



THE PEACEBUILDERS

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

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



Call for Applications ICF Small Grant

Calling on all Alumni from Vietnam, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Pakistan and India to submit proposals under the Small Grant for either Alumni Follow-Up or Local Peace Education, Advocacy, and Networking activities.

For the application form and further information please visit our website [here](#). Proposals can be submitted at any time, however the latest date for submitting is by July 2023 for implementation within August 2023. Please also make sure to allow sufficient time between submitting your proposal and the planned implementation date.

If you have any questions please contact the ICF staff for further support. ICF is looking forward to receive your proposals.



Inside this Issue:

Call for Applications: ICF Small Grant	1
ICF Alumni of Bangladesh Facilitates Nonviolent Communication and Human Rights Workshop	2
Reflection on the Workshop with Garo Baptist Convention - CES	3
Reflections from participants on the Community Immersion during the SoP 2023 in Nepal	4
Miscellany: To Someone Treading the Autumn of Life	5
From the Editor's Desk: Gender Justice – Is it all about Women's Rights?	6

ICF Alumni of Bangladesh Facilitates Nonviolent Communication and Human Rights Workshop

On April 1, 2023, ICF Alumni of Bangladesh facilitated a day-long workshop on Nonviolent Communication and Human Rights organized by Christian Endeavour Society (CES) Dhaka Circuit. The workshop took place at Sinoy Baptist Church, in Gulshan-1212, Dhaka, Bangladesh. Of the 24 Christian Youth participants, ten (10) were males, and fourteen (14) were female. They come from Dhaka Circuit Christian Endeavour Society (CES). The activity aimed to let the ICF Bangladesh alumni to share their experiences and to introduce the ICF programs and its activities to the group of Christian youth. The Christian Endeavour Society (CES) hopes to introduce the ICF programs and its activities to their Youth constituencies and build a strong network between the ICF National Forum of Bangladesh and Christian Endeavour Society (CES). The Christian Endeavour Society reached out to a group of young participants who wanted to promote peace through learning and practicing the Nonviolent Communication in the community. The ICF alumni of Bangladesh were invited as guests to facilitate the workshop on Nonviolent Communication and Human rights and introduce to ICF programs and its activities among Youth. The whole day activity was divided into four parts, namely:

1. what is ICF, its programs and activities?
2. Introduction to Nonviolent Communication and its four key elements
3. Experiences during the School of Peace (SoP)-2023 in Nepal, and
4. Basic understanding of Human Rights.



Rinku Mankhin facilitating session on what is NVC.

The activity started with greetings from Mr. Nondon Chanmbugong, President of the GBC Christian Endeavour Society (CES), Dhaka Circuit. Mr. Rinku Mankhin gave the introductory input on the programs and activities of ICF. Then he briefly introduced the principles of Nonviolent Communication and the NVC mode. He introduced how Nonviolent Communication as a practical and learnable process leads people to communicate with oneself and with others in a spirit of empathy and honesty. Psyche Mankhin gave her inputs on the four key components of the NVC: Observation, Feelings, Need and Request. She briefly introduced the NVC language: Jackal in, Jackal out, Giraffe in and Giraffe out. The process helped the youth attendees to express their own needs, desires and values to fulfill these with considering others from heart. The young participants enjoyed learning about the NVC as a new method of communication with each other during the session.



Sulogna Rema shared her experience on SOP 2023.

Ms. Sulogna Rema, who recently attended a 60 days ICF School of Peace program in Nepal, shared her experiences about the School of Peace among youth participants. She shared what the School of Peace is all about. She also spoke about what she learned during the SoP in Nepal, and her whole journey as a participant of SoP.

After the lunch break, Mr. Dhrubo Rangsa gave an overview of Human Rights, such as the definition of Human rights, Basic Provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), Economic Rights, Social Rights, Cultural Rights, Civil Rights, and Political Rights etc. He showed through a brief interactive play a situation of Human Rights violation that effectively helped the participants understand the topic. During the sessions, the participants responded and participated very actively. It showed that the activity was effective and successful. At the end of the session, the Dhaka Circuit Christian Endeavour Society (CES) team and the young participants gave their valuable feedback and comments to the facilitators.



Rangsa Dhrubo facilitating a session on Human rights.

The Christian Endeavor Society (CES) is one of the main wings of Garo Baptist Convention in Bangladesh. Its main purpose is to draw the young people to Christ and make them disciple of Jesus so that they would work based on the teachings of Christ. It is a group of Christian young people where anyone can join without any age limit.

*Rinku Barnabas Mankhin,
SoP 2019 Alumni*

Reflection on the Workshop with Garo Baptist Convention - CES



Psyche Mankhin facilitating a session on the four key elements of NVC.

The national forum ICF of Bangladesh got an opportunity to share their journey for the first time as peace builders in Dhaka. The GBC (Garo Baptist Convention) Dhaka Circuit CES was very kind to give us the platform. A total 24 young people had joined us in this sharing session.

In this session I shared about nonviolent communication. NVC really helps people to connect with themselves and with others as well. The participants took part in this session with a great energy. I really enjoyed the session with those energetic and enthusiastic youths. After joining peace institute back in 2022, this was my first time of sharing my learning and experience with my very own community. So it felt really amazing.

*Psyche Mankhin,
ToT on NVC 2022 alumna*

Reflections from participants on the Community Immersion during the SoP 2023 in Nepal

As a “peacebuilder”, my recent stay at the Bhagkhor community in Nepal was an incredibly enriching experience. The community has implemented the concept of homestays, which not only provides an opportunity for tourists to experience the community but also serves as an additional source of income for the locals.

During my stay, I was hosted by a family belonging to the indigenous Tharu community. My intention was to immerse myself in their daily life, work alongside them, and learn more about their culture and traditions. However, my homestay mother was hesitant to let me do any household work as they have never done it before, saying, "How can we make our guests do our household work?" This was because, in their culture, they firmly believe that guests are equivalent to gods and must be treated with utmost respect and hospitality. Despite their initial hesitation in my helping with their chores, the family warmly welcomed me into their home and made me feel like a part of their family. I spent my days working alongside them in their farmlands, planting seeds for the next season, and helping with irrigation for the fields. It was heartening to see the simplicity and sincerity with which they went about their daily lives. They took pride in their way of life and found joy in their work.

What stood out to me the most was the community's commitment to sustainable living. They relied on organic farming practices and never used chemical fertilizers. Instead, they used animal feces and household organic waste to create compost, which provided nutrients to the soil. It was refreshing to see how they managed to maintain a healthy ecosystem while ensuring food security for their families.

The Bhagkhor community's connection with nature was also evident in their culinary practices. They used fresh ingredients from their gardens and forests to prepare their meals. One of the delicacies I got to try was a curry made from a type of fern called Fiddlehead fern (*Diplazium esculentum*) that they harvested from the forest. And it was nothing less than “Mitocha” (the word for “Delicious” in the Nepali language). The flavor was unique and unforgettable.

Another aspect that impressed me was the community's collective responsibility in uplifting its community. They had a strong sense of unity and worked together towards common goals. The homestay concept was also a part of this effort, as it provided an opportunity to showcase their way of life and culture to the world while also generating income for the community.

My stay in the Bhagkhor community gave me a deeper understanding of the power of community and sustainability. As a peacebuilder, I believe that fostering sustainable practices and building strong communities are essential for long-lasting peace. The community's commitment to sustainable living and its strong sense of community serves as an inspiring example for other communities around the world.

My experience in the Bhagkhor community was an eye-opener. The community's way of life, rooted in simplicity and sustainability, was a stark contrast to the fast-paced, consumerist culture that we are all too familiar with. I left with a renewed appreciation for the beauty of traditional ways of living and a deep respect for the community's commitment to preserving their culture and environment.

*Yehen Asuramuni,
Sri Lanka*



Participants reflections from the Community Immersion During the SoP 2023 in Nepal

Bhagkhor, Nepal – The Interfaith Cooperation Forum's School of Peace seeks to contribute to the formation of peaceable interfaith communities in Asia by cultivating peaceable values and the capacity for conflict transformation and peacebuilding skills.

On February 25th, 2023, we went to the Community Cultural Center to learn about the local culture. We stayed there for five days. First and foremost, I'd like to express how I feel while living there. I found it very easy to adapt to living in the community. They are especially concerned about me, and I have received love from them as well. Observing the families I live with, I see that they truly help each other, whether it is a job for men or just a job for women. Uncle, after he retired from teaching, always assisted my aunt with cooking and housework, as I personally witnessed.

Second, I'd like to share what I've learned from the school where we went and did small activities. I've gained anything from something we missed. What I learned was the importance of planning and preparing. Especially when we go somewhere, we should assess the situation and determine what they need. Why do I believe it is important? Because I believe that when we go, we must not only go but also meet their needs. I've realized that when we don't plan ahead of time, we don't get our work done well and are unable to meet the needs of the community.

Third, Group Appreciation. Here, I've found that appreciating each other gives us the strength to move forward. Sometimes after we organize the program and evaluate it, we only talk about our shortcomings and mistakes. So in my opinion, I should not complain until we forget to congratulate each other.

Personal Thoughts. I am very interested in gaining community experiences for community discussions, cultural studies, team building, and collaboration. A Khmer proverb says: "A chopstick we can break, but more chopsticks we cannot break". We will have peace if the family, community, and society work together.

*Thavin Pich,
Cambodia*

To Someone Treading the Autumn of Life

I see freedom in your eyes
Embraced by shine of love
Youth radiating from your face
You, younger than the youngsters
You have seen your comrades falling
Witnessed faces fading
But, you stood tall
With confident smile,
Looking through the eyes of life.

-Shaloom Naeem, Pakistan



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: Gender Justice – Is it all about Women's Rights?

Women are oppressed simply because of their sex and gender.

This is the usual by-line of seminars on gender justice. It is true and so it is important to delve into the rights of women as human rights. It is an important basis for an activism and advocacy of women's rights groups. Women's rights are one of the significant topics in the curriculum of Interfaith Cooperation Forum's activities, particularly the School of Peace. It is also one of the programs of Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs (APAY). These moves are commendable!

Gender is a lively topic. Women's role and participation in both the private and public sphere have come a long way. Note that French existentialist feminist, Simone de Beauvoir, said: "One is not born, but becomes a woman." It is a notion that society has constructed to define how a female person looks, thinks, behaves, and the kind of work fitted for females. Unfortunately, the constructed notion of gender has been stifling and limiting to women's capacities. Feminists have fought for women's right of suffrage and for laws that apply equally to both women and men. Gender, however, could not be limited to the territory of the females who are now constructed as woman. At this point in time, one needs to beyond old feminist stance of seeking a universal equality that overlooks not just sexual differences, but also of differences among women, e.g. race, ethnicity, class, and culture. Gender is diverse, and so those who take gender justice as their advocacy must realize that one must be conscious of this diversity. Bulgaria-born French feminist, Julia Kristeva, helps gender advocates to understand a feminism that takes a broad view: that there are "as many kinds of sexualities as there are people."

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



This points to the next argument that there are as many genders as there are people. American philosopher, Judith Butler, proffers that gender is performative. If gender is performative, one could argue that justice is also performative. Ergo, when we speak of gender justice, we could not speak only of the rights of a group of women, but also of men, specially the subaltern men. One must remember that it is patriarchy that created a system that socialized the power relations of women and men. Then, a women's rights advocate would not be myopic, and does not pit women against the men. One must focus on the system that creates the notion of women as mere objects and men as the subjects who must rule over women.

In this light, one can speak and work for justice only when one sees women and men as human beings trapped in an oppressive system that dehumanizes both. While the discussions over the matter continues to explore its depths and finding a way out of such system, it could not be debated with unbridled emotions that blinds and blurs the issue at hand. Moreover, as there are many sexualities and genders, one must not push to the margins the cause of the subalterns, and the LGBTQI++. A polarizing attitude that assumes the idea that gender justice is a match or a fight of women against men, nor a reversal of power roles. Such stance and mind-set, of looking at gender justice as a fight against patriarchy, fails to look at both women and men as human beings created in the image of the Divine.

*Muriel Orevillo Montenegro,
ICF Coordinator*

