



# 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



## Announcement

### ICF School of Peace (SoP) 2023 in Nepal

ICF is happy to announce its first SoP in over three years. The SoP 2023 will run for 50 days in person, reduced from the previous 60 days due to the rising cost of accommodation, not to mention the transportation cost. The 10 days will be compensated digitally via zoom and self-learning sessions in an online classroom before and after the in-person meeting. It seeks to strike a balance between the theoretical and the practical.

The streamlined curriculum integrates the social, cultural, interreligious, and conflicts brought about by economic, social, political, and religious-cultural factors. It is one avenue where young people from different faith traditions are equipped with the basic knowledge, principles, and skills to develop a strong network of the peace movement in their respective contexts.

### Expected Participants and Venue of SoP 2023

SoP seeks to reach out to 15-20 young people, around 20-35 of age, coming from different religious or faith traditions and nationalities. Gender balance is also a consideration in the selection of applicants.

SoP 2023 will be held in Kathmandu, Nepal in cooperation with Nepal ICF Alumni, most of whom happen to be part of Nepal Unites.

To read the full announcement and to apply please visit our [website](#).

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### ICF-Albay, Philippines Facilitated a Leadership and Team Building Workshop

On August 20, 2022, the youth volunteers from ICF-Albay, Philippines facilitated a one-day workshop on Leadership and Team Building. The Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) of Binitayan invited the ICF-Albay to facilitate the activities for the youth leaders of the village of Binitayan in Albay. The event took place in Emieland Beach Resort in Bacacay, Albay. Twenty-eight (28) youth participants joined; 19 were male, and 9 were female. Five (5) SK members also attended. The event for that day had two parts: Leadership Workshop and Team Building activity. Edelene Rosin and Kharinna de Leon, both alumnae of ICF facilitated the workshops. Six (6) members of ICF-Albay also joined to assist the facilitators.

Edelene Rosin conducted the Leadership Workshop where the twenty-eight participants interacted with one another. The activities aimed to help them know their personal and leadership skills, and to understand better the people of their community. Kharinna de Leon facilitated the Team Building activities. She asked the participants to form into four groups, each group takes a ribbon to represent the group. Each group had to accomplish the tasks given to them in each game station. Six youth volunteers from ICF took charge of these stations. The participants were full of energy, listening carefully to the instructions and mechanics of the game that was given to them. They strategized and worked together as a team so they can properly accomplish their tasks before moving on to the next station. Though the participants had to compete by teams, they still cheered for each other and enjoyed the moment.



*Two participants during the communication session*

The facilitators closed the event by asking the participants to form a circle inside a different-colored knotted-ribbons. These are the ribbons that represent each team during the team building activity, one color for each team. The groups tied together their ribbons, representing their togetherness, and yet recognize their differences and making a difference. At the end of the day, the whole event was a success to both the participants and the facilitators as their relationships have become closer. The event became a venue to build a good connection between the SK of Binitayan and ICF-Albay.



*ICF Alumnus Jomar facilitating a session on Memory Verses.*

*Kharinna de Leon  
ICF Albay, Philippines*



### North Cotabato ICF Alumni held Follow-up Activity on Basic Human Rights and Organized the YMCIPA

The ICF Alumni of North Cotabato, Philippines, organized a face-to-face Seminar-Workshop on Basic Human Rights. During the said activity, the ICF Alumni also organized a sub-group of Cotabato-based ICF Alumni, called Young Muslims, Christians, and Indigenous Peoples' Advocates (YMCIPA). The group held the activity on September 16-17, 2022, at Kinazo Farm, Campo 10, Rangayen, Alamada, North Cotabato. Joining the activity were five (5) males and eight (8) females from North Cotabato and BARMM Special Geographic Area. Among them were two (2) Christians and eleven (11) Muslims. The ICF Coordinator, Muriel Orevillo-Montenegro, and Program Officer Baidido Saganding were present during the whole duration of the program.

The Seminar-Workshop aimed to help the participants review and deepen their knowledge and understanding of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and recognize the current Human Rights situation in the Philippines. Furthermore, the gathering also aimed to create a Cotabato Province ICF Alumni sub-group and to formulate the sub-group goals and directions.

The first day started with Hamida Paglas facilitating the section on getting to know each other and setting the house rules. Hamida Paglas is an alumna of ICF's Training of Trainers on Human Rights and Advocacy in Dumaguete. She applied what she learned from the Training of Trainers. Then, Hamsiya Olimpain and Nash Matula facilitated the process of situational analysis where the participants identified the current issues affecting their respective communities. After this process, the group identified the priority issues for the sub-group's agenda for advocacy. One of the participants, Mohamed Patadon, who has attended three online thematic workshops, presented the highlights of the UN UDHR. In the evening, after dinner, Hamsiya Olimpain, a member of the ICF Program Committee, led the discussion on the Bill of Rights, which is Article 3 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution.



*The newly-organized YMCIPA of North Cotabato ICF Alumni*



*North Cotabato ICF Alumni doing SWOT*

On the second day, we went deep into the workshop, Nash Matula, an alumnus of Peace Institute 2019, facilitated an assessment of the group's past activities using the SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) and the Vision, Mission and Goals (VMG) of the Alumni sub-group. Norhanie Saganding, an alumna of the Thematic Workshop in Iligan 2019, facilitated the session. The participants agreed to meet once a month for follow-up activities and to strengthen the bond among them.

To end the two-day activity, the participants had a closing ritual by forming a circle and sharing their learnings, reflections, and their commitments to contribute to the ICF alumni sub-groups' effort in promoting peace.

The activity is organized by Cotabato ICF Alumni headed by Hamsiya Olimpain, Hamida Paglas, and Nash Matula.

*Hamsiya Olimpain  
ICF Program Committee Member*

### The ICF Visayas Alumni Organized a Three-Day Activity

On September 27-29, 2022, the ICF Visayas held a three-day activity at NCCP Compound, Banilad, Dumaguete City. Seven ICF alumni from the Visayas region attended the gathering. The ICF coordinator, Dr. Muriel Montenegro, together with Ms. Baidz Saganding joined the group. It was a timely gathering for the peacebuilders in challenging times, particularly in countries like the Philippines. The realization of the activity provides a means to rekindle, reconnect and relearn together with fellow peacebuilders, thanks to the small grant support from ICF.

The three-day event was a manifestation of the continuing efforts for a just and lasting peace. The alumni were immediately engaged in the getting-to-know-each-other activity that was facilitated by Ms. GG Lumayag and Mr. Deomasis Narciso. The group was told to find a partner and gather five things that their partner loves to do. It was a good start to set each one's expectations for the activity. As the group had already acquainted with each other, the narrowing down of the purpose of the activity followed. Mr. Deomasis facilitated the activity. Everyone listed at least five pressing issues in their various communities. Some of the issues that were raised were the ecological crisis, church-related issues, and the post-election sentiments concerning the repercussion of the new-elected leaders in the Philippines.

The activity also provided a re-learning opportunity to recall the previous workshops conducted. The alumni did an excellent job of re-echoing these workshops. GG Lumayag shared her experience at the Human Rights workshop she attended. Mr. Japhet, Ms. Dory, and Ms. Div shared their learnings about nonviolent communication. During this time, it was a refreshing experience to keep everyone reminded of the workshops and training the alumni had attended. The ongoing learning opportunities for the alumni continued, as Dr. Muriel Orevilla Montenegro conducted a workshop on how to make proposals. At the start of her workshop, she asked the participants, "Why do we make proposals?" and asked further: "So what?" She laid down first the purpose of why making proposals is necessary.



The coming together of the alumni was a chance to learn about the pressing issue of Dumaguete City. It was a remarkable experience for the alumni to visit Barangay Tinago, which will be greatly affected when the local government of Dumaguete City pursues the 174-hectare Smart City Reclamation Project. According to the government, the 174-hectare reclamation could provide job opportunities for the community. However, the community people do not like the project because it destroys marine life. Besides the government's relocation plan since does not provide clear plans regarding their jobs. The community, together with the church and progressive groups continue to strongly oppose and call for the reclamation project to stop. The immersion in Barangay Tinago brought the alumni together in one accord that the issue of peace is real and is experienced daily by the common people. In the interview with the community people, the ICF Alumni learned that they continue to think positively and that the cause they are fighting is worth waging. Their adage is: "just keep going." The ICF Alumni learned from this community never to give up walking in the shoes of the poor. The activity culminated on September 29, 2022, with the ICF alumni attending the peace forum at Silliman University Divinity School, Chapel of the Evangel. A good ending for the gathering since the alumni connected with the wider community of peace advocates.



## ICF- Timor-Leste organized Four-Day Workshop on Human Rights and Nonviolent Communication

On October 6-9, 2022, the Interfaith Cooperation Forum Timor Leste (ICF-TL) organized a workshop on Human Rights and Nonviolent Communication in Dili, Timor Leste. This workshop aimed to increase the knowledge of ICF-TL members about human rights and how to communicate without violence. The workshop was attended by 15 ICF-TL alumni from the Catholic and Protestant traditions of the Christian church. Mr. Luis Garcia facilitated the workshop on Human Rights, while Ms. Leónia L. Freitas facilitated the workshop on Nonviolent Communication. ICF-Timor Leste availed of the Small Grant for Alumni Follow-Up activities from the Interfaith Cooperation Forum, now still based in Hong Kong. The ICF Coordinator, Dr. Muriel Orevillo Montenegro, and Program Officer Ms. Baidido Manalasal Saganding attended the workshop.

On Thursday, 06 October 2022, the session on Human Rights was held at the Indonesian Cultural Center in Dili. Luis Garcia introduced the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. He started by leading the participants to write their full names and paint symbols that represented their names so that they can get to know each other. After that, he showed the video “Resistir e Vencer” (Resist and Win), and then solicited from the participants their reflections and feelings about the content of the video. In the afternoon Ms. Leonia opened the session with a guessing game to introduce the topic of Nonviolent Communication and the elements of Nonviolent Communication. Leónia also explained the first element of observation and defined the difference between observation and judging. To understand better the differences, Ms. Leonia provided us with the exercises by showing a picture and requesting us to give our observations on the picture. Many of us failed to be accurate in our observations. It meant we needed to be more observant of the correct details of the photo.



*Luis Garcia facilitating the topic on Human Rights*



*Leonia Freitas facilitating the NVC*

On Friday, 07 October 2022, still at the Indonesian Cultural Center, Luis Garcia continued with the session on Human Rights, specifically about the three dimensions, namely: Civil and Political Rights, Economic Socio-Cultural Rights, and Collective Rights. The session was very interactive and the discussion was lively between participants and facilitators.

On Saturday, 08 October 2022, the session was held at the Timor-Leste Red Cross Hall. Ms. Leónia Freitas continued the facilitation of Nonviolent Communication (NVC). In this session, Leonia reviewed her presentation on the Introduction to NVC and continued with the four elements, namely: observation, feelings, needs, and requests (OFNR), and empathy. This session was extraordinary because there were very active discussions. Each participant also practiced directly how to do the OFNR and how to emphasize and listen without judging someone's observation or situation.

On Sunday, 09 October 2022, the session on NVC continued, facilitated by Ms. Leónia. This time, she explained about the Jackal and the Giraffe. This session was again very lively and fun because each participant practiced using the 4 ears of a Jackal and a Giraffe. All participants said that it was easy to practice the Jackal character but hard to practice the Giraffe character.

The training on the Jackal and Giraffe mode of language and expression made each participant identify their character. They confessed they were full of Jackal characters, and they all hope to practice the giraffe character in their daily life.

This four-day workshop was very successful and extraordinary because the topics were very interesting. The sessions on Human Rights and how to communicate without violence, how to empathize with someone, and learning to be conscious of communication as the jackal and the giraffe are very relevant. The workshops were interactive between participants and facilitators.

*Joalita Teresa Magno*  
ICF Alumna

### **Muslim Women attended a Personal Hygiene and Sanitation workshop**

On October 22, 2022, the ICF Alumni who are members of Nepal Unites organized a one-day workshop on Personal Hygiene and Sanitation with the ground-level community people in Rajbiraj-01, Sapatari, Madhesh Province in the eastern region of Nepal. Forty (40) women and five (5) men participants attended the workshop. They come from the villages of Dumari, Rahamatpur, and Chanaura. The activity received support through a small grant from the Mission Outreach and Ecumenism Committee (MOE) of Kowloon Union Church in Hong Kong.

Dumari Health Post personnel, Mr. Amar Anand Yadav and Ms. Rinku Mishra served as the main facilitators in this workshop. The facilitators led the sessions on Personal and Menstrual Hygiene, Food-Borne Infections, Diarrheal Diseases, and other communicable diseases.

A woman participant named Sabnam Khatun appreciated the workshop's organizer for holding an open conversation about personal hygiene, saying: "This really gave us a way to make a life of well-being." Another woman, Apsara Khatun also shared her experience with Muslim women who previously felt uncomfortable discussing menstrual hygiene and any other aspect of personal health. However, this type of workshop empowered the community's women to speak out and be aware of everything, she said.



*Workshop on Personal Hygiene and Sanitation.*

A featured guest and a local leader, Md. Doaman, shared about self-care and encouraged everyone to put what they had learned to use in their daily life so that they may live a healthier life going forward, especially this time that dengue is spreading like a pandemic in Nepal. Given that mothers are their children's first teachers, the community needs a program of this kind for women.

*Mohammad Ayatulla Rahaman*  
SoP Alumnus 2017  
National Director, Nepal Unites

## GETTING BACK INTO THE BEAT

Just keep going,  
In the beat of the signs of the times.  
Just keep dancing,  
Letting the rhythm move lives.  
- Japhet Estorque

The COVID-19 pandemic altered the beat of how we moved. We became accustomed to the sound of our laptop's keyboard, the social distancing, the beep tone of incoming mail, and the various simultaneous meetings using different social media applications. The home where we used to find solace and rest has now become a place of work. Yet, the hopes that one day we can go out are still alive. Behind the doors of our homes is the dream to meet friends one day — meet the peacebuilders.

On September 27-29, 2022, this dream day was realized. The ICF alumni from across the Visayas islands met at the NCCP Compound, Banilad, Dumaguete City under the theme—PANAGTAGBO: REKINDLE, RECONNECT, RE-LEARN. Bringing and sharing our different stories was a dream come true for the alumni. It was a realization of the theme for this year. It was a gathering that was as meaningful as the word, Panagtagbo, itself. It is a Cebuano word that means “meeting”. And this can be used as, “to meet”, “to gather” or “to come together.”

The coming back together as peacebuilders was a rekindling experience of each other's passion for peace. For two years of distant meetings and communication, there were many shifting moments where the advancement of peace was challenged—the Presidential election result; the red-tagging of peace workers and church workers; the killings, violence, and ongoing impunity of those in power. Even in the hype of the pandemic, the challenges of peace were never put to rest. It is like dancing with the hopeless beat.

The pandemic added up to the already depressing situation within a bad structural system – economic, social, and political in the Philippines. The three-day activity with the ICF alumni became a place for reconnection. It was a reminder that as we danced to the beat of hopelessness about what the future may bring us, we are never alone in dancing for peace is possible. Our hearts, passions, and aspirations were reconnected to the beat—that peace is a way of life. It became the opportunity for the peace builders to tie up the strings that connect us, and the hope for a just and lasting peace.

Moreover, the activity offers a relearning opportunity for the alumni. With the help of Dr. Muriel Orevillo Montenegro, the conversation became meaningful, and insights turned into a seed of new possibilities. The sharing of the alumni provided a space for relearning and re-examining our experiences. The activities that were conducted through human rights, non-violent communication, and morning meditation, among others, provided a space for us to follow the beat of peace. It was also an opportunity to gain skills in writing proposals for change.

The activity itself is a change. It was a change back to the beat of the signs of the times. On the day of the community exposure, on the 29th of September, this change turns out to be present not just on paper but also in the testimony coming from the community. The City of Dumaguete will construct a reclamation project called the “Smart City.” The community members, including the church and other progressive groups, strongly opposed the proposed 174-hectare Smart City reclamation project. This is an alarming project as many people in the community along the shores where the 174-hectare reclamation would be built would put the lives and livelihood of the people at stake. But one member of the community said: "Padayon lang gihapon! (Just keep going!)." with them.



Though the challenge of changing the decision of the local government to stop the reclamation project is difficult, the community is positive that their small voice will be heard. Albert Camus, a French philosopher, author, dramatist, and journalist, commented after the United States dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, saying: "Peace is the only battle worth waging." Hearing the worries of the people from that community, the only change that is worth waging is peace. The only thing that keeps them moving is the peace that will eventually be experienced by their sons and daughters. Meeting the community people provides an immense impact that peacebuilders are needed in society. Beyond the walls that separate the community from the 174-hectare reclamation project are their prayers that the local government can empathize with them.



*The ongoing 174-hectare Smart City Reclamation Project*



*The alumni during the morning devotion doing Shibashi*

The whole activity, from how it started and ended, was indeed an opportunity to gather together as peacebuilders to find the right beat back again that was disrupted by the pandemic. Dancing gracefully in the rhythm takes practice to identify the pattern and alternation of movements is like working for peace. As peacebuilders, sometimes it requires us to dance even in the melancholic sound—the hopelessness of a just and lasting peace. Yet as we start to move to the beat, we can feel the vibrant aura that we are not just alone dancing on the ground. We can still find visible signs of people who never give up on their aspirations for peace. There are still those who never resort to violence. In that community, we met people who dance to the rhythm of the challenges. Even if they are groping on how to learn the steps along with the beat, they just keep going—and that reminds us to get back into the beat.

*Japhet T. Estorque  
Visayas ICF*



*The alumni of ICF Visayas together with Dr. Muriel Montenegro and  
Baidido Saganding*

## Climate change is Real, and We need to do Something About It

Long-term shifts in temperature and weather are referred to as "climate change. It means dramatic changes that are harmful to mankind. We, humankind, are responsible for this. We are using nature for our good, but in exchange, we are destroying nature. That cannot be a reward for the earth. Yet, we are puzzled by the current natural temperature and the weather pattern.

The Earth is getting warmer day by day. The greenhouse gases are affecting the climate. The sea level is rising. Many animals are vanishing due to their inability to adapt to the changing world. We face so many circumstances due to climate change. We burn fossils like coal, fuel, and gas that generate greenhouse gas emissions that serve like a blanket wrapped around the Earth, trapping the sun's heat, and raising temperatures. Methane and carbon dioxide are two of the greenhouse gases that are causing climate change. These results, for instance, from the use of coal or gasoline to power vehicles or heat buildings. Carbon dioxide is increasing through forest and land clearing, but mostly through emissions from factories. Methane emissions primarily come from landfills of trash. Currently, the effects of climate change include, among others, severe fires, water scarcity, acute droughts, increasing sea levels, flooding, melting polar ice, catastrophic storms, and a loss of biodiversity.

The rising temperature is not a stand-alone fact. It affects everything because everything relates to nature. The rising temperature starts the engine that destroys the system. Then, the main plot emerged slowly after that. Extreme disasters that are made worse by climate change are already causing millions of people to suffer, from extended droughts in sub-Saharan Africa to catastrophic tropical storms that have ravaged Southeast Asia, the Caribbean, and the Pacific.

In 2021, sweltering temperatures sparked wildfires in Siberia and Greece, as well as catastrophic heatwaves in Canada and Pakistan. While Madagascar, where 1 million people are experiencing the world's first "climate change-induced famine," there was catastrophic flooding in Germany, the UK, China, and even in New York City.

Two out of every three people in the world are facing a lack of clean water or drinkable water. A slight increase in global temperature causes serious changes in nature, destabilizes the water cycle, and could make water scarcity much worse. Climate change affects rainfall patterns, meaning both drought and flooding will be more common and more intense. This situation is already life-threatening floods. Climate change is not just simply making one late for work.

The rainforests are called the lungs of the world. In the rainforest, some precious creatures live there. They depend on the rainforest. Once the system is scattered, the life of the creatures gets in danger. They are vulnerable. The Amazon, for example, is home to one-tenth of all known species on the planet. Yet the Amazon rainforest is already under threat of climate change in almost a third of its area. Global forest destruction primarily for agricultural purposes is a major contributor to climate change, emitting an astounding amount of greenhouse gases. The air is being polluted by increasing carbon dioxide emissions. This not only threatens humanity; it also threatens the life of the animals. This affects human health, especially children. Air pollution can lead to asthma, and heart and lung disease.

Climate change does not just impact forests, coral reefs, or even people in far-off countries. It affects all of us. People everywhere will feel its effects, from more extreme weather to increasing food prices, to decreased opportunities to appreciate the natural world.



After all this, we still have hope. We must do many things now to act properly against this severe climate change issue.

The steps that we need to take today are the following:

**Spreading awareness:** We need to spread the word to every person around us.

We must ensure that every person knows about climate change and the impact it has on every corner of the world. Every person should know how dangerous climate change is to the world, and they must take the necessary steps against it. People should reduce carbon emissions by reducing their use of fuel, oil, and coal burning. Social organizations must take the necessary steps to assist the UN. People should work hand in hand regarding this problem. Every social organization should organize a campaign to combat the issue and encourage people to spread awareness to everyone on the planet.

Transform your mode of transportation. A quarter of all greenhouse gas emissions are attributed to transportation, and many governments are enacting decarbonization plans on a global scale.

Leave your car at home and try to travel on foot or by bicycle as much as possible to gain a head start. If the distances are too great, choose public transportation, ideally electric vehicles. We offer to carpool if we must drive so that fewer vehicles are on the road.

**Limit your use of electricity:** If we can switch to a zero-carbon or renewable energy provider. Install solar panels on your roof. Be more efficient: Turn your heating down a degree or two, if possible. Switch off appliances and lights when you are not using them, and better yet, buy the most efficient products in the first place.

**Don't waste food:** Food waste and loss account for one-third of total food production. The Food Waste Index Report 2021 by UNEP estimates that 1 billion tons of food are wasted every year, which is equivalent to 8–10% of all greenhouse gas emissions. To avoid wasting anything, only buy what you need. Utilize every edible component of the food you buy. Be creative with leftovers; share extras with our friends and neighbors. Cook only the amount of rice or other staples that we need and contribute to a neighborhood food-sharing program. Store food properly; if you have a freezer, use it. Make compost from leftovers that cannot be eaten and use it to feed your garden. One of the greatest ways to manage organic waste and cut down on landfill costs is to compost.

**Plant trees:** Deforestation, along with agriculture and other changes in land use, results in the annual destruction of about 12 million hectares of forest, which accounts for about 25% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions. By planting trees, either individually or collectively, we can all do our part to halt this trend. For instance, individuals can fund the planting of trees around the world through the Plant-for-the-Planet project.

We have the good fortune to inhabit a stunning, interesting, supportive, and breathtaking world. The same is due for our children and all upcoming generations. It is good to be worried at this point. Together, millions of individuals are working to save the earth. That humanity is capable of great things when united and that change can be enacted for the right causes is brilliantly illustrated by occasions like Earth Hour.

Some changes took place since we knew about the potential effects of climate change. We need to tell political and business leaders that addressing climate change is a top priority with our actions, votes, and voices more than ever.

*Sanjib Rosario  
ICF Alumnus  
Bangladesh*





### From a Facilitator's Perspective: A New Path to Follow – the NVC Path to Peace



*Participants during the 4-Ear exercise*

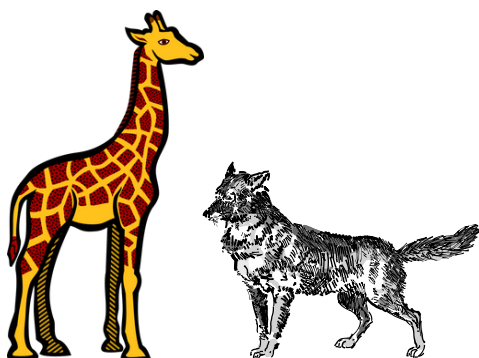


*Leónia facilitating the NVC workshop.*

I was so excited to share the knowledge and experiences I gained from training trainers in Dumaguete, Philippines. In Timor-Leste, particularly, in my family, we are taught to hide our feelings, especially against the elders to maintain our relationship. However, after participating in the training and sharing my experiences with the Timorese youths, I realized that it was not only I who suffer for not expressing myself honestly, but many of us young people are facing the same challenges. This is because of the nurturing we got from our families - that we should always respect our elders, which means never expressing our feelings and opinions to them.

As a facilitator of the Nonviolent Communication workshop, I am grateful because I can guide the participants to express their feelings, needs, and requests in a nonviolent, gentle way. In Timor-Leste, women are considered vulnerable as the environment does not support women to express their feelings, needs, and request. Having gone through the NVC training made me realize I was struggling with strategies to navigate between the cultural teachings of keeping silent. I blamed myself for following only what people say and do to cater to people's needs. NVC has supported me to define myself, and my inner peace and maintaining peace in my family. Practicing the NVC language in our daily life is important if I want to live in peace. I have practiced this in my relationship, families, and communities. I received an invitation to continue to share and facilitate an NVC workshop with another youth group in December. This is a new path for me to follow – the NVC path to peace.

*Leónia L. Freitas*  
*ICF NVC Training of Trainers Alumna*



## Reflection from a Facilitator's Perspective: Building Peace through Team Building

I facilitated the Team Building workshop, along with ICF-Albay, for the young people in one village in Albay. The event me to improve and enhance my facilitation skills and gain more confidence in interacting with and speaking in front of many people. It gave me joy knowing that I can take part in an event that would have an impact in the community and could make a difference in other people's lives.

In general, we organize team building processes to help participating individuals to get to know themselves and each other better and to strengthen their bond. It is a social activity where a group of people develop and accomplish given tasks and work together as a team, and qualities such as leadership skills, social skills, creativity, problem-solving skills, cooperation, and teamwork. It also allows the participants to determine each other's strengths and weaknesses and use these abilities to work effectively together. Aside from enhancing these qualities during this social activity, the participants also learn other important skills such as building trust among colleagues and develop good communication and interpersonal relations skills that are vital factors in peacebuilding.



*Participants during an exercise.*



*Participants during a connection exercise.*



*Group Picture*

In peacebuilding, we aim to mitigate conflicts and help find ways, at the lowest level, in resolving them. It is also desired to build and create harmonious relationships among people from all walks of life. We can see that one of the ways these can be achieved is through communicating clearly and willingness to listen to the other. This leads us back to the skills and qualities that are developed through team building. This social activity aids in building bridges among groups that help in creating a harmonious community towards a better society.

In conclusion, team building can be considered as a training for individuals to gain and develop certain skills that are needed in peacebuilding. It is one of the many ways that help in promoting peace, encourages people to work together effectively in achieving achieve a common goal that is for the common good.

*Kharinna de Leon*  
*ICF-Albay, Philippines*



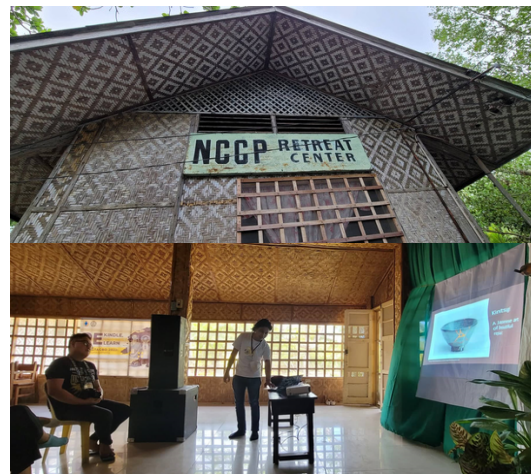
### From an Organizer's Perspective: Change Does Not Come to Us on a Silver Platter

The series of events that led to the actualization of the Alumni activity for the Visayas Region has its own challenges. When Dr. Muriel created a group chat for the Visayas Alumni, I felt a pulsing sensation, the excitement of organizing the event. At first, I was hesitant especially because I thought the other alumni could do it better than I do. I will just play the supporting role in this event. However, as we discussed things in the group chat, it turned out that these Alumni pastors are busy with their commitments to their congregation. So, volunteered to organize the event. It was not easy. We had to consider Dr. Muriel's suggestions for a revised proposal for the event. It was so detailed, every aspect of the event, and we have to take into account even the long-term effects of our plan. Then, my sister who is also an ICF alumna, DM Narciso-Ferrer, and I, drafted the proposal.

As we wrote the proposal for the event, we had this vision that this was going to be a space where the Alumni could talk about the social issues in their contexts. This should be a space where they could share the most pressing issues and envision sustainable solutions for these problems. We also had this idea that this was going to be the time when we will process the emotions and grief, after the loss of our candidates during the presidential elections. I felt that it was needed, as one of the head volunteers for Leni-Kiko's presidential and vice-presidential slate campaign in Negros Oriental. I believe our campaign for peace is not separate from the campaign for good governance.

Finally, the day of the event came. We managed to implement the project proposal at the National Council of Churches (NCCP) Compound in Banilad, Dumaguete City on September 27-28, 2022. Then the hard part came.

Making sure that the event will go through as planned during the daytime and working at a call center at night was so taxing for me. For two days I only had one hour of sleep. I drank five cups of coffee a day to survive. However, seeing these amazing people who are dedicated to achieving the ideal change in society gave me the energy to continue.



*Deomasis sharing ICF activity he attended*

On the second day of the event, the alumni shared their different experiences in the ICF activities they attended. It was quite a long conversation as each one made a presentation about what they learned during those activities: Non-Violent Communications, Peace Institutes, Human Rights Advocacy, Trauma, and Healing, visit the ruins of the war-torn Marawi City, among others. Then we proceeded into the discussion on the different social issues that our communities face, and the steps that we took to change them. I was amazed that most of us know what the problems are, but only a few took the steps to address the problem. It is probably because we have busy schedules and other commitments that we put on the side of the matter of contributing to the solution of these societal issues. Then we proceed to choose the issues that we could address in our respective communities. In relation to this, we wrestled to clarify what we wanted to do by taking the steps of writing a proposal using the Logical Framework model. Dr. Muriel Orevillo Montenegro facilitated this part of the discussion.



Afterward, we made plans as to how we could contribute to making changes in our communities since it is the essence of making a proposal: that is the drive to make an impact on our society and to change it.

One of the highlights for me during the event was the visit to Barangay Tinago, a village along the shore in Dumaguete City. It is a community that is gravely affected by the proposed reclamation by the city mayor, Felipe "Epi" Remollo. My heart breaks when we heard the actual scenario of what will happen to these people and how they felt. The threat is real. To see that those who are in political power would sacrifice the livelihood of the hundreds of people in this community in the name of "development" that benefits only the rich few, including the mayor, fueled my anger to call for change. We also talked with a community leader, who took it upon himself the mission to provide education for the children in the community since these children during the pandemic did not have the opportunity to go to school. I was amazed at his commitment to the development of these children. He spends his money to buy snacks for the children to encourage them to study. He converted his small yard into a makeshift classroom with a small library. His actions inspired others to further work for change. As Dr. Montenegro said, the main reason why we make proposals for an event is to make a change, to be a catalyst for change. This further solidifies my belief that change is something that we must work on. It will not be handed to us on a silver platter.



*Mr. Cobbie Palm on his topic on the importance of peace talks*



*A view of the reclamation site from Brgy. Tinago*

While I was away for work on the evening of the second day, the group had a workshop on songwriting. Divillajyn Ursos, an ICF alumna from Bohol facilitated the process. They agreed to record the song with words about peace and justice. These recorded tunes would be sent to Divillajyn who will put the musical notation. After the event, the participants attended a half-day ecumenical forum on the peace situation of the country at Silliman University.

As the organizer and host, I felt so exhausted but satisfied with the results of the event.

*Deomasis Patria Narciso  
ICF Alumnus-Negros Oriental,  
Philippines*

### INTERFAITH COOPERATION FORUM

Asia and Pacific Alliance of  
YMCAs  
23 Waterloo Road 6/F  
Kowloon, Hong Kong  
Phone: +852-27808347  
Fax: +852-23854692  
E-mail:  
office@asiapacificymca.org

The Interfaith Cooperation Forum is a program of Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs. It values the significance of interreligious understanding and unity. Thus, it offers opportunities for study and appreciation of the different 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: So, what if there is a climate crisis?*

As I write this essay, the Philippines is drowning. It is flooding all over the country. The deluge has taken over places that were not prone to floods. Small rubber boats ply along the city streets to rescue distraught people. Houses went crumbling down due to landslides. I traveled to some Asian countries during these past two months and noted some general observations. In the Philippines and Timor Leste, the communities and governments have not taken garbage segregation and disposal seriously. The heat in Timor Leste and my country is becoming so oppressive! In the Philippines, recycling is more of a lip service. Nothing much has been done on the personal and government levels in terms of garbage recycling and producing biodegradable materials for daily use. There is no serious policy to reducing intentionally the carbon emissions and carbon footprints in the daily grind of life. In Indonesia and Thailand, at least in Bali and Chiangmai, the government seems to have relatively good management of garbage disposal. Of course, I did not have the chance to visit the areas where they dump their garbage. The garbage dump is a good indicator to show how governments and communities are managing their garbage. But the issue of climate change is not just all about garbage.

Tons have been written about climate change and climate crisis. Studies had been done by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, indicating that unmitigated global warming at 1.5°C will be disastrous to all Earth life.

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

Muriel Oreillo Montenegro  
Editor  
muriel@asiapacificymca.org

Baidido Saganding  
Circulation and Promotion  
bai@asiapacificymca.org

Annika Denkmann  
Design & Layout  
annika@asiapacificymca.org



Tons have been written about climate change and climate crisis. Studies had been done by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, indicating that unmitigated global warming at 1.5°C will be disastrous to all Earth life. This panel suggested putting a cap on the warming at 1.10C as soon as possible. Another huge gathering, COP27 in Egypt will happen before the year ends. I wonder whether states and companies would take serious, big commitments to this situation. Otherwise, it would seem to be just a junket for the people to go there. COPs had been organized and agreements have been forged. The significant impact of these agreements and COPs is yet to be seen. Some people may disagree with me, but I would make the situations of severe floodings, typhoons and cyclones, extreme winters and droughts in other places of the world couch my argument on this matter.

In interfaith circles, religions have provided teachings concerning how people should relate to nature. The Hindu tradition puts forward the teaching that all living things, including the natural world, are sacred because they are part of God. All life is interdependent. The Buddha taught that one should not disrupt the established habitat of any other creature, nor kill other living creatures. One must practice and show metta (S. maitri – loving-kindness) and compassion to all creatures and believe that all life forms are special, not just human beings. Both Hindu and Buddhist traditions teach the principle of non-violence and "do no harm" through the concept of ahimsa. Both teach about the interrelatedness of everything and call upon human beings to live simply in harmony with the world, and the whole of the environment. All actions will bring karma, the consequences of either good or bad. Taoism's teachings are closer to a green philosophy. It teaches us to forge harmony with nature and humanity as this will have an impact on the good relations between people.



Landslide in Baranggay Busay, Cebu City brought about by Typhoon Nalgae (Paeng)  
Photo Credit: Carl Omega Aerial  
Source: Sunstar Cebu at <https://www.sunstar.com.ph/article/1944794/cebu/local-head-wants-mayor-to-declare-landslide-scene-off-limits-to-human-habitation>



Texas Guardsmen assist a motorist stuck on snow and ice on February 17, 2021 in Abilene, Texas. Photo: Texas Army National Guard/Staff Sgt. Yvonne Ontiveros  
Source: State of the Planet, Columbia Climate School at <https://news.climate.columbia.edu/2021/03/16/unprecedented-texas-cold-snap/>

The religions coming from the Abrahamic tradition also have teachings about human relations with nature. I come from the Christian tradition that takes part of the Judaic teachings into the corpus of its teachings. On the one hand, the Judeo-Christian tradition teaches that God Yahweh created the earth, but puts forth a kind of "stewardship" that is rooted in the concept of dominating the earth (Hebrew verbs *kabash* and *radah*) in Genesis 1:26 and 28. *Kabash* means to dominate the earth, to conquer, to make subservient, while *radah* means to rule, to dominate. On the other hand, Islam teaches about the oneness of God that is reflected in Allah's creation. Human beings and nature form one whole creation that must be preserved. An individual should act as a guardian, as *khalifah* of the earth as a sacred trust. Sunni Muslims have created haram zones where people must respect natural resources and not exploit anything that is there.





What happened to these teachings? Have these teachings been practiced in daily life?

It would be easy to identify the contribution of the Judeo-Christian tradition's contribution to the destruction of the Earth, as it got married with science. Early continental philosophers used the concept of kabash and radah implicitly to push for Euro-American colonial projects. The colonies became the sources of raw materials scoured from the earth to feed their industries. Churches did not protest the destruction as they look at these as the necessary evils needed for development. Christianity must explore its sacred text for an alternative concept of relating with the Earth.



*AN aerial view of Zamboanga City showing flooded areas as a result of tropical cyclone 'Paeng.' (PAF photo)*

*Source: Manila Bulletin at*

*<https://mb.com.ph/2022/10/30/zamboanga-city-under-state-of-calamity/>*



*Residents sought higher ground as they passed stranded trucks on a flooded street in the Sylhet region of Bangladesh.*

*Photo Credit: Syed Mahamudur Rahman/NurPhoto, via Getty Images*

*Source: The New York Times, June 24, 2022*

*<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/24/world/asia/sylhet-bangladesh-floods.html>*

But now, that development has wreaked havoc on the Earth. The rhythm of the seasons is disrupted. Crops are damaged either by floods or droughts. The lives of people and livestock had been lost. Non-renewable resources will soon be depleted. The marine and forest sources for livelihood are over-exploited. From the 1960s until 2000, some scientists still believed that the notion of climate change was a hoax! But now, they are proven wrong.

No one, especially those who are living in the cities and towns, could say she or he has nothing to do with the climate crisis. Governments and companies have big accountabilities, no quarrel about that. But we as individuals also must examine our lifestyles and how we contribute to the destruction of the Earth. The clock is ticking. The call to mitigate the climate crisis is not a joke. The situation calls for concerted efforts of everyone to carry out and practice actions for climate justice. How serious are individuals, governments, and companies in taking the challenge to take action to mitigate climate change? Are citizens and youths active in making their governments make and implement policies seriously to mitigate the climate crisis? Are individuals, especially ICF alumni, conscious that our habits, diets, choice of clothing, travels, and everything we do have intensified that crisis the Earth faces?

So what if there is climate crisis? There are still people who are complacent about it. We may continue to have a wager. The call, however, is walking the talk. We cannot continue to destroy the Earth and deprive today's children of a wholesome life on Earth. We cannot deny the reality that this generation is accountable for the future of the next generation. Climate is a big peace issue!

*Muriel Orevillo-Montenegro*

