Communication is Peace—
Taking Sides to Build
Viable Communities
21 June 2009
World Association for Christian Communication - Asia Region
Invitation to Celebrate Asia Communication Sunday 2009

The Church is called to bear witness to Christ by taking a courageous and prophetic stand to communicate peace. Realizing this mission, the World Association for Christian Communication – Asia Region invites you to join in the celebration of Asia Communication Sunday on 21 June 2009. The theme is “Communication is Peace – Taking Sides to Build Viable Communities”.

The World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) believes that communication must be used to create community, and to support and develop cultures. It must be participatory and prophetic — in the sense that it challenges injustice and inequality. WACC believes in “taking sides” with those who suffer from lack of peace in order to offer hope for resurrection and new life.

The following worship materials, stories and photos were prepared by communicators around Asia and edited by the WACC-Asia Executive Committee. We hope their message will inspire you to lift up the ministry of Christian communication in your churches, organizations and communities.

You may also access the content on the web at www.waccglobal.org/asia.

We welcome your feedback on Asia Communication Sunday. You may send comments to the Chairperson at smeshack@gmail.com. If 21st June is not a convenient date, you are free to observe the event on another Sunday in the month.

Our prayers and best wishes are with each of you in your vital work of communication for social change. May God bless you as we labor together to build viable communities of peace and justice, a community envisioned by the prophet Isaiah and the apostle John of Patmos, a New Heaven and New Earth.

WACC – Asia Executive Committee

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Information and communication are significantly changing the world we live in. Instead of establishing commonness and solidarity, public communication now tends to reinforce divisions, widen the gap between rich and poor, consolidate oppression, and distort reality in order to maintain systems of domination and subject the silenced masses to media manipulation.

Yet communication remains God's great gift to humanity, without which we cannot be truly human, reflecting 'God's image'. Nor could we enjoy living together in groups, communities and societies steeped in different cultures and different ways of life.

It is both the potential for solidarity and the threat to humanity which modern communications contain, that have prompted the members of the World Association for Christian Communication to examine their communication practices and policies on the basis of the Good News of the Kingdom. By accepting Christ's sovereignty, Christian communicators proclaim God's Kingdom. For this reason, Christian communicators promote ecumenical communication so that Christians can speak with one voice, thus bearing witness to the one body of Christ.

Christian communicators, as witnesses to the Kingdom, should awaken and reflect the corporate witness of the church. The lives of Christians, as well as the work of communicators, need to be set free from the individualism which
characterizes some cultures and traditions. The church as a community of believers is God’s instrument for building the Kingdom of Peace.

Jesus announced the coming of God’s Kingdom and commissioned us to proclaim the Good News to all people until the end of time. Hearing the Good News, living by it and witnessing to it, is the basic calling of all Christians. The Good News addresses itself to the whole person and to all people. The Gospel, being the Good News for the poor, needs to be constantly reinterpreted from the perspectives of the poor and oppressed. Christ’s own communication was an act of self-giving. He ‘emptied himself, taking the form of a servant’ (Phil 2:7). He ministered to all, but took up the cause of the materially poor, the mentally ill, the outcasts of society, the powerless and oppressed. Jesus’ preferential option was for the marginalized. He took sides with the people on the margins, to lift them and to give them the right to human dignity.

Hence Christian Communicators are called upon to take sides with the poor and the marginalized people of the society to give them communication rights and build viable communities of peace and justice.

The WACC’s Congress 2008 held at Cape Town, South Africa focused on the theme ‘Communication is peace: building viable communities’. It brought together about 300 communication and media professionals from 73 countries, ending with a call to give peace a chance.

The General Secretary Rev. Randy Naylor said, “War has had enough time. We have given war enough space in our publications, but as Christian communicators, the time has come that we give peace a chance. We should start writing about peace – peace that builds viable communities, inclusive communities.” The President of WACC, Mr. Dennis Smith also stressed, “In a day where identity is so precarious because of the forces of consumer society and the political, religious and ideological movements, communication and the right to communicate – especially of those who have been silenced, those who have been invisibilized -- is going to
allow us to strengthen voices of civil society through diversity. It makes us think of the need for peace ... to give voice to the voiceless and face to the faceless in our societies."

The world is experiencing peacelessness throughout the globe, where terrorism, war, oppression, marginalization of the poor, women, children and immigrants and refugees, increase the number of people on the margins. All our Communication efforts should focus on bringing the people at the margins to the center. A right to communicate is one of the key issues of the world and WACC will be present in the global struggle for this right.

Joanne Sandler, Deputy Executive Director - Program UNIFEM said that, "We can't do this alone... Working together, finding a way to bring synergy ... is a precondition for making the kind of change we want to see." The World Association for Christian Communication - Asia Region agrees and aims at working together with the people at the periphery, to be the voice of the voiceless and give face to the faceless as an instrument of Peace with Justice following WACC's Christian Principles of Communication.

The communication of Christians is ultimately meant to glorify God. In that sense, all Christian communication is an act of worship, a praise of God through the shared word and action of a community living in the consciousness of God's presence. Christian communication is challenged to witness to God's transforming power in all areas of human life. Hence, we are calling for Asia Communication Sunday 2009 to be observed in all the churches in Asia. The theme chosen is: "Communication is Peace: Taking Sides to Build Viable Communities."

We invite your suggestions for Asia Communication Sunday 2009. Let us share and celebrate this meaningfully, "Taking Sides" to build viable communities in order to establish Peace in our families, communities, churches, our nations and our world as Christian Communicators.
LITANY

COMMUNICATION FOR PEACE

Voice 1: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

(Luke 4:18-19)

Voice 2: The sun, round and orange, hangs high in the Jaffna sky like a lopped-off head, weeping rays of blood, while terror stricken civilians huddle in fear of the next wave of bombs. Pushed to the brink with killings and starvation, the people of north and east Sri Lanka are once more in dire straits. According to Indian estimates, around 165,000 civilians came out of the conflict zone. According to LTTE, 4,500 people died during the conflict between Sri Lankan military and Tamil Tigers. “Innocent civilians are paying a huge cost and are the worst hit. These people are coming out in highly traumatized conditions. Most of them are tired and worn out after months of suffering. Many of them are injured and some of them are very severely wounded. The hospitals have totally exceeded their capacity to receive the wounded.” The conflict is a continuing cause of concern of Peace. Similarly, nations in Asia, such as India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nepal, Thailand, etc., and other parts of the world, such as Israel, Palestine, Iraq, cause concern for world peace. People are losing their God-given freedom of expression.

Voice 3: Jesus is being crucified in the people who have lost their freedom of expression and the right to live a life of dignity.

Congregation: Lord, make us Communicators of Peace building viable communities of Justice and harmony in a war and terror ridden world.
Voice 1: "Give justice to the weak and the orphan; maintain the rights of the lowly and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked." (Psalm 82:3)

Voice 2: The Manila Declaration of 1994 called the churches and communication organizations to fight against injustice on the basis of gender. It says that, ‘... it is essential to promote forms of communication that not only challenge the patriarchal nature of media but strive to decentralise and democratise them: to create media that encourage dialogue and debate; media that advance women and peoples' creativity; media that reaffirm women’s wisdom and knowledge, and that make people into subjects rather than objects or targets of communication, media which are responsive to people’s needs.’

Voice 3: The Media and Gender Justice Programme of WACC calls for local and global struggles for gender equity and equality through communication rights broadly and media in particular. The cycle of gender-based exclusion persists and gender disparities are entrenched even further. Where gender stereotypes are propagated in and through media, they reinforce inequalities in gender power relations and provide justification for the perpetuation of discriminatory practices based on gender. Let us pray for those who are struggling to strengthen communication rights, for those who are marginalized and discriminated against on the basis of gender and in particular, women. Let us remember all the advocacy campaigns for gender fair and balanced media.

Voice 1: Jesus is being crucified in the cycle of gender-based exclusion and oppression of women preserving the patriarchal discriminatory practices to subjugate women.

Congregation: Lord, make us Communicators of Peace building viable communities of Justice and harmony for everyone in the household of God.
COMMUNICATION AND POVERTY

Voice 1: "Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice...to let the oppressed go free and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house..." (Isaiah 58: 6-8)

Voice 2: Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has stated that: “Millions of people in the poorest countries are still excluded from the 'right to communicate', increasingly seen as a fundamental human right.” And the European Commission noted that their summit “should reinforce the right to communicate and to access information and knowledge.”

Voice 3: Poor people’s definitions reveal important psychological aspects of poverty. Poor people are acutely aware of their lack of voice, power, and independence, which subject them to exploitation. Their poverty also leaves them vulnerable to rudeness, humiliation, and inhumane treatment by both private and public agents of the state from whom they seek help. Poor people also speak about the pain brought about by their unavoidable violation of social norms and their inability to maintain cultural identity through participating in traditions, festivals, and rituals. Their inability to fully participate in community life leads to a breakdown of social relations. Poor men and women very often express a sense of hopelessness, powerlessness, humiliation, and marginalization in their inability to be heard.

Voice 1: Jesus is being crucified in the people, who are denied their right to communicate and kept under the poverty of communication; as a consequence marginalized people, women, children and the oppressed die of hunger and malnutrition.

Congregation: Lord, grant us the courage to fight the evils around us and be Communicators of Peace, building viable communities of Justice and harmony providing the avenues of right to information and communication.

Voice 1: "There is no peace because there are no peacemakers. There are no makers of peace because the making of peace is at least as costly as the making of war – at least as demanding, at least as disruptive, at least as liable to bring disgrace and prison and death in its wake." --Father Daniel Berrigan

Congregation: "Injustice anywhere is injustice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny." --Martin Luther King, Jr.
Voice 1: "While there is a lower class, I am in it. While there is a criminal element, I am of it. As long as there is a soul in prison, I am not free." --Eugene Victor Debs

Voice 2: "I have the audacity to believe that peoples everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality, and freedom for their spirits…

Congregation: “… I believe that what self-centered men have torn down, other-centered people can build up.

Voice 1: "... I still believe that one day humankind will bow before the altars of God and be crowned triumphant over war and bloodshed, and nonviolent redemptive good will proclaim the rule of the land…

Voice 2: "...Now let us begin. Now let us rededicate ourselves to the long and bitter – but beautiful – struggle for a new world… The choice is ours, and though we might prefer it otherwise, we must choose in this crucial moment of human history… We shall hew out of the mountain of despair, a stone of hope." --Martin Luther King, Jr.

Congregation: We long for peace. We are thankful for the stirrings of peace and the promise of peace in our world.

Voice 1: We are promised in Isaiah: "My people will abide in peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places." (Isaiah 32: 18)

Voice 2: We hope for the resurrection of our world. Lord, use us as instruments of communicating Peace in this world, to work with you for a just and peaceful world, where people live in love, joy and peace.

Congregation: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor." (Luke 4:18-19) Lord, use us as Communicators of Peace, building viable communities of Justice and harmony. We pray in the name of our Lord and Saviour, the Prince of Peace. Amen.
The National Council of Churches in India is the apex body of the Protestant and Orthodox Churches with its 30 Member Churches, 17 Regional Christian Councils (RCCs), 17 All Christian Organizations, 7 Related Agencies and 3 Autonomous Bodies. The NCCI is an expression of ecumenical churches in India. It will attain its 100 years of ecumenical ministry and engagement in the mission of God in 2014.

The Commission on Communication and Relations coordinates the media and its activities within the NCCI umbrella. It seeks participation in God’s mission with more visible and vibrant expression by:

- Providing fellowship and common forum for dialogue and for fostering common concerns among the Churches and the society at large
- Interpreting and communicating the Mission of God relating it to every aspect of life
- Communicating truth fearlessly and objectively
- Interpreting events to give positive meaning and enhance human dignity, integrity of God’s creation
- Promoting justice, peace and harmony
- Reaching audiences around the world through media, making challenges of the times and responding to or joining alternative voices and witness of the ecumenical movement
- Examining communication in Communities
- Developing alternative communication so that prophetic words and deeds can be realized.
Towards this mission we engage in:

√ Print and electronic media
√ Inter-church and inter-organizational exchange of information and resources
√ People-oriented communication
√ Unconventional models of communication such as folk dances, street plays, indigenous music and other ways of cultural expressions
√ Communication for human dignity, gender equality, justice and people
√ Re-reading of the gospel
√ Gathering news and stories and issuing messages that are prompt, accurate and interesting as well as timely statements, strategic press conferences and briefs for media.

(by Mar Atsongchanger, NCCI, email: maratsong@nccindia.in; website: http://www.nccindia.in/)

The NCCI Emblem symbolises the Church with doors open and lighted by an Indian lamp placed in the national flower, Lotus, inviting all people of God into the ecumenical fellowship.
Since 2001, when President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo came into power, a human rights crisis has been developing in the Philippines. In particular, extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances began to intensify with the implementation of Oplan Bantay Laya (Operation Plan Freedom Watch), the Arroyo government’s counter-insurgency program in 2002. It reached an alarming rate by 2005 when one person was being killed or disappeared for political reasons every other day. By 2006, one person was being killed or had forcibly disappeared every day.


The 86-page report details some of the cases of political killings, and also studies the chilling pattern and alarming proportions with which these assaults on life were perpetrated. The report links the unbridled political killings to the Arroyo government’s counter-insurgency program. The NCCP hopes that the book can serve as an inspiration for the continuing struggle for a just and lasting peace and an advocacy tool by churches and organizations for their own advocacies.

The NCCP spearheaded the formation of a delegation of Protestant and Roman Catholic bishops and clergy, Christian and Muslim human rights defenders called the Ecumenical Voice for Peace and Human Rights in the Philippines. The said delegation was able to present the report before churches, governments and inter-government bodies in
One of the highlights of this effort was the hearing conducted by US Senate Foreign Relations Sub-Committee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs. It was probably the first US Senate committee to conduct a hearing on and to call the attention of the US and Philippine governments to the human rights violations in the Philippines. Two of the members of the Ecumenical Voice delegation testified before the said hearing.

In April and June 2008, as a follow-up effort, the NCCP led the delegation of the Philippine UPR Watch to Geneva, Switzerland. The delegation was able to do lobby work with various missions, some of whom raised critical questions on the Philippine National Report. They were also able to deliver oral interventions before the UNHRC in relation to the human rights report of the Philippine Government and the report of Prof. Philip Alston, Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions.

(by National Council of Churches in the Philippines: www.nccphilippines.org)

More information and photos at:
http://www.arkibongbayan.org/2008-04April03-upr/upr.htm

Victims of human rights abuses under the Gloria Macapagal Arroyo administration traveled to Geneva, Switzerland to tell their stories of torture during the 42nd Session of the UN Committee Against Torture on April 27, 2009.

Farmer Raymond Manalo, who suffered 18 horrible months of barbarity in the hands of the military, and Berlin Guerrero, a United Church of Christ in the Philippines pastor who was abducted and tortured by naval intelligence elements, narrated their ordeals before the Committee at Palais Wilson.

Together with Manalo and Guerrero were Philippine Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Watch human rights defenders Marie Hilao-Enriquez, Karapatan Secretary General; Edre Olalia, Karapatan Special Legal Consultant for UN Mechanisms; and Trisha Garvida, Karapatan intern, joined by other Geneva-based Filipinos under Migrante International.
Human rights organizations gave a briefing to the 10-member Committee on their data, views, and analysis of the Philippines' human rights condition. The Committee posed questions with keen interest and concern.

According to a joint report, attacks against human right defenders, church people and other social sectors in the Philippines are on the upswing following 20 cases of extra-judicial killings recorded beginning January 2009.

The delegation appealed to the Committee to (1) call the attention of the government to make real its commitments to uphold human rights, (2) stop torturing its citizens and (3) make the perpetrators accountable.

On April 28, the delegation visited the offices of the World Council of Churches in Geneva where they were greeted by WCC general secretary Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia. Dr. Kobia visited the Philippines in 2007 as head of an international delegation that campaigned for Pastor Guerrero’s release.

(by KARAPATAN, Alliance for the Advancement of People’s Rights, www.karapatan.org)
People’s Charter on Peace for Life

A People’s Charter on Peace for Life is a groundbreaking document that articulates the true meaning of peace from a people’s perspective in the new 21st century geo-political context. The Peace Charter was drafted in a series of meetings in Korea and adopted in October 2007 in Hwacheon, Korea.

The initiative to draft the People’s Charter on Peace for Life was led by Dr. Kim Yong-bock from Korea, chancellor of the Advanced Institute for Integral Study of Life, and Dr. Ninan Koshy from India, political analyst and former executive of the World Council of Churches. The project was supported by others, key among them, Dr. Ulrich Duchrow from Germany, professor of systematic theology at the University of Heidelberg, and Carmencita Karagdag from Philippines, Peace for Life Coordinator.

‘Peace for Life’ is a comparatively new concept that underlines the intertwining of life and peace. It is based on the sacred and inviolable right to life with human dignity, justice, freedom, and protection for the ecosystem. Peace is defined from the perspective of people and the planet as distinct from that of governments or interstate bodies.


The people of Hwacheon are delighted that the Peace Charter was drafted in their city, which is near the Demilitarized Zone and site of some of the bloodiest fighting of the Korean War. There are plans to establish a Bell Park for peace to make Hwacheon a place of pilgrimage for peace and life. A summary of the charter will be prominently displayed in the Bell Park. The Charter thus may also be called the Hwacheon Peace Charter.

The full document may be found at the website of Peace for Life: http://www.peaceforlife.org/projects/peacecharter/index.html
The following are excerpts from the Peace Charter:

- The notion that war is inevitable is totally unacceptable... If war is inevitable then peace becomes dispensable; peace has no space. The commitment to regain and expand the space for peace by struggling for a just and inclusive world community has to be reaffirmed.

- One of the casualties of the culture of war is the colonization of our imagination. People need to resist subjugation and reclaim their imagination. They have to dream anew of new possibilities. People need to exercise their imagination and envision a new world—a world without war or violence.

- The understanding of peace has to be broadened to lead to Great Peace. Toward this, the rich resources on peace from Asian traditions and religions need to be tapped.

- Since war begins in the minds of human beings, it is in those very minds that the defense of peace must be constructed....A culture of peace aims at transforming values, attitudes and behavior based on violence to those which promote peace and nonviolence. It aims at empowering people at all levels with skills of dialogue, mediation, and peace building.
Communicating Hope in Myanmar

1 Planting of new trees after Cyclone Nargis in July 2008 at Myanmar Baptist Convention compound

2-3 Music therapy and entertainment by the Christian Musicians Fellowship (CMF) for the cyclone-affected community

4 Blood donation drive organized by the Baptist Mission Bicentenary Celebration Mobilization Committee in December 2008 at Yangon General Hospital

(by Myanmar Baptist Convention-email: MBC@mptmail.net.mm, Att: Rev. Saw Mya Min Lwin)
Many years of fighting between the Philippine military and Muslim secessionists in Mindanao have resulted in indescribable destruction of life and property in southern Philippines and the deepening of divisions between Christians and Muslims.

In Metro Manila, there are neighborhoods – no different from ghettos – where Filipino Muslims live amid a much larger population of Christians. They had fled from the fighting in Mindanao, only to experience a different kind of conflict in Manila, where they are viewed with suspicion as outsiders.

In an effort to find a fresh peace-building paradigm, the Communication Foundation for Asia (CFA) developed the Peace Camp project for young Christians and Muslims, which gained the support of EED, Germany. To ensure wider cooperation and reach, CFA formed partnerships with the Episcopal Commission on Interfaith Dialogue (ECID) of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP), the Young Moro Professionals’ Network and the Ramon Avanceña High School (RAHS), which is located within a growing Muslim enclave in Quiapo, Manila.

On May 8-12, 2006, CFA conducted the Peace Camp for 29 Christian and Muslim students of the Ramon Avanceña High School, giving them creative opportunities to share their impressions of each others’ customs and religion, and to express their hopes for peace through video, photography, painting, writing, music and theater.

The broad aim of the project is to promote Christian-Muslim reconciliation and peace using the youth as catalysts for change. The goal is to foster a new spirit among children – both Christian and Muslim – so that their generation can declare, with conviction: Whether Muslims or Christians, we are all Filipinos proud of our cultural identities and united in our cultural diversity.

A vital component of the project is the video documentary. CFA produced a 31-minute video program entitled “Dear Peace”, which documented the unique Peace Camp process over a one-year period. Although one purpose of the documentary production was to have it broadcast on television, the more important purpose was to use it as a discussion piece (practically the “centerpiece”) of the forums that became part of the Traveling Exhibit.
The video documentary had its premiere showing at Ramon Avanceña High School on September 21, 2007, the International Day of Peace. On November 10, 2007, there was a second “premiere” of “Dear Peace” at CFA, with all the project partners in attendance. The documentary has been broadcast and replayed many times on the Catholic Channel TV Maria, which can be seen on both cable and satellite. The exhibit of paintings, photos, posters and video has been on tour since September 2007. It has been shown in schools, religious centers, malls, museums and even in embassies and police training centers in various parts of the country, from Metro Manila to Cebu, Mindanao, Central and Northern Luzon, and Southern Luzon.

Copies of the DVD have been sent to partner agencies in Germany, Canada and the Netherlands. It was even presented by the Archbishop of Manila, Cardinal Gaudencio Rosales, to the Vatican, as part of the Philippine report on new initiatives for inter-religious dialogue.

In May 2008, the video was shown at the Asia Region Assembly of the World Association for Christian Communication held in Chiangmai, Thailand.

This year, the Communication Foundation for Asia is holding a new Peace Camp for a bigger batch of high school students from four schools.

(by Communication Foundation for Asia, 2009: www.cfamedia.org)
A church in Xishuang Banna (Jinhong), Yunnan Province, China, has no background in HIV and AIDS issues and is also afraid of PLWHAs (People Living with HIV and AIDS). But another church, also in Xishuang Banna, a Tai Lue ethnic minority, started its work on HIV and AIDS with the help of some partners as part of its integral mission.

Since Xishuang Banna is a ‘gate’ to enter China, the city became a tourist destination and many rural people migrated there to provide sex services. Many sex workers attend church services on Sundays and the number of church goers is increasing. The churches do not know how to reach out to these sex workers.

The three S’s: sex, sin and salvation

Many Christians in Mekong countries believe that PLWHAs are people who have ‘sinned’ due to their sexual misbehavior, by having either sex with sex workers or sex outside marriage. The dominant Christian belief is that there is no salvation for people who are ‘sinners’. There are no discussions and concerns raised at all about children who are born HIV positive, and about women who received HIV from their husbands. No one questions the idea at all how women and children acquired HIV by misbehaving sexually.

Sex, HIV and AIDS issues are not easy subjects to openly talk about within the churches in Mekong countries including China. But a church in Xishuang Banna is sincerely interested to work with sex workers since there are many sex workers who come to worship at this church each Sunday.
A group of women from Xishuang Banna once visited Church of Christ in Thailand’s (CCT) AIDS Ministry (CAM) to learn about CAM’s work on HIV and AIDS. Challenged by these Chinese women, the Mekong Ecumenical Partnership Program (MEPP) responded by initiating a Personnel Exchange Program between churches in Xishuang Banna and Thailand. The aim of the program was to provide opportunities for mutual learning and experience sharing between participants, and to enhance personal and team development skills on HIV and AIDS work and related issues.

One of MEPP’s ministries is linking churches in Thailand and China and to help these churches initiate collaborative work on HIV and AIDS and related issues. On February 25 to March 2, 2009, the MEPP Coordinator, Ms Janejinda Pawadee, led a team composed of seven CAM staff, together with a pastor who was CCT’s missionary to Xishuang Banna in 2003 to 2007, to visit churches in Xishuang Banna.

A future plan is for church leaders from China to visit Thailand and gain some experience on working on HIV and AIDS. CCT’s CAM has a long experience of AIDS advocacy and service work. CCT is willing to help church leaders and churches in Xishuang Banna to prepare them for work on HIV prevention, counselling, pastoral care, home-based care, including confronting discrimination and stigmatisation of PLWHAs.

It is not too late to help churches in Mekong countries to understand that all human beings and not only PLWHAs have sinned. Salvation comes to everyone through Jesus Christ who taught us to love one another. If we learn to love, discrimination and stigmatisation will not be issues anymore.

HIV and AIDS are not issues of sex, sin or salvation. HIV and AIDS are issues of life in all aspects - physical, emotional and spiritual. Churches have important roles to help eliminate HIV and AIDS but not the people living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHAs). One of these roles is to communicate God’s unconditional love for all, especially for PLWHAs.

(By Janejinda Pawadee, Mekong Ecumenical Partnership Program. Contact: Christian Conference of Asia, email: cca@cca.org.hk; website – www.cca.org.hk)
Easter, a festival which commemorates the resurrection of Jesus Christ, symbolizes life and hope. Yet sickness is all around the world. Hundreds and thousands are suffering from sickness every day, and many have to face discrimination and live in despair. HIV/AIDS is an example.

Organized by the St John’s Cathedral HIV Education Centre (the Centre), the AIDS Festival 2009 was successfully held on April 5, 2009 at the Chater Road Pedestrian Precinct, Central, Hong Kong. 20 groups of participants from different cultures and nations including Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, Sri Lanka etc. gathered together and took the lead to fight AIDS. The aim of AIDS Festival is to raise the awareness of AIDS among the public and ethnic minorities, and enhancing racial harmony.

The theme for this year AIDS Festival is “Stop AIDS, Keep The Promise– Lead-Empower-Deliver”. Leadership encourages leaders at all level to stop AIDS. Leadership empowers everyone, including individuals, organizations and government to lead the response to AIDS. People have offered their leadership, it’s time to deliver. Promises must be kept and people must feel empowered to act and confront HIV/AIDS through prevention, cure, support and care.

The AIDS Festival 2009 brought along a series of performances to the public, including free basic medical check-ups, booth exhibitions, dancing and fashion competitions, drama, magic show and cultural performances.

According to UNAIDS, there were 33.2 million people living with HIV in 2007; half of them are females and children. Every day, more than 5,700 die from AIDS. There are approximately 4.9 million HIV-infected patients in Asia alone. According to the statistics of Department of Health in Hong Kong, in the fourth quarter of 2008, there is a cumulative total of reported HIV infection of 4047, including 227 non-Chinese.
Eni Lestari, Chairperson of the International Migrant Alliance expressed that migrant workers are very vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. However, instead of curing the disease and providing accessible medical care, many receiving governments impose discriminative policies against migrant workers such as mandatory testing for HIV/AIDS.

“In Hong Kong, the employment ordinance stipulates that employers are to be responsible for our healthcare expenses by requiring them to purchase medical insurance for us. Unfortunately, either not many of us are aware of this or our employers do not implement it. This is not to mention the fact that the insurance provided to us usually does not cover the more severe illnesses that we oftentimes also get because of the nature of our job,” Eni continued.

St. John’s Cathedral HIV Education Center is the first faith-based organization to embrace HIV/AIDS education and prevention services in Hong Kong, and primarily provides services to women, teenagers, migrant workers and community groups. The Centre was established in 1995 in order to induce awareness to the rapid spread of HIV in Hong Kong.

In addition, the Centre combines the energies and resources with many international women’s groups, faith-based organizations and UN agencies to combat the AIDS pandemic. (By St John’s Cathedral HIV Education Centre: http://www.sjhivctr.com/)
On the March 8, 2009, about 120 members of the Timorese Community of the St Mary’s Cathedral Sandakan assembled at St Mark’s Church, Mile 12, Labuk Road to attend a briefing by Ms. Tumiur Harianja, the Coordinator of Center for Indonesian Migrant Workers (CIMW) of Jakarta, Indonesia. The briefing touched on current issues and problems faced by the migrant workers and the proper channel to voice their predicaments. Through this awareness forum, the community decided to form an ad-hoc committee to look into the welfare of the community as well as a channel for the Church to reach out to them.

(by Urban Community Mission, Jakarta: email cimw@cbn.net.id)
An unprecedented global recession is having a great impact on the communication rights of migrant workers in Taiwan and Macau. Like in past economic crises, migrant workers can be labeled wittingly or unwittingly of allegedly “stealing” the jobs of local workers. This creates an added fear to the migrant workers besides losing their jobs, lowering of their wages and benefits. It is thus a great challenge for migrant advocates including churches to intervene on behalf of the migrant workers so that no further discrimination is orchestrated against them.

In both Taiwan and Macau, some local workers groups are calling for the expulsion of all migrant workers within their territories. In response the governments of both places have announced that they will reduce the number of migrant workers and prioritize the hiring of local workers instead. At the same time, there is an intensification of crackdowns on undocumented migrant workers.

The Macau government in particular has resorted to these harsh measures including giving out cash to permanent and non-permanent residents alike to quell the anger of local people planning a May Day rally against “businesspeople ruling Macau”.

There are even reports in Taiwan of three Filipino factory workers being beaten up by other local workers and a supervisor resenting their presence on the island. In Macau, a hate hand-out was given out late last year in both English and Chinese threatening Filipinos to leave Macau.

From November 2008 – February 2009, Taiwan saw a decline of 24,018 migrant workers mostly in the manufacturing sector. But the total number of those retrenched because of the crisis is believed to be much higher as the Philippines alone had more than 4000 new hires during that period.

Macau on the other hand saw a decline of 14,950 from September 2008 – February 2009. Most of these were from manufacturing, construction and the gaming industry. The latter had the most number of foreign workers retrenched at 52% of the total migrant worker force.
In addition to this, the Council of Labor Affairs (CLA) announced that it would want to further reduce 30,000 or 17% of the migrant workers in the manufacturing sector in 2009.

Macau’s government announced its own measures which will supposedly be discussed in their Legislature by December 2009 that would if implemented lead to 15,698 migrant workers being retrenched in the construction industry; 8,966 in hotel and restaurants; 770 in the security services and an unknown number in the cleaning categories.

Going back to Taiwan, the government also allowed the imposition of additional labor flexibility schemes such as no work, no pay and forced unpaid leave. These have been imposed on both migrant and local workers. For migrant workers this has reduced their already meager pay.

While in Macau there are reports of up to 33% wage cuts in some casinos while the Mandatory Provident Fund for Wyn casino in Macau would be discontinued.

It is thus a big challenge for migrant advocates including churches to create a space for migrants to understand their condition in the midst of the global recession. They need to learn how to work in solidarity with local workers and other sectors affected by the crisis in order to protect their rights and well-being. We should also advocate for a society where there is opportunity for everyone to live a decent and humane life.

(by Asia Pacific Mission to Migrants: www.apmigrants.org)
Communication is sharing, togetherness, fellowship, give and take, etc. When we share, there is peace. Peace is communicated when a person is involved with the people, understands their problems, and shares in their joys as well as sorrows. Communication is peace when we join hands with those people and raise our voice in their struggle for rights and freedom. Communication is peace when we stand on the side of the oppressed and challenge the oppressors. Communication is not silent but it involves, listens, understands and acts.

One Indian woman who embodies this kind of communication is named Mercy Mathew. Mercy holds a Bachelor’s degree in Law and a Masters in Social Work, but is now affectionately called Dayabai by the tribals of Madhya Pradesh. Dayabai is the name that Mercy adopted when she decided to leave her comfortable life in her home state of Kerala in south India at a tender age and sacrifice her life for the common people (minorities) in their struggle for life.

Living and working among the illiterate, marginalised tribals in the heartland of India, she spends time with those who are in need, listens to their voices, educates them of their rights and acts according to the situation. She selflessly renders her services for humankind. Hers is a conscious, deliberate effort at taking sides to build communities, and she communicates by taking sides and getting involved in the common peoples’ struggle for life.

Dayabai has been living with the Gond people in Chhindwara district of Madhya Pradesh for more than twenty years. There are a number of untold stories about her. Some of them are the encounters with the village goondas who tried to abuse her while she fights for the rights of the villagers. She was once brutally beaten up by a policeman while she was trying to protect a victim of domestic violence.

Some of her work: she works for women’s rights; she opened schools for the minorities, negotiates between the government and common people, fights for justice and teaches people how to protect themselves against corruption, teaches ecological concerns, helps various villages teaching people the need for conservation of water, and performs and organises street theatre related to relevant social issues.
Peace Walk: From Chitrakoot to Ayodhya

One of Dayabai’s involvements in solidarity with others was the peace walk from 27 May to 21 June 2002 organised by social activists Sandeep Pandey and his wife Arundhati Dhuru (under The National Alliance of People’s Movement in India). The walk was from Chitrakoot to Ayodhya, and the motive behind it was to:

- promote communal harmony,
- protect our different cultures and religions to live together
- protect the country of the misuse or politicising of religion
- raise questions about the communal riots in Gujarat
- protest strongly about the riots and violence in Gujarat
- hold inter-religious meetings and dialogue about the issue of Ayodhya with the Babri mosque and the Ram temple which was the cause of massacres

One of Dayabai’s poems:

“Memories”

You bounced on me
Mercilessly with all your might
My crime
Pleading
For a voiceless woman
Questioning
An unjust act...
You - a big man
Fed on the government’s money
Clad in a police uniform
Vested with power
I - a simple village-looking woman
Clad in a village sari
With no label
Living on hard earned money...

Note: More information about Dayabai and her work can be obtained from the book: “Dayabai: The Lady With Fire” by Mercy Mathew (Dayabai) and Annie Drese, and the documentary “Dayabai: Tribal Mercy”.

(By I. Lanusenla, Leonard Theological College, Jabalpur, India, email: ltcjbp@gmail.com)
Children all around Indonesia have the right to get attention for their personality, character, and faith development in order to achieve happiness in the future. They also deserve happiness in their childhood along with their peers in their social communities. Faith education for Christian children is the task and responsibility of parents. But in reality, many parents are not able to do so. Considering this situation, the Church has initiated faith education for children by involving societal participation with activities in the neighborhood, area and also parish, including intensive activities at school.

The EMMANUEL SERIES by Kanisius Publishing Yogyakarta is a multimedia program of Christian guidance activities for child faith development. It uses creative and innovative methods and its application can range from simple to sophisticated. The series has five themes that reflect the essence of the concern of the Indonesian Church and Catholics nowadays.

The five themes are:
- Ke Gereja Yuk (Let’s Go to Church)
- Biar Beda Tetap Bersahabat (United in Diversity)
- Mencintai Lingkungan (Love your Environment)
- Aku Bisa Kapan Pun Bisa (I can do it anytime)
- Akrab dan Damai (Friendship and Peace)
In the last 2 years, Kanisius Publishing Yogyakarta has cooperated with other institutions to hold training for using guidance activities for child faith development at archdioceses in Indonesia such as:

- Manado-North Sulawesi
- Toraja-Makasar
- Manggarai-Ruteng
- Denpasar-Bali
- Pontianak-West Kalimantan
- Jakarta, Bandung-West Java
- Bogor-West Java
- Pangkalpinang, Medan-North Sumatra
- Lampung-South Sumatra
- Surabaya-East Java
- Malang-East Java
- Purwokerto-Central Java

It is hoped that the Emmanuel series as multidimensional media helps today’s children prepare themselves to be a strong church in the future, to have good character and to be assertive as well as tolerant.

(by Dwi Ismarwanto, Kanisius Multimedia, www.kanisiusmedia.com; email: office@kanisiusmedia.com)
About WACC

The World Association for Christian Communication is a global network of communicators, journalists and activists who share a commitment to using communication media for social change. WACC works to build a peaceful world community based on justice and human dignity.

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• Media and Gender Justice
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• Communication for Ecumenism
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Listen to an interview with WACC General Secretary Rev. Dr. Randy Naylor, conducted by Judy Chan during his visit to Hong Kong in February 2009 at www.waccglobal.org/asia
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