



# 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



## *ICF organized an in-person Training of Trainers on Nonviolent Communication*

On June 6-10, 2022, the Interfaith Cooperation Forum organized a five-day in-person Training of Trainers on Nonviolent communication. The activity took place at Bethel Guest House, Rizal Boulevard, Dumaguete City, Philippines. Nine participants attended the Training of Trainers. 4 were males and 5 were females from four Asian countries, such as Bangladesh, Philippines, Timor-Leste, and Nepal. In terms of religious representation, 5 of them were Christians, 1 was a Hindu, and 3 were Muslims. The participants of the in-person Training of Trainer's practicum were those who complied with the requirements of the online sessions held on March 7-30, 2022 with satisfactory ratings.

Through hosting Training of Trainers on Nonviolent Communication (NVC), the ICF expect those who received the certificates to contribute as facilitators in activities in their local or national contexts and in some ICF activities in the future. ICF reached out to a diverse group of young people who wanted to contribute to promoting peace through learning and practicing nonviolent communication. The whole in-person Training of Trainers was designed to be divided into two important parts. The first part was a review of the principles of NVC. The second part was the practicum.

The first part included the Elements/Components and Principles of Nonviolent Communication, Exercises on Empathy, and Options in receiving hard-to-hear messages.

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*Jiyaul, Leônia, Rajan and Denver engaging in an exercise during the ToT.*

The 13 NVC Dance Steps. The Training of Trainers started with greetings from the staff of ICF. Dr. Muriel Orevillo-Montenegro introduced the goals and purpose of the Training of Trainers, and oriented the participants on the program flow of the training. . The rest of the first two days had the resource persons, Amina T. Mambuay and Lara Mambuay, giving review inputs on the basic elements, principles, and other aspects of NVC. The new part of NVC that participants learned, as these could not be done online, were the exercises on Four Chairs – of giving empathy to others, and the Four Ears – of receiving hard-to-hear messages.



*Rinku sitting on the "hot" seat during the Four Ears exercise.*

The third day was a day out with nature. The participants went to visit the Apo Island where they swam with the giant sea turtles. In addition to enjoying the natural beauty, the main purpose of the trip was to keep the participants physically and mentally fit/healthy for the final practicum learning session based on their topics related to nonviolent communication.

The second part of the practicum session. Ten guest participants were invited from a local community of Sibulan, Negros Oriental to the Training venue. It was an intergenerational group of Junior and Senior High school students including some adult persons.

During the fourth and fifth days, the participant-facilitators did their practicum session based on the chosen aspects of Nonviolent Communication. Each facilitator prepared their module in terms of the topics of nonviolent communication. The practicum session conducted by the facilitators were: Session 1: Introduction to Nonviolent communication, What is NVC? The story of the Emergence of NVC (Denver Talha, Philippines).



*Denver Talha facilitating the first session.*

Session 2: The NVC model, Frame of engaging and modes of connection and purpose of NVC (Rajon Bhandari, Nepal), Session 3: The principle of NVC (Md Jiyaul Rahaman, Nepal), Session 4: The four key components of NVC : Observation, Feelings, Need and Request. (Psyche Mankhin, Bangladesh), Session 5: Empathy- the flow of connection extended towards the self or another person (Rinku Mankhin, Bangladesh), Session 6: NVC language: Jackal in, Jackal out, Girrafe in and Girrafe out (Edelene Rosin, Philippines), Session 7: The 13 NVC Dance Step (Leonia Freitas, Timor-leste and Seah Olimpian, Philippines), and Session 8: Workshop on Empathy: The four chairs- giving empathy to others and The four Ears – hard to hear the message (Sarah Adrianne Mambuay, Philippines).



*Psyche Mahnkin during her facilitation.*

At the end of each practicum day, at the end of the practicum session, the Resource persons, the ICF staff, and the participants provided their valuable feedback, comments, and guidance to each facilitator. The guest participants responded very actively and positively during the facilitation that was effective in making the facilitation session successful.

On the last night, the participants sat down to evaluate the entire ToT process using metacards. The areas evaluated were the content, accommodation, meal arrangement, ICF staff, resource persons, and the participations. They used seven different colors card to put their valuable feedbacks.

For the closing rites, the participants placed their national flags in the center. Then everyone sat down around it and shared their feelings, what they like or dislike, what they have learned from this ToT, their commitment, and how they could contribute to promoting peace in their local communities when they return to their own communities.



*The group during the final circle, expressing their ideas and plans for commitment to NVC beyond the ToT.*

*Rinku Mankhin  
ICF School of peace 2019 Alumnus  
Bangladesh*



*Group picture with the guests from Sibulan.*



## ***10 Completed the ICF Training of Trainers on Human Rights and Advocacy***

From June 14 to June 25, 2022, the Interfaith Cooperation Forum held a Peace Institute-Training of Trainers in the Philippines. ICF welcomed 10 students and one observer-participant from 7 different countries including Bangladesh, Cambodia, Laos, Nepal, Philippines, Timor-Leste, and Việt Nam who came to Dumaguete City to join the training of trainers workshop. The training theme was Human Rights and Advocacy. The training was anchored on the hope of young people creating a peaceful and sustainable world together. ICF invited very able facilitators led by Ms. Dessa Quesada-Palm, a theater artist and head of the National Committee on Dramatic Arts of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts Together with her was Carlton "Cobbie" Palm, a Presbyterian Church-USA Mission Co-Worker born in Dumaguete, and Ernest Hope Tinambacan, a theater artist and songwriter. The Peace Institute students have successfully completed the course with many memorable experiences.



*Hamida (right) and Vie (left) presenting during an activity.*

What did we learn during the 10-day training?

1. We learned deeply as we clustered human rights into categories.

We approached and analyzed the development and the provisions of the United Nations Charter and the basic provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

We studied major human rights covenants and protocols, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the International Covenant on the Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). Political Rights are the contents of the law of people's participation in politics and governance. Civil rights are the content of the judiciary and penal systems. These are the rights that protect Justice. Social rights are the guarantees for a healthy quality of life for all persons, while economic rights are the guarantees for meaningful work, production, and services. Cultural rights are the guarantees for cultural respect and freedom to exist, and collective rights are the guarantees of the state to protect the environment and natural resources.

The participants had an open space to discuss, do in-depth research, and relate to the implementation and practice of the ICCPR and ICESCR in different countries. In addition, the class also approached international organizations that protect human rights, proposed solutions from a multi-dimensional perspective on multiculturalism among the different countries and religions.

2. We gained skills in applying theater art in human rights advocacy

During the sessions, the participants engaged in collective activities to awaken and connect to the different parts of the body. The exercises enabled the participants to explore and develop ways of using theater art as an effective tool or method to advocate and promote human rights. We experimented on the elements of theater forum, story building, and simulation of human rights abuse situations and short plays. The participants also learned from their fellows concerning the issues in each country, such as red-tagging, freedom of speech, sea pollution, gender equality, etcetera.



*The final circle committing to defend human rights.*

### 3. Creating a teaching module on specific Human Rights issues using with theater art

The participants distinguished the difference between the role of trainers and that of the facilitators. They also learned theories on how to work with different types of learners, and how to build different teaching frameworks to achieve the best results for different target groups. With the guidance of the facilitators, the participants worked together in groups and created their built teaching modules on different human rights topics, following the training circle format:

- (1) Identifying training needs (TNA)
- (2) Establishing the training objectives
- (3) Designing and Planning the Training
- (4) Delivering the actual training activity, and
- (5) Evaluating the training activity.

On June 25th, the participants had practicum sessions and directly interacted with youth and students in three different communities. One group went to the local church of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) in Sibulan to do their practicum with the church youth. Another group went to Little Children of the Philippines, a shelter for abandoned children. The third group went to the UCCP local church in Dumaguete City and had their practicum with the church youth and the youth from an NGO called Les Enfants du Mékong. This gave the participants the opportunity to apply the knowledge and practice the skills gained during the training. It also helped the participants gain a better understanding of the local human rights issues. The practice sessions have left many memorable experiences for the local young people as well as participant-trainees..

In addition, the participants also had an opportunity to join the worship service at Silliman University Church. They had time for bonding and connecting with nature in Negros to understand more about the local culture, landscapes, and local issues.

"The course not only brings knowledge to me, but also serves as a daily reminder of our hope for a better world every day," a participant shared.

*Viet Hang Nguyen  
ToT Participant  
Vietnam*





## ***Bangladesh National Forum of ICF organized an Alumni follow-up activity***

On April 28th-30th 2022, the Bangladesh national forum of ICF organized a three-day Bangladesh ICF alumni follow-up activity “on the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on Alumni's life and peacebuilding efforts. The activity took place at the Training Centre of Caritas Mymensingh region, Mymensingh city, Bangladesh. Out of thirty (30) participants, twenty (20) were ICF alumni and three (3) were from Shante Mitra, three (3) were from Taize brother peace network and four (4) were other youths. Twenty-three (23) of them were Christians, two (2) were Hindus, four (4) were Muslims and one (1) was from the Buddhist community. Of the thirty (30) participants, 13 were males and 17 were females from different Upazila (sub-district) such as Trishal, Dhobaura, and Haluaghat Upazila of Mymensingh, Durgapur & Purbadhala Upazila of Netrakona district, Modhupur Upazila of Tangail District and Jamalpur district of Bangladesh attended on alumni follow-up activity.

The invited resource person was Dr. Ruma Rumjhum Mrong, Jr., a consultant of Fulpur Upazila Health Complex in Mymensingh. This small project received support from the Interfaith Cooperation Forum (ICF) Small Grant for ICF Alumni follow-up activities. The project seeks to equip and encourage the ICF alumni to become more involved and connected with each other in peacebuilding activities in their respective communities.



*Resource person Dr. Ruma Rumjhum Mrong Jr. providing input to the participants.*

The three-day Alumni follow-up activity went through three different learning sessions and exercises for the participants. The first topic was about Understanding how the COVID-19 pandemic affected the peacebuilding efforts of Bangladesh ICF alumni, and the problems and impact of the ongoing pandemic crisis on ICF Alumni's lives.

On the first day, April 28, the activity started at 5:00 pm. with welcome greetings from Rinku Mankhin. He shared the purpose of the alumni follow-up activity. Then the participants introduced themselves and shared peaceful greetings with each other.

On the second day, Sulogna Rema shared the inputs on the activity objectives. Among the topics that the organizers included in the program was how COVID-19 affected the life and peacebuilding efforts of the ICF Alumni. Psyche Mankhin gave an orientation on the program flow and introduced the work of ICF. Rinku Mankhin gave input on how the ICF Alumni Birisiri team fought against COVID-19 to support and encourage their community people to survive and how they contributed to peace building during the COVID-19 pandemic. Then one by one, all the participants shared how COVID-19 affected their life and activities. They shared the story of their life struggle, experiences, and challenges they are facing due to the pandemic.

After the lunch break, Mr. Biplob Rangsa, a member of the ICF Program Committee, shared his experiences with ICF among the participants.

The resource person, Dr. Ruma Rumjhum Mrong, gave her input on the challenges of the pandemic crisis and ways of overcoming those barriers. She shared the stories and experiences of her life on how she struggled during the COVID-19. She discussed how COVID-19 had a divesting effect on people's lives, activities, and all the spheres of life, what kind of challenges and problems people faced by the pandemic, and how they overcame those.



She pointed out the kind of challenges, problems we are facing and might face in the future due to the pandemic. It was effective for the participants to become more aware of these challenges.

Second topic was about sharing the activities and experiences between ICF alumni and the Taize brothers. On the third day, Rinku Mankhin gave a brief introduction to the Bangladesh ICF national forum and the activities of alumni during the pandemic. Then, the ICF alumni and Taize brother's peace network shared their activities and experiences with each other on how they struggled and fought against the pandemic. They shared inputs on how their organizations contributed to support the community people during the pandemic and how currently their organization contributing to peace building. The representative from Shanti Mitra and alumni participants also shared their activities and experiences on the same thing. It encouraged everyone to contribute constantly and work together for peacebuilding in their respective areas.

The third topic was on designing a new workable plan on how to support and stay connected with one another in peacebuilding activities. All the participants did the Hope and act tree activities and creative activities. They shared their dream of how they want to contribute to peacebuilding in their respective communities. They shared thoughts and plan on how they wanted to support and inspire each other to get everyone involved in peacebuilding activities. In the end, the Alumni created an alumni support group via Messenger and Facebook to stay connected with each other.

*Rinku Mankhin*  
*Activity Proponent and Coordinator*  
*ICF School of Peace 2019 Alumnus*  
*Bangladesh*



*Group picture with all the participants and resource person (center).*



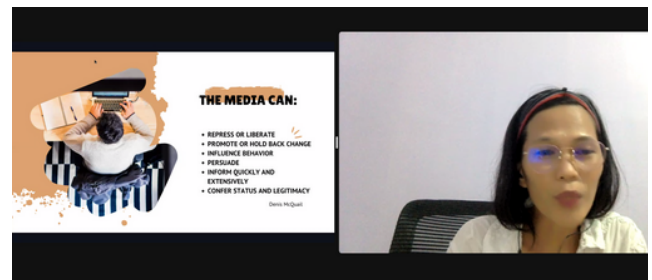
## *The Significance of Basic Journalism Skills for a Peacebuilder*

The Interfaith Cooperation Forum has organized so many virtual workshops since COVID-19 came into our lives. ICF continues its advocacy for peace through these virtual workshops. Interfaith Cooperation Forum arranged another virtual workshop on the theme of “Basic Journalism: Writing as a Prophetic Act towards Peacebuilding” on May 16-20, 2022. It aimed to provide basic skills in journalism for interested young people. This workshop equipped the young participants to write news reports and opinion columns for media outlets on any event of unpeace. The workshop was divided into five different sessions. According to ICF, 16 people registered to participate in the workshop. However, only 9 completed the session. 6 of them were females, and 3 were males. Of the nine attendees, 1 was a Muslim, and 1 was a humanist. The rest were Christians. Some ICF Program Committee members attended selected sessions.

There were three resource persons for the whole week's sessions. Ms. Len Olea, President of the National Union of Journalists in the Philippines, discussed the Importance of Journalism in Promoting Justice and Peace, and the Purpose and Elements of Good Journalism. Dr. Rosario "Rose" Maxino Baseleres, dean of the College of Mass Communication at Holy Name University in Tagbilaran City, facilitated the next two sessions on Writing a News Story: Its Elements and Parts. This included exercises in writing a news story, crafting a news lead, the headline, and the body of the news story. A good news story follows the inverted pyramid format, where the Lead paragraph carries all the important information. The most important information is at the top and the least important information is at the bottom.

The participants had to present their outputs for critiquing. The last two sessions were on Writing a News Feature and Opinion Article with a Prophetic Slant for Justice and Peace.

Mr. Vaughn Geuseppe “Koko” Alviar, a lecturer at the University of the Philippines- Baguio City, facilitated the sessions. The participants were also tasked to write and present their feature and/or opinion articles on the last day.



*Ms. Len Olea during her presentation.*

Ms. Len Olea pointed out that the media has its own power to repress or liberate. It can promote or hold back any change in our society or state. Media influences our behaviors. It also has the power to inform anything very quickly and extensively. Ms. Olea checked on the participants if they could identify who controls media in their respective countries. The participants had a similar answer: the controlling power or authority is in the hand of corporations with political and economic interests. Media is used to defend and further these interests through the use of information as a means of controlling the public mind. Good Journalism has some elements, namely:

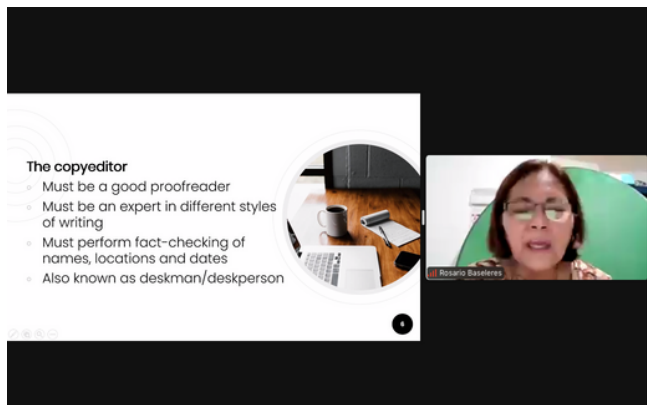
1. Journalism's first obligation is to the truth.
2. Its first loyalty is to citizens.
3. Its essence is a discipline of verification.
4. Its practitioners must maintain independence from those they cover.
5. It must serve as a monitor of power.
6. It must provide a forum for public criticism and compromise.
7. It must strive to make the significant interesting and relevant.

Ms. Olea also discussed pro-people journalism. Pro-people journalism focuses on stories that are unreported or underreported by the corporate media.



It requires integrating with the people, rather than merely “covering” them. The audience is not treated as a market but as a valuable source and ally in pro-people journalism. The enlightenment and empowerment of the masses as agents of change is the goal of pro-people journalism.

During the 2nd and 3rd sessions, the participants learned that “A good journalist has the nose for news.” Immediacy or timeliness, conflict, consequence, human interest, humor, oddity or unusualness, prominence, proximity or nearness, suspense/drama, and significance are the elements of a news story. Dr. Maxino-Baseleres reminded the participants that Sources of news are important for news writing. A good journalist can sense the beat of any incident or any probable news. A good journalist is always aware of the goings-on, especially the activities that are not visible to many people. Dr. Baseleres gave some pointers on news gathering and checking the facts.



*Dr. Maxino Baseleres during her presentation.*

Mr. Koko Alviar discussed how to write a news feature article and gave us proper guidelines on how to write a piece of news considering its sources, and angle, structure, length, language, production, presentation. There are widely recognized types of newspaper features, such as business, commemorative, explanatory, historical, hobbyist, medical, invention, overview, odd-occupation, participatory, profile, and unfamiliar visitor. Columns, comments, and editorials are also known as leaders. All these types of opinion writing are about issues in the news.

Opinion and feature articles give more emphasis on the views of the writer. An important tip from Mr. Alviar is for the journalist to respect laws on privacy and sources' request. A journalist must be sensitive about the privacy and security of the person who is giving information. Sources of the news must be named whenever it is feasible. The media should perpetuate discrimination, not judge anything or use any offensive language. Every journalist must have a good knowledge of the laws according in one's country, and in others too.

In today's world media has the power to spread any message very fast. It can influence people very easily. Peace issues are very sensitive. There are so many things happening around us that most people do not know.

This becomes a barrier to peace. It is important to know the truth and share them with people to overcome the problem together. I have attended several virtual workshops organized by the ICF. ICF has inspired me as a peacebuilder. To do peace advocacy, I also arranged some workshops in my community. But these workshops are actually not enough to spread the message of peace because it is not possible to invite everyone to join. But, if we write an article and publish it in any media or news portals, it is really possible for everyone to read it or get the message I am trying to say. Joining the workshop on basic journalism helped me learn things about news story writing. Hopefully, now I can improve my writing skills on any specific idea. Hopefully, I will be able to spread the message of peace to my friends, community, society, and country. Thank you, ICF for organizing a thoughtful and very helpful virtual workshop for young peacebuilders. Hopefully, we all can work for a peaceful world.



*Psyche Mankhin  
Bangladesh*



## *Fake News: The Unseen Enemy*

Without a doubt, the internet surely made our daily lives easier. You can send a message to your loved ones, even overseas, in just split seconds. You can interact with diverse people from different points of the globe through social media platforms. You can make online purchases and have them delivered to your door. Most importantly, information is made available to you with just a few searches and clicks. Indeed, it is understandable why most people, if not all, see the internet with hearts and sparkles in their eyes. However, nowadays, it is sad to witness that these same hearts and sparkles are what make people blinded by how much the internet could destroy reality and, more so, their lives.

Many say that one of the greatest crises our generation is facing is disinformation. With the presence of modern technologies, and of course the internet, information can be accessed almost everywhere and by anyone. One just needs to have a smart gadget, which could be a phone, tablet, or laptop, and mobile data, wifi, or any means to connect to the internet. Then, you can have unlimited access to almost every single site that exists on the web. With every single site being able to offer content and information to a user, like us, the problem of deciphering what is true and what is not arises.

Today, as different sites including social media platforms are able to produce content and capable of spreading information to huge audiences, the dilemma of disinformation intensifies. Fake news has been rampant these past few years, only proving that online sites and social media have been used as a weapon to earn and manipulate people. Youtube, Facebook, and most especially TikTok, are platforms primarily established to connect people and provide an avenue to share their skills and talents. Yet nowadays, these platforms have been used to spread false information to users.

What is even more dismaying is the fact that the underprivileged are most affected by this disinformation.

Yet, there is also a big percentage of the population that have been fully fed with untruthful information and refuse to learn the truth. Hence, if there is one thing that Filipinos learned in the last elections it is that disinformation and fake news is the real enemy and will be the reason for the possible downfall of the country.

With all these, it is apparent that while the internet is able to ease our lives, it also has immense power to manipulate people. Moreover, it is also evident that our fight, as the ones privileged to fact-check, must be taken seriously. Let us prevent disinformation from victimizing even more people. Let us continue lobbying our government to pass on laws that will safeguard the truth in online spaces. It is not yet too late. Let us save our country from the onslaught of fake news - our unseen enemy.

*Ma. Jacintha L. De Leon,  
Thematic Workshop Participant: Basic Journalism  
Philippines*





## Reflection: ICF and My NVC Journey

Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCA's Interfaith Cooperation Forum organized 11 virtual sessions and 5 days in-person workshop-practicum days on Nonviolent Communication as part of the Peace Institute-Training of Trainers program. Amina T. Mambuay, a Certified NVC trainer, gave lectures and exercises, assisted by Lara Angeli T. Mambuay. The program was designed to include theoretical, practical, and demonstration or practice. In the program, I learned about NVC its definition, history, purpose, and model principle of NVC. I also learned different 4 key elements of NVC. We also learn the empathy and NVC languages, empathy to self and others. We did several practices in the related session and final presentation.

Before this Nonviolent communication journey, I always try to connect with others for growth and development. I never observed my feeling and needs. I sacrificed my feeling and need because I am not able to express them. Due to fear of the loss of connection with family friends and society I accept the thing which I do not like. Although from the outside I seem to be happy, from the inner heart I am not. Engaging in social activities and media, I receive negative messages that made me angry, break relations, and made me depressed also.

After the journey with Nonviolent Communication, I feel that the connection of the world will only be a success if we are connected with ourselves. Now I am concerned with my feelings and my needs. After learning the mode of connection, I am able to identify my feeling and need. Now, I am able to express them. After connecting with myself, I feel that it is easy to connect with others because my feeling and my needs are the same as those of others. We are having the same universal feeling and need in this world. I am responding to the thing which I don't like, and able to express it using the NVC process (observation, feeling, need and request), which helps me to be happy from my inner heart.

I am happy because I am able to tackle the negative messages and it helps me in my social life. I feel that if we give sympathy to others, that other persons' chance of becoming happy is possible. When we are connecting with empathy, it makes the conversation continue and makes a good relationship also.



*Above and below: Rajan during his facilitation.*



I am very happy and satisfied with this journey of the NVC. My need for happiness in my life and the connection with society are met. Special thanks to: the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCA's Interfaith Cooperation Forum staff, Amina T. Mambuay, and Lara Angeli T. Mambuay for providing me with such lifelong skills for a compassionate life. I promise I will use my skills to transform my society.

*Rajan Bhandari,  
Nepal*



## ***Reflection: Memories of the Second Peace Institute held in Dumaguete, Philippines***

We started the first day of the training with Morning Prayer and reflection on the different views. The ICF coordinator Muriel Orevillo-Montenegro shared about the ICF and its objectives, goals, program components, and how it is working in Asia. ICF officer Baidido Manalasal Saganding facilitated how to contribute to the workshop successfully. Then the participants wrote some words such as energy, deep listening, be on time, passion, talent, to help respond, mindfully, active listening, no judgment, respect the boundaries, etc on the chart paper and stick it on the wall of the training hall.



*Participants writing down their wishes for the training.*



*Participants engage in whole body activities during the workshop.*

Ernest Hope Tinambacan was a co-facilitator in this training. He facilitated the introduction by asking the participants to share the meaning and history of their names. We paired off into dyads and discussed why human rights are important. Two groups were also formed, to take charge of the energizer and recap. The Energizer group members called themselves the Eagle and the Recap group chose the name Echo for their group. Both groups had different responsibilities during the training. Dessa Quesada-Palm was the main facilitator of the training and she facilitated on workshop on the "word web, which was totally new learning for me. Human Rights was our topic to make the word web and I knew how it is connected with other words. Our group made one word and presented the sketch and role-play. It meant "Theater."

Carlton "Cobbie" Palm facilitated the input on Human Rights. He shared with us the significance of Human Rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights has three dimensions: Civil and Political Rights, Social and Economic, Cultural Rights, and Collective Rights. We also discussed the emergence of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). I learned very well the examples of Normative Equality and Substantive Equality, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and we discussed these deeply and individually. For the practicum preparation, we were given 5 minutes each to lecture on a specific Human Rights topic during the training.



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We also had a Forum Theater workshop by groups on Advocacy. In Image Theater, we portrayed an image of the problem, then portray the desired image as a solution to the problem. Then, each group was asked to show an image of how we could reach the desired image as a transformation. I learned much through the forum theater. With my team, I visited the Little Children of The Philippines Foundation Hope Village for our practicum part. There, I met the youth who really imagined and had the willingness to make unity in raising their voice to advocate for their rights. I heard most of the time from the LCP youth the word "Respect." Then I felt the word "Respect," which we must have to apply in our work for Human Rights and Advocacy. I believe that "Theater" is one of the tools for social transformation and advocacy. During the training, I got some points from our respective facilitators for improvement in the coming days. I got good information and knowledge on Human Rights issues, and that advocacy is a risky work as shared by the participants and the experiences from the respective 6 countries. I can say what we can and what we contribute from our side on Human Rights just depends on the direction of the movement of our footsteps.

*Mohammad Ayatulla Rahaman  
School of Peace 2017  
Nepal*



*The group during an energizer.*



*Mohammad (right)  
presenting during an  
activity together with  
Pete.*



*Pete during a short performance.*



## PHILIPPINE ECUMENICAL PEACE PLATFORM

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OWGC-AMRSP

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**Muriel Oreillo-Montenegro, Ph.D.**  
Coordinator, Inter-faith Cooperation Forum  
Asia Pacific Alliance of YMCAs.

**Pastor Carlton "Cobbie" Palm**  
Divinity School, Silliman University

**Mr. Alvaro Senturias & Dr. Erlinda Senturias**  
Mindanao Peoples Peace Movement

**Ms. Myla Leguro & Ms. Ma. Ida Guigiento**  
Catholic Relief Services, Mindanao

**Sr. Luz Mallo, m.a.**  
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### "Continuing Our Ecumenical Journey in the Pursuit of a Just and Enduring Peace"

Statement of the 10<sup>th</sup> Ecumenical Church Leaders' Summit on Peace

*"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world"*  
(John 16:13)

We, Clergy, Religious and Lay leaders from various denominations and generations, have gathered in Cebu City from June 27 to 29, 2022, for the 10th Ecumenical Church Leaders' Summit of the Philippine Ecumenical Peace Platform (PEPP)<sup>1</sup>. We come from all over the Philippines for our first physical gathering since the COVID-19 pandemic, which started in 2020.

Our gathering comes on the eve of the end of the term of President Rodrigo Duterte. The six years under President Duterte have been marked by the war on drugs and the war on "terrorism." When the Duterte government unilaterally terminated the peace negotiations between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) and then created the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC), human rights violations significantly increased and the climate and culture of impunity in the country worsened. As the war on drugs felled innocents, so did red-tagging, arrests based on trumped-up charges, and other rights violations take place.

There is a desecration of God's gift of human dignity. There is unpeace.

On June 30, 2022, President-elect Ferdinand Marcos Jr. will be sworn into the highest office in the land. Based on our history, the prospects of peace under a Marcos presidency seem to us quite dim. But we are inspired by our guest speakers – former Chief Justice Hilario Davide; Bishop Reuel Norman O. Marigza, the General Secretary of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines; human rights lawyer Neri Colmenares; theologian Dr. Melba Maggay of the Institute for Studies in Asian Church and Cultures; Bishop Jose Colin Bagaforo, National Director of Caritas Philippines; and our sisters and brothers who brought their testimonies from the ground – to NEVER GIVE UP hope, and continue to work for a just and enduring peace! They

1. There were 190 participants from Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao.

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exhorted us to be creative, use lessons learned, rediscover the resources of our faith and culture, build friendships and bridges, keep speaking truth to power, continue our critical and principled engagement, and link up and work with the growing movement for change and good governance.

We are encouraged and inspired by the commitment of the women and youth of faith to be PEPP's co-sojourners for a just peace. We will also persistently work with the Citizens' Alliance for Just Peace<sup>2</sup> in calling for the resumption of the GRP-NDFP formal peace talks.

For the formal peace negotiations to proceed in earnest, we appeal to the incoming lawmakers to pass a resolution in both houses of Congress to support the formal peace talks. We also appeal to them to repeal the Anti-terrorism Act of 2020 as a serious impediment to peace.

The incoming administration has banked on the rhetoric of unity, but there can be no true unity when there is unpeace. Thus, we call on President-elect Marcos Jr. and his government to resume the GRP-NDFP formal peace talks, which address the roots of the armed conflict; respect the work and agreements that have been entered into by past leaderships, and employ a "whole-people-and-country approach." We also demand a stop to the practices of red-tagging, filing of trumped-up cases against dissenters, and extrajudicial killings; the release of all political prisoners; and the abolition of the NTF-ELCAC. Above all, we remind the incoming leaders to respect the sovereign Filipino people and ensure that human rights and the rule of law are respected at all times. This comes with our prayer to Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace.

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<sup>2</sup> The Citizen's Alliance for Just Peace (CAJP), an alliance of four major peace networks – Philippine Ecumenical Peace Platform (PEPP), Pilgrims for Peace, Sulong Peace and Waging Peace Philippines – is the biggest network of peace groups in the country from different political backgrounds. The CAJP has united under one goal -- to work for a just, equitable and enduring peace in the Philippines by engaging the peace processes including through principled peace negotiations.

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## 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 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: The return of Marcos to power*

On May 9, 2022, thirty-six years after the Filipinos ousted the dictatorship, over thirty-one million Filipino voters have supposedly elected the dictator's son Ferdinand Marcos Jr. as the 17th President of the Republic of the Philippines. His running mate is Vice President-elect Sara Duterte, the daughter of former President Rodrigo Duterte.

The winning of Marcos Jr. provides the opportunity for the Marcos family to return to power. Marcos Sr. ruled the Philippines for more than two decades marked by human rights abuses and massive corruption. Amnesty International reported grave human rights violations where thousands of people were arbitrarily arrested, detained, tortured, disappeared, and killed during martial law. Marcos Sr. was one of the most corrupt government leaders in the world. His wife, Imelda, is guilty of graft and sentenced to prison for illegally funneling \$200 million to the Swiss Foundations. But she never serves her sentence. Furthermore, Marcos Jr. remains a convict due to his failure of filing his income tax return. But despite the evidence, the Marcos family continuously denies the horrors of Martial Law and dictatorship.

Marcos Jr. winning for power is not new. In 2018, Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro, a retired military officer won as President amidst a corruption investigation. The return of Marcos to power did not happen overnight. It is the result of a long decade of disinformation and historical revisionism. Social media platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube played an essential role in the campaign. The Marcos troll farms actively used these social media platforms to disseminate disinformation to sanitize the image of the Marcos family and demolish the credentials of former Vice President Leni Robredo. This is also true for Bolsonaro whose camp used WhatsApp and Facebook to spread fake news to win power.

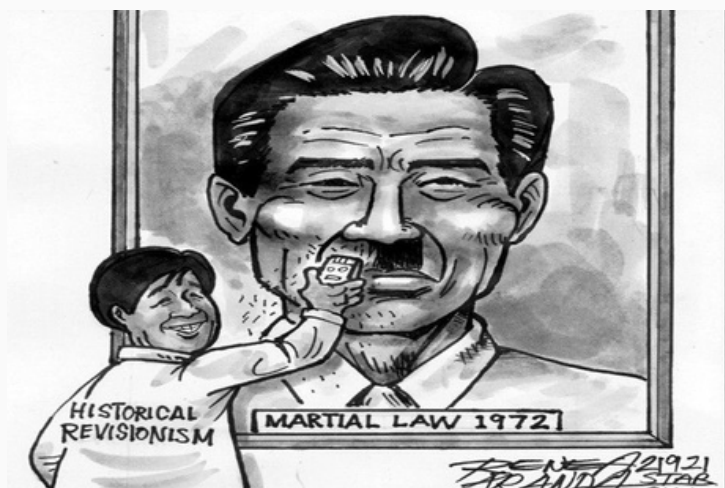
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*Editorial Cartoon of the STAR, September 2021*

The successful winning of Bolsonaro and the return of Marcos to power remind us to be critical and vigilant of fake news and historical revisionism. After her brother Ferdinand Jr. won the presidency, Imee Marcos, sister of Marcos Jr. and an incumbent senator, said that they would finally clean their family's name and their "legacy". Marcos Jr.'s son also got a seat in congress. The mother, Imelda Marcos remains influential.

Given the grave human rights violations committed by the Marcos clan and Duterte's war on drugs that led to extrajudicial killings and shrinking of democratic space, human rights groups and defenders are fearing that Marcos Jr.'s administration will further suppress people's rights. In his meetings with the United Nations resident coordinator in the Philippines, Marcos assured the UN that his administration would respect human rights and adhere to international law. But despite this pronouncement, questions and doubts remain. How can he respect human rights when he is not admitting what his family did to the thousands of human rights defenders and advocates? Whatever the answer to this question, let us remain hopeful and continue being critical of holding the Marcos presidency and his family accountable for their doings.



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