The future belongs to those who do something for it!

The second N E dialogue on the *The Future We Want* took place from 11 to 14, November 2016 in the breathtaking Siloam environs around Umiam Lake near Shillong, Meghalaya. The dialogue brought together participants from all over Nagaland, Meghalaya, Manipur, Maharashtra, and Kerala who were quite eager to find ways in which they could build a brighter tomorrow.

The dialogue began with an address from Christine Iralu of Sechu Zubza, Nagaland. She stated that there is always something we can each do, no matter what the situation is. Niketu Iralu spoke of the tumultuous times we live in and that the role of dialogue is to seek ways on how humanity responds to the problems of the world together.

Wati Mollier from Nagaland shared his experience of the first dialogue. Having been inspired by the stories he heard and being particularly touched by the quote: ‘Hurts not transformed are transferred’, he went back to his home and forgave his father against whom he had a long-held grudge. On Father’s Day, he told his father everything that he had been holding bottled inside. After the experience he found freedom. He is now interested in helping unite the people of Nagaland, identifying first as a Naga rather than as a member of his tribe.

Father George caught the imagination of everyone asking if just as the government has demonetized money, violence could also be demonetized? Would people queue at *Love and Compassion counters* as they are lining up endlessly at ATM machines? He spoke of North East youth as ‘pioneers of forgiveness’. He said, ‘We cannot forgive until we learn how to love ourselves and it’s very hard to love and be productive if we’re bitter. The real need of forgiveness is at home, with people who really matter. Everybody is hurt; we use our wounds to justify why it’s ok for us to hurt. Forgiveness is our best gift to ourselves.’

Malthus Sangma (Deputy Passport Officer, Shillong) expressed that a society is only as good as its people. We live in two worlds - the inner and outer world. When we
start to compromise on small things, we are more likely to compromise our honesty in bigger matters. He also spoke of being a good example, of teaching our brothers and sisters to walk on a straight line and the idea that many problems can be solved if one sorted oneself out first.

Barkos Warjri (just retired Chief Secretary of Meghalaya) touched on honesty and responsibility. He said, ‘I started asking myself 30 years ago – What is the problem with me? And this has helped me tremendously. There are many problems that can be solved if I sort myself out. What am I going to give is something we don’t think about. What am I going to get is what consumes us.’ He also talked about the importance of having strong families as they are the foundation on which society rests.

Sunil Kaul and Jenny Liang talked about their work with ANT (Action North East Trust). They said that the future belongs to those who do something for it today. Both of them shared about their lives in the North East and how ‘living one day at a time’ was the best thing to do since their work involved risks and threats. Sunil mentioned the importance of speaking the truth, that one does not necessarily have to shout when telling the truth, one just has to state it. On fear and courage, they responded saying, ‘Fear is of the unknown, the faster we can know the unknown, the faster fear will go. The mantra is – Hope for the best, prepare for the worst.’ They added, ‘Doing the right thing is courage. Doing it every time it’s needed is ultimate courage.’

We had interaction with Niketu and Christine Iralu with Om and Pushpa Bagaria, businessfolk of Tezpur. Answering a question on what has kept them going through all these years, Om Bagaria said it has been the fellowship and daily renewal with inner listening. He said transformation alone makes the world beautiful. Christine Iralu stated, ‘People who had faith in me, never gave up on me. I was searching for meaning in life. The idea of living and working for others is what I found. Not running after the pursuit of happiness or money.’

Niketu Iralu explained, ‘I was very skeptical of the future when I was young. I went to college saying there is no hope. And then I met people who wanted to remake the world, starting with oneself, people who were deeply real and honest about themselves. They gave me hope that I too can be honest. Listening to the still small voice and obeying it can change lives.’
We had two workshops this time: The workshop on empathy held by Anand Aithal was interactive where the facilitator had the participants visualize the future they wanted for themselves. He expanded the discussion by asking what the world would need to be in order for each one to live the life they envision. The discussion extended into speaking about the legacy each one wants to live behind as well as one’s greatest fear.

Julie Tan, senior IofC worker from Malaysia held a workshop on Learning to Love Yourself. Participants were helped to look at how their past had affected who they were today, how to have deep inner healing through writing letters to their parents and finally how to love themselves unconditionally so they could move on in their lives. Several others asked to have more time on a 'one to one’ basis with Julie after the sessions. Generally, many of the participants looked and felt freer after going through this session.

**Expressions from the participants:**

- I am leaving behind my jealousy and anger towards my sister and other family members.
- I am leaving behind the habit of criticizing perpetually
- I have learnt letting go, forgiving and forgetting.
- This is my first time spending time with people from different faiths. I always thought people who belonged to the Christian faith were peaceful. Coming here and sharing with different people made me realize that I was wrong in thinking the way I did and saw the beauty in each human being.
- I came here with the intention of changing my brother. Being here for the past couple of days made me realize how wrong I was in hating him. I forgive him and on going back I will try to be more understanding with him. I know he's still going to hurt me with his actions but I will work on our relationship.
- This program gave me a lot of confidence and courage. It gave me strength to be positive and made me realize my mistakes and see ways to rectify them.
- There is so much of hatred in me against one person. I always wished that the worst of things happened to her. I have realized that isn’t right. I will work on rebuilding a relationship with her.
- I envy my friends who can play violin better than me.
- I’ll take kindness with me. I will practice silence, listening to the inner voice.
- I will be humble towards people from now. Will focus on my work without hurting anyone.
- The one thing that touched me is the realization I’ve hurt people who’re close to me. Being here has given me the courage to say sorry.
- Initiatives of Change made me realize there’re differences of beliefs but to respect them. Each individual is unique and has unique things to contribute to society.
- It gave me immense joy knowing you guys and also what am I as an individual. What are the things I need to focus upon? What are the things I need to quit? The art of admitting our mistakes and saying sorry whenever required. To expect less from people and work for the goodness of people. Life is too short to hold grudges against anyone.
- I have to become strong because I am going to be some child's parent in the future.
- If we don't come out of our comfort zone, we may never notice the beauty surrounding us.
- We are a candle that has been ignited. Let's pass the flame on to others.
- My mind was always in a state of unrest. But doing the morning soul nurture has brought peace to my mind. It's a break from all the voices in my head.
• Not doing one's duty equals injustice. I want to do something for my society. But I have to change myself before I can do anything for my society.
• Heartening seeing brothers and sisters all the way from mainland India. If we only continue doing this, we can be the bridge that dispels the walls of preconceived notions and prejudices. We can create unity among us.

The year 2016 has brought many young people together who have been actively thinking about the future they want. With these dialogues, we hope to spark conversations that will lead to tangible actions led foremost with guidance from the still small voice within us. The next dialogue will be in June 2017.