

# PRAXIS

Newsletter of the WSCF Asia-Pacific Region

No. 3, September - December, 2007

**"Speak up for people who cannot speak for themselves. Protect the rights of all who are helpless. Speak for them and be righteous judge. Protect the right of all the poor and needy."**

*Proverbs 31:8-9*



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## PRAXIS

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# EDITORIAL

December 10 marks the international commemoration of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). This day should remind us that as God's creation we are "all created in the likeness and image of God" (*Genesis 1:2*), and therefore have equal rights to live and enjoy dignified lives. With this comes a responsibility to ensure that the rest of humanity experience the same gift from God, and when conditions are otherwise, Christian communities are called to "Speak up for people who cannot speak for themselves. Protect the rights of all who are helpless. Speak for them and be a righteous judge. Protect the right of all the poor and needy." (*Proverbs 31:8-9*). This is the prophetic mission of the SCM today. We are called to be God's channel of peace, justice and hope in the midst of brokenness in the world.

These last few months of 2007 have been disturbing for many of us living in this part of the world. We have seen how the Burmese Military Junta violently quelled the people's peaceful voices of resistance in September. The arrest of lawyers and human rights activist, following the declaration of martial law by President Muzharaf in Pakistan in October, and the continuing cases of disappearances and extra-judicial killings in the Philippines and Sri Lanka. In all these countries, the state or the powers that be are the principal violator of human rights, noting that these countries are original signatories of the UDHR in 1948.

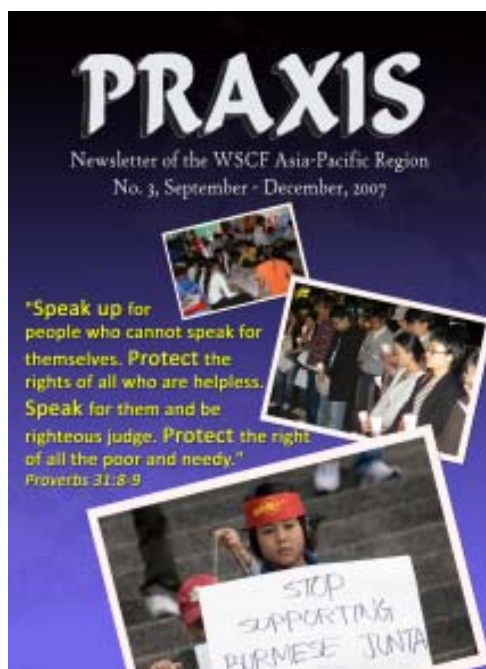
In this issue of PRAXIS, we have printed the analysis made by the Asia Pacific People's Partnership on Burma (APPPB) on the aftermath of the so-called Maroon Revolution in Burma. APPPB represents the largest coalition of groups and NGOs working inside and outside Burma. In their statement, they highlighted the role of the 88 Generations of Students Group in

gradually building the awareness of people to assert their rights and the continuing struggle finally bring democracy to Burma. The biblical reflection contains the liturgy prepared by the WSCF HR Committee on the theme of human rights. Women's Space is the story of Doman, an indigenous young Filipino woman, whose husband was a victim of the extra-judicial killings in the Philippines. She narrates her healing journey and how she is coping with life as a young single mother of two after the tragic death of her husband.

As we celebrate the advent season, let us be reminded of the meaning of the birth of Jesus Christ in the context of the suffering of people whose rights to life are denied. Let us celebrate Christmas with hope for justice and peace and a better world for the future.

Makabuluhang Pasko sa Lahat! (Meaningful Christmas to All!)

**Necta Montes Rocas**  
Regional Secretary





# PERSPECTIVE



Asia Pacific People's Partnership on Burma (APPPB) \*

## YOU CAN'T SHOOT LOVING KINDNESS! Moving Forward in the Maroon Revolution

The last two months have seen the large scale revival of a movement for change that has been simmering in Burma for nineteen years. The peaceful protest movement, started by leaders of the 88 Generation Student Group and later led by the Buddhist monks, has brought the people of Burma renewed hope for an end to the long suffering they have endured under the ruling military junta. Since the first protest in Rangoon on August 19, more than 1,000,000 people have taken to the streets across the country. This is a huge achievement in a country where human rights are severely suppressed on a daily basis. With monks taking a leading role, demonstrations have been peaceful and protesters have shown exceptional discipline and bravery in the face of government repression.

Despite the brutal crackdown that has resulted in the killings of an estimated 200 protesters and 3,000 arrests, the protest movement is still alive and people across the nation are continuing to defy the ruling State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). Movement that has spread across 66 cities in 227 demonstrations does not die overnight. A movement of a million people with the bravery to defy bullets cannot easily disappear.

### Background

The catalyst for the current protests was the lowering of fuel subsidies at government petrol stations, which doubled the cost of fuel. This move substantially increases the suffering of Burmese people, the majority



\*The Asia-Pacific Peoples' Partnership on Burma (APPPB) is a movement of organizations and individuals that aims to develop a strong broad-based partnership of peoples of the Asia-Pacific advocating and mobilizing a movement for promoting freedom, democracy and human rights in Burma. This movement facilitates strategic linkages; coordinates activities; develops and shares its capacity and resources; channels information resources; and promotes dialogue towards unified approaches. You can check them at <http://apppb.blogspot.com>.

of whom have been living barely above subsistence levels, victims of 45 years of appalling economic mismanagement and corruption. The price hikes were immediately felt through a doubling in the cost of bus fares and commodity price rises that has increased the widespread suffering many Burmese people endure. Rice, the staple food of the country, has risen by 42 to 75% in some areas, which raises the threat of hunger and malnutrition.

In response to the fuel price hikes, leaders of the '88 Generation Student Group went on a nine kilometer march on August 19 with two hundred residents of Rangoon who could afford bus ticket. The march grew to more than five hundred people as more residents joined en-route. In the following days, protests grew and began to spread outside Rangoon. In reaction to this rapidly growing public dissent, the military stepped up repression, by intimidating protesters and arresting leaders.

The National League for Democracy (NLD) also played key role in the early days of the movement. Between August 24 and September 5, the NLD mobilized 34 peace marches in towns across Rangoon Division, Mandalay Division, Magway Division, Tenneserim Division, Irrawaddy Division, Pago Division. This showed the sustained strength of the NLD, despite 18 years of office closures, detention and intimidation of party leaders, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and U Tin Oo, as well as grassroots members and supporters. After September 5, NLD supporters joined the mass movement, marching with monks, students and other sectors of the society.

### **Buddhist monks takes the lead with silent support of Sangha Nayaka Council**

An unprecedented strength of the current movement is the leadership role taken by monks, who hold the highest moral authority in Burma. The current uprising is the first in Burma's history that the monks have taken to the street on this scale. This has inspired hundreds of thousands of ordinary Burmese people to follow and join the monks in defying the dictatorship and seeing the future.

Mass mobilization of monks began on September 5, when protest took place in Pakkhoku involving more than 500 monks. The SPDC violently crushed the protest, beating and arresting monks. The following

day, the monks asked for an apology and warned that they would boycott accepting alms from the military if their demand were not met. When the military failed to apologize, monks across Burma took to the streets. Monks' protests soon spread across Central Burma, to western Arakan State, Northern Kachin State and beyond.

On September 24, state owned television aired footages of the Religious Affairs Minister, kneeling before select members of the highest authority of Burmese Buddhism, the Sangha Nayaka Council. The SPDC claimed to have the support of the Sangha Council however, a closer look clearly shows that the Sangha Nayaka Council refused to be bullied by the military leaders.

Religious affairs Minister Thura Myint Maung publicly called on the Council to "give instructions for the sake of the country". If the military had the support of the Sangha Nayaka Council, the Council could publicly play a mediating role to silence the rising voice of protest. However the SPDC's appeal for help was met with silence, since no new orders by the Sangha Nayaka Council appeared in Burmese media.

In desperation, the military then organized four Sangha Nayaka Council members to re-announce old orders from the 1980s and 90s. These orders demanded that monks follow all national laws, that abbots ban unofficial organizations of Buddhist monks and that monks stay away from party politics. Monks who disobey are threatened with 'action'. It is clear that this was a last attempt by the SPDC to control the Sangha Nayaka Council.

When Buddhist monks began to protest, they gained the backing of the majority of people and were critical challenge to the SPDC leadership. The regime has not succeeded at this however, since as soon as soldiers began riding and looting monasteries and beatings and killings of monks, and news spread and hundreds of thousands of people mobilized to show their outrage and attempted to protect the monks.

So far at least 31 monasteries have been raided and raids are continuing on an almost nightly basis. A witness describes this shocking attack against Buddhism: "We have gone by number of monasteries and they are empty. And it is frightening to think why that is." A number of monasteries in many areas where

# PERSPECTIVE

protests took place have been locked down. Lay people who visit those monasteries have reported harassment and intimidation by security forces. Just on Wednesday night, at least five monasteries were raided in Rangoon.

It is unprecedented in Burma for a ruler to fight against the institution of Buddhism, This crime has shocked the world and forced world religious leaders to speak up.

In a statement issued on September 23, His Holiness the Dalai Lama voiced his full support for the movement and appealed to Buddhist members of the SPCD to “act in accordance with the sacred dharma in the spirit of compassion and non-violence”.

Pope Benedict also spoke out in support of the democracy movement, expressing his “spiritual closeness to (Burma’s) dear population in this painful trial that is going through.”

Archbishop Desmond Tutu compared the uprising to the movement against Apartheid. “The courage of the people of Myanmar (Burma) is amazing and now they have been joined by their holy men” he said. “It is so like the rolling mass action that eventually toppled apartheid”.

## Continuing crackdown

Since the start of the movement, the SPDC has used brutal tactics against peaceful protesters, including torture, beatings, detention, disappearances and killings. Initially protesters were attacked by hired thugs from the United Solidarity and Development Association (USD) and Swn Ah Shin and regular police. Later, riot police, the ‘anti-terror’ squad and soldiers were added to the fray. More than 200 protesters have been brutally killed and thousands have been beaten, tortured and detained.

In Rangoon and Mandalay, soldiers raid houses of protesters nightly, beating and detaining those they

can catch. On the streets, soldiers randomly search people and those found with cameras or cell phones are immediately taken away.

People are being threatened not to listen to BBC,VOA and other opposition radio, which is the main source of information available to Burmese people. The military junta has already acted in this threat, beating and arresting a man in Mon State for simply listening to the radio and even arrested a township SPDC chairman in Northern Shan State for that ‘crime’.

*“Two months of sustained protest against the military regime is a huge accomplishment in a country under brutal dictatorship. While less people have been demonstrating since the crackdown, many Burmese continue to defy the military and protest in so many ways.”*

To complete the crackdown, the SPDC is trying to turn neighbors against each other, ordering that people should turn in anyone in their community who joined the protests. The junta also appears to be paranoid about the true feeling of civil servants, who are being prevented from joining the demonstration through threats of sacking and arrest. Government offices are being locked down during the day to keep civil servants away from the movement.

In states and divisions where protests have taken place, monks are virtually locked into their monasteries and under constant surveillance and many monks have been forced into hiding. This is happening in Arakan State, Kachin State, Mon State, Rangoon Division, Mandalay Division, Pegu Division, Sagaing Division and Megwa Division.

## Repression through starvation

The SPDC is systematically starving whole states and divisions where protests have taken place by grounding food transport.

Furthermore, commercial transportation of food in and around Mandalay and Sittwe has been banned. The Sittwe port is a food transport hub for the whole country so restrictions there have disastrous repercussions for the people of Burma. Restrictions



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have even halted the World Food Program from distribution food to the most marginalized communities. Mandalay is a food transport hub for central Burma so restrictions there create great hardship for residents in towns and villages through central and northern Burma.

There are now food shortages in markets throughout Burma and if these restrictions continue, there is grave concern that hunger and malnutrition could increase to deadly levels. The SPDC is effectively starving millions of people in a war against its own population, as a punishment for peaceful defiance.

### Strength in adversity

Two months of sustained protest against the military regime is a huge accomplishment in a country under brutal dictatorship. While less people have been demonstrating since the crackdown, many Burmese continue to defy the military and protest in so many ways. Many more are waiting for the chance to continue protests as restrictions are inevitably eased. International support is urgently needed to prevent continued bloodshed and people re-mobilize.

### Maroon Revolution in Numbers

1. In total there have been 227 protests openly defying the military regime.
2. On September 24 alone, over 1,000,000 people took to the streets in 26 cities and towns across Burma, marching for freedom and better life<sup>1</sup>.
3. In total, demonstrations have taken place in 66 cities across the country in all 7 states and all 7 divisions<sup>2</sup>.
4. So far an estimated 3000 protesters have been detained. This includes at least 1,400 monks and nuns<sup>3</sup>.

5. On August 21, 13 leaders of the 88 Generation Students Group were arrested. On average, they have already spent 30% of their life behind bars.

6. In the bloody crackdown that began on September 26, more than 200 people have been killed<sup>4</sup>. The ruling State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) only claims that 9 have been killed.

7. In the crackdown, 1 Japanese journalist was killed, at least 5 were arrested and 10 were injured or harassed<sup>5</sup>.

8. Before August 21, there were 1158 political prisoners in Burmese prison<sup>6</sup>.

9. At least 1,000 people have disappeared during the Maroon Revolution<sup>7</sup>.

10. At 11am on September 28, the SPDC shut down the country's only public web server. This prevented Burmese people from getting urgent messages to the world<sup>8</sup>.

11. The protests started after the SPDC increased the price of fuel by 100 percent. This caused the prices of daily goods and transport to rise, bringing more suffering to millions of Burmese people. The price of a kilo of rice, the staple food of Burma, rose from 455 kyat on August 14 to 1,055 kyat on August 17<sup>9</sup>.

### (Footnotes)

<sup>1</sup> Forum for Democracy in Burma (FDB) estimate.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Democratic Voice of Burma estimates.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Reporters Sans Frontiers (RSF), 30 September 07

<sup>6</sup> AAPP

<sup>7</sup> AAPP

<sup>8</sup> RSF, 28 September 07

<sup>9</sup> Altsean Burma,

August 2007, Burma Bulletin

# BIBLICAL REFLECTIONS

## WSCF-AP Human Rights Liturgy

*December 10, 2007*

*(Note: The members of WSCF AP Human Rights Committee ask that you share this liturgy with members of your movements. This liturgy is designed for us to focus on the recent events happening in Myanmar (Burma), Pakistan, and Philippines but also to encourage us to look at the Human Rights Issues happening in our own country. We hope you can use this liturgy as a resource and starting point for your own worship.)*

### Call to Worship

Preparation

Silent Meditation

**“ Speak up for people who cannot speak for themselves. Protect the rights of all who are helpless. Speak for them and be a righteous judge. Protect the right of all the poor and needy.” (Proverbs 31:8-9)**

**Leader:** Sisters and brothers, we have come together to worship God who offers us freedom through our Lord Jesus Christ. For the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set us free from the law of sin and death.

**Response:** For we did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but we have received the spirit of the children of God to live free from fear.

**Leader:** Sisters and brothers, we have come together to remember the people in Myanmar, in Pakistan and the Philippines walking humbly in peaceful unison with their God, walking for freedom, justice and human rights.

**Response:** Let us take up our cross and walk with Jesus, the same way he walked down the streets of Jerusalem. Let us remember that the simple act of walking to show defiance against oppression is to bring the peace and love that Jesus’ teaches us. God we seek your peace. Amen

We recite together the World Peace Prayer

Lead us from death to life,  
from falsehood to truth;  
lead us from despair to hope,  
from fear to trust;  
lead us from hate to love,  
from war to peace.  
Let peace fill our heart,  
our world, our universe.

*Opening Song: Come O come,  
Let Us Praise Parent God  
Words by the University Christian  
Fellowship Myanmar*

### Intercessional Reflections

*(written on remembrance day by Kevin Ranville, November 11, 2000)*

**Student 1:** How do you say thank you to the men and women who risked their lives, and lost their lives to secure our freedom, our way of life, our peace and prosperity?

**Student 2:** How do you say thank you to the men and women who went through the most terrible experiences of their lives, surrounded by death and carnage, losing friends and loved ones, seeing things that would change their lives forever?

**Student 3:** How do you say thank you to those who went through all this with the belief that their one life, whether lost or saved, could make a difference, had to make a difference, for our sake, the generation they had not even met yet?

**Student 4:** How do you say thank you to the men and women who had faith in us before we were even born, faith that we would become people worth fighting for, and worth dying for?

**We all respond:** How do you say thank you? You honour their sacrifice with your own life. You go to



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*Cambodia*

war against your faults and failures. You conquer all the things inside you that make this world a worse place to live in; worse for your family, friends, neighbours, co-workers. You fight to make the small space in the world that you touch a better place. You win the battle for your own soul. You be good and do good; you live selflessly, remembering the example that the veterans, both living and dead, laid down for us. You live life so well that those who remember the horrors of war look on you with satisfaction and pride and are comforted, never feeling for a moment that you weren't worth the price they paid.

## Scriptural Reading

(You may choose from the following suggested readings that will suit your biblical reflection on Human Rights)

1. Proverbs 31:8-9
2. Genesis 1:27- (In God's Image)
3. Luke 4:16-21 (Jesus in Nazareth)
4. Matthew 26:6-13 (Jesus Anointed at Bethany)

(Distribute copies of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), invited to share your reflection and thoughts on the International Human Rights Day)

## Intercessional Human Rights Prayers

**Leader:** God our hope and giver of life we put aside this time for us to pray and reflect on the human rights issues that affect our individual countries.

**Student 1:** In Cambodia on the 29<sup>th</sup> of November police broke up a peaceful strike in Kandal Province where over 2000 people were set to demonstrate. Police assaulted workers and arrested members of the local labour unions.

**Response:** God we keep in mind the struggles of people who have been abused and assaulted by police in Cambodia. **God hear our prayer.**

*Sri Lanka*

**Student 2:** Sri Lanka continues to experience extrajudicial killings and disappearances, in October 53 disappearances were reported, and the disappearances of humanitarian workers. Due to the continuing failure to persecute the alleged perpetrators and the absence of proper mechanisms for the affected family members to seek redress, these are still ongoing.

**Response:** God let us use this time to reflect on the countries who have suffered from extrajudicial killings and disappearances in Sri Lanka, The Philippines, Cambodia, Myanmar, China, and many other countries throughout the Asia and Pacific Region. **God hear our prayer.**

*Philippines*

**Student 3:** Threats have been made upon human rights activists and widows of activists who are helping victims. On November 2, activist Olivia Bernardo was followed and photographed by an unknown person



*SCMers in Hong Kong (above) and Korea (right) showed their commitment to upholding and protecting human rights as they expressed solidarity with the struggle of Burmese people.*

## For Human Rights For Solidarity



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while her colleague Mary Guy Portajada started receiving threatening messages on her mobile. In another incident the widows of murdered activists, Hilda Orpilla and Natividad Battad, have also been threatened by members of the paramilitary following their husbands' murder early this year.

**Response:** God we ask for your protection upon people whose lives have been under threat and intimidation used to instigate such threats. **God hear our prayer.**

## *Pakistan*

**Student 4:** Mr. Amir Naveed, the vice-chairperson of SCM Pakistan was arrested and was imprisoned for 3 days last November for leading and participating in the rally against the emergency rule in Pakistan. In recent months we have watched the demonstrations of peace activist, human rights activist in Pakistan as they prepare for a change of government. The imposition of martial law leading to the arrest of lawyers, journalist and activist has caused people to demonstrate on the streets pushing for the military government to hear the needs of the people.

**Response:** God we seek your wise guidance to help us reflect seek peaceful solutions to the political turmoil in Pakistan. **God hear our prayer.**

## *Myanmar*

**Student 5:** In recent weeks there has been worrying reports about the resurgence of government-backed goon squads in Burma. Gangs of thugs, have been used to attack human rights defenders going about their business and persons holding prayer vigils for the release of political prisoners. Out of the arrested during last September's violent crackdown on peaceful protests led by monks, 106 women remain in detention, including six nuns. Women activists have been hunted down, assaulted, tortured and framed with false charges, and their family members threatened and held hostage.

**Response:** God we pray for peace and the change of power in Myanmar that represents and upholds the dignity of the ordinary people of Myanmar. **God hear our prayer.**

## *Asia and the Pacific Region*

God let us remember the many countries, communities, men, women and children who suffer at the abuse of their basic Human Rights, for food, education, safety, love and care; we pray for a better future where there

is hope, peace and reconciliation. Through Jesus you have given us several examples on how to advocate for the needs of the millions of people who suffer because their basic human rights and needs have been denied to them. Let us as part of the whole human creation of God come together to make long awaited changes. God hear our prayer. And let our prayer come unto you.

*Intercessional Song of Praise from Pakistan:  
Have Mercy on Us, Lord*

## THE ARAMAIC PRAYER OF JESUS

as translated from Aramaic by Saadi Neil Douglas-Klotz of the Sufi Order of the West

O, Birther of the Cosmos, focus your light within us —  
make it useful  
Create your reign of unity now  
Your one desire then acts with ours,  
As in all light, So in all forms,  
Grant us what we need each day in bread and insight:  
Loose the cords of mistakes binding us,  
As we release the strands we hold of other's guilt.  
Don't let surface things delude us,  
But free us from what holds us back.  
From you is born all ruling will,  
The power and the life to do,  
The song that beautifies all,  
From age to age it renews.  
I affirm this with my whole being.

## CLOSING SONG

Oh Freedom!

Oh Freedom, Oh Freedom,  
Oh Freedom over me, over me  
And before I'll be a slave, I'll be buried in my grave  
And go home to my people and be free!

Oh Justice, Oh Justice, Oh Justice, over me, over me  
And before I'll be a slave, I'll be buried in my grave  
And go home to my people and be free!

No subjugation, No subjugation,  
No subjugation over me, over me  
And before I'll be a slave, I'll be buried in my grave  
And go home to my people and be free!

(Guitar Chords: D-A7-D-A7-D-D7-G-D-A7-G-D)

# WOMENS SPACE

**WAR DOES NOT MAKE SENSE!**

**WAR DOES NOT MAKE SENSE!**



**WAR DOES NOT MAKE SENSE!**

*Response of a Terrorized Widow on the Anti-Terrorism Campaign and the Human Security Act, Philippines*

*Florence (Dom-an) Macagne-Manegdeg*

**Exodus in our motherland...**

“Would anyone help me make sense of war please?” On August 7, 2007, it will be one year since and my young daughters packed a few belongings and left the comfort of our niche in the cool city of Baguio in Northern Luzon, Philippines. We traveled further away from our hometown, the mystic mountains of Sagada, Mt. Province and romantic beaches of Pagudpud, Ilocos Norte. We fled to Metro Manila, a place sweltering with heat and filth, overcrowded with urban poor and a haven for infectious and contagious diseases. We also took solace in a few more comfortable zones. Inside the university compounds, the La Mesa watershed area, the Quezon City Circle and Wild Life Parks, some spacious subdivisions, the church yards and the convents. Or anywhere where a tree spreads its leaves to shade a tiny flower and branches for a chirping bird to perch on was somehow home and reprieve to us. Unfortunately, my youngest daughter contracted Dengue Hemorrhagic Fever while we lived with my in-laws in a middle-class subdivision. A plague that knows no boundaries. We had to rush her to the nearest hospital and paid a hospital bill that rolled like a taxi meter.

## WOMENS SPACE

Seeking sanctuary and serene places to pause and re-view our path as we moved on to the life journey of a widow and two orphans of war is an endless question of where to, what next and how to. At times, tears flow wishing these were not true. Sans a famous name, or a bank account in our possession except that we are the family of one of the less celebrated cases of extrajudicial killings proclaimed as peoples' martyr Jose "Pepe" Riveral Manegdeg III. We met people from various walks of life, various persuasions yet of common vision who in their own ways offered us hearts, hands, shelter, arts, money, prayers, thoughts and love. Finally, along our journey to peace and healing, we sought refuge in the serene mountain and calm lake of Mt. Taal and communities nearby including the welcoming hearts and hands at the Maryridge Place of Healing and Renewal. Taal, the folks say means Truth.

Along the journey, I have always believed that those who have gone ahead of us in the spirit world are guiding us, just as relatives whispered in condolences as I sat with emptied heart during the wake of my husband. While indeed, human hearts and hands had been along the way when we needed them most.

### Dancing with the Angels of Darkness

What happened? I first noticed the presence of two masked men on motorcycles that came to our peaceful isolated neighborhood by the hillsides in Baguio City last July 30, 2006. The next day, we heard news that Alyce Omengan Claver died when together with husband and child their car was sprayed with bullets on their way to school. It gave me uneasy feelings. I reported the incident to responsible government agencies, relatives, friends and church people. Considering the rise of incidents of killings done by masked men on motorcycles, they were alarmed and warned us to be vigilant and use commonsense when needed. The Civilian Intelligence Detective Group (CIDG) even suggested mockingly they could give me a licensed gun to

protect myself. Nevertheless, we refused to panic for all the more it does not make sense.

Allowing some time to pass, last August 7, 2006 we were terrorized to see the same motorcycle with plate number AF 1033 with two strange masked men once more. Sensing danger and consulting a friend, I packed a few clothings, talked to my two young daughters and we fled our rented home. They had to stop going to school. It made more sense to be together and be secure in the presence of each other by end of day even as it was uncertain what happens the next day and the next weeks until a year passed.

Plate number AF 1033 was found to be registered in another place not in Baguio but in Ilocos where Pepe was killed. Even the an agent of Ilocos National Bureau of Investigation

(NBI) have refrained from checking the plates because a man of the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (ISAFP) was accosted for possessing black ribbons received by human rights advocates in the Region. Some honest investigators were also killed effectively silencing others who are sincere with their tasks.

Speaking with my cousin today recalling the incidents, she reveals that even as we left, she saw masked men on motorcycles going up and down our place several times in the succeeding months. They did not stay long. At one time, she was awakened in an early morning by the barks of our dogs led by Justice. Some strangers were exploring the 109 steps stairway to reach the place we left. They did not bother to take off their motorcycle helmets and their masks. It is not many homes by the road end where we used to live. There was only one person who owned a motorcycle for home use that occasionally travels up the steep road. Who were these men and who sent them on what purpose? They did not even have looks of adventure seeking riders nor

*“Along the journey, I have always believed that those who have gone ahead of us in the spirit world are guiding us, just as relatives whispered in condolences. While indeed, human hearts and hands had been along the way when we needed them most.”*



a motorcycle out for some road testing. One thing is clear, they conceal their faces and bear emptiness in their eyes. Their aura invite suspicion and their presence warn of danger.

## **Liberating Life-bearing Angels...**

My beloved husband Jose "Pepe" Rivala Manegdeg III of the Rural Missionary of the Philippines was brutally assassinated with 22 gunshot wounds last November 28, 2005 amidst tobacco fields in San Esteban, Ilocos Sur. He just delivered a lecture on human rights to fellow workers in peace and justice advocacy and grassroots organizing. He was waiting for a bus bound to Manila to meet with fellow churchworkers to prepare for the arrival of an international delegation of the Global Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church in the morning then was supposed to meet me at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport arriving from Hongkong at 5 O'clock in the afternoon. He was slain by motorcycle riding men and the assassins divested his body of his mobile phone, wallet and money. Some military men in the area discreetly admitted that he would have been executed earlier of November 22 were it not for some soldiers who attempted to call off the mission for they knew Pepe as a townmate. He did write about his being harassed by men who suspiciously tailed him in the bus that day talking about following up a case of so-called "organized crime".

Yet, the "order of battle" has been made and the list included Pepe and his colleagues. And the mission for execution was accomplished just before a happy family reunion could have been made. My husband was a radical alright. For seeking changes in a social system that perpetrates inequality, poverty and violence. For initiating a publication on Church and Society entitled "Writing on the Wall". For writing project proposals and charismatically appealing to advocates, ecumenical partners, enlightened landlords and politicians for funds and resources to be channeled to a region long impoverished by land monopoly and local tyranny. For effectively leading fellow workers to effectively strengthen community organizations for stewardship of land and resources and forging alliances for a growing power-in-one. For transcending his own personal poverty and

woundedness and transforming his energy to the greater cause for social justice and world peace. For passionately loving his mother, his children and other children, his family and other families. For loving me endlessly and comprehensively as well.

What a grave mistake indeed to kill such man. For his death simply released his spirit to inspire a great movement on earth as it is in heaven...yet more of a few young men and women like him continue to be sacrificial lambs.

## **A question too many...**

I took solace in writing and making appeals for truth behind the killing of a gentle, peaceful and loving family man who was father-mother to our two daughters while I was then in foreign land trying to make a decent living as a domestic helper.

Before leaving for Hongkong, I also mourned the death of two young brothers stabbed by a reckless taxi driver and a gang of young men. Senseless violence that worsened the plight of a family in economic poverty. Both cases brought to court and the killers were eventually convicted even as they acknowledged their crime yet legally pleaded not guilty. Two young joyous brothers dead at age 23 and 15 years old and more brothers on the line? What a litany of agony in misery and poverty that it is but sane to ask the infinite WHY? and pause to create space, time and a moment to breath...within, in much deep deeper silence beyond words better expressed with a bamboo nose flute, poetry, smiles and tears...

## **Perpetrating Wide-eyed Terror**

During and after the wake of my husband, it was blatantly absurd and of much disrespect to the solemnity of mourning to see military men and their intelligence agents lurking around the wake and burial site of my husband. A pair of them were on black motorcycle with plate number BI 9872. They had the guts to join the people on vigil but left when they noticed the people were observing them. They were even heartless enough to spread disinformation about my husband and rumor of killing me and the brothers and sisters

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of a dead man. Four months after, my fisherman brother-in-law went missing and later found dead with mutilated body parts.

And even as we strive to move on to the life of a widow and an orphan, we are not spared of more terror. For what would it be if not sheer horror to loose brothers in senseless violence, a husband in extrajudicial killing, a brother-in-law in murder and much worst, my life threatened by masked men for my writings and pleadings? Incidentally, all these started to happen in November 2000 to the present as more brutal killings happen outside of my family. To mention a few that have already been stricken of an apparently deadly and invisible list... a female lawyer defending the poor, student researchers integrating with peasant communities, a poor farmer leading his community to raise their concerns about mining wastes polluting their fields through a poisoned river, a peace pact holder among the tribes of Kalinga killed in front of his teen-age son, a teacher witnessing the assassination, a physician who served the provinces ambushed with wife and child, a bishop feeding the poor stabbed to death, a worker of the Department of Agriculture assassinated by the same gunmen who killed Pepe, a painter and dutiful son shot in front of her pleading mother, a journalist critical of graft and corruption shot as he was buying second hand clothes for his children, a priest supporting sugar factory workers appealing for just wages, a pastor gunned by armed men barging into his home, an organic agriculturist assisting peasant organizations abducted in a busy shopping center... still missing...and many more...many more...endless list...of civilians

with passion for truth, peace, liberty and comprehensive sustainable development for all.

I could not help but shut my eyes tight then open it wide several times as I take deep breathes. Wishing that all that I have witnessed is illusion or simply a nightmare. Hoping that when I open my eyes once more, I wake up to the smile and hug of my husband and father of my children as we share a cup of coffee, take our morning walks in public parks and pick up grass flowers by the roadside as our children run with our dogs with gaiety and laughter.

### **Human Security Act: Logical Solutions or unwitting invitation?**

After all these, here comes the Human Security Act (HSA) or the Anti-Terror Act. With the passionate and bemedalled lawyers and lawmakers debating over the legality and intricacies of such law. Our case could even be used by both sides to justify their arguments. Is this due process or simply part of mitigating the dehumanizing realities of the escalating "game and theater of war" if I

may quote AFP's Maj.Gen. Jovito Palparan statement last December 2006 on urban militarization? Or is it an act to legitimize the already widespread State terror under the leadership of Gloria Macapagal Arroyo?

I could not help but feel even more insecure and appalled even as I try simply to detach and witness how more senseless violence makes the papers, the streets and debates bloodier. I cry silently witnessing the manifestations of the impact of violence that shattered my children's young minds and hearts even as I also continue to

*“Will the Anti-Terror Campaign erase the smirk on the faces of warmongering generals and a president who derive pleasure in the victory of depriving lives of selfless loving fathers and mothers and the dreams and hopes of youth and children with the power of blazing guns, gold and goons and legal jargons to conceal their delusions?”*

*I do NOT believe so.”*

learn how to meet the demanding tasks of a mother-father. It is beyond words to articulate what war widows and war orphans are going through which brings us to seek sanctuary and sanity in healing arts as I play my bamboo nose flute and chant my dirges, sing my calls for healing and peace and strive to establish a meaningful existence one moment at a time...

## **Desecration of Sacred Life, Sacred Rights**

Will the Human Security Act and the raging debates around it restore our once happy and simple life? Will it heal the deep soul searing wounds inflicted to our beings? And will it allow us to go back home with a sense of safety? Will it erase our fleeting fear when we see masked men on motorcycles though we have resolved not to live in paranoia? Even as we are aware that Capt. Joel Castro and his comrades in the Military Intelligence Group who maimed, dragged and pumped bullets into my husband's sacred body is very much free and the masked men who came to disturb our peace are very well secured by their own commanders in higher positions of the State? How much sense could it be made of paying a triggerman P 120,000 and awarding a medal of valor to the commanders of men like Joel Castro and honor-hungry men?

Will the Anti-Terror Campaign recognize humane universal laws of widowhood and orphanhood? Or inhumanely and heartlessly consider orphans and widows as casualties or collateral damages of the War Industry. In our case, it has clearly ignored it. Or it simply has not considered "Pacem in Terris" or Peace on Earth. Perhaps the Vatican could help the gallant crusaders to unearth the documents that expressed Pope John XXIII's views on Human Rights. Or they may come, I bring them to village elders among the Kankana-eyes in the Cordillera and be enlightened with the edict of "Lawa and Inayan" Thou shall not do anything if it harms, it may come back we never know.

## **A Crusade of the "Anointed Few"?**

Will the Anti-Terror Campaign spare humanely and spiritually evolved civilians from being perceived and portrayed as demons and placed in a list called the "order of battle" and the

"enemies of the state" that sounds like a "Schindler's list"! Will it erase the smirk on the faces of warmongering generals and a president who derive pleasure in the victory of depriving lives of selfless loving fathers and mothers and the dreams and hopes of youth and children with the power of blazing guns, gold and goons and legal jargons to conceal their delusions?

I do NOT believe so.

Or could it be a re-enactment straight from the book though with modern weapons enflamed with spiritual quests such as that of Constantinople under the new banner of Anti-Terrorism? Or as in fantastic novels about an evil Queen's desperate attempt to hold on to her crumbling towers? Or a pharaoh's quest for a pedestal as high as the heavens? Spare me. Creepy and insane as it is.

Yet I pray may love and mercy empower the people of our beloved greed and war ravaged motherland...What we most urgently need is not more laws and acts and a waste of time on intellectual exercises and interpretations subject to vested interests, compulsive reactions and fixations. From the war weary souls and blood drenched ground where I belong, those accountable for all the bloodshed need simply to face the consequences of their acts and choices, be reckoned by the human spirit, and sincerely drop the campaign about terror and abhor war as a policy. In plain words, be responsible, humble and honorable enough to stop the madness! Stop shedding the body and blood of selfless and compassionate men, women, youth and children.

For what a doom indeed that a bloody and gory history repeating itself is unfolding until humanity learns its lessons...

## **Thou shall not Kill...**

A growing wave of people and spirits on earth as well as in heaven continue to seek the fragile, elusive and genuine peace...the "holy grail" of mythic lores. I beckon, may we be compelled to listen not only to our minds but to our hearts, our souls and our spirit as one...we only

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have one precious sacred body and life on earth. May we listen to the eyes and silence of the children...whose innocence and purity continue to be desecrated by violence, poverty and war.

What a tragedy to waste life in paranoia, self-deception and delusions. What hell of a life is it to be so occupied with bloody wars and endless arguments and be so helpless when natural disasters of an increasingly heated world could easily cleanse the earth in just a few minutes. What phenomenal folly is it to launch wars created in our own minds and campaign to savagely eliminate those who have dedicated their breath and lives in work that uplift the lives of the lowly and downtrodden that all may enjoy the fruits of the earth. What destructive mania is it to build-up and unleash bombs that explode the bosoms of the earth and mangle the bodies of its nurturers? And what an equally apathetic and devious scheme to make money out of the fears and desperation of those who survive.

Life is sacred...honor it.

### **Singing the Earth Songs of Eternal Freedom...Eternal Love...**

What a liberty to hear one, two and three billions of living angels and humane beings wounded as they are yet continue to sing, dance and weave as they march for Peace Not War, Love Not Hate...in its simplicity, purity and sincerity. It shall soon quell the chorus of the damned. Those who have taken what was not freely given to them shall answer to the courts of humanity and to the very Source of Breath and Life.

And a singing widow beckons...Come, let us join hands together and refrain from pitting our heads against each other. Take a little step further away from zones of comfort and walls of hiding. Bring out our shining breastplates of love, fasten our belts of faith, put on our helmets of wisdom...prepare the gongs, the trumpets and the drums...beat the rhythm of victory...the walls are crumbling, the grounds shaking, the giants are stinking and gnashing against the other as the queen is stuck in her bloody red velvety gown. Pray and play the sacred music of the breath.

Blow with the spirit of LOVE, TRUTH, JUSTICE and PEACE... LIBERTY is at hand. There is time for everything under heaven. As the Divine Spirit flows and glows to inspire humane hearts...the movement for a new world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century takes a new leap...an evolution towards the communion of humanity and divinity...here and now...the Holy Grail is in our hands...fragile and tempting ever...Beckoning us to move fast yet subtle as the wind...we shall restore the covenant of peace and rebuild with our hearts, with our hands the sacred lands and communities...as the eternal spring of life flows freely forever...

Indeed, God lives in the heart of humanity...yet God is, we are not.

### ***Kasiyana...kasiyana...***

*Kasiyana is a word among the Kankana-ey Indigenous Peoples of Sagada, Mt. Province Cordillera Philippines. It beckons and evokes love, hope and healing in times of woundedness and turmoil.*

**May we humbly appeal for urgent support of all forms to the Kasiyana Peace and Healing Initiatives (KASIYANAPHI). It aims to develop and encourage programs for peace and healing journeys for orphans and widows of war. It affirms the effectivity of nature and art therapy and creative individual and group counseling. It actively joins the advocacy, concrete actions and movements for social healing and social wholeness. It also initiates the opening of spaces for peace and healing for war weary souls as it upholds the sacredness of personal and communal journey of life on sacred lands. "All that comes from the heart freely is returned a thousand fold". Thank you.**

*Kasiyana Peace and Healing Initiatives. Mt. Taal, Batangas, Philippines [kasiyanaphi@yahoo.com](mailto:kasiyanaphi@yahoo.com) [domanay\\_nomad@yahoo.com.ph](mailto:domanay_nomad@yahoo.com.ph) or + 63 09185117430*



# True Face of Migration, Let the Migrants Speak

## “Migration, Movements and Justice”

The program has begun when I arrived, having faced some hurdles in securing a VISA. Since Filipinos are one of the most “mobile” people in this era of neo-liberal globalization, and present in more than 100 countries as migrant workers, one can only obtain a VISA to Mexico after some scrutinizing. I find it ironic though that Mexico lays very stringent migration rules for Filipinos, since Mexico itself is topping in world’s three greatest recipients of migrants “dollar remittance”, including Philippines and India; and also one of the biggest “labour exporter”.

I was personally excited to go to Mexico. Philippines, is sometimes being touted as a “Latin American” country displaced in the heart of the Asia Pacific. We feel a weird sense of affinity to South Americans, perhaps because of the historical common thread that bind us, and the solidarity is common having same *Conquistadores* that has plundered our nations and that we had struggled from.

Not only this, Mexico and Manila, had had the ancient link because of the oppressive Acapulco Trade of Spain, which also germinated the first workers and Filipino migrant workers. The first Filipino migrants fled the oppression in the Galleons or ships of conscripted (slave) labour from Manila to Mexico route, farther to North America. Today, Mexico has become a dangerous ground and vast transition point,

desperately taken by millions of people from the rest of Meso-America and South America hoping to cross the USA.

Mexico City was extra chilly during the entire “Migration, Movements and Justice” global program this September. The co-participants coming from different SCMs in 16 countries around the globe, got a

imposed during the Conquest. The visit to the Teotihuacan Pyramids has become thought-provoking for me, rather than mere sight-seeing.

As gleaned from history, these Conquistadores would plant the seeds of oppression in many countries and built unviable and oppressive structures, which until now, have left an irreparable system of inequality, “proxy” ethnic and internecine wars and conflicts in the colonized countries. Most, than not, the perpetuation of this same type of unjust system in the modern times has become the “prodding” reasons of movement and displacement of people. Aggravated by globalization, underdevelopment, foreign plunder

*Migration is an issue that various SCMerS from around the world discussed in the meeting. Labor migration is one of the biggest phenomena we face today. Leni Valeriano (far right) is the Philippine delegate and author of this article.*



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of natural resources, empire domination, the people in most poor countries suffer chronic social and economic inequalities that force many to migrate.

In the program, I shared the reality in the Philippines, having as many as 3, 400 Filipinos leaving the country everyday as Overseas Filipino Workers, not out of sheer choice but of compulsion, of the basic instinct to survive because of the untold poverty, inequalities and injustice prevailing in my country. This situation of “forced migration” is common in many poor underdeveloped countries.

Do-hun Lee, from KSCF shared the situation of migrant workers in Korea who struggle against unfair labour practices from their employers, poor working and safety conditions in factories and especially the inhumane situations faced by undocumented workers coming from different part of Asia Pacific.

Participants from Europe, USA and Canada also shared the plight of migrants who are at the receiving end of the systemic racism in these regions. The youth, women and immigrants of different nationality in these regions are the hardest hit by the ongoing capitalist crisis, as they are exploited for cheaper wages. Immigrants, are used by the governments and capitalist lobbyists as the reasons for the employment unrest, and are pitted against other local workers in the form of chauvinism and neo-fascism.

However, the continuing protests of migrant workers opposing unjust migration and labor policies, like the millions of protests of Latin American, Chinese and Filipino workers and others in the USA showed that solidarity and action can frustrate anti-migrants and anti-workers policies.

The conference was not only replete with discussions. There was also significant underpinning of Biblical stories and reflections on migration as an age-old phenomenon; underscored the Abrahamic tradition of hospitality like those depicted in the stories of Ruth and Naomi; and the central admonition from the Gospel to do justice, especially to strangers.

Current discourse now of the governments like the in Global Forum

on Migration this July, about how migration can be a tool for “development”, must be seen with critical eye. They touted the migrants’ contribution in the “development” of their home countries through sending of “dollar remittances”. However, this lip-service tries to deflect on the many unjust conditions majority of migrant workers experience in the host countries as well as in the home countries—the very reason of their departure.

For example, the “dollar remittances” has become the buoyant agents of economic downturn of poor countries, artificially filling the financial deficits and swinging the negative imbalance of trade. Countries like the Philippines, has totally become dependent on this and has exploited the desperation of people to look for opportunities abroad through the governments devastating “Labor Export Policy” (LEP). The LEP obfuscates the real unemployment problem in many underdeveloped countries and the feudal oppression in the countryside, and is hyped as the saving grace.

In the final analysis, we must go home to the very reason of “forced migration” and not be blinded by the subterfuge of governments through the use of human labor for export. The greater challenge in all the discourse about migration is to put in centrality the MIGRANT herself or himself as a human being whose dignity must be restored.

The conference promised solidarity actions and further studies involving the real situation of migrants all over the world as the litmus paper of all this discourse and to “critique the global economic system, international financial institutions and economic structures as the major causes of migration injustice and to look for just alternatives”.

*Participants took time to see beautiful Mexico, a place rich of cultural diversity and where migration is a reality.*





photo by Corazon Amaya Canete

# WSCF Migration Statement and Solidarity Plan

*Inter-Regional Programme: Migration, Movements and Justice*

*Mexico City, Mexico  
September 12-21, 2007*

## Statement

**W**e, the participants of the WSCF Inter-Regional Programme "Migration, Movements and Justice" recognise that migration is an age-old global phenomenon. We recognise that migration is a complex issue and that the reasons motivating migration vary in different contexts. We note that migration has various forms, some positive and some negative.

### We believe

- Ø That every person is created in the image of God and that every person deserves to be treated with dignity and respect no matter their immigration status
- Ø That each person has a right to move in safety and with their dignity respected
- Ø That the voice of migrants should be heard in all deliberations on migration
- Ø That migration can have a dehumanising effect on the most vulnerable people (Dehumanising conditions faced by migrants may include but are not limited to: refusals at borders, being treated as security threats, being used for political purposes, suffering human rights violations, being treated purely as resources or burdens, and being subject to the illegal markets of migration.)
- Ø That some states are encouraging the creation of xenophobic policies
- Ø That hospitality and care of the stranger are inherent in the Abrahamic traditions and that some of the central stories of these religions are stories of migration
- Ø That Christ teaches us to make ourselves vulnerable, to be open to the people around us and to God, and that a central part of this openness and vulnerability is demonstrated in welcoming those people who are 'strangers' to us, including migrants

### We recognise

- Ø That in looking at migration we have to critique the global economic system, international financial

institutions and unjust economic structures as the major causes and to look for just alternatives

- Ø That the consequences of migration are shared by the migrants and their families, and the sending and receiving countries
- Ø That migration takes place within the context of patriarchy and therefore women and unaccompanied children migrants are especially vulnerable to exploitation, sexual violence and abuse
- Ø That any assault against a migrant is a crime against humanity

### We denounce

- Ø The misuse and abuse of Christianity (or any other religious or national identity) to promote or support in any way xenophobia and systemic racism
- Ø The commodification of labour and people
- Ø Those who profit from the misery of migrants
- Ø Systems that kill the bodies, souls, hopes, skills and communities of millions of migrants.
- Ø The criminalisation of migration

### We affirm

- Ø The efforts of all those working for migration justice
- Ø The work of migrant groups who fight for their own rights, and we stand in solidarity with them

### We call for

- Ø Civil society and governments to do critical analysis of the concept of migration, development, and co-

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development

- Ø Countries in the south to increase and integrate south-south co-operation on migration, promoting solidarity between countries on the periphery of the global economic systems
- Ø Countries in the south and north to increase north-south co-operation on migration
- Ø Countries in the north and the wealthy to give up some privileges in order to stop exploitation of the poor including migrants
- Ø UN and related agencies to strengthen international action and solidarity for the protection of migrants, and especially of migrant women and unaccompanied children.
- Ø All peoples and countries to recognise the inalienable human rights of migrants

## Action plan

We propose the following actions on migration to the World Student Christian Federation globally and regionally and to the national Student Christian Movements.

We encourage National/ Local Movements to:

- Ø Study the issue of migration from economic, political, contextual, gender, Biblical, theological and ethical perspectives
- Ø Organise events to promote awareness of migration for people within the SCMS and in the larger community
- Ø Work in solidarity with communities of migrants on the local and national level and build relationships with communities of migrants
- Ø Take action on the causes of unjust migration, mobilising local branches to recognise and respond to migration in their local contexts
- Ø Build alliances with churches and other local groups that work for global justice and equality in order to effect change in migration injustice

We encourage WSCF Regions to:

- Ø Reflect on unjust migration in the particular context of the region
- Ø Select an aspect of migration which particularly affects the region and work extensively around that issue in order to build awareness, seek solidarity and promote action
- Ø Compile and share experiences of migrants and their realities in order to educate in the region
- Ø Empower students in pastoral involvement with migrants

- Ø Support local and national movements in their efforts to promote awareness, create programmes and organise action against the inhumane treatment of migrants
- Ø Initiate contextual Biblical and theological reflection on migration
- Ø Co-operate with ecumenical, church and other networks engaged in issues of migration

We encourage the global WSCF to:

- Ø Provide resources for theological and Biblical studies on migration for all levels of the Federation
- Ø Share information within WSCF about regional and national efforts on migration
- Ø Contribute the student perspective to broader ecumenical efforts on migration
- Ø Co-operate with ecumenical, church and other networks engaged in issues of migration
- Ø Strengthen the Federation's role with the United Nations and its agencies to raise awareness and take action on decisions that reinforce respect of the human rights of migrants
- Ø Open channels for the regions and the national movements to engage with the United Nations and its agencies
- Ø Advocate with and work alongside those striving for an international agreement on migration enshrining the rights of migrants.

We encourage all levels of the Federation to:

- Ø Grow in our critical understanding of development in relation to migration
- Ø Protest the discriminatory nature of migration policies
- Ø Advocate for the rights of migrants from an ethical perspective

## Migration Programme Participants

Torbjørn Askevold, Norway ø Monica Bazi, Lebanon ø Maria Cachacas Ramos, Bolivia ø Adèle Djomo Ngomedje, Cameroon ø Dan Gonzalez Ortega, Mexico ø Patrick Fennig, USA ø Luis Flores, Guatemala ø Andrew Karam, Egypt ø Sonja Kosunen, Finland ø Dohun Lee, Korea ø Marcelo Leites, Uruguay ø José Lopez Vasquez, Mexico ø Juan Luis Loza Leon, Mexico ø Cecilia Medina, Ecuador ø Gilbert Mulimbi, Democratic Republic of Congo ø Nina Nayoan, Indonesia ø Leni Valeriano, Philippines ø Michael Wallace, Aotearoa New Zealand ø Erica Young, Canada



# Choosing Hope. Taking Action.

## A brief reflection on the Religions for Peace Youth Summit in Singapore

By *Biyaya G. Quizon, WSCF Asia Pacific Vice Chairperson.*

Choosing Hope, Taking Action! was the theme of the three-day “Post Assembly Summit of Asian Religious Youth Leaders of the Religions for Peace” held from September 5-7, 2007 in Singapore. Taunted as the world’s largest coalition of religious communities accredited by the United Nations, Religions for Peace is a prestigious organization that works through its affiliated inter-religious councils in 70 countries in six continents. Representing the Student Christian Movements (SCMs) in this Youth Summit was a great privileged.

The Youth Summit was an off-shoot of the 2006 World Youth Assembly in Kyoto, Japan of the Religions for Peace, whose objective was to build a Global Network of Religious Youth to confront violence and advance shared community in harmonious and peaceful co-existence. The meeting in Singapore which was participated in by 18 countries coming from Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and other interfaith groups from within Asia Pacific region aimed to build continuous commitment in taking concrete actions to transform conflict, build peace and advance sustainable development.

The first evening of the Summit offered participants with many activities like production numbers, welcome speeches, and a well prepared Singaporean dinner. The opening program was an opportunity to meet new friends from many religious backgrounds. I will not forget the number of times

I introduced myself and shared my organization to build and initiate contacts with the participants.

In an effort to widen the youth’s global perspective in working for justice and peace, speakers from Iraq, Israel and the United Nations have been invited. Among the speakers was Ms. Ryce Chanchai, Policy Associate for Asia of the United Nations Millennium Campaign who was asked several questions after her presentation. Her session made a significant impact on the participants’ critical understanding of how the United Nations concretely implement its poverty alleviation programs and policies in accordance to the Asia Pacific countries needs.

The following days of the Youth Summit were allotted to sharing of Asian realities and efforts made by interfaith and religious youth groups to promote peace. Undeniably, most of the

participants’ respective organizations have contributed in the effort to promote peace. As I listen to the presentations, I reflected on how this network would really materialize its effort to achieve peace that is based on justice and how religious and interfaith youth groups would be in the forefront of the struggle to achieve the unity amidst diversity? As a worldwide organization, the SCMs and WSCF can participate in the Religions for Peace endeavors and encourage its membership to be one with the marginalized calling to end the hegemonic powers that brought worldwide impoverishment of majority, insecurity and un-peace.

A co-participant in the Youth Summit, Kaythi Min Din from SCM Myanmar was appointed a member of the Asian Youth Council of the Religions for Peace together with ten other members from different religious groups. With my participation in the Youth Summit, I hope that WSCFAP will continue to cultivate a deeper understanding and commitment to inter-faith initiative for peace-building among its member movement and WSCF’s networking and solidarity efforts with inter-faith groups for building just-peace will be strengthened.

# SOLIDARITY SPACE

## SOLIDARITY STATEMENT TO THE PROTEST MOVEMENT IN BURMA

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*World Student Christian Federation Asia Pacific  
(WSCF AP)*

**T**he World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) Asia Pacific, an ecumenical federation of 17 Student Christian Movements in the Asia Pacific expresses its solidarity and support to the Burmese people in their collective struggle to bring about meaningful change in their lives and their country.

The people of Burma is speaking to us today in a language that has long been muted by systematic repression and fear. The Burmese people have had enough! They have long endured suffering under the repressive Military regime and abject poverty brought about by unjust economic and social order. Triggered by the astronomical increase in fuel price early this month, the Burmese people finally said NO!

Today we are witnessing the power of the Burmese people to assert their right to determine their destiny and their future. Led by the Buddhist monks, they have openly challenged the repressive rule of the Burmese Military Government. The momentum of the street protests grow in number as people from all sectors bravely express their opinion and discontent to more than 40 years of Military dictatorship in this country.

As we gather here today, many have been killed, tortured, arrested and harassed by the military. We denounce Burma Military Government's violent response to suppress the legitimate right of the people to express their demand to seek redress and apology, genuine reconciliation and peace and to defend their lives and liberty. We urge the Military government to stop the crack-down of the people but instead listen the voices and heed to their demands.

We want to highlight the role of Multi-National Corporations and big business who have worked with the Military Government in exploiting the Burmese people and have taken advantage of the natural resources. They too should be made responsible for the poverty and suffering of the people in Burma.

We recognize the long struggle of the people who resisted and asserted their rights on different fronts. We remember the sacrifice of the numerous young men and women who have been killed in the 1988 uprising and

many others who continued the struggle. In their memory we offer the young people's commitment to carry-on the struggle for justice, peace and democracy.

We join the Burmese people who have courageously come forward by marching on the streets of Rangoon and in other parts of Burma to denounce the Military Government's total disregard of the people's right to freedom, democracy and self-determination.

We urge our member movements in all the countries in Asia Pacific and the global Federation to join local actions and campaigns to support the people's action and ensure a peaceful resolution to this crisis. We continue to pray for the people of Burma, the leaders of the protest actions, our friends and colleagues in the student movement and the Churches. May they be strengthened by our solidarity action and prayers as they struggle to seek peaceful change in their country.

***We salute the people's struggle for justice, freedom and democracy in Burma. Long live the people's struggle in Burma! Justice to the victims of the Burmese Military regime!***

# Solidarity Bridges Distance

## WSCF Middle East

Dear Necta and SCMerS in AP Region

It is with deep sorrow that we receive this troubling news about Burma.

Today I learned that Budist monks and civilians were killed when the police opened fire at the protest. Are there any SCMerS amongst the injured???

We express our condemnation for these violations for human rights and dignity. The monks that were killed should push us to strengthen our cooperation with all our brothers and sisters in humanity who share our christian values especially if they are not christians. We will keep you in our thoughts and prayers and we will circulate this Email to all ME SCMerS.

Please keep us informed.  
May the Lord protect you all

Yours in Christ  
Elias El Halabi (WSCF Middle East Region)

## East Timor

In solidarity and struggle for the peace and life in Burma .  
peace and prayer,

Nina Nayoan  
East Timor

## Sweden

We have followed the situation in

Burma through Newspapers, Internet and TV.

The whole world is watching the unjust situation for the people in your country.

As a Christian movement in one body of Christ your suffering are also our suffering, your struggle for freedom and justice is also our struggle.

You are in our prayers and thoughts. We hope and pray for a world that won't tolerate dictatorship and oppression. Your past has been turbulent and violent, but the non-violent and peaceful actions by the Buddhist monks have been an eye-opener for the rest of the world. We wish, hope and pray for a better and democratic Burma.

Mattias Kareliusson  
Chairperson  
Student Christian Movement in Sweden (KRISS)

## WSCF Europe

Dearest friends in the AP Region,

We have been following the news from Burma and we would like to express our solidarity with the Asia-Pacific Region, and with the people of Burma who have had the courage to stand in protest. Our thoughts and prayers are with you during this time of struggle.

In Solidarity,  
WSCF Europe Region



*In the spirit of the SCM Solidarity Song, written and composed by SCM Burma in the 80's:*

*The Song We Sing Not For Ourselves  
For Those who are Oppressed and Chained  
Build Up a New Society  
Lets Share and Feel With Them*

*The way we work not for ourselves  
For those who are oppressed and poor,  
Suffer with them and let is know  
That Our Struggle Will Win!*

*The life we owe not for ourselves,  
Women and men work hand in hand,  
The unity will triumph,  
We share the vision and hope.*

*Come SCM's Unite be one,  
Pull out injustice from this world,  
Live with people, build together,  
One day we'll reach a new just world.*

World Student Christian Federation Asia Pacific (WSCFAP)  
September 28,2007  
Chater Garden, Hong Kong  
(At the candlelight vigil in support of the Burmese Struggle)

Email Exchanges

# SCM Pakistan Vice-Prexy arrested



SCM Pakistan is involved in the nationwide protests calling for Musharraf's withdrawal from power.

## SCM MOVEMENT New Zealand organizes year-end get together

Dear Friends,

At first I thank all of you for your prayers and solidarity for peace in Pakistan. I am e-mailing to inform you that Mr. Amir Naveed Jeeva, Vice Chairman of SCM Pakistan was arrested for last three days during the protest against the emergency even at present he is vulnerable for further arrests. I would like to request all of you to continue praying for SCM Pakistan and are able leadership of our chairman Mr. Sohail Akhtar who is also involved in different protests.

With kind regards,  
Yours sincerely

Suleman Abdiah  
General Secretary  
SCM Pakistan

Dear Necta,

Mr. Amir Naveed is a Former Member of Provincial Assembly (Miniroties, Punjab) from the Pakistan Poeples Party seat (Benezir

Bhutto's party). He is also a Coordinator of All Pakistan Miniorties Alliance (South Punjab) and Vice Chairperson of SCM Pakistan. Benezir Bhutto announced a long march rally against the emergency scheduled on November 13, 2007 in LAHORE. Amir was also leading one of the groups in long march on November 13 and was protesting the emergency.

Suddenly the Punjab Police started beating the protesters in which Amir was severely injured and was than arrested, the police registered First Information Report (FIR) against him and shifted him to Kot Lakpat Jail, Lahore. He was released from Jail on November 16, 2007, he was in jail for three days from 13 November to 16 November. he is free now and is still actively involve in protests. I once like to thank you for your prayers and solidarity towards Pakistan.

with regards,  
Suleman

SCM Aoteroa/New Zealand organized an SCM Canterbury End of year breakup BBQ on 25th Nov. from 6pm - 9pm at the residence of Jean Kite, the SCM Canterbury co-convenor. Seven (7) people – a mix of SCMLers and interested friends came for the gathering. The BBQ get-together was organized to have a final get together for the year and begin discussing poster and banner designs to make SCM more visible in 2008.

Highlight of the activity was a good discussion about who we are and what we believe are the values of SCMA. A list of words that represent the Canterbury group such as spirituality, peace, justice, and transformation was drawn up and will be considered over the holiday period. We also examined the posters and slogans from other movements and found some inspiration. We're looking forward to next year.

Ed Franks - National Secretary for SCMA



# REGIONAL/GLOBAL NEWS

*“Your sons and daughters shall prophesy...”*

## WSCF 34<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in Quebec

North America Region Serves as Hosts

The 34<sup>th</sup> WSCF General Assembly will take place from August 1 to 10, 2008 at Collège Jean de Brébeuf, Montréal, Québec, Canada. With the theme, “*Your sons and daughters shall prophesy* (from the Book of the Prophet Joel), the GA will gather together 150 delegates from its member movements, officers and staff from over 100 countries worldwide.

The GA aims to accomplish the following objectives: a) to call forth a new generation of ecumenical leaders, b) to gather students from around the world to share stories of God’s work in their lives and their work in God’s world, c) to re-envision the mission of the WSCF and its 105 national movements for the quadrennium to come, and d) to review and assess the situation of the member movements, the regions and the worldwide situation of the Federation.

The GA will be a space for bible study and theological formation, women’s and men’s pre-assemblies, liturgy, music and prayer. The GA will also be a time to select the leaders of the Federation and identify its mission and thrust in the next quadrennium.

Next year’s assembly highlights a new approach in invigorating the life of the GA with the formation of commission that will discuss the following thematic areas: Raising prophets: Ecumenical Leadership Formation Commission, Prophecy in action; Advocacy and Solidarity Commission, Radical renewal; Biblical and Theological Commission, Making the vision real: Capacity Building Commission.

WSCF Member movements are requested to send the names of their

official delegates on December 10, 2007 in anticipation of the time needed to apply for visa. Movements are also requested and encouraged to raise funds to support their delegates and make contribution to the GA funds.

For more information and details of the WSCF General Assembly, please contact the WSCF Inter-regional office, Michael Wallace, [wscf@wscf.ch](mailto:wscf@wscf.ch).

### CALLING ALL SENIOR FRIENDS of the World Student Christian Federation

The WSCF is inviting its Senior Friends to a Senior Friends Gathering to be held in Montreal, Canada from 4 to 8 August 2008. This Gathering will be held alongside the WSCF General Assembly and coincides with the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the historic WSCF World Student Conference which met in Turku in 1968.

Would you like to receive further information about this event? Would you like to help in its planning? Do you know of others who might like to receive information? Would you like to be on our list to receive further news of WSCF and our Senior Friends?

If your answer is “Yes!” to any of these questions, please contact me. I look forward to hearing from you and, I hope, to meeting you in Montreal.

Michael Wallace  
General Secretary  
World Student Christian Federation  
Inter-Regional Office  
Ecumenical Centre, 5 route des Morillons,  
P.O. Box 2100, CH 1211, Geneva 2, Switzerland  
Tel: +41 22 791 63 58/ 60 41 / 62 21  
Fax: + 41 22 791 6152  
Email: [wscf@wscf.ch](mailto:wscf@wscf.ch)  
[www.wscfglobal.org](http://www.wscfglobal.org)

### School for Ecumenical Leadership Formation (SELF) 2007 Program tackles Wider Ecumenism and Interfaith Dialogue



The 4<sup>th</sup> School for Ecumenical Leadership Formation (SELF) program was held from September 2 to 22, 2007 at the Ecumenical Institute for Spirituality and Development (EISD) in Colombo, Sri Lanka. With the theme “Young People Working Towards Wider Ecumenism in a Pluralistic Society”, the three-weeks intensive training was participated by young people coming from the member movements of WSCF Asia Pacific (WSCF AP) and youth groups of the member churches and national councils of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA).

The SELF Program were participated in by thirty-six (32) young people from 17 countries in Asia Pacific. The participants were: Mr. Saw Kuku, Myanmar; Mr. Sukanuma Shinichiro, Japan; Mr. Jahartap Yustin Pasaribu and Ms. Ikhana Indah Barnasaputri, Indonesia; Mr. Antonio Bernardo Schunemann da Silva and Mr. Admin Vasconcelos, Timor Leste; Mr. Park Byung Chul and Mr. Nam Ki Pyung, Korea; Ms. Lau Kim Ling, Hong Kong; Mr. Ham Kim Houn and Mr. Mey Navy, Cambodia; Mr. Milton Mondal and Ms. Elora Antonia, Bangladesh; Mr. Mohsin Zia and Ms. Arfa Andleeb Qaiser, Pakistan; Ms. Abigail Peter, Malaysia; Ms. Rachel Halina Soja, New Zealand; Ms. Tanya Rose Richards, Australia; Ms. Dianne Asuelo and Ms. Karla Joy Everette G. Mercado, Philippines; Ms. Lin, Chia-Hsun and Ms. Lin, Huie-Yen, Taiwan; Mr. Boonyarid Promsuttipong, Thailand; Ms. Abenla Ozukum, Mr. J. Abraham and Mr. Arun Raju, India; Mr. Timothy Pathung Kumara

Thunghe, Mr. Krishan Ignatius, Mr. Newton Yesuwadian, Ms. Sathiasobana Sathianathan, Sri Lanka. The participants were also joined by members of the Local Host Team and WSCF Staff Team.

SELF was divided in 5 modules: module 1: Building an Ecumenical Community; module 2: Ecumenism and the Ecumenical Movement; module 3: Defining the Signs of the Times; module 4: Reading the Signs of the Times; module 5: Strategies and Skills in Communicating Ecumenical Vision to the Youth and Students. Each module lasted for 3 to 4 days with specific topics and facilitators and resource persons expounding on each topic.

The first module was led by the members of the Steering Committee, which included personal introductions and expectations by the participants, gender sensitivity workshop, men and women caucuses and personal history as social history. The second module was led by Dr. M.P. Joseph, from the Tainan Theological Seminary on the history, principles and challenges of the Ecumenical Movement. The third module was led by Ms. Carmencita Caragdag, Peace for Life on the topic of Geo-political situation of Asia Pacific in Era of the Empire, Rev. Bishop Duleep Chikera, bishop of the Anglican Church of Colombo on the topic Conflict and Prospect for Peace in the Sri Lankan Context, and Inter-faith Dialogue led by Rev. Dr. Lawrence, vice-chancellor of the Theology College of Lanka and Dr. Marshal Fernando, Director of EISD. The fourth module was led by Ms. Yong Ting Jin, Coordinator of Asian Women's Resource Center (AWRC), on the topic of Feminism and the Feminist Movement, and Mr. Chan Beng Seng, director of Documentation for Action Groups in Asia (DAGA) on the topic Neo-liberal Globalization and Economic Justice. The final module was led again

*Self, go to p. 30*



## SCM AP General Secretaries and Coordinators prepare for WSCF GA 2008

**S**eventeen SCM leaders from Asia Pacific met from Nov 1 to 5, 2007 at the Student Christian Center (SCC) in Bangkok to discuss important issues facing the national movements. Those who attended were: Annabel Dulhunty, Australia SCM; Ed Franks, Aotearoa/New Zealand SCM; Prince Suman Muzamdar, Bangladesh SCM; Dith Sareth, Cambodia SCM; Lau Kim Ling, SCM Hong Kong; Samuel Jayakumar, SCM India; Jahartap Yustin Pasaribu, GMKI; Doim Bang-joo, KSCF; Kaythi Min Din and Khin Mu Mu Han, Myanmar SCM; Dion Cerrafon, SCM Philippines; Suleman Abdiah, SCM Pakistan; Immanuel Gopala Kitnan, SCM Sri Lanka; Rev. Tan Ho Tek, SCM Taiwan; Pitiphan Areeyat, Thailand SCM; Antonio Da Silva, SCM Timor Leste; Roger Gai kwad, WSCF AP; Michael Edge Perkins, Exco Member WSCF AP; Necta Montes Rocas, Regional Secretary, WSCF AP; Sunita Suna, Regional Women's Coordinator, WSCF AP; Rev. Paddy Noble, Human Rights Coordinator, WSCF AP.

The agenda of the meeting included assessment sharing of the 17 national movements, focusing on the 2-year work in the area of movement building, building theological and critical thinking of students, action and participation, relationship with churches and senior friends as well as challenges in organization work, staff concerns and external challenges.

The WSCF regional team composed of Necta, WSCF Regional Secretary, Sunita, Regional Women's Coordinator and Paddy, Human Rights Coordinator also shared reflection on the recent activities of the regional office and their assessment of these activities. In Necta's sharing she enumerated the following as the challenges facing the national movements: declining student membership, ecumenical leadership, relationship with the churches, Christian identity and theological formation, limited resources and financial sustainability of the SCMs, relevance and direction of the SCMs.

Roger Gai kwad, WSCF AP chairperson led a bible study on the theme of migration and reflection session on SCM faith and theology. Janejinda Pawadee, senior friend of Thailand SCM reflected on the issue of Migration in the Thai-Burma border, while WSCF vice-chairperson Udan Fernando, led a session on staff development training on strategic planning.

The meeting also discussed preparation for the WSCF General Assembly, which is scheduled to be held on August 1 to 10, 2008 in Montreal Canada. In this meeting, the participants raised concern about the difficulty of acquiring visa to attend the GA and recommended actions to address this issue. They recommend for the GA preparatory committee to provide step-by-step information for visa application for participants as early as possible. The Standing Committee was also tasked to follow-through the recommendations and ensure immediate response to difficulties arising due to visa problems. The meeting also agreed to hold the WSCF AP Regional Committee meeting a week before the GA to save on airfare cost in any of the following countries: Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Philippines.

In addition to the GA, the meeting also tackled the Ecumenical Assistance Program (EAP), a funding mechanism set-up to support the work of the national movements. Given the critical impact of possible withdrawal of EAP funding, the meeting discussed alternative funding source for the national movements, which include, movement to movement sharing, senior friends appeal and regional strategizing.



*ACTIVE PARTICIPATION. SCMers joined young women from Cambodia and both played active role in the Regional Women's Programme in the Context of Globalization, Migration and HIV/AIDS held there last October. Not only women were involved but young men as well.*

**Cambodia**  
**October 24-27, 2007**

# Regional Women's Programme- SCM Joint Women's Programme

**T**he RWP – SCM JWP was held from October 24-27, 2007 at the Cambodia Student Christian Mission (CSCM) in Phnom Penh, Cambodia on the theme, “**Women in Cambodia in the Context of Globalization, Migration and HIV/AIDS : Challenges and Hopes.**” 24 participants both female and male students, senior friends from CSCM, Kampuchea Christian Council (KCC), Initiative for Change Association (ICA), Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), participated.

The intent of the programme were: to create awareness among the students of the impact of Globalisation, Migration and HIV/AIDS from women's perspectives and critically analyze the emerging forces; expose them to the realities of the suffering masses in Cambodia - Biblical reflection from the perspectives of women; develop network with the likeminded women's groups – form a women's group to strengthen women's leadership in CSCM and in Cambodian society.

The topics and resource persons of the programme were: Women and Globalization: A Critical Analysis of Socio-Political, Cultural and Economic situation in the context of Cambodia which was dealt by Mark Channsinhtha from the Asia Pacific Action in Cambodia;

Gender based violence and HIV/AIDS by Pauv Ponnary from the Kampuchea Christian Council (KCC); Female Labor Migration in Cambodia by Prok Vanny of UNIFEM Cambodia; Gender Sensitivity workshop by Sunita Suna, Regional Women's coordinator of WSCF-AP; and Bible Study by Kim Houn, Coordinator Students' Fellowship, Cambodia.

The resource persons helped the participants to understand the Cambodian society by bringing a critique of the emerging forces, especially globalisation, migration, trafficking, and the growing concern on HIV/AIDS. Collectively they said that Cambodia is an example of the negative impact of globalization/unjust economic systems - and the Cambodian women are the prime victims of these emerging forces.

Apart from the input the participants went for an exposure to PTEA TEUK DONG (Street Families Centre) in Battambang province, Cambodia. This centre is a place for homeless families and the young women who have experienced physical sexual violence at home, school and in the community. The director of the centre *Prak Sokhany* spoke to the group and explained the issue and challenges. The group also visited the place and had interaction with the victims.

At the end of the programme, a small group comprising of 5 women was formed to do the follow activities and strengthen the women leadership in CSCM in collaboration with other like-minded women's group in Cambodia.



# Women Doing Theology

Seoul, South Korea

November 13-19, 2007

The Women Doing Theology Workshop was held from November 13-19, 2007 in Seoul, South Korea on the theme “Women & Sexuality: Transcending Boundaries & Embracing Inclusiveness.” 17 young women from Asia and the Pacific participated in the said workshop, representing the national movements of Australia, Bangladesh, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Korea, Myanmar, Pakistan, Timor Leste and Thailand. Also there were representatives from SCA, Ecumenical Youth Council of Korea and Hanshin University of Korea. The workshop was hosted by the Korean Student Christian Federation.

The intent of the workshop were: to create a platform for the young women of SCM to share and critically reflect on their experiences of sexuality as women; to break the culture of silence and taboos on sexuality, particularly female sexuality at home, society and religious institutions/church; to re-read some biblical texts on the issue of sexuality from a feminist theological perspective.

The sharing of Her Story was motivating as it helped the group share their own experiences and answer questions like “How I feel as a woman? How do I experience my own body, my own sexuality?” This process helped them to name the taboo of sexuality from their own context. Ting Jin’s exercise on breaking



the taboo of sexuality, helped them to understand why and how our bodies and sexuality belong to someone else – the family, husband, the church, male pastors, the Bible, the institutions.

The group exercise on Church, religion, scriptures and sexuality, led them to critically analyse “What does the church/temple, religion/Christianity, Bible/scriptures say to women about sexuality? What are our positive and negative experiences?” Ting Jin explained the relationship between “my sexuality” and “myself” based on the stories. She said, “I’m not totally liberated if you’re not – we need to get liberated together!”

HyeRan Kim-Cragg’s paper on women’s sexuality covered a range of

female sexuality. This also covered the Judeo-Christian and Biblical understandings of sexuality, the place of sexual minorities in Asian cultures and other faith traditions. At the end of her session the group could appreciate our bodies and our sexuality.

Re-reading the Bible text: Judges 19, was a shocking and eye opening experience for the group. What Ting Jin explained was a critical feminist reading of the Bible which goes beyond a woman’s perspective on the text as it was an act of terror and violence on women that the power clash is between men where by the woman becomes a victim.

The group went for an ‘exposure’ in two different places to find out how

women’s body/sexuality is abused and violated as an object of pleasure.

I. Durebang - “My Sister’s Place”, women living in camp towns [which surround the US military camp in Seoul] – where women are forced into prostitution and trafficking of foreign women for sex industry is prevalent.

II. House of Sharing (Comfort Women) - The Korean women were used as sex slaves by the Japanese (Comfort Women) during and after World War II.

Michael Wallace also led us in a Bible study on partnership between women and men, by discussing on the texts from the model of women and men in partnership (Genesis 16:1-6, Matthew

*Women, go to p. 31*

# Central Women's Workshop '07

The Women-sub committee of Bangladesh SCM organized a women workshop from October 15-18, 2007 at Caritas auditorium, Barisal, Bangladesh. The theme of the workshop was **"Leadership and Gender issues"**. Rev. Sudatta Baidya, Ms. Hasina Begum Nila, project coordinator, SDS Barisal and Mr. Alison Subrata Baroi, Chairperson of Bangladesh SCM were the resource persons respectively from Church, NGO and Bangladesh SCM part.

Daisy Roy and Monika Biswas, former and present women coordinators of Bangladesh SCM, respectively, assisted with the discussion. Rev. Sudatta Baidya focused on women issues from the Bible in the Bible study sessions and morning devotions. The objective of the program was to encourage and equip women of BSCM to develop understanding of women rights situation in the society, identify problems and solve them, understanding gender issue and partnership, practicing in their life and teaching others.

The 35 members from 7 units of Bangladesh SCM participated and discussed women's rights, women's position and situation in family, religion, society and politics, gender equity and genuine partnership and women in a patriarchal society. They also participated in issue-based discussions. They were spontaneous in the sessions and group discussions. On the last day, participants came up with the following issues to be worked out at unit level SCM to enhance Gender equity and women rights.

- > Women should take initiative to solve problems in family and society.
- > They practice and teach genuine partnership.
- > They participate equally with the men in organizational activities.
- > They organize programs on women issues.
- > Value opinions of women.

The participants committed themselves to contribute towards the development of women's situations in their organizational and personal lives.

*Self, from p. 26*

by Ms Yong Ting Jin, Learning Theologies and Biblico-Theological Skills and Servant Leadership and Movement Building was presented Mr. Lesley Capus, the youth secretary of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines.

The exposure programs were organized in 3 different provinces in Sri Lanka. Each province provided a unique opportunity for the participants to learn about the people's situation and the issues they are confronted with. These issues were: (a) Internally Displaced Peoples (IDPs), in Puttalam; (b) Tea Plantation

Workers, in Kandy; (c) People affected by the Tsunami in Dehiwala.

Rev. Dr. Roger Gaikwad, WSCF Chairperson led three biblical reflection on the topics of Ecumenism and the Ecumenical Movement, Nature and Worship from the book Genesis 1, and Charity and changing the structural oppression from Luke. Rev. Muthiah Selvaraj, Methodist pastor and lecturer in Sri Lanka, led 2 bible studies on the topic of Healing and Reconciliation (John 5: 1-9). Mounita Biswas, CCA Staff led one Bible Study on Re-reading the Bible through Women's Eyes from the book of John 4:4-28.



## SCM India holds Gender and Media Justice Confab

SCM India organised a National Workshop on "Gender and Media Justice" at the SCMI Programme Centre on October 19-21, 2007. Forty students and senior friends attended from all over the country.

The workshop began with an inaugural worship and a keynote address from one of the most prominent persons in media, Ms. Ammu Joseph. Rev. Dr. Sham P. Thomas, Ms. J. Lalvarliani, Dr. Sakuntala Narasimhan, Fr. S. Jayanathan and Dr. Hrang Thanchhungi were some of the speakers.

The workshop's aim is to impart media education to students and enable them to critically watch over media, from gender perspective.

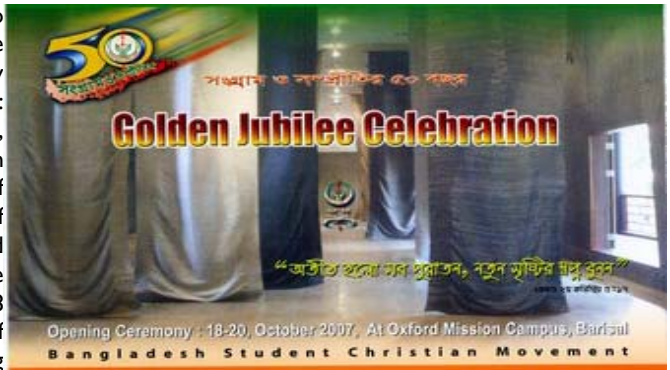
We emphasised mainly on print and electronic media. At the end of the workshop, we formed a Media Watch Group, where the participants joined as members. We were divided into three groups to focus on three different aspects of Media: Newspaper, Journals and Movies. We decided to collect clippings on the advertisement and editorial sections of newspapers and journals of our own region/state, and movies.

We shall give critical reflection and respond to them in order to create a just media, especially from women's perspective.

# NATIONAL MOVEMENT NEWS

## Golden Jubilee Celebration of Bangladesh SCM

Bangladesh SCM has planned series of activities to celebrate this auspicious occasion, which will be carried out from 18 October 2007 to 08 February 2008 (Four months) at 9 different region of Bangladesh: Barisal, Dhaka, Jessore, Faridpur, Pabna, Kushtia, Khulna, Savar and Meherpur. The first and opening program arranged at Barisal as Barisal is the birth place of Bangladesh SCM. Immediately after the program of Barisal, another 8 events at local level will be held between December 2007 and January 2008. The closing program will be taken place at Dhaka on 08 February 2008 (tentative). The central committee of Bangladesh SCM will organize opening and closing program at Barisal and Dhaka respectively as the national program and the others program will be organized by local units with the support of Bangladesh SCM. A strong convening committee has been formed to celebrate the program through series of activities.



of the occasion.

### GOLDEN JUBILEE!

Since 1957 **Bangladesh SCM** has started its works and celebrating 50 years of its experiences this year. During its fifty years of journey Bangladesh SCM has served an approximate number of 50,000 college and university students of the Christian community across the country. A good number of exSCMer now are professionally established and representing themselves in the top level position of different renowned national and international NGOs, Government institution, Church institution and other private organization. It has an effective network with the Christian leaders, who are actually nurturing our Christian community for spiritual and social development at local and national level. This organization has been maintaining sound relationship with other faith people and renowned personalities in social, cultural and education sectors. At present, it serves directly and indirectly about 1000 students through nine local units around the country: Barisal, Dhaka, Faridpur, Jessore, Khulna, Kushtia, Meherpur, Pabna and Savar. Our movement mainly covers the program in the field of Ecumenical Community; Personal Spirituality and Bible study; Prayer and Worship; Interfaith dialogue; Social and Political Analysis and Action; Gender; Justice and Peace.

There was a Fair Booth at the premise of program, where nine local units participated in the event and display their materials accordingly.

### Program participants of the opening program:

Near about 300 hundred participants were actively participate in the event from nine local units. Participants were different categories such as students, senior friends, exSCMer, Advisor, Patron and well-wisher of Bangladesh SCM. Moreover, other invited guest from relevant student, religious, social and cultural organizations was also participated in the event.

### Guest and Resource Person:

**Ms. Labonya Prova Halder**, founder of Bangladesh SCM inaugurated this glorious event. Prof. Dr. Siraj Uddin Ahamed, Principal of Govt. B. M. College, Barisal was the Chief Guest in the inaugural session where representative from local administration, heads from church institutions, NGOs, social, cultural and educational organizations were the special guest



Women, from p. 29

Finally the WDT was concluded with the affirmation that we had looked at our stories, the construction of our sexuality from people and forces outside our bodies and how they want to control our sexuality. Therefore we need to deconstruct by breaking taboos then reconstruct our sexuality.

Some excerpts from the reflection of the participants:

*"This workshop has helped me to construct my sexuality"*.

*"I want to love myself as a woman."*

*"I love my personality, no matter how it is in people's eyes."*

*"I feel free by sharing my/our taboos...I realised a lot of things while sharing our experiences as woman."*

*"I am perfect the way I am, and no one else has the right to tell me what I should look like."*

*"I Love my body and embrace my sexuality the way it is."*

28:10-10, 1 Samuel 1:1-8, Acts 18:1-26, especially vv 24-26)

# WSCF 2008 PROGRAMS & MEETINGS

## JANUARY

4-8: Philippine Human Rights Working Group (PWG) Meeting (Hong Kong)  
7-9: EASYNET Coordinating Team Meeting (Manila, Philippines)

## FEBRUARY

22-25: WSCF AP Human Rights Committee Meeting (Bangkok, Thailand)  
13-20 : WSCF Global Staff Meeting (Geneva, Switzerland)

## MARCH

CCA WSCF Joint Program (CWP) Committee Meeting (Chiangmai, Thailand)  
6-8: WSCF – SCM Pakistan Joint Women's Program (Lahore, Pakistan)

## MAY

7-13: WSCF Global Program on Students and Higher Education (Finland)  
WSCF Sub-regional Women's Program

## JUNE

WSCF AP Regional Human Rights Program  
Student Conference on Internally Displaced, Migration and Trafficking (Thailand)  
Human Rights Internship Program on Trafficking, Migration in 2008  
Regional Women's Internship Programme (Bangkok, Thailand)  
International Migrants Alliance Congress (Hong Kong)

## JULY

23-25: WSCF RCM Pre-women's Meeting  
26-29: WSCF Regional Committee Meeting

31 JULY-10 AUGUST  
**WSCF GENERAL ASSEMBLY**  
MONTREAL, CANADA

## AUGUST

WSCF Women's Sub-regional Program

## SEPTEMBER

3-9: Asian Student and Youth Gathering (ASYG), Seoul, Korea  
Student Empowerment for Transformation (SET) Program

## OCTOBER

Asian Student Youth Week Celebration  
WSCF Sub-regional Women's Program