. The critiquing processes on the last two sessions are opportunities for the participants to learn from each other. It behooves upon those who registered to answer the initial set of questions before joining the session. The in-house staff will facilitate the sessions.

Why this kind of training? ICF recognized that among the skills that a peacebuilder need is writing a proposal, particularly one that will benefit their respective communities. Writing a project proposal may help the peacebuilder articulate the community's needs, assess their capacity and commitment to do something to address a prevailing problem or need. A proposal could help possible partners — local, national, or international — understand the kind of assistance they could extend or provide. These proposals could be an instrument that may give them access to resources from partner organizations.

What are the expectations for this workshop? ICF expects the participants to share and explain the reasons why they want to write a project proposal. They must clearly articulate their outputs from this workshop and how they will use their respective output.

Taking the sessions seriously and learning from the workshop depends on the participants. ICF can do only so much in terms of providing the principles and basic skills. It is our hope, as facilitators, that the participants would truly practice writing. The catchwords are this: writing is a craft.

Muriel Orevillo-Montenegro
ICF Coordinator



ICF organizes a Virtual Workshop on IDPs and Refugees in Asia

Interfaith Cooperation Forum will hold Thematic Workshop on Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and Refugees in Asia in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and Military Junta takeover in Myanmar on July 26-30, 2021 from 7:00-9:00 p.m. HKT.

Displacement is a peacebuilding and human rights issue. Addressing their needs and protecting their rights is an integral part of peacebuilding. Thus, ICF seeks to help raise awareness among young people about the situation of IDPs and refugees so that they could help protect and provide assistance to them. In this thematic workshop, the participants will identify the current situation and challenges that the IDPs and refugees face. They will examine and explain the responses of the government and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to the situation of the IDP's and Refugees. They would explain how their governments and ASEAN have integrated the UN Mandates on the matter at hand.

Furthermore, they will identify laws and policies that protect the IDP's and Refugees and explore the role of the young people in supporting and advocating the rights of the IDPs and the refugees. When possible, the participants will create a small doable proposal that would be relevant to their communities.



Asia Pacific Alliance of YMCAs
Interfaith Cooperation Forum

**VIRTUAL THEMATIC WORKSHOP ON IDPS AND REFUGEES
IN ASIA IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COVID19 PANDEMIC AND
THE MILITARY JUNTA TAKEOVER IN MYANMAR**

July 26–30, 2021 7:00–9:00 pm HKT

Registration will close on July 16, 2021.
For more details visit Interfaith Cooperation Forum –interfaithforum.org

Interested young people will have the option to register as regular or non-regular participants. Regular participants are those who choose to attend the 5-day session and actively participate during the session and follow-up discussions. They will commit to submitting a well-thought reflection on the four-day sessions. Non-regular participants are those who will choose to attend only one or two sessions, and they are not required to submit reflection papers and attend the follow-up discussion.

To know more details on this virtual workshop and on how to register please visit [here](https://interfaithforum.org).

*Baidido Saganding
ICF Program Officer*

Understanding Patriarchy, Misogyny, and Religion for Peacebuilding

On the 8th and 9th of May 2021, the Bangladesh ICF alumni have organized an activity based on the ICF's series of workshops on the impact of a patriarchal society on women's rights and security according to the sacred texts of Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism. This was attended by the inter-faith youths coming from different cultural and religious backgrounds who play a vital role to lead the youth to contribute towards peace in the society by maintaining equal rights of men and women at the training Centre of Birisiri YMCA, Bangladesh.



The participants, Psyche Mankhin, Sulogna Rema, Dayna Chambugong, Renchi Chiran, and Rinku Mankhin from Bangladesh participated in a Virtual thematic workshop on religion and peacebuilding: Exploring patriarchy, Androcentrism, and Misogyny in the Sacred Texts held from March 4-30, 2021 Organized by the Interfaith Cooperation Forum. It was an opportunity to increase one's knowledge, experience, skills, and positive thinking on the theme.

The four different religions, namely, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism along with the structural system of patriarchy and misogyny have contributed to the suffering of women. These led to discrimination, injustices, and violence against people especially towards women we gained a lot of valuable information, ideas, and lessons from the respected resource persons about that. Understanding these issues play a key role in establishing peaceful relations between men and women in society and reduce the inequality and injustices against men and children.

So, we - the thematic workshop alumni 2021 from Bangladesh organized a two-day workshop at YMCA, Birisiri of Durgapur Upazila (sub-district of Netrakona), Bangladesh with the interfaith youth in collaboration with ICF.

To make the two-days thematic workshop successful, we adopted two different action plans: the first part was to discuss the definition of patriarchy and misogyny and how the religions' sacred text has embedded these concepts. We discussed the impact of patriarchal society on women's rights and security according to the sacred texts of Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism. The second part was drawing out active participation creative personal, group work, and presentations.

We had time for questions and answers, regarding the participants in distinguishing obstacles posed by the patriarchal society towards women and finding a way to a solution in establishing a peaceful society. The activity aimed to give an orientation to the 20 youth from different religious and cultural backgrounds at the training and resource center of the YMCA. We invited three resource persons from three different religions to discuss and facilitate the sessions. They were Emran Hassan Shimul, an artist, researcher, and faculty of Tagore University in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The second invitee was Dilip Kumar Ghose, senior program officer of a youth program, and the third, Dr. Samuel Pranotosh Sangma, a medical practitioner. Since we were all aware of the global epidemic of Covid-19, maintained all the health regulation of Covid-19 during the workshop. The program began with a greeting from Rinku Mankhin and the introduction of the objectives of the activity, and the goals of ICF. The activity aimed to reduce discrimination and injustices towards women, especially those reinforced by the different sacred texts of religions and cultures. The following topics discussed were –

- Definition and the relationship of Patriarchy and misogyny,
- Differences between gender and sex,
- Positive and negative challenges of patriarchy society and its practice in society

- Christianity and its teaching on women
- The influence of the Goddess on women in Hinduism,
- Women's rights and role from the perspective of Islam religion

What is peace? What is the impact of patriarchal society on peacebuilding? Is the patriarchal social system an obstacle to build peace? Identifying the challenges of patriarchal society and finding ways to overcome these to build peace and the role of youths in establishing peace in the community in the light of patriarchal society.

The participants come from three different religions representing Islam, Christianity, and Hinduism from the areas of Upazila (sub-district) like Durgapur, Kolmakanda, and Dhobaura of Netrakona and Mymensingh district of Bangladesh.



The speakers shared with the youth participants their valuable information, thoughts, knowledge, experience, and ideas about the impact of patriarchal society on women's lives and rights from the perspective of their respective religions.

The participants were divided into five different groups and the youth participants contributed their important thoughts, realization, ideas. They also participated in the workshop goals such as individual surveys, poster work and group presentation, short reflections, among others. By doing these things, they tried to find out how the structural system of patriarchal society, religion, and peace are interrelated. Moreover, the youth participants defined peace from their point of view and presented it by through a gallery exhibition.

Hopefully, all the process of working together developed their mutual understanding and made stronger their community relationship with one another. We know that today's youth are the pioneers of changes; the youth are the strength who will lead the society towards peace by reducing all forms of discrimination, injustices, and violence against women and children. I hope our small effort will change the negative attitude of today's youth towards women as well as increase their positive attitude, respect for each other, develop higher values and skills, and that later through joint work, they will be able to play a major role in establishing peace in the society.

Rinku Mankhin
SoP 2019



ICF Alumni gave a Talk on Conflict Management and Transformation

Hamsiya Olimpain, SoP 2019 alumna, gave a talk on the topic Conflict Analysis: A Crucial Aspect in Peacebuilding. The talk was part of the training for women and young leaders in the conflict-affected areas of Datu Montawal and Pagalungan in Mindanao, Philippines. The training aimed to respond to the effect and impact of conflict in the said areas. The activity took place at Jasmin's Place, in Pikit, North Cotabato on June 25-27, 2021. The 56 participants were members of the Katipunan ng Kabataan (KK), a federation of the youth, and the Sanggunian ng Kabataan (SK), as its governing body. The Sangguniang Kabataan represents the youth in each village's higher council. The Suara Kalilintad Association Incorporated, an NGO, organized the three-full day training activity.

The training started with the usual preliminaries, such as registration, an ecumenical prayer led by Mujahidin Lucman, one of the participants, opening remarks, and other activities that the Suara Kalilintad staff facilitated. Samira Usman, the Project Officer of Suara Kalilintad, gave an inspirational message and the rationale for the training.



photo from Hamsiya

Olimpain learned about Conflict Transformation when she attended the two-month School of Peace in 2019. The objective of this specific session was to introduce help the participants analyze the issues surrounding the conflict and its roots that affect the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). Conflict analysis helps people to imagine and formulate possible ways of addressing the conflict.

Olimpain was involved with a youth organization that received an award as Most Outstanding Youth Organization from SIPAG 2020, and the Office of the Vice President of the Philippines, also in 2020.

*Hamsiya Olimpain
SoP 2019*

Reflection: We are All part of Nature, Never its Master

As part of their International Peacebuilding Training Programme (IPT), the Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution (ASPR) offered five online lectures in June under the theme, “Navigating Complexity Caring Conversations for Peace and Justice.” The ASPR is an independent, non-profit and non-partisan organization, engaged in research, education/training, and practical conflict transformation. Two ICF staff participated in the selected online training, namely, Annika Denkmann and Muriel Orevillo-Montenegro.

One of this year’s IPT online lecture series was on “Peace Ecologies: towards inclusive and sustainable Peace in the 21st Century” on June 22, 2021. Dr. Siad Darwish was the lecturer. He is an anthropologist and peacebuilder who specialized in gender and environmental peace and conflict. Dr. Siad Darwish’s lecture felt more like story-time than a traditional lecture in the best possible way. He used the method of storytelling, instead of giving a more classical presentation. That was a welcomed approach and informative, especially in times when people are into so many online meetings. One of the stories he focused on, to bring peace ecology closer to us listeners, was *The Eye of the Crocodile* by Val Plumwood. I will give a summary of this story and its implication on peace ecology.

Val Plumwood was an Australian philosopher and ecofeminist. While kayaking Kakadu National Park in Northern Australia, a crocodile attacked Plumwood. She survived, but that experience left her pondering over and rethinking her and humanity’s relationship with nature. Dr. Siad narrated that Plumwood remembered vividly how certain she was that the attack could not be happening. She was certain that the crocodile was mistaken, and wrong in reducing her to food. The crocodile could not simply reduce her, a human being, to food. She was so much more than that. It felt unreal to her, more like an illusion than reality. However, the memory of this event did not leave her. Later, she came to the conclusion that yes, there was an illusion to the situation, but it was her perception of the world rather than that of the crocodile. Becoming prey in the crocodile’s eyes made her realize that the reality to which she subscribed was utterly wrong about many things. She recognized how she and millions of people shaped a Western worldview especially about human beings and their relationship with nature. Val Plumwood said, in her own words:

If the framework of normality was true, the lack of it could only be explained if this experience of being prey was an illusion, was a dream or nightmare. But if it wasn’t, I had to face the possibility that the lack of it was there because both I and the culture that shaped my consciousness were wrong, profoundly wrong—about many things, but especially about human embodiment, animality, and the meaning of human life.



Dr. Siad Darwish used this exceptional tale on Plumwood's encounter with the crocodile to underline one of the main points of peace ecology: that everything is connected. However, we as humans, especially those located in the urban and western world do not view ourselves as part of nature but as its master. The consequences of this can be seen in the ever more intense weather conditions we have been experiencing lately from raging wildfires in Australia to extreme Typhoons in the Philippines and the melting of the arctic ice to only name a few. As the 21st century sees most of the world's population gravitate towards urban living and detachment grows, Dr. Siad questioned when in our own family histories we can observe this change.

He asserted that we could only learn to reconnect once we are aware of our detachment and the harm it causes.

Although I do not advocate for all of us to share Val Plumwood's scary experience of becoming a crocodile's prey, I do think we should all aim and learn to see the world and especially us through its eyes.

I thank the [ASPR](#) for organizing this lecture series and especially Dr. Siad Darwish for introducing me to this powerful true story.

*Annika Denkmann
BftW Seconded Personnel*



Photo by David Clode on Unsplash

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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 perspectives 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:

Reminiscing Some Events in June and Hints of Lessons from their Memories

The world is about to enter the 20th month of the COVID-19 pandemic in July. Yes, 20th month. But it would only be about 17th month if we reckon the spread of the disease on March 11, 2020, the day the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 at the pandemic level. Thus far, 3.91 million people all over the world have already died as of this writing and still counting. The world is still struggling to win the battle against this unseen enemy. In this context, we see more and more of the escalation of political, economic, and socio-cultural crises during the pandemic in many Asian countries. Amid the depressing situation these days, I would like to recall a few events that happened in June that have explicit and implicit impacts even on us in Asia. These events continue to leave challenges to the task of peacebuilding today.

First is the June 5, 1832 Uprising in France. Many people have probably read the book *Les Misérables*, or have watched the movie based on Victor Hugo's novel. In this novel, Hugo weaves the image of "barricades" and the story of the conflict that he witnessed on June 5, 1832. The shootout happened in the working-class district of Paris between the confrontation of the French soldiers and the anti-monarchy rebels fighting for democracy.

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The food shortages, economic crisis, and cholera epidemic were oppressive. Cholera took the life of the pro-democracy leader, Jean Lamarque, the people's hero. On June 5, during his funeral, the demonstrators held a rally, where they waved red flags while chanting "liberty or death!" It sparked the uprising. Hugo wrote the best-seller book thirteen years later.

The second is the Tiananmen Square massacre. On June 4, 1989, many pro-democracy student demonstrators, hundreds of them, died in what is now known as the Tiananmen Square Massacre. In two days, the Chinese Communist Party leaders saw the rally grew bigger and bigger in number. They, along with Deng Xiaoping, agreed to implement a crackdown on the demonstrations. The seemingly ideal image of Mao's China crumbled before those who idolized it when the Chinese army crushed the demonstration. The army killed young, unarmed students while they sat, or slept on the ground of the Square that night. Before this cataclysmic event, I cherished the words of Deng Xiaoping delivered during his speech on April 10, 1974 at the United Nations:

"If one day China should change her color and turn into a superpower, if she too should play the tyrant in the world, and everywhere subject others to her bullying, aggression, and exploitation, the people of the world should identify her as social-imperialism, expose it, oppose it and work together with the Chinese people to overthrow it."

(<https://opinion.inquirer.net/73236/china-defies-deng-xiaoping-warning#ixzz6z9MtqH7o>)

Today, I lament that these words just drifted away to nowhere. I weep over the subservience of my country's leaders to the bully of Asian countries. It is deplorable that it refused to honor the verdict of the Permanent Arbitration Court in 2016 that recognizes the Philippines' defense over the West Philippine Sea under the UNCLOS.

The third event is the Stonewall Uprising that started on June 28, 1969, at Greenwich Village in New York. Rather than calling the event a riot, it was an uprising. The inn was a bar where gay people hang out. Early morning on June 28, 1969, the New York police raided the inn and attempted to force bar employees and patrons out of the inn. People in the neighborhood and a horde of support groups – gay and straight people – rushed to the area to prevent the police from further harassing the people inside the bar. The Stonewall Uprising sparked the gay rights movement and highlighted the gay people's struggle for the world to respect their rights as human beings. This movement evolved and grew later into the LGBTQIA+ movement. Then, on June 25, 1978, Gilbert Baker designed a striped, rainbow flag giving meaning to the colors, namely, hot pink for sexuality, red for life, orange for healing, yellow for the sun, green for nature, blue for art, indigo for harmony, and violet for spirit.



What lessons do we learn from these June events for peacebuilding?

First, the event that inspired the novel of Victor Hugo happened in France, but it moved the people to aspire for liberty and democracy continue to spread among the peoples and nations around the world, including Asia. You will see these aspirations among the people in Cambodia – albeit muffled, Hong Kong, India, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. The expressions of these aspirations, unfortunately and historically, do not get a positive response from the leaders. Instead, the leaders met them with the iron hands as the leaders seek aggrandizement at the expense of the citizens. Second, on the surface, China's Belt and Road Initiative looks harmless. But we know that the countries that accepted money from China for their infrastructure projects are now wallowing in the quagmire of debts. Sri Lanka is a glaring example.

A closer look spells “no way out.” Slowly, the countries find themselves trapped in the dragnet that Deng Xiaoping warned about before the UN in 1974. Third, indeed the LGBTQIA+ community is gaining the courage to claim their sexualities and gender orientation, and the right to live a normal life. However, these individuals still find their societies, religions, and communities of faiths turning away from them. Unfortunately, there are still communities that refused to accept them fully as humans, and religions still deem them as sinners, if not the work of the devil.

The issues raised by these events are basic peace issues. They need to be revisited and reflected upon. These issues are made complex by the societies' constructs of how to look at the world and people. These June events are significant because a peacebuilder must learn to understand their underlying reasons and analyze their roots, and why the people continue to struggle. Peacebuilders must dig deep and gather nuggets of wisdom that they may use in facing the contemporary challenges of building peaceable communities.

