



Interfaith Cooperation Forum Justpeace Newsletter

July, 2016

Reflections on Ramadan

SOP alumni talk about their month of fasting, praying, and charitable giving

by **SOP Alumni** on July 01



The Ramadan market in Poso where people can buy halal foods for the evening breaking of the fast. (Photo by Gunawan "Wawan" Primastaya)

Gunawan "Wawan" Primastaya (SOP 2010): Ramadan month is big annual celebration for people in Poso, Central Sulawesi, Indonesia. Everyone gets excited to go to the Ramadan market to buy cookies, food and drinks. Everyone goes to the market, even Muslim and non-Muslim people. So for me Ramadan is not only a kind of worship for Muslim community but a time to celebrate diversity and peace with all the different community. Ramadan month for me is a time for reflecting on our lives. Fasting in Ramadan is not only stop to drink and eating during the day but also controlling the emotions within ourselves. Ramadan also brings value of reconciliation, first is you have to be reconciled with your own self and then other human beings. It can be done by being forgiving, being grateful, positive thinking and building good interactions or we called 'silahturahmi.'

Laela Tambawang (SOP 2012): When you learn about fasting, maybe you think it's about food and maybe you will say it's easy. But in truth is not about how long you can last without food, the truth is how you have to fight with yourself, with your ego, emotion and from everything inside yourself. Fasting it's about how you learn to be kind, be true to yourself and your environment. Fasting is about sharing kindness, love etc . Fasting is how you learn to control negativity around you and reflect on your life during fasting. And after one month of fasting the outcome that I wish for myself after fasting is how I can become better person. The truth is fasting is not just about food but how you transform yourself after a month of reflection.

A-esha “Ashang” Afdal Ampatuan (SOP 2015): Ramadan for me is a month of disciplining oneself and strengthening his/her relationship to Allah and other creations. Disciplining because you need to avoid things you usually do that can give you pleasure and focus on doing what Allah want you do as his creation. It is also a month of testing yourself as a Muslim physically, mentally and spiritually. You need to evaluate yourself: Can my body still bear no food and water for a day? Can my mind still focus and forget the earthly things? Lastly what have I done as a creation of Allah this past year? Did I do what he want or what I want? If your answer is following Allah, congratulate yourself because you played your role as his creation, if not then you need to improve yourself by rendering most of your time to worship him and ask for his forgiveness because life is so short to waste. You need to invest good deeds for the day after life by doing what he want not what you want.

Indeed, Ramadan is the most important month of all because it gives me a total picture of what a real Muslim is.

Fira Tiyasning (SOP 2015): Two of the most important parts of Ramadan are charitable giving and fasting.



On Friday June 24 2016, Generation of Peace (a young community group in Poso) and me gathered with some youth people in Poso to reflect on making a strong stance for peace as youth people in Poso. Our point discussion was sharing experience with Mr. Budiman Maliki who received Ma'arif Award from Ma'arif Institution, Budiman Maliki is a peace builder in Poso who has been active in dedicating himself to work during

the conflict, and Gunawan Primastaya (SOP 2010 alumnus) who is a Young Southeast Asia Leader Initiative fellow in Chicago, U.S. He encouraged the participant to use social

media in a tools for peace campaign. The participants came from different backgrounds all around Poso.

This meeting gave us a better understanding about current issues in Poso. As a network we would like to collaborate through action to balance the image of Poso in media mainstream by using social media and our local newspapers. I'm grateful to be given a chance to explore these issues with such a wonderful group of young people in Poso. As a young people, we face the same the issues, but we don't know how to address them. It was an emotional experience where I realized the power of a united group, the value of working hand in hand and the meaning of togetherness to make something better in the future.

One of the other things we do during Ramadan is fasting. It goes smoothly because of intension. Wise people said it comes from deep in your heart which you believe it can be real and your mind force your body to do step by step. So, for me fasting is a sign. A sign for all human beings to realize that we have to cooperate together.

We can't refuse to believe that we need each other. Fasting is the sign to think outside of yourself. I hope through this activity with Generation of Peace we can upgrade our sense to looking around. We don't learn from experience but we learn from reflecting on experiences. Fasting without acting is nothing.



Esty Dyah Imaniar is a fashion designer who recently participated in Indonesia's mini SOP. (Photo submitted by Esty Dyah Imaniar)

Portrait of an Indonesia Mini SOP Participant

by **Esty Dyah Imaniar** on June 17

I am the founder of Modesty Indonesia. This company produces apparel with hand embroidered calligraphy of peace and equality values in Islam. Under the idea of WeaReaDonate, we aim not only to create unique modest fashion (wear), but also to educate Muslim women by including writing of the history behind the values embroidered on the garments (read), and help women feel empowered and peaceful through Islamic campaign work with our community partners (donate).

As the Muslim fashion industry gets bigger, I wish that I can employ this benefit by working on peaceful Islam campaign through it. I aim to bring Islamic peace values and gender equality in a popular way, since many (young) people tend to support (or pay no attention to) religious-based violence merely because they have no enough understanding about why they should campaign for peaceful Islam or how to work on it.



Many of the dresses and hijabs I make aim to encourage Muslim women not to disvalue themselves since in Islam there is no first or second gender. All humans are equal in front of God, no matter what gender they have.

I participated in the Indonesia Mini SOP at the Ciptagelar indigenous community in West Java. I decided to join because I found that this agenda fits my passion and vision. Moreover, I think this event does not only use dialogue in a superficial way. It goes further from my expectations, and doesn't only look for "common ground" of faiths but how to work within them to solve society's problems. That's

why I decide to join Mini SOP.

During structural analysis classes, I learned a lot about the root problem of current conditions and my stance on it. We learned about capitalism and I realized how the fashion industry (the field I am working in now) is closely related with it. Knowing the problem, I will try to keep running this business in a more social-enterprise approach by empowering local artists, paying attention to worker's rights, arranging more reasonable profits, etc. Actually, I did learn about capitalism back in university, however the classes in mini SOP work better for me. It didn't only give me knowledge but courage to act.

Summer Kids Peace Camp in Mindanao

by A-asha “Ashang” Afdal Ampatuan on July 01

The Summer Kids Peace Camp is a 3 day camp exclusively for grade 5 students from the Province of Cotabato, conducted every summer from last week of March to last week of May. Approximately 20,000 grade 5 students (girls and boys) all over 17 Municipalities and one city in the Province of Cotabato participated this year. This program was initiated under the leadership of Governor Emmylou “Lala” J. Taliño-Mendoza last 2012 up to the present.

In this three day camp, the children undergo a lot of lectures, games and other related



activity regarding personal development, environment, children's right, disaster risk management, gender issues and concern, programs of the provincial and local government unit in their respected municipality and especially module on Interfaith and Peace.

The Interfaith and Peace module was handled by my team for the past years; basically we are giving them lectures on the following terminologies: interfaith, religion, tribes, lumad (local term for indigenous group in Mindanao area only), Muslim, Christian, and Bangsamoro. Why these? In order for them to understand their own faith and culture at the same time understand also the different faith and cultures of others towards a peaceful diverse community. We also share to them how

speaking and body movements contribute to the conflict happening around them. We also emphasize the importance of unity, love, concern, respect and forgiveness to all creation. We also encourage them to start practicing good values and manners such as being respectful of elders, praying or being thankful to the creator, taking good care of the environment etc.

This year, after participating SOP we added more lessons to really implant in the minds of the children how important peace is and how we can achieve it together. We included the word self-transformation as the ultimate end to change the current situation. We also introduced the words tolerance, acceptance, and engagement in a way children can understand. We also utilized the short film entitled Tolerancia as a reflective film for the children to really internalize the reality.



Photo submitted by Paddy Noble.

Paddy Noble starts work with HIV affected people

by **Paddy Noble** on July 01

Greeting Friends of ICF and ICF networks,

I am now working with Brahmavihara Cambodia AIDS Centre based here in Phnom Penh. An organisation founded in 2000, the centre provides chaplaincy services to HIV and AIDS-affected patients in hospitals, homes, and prisons, in and around Phnom Penh. Specifically my job entails a lot of relearning when it comes to report writing, networking and communicating to their funders in the United States. I also visit people with HIV/AIDS in hospitals and around Phnom Penh with the staff of Brahmavihara. As part of the chaplaincy services, we also practice Reiki, which is a form of meditation with hands, rooted in Buddhism. The job requires us to be the doctor, nurse, caregiver, chaplain, counsellor, translator and many more largely because the patients can't afford proper health care.

Besides the chaplaincy services I am undergoing training in meditation every day and studying the Dharma each Wednesday with the staff. This has been an important learning for me because it helps me understand my Christian faith more but also be able to understand Buddhism in Cambodia and the way people see their faith. It requires us to be open and compassionate, especially when we visit people in hospitals. Sadly many Christians judge the people with HIV/AIDS harshly because they are Buddhist according to the experience of many of the patients in hospitals.

I have undergone a major shift from working with ICF to where I am now with Brahmavihara. It is hard work and we have to keep focused. I have had to break away

from various habits when writing reports, I have to be specific in my writings, and adjust to the meditation schedule and Dharma studies. We have to be emotionally and spiritually strong and be able to work with people suffering from HIV/AIDS. I was told by the founder of Brahmavihara, who is a Zen Buddhist Nun, it will feel as if we have moved a building yet it hasn't quite found its footing as it is slowly letting go of the old foundation where it laid. This is a true description of how I feel but with peace and compassion at the same time.

I continue to keep in touch with ICF by visiting Max and friends. It has taken me some time to readjust and transition from working with ICF to where I am now, largely because there were many uncertainties happening around me, and with my new job. It is nice now to feel that I am doing something of value for others.



Students participate in the World Environment Day art contest. (Photo submitted by Santosh Yadav)

World Environment Day Art Contest in Nepal

by **Santosh Yadav** on July 01



Triveni Bikash Samaj (TBS) is community-based networking organization working for the poor and marginalized community of the 5 VDC of Banke District, Samshergunj, Ganapur, Manikapur, Kohalpur and Rajhena. Part of our local initiative community health strengthening program is improving the sanitation in the area. To promote the initiative, TBS hosted a World Environment Day art competition on June 5 on the theme of "Go Wild For Life." A number

of schools in the area were invited to join and four students were selected as winners.

Correction: Last month's newsletter featured an article called, "Bangladeshi SOP alumni takes part in Visthar course on Gender." It was written that Bibek Shahi is from Bangladesh, but he is actually from Nepal. ICF apologizes for this error.

COMING UP
Justpeace Events

China Mini SOP July 21-28 in Siem Reap, Cambodia at the Metta Karuna Reflection Centre.

Philippine National Forum July 29-August 1 in Davao City, Mindanao Province

Christian Conference of Asia & Asia Pacific Alliance of YMCAs Joint Mini SOP - August 8-22 in Siem Reap, Cambodia, at the Metta Karuna Reflection Centre

Laos Human Rights Workshop September 11-17

ICF Re-Envisioning Meeting September 26-30 in Hong Kong at the Asia Pacific Alliance of YMCAs head office in the Kowloon area.

Announcements
Exciting news from within the ICF family

Emma Leslie is known to many SOP alumni. She is director of the Center for Peace and Conflict Studies (CPCS) in Siem Reap, Cambodia and has been a resource person, as well as mentor, for ICF. Both Emma and CPCS are important partners of ICF and SOP. Recently Emma was awarded the [Order of Australia in the Queen's Birthday Honours](#). We congratulate Emma on this award, but more importantly we stand with her as she strives to help build communities of justpeace in a world filled with conflict.

June Pichaya, an SOP 2012 alumna, recently graduated from Thaksin University in Songkhla, Thailand with a master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction from the Faculty of Education. Congratulations, June!



Interfaith Cooperation Forum
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