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Empowering Youth as Keyplayers in Development

From your Editor Ms. Joy A. Bastian:

The number of youth between the ages of 15 and 24 is now 1.1 billion, that is, 18% of the global population. The youth and children population combined account for 40% of the world's population. They should be a significant group.

However, not many have paid attention to the importance of this young sector to collaborate with in our society, as we are very much occupied organizing mothers and farmers, collaborating with government officials, line agencies, and elected politicians. We are focusing much on developing the leadership style of current leaders so that it is geared towards the common good of the majority.

We should be empowering the youth in the hope to repeal recurring defective leadership in all societies, and coaching them to create an enabling environment.

Initiatives to develop the youth are being done like the Sangguniang Kabataan in the Philippines written by Mr. Marvin P. Saladar, the Girls Adolescent Club in Bangladesh by Mr. Kazi Mazed Nawaz, the Youth Media Team in Sri Lanka by Mr. Roy Antony Rodrigo, and the Teens Clubs in the Philippines by Ms. Joy A. Bastian.

Each writer narrated how the youth are being involved in various community level development initiatives such as electing political leaders, disseminating information through social media and print, asserting the rights of the young girls against arranged teenage marriage, acting as support group for kids, and advocates against injustices. A few of them even participated in the international competition, despite of limitations in resources and the lack of opportunities to develop them.

Empowered youth can be a drive for change.



Adolescent Girls Club members in Bangladesh. Photo by Mr. Kazi Mazed Nawas.

PAGE	TABLE OF CONTENTS
1	Editor's Note
	Focus Articles
2	Youth Federation, Mr. Marvin Saladar, Philippines
7	Adolescent Girls Club, Mr. Kazi Mazed Nawas, Bangladesh
9	MONLAR Youth Media Team, Mr. Roy Antonio Rodrigo, Sri Lanka
11	Teens Clubs, Ms. Joy A. Bastian
	HERE AND THERE
14	AHI Reunion Seminar in Bangladesh, Ms. Taslima Akter, Bangladesh
16	Speaking Tour, Ms. Kagumi Hayashi
	AROUND JAPAN
17	Fukushima Disaster, Voice from Japan
19-20	PCLDC, Vulnerables, Call for Articles, SUPPORT AHI: BE A MEMBER!

FOCUS ARTICLE

**Pamangkutanon Sang Banwa (Citizens Query)
Kwentahan Hindi Kwentohan (Accountability Not Lip Service)
Mr. Marvin P. Saladar, Local Government Unit of Bingawan, Philippines, ILDC 2005**

1. Background

Local politicians promise to deliver several good programs once they get elected. However, these are often empty promises.



Mr. Marvin Saladar

Republic Act 7160 (Local Government Code of 1991 or LGC 1991) mandated LGUs to ensure representation of basic sectors in the Local Development Council (LDC) and other special bodies wherein sectors choose representatives from among their groups. People's participation has opened opportunities for innovation to develop a more responsive and accountable local government structure. Though in practice, local elected officials choose only their allies to sit in the council and local special bodies, ignoring genuine inclusive people's participation in public administration and governance.



Collaborative activity of BWYF and LGU.

In effect, LGU responses to the needs of the community are sometimes ineffective resulting to unnecessary spending of its meager resources. The real voices of the legitimate representatives of the vulnerable sectors are not heard and included in the development planning, programming and budgeting

as well as in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programs and projects.

The Bingawan Working Youth Federation (BWYF) is a Federation of Youth Organizations in four barangays of Bingawan Municipality, Iloilo, with 250 members. I was a youth organizer in the federation. It is a non-sectarian, non-political organization organized in 1995 and registered as Rural Workers Association under the Department of Labor and Employment. A federation member organization was awarded as Outstanding Working Youth Organization in 1997 and 1998.

BWYF is accredited and an organic member of the Municipal Development Council (MDC) in Bingawan and was able to access funds from the Local Government (LGU) in 2003 to support the Tilapia (freshwater fish) Production Project.

The BWYF members are development advocates and co-organizer in barangay and municipal level undertakings like voters education campaign, conduct of barangay transparency and accountability program, and established partnership with different stakeholders such as NGOs, POs, religious, and business sector. At present, majority of the members are now employed in the LGU of Bingawan in sustaining the advocacy of transparent and accountable good governance, at the same time facilitating the bi-annual conduct of Pamangkutanon Sang Banwa (PsB), with other existing PO in the municipality as Project Management Team (PMT).

Last election of 2016 the elected municipal mayor and vice mayor came from the working youth over a landslide victory against their opponents. A dream come true as part of my plan of action during my 2005 ILDC training.

2. Objectives and Solution

The PsB: "Kwentahan hindi Kwentohan" (Citizens' Query: Accountability, Not Lip Service) is a multi-sectoral participatory governance program which

aims to promote transparency and accountability in local governance. It establishes a venue to assess performance of elected leaders and public officials and to raise issues, concerns and recommendations on the delivery of basic services. It tackles various issues: (1) lack of feedbacking mechanisms, transparency and accountability systems; (2) unclear leadership agenda; (3) limited people's participation in administration and governance, and; (4) reactive management of service delivery.

The program is a trail-blazing practice of assessing the performance of executives, legislators, village leaders and civil servants through regular municipal assembly. It commences during election period wherein candidates are asked to sign a Performance Evaluation Covenant (PEC) that when elected into office will submit themselves to public performance evaluation once in every six months. It binds public officials to their words and promises and serve as a goad that drives them to perform their mandates as civil servants and not masters of their constituents.

During the PsB, local officials personally and publicly present their reports of accomplishments for the past six months to the people. After which, there is an open forum to cater questions, clarifications or recommendations regarding the report or other governance-related issues. Concerned officials are obliged to give responses and actions to be taken to answer the queries immediately. Likewise, they can propose policies or measures to be considered in the next development planning and budgeting cycle.



The PsB assembly in Iloilo, Philippines.

Through this municipal assembly, the community could publicly express the services they need by writing questions based on the actual realities at the grassroots level. Involving the electorates in the PsB compel local officials to effectively improve planning programming, budgeting as well as

project, program and policy implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

By massive information dissemination, baseline information gathering, strengthening of local governance structure and LGU policy formulation, this public feedbacking and reporting mechanism tracks down, appraise actions and performance of local officials and LGU personnel. With this performance-based leadership, transparency is promoted and access of electorates to public information is provided; enhancing a pro-active role and participation of constituents in the delivery of services and other governance processes.

3. The Initiative

The LGU-Civil Society Organization (CSO)-PO partnership investments, institutionalized the PsB Executive Committee through a Municipal Ordinance and the PMT through Executive Order in 2017. The said order granted the PMT with the authority to formulate plans and facilitate in regular basis the conduct of PsB. The PMT is comprised of representatives from different sectors: farmers, youth, elderly, cooperatives, academe, business and transport group, women, persons with disability (PWD's) and religious sector, LGU representatives from the executive and the legislative departments, and the league of villages. It spearheads and decides on every aspect of the program implementation except for venue identification. It selects from among the sectoral representatives the members of screening committee, panelist, documenter and timekeeper who will serve as facilitators during the PsB.

The executive committee is composed of the Local Chief Executive, Chairperson of the Committee on Good Government of the Municipal Council, representatives from Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPC-RV) and NGO/PO, and Municipal Local Government Operations Officer (MLGOO) of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) – a national agency. It determines the venue for every conduct of PsB.

About 500 participants attend per conduct of the activity. They came from the general public, various CSOs, POs, students, pupils and religious groups. Regardless of gender and status in the community all participants have the same opportunity to raise relevant governance questions, clarifications and recommendations. Moreover, the result of the program could benefit about 15,000 people of the municipality.

4. Initiation, Implementation and Resources

The Iloilo CODE NGOs (ICODE), Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPC-RV), LGU, local POs, and the academe are the major designers of PsB. In 2000, Iloilo CODE NGOs, a provincial network of NGOs has been conducting community organizing activities in the municipality to promote people's participation in governance and empowerment of local communities. Prior to 2001 election, the Jaro Archdiocesan Social Action Center (JASAC), a social arm of the Archdiocese of Jaro, Iloilo, Philippines invited CSO community organizers to a seminar on voter's education conducted by the PPC-RV. It is a Commission on Election accredited citizens' arm responsible for educating electorates and poll watching to ensure a fair, honesty, orderly and peaceful election. This started the ICODE-PPC-RV partnership.



BWYF members attending the signing of Peace Covenant.

They spearhead voters' education and candidates' forum, advocate and campaign for transparency and accountability and mobilize people's participation in governance. With the support of the local PO and acceptance of the LGU, the initiative to establish a Performance Evaluation System for elective officials was conceptualized. This led to the establishment of Pamangkutanon sang Banwa (Citizens' Query): Kwentahan Hindi Kwentohan (Accountability Not Lip Service).

As the program progresses, the LGU strengthened its support through legislative actions. The Municipal Council enacted a Municipal Ordinance establishing the Pamangkutanon sang Banwa and providing funds for its implementation. It mandates reporting of plans, programs and accomplishments to the public, and provides policy support for strengthening and replication.

Meanwhile, the CSOs, POs and the academe lead the advocacy and community awareness, assist in the conduct of voters education for electorates, conducts role playing of students during the Youth Week Celebration, disseminate information to local media and replicate to the villages and other municipalities.

The PMT facilitates the overall conduct of the activity. Invitation and announcements are made through LDC meetings, streamers and social media postings, public address system, in church masses and worship services and in schools' flag ceremonies. Pre-activity meetings and consultations are held to plan, prepare, and select members of the screening committee, panelists, documenters and timekeeper to ensure smooth flow of PsB.

The 2-hour PsB is divided into two parts: the reporting and the open forum. Mechanics were established for proper guidance. The mayor delivers the accomplishment report of the executive department while the report of the legislative department is presented by the vice mayor. The financial report is also presented by the municipal treasurer or the municipal accountant.

For the open forum, questions are written on a piece of paper and placed into drop boxes circulating the venue. In order to accommodate questions from the public who could not attend the actual conduct, drop boxes are distributed in advance at the villages, churches, schools, public market and other conspicuous places. These questions are also raised and addressed during the open forum.

In lieu of direct oral questioning, it is agreed and established by the stakeholders that queries should be in written form to avoid irrelevant, personal and below-the-belt questions. Written questions serve as official reference document for re-planning and re-programming of community development projects.

All questions pass through the screening committee before forwarding to the panelist to avoid duplication, and to ensure that only relevant governance questions are raised. Unrelated questions yet require immediate actions are referred to concerned agencies. A letter is sent to the agency concerned clearly stating the prescribed response time or action. If the issue does not fall under the current priority programs, it is considered in the next budget planning. The panelist directs a specific question (read twice) to concerned elected officials, with a response time of 3 to 5 minutes.

An external, competent and credible moderator who understands the context of governance of the locality is invited to smoothen the flow of question and answer process during the open forum. This ensures neutrality and objectivity. The moderator helps clarify questions to generate specific answers.

For all qualified questions that could not be accommodated due to time constraint, they are read in the assembly by the panelist informing and assuring the public that these queries will be forwarded to the PMT for consolidation and presentation to the municipal council for appropriate action.

Since 2004 to 2016, Php 20,000.00 (\$385) per year is allotted in the annual budget of the LGU for the program. The LGU also provided free transportation for the participants to and from the venue. Host village also gives counterpart for the snacks in varied amount or in-kind depending on its capacity. All involved in the program implementation except the moderator are volunteers. In 2017, the budget increased to Php 30,000.00 (\$578) that enabled them to give an allowance of 300 pesos (\$6) each of the 11 PMT members. Budget for snacks and logistics also increased.

5. Community Impact and Sustainability

Peoples' right to vote is expressed through election. By virtue of their mandate, elected officials are the representatives of the people. Therefore, their governance decisions and actions should reflect the people's needs. The PsB is a mechanism to promote performance-based politics.

The LGC of 1991 mandated LGUs to have a comprehensive multi-sectoral development plan initiated by its Municipal Development Council (MDC). As provided, NGOs shall constitute not less than one-fourth of MDC membership. To be qualified as regular member, NGOs should undergo accreditation process in the municipal council. The POs cannot comply the tedious process, and lost the opportunity to be part of the planning process.

Through PsB, all community people could participate in local governance processes. They can air their needs, issues and concerns, for inclusion in the local development agenda. It gives feedback on the implementation of programs and projects as part of monitoring and evaluation.

To be specific, very poor road network is a chronic problem of the whole municipality. Recurrent and

significant number of questions regarding this concern is raised every conduct of PsB, that connotes urgency in addressing the issue. In turn, the LGU and the community give premium to the problem as highest priority project.



Youth participation in tree planting and environmental conservation activities.

For 10 years of implementing Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan-Comprehensive Integrated Delivery of Social Service (KALAHI-CIDSS) Program in the municipality, a community-driven project of the Department of Social Welfare and Development, 31 road projects out of 46 total sub-projects were completed. The CSOs also prioritized road projects under the Bottom-Up-Budgeting (BUB). The LGU accessed various funds for rehabilitation and concreting of roads. Significant improvements of road networks in the municipality is observable.

Improved road networks benefits the whole community particularly the farmers, women and children, elderly and persons with disability and other vulnerable groups. It enhances accessibility of far-flung areas and eases mobility, reduces travel time by a half, lessens transportation cost, improves delivery of services, and facilitates easy transport of products to the market.

The quality and frequency of questions regarding certain issues raised during the PsB measures the effectiveness of the responses and actions taken.

Public service is a public trust. PsB is a mechanism that helps protect the sacredness of votes because it makes popularity, traditional 3Gs (guns, goons, gold) and empty promises of non-performing incumbents and undeserving aspiring candidates irrelevant, to guarantee victory in the election.

To ensure accountability of winning candidates, they are asked to sign a covenant in front of the

public, that when elected they will submit themselves to a public performance evaluation. The program obliged elected officials to fulfill their duties as public servants and not public masters. Their performance gauge their chances for re-election which is proven true in the case of four non-performing candidates seeking to be re-elected but lost. It educates the people that performance-based politics is a parameter in selecting candidates to be entrusted of public service. Institutionalization of PsB ensures sustainability and transferability of the program. It gained a legal identity through the enactment of a Municipal Ordinance for its creation. The establishment of PMT to facilitate planning and overall conduct of PsB sealed its strength.

In 2007, the PsB was packaged by the BWYF as entry to the 2nd Philippine Development Innovation Marketplace Panibagong Paraan sponsored by the World Bank. BWYF got a grant of, one million pesos (\$19,000) from The Asia Foundation (TAF) to be used for advocacy, promotion and replication of PsB. The 14 villages in the locality adopted and replicated the program with their own names.



Youth members, Clean-up Drive, Environmental Protection and Solid Waste Management.

Due to the positive impacts of the PsB, the LCEs of other municipalities invited Bingawan to present the program to their municipal councils for replication. To date, the Municipalities of Concepcion and Calinog in Iloilo, Philippines have replicated the program. It is also presented in various local, national and international fora.

In 2010, it was awarded by the Galing Pook Foundation of the Philippines as one of the Ten Most Outstanding Local Governance Programs in the country for its exemplary contribution in promoting people's participation in advancing transparent and accountable governance. In 2016,

the program again was packaged by the LGU of Bingawan as entry to the United Nations Public Service Awards. It is the only entry in the whole Philippines selected by the United Nations panel of evaluators before it reaches the final nomination and awarding at the Hague, Netherlands.

6. Lessons Learned

Problems affecting local communities, need local solutions with proper interventions. This is the essence of PsB which upholds people empowerment through people's participation. Traditionally, there was limited venue for planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of government projects and programs.

The vulnerable sectors in the community are deprived of opportunities to impart their knowledge and skills to local development. Since they are the most disadvantaged, their deprivation and vulnerability cause them to face the challenge and look for creative ways for them to be counted. Finding strength in their collective efforts, they stand up to seek solutions in changing the status quo.

As electorates, they were able to realize their strengths that can be exercised during electoral processes. One term of office of a local politician is equivalent to three years. Election period is not too long but for the electorates they have only one day to cast their votes, while the local politicians got three years. Yet one day on the electorates' side is powerful. Indeed, there is hope to change the status quo. Thus, PsB was conceptualized and exercised.

The PsB is a pro-active and multi-stakeholders approach of evaluating the performance of public officials and quality of basic services delivery. It emphasizes performance-based governance. Mr. John Joseph Cordova, the moderator of the 27th PsB said: "Public service is a public commitment, to offer your life that's commitment, to offer your service that's your commitment, to offer your all to God that's your commitment."

Thirteen years rolled since the PsB was established, and it has proven that the poor and vulnerable are relevant partners for effective and efficient local development.

Adolescent Girls Club: Empowering Girls
Mr. Kazi Mazed Nawaz, Jagorani Chakra
Foundation (JCF), Bangladesh, ILDC 2007

1. Introduction

The adolescent and youth of Bangladesh is 52 million; 33% of the total population. Among adolescent girls, early marriage is a critical issue. According to the International Center for Research on Women (2012), the prevalence of child marriage in Bangladesh is the highest in South Asia of which poverty is one of its causes. The adolescent birth rate for girls between the ages 15 and 19 years is 118 per 1000 women, which is again the highest rate in South Asian. The high level of child marriage and associated teenage pregnancy result in many negative health and social consequences. For instance, obstetric fistula, other pregnancy related morbidities, maternal mortality, neonatal/infant mortality, anemia, and poor overall health of the baby and the mother. Until recently, the rights and needs of adolescents were largely ignored in Bangladesh. Particularly girls, most of whom move straight from childhood to marriage around the time of puberty. They are not informed about their rights, health, and gender equality. They have limited mobility and opportunities to meet and exchange ideas among their friends.



Mr. K. Mazed Nawaz



Girl's domestic work.

2. Creation of Adolescent Girls Club

JCF established 33 Self-Help Organizations (SHOs) in Chuadanga District in Bangladesh, where 7,000 extremely poor families are involved in order to improve their living conditions and uphold their rights. These SHOs have their own community centers which are used for pre-school, training, and their office. Since 2014, the 17 SHOs have been organizing 17 clubs in rural villages at their own community center.



Adolescent Girls Club members playing the community center..

In response to the SHO members' hope, the club was formed with adolescent girls (11 to 18 years) who are living in the same village or surrounding area of the Community Center of each SHO. The main purpose of the Adolescent Girls Club is to create an environment for their recreation and raising awareness in various issues. Seventeen clubs have been continuing their activities with 299 members in different villages. It was identified that most of the girls stay at their home after school because they do not have opportunity to do anything they want like: playing games, reading newspapers and books, and other activities.

The members of the Adolescent Clubs meet two or three days in a week at their respective community centers. The activities of the Adolescent Clubs are reading books and magazines with the study circle, playing indoor games like Ludu and chess, discussing relevant issues, and sharing personal issues.

Common issues emerging in the discussion are:

- problems and awareness in adolescent period such as dowry, and early marriage
- gender and legal rights

- first-aid
- awareness on groups and SHOs

Most of the clubs are active despite of their limited resources. JCF provides some reading materials irregularly and SHOs provide space, game materials with logistic support. The JCF supporting team is working with the federation which is the apex of SHOs. JCF organizes orientation regarding group formation, series of activities, and selecting discussion issues.

3. Observable Results

Akin to all initiatives, the Adolescent Girls Club exhibits observable results such as :

- positive impression created among the guardians because initially most of them were not interested,
- mothers are much interested than fathers to send their girls to the club,
- involvements of the members are increasing in different activities,
- demand of reading materials also increased,
- leadership capacity is developing by organizing meetings and writing minutes of the meeting,
- some members go to their clubs for only one day due to different time schedules of their schools,
- decreasing interest of some members due to limited books, magazine and game materials,
- no specific pointperson to guide the club, and
- hard to arrange programs due to fund shortage.

Many opportunities are already created for good understanding regarding the activities of Groups and SHOs as well as leadership development. Their leadership capability is improving because they are organizing their meetings, making decisions by themselves, instituting different activities like playing indoor games, reciting poems, rehearsing



Meetings are managed by AGC members.

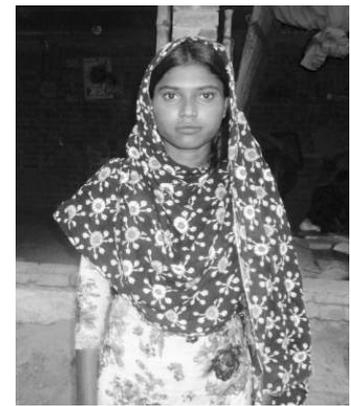
songs for competition, participating in awareness raising through discussions on early marriage, dowry, and the sustainability.

4. How the Adolescent Girls Club Works

The Case Story of Ms. Mariam Khatun

Ms. Mariam Khatun is 17 years old. She lives in Jhadjanga Village, Chuadanga, Bangladesh. She did not see her father because he died before her birth. She lives with her uncle while her mother is working as a housekeeper in Saudi Arabia. Her elder sister got married at age 14.

Mariam is a Grade 10 student. When she was Grade 6, she joined the Adolescent Club with the other 26 girls. Her club name is Golap (Rose) Girls Adolescent Club. She was elected as a president of her club. She and her friends are initiating various activities for recreation and awareness raising.



Ms. Mariam Khatun

She loves to chat with other members, recites poetry, reads magazines and plays indoor games. She likes awareness sessions as well. Their adolescent club attends rallies and seminars with the SHO members.

Recently, her uncle tried to arrange her marriage but Mariam was not prepared. She wants to complete her education. But her mother and other relatives were pressuring her to get married. To oppose their plan, Mariam asserts that: "My sister always gets sick. She is now a mother of two children, who are also suffering from malnutrition and illnesses. Round the year they spend a lot of money for their treatment." Mariam bravely asserted her resistance to early marriage to her relatives in the presence of her club members and the JCF staff. Finally her relatives were convinced to stop the marriage plan.

Now she is trying to reach her dream. She wants to become a journalist. She happily says that: "My uncle and my mother are now aware about the risks of early marriage. They promised to never force me again to marry early, and will help me to finish my

education. She also wants to raise awareness about early marriage in her community.

5. Conclusion

Marian's case is a concrete example of how "youth power" can save one of their own from being trapped into early marriage. Collective assertion by Mariam together with the AGC members and the JCF staff successfully pressured her family to stop making decisions for her future, health, well-being, and marriage. Mariam was given the opportunity and freedom to decide for herself particularly on marriage. Marriage is a sacred and complex stage of life. In case of Mariam, her decision as to who and when to marry is of prime importance.

MONLAR Youth Media Team
Mr. Roy Antony Rodrigo, Movement for
National Land and Agricultural Reform
(MONLAR), Sri Lanka, ILDC 2011

1. What is the situation?

Many years have passed since the end of War in Sri Lanka, no government seems to be making any effort to remove the root causes of that prolonged war. Due to this negligence the problem seems to be slowly and steadily emerging again and again. There seems to be no proper mediation whatsoever taken so far to eradicate the distrust among ethnic groups. It is very important to note that a 30-year long war was initiated by the youth. It was predominantly Tamil youth who joined the LTTE while majority of the soldiers of the government forces were also Sinhala youth. Most of the youth from the LTTE and the government forces who survived the war were handicapped and crippled.



Mr. Roy Rodrigo

In 1971 and during 1988-1989 the Sinhalese Youth launched an armed struggle against the government due to rising unemployment, lack of fair opportunities for education, lack of land for cultivation, dwindling rural economy, and above all against the development models adopted by the people in authority. Despite of the struggle, these issues still remained. The same development models and strategies which were not successful and effective are being implemented again with different

titles and labels. Instead of strengthening the Sri Lankan economy, the leaders seem to kneel on foreign economic policies.

The government priority is for large scale agro-industry by multinational companies. It even provides the required infrastructure for these companies to operate on the Sri Lankan soil. It negatively affects the rural economy that the youth resented.

2. Unemployment and Privatization of Basic Services Affecting the Youth Sector



Youth joining the march to air their sentiments.

Due to rising unemployment and insecure future, frustrated group of youth resorted to drugs and became anti-social criminals.

The depressive behavior of the youth is further agitated by the Sri Lankan media. Most of the media channels are owned by the government and the private sectors. Ironically, none of these are functioning as peoples channels. Government owned media always acts in favor of the government, not for the people. Since most of the private media channels are owned by the oligarchs, their sole aim is to promote their business, expand their market while inculcating consumerism among the common people. Thereby, making them the slaves of a highly consumerist society.

Direct and indirect efforts are constantly made to convince that the existing system is fair. Hence the down-reporting of concerns and problems faced by common people. News reports are twisted in favor of the government. The people's struggles, and the unhealthy development programs implemented by the government are under-reported.

3. What actions to take?

Movement for National Land and Agricultural Reform (MONLAR) has worked to build people's movement for the national resource and human rights. The Peoples Planning Forum (PPF), a provincial level gathering of various representatives of different organizations such as NGOs, CBOs, activists, government officers, and professionals, which was initiated through the intervention of MONLAR. PPF has been discussing the issues thoroughly. The result was positive of which the media secretaries of the forum decided to start the program for youth from all provinces.

Immediately, the first and second training programs were conducted in Negombo, and in Rjanganaya, Anuradhapura District, respectively. Around 40 youth members attended in both occasions. They learned about the importance of print media and digital media. The cost incurred particularly for the second workshop was minimal. They used simple facilities. The participants cooked their meals and cleaned the venue in order to cut cost.

To date, there are eight groups functioning in Galle, Anuradhapura, Moneragala, Badulla, Nawalapitiya, Trincomalee, Vavuniya and Kurunegala districts. The main group of all districts has 40 members, and the overall group has 60 members.

The district groups function independently and being moderated by themselves, while the common programs are still being facilitated by MONLAR.

4. Concrete Results

The once before problems faced by the people, and the issues they struggled against the ongoing development projects, that were ignored by the mainstream media were now unmasked by the district groups. Their strategies of exposing the issues were through peoples protests, photographs, discussing alternatives, and writing articles highlighting these issues.

They also keep in touch with what is happening in other districts and continuously cross-share information with their local groups. They make sure that the members of the Peoples Planning Forum of the districts are well informed on the current situations. Sessions are conducted to continuously raise people's awareness and ensure that the Resource Centers in each district are functional. They also collect information from

different resource persons, and places such as organic farming centers and libraries.

The most compelling change for the youth is their realization that like adults, they (too) have social responsibilities. They started to get involved in social actions. The youth participated in a lengthy discussion about the ethnic group issues in Sri Lanka. Some of them begin to show patriotism. They are now aware of the rights of the minority, and why they are into armed struggle. Moreso, they are actively recruiting new youth members. They organized two meetings for new members in



The Youth attending sessions for awareness building.

Puttlam District and Badulla District on June 10th and 15th, respectively.

The youth members are now reading the books and watching the videos given by MONLAR to them. Later on share they are going to share them to the PPF.

5. What else could be done?

While engaging in several activities, the followings are few suggestions to improve the functioning of district groups:

- to strengthen and maintain the Alternative Media Group and the Network,
- to get these groups engaged in enhancing the news magazine (Sandeshaya), and the Internet Radio Service (Visura), which are run by MONLAR,
- give a boost to the people in the districts by updating and strengthening the resource centers,
- increase the use of cultural and media activities involving the people against Neo-Liberalism, in search alternatives ways,
- focus on the views and reactions of people against these unhealthy development programs, document and compile them as education tools, and
- find mechanisms for communication that would evolve into peoples movement.



Strengthening through workshops at school.

6. The Case Story of Nisindu Amarasooriya

Ms. Nisindu Amarasooriya is 23 years old, living in Andaulpotha, Uharaniya, Rideemaliyadda, Sri Lanka. This area is very poor where most people depend on agriculture. The girls are engaged in garment factories. The educational facilities are lacking. So, after completing the basic school education, it is hard to pursue further. The divisional secretariat is the second poorest in Sri Lanka. The place is also on the top list of underage marriages. The high usage of agro-chemical fertilizers caused the increasing number of kidney patients.

Ms. Amarasooriya said: “I came to this group with the intention of knowing what Media is and its usage. I also want to get some Media training that we were deprived before. I write poems but I have no chance of getting connected to the Media.

By joining the Youth Media Group I learned many things. For example, to cooperate in a group, to diagnose a problem, to seek solutions, and to circumvent the ethnic issue in Sri Lanka. I realized that in order to address unresolved issues in the villages, one must do concrete actions in his society. We are from different religions and ethnicities, but we feel that we are one family. My perspective in life, world, and society has changed positively.

Being a member of the Youth Media Group is a good mechanism to counter mind conditioning feed by the mainstream media. I feel that they are poisoning the minds and hearts of the people. The people are unconsciously enslaved through most tele-dramas that are promoting products and services. Thus, raking-in huge profits for big businesses and nothing for the society.

Through this platform, we are voicing out the strong desires of the oppressed people, who composed the majority. Party politics never solve their perennial

problems. Equality and respect must prevail among humans. Class difference must be eradicated.

The training I received by joining the group helped me reckon that development programs are not people friendly. Trees were cutdown in favor of constructing highways. There has been no plan to replant trees. Schools do not have basic facilities most especially in far flung rural areas. Ironically, the government give more facilities to the urban schools that already have. Most of the rural areas lack school buildings, desks and chairs for children. Priority is supposed to be given to them.

We are determined to get ourselves organized and go village to village to educate the people and make them aware of the issues. We need to make others also feel what these village people are experiencing. The Media is not balanced. It cannot do its main mandate, that is, to give real information. Filtering of information is terrible. Hopefully, we can fortify our group and find our own alternative communication program for the benefit of the common people.

5. Conclusion

The Youth Media Group initiative is similar to that in Thailand to some extent. Though this one in Sri Lanka is still on its early phase. There is a great potential to mobilize more youth members in the villages through this innovation. JCF shall be playing a critical role to create impact to the lives of the youth and their respective villages.

Teens Clubs Inter-area Youth Cooperation *Ms. Joy Ayuste-Bastian*

1. Characterization of Barangay NHA Maa and Barangay Bucana

In the 16th century, the Philippine national hero Dr. Jose Rizal said: “The youth is the hope of the nation.” His statement left a hallmark that was referred here in forming the Teens Clubs (TC) in Barangay Maa and Barangay Bucana, both in the City of Davao, Mindanao, but of different social and economic status.

In the mid-‘90s, the Institute of Primary Health Care-Davao Medical School Foundation, where I used to work as a staff, implemented a Canada Fund supported three-year project called the Aral-Laro:

Home-based Child Minding Center (HBCMC) in Bucana and in NHA Maa under my watch. Aral-Laro means study and play. This user-fee project aims at creating a safe place for under six years old children while their parents are working. It also offers basic writing, reading, and calculating skills. The two HBCMCs are attached to the house of the trained para-teachers who run them.



The first Home-based Child Minding Center in NHA Maa, Barangay Maa, attached to the house of the Children Caregiver or Para-teacher.

Barangay Maa has a total population of 150 households (1990) with three major ethnic tribes namely: Mandaya, Manobo, and Moro Lumads with Christians as the most dominant group. It was used to be an agricultural land, but most of its land was later converted to housing projects from low-cost to high end. NHA Maa belongs to this barangay of which majority of the residents were earning minimum regular wage, through employment from private and public sectors. NHA Maa was a low-cost housing area financed by the government's National Housing Authority.

Bucana had a total households of 150, and 53% of its households was self-employed, earning low and very irregular income. It is located in the shoreline of Davao City, wherein houses were made of lowly materials and even scrap. Health, hygiene, and poverty were top pressing problems here.

2. The Emergence of Teens Clubs

The formation of TCs was naturally organic in the process of implementing the HBCMC. Its emergence was triggered by the need of the para-teachers for assistance because they cannot cope with the needs of the children just by themselves. Thus, the

TC members were identified and formed in Bucana and in NHA Maa through the help of the Community Health Volunteers (CHVs), who are now know as Barangay Health Workers.

It was not easy to recruit TC members especially that they were also busy with their studies. Patience was essential, constant follow-up, thorough explanation were found to be helpful in the recruitment process. The teens were more attracted to become members because of the sports activities and inter-area visits. Added attractions were the workshops on environment and theater arts, where they can express themselves, as some of them were very shy in the beginning. These workshops help them free themselves from being introverts.

There were only two TCs, in NHA Maa and in Bucana, with 20 to 30 members.

3. The Teens Clubs Activities

Since the formation of TCs, regular activities were conducted in order to strengthen the membership, such as:

- recruitment of members
- attending seminars and training sessions on group formation, first aid, leadership, environmental management, theater, handicraft making using recyclables, and how to tutor kids
- holding monthly meetings
- organizing inter-area sports events
- assisting para-teachers
- tutoring kids: mathematics, reading, writing
- joining inter-area visits among teens, and
- initiating environmental actions: tree planting, recycling, backyard and neighborhood cleaning

The above activities were regularly done by the teens with the guidance of IPHC staff. The recruits underwent orientation seminar. The workshops and seminars were held onsite and offsite. The TC members' knowledge, attitude and skills in leadership, environmental awareness, health, livelihood, and sports were developed after attending series of seminars and trainings. It did not happen overnight though. Time was a critical factor in the transformation process.

Each TC member has his/her own pace of comprehension. This being understood enabled them to initiate appropriate interventions. A thorough follow-up and counseling might be necessary. It was also observed that there were teens who wanted to join but were not allowed by their parents. What the

TC members did was to home visit the concerned teens and talked to their parents about their group. After hearing their good intentions, the parents at last allowed their young, as it was a better alternative to deliver their children away from illegal drugs and untoward activities.

The TC members became environment advocates by initiating neighborhood clean-up particularly in the shoreline of Bucana, tree planting, promoting 4Rs (Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle), and conducting talking sessions among the youth. They made hand-craft out of recyclable wastes and donated to the HBCMC as learning materials for the kids. This was a big help for the para-teachers who did not have budget for buying educational toys for the HBCMC.

In terms of leadership, they can visit the “purok leaders” (like cluster leaders) and coordinate their youth inter-area activities, for instance. They started to get involved in the Sangguninang Kabataan or SK (Youth Council). They supported their local officials by disseminating information, and organizing sportsfests. They also inspired the youth in their neighborhood to do good instead of resorting to unwanted petty crimes or doing vandalism.



Barangay Bucana, visited by the Teens Club members during the inter-area activity.

During the inter-area visit, the TC members of Bucana went to NHA Maa, and vice-versa in order to attend seminars, sports events, and tree-planting. The inter-area visit was very useful for them to learn from each other while strengthening their bonds. Interestingly, this promoted mutual understanding and acceptance among them. Because at first, the TC members of NHA Maa seemed to discriminate the lowly teens of Bucana, who in turn felt uncomfortable mingling with the former who were better-off than them. They broke the economic and social barriers through visiting each others’

places, playing sports, and discussing their situations.

Their support to the HBCMC was very valuable as affirmed by the para-teachers and the parents of the children who enrolled their children there. They also developed a loving and caring attitude towards small kids. They tutored the kids voluntarily, according to what they were good at. For instance, the Team Leader of Maa TC, Nolan, was good at mathematics, so he taught mathematics to the kids. These activities were done on weekends and holidays in order to not to hamper their own schooling.

4. Contribution to Community Development

The elaborated activities of the TC members was a testament that their contribution to improve their neighborhood was visible. They could lead, advocate, promote, help, and teach without expecting remuneration. This seemed to be the right stage to mold sensitized future leaders, while they were young, who will take charge of our communities.

Because of their innate stamina and agility, the teens were great support for the elderly CHVs in their areas, especially in information dissemination. They can walk all day without aching their feet as compared to the older CHVs. They could assist the para-teachers in organizing activities for children: running, racing, dancing, exercising, walking around the neighborhood, and the likes.

5. Are Teens Clubs Sustainable?

A big question! The Teens Clubs dissolved after the project phase-out. Too bad!

It was a pity to not sustain the TCs as they were dependent to the HBCMC’s project life—three years. If only the TCs were anchored to the government structure or a follow-up project was implemented to absorb them, sustainability was highly possible.

Just like the Kabataang Barangay or KB (Village Youth) initiated in the ‘70s during the Marcos Regime, it survived until present (in its new name Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) or Youth Council) because it was part of the local government structure.

Three years was too early to warrant sustainability of TCs (or any other initiatives for that matter) especially that they were still young. Inarguably, the existence of the TCs in barely three years had

shown concrete results. Too bad they were not ready to keep going.

6. Reflection

The narratives concluded that the formation of the Teens Clubs were essential in running the HBCMC, contributed to the improvement of their communities, and facilitated in honing potential future leaders. However, the sustainability issue was very important to consider so that future initiatives like this can already built-in some measures. Though the original project design did not actually include Teens Clubs formation, its emergence was still very relevant.

For the sustainability of the Teens Clubs, back in time, I would have recommended the following:

- to have a clear cut sustainability plan beyond project life,
- to link the TCs strongly with the barangay leaders,
- to officially become annex to the SK (to avoid duplication),
- to implement another 3 to 5-year project after HBCMC, so that TCs can get free trainings and seminars, and become more ready to stand on their own; phase-out scheme must be made, and
- to introduce them to the government line agencies so that they can be tapped as need arises.

If we are really serious about making a difference, let us not forget the Youth because they are the second liners who will continue to lead the villages, municipalities, cities, and nations. By consciously putting them upfront in any development initiatives, we can ensure a higher possibility of honing more people-centered and fair leaders in the years to come.



Kids in traditional costume.

After all, the children and the youth are the hope of the nation.

“If we are to reach real peace in this world, we shall have to begin with children.” — Mahatma Gandhi.

“Great changes in the destiny of mankind can be effected only in the minds of little children.” — Sir Herbert Read.

HERE AND THERE

Report on Reunion Seminar in Bangladesh
Ms. Taslima Akter, Center for Disability in Development (CDD), Bangladesh, ILDC 2015



Ms. Taslima Akter

1. Introduction

The 3rd AHI Reunion Seminar was held in Dhaka, Bangladesh on March 15 to 18, 2018. It was propelled by the theme “Positive leadership to build a peaceful inclusive world”. The reunion focused on three areas such as Leadership, Inclusion, and Peace. A total of 28 Bangladeshi and 6 international participants gathered at the seminar. The participants were reflecting on how they can consciously integrate these into their existing and future initiatives. They are crucial to the development processes.

2. Pre-seminar preparation

I participated in the ILDC in 2015 and it was a milestone for me in changing my mindset toward development work. ILDC influenced me a lot to work for peace building and collaboration with emphasis on active community engagement. It was the first Reunion Seminar organized by the Development Association for Self-Reliance, Communication and Health (DASCOH), that I felt the AHI alumni can play a significant role to work for community development, through mutual sharing and collaboration for developing leadership to promote peace and inclusion based on common understanding. So I decided to arrange such an event in my organization, the Center for Disability in Development (CDD), so that the AHI alumni can include disability issues in their work.

An organizing committee for the 3rd seminar was formed at the end of the 2nd reunion, of which I was the pointperson. We had meetings several times. In the meetings, we discussed and set the objectives, theme, budget, participants, and other mechanism for the AHI-ILDC reunion seminar. As I was thinking about promoting peace and inclusion through AHI alumni, I proposed the theme “Positive leadership to build a peaceful inclusive world”.



Reunion Seminar participants in Bangladesh.

the whiteboard under the categories on: Peace, Inclusion, and Leadership. It was the springboard for the small group discussions that was facilitated by Ms. Kyoko Shimizu, AHI staff. They linked these keywords to the presentations, which were relevant to the overall development work. Without them, all efforts will be meaningless.

We provided the guideline beforehand, for all participants to prepare their presentations focusing on the practice within the theme. Likewise, a contribution to be collected from the alumni was agreed. A total of BDT 205,500 (35% of the total budget) was successfully collected.

2. Activities and Field Visit



Field visit during the reunion seminar.

Like other programs, the AHI Reunion Seminar was graced by personalities from some sectors apart from the AHI alumni. To be specific, the Honorable full time member of the National Human Rights Commission of Bangladesh, who is also the executive director of CDD attended this event.

There was sharing of initiatives from AHI Japan pertaining to their existing programs and learning. A presentation about the 2017 ILDC training was insightful. The AHI Alumni from different organizations had presentations on their good practices, which reflected the learning from AHI-ILDC training, and also the progress of POA made last reunion seminar. The participants showed in their presentations the interrelation of positive leadership, inclusion, and peace.

During the presentations, all the participants picked the keywords from the discussion, and put them on

As collectively defined in their discussions, leadership is a key element to empower women, person with disabilities, and any disadvantaged person/s. Once a disadvantaged person is empowered and became a positive leader, he/she has the consciousness to include the marginalized people in order to also improve their own conditions. Because he or she understands what it feels like being excluded, the urge to practice inclusion is much stronger. The inclusion process being applied by a positive leader leads to peace.



The participants were seriously contemplating during the small group discussion.

The reunion seminar also had a field visit to a project of CDD named Promotion of Human Rights of Person with Disabilities in Bangladesh (PHRPBD) through Disability Inclusion. Field visit were arranged at Gazipur, Bangladesh where participants observed leadership, inclusion and peace along with the group and individual activity. SHGs were visited by the participants, wherein they shared their Income Generating Activities (IGA) initiatives, and efforts of inclusion and positive leadership. The participants dramatized their field observation upon returning to the seminar venue. It was a concrete show that they have gained and internalized some insights from the field visit.

A cross-cultural program was also held in the evening where participants from India, Nepal,



The participants met SHG members in Gazipur.

Japan, and Bangladesh performed according to their own cultural background. Special mention to the speech and hearing impaired children who also performed. From the side of Japan, Ms. Kaoru Ishimoto gave a presentation about the empowerment of Toshi, a girl with severe physical disability, through community based rehabilitation (CBR) strategy. On the other hand, Dr. Patrick Bipul Biswas from the Endoscopy and Maternity Center gave a presentation on breast and cervical cancer.

All presentations provided good insights for the participants to guide them in the Plan of Action (POA). They identified some good practices and learning from the seminar, which became part of their POAs. Most POAs included leadership capacity building, SHGs formation, advocacy, networking, and women empowerment vis-a-vis peace, positive leadership, and inclusion. A committee was formed to organize the 4th ILDC-AHI reunion seminar, and its host was selected.

3. Outcomes

- 17 of the organization included disability issue in their plan of action as good practice and learning.
- An organization (Salvation Army) already visited CDD for learning and technical capacity exchange as learning of the seminar.
- 13 organization included Peace-building and Inclusion issue in their plan of action.
- Enhanced leadership capacity towards inclusive development through collaboration among AHI alumni;
- Learned about the strategy on leadership, inclusion and peace through exposure visits;
- Gained knowledge on inclusive development experience of Japan from AHI
- Generated good learning from root level to national level development;

- Built and strengthening mutual communications and networking towards a peaceful world though self-contribution in development;
- Finalized the date, venue, host organization and organizing committee member for the 3rd reunion seminar

4. Participants' Reflection

Mr. Rafiqul Alam Mollah from Unnayan Sangha, ILDC 1991, said that the 3rd reunion seminar in Bangladesh was successfully completed. We have learned from the alumni of India and Nepal. We prepared our own organizational level POAs based on the learning, and hopeful to proceed accordingly.

Mr. P. Balaram Naidu from the Comprehensive Social Service Society, India, ILDC 1982, shared that: "There are some changes in the latest ILDC Training. The seminar is a great venue for me to share my experience with new AHI participants.

Please download the report of Reunion seminar from <http://ur2.link/KQCE>.

**The Speaking Tour of Mr. P. P. Sivapragasam
in Japan
Ms. Kagumi Hayashi, AHI**

Mr. Sivapragasam, who is called Siva, is the director of Human Development Organization (HDO), based in Kandy, Sri Lanka. He was invited by an international NGO, "The International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR)" as a national reporter from Sri Lanka at the international consultation in Osaka on April 9, 2018.

The IMADR is an international non-profit, non-governmental human rights organization devoted to eliminating discrimination and racism, forging international solidarity among discriminated minorities and advancing the international human rights system. Founded in 1988 by one of Japan's largest minorities, the Buraku people, IMADR has grown to be a global network of concerned individuals and minority groups with regional committees and partners in Asia, Europe, North America and Latin America. IMADR's International Secretariat is based in Japan and maintains a UN liaison office in Geneva. IMADR is in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). (*For details visit: <http://ur2.link/KQCE>*)

www.imadr.org/). One of the co-chairpersons of IMADR is based in Sri Lanka.

The consultation on April 9, 2018 was organized prior to the international symposium on the UN Guidance Tool on Descent-based Discrimination, co-organized by IMADR and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) held in Tokyo. OHCHR has been working for human rights of minorities. "Minorities in all regions of the world continue to face serious threats, discrimination and racism, and are frequently excluded from taking part fully in the economic, political, social and cultural life available to the majorities in the countries or societies where they live." Navanethem Pillay, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (Statement on Human Rights Day, 10 December 2009).

HDO has been actively working for the human rights issue of tea plantation workers. They were called as Plantation Tamils, as their ancestors were mostly Dalits brought from South India in the 1820s under the British colonial rule. Although the plantation system has undergone changes from the nationalization to privatization in the 1990s along with the growth of trade unions, the plantation workers have been subject to various forms of discrimination.

At the time of independence of Sri Lanka, the Ceylon Citizenship Act was passed in 1948, which did not grant citizenship to Plantation Tamils. They as non-Sri Lankans have worked and carried over the Sri Lanka's largest export industry for many years. Their citizenship has finally legalized all after tremendous efforts of advocacy by the concerned groups and organizations, including HDO. Their international networking through IMADR helped them a lot in bringing the issue to the international communities, the UN human rights commission.

After Siva presented the case at the consultation, he visited AHI after 20 years. Siva gave his talks to the Japanese people in three meetings organized by AHI, on "What's behind your cup of tea: who work in the tea industry, and how they have been." The struggle and their long experiences of advocacy were also shared with Japanese participants. He emphasized that the issue to be dealt with needs to be sharply specific. Your voices to whom, on what aspect, and on what evidence are very crucial.

Some Japanese participants in the meetings were conscious about "fair trade tea". Fair trade products are gradually getting popular in Japan. Siva put the

question "How fair are your fair trade products? Are they produced in fair situation?" Siva was actually with foreign tea buyers, and saw the plantation workers well treated. He suggests that NGOs must help ensure fair labor condition. Tri-party collaboration among tea companies, trade unions and NGOs could contribute to fairer tea trade. Even after the citizenship was obtained, the struggle for wages, and housing lingers. HDO is now making argument on health policy for plantation sector, which has been long excluded from the national health system, as he writes in the newly published book "Policy Review on the Status of Health in the Plantation Sector".



(2nd right) Mr. P. P. Sivapragasam explaining while the students were listening.

AROUND JAPAN

Becoming Stronger and Kinder: Carrying on Living in Fukushima in a Paradoxical Situation

A reprint of an article from the "Voice from Japan" No. 32, compiled by Ms. Kuniko Funahashi, The Asia-Japan Women's Resource Center (AJWRC), with permission.

1. Introduction

The problems of a rapidly aging population, large numbers of elderly people who live and increasingly even die alone, and the division and collapse of communities, are all issues that Fukushima is facing right now— and these problems are by no means limited to just Fukushima. It is merely ahead of the trend. As of September 2016, earthquake-related deaths numbered 2,986 people, exceeding the 1,611 people who died as a direct result of the 2011 earthquake.

Still, the process of decommissioning of the nuclear reactors has been uncertain, and so far no restorations of the plants have been made. Fukushima residents have had their peaceful lives snatched from them, while the issue of radioactive contamination is still going on today. Nevertheless, the government has declared to bring down the number of evacuees to zero by the time of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. It has lifted evacuation orders, thereby forcing evacuees to return home to what is still seen as a contaminated zone, as well as discontinuing housing assistance programs for the so-called voluntary evacuees (evacuees from outside the areas under the evacuation instructions).

What has the Fukushima nuclear disaster meant for women? What changes has it brought to their lives? Hatsue Munakata, a midwife who supports mothers, their children, and the elderly living in Fukushima, gave a talk about their everyday difficulties in the paradoxical situation of the region.

2. The Confusion at Shelters after the Earthquake and the Nuclear Disaster

I work in Koriyama City, in the central area of Fukushima Prefecture called Nakadori. I am the head nurse at a hospital focused on treatment and caregiving for recuperation with 120 beds. One of the main hospitals in the city collapsed during the earthquake, leaving 40-50 patients with nowhere to go. Most patients were discharged, while those who needed care were transferred elsewhere where appropriate treatment could be provided. Elderly patients who did not have dire medical needs simply needed nursing care, were left on their own, although my hospital was able to take in 45 of them.

Three days after the earthquake, I heard that the local shelters had run out of milk formula and diapers for mothers with infants, so my midwife colleagues and I split into groups and visited the 20 shelters around the city. I made these visits during my lunch breaks. Because there was no gasoline available, I went by bicycle.

The individuals staffing the reception counters at the shelters were all men from either the fire brigade or the city hall, who did not understand the needs of new mothers and their infants. One gymnasium housed a 10-day old infant. When I learned that, I teared up. There might be pregnant women close to their due dates staying in the shelters and no one seemed to give them a second thought. Hard reality.

I got in touch with public nurses and doctors from the medical association, and within two weeks, from

March 15-31, we turned the shelters into places that offered the necessary care for these women. Although the necessity of a manual detailing how to assist expectant and nursing mothers and their infants in a time of disaster already have been pointed out by women who experienced the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, these shelters essentially had no resources for such women.

In another shock, at a multi-purpose hall sheltering 2,500 people, and finding out procedure of the people in charge of elderly care. The staff asked each elderly person whether they had been authorized to receive nursing care insurance. Those individuals who had been authorized were given priority in being transferred to a care facility. There were also many elderly at the shelter who needed assistance, even though they were not authorized for the insurance however.

In their own home, these elderly could get by without using nursing-care insurance, even with problems like pain in the hands and feet, or deafness, etc., as they were accustomed to their own home. But many elderly people suffered greatly due to the disruption of the sudden evacuation. To deal with this issues, at any hospital, volunteers organized bathing services and tea parties for such individuals until July 2011. We cannot forget to keep an eye open for vulnerable people who might fall through the cracks of the system. What tormented us the most at this time was that no one knew, what exactly had happened at the nuclear reactor. There were reports on it, but no one had any understanding of the properties, or dangers of radioactivity and all we had to rely on, was the commentary of scholars with ties to the government.

3. The Parents and Children Living in Fukushima

Another consequence of the nuclear disaster was how it broke down the community. It created antagonism over compensation—among those hit by the tsunami and people who evacuated due to the nuclear accident, between evacuees and local people of the receiving area; and between the people of Fukushima who have escaped and those who have remained. It will take a long time for these divisions to be healed.

Before the earthquake, in 2005, a few friends who were also midwives and I, organized a group on reproductive health. Since then, we have given sex education lessons to elementary, middle, and high

school students, as well as providing courses on parenting, in order to create chances for mothers who had been raising their own to get together. After the earthquake, I organized a special course on parenting for mothers with infants in Koriyama. Through this network, we have received call after call from mothers requesting to set up some sort of course or group meeting to get mothers together.

Among these women were mothers who had temporarily left the prefecture with their children. One mother and her child returned after only one month in Niigata, as the five year old child was wetting himself and had trouble eating and sleeping. The child had developed psychological issues. The mother told me that her child's suffering was more frightening to her than the radiation. There were also some to returned home full of stress because their family members had been dispersed all over the place in the chaos of a disaster.

Although it has already been six years since the nuclear disaster, mothers who decided to stay, cannot help thinking to themselves for not having left, if something were to happen to their child. They cannot escape this anxiety.

4. How the Nuclear Accident Has Changed Me — Supporting One Another through Pain and Anxiety

To this date, neither the government nor the Tokyo Electric Power Corporation (TEPCO) has taken responsibility for the nuclear disaster. No one has been punished and it has not been made clear where responsibility would lie. Instead, the burden has been heaped onto such places as the medical facilities I work for.

It is not our fault at all, yet we have been left holding the bag. I cannot forget my anger and regrets toward the outrageousness of this. In order to keep on living in the paradoxical situation in Fukushima however, I have no choice but to be forward-thinking and positive. The nuclear disaster has taught me that kindness — and the ability to work with it — are tied to strength. My perspective, from the position off the nursing caregiver towards my patients, also has changed.

We are currently cultivating the French method of “Humanitude”, which emphasizes on conveying kindness to patients. I am now working on important details, such as properly facing my elderly patients who require high levels of nursing care, looking at them empathetically in the eyes,

talking to them, and touching them gently. Instead of saying: “Don’t do that!”, I suggest: “It’s better if you do this instead.” By putting this method into practice, I have personally experienced how people can change and grow. I was quite happy when a visitor at the hospital pointed out that even our patients with high nursing need look one straight in the eye. As a caregiver, I do not want to take away people’s dignity. I have had a significant opportunity to consider how to support them so that they can live a good of a life as possible.

I feel the same about providing assistance to mothers and children. I want to start everything with affirmation. I want to convey to them that: “Leaving is fine, but so is coming back—because it is what you decided on.” It is about importance of supporting and being at the side of mothers who say things like: “The thought of radiation is always at the back of my mind. I go back and forth between getting anxious at the slightest thing and then relaxing again.” Empowerment is not about leading, sympathy or understanding. It is about empathy. Through empathy you become both stronger and kinder.

I have come to understand that there is an art of conveying kindness and I want to spread that to everyone—the children, the elderly, my neighbors. I feel the increasing importance of creating places in the region where people can get together and where, no matter how small the act, we can support one another. That is what will become the strength that empowers women, overcomes divisions, and changes society.

“Resilience is the ability to work with adversity in such a way that one comes through it unharmed or even better for the experience. Resilience means facing life’s difficulties with courage and patience — refusing to give up. It is the quality of character that allows a person or group of people rebound from misfortune, hardships and traumas.”

Resilience is rooted in a tenacity of spirit — a determination to embrace all that makes life worth living even in the face of overwhelming odds. When we have a clear sense of identity and purpose, we are more resilient, because we can hold fast our vision for a better future.

Much of our resilience comes from community— from the relationships that allow us to lean on each other for support when we need it.”

—Wisdom Commons—

LET US KNOW YOUR PRACTICE FOR THE VULNERABLE PEOPLE

Global communities are making effort to the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development *Goals (SDGs)*. We call all AHI alumni to write an article on the activity in the commitment to “leave no one left behind”. Please include: Who are left behind in your community? How you are addressing the issues?

Size: A4 2-3 pages including photos,

Font: Times New Roman, size 11

Deadline: September 30th, 2018

**CALLING ALL AHI ALUMNI!!!
WRITE YOUR ARTICLES**

- Peace, Inclusion, Positive Leadership
- Participatory Techniques for Self-Sufficiency
- Alternative Awareness-Building Strategies
- Health and Peace-building in Conflict Areas
- Disaster Prevention, Response & Management
- Community-based Inclusive Development
- From Peoples Organizations to Civil Society Organizations
- Rights-Based Approach Development

NOTE: Please write your articles using simple format. Do not indent, underline, italicize nor highlight your text. Special effects will only delay the editing process. Send us high your high resolution face photo and field photos with caption to support your article. Your cooperation is highly appreciated. in knowing the exact improvement.

The 2018 Participatory Community Leadership Development Course (PCLDC), was held in Lahore, Pakistan on April 13-22, 2018. It was a participatory training for local young NGO staff of Pakistan organized by Mr. Hector Nihar, AIDS AWARENESS SOCIETY (AAS), (ILDC 2013).

Please download the report of 2018 PCLDC here: <http://ur2.link/KQCY>

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Individual (C)	\$ 30 per year
2. Donation	Any amount, anytime

AHI programs are supported by the contributions and donations of supporting members, of which the number has been dwindling, due to the unstable economic situation in Japan. So, AHI started to welcome supporting members outside Japan. A few AHI alumni and friends from overseas responded to the call. The life of the programs engaged by AHI together with its partner organizations in Asia depends on the membership dues and donations. These programs are crucial in developing leaders, NGO and government workers, civil service organizations, and disadvantaged communities to alleviate their current conditions. Your support will help in shaping Asian leaders!

Check our website and go to the page [support AHI](#).

<http://ahi-japan.sakura.ne.jp/english/html/>.

If you have any questions, please e-mail to: info@ahi-japan.jp.



Structured learning exercise during PCLDC.