

Ten Nations: One Binding Energy- Youthfulness

Young people from ten different countries experience the synergy of youthfulness at the South Asia Christian Youth Network Leadership and Discipleship Training programme being held at the Holy Trinity Church in Dubai. Youth from Sri Lanka, Nepal, Myanmar, Pakistan, India, Bhutan, UK, Singapore and Malaysia are participating this year and the significant absentee were delegates from Bangladesh who were not able to secure VISA to the UAE in spite of many efforts over two months. Transcending barriers of nationality, ethnicity, language and all other realities that build walls between peoples SACYN was trying to build bridges of fellowship and friendship across the four days of training.

The 26th of November was marked as a day of reflection and sharing. Young people were asked to write a five page reflective paper on one of their observations on the theme of Migration and South Asian youth. The day began with worship on the lawns of the Holy Trinity church done creatively with lot of singing and prayer. Neethu Elsa Varghese led the Bible Study on the life of Onesimus. The forenoon was then set apart for the young people to write their reflective essays. The announcement that the two top essays would get a trip to the UK as SACYN Ambassadors as the prize made the essay writing an intimate one.

After everyone had written their essays the group was divided into five groups and the essays were presented in the small groups for discussion and evaluation. One essay from each group was then chosen to be presented at the final plenary. Reshmi, Preethi, Ebenezer, Mervin and Bincy presented their papers which were all top class. Best among these essays would bag the prize. The deep analysis of Preethi and Ebenezer on the issue of Migration, the original and creative presentation of Bincy on the visit to the labour camps and the out of the box suggestions of Preethi and Mervin on the fund raising possibilities of South Asian youth were all well taken. Some of the essays that were not taken for the final round were then send to an expert panel for deep analysis and evaluation. There were people who wrote in their native languages and those papers were translated for the expert group trying best not to rob the papers of its originality and content.

The evening was left free for the group to explore into the live realities of Dubai. Special arrangements were also made for those who wished to have a continuing experience of the labor camps.

Today people look forward to have an interaction with Ajoy Varghese of the International Justice Mission to understand further the justice aspects of the issue of migration. The drawing of the threads led by Kang San Tan, Adrian Watkins and Raj Patel will look basically on the directions SACYN will take in the future. Fr. Sam Ponniah and Fr. Vinod Victor will lead the closing session of dedication. Certificates will be issued to all participants. The participants will worship in different churches on Friday and the meeting will conclude with the Business session on Friday afternoon.



WHAT IMPACT SHOULD SACYN HAVE ON ITS PARTNERS?

Raj Patel



The strength of SACYN is apparent mostly in its participants and alumni which are drawn from 10 South Asian countries and supported by a number of others.

The beatitude 'Blessed are the meek', the meek including the dispossessed and discriminated, has been given a fuller meaning particular as the participants learn about and visit the exploited migrant labourers in Dubai and share similar stories of people from their own countries. This dynamic learning is beginning to be translated into new and invigorated actions in each delegates countries and wider.

The effervescence of the delegates is definitely fizzing over into counties beyond their own. The responses to the question 'What impact should SACYN have on its partners (which so far have been the funding partners)?' Gained 20 written responses. These can be clustered under three categories:

- (a) contribute significantly to the churches and young people in partner churches (8 responses)
- (b) learning from each other and to disseminate that learning (6 responses)
- (c) demonstrate the unity and bonding that develops across South Asia and partners' countries (6 responses)

Below is just one response that typifies the strength of voices raised by this question:

To connect with partners and give back 10 times what they have donated to SACYN, whether this may be money or people in Christ.

WHO SERVED YOUR LUNCH?

Mathew T. George

Was the lunch at the Holy Trinity Church good? I thought so, too. Tasty and wholesome. Any idea who served you lunch? Yup, thin short guy in a grey Tshirt and stout black guy in a white, button down shirt that had Sujas in red.

Mr White Shirt's name is Gino, an Indian. Hailing from Omallur in Kerala's Pathanamthitta district, he is a qualified lift technician. When the bottom dropped out of the market for lift technicians, he worked in a pharmacy for two years and then moved on to catering. It's been two-and-a-half years since he came to Dubai. Life has been tough, but no



complaints, he says.

Mr Grey Tshirt is Balakrishnan aka Balan from Madurai in the state of Tamil Nadu, India. No complaints here, either. Sujas is an old and reputed catering firm, and work is good. Just that the traffic is bad and distances mean nothing in Dubai. "We need to come early tomorrow," he warns Gino. "We just got here in time today. We had not finished setting up when everyone came down to eat." Gino nods in agreement.

Shake their hand when you see them today. Give them the warmth of your smile and the reassurance of your handshake.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE WORKSHOP

YOUTH DIASPORA AND THEIR STRUGGLE – SOLOMON DAVID

Preeti

Our workshop focus was more on the youth Diaspora and their struggle particularly of the educated. The facilitator stated the concept of the Kafala (Sponsorship). He believed that this trend of Kafala is one of the main means of exploiting the migrants. Kafala are the sponsoring people from the sending country, which means the sponsors have total control over the migrant and can treat the individual as per their needs.

Furthermore he talked about the mental pressure a youth experiences while he/she is away from home and the issues that arises from it. He stated that youth fall prey to drugs due to family pressure. This family pressure means the family burdens the youth to send money back home as soon as possible, without understanding the youth's living conditions, environment he/she lives in and failing to understand the distant feeling of home that the youth experiences. Moreover, educated youth tend to get attracted to the Western lifestyle; hence they opt for credits leading to high debts. The effects of the above mentioned leads to high level of stress, anxiety, depression experiencing burnt off stage.

Also the feelings of the youth who have been born and brought up in

the Middle East are not given permanent residency. They are still termed as migrants; a feeling of unacceptance is experienced.

The facilitator gave the outlook of the Church as follows:

- There is lack of unity among the denominations
- Lack of interest
- Very indifferent to our fellow people
- People are accustomed to their living

The facilitator also emphasized on the points on the role of the Church and the areas it should promote:

- Community Centre's at every locations
- Develop the community in Christ
- Building awareness of Diaspora Society

The migrants have learned and accepted their lifestyle. They have accepted their fate. It is difficult to understand that irrespective of living a life of a migrant, people still opt to come to Middle East to work, hence there is something good about being a migrant and at the same time something uncertain about it. "It is definitely a struggle only if you see it as a problem or a challenge".

Conflict of the Migrants - Sam Ponnaiah

Bincy Bijoy

It was never by choice that the migrants from various countries come to the Middle East or for that matter migrate to different parts of the world away from their home land. It is, the need, the requirement, the want of each individual to see their family suffer less, their children have good education, provide 3 meals per day and provide the family with the financial help. Yet it is the individuals who suffer the most, away from the comfort of their home, away from their families, sick, unhappy, lonely in the harsh working conditions it is the individuals who are in pain.

An in-depth understanding of the entire matter was a necessity. The root cause for the purpose of the migration was what was needed to be understood. Introspection into the various stories threw light on the different conflicts that the migrants faced. Poverty, Ignorance about their rights in the migrant countries as well as the laws of those countries, lack of opportunities in their homeland, the notion that the Middle East countries churn out lots of money were the major conflicts that the migrants faced.

The migrants are migrants at the end of the day away from their home in a foreign land, abused, insulted, underpaid and alienated from proper human living conditions. What as fellow human beings and beloved in Christ should be done so that they are a little less pained? Extend a hand of help, educate them about their rights and the laws which will enable them to carry on the correct procedure to undertake the jobs in the various migrant countries, not be indifferent to the sufferings of the migrants.

There are various instances in the Bible which teaches us the situations similar to that of the migrants. Whether that is the story of Jacob who ran away from the conflict with his brother Esau to his Uncle Laban where he was treated as a slave with promised marriage to Laban's daughter or be it the story of the Prodigal Son who flees away from the conflict at home of following the father and leading a good disciplined life and ends up being treated like an animal when he loses all the money. The Bible always had answers to the various unanswered questions; all that is needed to be done is link the context to the text.

Building Bridges Across Cultures - Loun Ling Tan

T. Bijoy Idicheriah

Anyone walking past room C4 at Trinity Church would have wondered if they had stumbled upon a bunch of lunatics, who kept nodding, smiling, pointing, shaking hands and even hugging.

Wait!!! Don't call the mental asylum yet! It was just a session by Loun Ling Tan on 'Building Cultural Bridges'.

Starting with the basic differences such as greeting one another across South Asia in church and non-church settings, Loun broke the ice by getting people from different parts of the region to greet, meet, exchange greetings and even hug!

Pointing out that each culture has aspects that are Biblical and some that are un-Biblical, she pointed out that in Asia, concepts such as time tend to be extremely fluid and stretchable, with delay being an essential part of how they function. She helped the workshop participants reach the conclusion that this Asian style was in sharp contrast to more formal Western approach that relies on timeliness.

Similarly, she highlighted 'Six Fundamental Patterns of Cultural Difference' and each participant voluntarily shared how the countries varies in communicating, problem solving, decision making, conflict management, disclosures and thinking processes.

In Asia, there is a 'monostic' approach to an individual, so body, mind and soul is treated as one, whereas the Western concept can

often split the person into body, mind and soul and communicate accordingly.

Referencing David Hesselgrave's theories, she moved on to the 'Seven Dimensions of Cross-cultural Communication', with specific stress on linguistics, behaviour patterns, ways of thinking, media influences and so on.

The participants stressed on the need to understand a culture to ensure accurate communication of the message, especially by missionaries, rather than assume a one style fits all approach.

One of the Pakistani participants Zeeshan James pointed out how confusing the typical Indian head shake can be, as it can mean yes, no or even mere acknowledgement that something has been heard.

Finally, in conclusion, Loun touched upon the 'Eight Aspects of Cross Cultural Presentation', which reiterated with examples how Asians, especially South Asians listened, spoke, stressed on content, time, differed on learning methods, media and handled audience responses.

At the end, when Loun asked whether we had understood the crux of these cultural differences on which bridges to be built to reach out to each other, especially in the service of God, the participants responded with an enthusiastic Indian head shake. :)

Films on Migration - Bijoy Idicheriah

Belinda Tan

The picture is very glorious and glamorous when we talk about Dubai or any foreign countries which promise enough income to the migrants. Is that picture true to itself or is there a broader angle to that picture? The workshop included clips from various countries which talked about the stories of migrants both in a humorous way as well as on serious notes.

The workshop blended Western exposures and Asian films on experiences of the life of migrants in a negative manner. It was a bizarre melding of anger and entertainment but I think that reflects the bizarre life of migrants in trouble. There are situations of injustice that boggles the mind, but in which life still has to go on, and the world revolves on its axis as before. There were clips that

showed how there is a clear discrimination made between the locals and the migrants, how the basic rights are denied to the migrants and above all how there is rigidness in accepting the migrants or somebody who does not belong to their so called 'community'. There are good attempts made in films to surface the issues, but the filmmakers are also compelled to serve the audiences as there is need for drama and comedy. There are attempts by documentarians and news agencies to expose the 'REAL' truth, but do they really issue a call for action or rather end up gathering fame only for themselves? We need filmmakers and activists and news sources to work together to result in high quality works with practical action for audiences.



Role of Communication Tools in Migrant Youth - Anil M. Jose Mervyn

Curtains Open! The first workshop of SACYN finally commences. Rev. Anil M Jose sits with his usual smiling self on the chair amidst the delegates and welcomes them warmly. The delegates were taken through a short presentation on communication tools especially amongst the youth. The aftermath of a powerful presentation was an intense group discussion with a fruitful outcome. Communication tools were analyzed with their potential challenges in future. The biggest challenges that have come

up were the control of information and barriers of language along with the availability of basic communication tools with every one of the migrants. The future hope of the workshop was a complete virtual world where everything and anything from live churches to video counselling could be a reality. The workshop concluded with a strong outcome that every migrant should be educated by either print or electronic media such that living conditions among migrant youth can be substantially improved.



City of Dreams! Ihtsham Ravi

A life for me, a smile for my wife,
A beginning for my child,
Oh city of dream! Do you have enough time?
I made you and love you,
You live in my mind,
Oh city of dream! Do you have enough time?
You was my work of hand, but, left me, as
stranger in new land,
To see your shadow from behind,
Oh city of dream! Do you have enough time?
Your promised me high aim, now I live without
claim,
I earned ashes, shame and lime,
Oh city of Dream! Do you have enough time?

Babel T. Bijoy Idicheriah

Dreams come true,
Every brick making the dream city real,
Not slowly, but surely the climb continues
Pride, the key driver
As they reach for the skies
Leaving the 'heavens' far behind
Towards stratospheres where
The babble of earth is not heard
The Babel of people on whose invisible shoulders
The dreams now stand
And into the shadows of these dream cities, disappear
The dreams of many who had dared to dream
But, now wilt away into the unseen corners where
They shall forever hold their peace



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

WHAT YOU CONTRIBUTE TODAY IS MEMORY IN THE FUTURE