

Youthfulness at its best as SACYN unfolds in Dubai

The South Asia Christian Youth (SACYN) annual leadership and discipleship training programme unfolded with all youthful gaiety at the Holy Trinity Church in Dubai. Day two began with a time of private devotion on the book of Ruth. After the morning worship the Rev. Chukka Helen Sweety led the Bible Study based on the experiences of the Canaanite woman. Tan Shin Young then led a session on the Migrant Strangers in the Globalised world. He shared his experience working with the migrant communities in Singapore and in other parts of the world. Arul Das and Solomon David then discussed with the group on the realities of the migrants and diaspora communities in the UAE.

Four meaningful workshops were organized. Tang Shin Yong led a workshop on "Creating a Safe Space for Migrant Workers" where he emphasized on one aspect of migrant care, safety. Chukka Helen led a workshop on "Women and Children as Migrants". Adrian Watkins discussed with his team on South Asian Migrants, local churches and country identities. Rev. Sam Ponniah led a workshop on "Conflicts and its Impact on Migration". There was a sharing session after, which ensured cross learning where the participants of different workshops shared their learnings with the others. A visit to the Labour Camps was organized for the participants. Some of them got firsthand experience of the very difficult living conditions some of them lived in.

Tuesday the 25th November also began with a private devotion based on the handbook prepared by Kang San Tan on the life of Ruth. The Bible Study was led by Tang Shin Yong on the book of Philemon. John Chethri and Miranga Pieris then led the group through the experiences of different young people in the migrant situations. A very interesting and participatory session on the "Experiences and Projections of being a Regional Community" was then led by Raj Patel. He engaged the group in a meaningful introspection on identities and how migration affects the identity of people. Workshops were led by Lee Long Ling on "Building Cultural Bridges", Ravi I on "Religious Dynamics of Migration" and by Mathew T George on "Journalism as a Tool from God."

The CSI Malayalam congregation in Dubai then offered a cruise dinner for the group. Young people and families from the church joined the group led by Rev. Praveen Chacko.

Those were three very meaningful days of our life- This was the response of one of the participants when asked to reflect on the initial days.



LABOUR CAMP – A VIEW OF THE LENS

Bincy



There was a lot of buzz among the various participants that had come to the SACYN conference 2014 regarding the labour camp. I was also a little excited as I was about to capture the various emotions through my lens. Two days had passed, and I had only captured the participants, their happiness, their activities, Dubai; but now it was my turn to capture the true stories behind all the glitz and glamour of Dubai, the Exclusive City.

We were scheduled to depart for the labour camp at 5 in the evening but our transport got delayed and we had to wait till 7pm. Meanwhile I heard the leader warn the participants not to carry their cameras as that would result in encroaching into their private space. I became sad and then I heard my owner saying that he would take me as he wanted to capture the essence of the meagre lives that wasted away in Dubai.

My lens were adjusted, the auto mode was set, the brightness and the filters were in place and I was all set to take the tour to the underprivileged parts of the grandeur Dubai.

I had heard different stories about the poor living conditions that the inhabitants of the labour camp lived in. I had already created a visual regarding how the labour camp would look like. There were too many people crammed into a single room, with no proper sanitation, no proper food, and no proper place to sleep in. But when we reached the camp, I was a little disappointed to see that my visual did not have truth in it. I was being judgmental regarding the labour camps to be inhumane. But what I saw was people from different communities coming and staying together as one. Contrary to what I had heard, I saw a different picture all together. The rooms were clean, there was proper sanitation and livable conditions existing in the labour camp. However there was loneliness lingering in the air as they welcomed us. They smiled but their eyes were moist. They had different stories to tell some had come to support their families while some came to give their children the education they were deprived of. Some were here to send money to provide health care to their old parents while some were here to build a future for themselves. They had dreams in their eyes but little hope of them to get fulfilled. Whatever the reasons were helplessness was what got them the courage to leave their beloved and migrate here. Different nationals, different languages but they were bonded as one through one thing- loneliness. They cooked together, ate together and as we went to various rooms we heard them sing and saw them dance.

If I had a heart it would have been heavy with multiple emotions, sadness at their plight, joy at their togetherness and worry about their future. I had my memory card waiting to capture some beautiful memories. They happily posed as I clicked away. While returning though my memory card was not full but I was overwhelmed from the experience I had just encountered.



THE FUTURE IS FULL OF HOPE

Kang San Tan

SACYN is one of the few active Christian youth movements in South Asia whereby younger leaders from about 9 countries are gathered for a week of learning and sharing. Our dream is to grow this movement whereby younger leaders meet, share their experiences and are challenged to conduct similar training in their countries. In 2014, our younger leaders were introduced to some of the challenges faced by migrant communities in Dubai and the need for creative responses that are required for younger leaders to be God's agents for change. We are inspired by the high quality of commitment and enthusiasm of young people. We ask for prayers that these young people will return to their countries to cascade lessons gained and share them in the forms of local trainings and seminars.

On 26th Nov, 2014, all participants will be busy writing a reflective paper based on their visits to labour camps and inputs received from various plenary sessions. After presenting their papers in small groups, the best papers will be presented to the larger group. Two of the best papers will be awarded with the prize of becoming Ambassadors for SACYN. We hope that they will be able to promote the vision and dreams of SACYN to the wider Christian communities in the West and in Asia. Future is indeed filled with hope.



A YOUTHFUL PERSPECTIVE

Miranga Peiris

SACYN brings together 12 churches (different denominations) from 7 countries and I strongly believe that by being part of SACYN programs, one can gain lot of knowledge by assisting on areas like worship, documentation, workshops, and other administrative tasks. Also on ecumenical churches, meet people from different backgrounds & work with them, build relationships and also add value through knowledge and talents to make this Movement a success. Further one could take this experience, knowledge back to their countries and share with the local churches and in return it will definitely add value to local youth.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE WORKSHOP



Women and Children as Migrants

Agnes Nancy Macdoline

SACYN 2014's aim being educating the young Christian youth of today on migration and its effects, the workshops laid emphasis on women and children migrants. Being led by Rev. Sweetie Chukka Helen, the discussion took off with brief a description of migration itself.

Migration has almost become an important social phenomenon taking place on a large scale. While deeply analysing the causes, we as a group figured out Globalisation to be one of the vital reasons. Although this denoted the growth taking place around the globe, while we tried to look into an extended horizon number of other reasons popped up. Some of them being inequalities of wealth, environmental disasters, political influence and economic factors denoted the grey side of migration.

Taking into account the South Asian family set up, it is a pre-conceived notion that men are not only the leaders of the family but also the earning member. Therefore they are more likely to form a higher percentage among the migrant community. Whereas on the contrary a statistics says that around 200-300 million (i.e) 3.5% of the world's total population are migrants out of which more than 50% turn out to be women."

Turning our attention to women, we then tried to figure out the factors that influence women to migrate. Certain pull factors that we thought might have stimulated women includes their ambition to move further in life and also a force within themselves to fulfil their desires. But on the other hand certain push factors that we thought to have existed includes the desperation that women faces in her surrounding and the pain and difficulties that she undergoes in her society.

So what is the plight of the children? They grow up seeing their mother being abused. They are denied of parental care as the mother is deprived of her right to look after her children. This ends up bringing negative psychological effects in them.

So finally, we tried to look out into ways of bringing in some kind of support to the migrant women and children as putting an end to this problem would be a long term process. All that we thought that we as young Christians could do is to make ourselves clear of the laws and regulations that are into existence for the welfare of the migrants and then create awareness among the women migrants in our neighbourhood. We also decided that we could provide psychological support migrant women in our surrounding. And, to conclude from a biblical point of view we as Christians are set on a mission to 'Love one Another as we love ourselves' so theological hospitality would be the best support that anybody in Christ could extend to a stranger for God always seeks justice for migrants as in case of the Egyptians in the Bible.



Creating a Safe Space for Migrant Workers

Rashmi Rajahmoney

"What can we, as a sender country do to prepare youth who are going to migrate? "

This was the note on which the workshop of Shin Yong on Safe Spaces for Migrant Workers closed. Traditionally the church system looks for those who Behave in a manner acceptable to that church, to Become a member to finally gain a sense of Belonging, However, as Christians it is the reverse that must be practised. People need to feel a sense of Belonging in order to Become a member after which Behaviour would follow automatically. In the case of migrant workers, it is necessary for us to go where they are, meet them at their level to truly empathise and be in a position to provide them with the necessary comfort and guidance.

In the discussion, parallels between the cities of Singapore and Dubai were drawn with many examples cited of exploitation of workers by their employees by non-payment of promised salary, non-compensation of work related accidents etc. coming back to the pertinent question of what we, as youth can do. The following suggestions were made

- Organising church level orientation programs for youth which would be informative and provide them with necessary information including employee rights.
- Create networks which would help support migrants
- Looks for means of strengthening and supporting advocacy movements which call for tighter control over agents

This helped the youth in not only understanding the issues faced by a migrant worker but also in some practical steps we can take to ensure the risks are mitigated.



DUBAI TIMES: INSPIRATION FROM YOUNG LEADERS

Sweetie Helen Chukka

Every time I attend an International Ecumenical Youth gathering, I am inspired. I am inspired at the leadership qualities of young people, the potentials youth are blessed with, and the way that they exhibit it. SACYN is yet another Ecumenical Network I got in touch with just this year. A network of young people, a fellowship of youth from South Asia, gathered together as young people to learn, to unlearn, to reflect, to meditate, to exhibit, to articulate, to contemplate and to experience. Yet another opportunity to learn from young delegates to be an effective leader, to be a committed organizer, to be a

faithful steward and to be an ever willing volunteer. SACYN gives me memories, memories filled with learning, that I would cherish, that I would practice and that I would share. SACYN times are an experience of creative leadership, creative sessions, and committed individuals. It is my anticipation, that SACYN will continue create leaders, will encourage partners, will nourish relationships around South Asia and will express solidarity with those vulnerable communities who deserve their voices be heard, their cries attended and their needs met. May SACYN be a network of expressing solidarity, a network of connecting people and a platform that promotes ecumenical learning and thinking.



Send in your entries for SACYN Times before 10pm to: anilalmjose@gmail.com

WHAT YOU CONTRIBUTE TODAY IS MEMORY IN THE FUTURE