11th Asia Pacific Youth Conference

Siem Reap - Angkor

Kingdom of Cambodia

MRA - Initiatives of Change & Khmer Youth Association (KYA)

A Better World Through You and Me

The time for action is now.

If not now, when?

If not me, who?
“We are glad that you chose this place to hold the conference so that you can find peace for oneself, society and around the global world. If we find peace with people around the world we will have friendship.” Venerable Wat Rajabo Monk, during opening ceremony

The 11th Asia Pacific Youth Conference brought together 230 young people from 28 countries in a Buddhist pagoda community, Wat Rajabo, in Siem Reap, Cambodia. Held between 22nd and 31st July 2004, the conference explored how action can be taken how to create a better world, not through government organisations or the United Nations, but through the contribution of every person - you and me. There were 85 Cambodian participants, and large delegations also from Indonesia, Vietnam, Taiwan and South Korea.

Conceived, planned and facilitated by young people, the programme ranged from small “family group” sharing to plenaries on major issues of today’s world, from active workshop sessions to quiet periods of reflection. It included many cultural learning experiences, the highlight being a day’s visit to the famed temples of Angkor Wat.

This was the first APYC to be held in Cambodia, and emerged from the conviction of young Cambodians who attended the 10th APYC, in Malaysia in 2002. Special thanks must be given to the organisers - MRA-Initiatives of Change, Action for Life and the Khmer Youth Association - for the many months they dedicated to the preparation of this conference. Through their time and vision APYC 2004 has provided an invaluable springboard for many exciting plans to be shared and built upon, both within and between individuals and nations.

“I never knew about the hate that Cambodian people have for Vietnamese” Vietnamese
“I love the Vietnamese very much” Cambodian
“I want to express my apology to the Vietnamese for the past” Cambodian

“You’ve no idea where the decisions you make here – to break through prejudice, to seek forgiveness and healing - will lead in the next 20 years.” Mike Brown, Australia
A better world through you and me

Mr. Keat Sokun, Advisor to the Cambodian Center for Human Rights

I am one who lived under French oppression. I was a victim of the Khmer Rouge, a victim of the communist regime. It was very hard being a citizen of Cambodia at that time. How could I forgive and change my attitude towards them? Now I take this opportunity to say sorry to France, and also to Vietnam for hating them.

Being a Cambodian or Asian husband means it is hard to admit mistakes and say sorry to your wife. Something small happens and we don’t talk for a whole week. It brings stress into the home. Being a father means it is very hard to say sorry to the children. Now I can do it.

I have realized that everyone is the same, everyone is the strength of the world. Whether they are men, women, or children, they are all agents for change. That’s why we have to admit mistakes and apologize to our children.

The world belongs to you and it will get better if you change, if you commit yourself and have confidence. Listen to your inner voice and act with your conscience. You will have good results and you will realize that you will be free.

Yong Kim Eng, President of Khmer Youth Association, Cambodia

I believe that a few people, personally committed, can change the world; and that young people, with energy, can play an important part to committed, can change the world; and that young people, with energy, can play an important part to

H.E.Pich Sokhen, Deputy Governor, Siem Reap

Development and healing are needed in Cambodia. We hope you will continue to work with young Cambodians to strengthen that process. And then from here in Siem Reap, you will start a movement for peace; for compassion and help for those who suffer; for transparency and good governance; for economic and human development for all people.

What is the message you will take from this conference out to the world and to your own countries?

Venerable Mother Park Chung-Soo, Head of Won Buddhism, South Korea

In silence we get wisdom. In silence we learn to think of others, not just ourselves. If we think of doing wrong, we are wasting our time. Through this type of conference we learn to take this to others. Through people in MRA-Initiatives of Change, I have helped with de-mining in Cambodia, and sending clothes from Korea to Cambodian orphans.

If you do not commit to help others through this conference, you are wasting your time. If you commit to care for others, and not just yourselves, you are ready to help change the world.

Leena Khatri, International Council, Initiatives of Change

30 years ago this region was in great pain. H.E. Son Soubert then expressed his vision in a poem, which symbolized the ‘Apsara’ with the hope that one day she would smile again. When I heard the young speakers from Asia and this region I felt that perhaps the Apsara was beginning to smile. These youth have decided to become responsible world citizens through their actions. To do this they do not have to have positions or power. They have shown that putting things right in our lives prepares us to tackle problems around us.

Here is a potential Asian-Pacific team that will make a difference. Let Asia answer her poverty, but not lose her riches - both spiritual and cultural. The practice of being content with little and having compassion for those who have less is what we need to develop for the world.

Pinky Hidayati, Indonesia

I was raised in Javanese culture where you are expected to always give your best. At work, I would do all my coordinator asked and keep negative feelings inside. Recently introduced to the idea of quiet times of reflection and writing, the thought came to take courage to talk to my coordinator. The next day she asked me to do something that was not part of my job. Normally I’d just say ‘yes’, but this time I said, ‘Sorry. It’s not part of my job’. She was surprised. Then she said, ‘What gave you the courage to say no?’ We talked and she said sorry.

Quiet times help melt the barrier in my heart. People have the potential to solve problems, but with blocks of negative feelings, they don’t know what to do. Quiet times help free your emotions.

connection correction direction

Tran Dang Khoi, Vietnam

APYC symbolized the power of humanity. I have learned the right way to reflect within my soul.

Cho Min-Jyoung, Korea

I have a bad habit which is to judge other people easily. But when I looked around at other people, they really embraced each other and accepted each other’s vulnerabilities. I have also discovered myself more. I was always thinking of my own world, but many people in this conference were thinking of their neighbours and their countries and seeking peace. Now I am beginning to open my eyes and heart to others.

Chris James, Australia

“If an idea is right, nothing can stop it”. What an incredible week of inspiration and spiritual growth! APYC allows every religion to have an equal voice and to learn about one another through friendships and past experiences. I have always been a person who has claimed to be a Christian without living what I spoke of. Contact and relationships with people from other religions and cultures have made me understand how important living your faith is. I have become much more dedicated to the spiritual relationship with people around me, and God, thanks to MRA-Initiatives of Change.

Pheng Sokunthea, Cambodia

Cambodians are usually shy about talking and sharing, especially with foreigners. But at this APYC, we had an opportunity to talk freely and express all we wanted to. We also learnt how to listen to the inner voice and how people can build a better world together, particularly starting from ourselves.

Achmad Hairul Umam, Indonesia

My family is extreme and they find it hard to accept things from other people and places. But step by step my heart is opening and I can accept people from different religions and countries.
Identity: a source of strength or conflict?

H.E. Son Soubert, Member of the Constitutional Council of Cambodia

I feel very humble because we Cambodians are lucky we don’t have racial conflicts. Yet we are quarrelling and fighting. We identify ourselves as Khmer, as a kingdom, with our monuments etc. But we still try to find our enemies everywhere. We identify ourselves by our enemies - Thailand, Vietnam, China. We have enemies in the religious groups also. We think Islam is a threat to Buddhism even though 90 per cent of us are Buddhist. We fear Christianity for its conversions and that some churches are using the poverty of our people to convert them. Refugees who fled communism, on return, are still discriminated against even after 10 years.

So where is our identity as Khmer and Cambodians? Are we going to go on finding our identity through opposing other peoples? Our government blames the Thais for their films, TV, etc. But this is freedom of expression; we can’t ban them. Why can’t we improve our own TV programmes?

Our people are pawns in the struggle for influence between Thailand and Vietnam. With modern technology there is also western influence. Our youth have to find their own identity.

Mohammed Bachrul Ilmi, Indonesia

I studied in an Islamic boys’ school for six years. I was taught to hate the Chinese. In Indonesia most Chinese are Christian and therefore different from us. Last year a friend from Hong Kong told me he had a prejudice against Muslim Indonesians. I remained quiet thinking of the many Chinese who were raped in my country during the riots. But I still carried hatred in my heart.

In a quiet time I thought to link up with the Chinese Confucianist Community. They told me that they also harboured mistrust of Muslim Indonesians. I began to understand the problem.

I met Nandor Lim from Malaysia and he asked about the Chinese in Indonesia. Then I realised the Chinese hated me because they too were trained by their parents to hate Muslims. Daily Nandor and I have shared; and I now do not hate the Chinese.

Nandor Lim, Malaysia

As a teenager, if you asked me, "Are you Chinese or a Malaysian?" I’d say I was a Chinese and a Hakka. My ancestors came to South East Asia from mainland China generations ago. They worked to keep their culture alive in a country fighting for independence. They improved their standard of life, but the memory of suffering still remains.

When I was a boy, my grandparents warned me, “Don’t have contact with the Malays or Muslims. Don’t work with Indians. You don’t know when they will betray you.”

In 1969, the first riots broke out between Malays and Chinese in Malaysia. I was born five years later, part of a generation who should have had no racial discrimination, but I was educated to be hostile to the other races. When I was 15, my parents separated. So, I was betrayed not by Malays, Muslims or Indians, but by my closest ones. Anger, hopelessness and self-pity became a part of me. I built a large wall to defend myself.

In 1994 I ran away from my family for six years. In 1999 I met a senior MRA full-timer, who challenged me to go home and stay with the family member whom I hated most.

Wardhana Dipa, Indonesia

I was born Chinese. My father taught me caution when dealing with Muslim Indonesians as they “were greedy and would betray” me. This prejudice grew stronger in me. It is strange as my best friends in school were non-Chinese. I spent a lot of time with them and trusted them. At times I felt so sorry to be born into a Chinese Confucianist family, and felt that it would have been better if I was a Muslim Indonesian.

There was a lot of discrimination against Chinese and Confucianists by the Indonesian Government and this affected my thoughts and feelings. In high school, after the riots, I felt afraid. I needed time to change my thinking that Muslim Indonesians were bad people.

I realized I am Chinese but also an Indonesian citizen. I’ve never regretted making this choice of being Indonesian-Chinese. The three of us here (Bachrul, Nandor & I) are a part of today’s generation who realize this legacy of mistrust has to be broken down and the chain of hate and fear, torn apart.

Thammavongsa Oula, Laos

APYC is a great opportunity for me to meet people from other lands. My confidence is strengthened and I can face the future better. I have also learnt to distinguish right from wrong. Through the family group I have found the purpose of life and how to deal with problems.

Ny Veasna, Cambodia

APYC has given me guidelines and principles for life, like quiet time, and the four principles: love, honesty, purity, and unselfishness. It was a chance to listen to my inner voice, something I had never practised before. This has helped me see what I should do to achieve my life’s mission statement. APYC builds up networks between different countries, leading to a better world without hate, greed, jealousy. APYC is an amazing world youth cooperation.

a Vietnamese participant

After APYC I realize that I need to meet my father and say sorry to him. I was angry with him and had thought that I could never ever forgive him. He earned a lot of money but was not being responsible for the family or for me during the time I was at University. He just cared about his hobby with girls. So he divorced my mother. But now he lives alone and he is ill. I had lost respect for him and hated him very much. But after participating in APYC I realize I must change my behaviour towards him and forgive him.

Park In-Whan, Korea

I would keep all my anger inside, and make myself unhappy. During APYC I saw this happening. I had a time of quiet to think about why I was so angry and how to deal with the anger. I found I could overcome my anger by reading and listening to music to calm myself down and then I realized that I could smile. I will share with the person I was angry with when I return to Korea.

connection correction direction

Thammavongsa Oula, Laos

APYC is a great opportunity for me to meet people from other lands. My confidence is strengthened and I can face the future better. I have also learnt to distinguish right from wrong. Through the family group I have found the purpose of life and how to deal with problems.

Ny Veasna, Cambodia

APYC has given me guidelines and principles for life, like quiet time, and the four principles: love, honesty, purity, and unselfishness. It was a chance to listen to my inner voice, something I had never practised before. This has helped me see what I should do to achieve my life’s mission statement. APYC builds up networks between different countries, leading to a better world without hate, greed, jealousy. APYC is an amazing world youth cooperation.

a Vietnamese participant

After APYC I realize that I need to meet my father and say sorry to him. I was angry with him and had thought that I could never ever forgive him. He earned a lot of money but was not being responsible for the family or for me during the time I was at University. He just cared about his hobby with girls. So he divorced my mother. But now he lives alone and he is ill. I had lost respect for him and hated him very much. But after participating in APYC I realize I must change my behaviour towards him and forgive him.

Park In-Whan, Korea

I would keep all my anger inside, and make myself unhappy. During APYC I saw this happening. I had a time of quiet to think about why I was so angry and how to deal with the anger. I found I could overcome my anger by reading and listening to music to calm myself down and then I realized that I could smile. I will share with the person I was angry with when I return to Korea.
The heart of transformation

This four-part presentation done at APYC was based on the founding principles of Initiatives of Change and aims to aid in the process of building a better world, beginning with individuals. It is a simple idea, but one that works. ‘If you want to make a difference, the best place to start is with yourself’.

In the first session we looked at:
‘What kind of person does the world need me to be?’
How might we combat the problems of the world through the four moral absolutes – absolute honesty, absolute purity, absolute unselfishness and absolute love. If we examine our lives with this in mind we are better able to recognise the changes we need to make.

The second session explored how we might use these changes to encourage those around us:
‘What could my transformation lead to in others?’
Rather than merely having a good time with friends, we should try to reach beyond this and honestly share our experiences of change in direction and motivation. This care forms a logical next step in providing an answer to the needs of the world – two people together can make a greater difference than one. Then together we can continue to extend and form teams to plan solutions to local issues and also those further afield.

The third session considered:
‘Is my vision big enough to make a difference?’
We heard from participants who felt they had spent too much time on themselves, their studies and work and not enough on caring for the world around them - their vision was limited. Other participants told of how their vision was too big and focused too much on solving the world’s problems and not ones closer to home. From these stories it became apparent that a balance is needed.

Finally, the question for the fourth session was:
‘Do you have hope for humanity?’
Even the small changes we make in our own lives will inspire those around us. The new life and relationships we create in the process will in turn impact our communities and social issues. Good news travels fast – practical answers can spread and motivate the world. To give hope to humanity, be the hope you want to see.

Absolute moral standards help us question the way we live, showing where we can grow and be different:

Absolute honesty: Exams? Workplace? Do others see who we really are? Can we face where we have been wrong, and take steps to apologise or put things right?

Absolute purity: Do I care for others simply to get something for myself? What absorbs my thinking – sex, TV, alcohol, the Internet, or anything else? How can I free my energy and imagination, to live creatively and wholeheartedly?

Absolute unselfishness: What proportion of my time and energy is spent on myself, and what on others? Am I aware of how much the way I live affects others? If everyone cared enough and shared enough, everyone would have enough.

Absolute love: Is there anyone I can’t get along with? Am I holding on to hurts from the past? Is my heart open to all people, especially those who are different from me?

At the heart of this process is the regular practice of taking time in silence to listen to the leading of the inner voice. This ‘quiet time’ includes:
- **Connection** – to the Divine, to the truth and wisdom within
- **Correction** – examining our living and motivation in the light of moral absolutes
- **Direction** – practical leading in next steps and initiatives for us to take

Writing down thoughts and sharing them with trusted friends is important in keeping us faithful to this leading and in building partnerships of trust.

connection correction direction

Petre Ann Santry, University lecturer, Australia
This is my first time to attend such a conference dealing with really basic issues of human need for love and community. I felt deeply moved by the enthusiasm, dedication and extraordinary level of wonderful planning that catered for every need. As for myself, I found the contribution to the young people extraordinarily positive and life changing. I myself received renewed spiritual growth.

Hoang Thi Huong Giang, Vietnam
Taking part in APYC has been the most interesting thing of my life. I was not an open-minded girl, but after joining APYC, after several days, I have changed. I learnt to trust others and realized one important thing, that love brings people together. Together with Vichheka, a Cambodian girl, we want to tell everyone that Vietnamese and Cambodians are real friends naturally.

Sarim Mardi, Cambodia
There was a war between my father and me. I felt that he was over-protective. I had to keep informing him about where I was and who I was with. One day I went out without telling my family. When I got back we had an argument. Instead of saying sorry I turned to anger and stopped talking to my father for a week. After that I felt very bad, and lonely. I couldn’t say sorry because it seemed to be the hardest word to say. I had a quiet time and realised that I had done something wrong. I had lunch with my Dad, and said sorry to him for what I had done. It was a great time for me. I believe that you can change whatever you want. The key is inside your heart.

Chung Yi-Fang, Taiwan
Through honest sharing with one another, I have found true friendship, and direction for my life. I have decided to be part of this big family to build a better world through each one of us.
Practical examples of reconciliation and conflict resolution

Dr. Ok Serei Sopheak, consultant to peacebuilding NGOs
From the start of my political activities in 1975, I had four enemies, but until recently I was only conscious of three. One enemy was the Khmer Rouge because they killed my father, brother and many family members. When the Vietnamese occupied Cambodia in 1979 they also became my enemy. The former communist government of Cambodia sold the country to Vietnam, so I considered them my enemy as well.

I joined the resistance for 11 years until 1992, when I returned to Phnom Penh. Having seen so many painful events and deaths, I wondered how I could heal what was in my heart.

Through becoming adviser to the Deputy Prime Minister Sar Kheng of the Cambodian People’s Party, I was reconciled with one enemy. During five years, we were one of the best teams in government working to promote the bottom-up democratic process.

Then through the Cambodia Development Research Institute, we set up a program in Khmer Rouge areas we called ‘Working Together for Peace and Development’. I met many who had killed people. Working with one former Khmer Rouge commander, I realized I didn’t feel any hatred toward her. I just felt a lot of sorrow.

Together we set up a program for dialogue between Khmer Rouge and non-Khmer Rouge groups, which has now gone to communities in all the former Khmer Rouge areas.

After reconciling with the Khmer Rouge, I decided that continuing my hatred of Vietnam was completely changed and feel very sorry I nurtured hatred for so many decades. I’m not unaware of the conflict between Vietnam and Cambodia, but now I approach it with a new feeling in my heart that helps me deal with issues.

I didn’t know my fourth enemy until this year. I came in touch with young Buddhist monks serving communities. They taught me simple principles which changed my life. I was doing so much, but I didn’t have time to reflect on my actions. From that time I became aware of being a terrible father and husband, separated from my family, who live in France. I had neglected them for so long. I apologized and started to love my wife again. Life is much better now.

That growing consciousness made me realize that we should not look for big happiness, but for every small happiness. Picking up rubbish, caring for children, makes me realize life can be fulfilling. We receive so many small gifts, but we take them for granted. If we are aware of them we can make our world much better and more peaceful.

The dialogue you’ve started at this conference between Vietnamese and Cambodians can help build new foundations for friendship. My generation is so tied up with bad feelings, we can’t build new foundations for friendship. My dialogue you’ve started at this conference between Vietnamese and Cambodians can help build new foundations for friendship. My generation is so tied up with bad feelings, we can’t

Naro Thiek, Nagaland, India
I come from a state which carries a history of 55 years of fighting for sovereignty from India. During my journey through India with Action for Life, the warmth of the people I met made me realize many judgments of Indian people were of my own making. This led me on a path of healing with the people of India.

Mohammad Altaf Khan, Kashmir, India
The armed struggle in Kashmir began when I was 16. Two years later I joined a group involved in political activities. In 1995 we formed a group with political people and others of a militant organization who realized violence would not help Kashmiris, and that reconciliation was needed. Unfortunately we were seen as a threat by both Pakistan and India. 10 of our group were killed. I was arrested and spent two years in Indian jails. 20 days after I was released from jail, my best friend was killed. He had spent two years in jail with me. I lost hope, faith and energy.

For six months I was restless, thinking that God did not exist and that nothing would help Kashmir. I hated India, its security agencies and those responsible for killings. I had been released from jail, but was imprisoned in myself.

While doing a law degree in India, I stayed with a Hindu friend who helped me realise that there were many things I tried to hide from myself, and that I should look at my own shortcomings. I hadn’t forgiven the people who had killed my friends. I decided that I couldn’t forgive them because I was torturing myself. I wouldn’t let them to torture me any more. So I forgave them. I got my faith back.

I travelled to Pakistan-controlled Kashmir with a reconciliation program of building understanding by learning to listen to each other and being ready to share suffering. That brings peace to those who have seen similar situations. We need not to impose solutions but just to listen and be sensitive and patient. Solutions will then come.

Ou Sopheary, Cambodia
My next step is that I have decided that I have to share my problems. Before the conference I thought I would never share my story with anyone. I have decided that when I return home I will start sharing with my best friend. I want to make this a habit. Another thing that can help me achieve this is respect. I should respect myself, my peers, and my friends.

Yoshie Katori, Japan
Before coming to APYC, I was worried about many things, like making friends, and being able to communicate with people of different countries, cultures, and religions. But here I have made many friends and it has become easier for me to communicate with people because my English has improved. I hope I can take part in the next APYC.

Neang Sovathana, Cambodia
I had never thought of the small mistakes I make in my close relationships, but during a quiet time the small mistakes came out and I saw the need to change them. If others had shown me my mistakes I might not have accepted it, thinking they want to embarrass me, but when I listen to the inner voice I can acknowledge my mistakes.

Suseno Dwinanto, Indonesia
I had a big fight with a team-mate recently. Normally I would have just stayed silent in anger and avoided the person altogether. But at APYC we sat down together one night and sought to resolve our conflict rather than ignore it. We are now stronger friends.

Nguyen Tuan Anh, Vietnam
I used to be a selfish and shy boy. Through APYC I learnt to listen and share with other people which is something I have never done before. This has been a big change in my life, like a second chapter of my life.
Taking initiatives for a corruption free country

Madame Chea Vannath, President of Centre for Social Development, Cambodia

Corruption costs Cambodia about US$1 billion every year, through tax evasion, smuggling, illegal logging, and procurement. That’s more than the national budget. In Siem Reap two bridges collapsed recently. Overweight illegal logging trucks were blamed. But because of corruption nobody stops illegal logging.

In 1993, Cambodia changed to a “free for all” market economy. But we did not prepare the infrastructure to operate a free market economy. So the rich get richer, the powerful more powerful, the poor poorer.

In 1998 our Centre (Centre for Social Development) recognized that to work for a legal framework against corruption was not enough. We formed a group called Transparency Task Force with a curriculum for schools to teach children about honesty, integrity and accountability. 6000 teachers have been trained in this curriculum. In 2002 we formed Coalition Transparency Cambodia: an effort to sensitize the public on how corruption affects family, society and country. It has more than 200 members from the government, military, police, students, NGOs, media and Buddhist monks.

In my organization we have to remind ourselves that we must be role models, starting with ourselves. Our procurement committee ensures that all procurement is clean, even getting a hotel room, catering or renting car. It is a struggle because corruption is continually going up. Behavioural change is very important. We need to revive the five Buddhist principles, which include no lying and no stealing.

There is good and evil in all things, government, society, everywhere. We need to mobilize a force for reform greater than the force resisting reform.

Isry Laila Syathroh, Indonesia

During a vacation at my uncle’s home, he had given me some money as part of tradition, and asked me to share it equally amongst my siblings. When I got back home I didn’t do this, as I thought that I deserved a bigger amount since I was the one who had gone to see my uncle. Later, I was learning about corruption and governance at university. I felt ashamed about the money I had not shared equally with my siblings so long ago. I apologised to them for lying to them and promised to pay the money back. I hope that what I have done to get rid of corruption in my daily life will be a contribution for a better life in future. A journey of 1000 miles should start with one single step.

Hsu Shou-Feng, Taiwan

The Taiwan Clean Election Campaign was inspired by an anti-corruption campaign in Australia in 1990. There was a chain reaction as the idea spread into Taiwan, Brazil and Kenya. The work of Clean Election is based on the idea that it is better to light one candle than to curse the darkness. We all have a choice to make – to be a part of the problem or a part of the answer. You too can be part of this chain reaction.

Huynh Thanh Binh Minh, Vietnam

I have learnt more from this conference than from any course at school. I have learnt to love international friends as if they are my fellow countrymen. Before APYC I was not aware of the negative emotions felt by the people of Cambodia towards the Vietnamese. During the conference when honesty was practiced, I felt a deep pain in my heart. Through many conversations and meetings with the Cambodians I learned that they did not hate me personally but hated what the Vietnamese had done in the past. I began to develop strong relationships with many Cambodians and discovered a large number of similarities. Relationships are worth much more than money can buy. I learned to be a strong person. I am going to meet every week with the MRA team in Vietnam, at the Pagoda.

Hoang Thanh Thanh, Vietnam

Through quiet times every day I have learnt that inside me there is always a most trusted voice. Through APYC I have become a better listener. People opened themselves to me and I learned to open myself to them. If I judge or criticize others, my inner voice says, “It is time to sit, listen, and respect.” As I open my ears, I open my soul.

Nurul Huda “Roy”, Indonesia

I defrauded a lot of money when I was on the welcoming committee for new students in my university. I realised that it was wrong but never had the courage to give back the money to the University. But during APYC, I decided to do so.

Janak Basumatary, India

I will go home and talk with my parents, which I don’t normally do.

connection correction direction

Isry Laila Syathroh

Hoang Thanh Thanh

Hsu Shou-Feng
Mobilising a new generation for healing and development in a globalised world

Mr. Jeffrey Sng, International Network of Engaged Buddhists, Bangkok

Coming to APYC is like taking a step into the future. I used to attend meetings with activists and student intellectuals. But the atmosphere there was different to the APYC. I am really impressed with the size of this conference with people from many different countries. It reflects the globalization of civil society.

Dr. Meas Nee, Professor, Rural Community Development, Cambodia

Development work in Cambodia today is based on a project-oriented approach. It’s time for the next stage; a movement, not just projects. We forget that the best way to build hope is to build from within. When the capacity to hope, built from inside, meets support from outside, the dream becomes true. No matter what help you have from outside, if you have no hope inside, nothing will work.

Cambodian youth have suffered from a lack of hope. They are virtually excluded from the discussion on Cambodian development. But we have to create a movement not just a discussion.

Through conferences like this you get to know one another across countries. All can benefit from building up networks. But it remains only a “net”, if there is no work, or no action is taken.

Khuon Vichheka, Cambodia

I was taught in school about the history of Cambodia and Vietnam. I felt that it was because of Vietnam that my people are poor and things are wrong in Cambodia.

My neighbours are Vietnamese. I would smile and talk, but deep down I disliked them. I could never be honest with them. At the APYC two years ago I was rooming with a Vietnamese, and when I was lost it was a Vietnamese who helped me find my room. In a workshop a Vietnamese called Nguyen was asked to sing a song and I decided I didn’t like her. In a quiet time I decided it wasn’t right but I didn’t want to listen to my inner voice. I didn’t want to love or talk to Vietnamese people.

Last year at a Life Matters Course in Australia I met people who changed my idea about Vietnam. I also started to change myself. I want to apologize to Vietnam and be a bridge between the two countries. I hope that Cambodia and Vietnam can become friends and respect and love each other.

Le Thy Truong Ngan, Vietnam

When I was six years old my mother and I came to Cambodia. My mother worked very hard to earn. But she was cheated and lost all her money. She left me with a family in a village for a while. I disliked them because they loved their children more than me. I felt left out. I became a street child. It affected how I grew up. Now in Cambodia, a country full of temples and friendly people, I ask myself, what can I offer Cambodian friends, while my heart still carries pain from past experiences.

Through a quiet time I decided to go back to the village where I lived as a child. I realized I’d created a lot of hatred, bitterness and fear without any understanding. I also heard that Cambodians don’t like Vietnam because of territorial issues. I would like to apologize for what happened and what is happening. Will we still carry that mistrust and hatred or will we find a way to work together to create a better world through you and me?

Phloung Pisith, Cambodia

I learnt that the young bamboo should replace the old bamboo. The old must set an example, but how does the young get advice from the old? We need to communicate, sit and talk, build a network between young and old people, be ready to be close, to be challenged, to overcome difficulties. Sooner or later we will succeed. With our relationships with Vietnam, my own feeling is, if we can be together and have something in common we can narrow the gaps between the top and lower sections of society.

Khuon Vichheka, Cambodia

I was taught in school about the history of Cambodia and Vietnam. I felt that it was because of Vietnam that my people are poor and things are wrong in Cambodia.

My neighbours are Vietnamese. I would smile and talk, but deep down I disliked them. I could never be honest with them. At the APYC two years ago I was rooming with a Vietnamese, and when I was lost it was a Vietnamese who helped me find my room. In a workshop a Vietnamese called Nguyen was asked to sing a song and I decided I didn’t like her. In a quiet time I decided it wasn’t right but I didn’t want to listen to my inner voice. I didn’t want to love or talk to Vietnamese people.

Last year at a Life Matters Course in Australia I met people who changed my idea about Vietnam. I also started to change myself. I want to apologize to Vietnam and be a bridge between the two countries. I hope that Cambodia and Vietnam can become friends and respect and love each other.

Le Thy Truong Ngan, Vietnam

When I was six years old my mother and I came to Cambodia. My mother worked very hard to earn. But she was cheated and lost all her money. She left me with a family in a village for a while. I disliked them because they loved their children more than me. I felt left out. I became a street child. It affected how I grew up. Now in Cambodia, a country full of temples and friendly people, I ask myself, what can I offer Cambodian friends, while my heart still carries pain from past experiences.

Through a quiet time I decided to go back to the village where I lived as a child. I realized I’d created a lot of hatred, bitterness and fear without any understanding. I also heard that Cambodians don’t like Vietnam because of territorial issues. I would like to apologize for what happened and what is happening. Will we still carry that mistrust and hatred or will we find a way to work together to create a better world through you and me?

Phloung Pisith, Cambodia

I learnt that the young bamboo should replace the old bamboo. The old must set an example, but how does the young get advice from the old? We need to communicate, sit and talk, build a network between young and old people, be ready to be close, to be challenged, to overcome difficulties. Sooner or later we will succeed. With our relationships with Vietnam, my own feeling is, if we can be together and have something in common we can narrow the gaps between the top and lower sections of society.

Daungdee Nattinee, Thailand

When I was eight I met a Thai who introduced me to the war in Cambodia. I didn’t know what kind of war it was, but I wanted to help. I came to Cambodia and started a restaurant. With earnings I supported students to go through university. Six are still studying. When we die we can’t take things with us. While we live it is an opportunity to share and make a contribution to the world.

Jeong Yeon-Yuk, Korea

My commitment is to let God control my life. I had bought a camera without paying tax. I wrote to the taxation office about it. I have a Masters degree which I felt was not my own, so I wrote and told my professor. I think about my country and envision true North and South Korea reconciliation; about Korea being a bridge between Japan and other Asian countries. Apart from these commitments, I have taken on to coordinate Action for Life 3.

Mike Brown, part of the Sorry Day/Journey of Healing movement for justice for the Aborigines of Australia

There is so much bitterness and suffering today because of what happened in the past. 200 yrs ago Europeans came and took Australia as if it was empty and pushed the aboriginals off. The government took aboriginal children away from their families and put them in white homes to work as servants, or in church institutes.

23 yrs ago I walked on land my Brown ancestors took in 1850. They didn’t pay or ask, but just took it, chasing aboriginals from their sacred sites. In 1851, James Brown, my great great uncle was found dead, beaten to death which suggested he had abused an aboriginal woman.

It was a shock to me. I shared my story of shame with an aboriginal man and asked for forgiveness for what my people had done. His response changed me. He asked if we could pray together near my great great uncle’s grave. We prayed for forgiveness for what we’d done to each other and we prayed for all Australians.

A document was produced which described this tragic history. Australians were shocked. There were 54 recommendations, including a national apology. But the government of the day said it was not their business. So, we formed groups in different states to have our own national sorry day. 1 million Australians wrote their own apologies in “Sorry Books”. This last May the government finally agreed and a plaque was unveiled in front of parliament recognizing this history.

Our journey has just begun, but there is a long way to go. IC has broadened this by bringing reconciliation with other groups in Australia.

You’ve no idea where the decisions you make here - to break through prejudice, to seek forgiveness and healing - will lead in the next 20 years.
The time for action is now!
If not ME - who?    if not NOW - when?

Dr. Heng Monychenda, Director of Buddhism for Development, Cambodia
When I became a monk I was a refugee. In 1982 I was meditating near Angkor Wat and it came to my mind that I was going to die tomorrow so I should start to do something now. I got a chance to go to Australia as a refugee but I decided to return to Cambodia.

Making an effort, doing something good now without waiting for tomorrow, and having hope; these are points I can share with you. Through Buddhism, I’ve realized that our nature is very important; call it Dharma or God. We have to maintain the individual, society and nature in balance. I am glad that you from different religions came to this pagoda. We should take action now, with all the religions, to learn how to live together.

Megumi Kanematsu, Japan
I learnt history from real situations rather than from Japanese education. I thought that if Japan could help to solve the needs of the world, I would give my life to whatever needed to be done. Step by step for the last 30 years I was led in a special way through listening to the inner voice, and I have no regrets. I want all young people to find this secret so that you can have a part to contribute to the needs of the world.

Vu Duy An, Vietnam
I would like to apologise for what our elder generation had done to you in Cambodia, and as the younger generation, we shall try our best to be as helpful as possible to everybody, especially you, with the hope that we can compensate for what Vietnam has done to you. I hope that we can be true friends and work together.

Sen Sangkhim, Cambodia
When we go back home we want to share information to our workplaces and to build networks nationally and internationally. We want to strengthen moral standards among the young people and look for key people to discuss and find the next steps.

Lang Vann Boramy, Cambodia
Through APYC I committed myself to do what I have never done before; to write a letter to my dad telling him about my feelings. He left us when I was 5 years old to marry another lady. They live in France and we have had no contact for more than 10 years. With time I no longer felt angry with him but I have never written a letter to him. I have now decided to do so before it is too late.
Outcomes: Bridging the Gaps

Through transforming attitudes on issues like corruption and prejudice, learning to appreciate each other’s cultures, and providing practical tools for helping change ourselves and our world, the APYC has paved the way for numerous social development, community building and reconciliation initiatives.

For instance, Cambodian and Vietnamese participants initiated three late night meetings outside the formal conference to share honestly their feelings about each other’s countries, based on the mistrust and enmity that has often scarred their history. The initial feelings of confusion and pain were transformed into trust and understanding. Some deep friendships have been formed, symbolized by the Cambodian hosts and Vietnamese in a final session wearing each other’s national costumes. This bridge-building process will continue.

The conference concluded with a commitment to ‘Bridging the Gaps’ in Asian and Pacific communities; between nations, races, religions and different sectors of society. Specific initiatives launched by participants include:

- **Building relationships** between rural and urban communities, including capacity building amongst farmers in Cambodia to increase local production.
- **Exchange programmes for healing** the wounds of history between Cambodia and Vietnam. This process will continue with exchange visits, peace-building and conflict management workshops.
- **Trust-building initiatives** in Indonesia - specifically involving partnership building and inter-faith dialogue between Muslim and non-Muslim communities.
- **Continuing and expanding the commitment to local development** programmes at the Battambang Initiatives of Change centre, managed by young people from the area. Projects include voluntary work in areas such as tree planting, rubbish collection, and teaching children in financial difficulty.

Cambodian, Thai and Vietnamese leaders in human rights, conflict resolution and community development who attended the conference made commitments to work alongside young people to help bring their dreams into reality. Dr. Heng Monychenda, founder of Buddhism for Development, commented: ‘This conference has changed Cambodia.’

Thankyou

It was a big challenge to raise funds for this conference. Over half of the participants came from developing countries and could only pay a basic rate, needing major subsidies. APYC would not have been possible without the generous financial support of many individuals around the globe and specific grants from:

- His Majesty, King Norodom Sihanouk of the Kingdom of Cambodia
- American Friends Service Committee
- Forum Syd
- Catholic Relief Services
- Apsara Authority
- Rotary Club of Malaysia
- The International IC Association of Japan, and other MRA /IofC teams around the world
- Action for Life
- Won Buddhism (South Korea)

We are grateful for this generous support. The budget allowed modest seed funding for ongoing initiatives which developed during the conference (see Outcomes, above) so the action of the conference continues. We also give heartfelt thanks to the many people who contribute so much time and energy to make APYC such a success.
There was a surprising number and variety of workshops in APYC, which helped to build and strengthen a sense of fellowship amongst the diverse collection of participants.

The workshops ranged from fun, games and dance, to painful self-exploration, aiming to bring the best out in each person. The seven dimensions of the human being were explored by Father Francois from Taiwan. The family workshop run by Ren-Jou Liu helped people to confront and reconcile with their pain from the past. Conflict with the “other” was explored with Heidrun and Dr Levine in the conflict resolution workshop, and the Open Space forum run by John Freebury gave participants a place to raise their own issues of concern. Workshops on creativity, art therapy, dancing, singing, meditation, song writing and drama all provided opportunities for people to discover and express themselves in new ways.
What they said...

I am braver than before. I dare to share my ideas. I have a strong commitment to follow my inner voice.

I know what kind of a person the world needs me to be and I will try to be it.

My quiet time and family group sharing have motivated me to improve my relationship with my family.

I have felt closer to God and I am trying to listen and obey more.

I have learnt to be grateful for what I have and to live a life of gratitude.

This conference has changed me from a negative to a positive thinker. I’ve learnt how to listen and share with others and change my points of view about the world around.

My commitment to care for this part of the world has grown stronger.

What they found most valuable...

To see people changing and to decide to have a quiet time everyday.

I have more hope for the future.

I got the courage to change my life and I believe God will help me do it.

What they learnt...

To know who I am and to use the word sorry.

I used to think we can’t do anything about corruption, but through APYC I know that first I need to change myself.

APYC brought me hope. I used to take drugs. Now I want all my friends to follow me and quit.