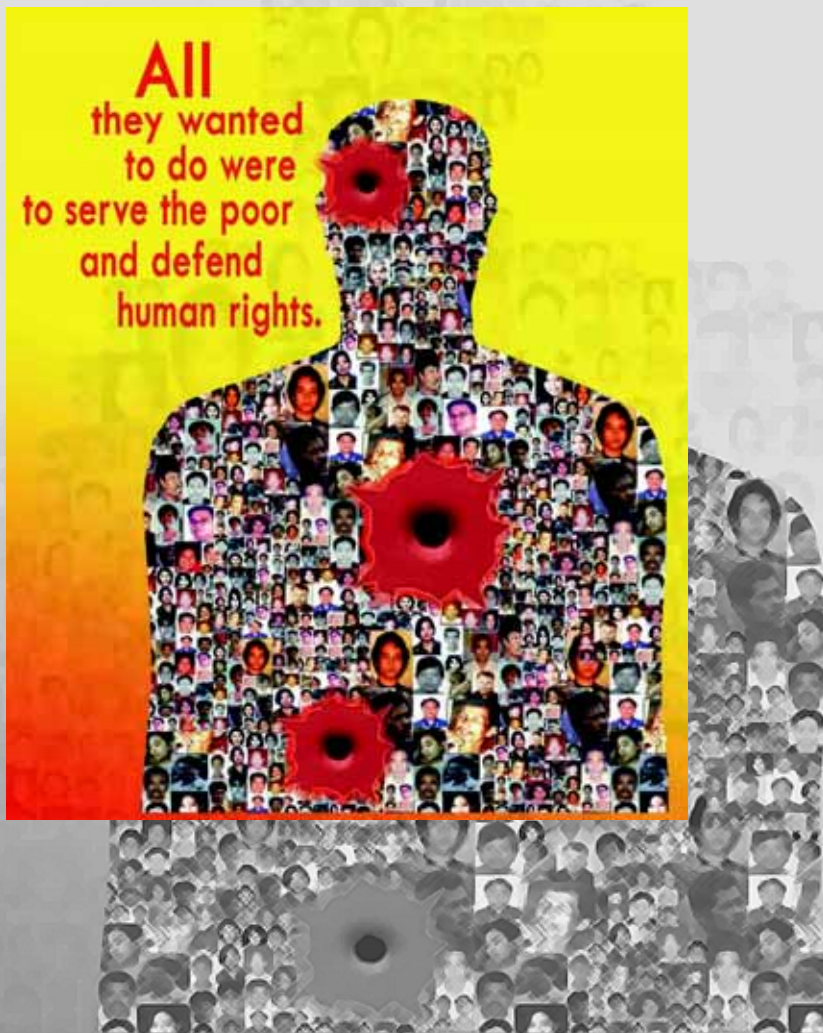


PRAXIS

Newsletter of the WSCF Asia-Pacific Region
No. 3, September - December, 2006



Editorial

- Perspective*
- 2 Geo-Political Situation in Asia & Pacific: Escalating the Conflict and Impact of U.S. War on Terror
Tony Waworunto
- Biblical Reflection*
- 8 The Jubilee Year: Economic Rights and Justice in the Bible
Rev. Letirio Panjatan
- SCMers' Diary*
- 10 Crying for Justice
Hannah Angus
- 12 Youth for Change
Ann Cho
- Women's Space*
- 13 Facing the Challenges of New Reproductive Technologies
- Solidarity News*
- 22 Bleeding My Brain
Melva Sihombing
- 25 *Regional News*
- 29 *Movement News*

When life and limbs are at stake.

"In the Image of God he created him: male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:27) is a central theme in our Christian faith. This belief translates profoundly to the concept of "Common Humanity" enshrined in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN-UDHR), which has been the basis to call on all nations to respect, protect and guarantee human rights for all, and of we which commemorate on the 10th of December every year. This belief does not only find meaning in the respect for gender and sexual preferences, but of color, class, race, creed and political persuasions. Over the years, the fulfillment of this declaration and its corresponding covenants have been continuously challenged and denied, even by forces that have sworn to protect and abide by them, our states and governments.

Human rights workers and defenders are increasingly becoming victims of these violations, specifically in countries such as the Philippines, where more than 765 extra-judicial killings of activist, labor leaders, students, human rights workers and church workers have been reported in 2006. Alarming has been the number of church people, more than 20 on this list, who have been killed, the most recent of which is Bishop Alberto Ramenta of the Philippine Independent Church (PIC), a staunch human rights defender of the poor, stabbed to death by unknown assailant inside his church in Central Philippines last October 3, 2006. Just last week, a former SCM Philippines member has been killed in the southern island of the Philippines, where he joined a labor union as an organizer.

PRAXIS

is the newsletter of
World Student Christian Federation
Asia-Pacific Region

Regional Office:

Unit 1-2, 18/Floor
280 Portland Street Commercial Building
Mongkok, Kowloon, Hong Kong
Tel: (852) 23852550 Fax: (852) 27823980
Email: wscfap@netvigator.com
Web Site: www.wscfap.org

Inter-Regional Office:

The Ecumenical Centre
5 Route des Morillons, 1218 Grand-Saconnex
Geneva, Switzerland
Tel: (41-22) 7988952 Fax: (41-22) 7982370
Email: wscf@wcc-coe.org
Web Site: www.wscfglobal.org

Editorial Team:

Ms. Necta Montes Rocas
Ms. Wong Yock Leng
Ms. Wong Yick Ching

The cover image is taken from the campaign of 'STOP extra-judicial killings and human rights violations in the Philippines!'

In Indonesia Irianto Kongkoli, a clergy man, general secretary of the protestant church in Central Sulawesi and well-known advocate of inter-faith dialogue and cooperation has been shot to death on October 17, 2006 following the execution of 3 Christians accused of master-minding the recent spate of bombings in Central Sulawesi, Indonesia. The death toll in Sri Lanka continues to rise, including the death of 15 aid workers killed last August in Muttur town in the midst of the internal conflict between the rebel LTTE and Sri Lankan government forces.

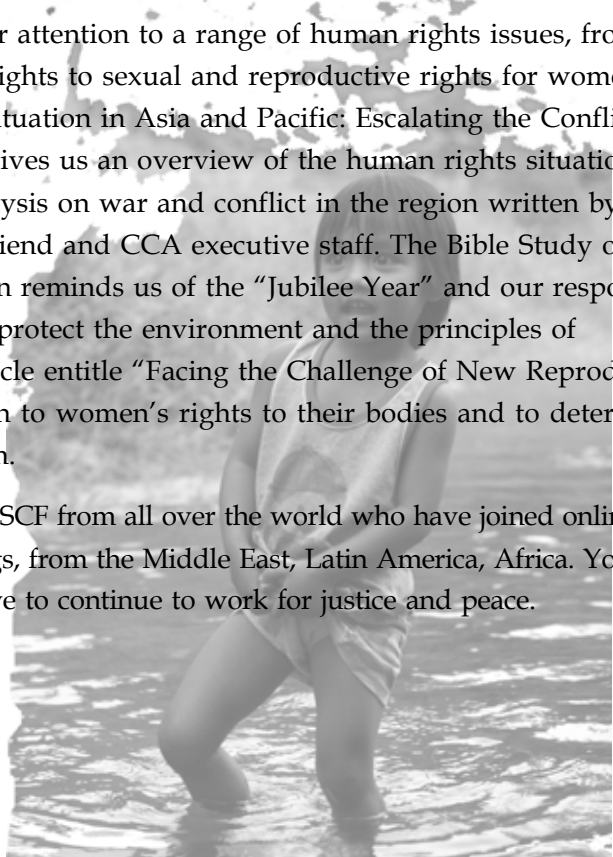
Government in many Asian countries, despite signing on many of these international human rights agreements and conventions have become inutile in the face of what the Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) describes as the collapse of the rule of law in some of these countries. State-sponsored violence, such as in case of Sri Lanka, Philippines, Indonesia, Pakistan continues unabated and leaves the people doubtful of their peace and security in their governments and of their future. No doubt that the growing pressure from the US and EU to tow the line on the War on Terror has further aggravated and contributed to the deterioration of human rights conditions in many of these countries. Government enact laws and use its military apparatus to act in complete disregard and violations of international human rights standards, such as torture, illegal arrests and detentions, disappearances and employing private armies to arrest and execute suspected terrorist elements.

In this issue of Praxis, we draw your attention to a range of human rights issues, from civil and political rights, economic rights to sexual and reproductive rights for women. The article entitled “ Geo-political Situation in Asia and Pacific: Escalating the Conflict and Impact of US War on Terror”, gives us an overview of the human rights situation and the underlying geopolitical analysis on war and conflict in the region written by Tony Waworuntu, a GMKI senior friend and CCA executive staff. The Bible Study on Leviticus 25 by Rev. Leritio Panjaitan reminds us of the “Jubilee Year” and our responsibilities as Christian communities to protect the environment and the principles of economic rights and justice. The article entitle “Facing the Challenge of New Reproductive Technologies” adds a dimension to women’s rights to their bodies and to determine what is good and bad for them.

Finally, I thank all the SCMers and WSCF from all over the world who have joined online signature campaign to stop the killings, from the Middle East, Latin America, Africa. Your solidarity has strengthened our resolve to continue to work for justice and peace.

Maligayong pasko sa inyong lahat!

Necta Montes Rocas
Regional Secretary



Geo-Political Situation in Asia & Pacific:

Escalating the Conflict and Impact of U.S. War on Terror

Tony Waworuntu is currently the joint executive secretary for Justice, International Affairs, Development and Service of CCA. He is a senior friend of GMKI (SCM Indonesia). This paper was presented during the WSCF Human Rights Workshop in Parapat Indonesia, September 2006.

Tony Waworuntu



Indeed it is a long and winding title, which seems to be impossible to deliberate within the time frame that has been given to me. The peace and security issues in all over the world, in the aftermath of September 11, 2001 has become more critical and dangerous. In the midst of the U.S. led war on terror, the world has become more terrorized, where killings, violence still behoove as “people’s daily bread”. This is quite obvious, that after the U.S. attacked Afghanistan and Iraq, and has identified some countries as the “axis of evil” there are growing instability, people’s insecurity, tensions and conflicts caused by different crises that has come to the forefront, particularly in Asia as the result of the War against Terror, issues that the Americans have failed to address.

The problem of people’s security in Asia has already been ongoing due to political, ideological, religious and ethnic conflicts in different places. This includes ongoing conflict between Taiwan and China where deep-rooted issues of sovereignty and self-determination are at the core of the problem. Insurgency, violence, and poverty in various places in Asia have resulted

in increases in migration of people, in internally displaced people and refugees, both in economic and political senses.

The war on terrorism and the consequent U.S. intervention in South Asia and South East Asia are events of far-reaching implications for peace and security of the region. These developments pose a serious “security dilemma” not only for the major regional powers, China and Japan, but also for secondary powers like India, Pakistan, South Korea and Indonesia.

A change in the balance of power between China and Taiwan could destabilize the entire region. Towards her relationship with China the U.S. still kept the so-called “One China Policy” on the one hand, but on the other hand the U.S. always has been said that if China is going to takeover Taiwan with force then the U.S. will stand in frontline to protect Taiwan. This kind of approach, towards her relationship with China and Taiwan, is again for the sake of the U.S. economic in-

terest. And with this ambiguity, the tensions and fears in the Taiwan Strait remain high and hostile.

As long as the tension remains high and the fears of the Taiwanese still strong, then the desire to be well-protected and modernized their defense system is also high and these exactly are the pushing factor for a big demand to buy arms and missiles from the U.S. The peace and stability in the region will largely depend on the maintenance of balance of power and construction of a region-wide framework of cooperation that could diffuse violence and conflict.

In fact, after the Cold War confrontation and nowadays under the War on Terror the United States has been putting some pressure to Japan to have a heavier military role than what Japan has ever had after Second World War. Following the 1996 redefinition of the U.S.-Japan security alliance, a new military arrangement titled the U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation Guidelines was made in 1997. This bilateral arrangement obligates Japan to mobilize its public and private resources, personnel, facilities, and services as well as its military force to join American military operations to be conducted in "areas surrounding Japan". North Korea was specifically mentioned by the designers of this arrangement as "clear and present danger" to "have important influence on Japan's security," a case that will trigger American military action in which Japan is to participate. But of course it is clear that a military conflict in Taiwan Strait is assumed as a possible trigger for U.S.-Japan joint military action though the Japanese and U.S. governments quibbled on this point considering China's strong reaction.

One alarming critical development connected with this is that using the momentum of the alliance redefinition the Japanese ruling groups are now freeing the postwar Japanese State from its constitutional constraints. This has been changing the pacifist clause from a self-defense status to full-fledged war capable state with a large army deployable overseas; as it is now being deployed in Afghanistan and East Timor under the label of the U.N. Peace-Keeping forces in those countries. As the world is entering the U.S. led War on Terrorism, the U.S. hegemony and its military aspects more or less remains the same as it was in the Cold War era or even much more worsening.

In relation with the Peace and Security in Asia for the people's life-as a matter of fact while facing the threats of the globalization process, the people's security is much more relying on daily life than from the dread of a cataclysmic world events, such as world trade center attacks in New York or Bali bomb blasting, and the war in Lebanon very recently. Insecurity arises more from worries about food security, job security, income security, and environmental security. These are the emerging concerns of human security all over the world. But human security does not address the system of global exercise of violence pivoted on the U.S. military's policy role. Integrating the positive aspects of human security with people's security means comprehensive security of the people as individuals and as people's collectives. Here people's security shares with human security its concern with the whole ranges of people's life, but considers the military element ingrained in the structure as a destabilizing factor. In short, people's security calls for demilitarization. That's why to prevail peace without justice in the world

of oil, natural gas, minerals, water and forest resources. Empire is based on the appropriation of riches from the dominated countries for the benefit of the power centre. The empire is reaching out to establish unilateral control over natural resources around the world, even if this means going to war or destabilizing legitimately elected governments. Instruments such as the World Bank and other international financial mechanisms are being used to “liberalize” resource-extraction policies for the absolute benefit of the large transnational corporations serving the empire, with minimal benefits to the resource-endowed nations.

More people throughout the world are being forced to leave their homes because of wars, human rights violations, and dire poverty of environmental destruction.

Environmental protection and development are important issues. Since most Asian countries are still dependent on primary economic activities, this pressure is creating over-exploitation and depletion of land, water, forest and other ecosystems. The existence of mass poverty is accelerating the destruction of natural resources.

From rural to urban areas, from poor to emerging economies in the South, from countries of the South to countries of the North – migration has become a trend impacting most societies worldwide. The number of international migrants has increased to more than 175 million in 2005, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Today, one in fifty people on earth are living outside their home countries, while an estimated 25 million have been forcibly displaced within their own countries. At the same time that globalization is lead-

ing to freer movement of capital, goods and services, walls are going up to limit the movement of people across borders. As the “human side” of globalization, the phenomenon of migration means that virtually all societies are multicultural and multi-religious.

The plights of “uprooted people” – migrant workers, refugee and internally displaced people – still dominate the inter-agency debate to ensure that governments abide by international protocols and declarations. Two major areas need to be thoroughly discussed to prevent the flow of refugees and displaced people from their home countries and to provide assistance in receiving countries. A vulnerable economic situation in Asia and conflict between neighboring countries have forced authorities to take measures to forcibly return displaced people, ignoring whether their safety could be guaranteed.

Regarding issues on justice in Asia, the Human Rights issues still remains the priority of the people in Asia, where they are facing such human rights violations in their respective countries that need to be dealt with. Where as a result, many ordinary people have been unnecessarily subjected to threat, torture, imprisonment and loss of life, such as in the Philippines where many church’s workers, pastors and journalists have been killed by the military’s atrocities.

As conflicts still continuously takes place in Asia, even in some countries such as Sri Lanka, Pakistan, India, Indonesia this become more serious and have taken more lives of the people; therefore we need to continue our efforts to restore peace and resolve conflicts among the parties that are involved in those conflicts.



In the original Hebrew and Greek, the words for justice are the same as those rendered “righteousness.” Justice had primarily to do with conduct in relation to others, especially with regard to the rights of others. In a larger sense justice is not only giving to others their rights, but involves the active duty of establishing their rights.



(Justpeace is, therefore, a peace that emerges as the injustices of the world are transformed and rights are restored for all people. This peace goes beyond simple treaties or contracts. It goes beyond programs that simply help people live a bit more comfortable within systems and structures that are oppressive and unjust. It recognizes the history, the culture and the complexity of a conflict and it tries to address each of those creatively and courageously. Justpeace takes into consideration all forms of conflict and injustice, including economic violence, political violence, social violence, cultural violence, gender violence, ethnic violence, etc. Each of these forms of violence is created by injustice and to create a justpeace these injustices must be transformed.

To build justpeace, we must have movements that are rooted deeply in the marginalized communities and to be successful it is required that our movements not only address the issues of these communities but also provide means of participation suited to these communities, empower them, make them fully welcome and comfortable, and reflect their values and aspirations to the rest of the world.

It is not only a movement of protest, but a movement of transformation – building counter

institutions, systems and structures from the bottom-up.

Suffering does not know boundaries – religions, gender, national or ethnic. In suffering, people come together for they know that their survival depends on unity. As people committed to building justpeace, we too must come together without concern for religious

affiliation, gender, nationality or ethnicity for that is what is demanded of us by those who are most victimized by violence. Our coming together with the marginalized without regard to our differences reflects our vision of a future global community of justpeace – the Reign of God.

To overcome the above mentioned problems and challenges, then, as a starting point, the WSCF, Asia Pacific together with all SCMS in this region can ensure that:

- Every activity is designed in such a way that it reflects upon and finds creative ways to act upon the structural forms of economic, political and social violence in the society;
- All programs should make justice a primary focus of activities, for it is only when there is justice in our local, national, regional and global relationships that peace can emerge;
- Emphasize awareness raising of the churches and students of Asia to the roots of injustice and encouraging them to have the wisdom and courage to confront those roots of injustice and work for true transformation of the economic, social and political structures.

Chiang Mai, early autumn 2006

The Jubilee Year:

Economic Rights and Justice in the Bible

Lev. 25:8-17, 39-43; Luke 4:16-21

*Rev. Letirio Panjatan is a full-time pastor
in a local church in North Sumatra, Indonesia*

Rev. Letirio Panjatan



The Bible has far more to say about God's will for economic life than most of us realize. And those teaching are presented as "spiritual" issues, not just "material" concerns. We know of course that God liberated the Hebrew people from slavery in Egypt and brought them to the Promised Land, so that they might be God's people and live according to God's commandments. Leviticus 25 tells us how they were to order their social-economic-spiritual life, and it offers fundamental challenges for us today.

Before going into details of this chapter, we should briefly consider its background and context. This material was probably put together when the remaining tribes of Israel were returning from exile (6th century B.C.), but its roots to go back to the founding of their nation (13th century B.C.) and its reflects the concerns of the prophets during the monarchy (11th to 6th centuries B.C.). The chapter summarizes God's commandments regarding the Sabbath Year (every 7 years) and the jubilee year (every 50 years). Much of the focus is on ownership of the land, which was the primary source of economic life, social life and even family and personal life.

It is easy to see that mandates for the Sabbath year and the jubilee year are addressed

to one of the most burning problems of ancient Israel, of Jesus' day and even for our own generation. The land, like other resources for economic life, tends to fall into the hands of a few who become rich, and the majorities become poor. In ancient times most the people live off the land. When their crops failed, they went into debt: and if they were unable to pay back their debt (often with very high interest), they lost their land. Then they become sharecroppers, day laborers or even slaves. They might eventually be forced into bagging, prostitution, and other "unclean" work, as their families faced severed undernourishment and disease and finally death.

The teaching about the Sabbath year and jubilee year (compare Deuteronomy 15:1-18) are a direct and revolutionary (though non-violent) response to that social and economic problem, which at times became the central issue in Israel's life and a central concern of Israel's God.

It is important to note how directly these mandates are related to Israel's faith. The ju-

bilee was to be proclaimed on the Day of Atonement, the most sacred day of the year. On that day and only on that day the high priest entered the Holy of Holies to offer sacrifices for the cleansing of the temple, the priesthood and the people; and a goat was sent to the desert to symbolize the expulsion of their sin. The fulfillment of the jubilee mandates themselves are based on the fundamental beliefs of Israel.

The jubilee and Sabbath year mandates are not arbitrary or isolated teaching. They express the fundamental logic of God's intervention in human and cosmic history. The God of exodus, who delivered the Hebrew people out of slavery in Egypt into a "land flowing with milk and honey", had every right to expect them to resist and reverse the very human but sinful tendencies towards wealth and poverty, domination and alienation. God's justice, which is based on God's saving grace, demands fullness of life for all the people.

This concern was expressed repeatedly by The Old Testament prophets. In Isaiah 61:1-2a (compare Isaiah 58:6) we find a direct reference to the jubilee year as "the year of the Lord's favor", that passage was in turn used by Jesus to explain the central concern of his ministry (Luke 4:16-31). Several of the prophets were so vehement about God's demand for justice that they called into question into very worship of Israel and foretold the destruction of the temple. In the same way Jesus confronted the religious establishment of His time, which was linked with the wealthy landholders, the temple state and the Roman Empire.

In fulfillment of the jubilee mandates Jesus brought good news to the poor as the breaking

in of God's reign, as the release of those in prison (most of whom were there because of debts), as recovery of sight to the blind and healing of all kind of diseases, as liberation of the oppressed. He taught that God's reign would comfort those who mourn, give land back to the meek and fill the hungry with justice. Not only did He heal the sick, but He broke the taboos that marginalized people, above all the unclean, the sinners, woman, and children, and He gave them first priority in God's reign. To do this He had to challenge the guardians of the social, economic, political and religious system. First the scribes and the Pharisees, later the Herodians and Sadducees, finally the high priests.

Jesus taught his disciples to pray for the coming of God's reign, to forgive debts, to serve one another with humility and to be ready to give their life as He was bound to do.

Having considered these important biblical teaching, we must ask ourselves how faithful we are to God's commandments as they are expressed in terms of the jubilee and Sabbath year. How can we bring good news to the poor, release to prisoners, sight to the blind, liberation to the oppressed? We must bring this mandates down to our daily lives in concrete ways, remembering that Jesus, through small acts of healing and caring and even by disobeying legalistic regulation, was breaking down the walls of oppression and bringing in God's reign.

At the same time we must relate the central mandates of Leviticus 25 and Deuteronomy 15:1-18 to the central crisis of our time. And we must pray for the coming of God's reign in terms of the biblical in response to the struggle of all God's people of fullness of life.

Suggestion for Discussion

1. What does it mean to give "rest to the land" (Lev.25:5)? Can this be applied today to an ecosystem about to collapse, leading to planetary death?
2. In your community how does the increasing concentration in fewer hands of the resources necessary to participate in economy, society, and life as a whole affect the people? What are some creative ways of reallocation available resources for the life and well-being of all God's people and all of creation?
3. What does it mean today to free the slaves? Could this call for liberation be applied to peasants and workers at all levels that are subject without appeal to the "invisible hands" of the market and thus permanently exposed to the threat of layoff, which can mean economic death?
4. The debts which many poor countries owe to foreign banks, governments, and financial institutions are now being used to enforce their submission to outside economic power, who are requiring them to dismantle social welfare system to the point of bringing about what some call ungovernability, and others refer to as social explosion. How do these "jubilee" texts speak to this situation?

Crying for Justice

by *Hannah Angus, SCM Australia*

Hannah Angus is a member of Australian SCM and their current Human Rights Coordinator. She is studying Arts at both University of Sydney and UTS, majoring in International Studies.

The WSCF AP Human Rights Workshop was held from 3 to 10 September in Parapat, North Sumatra, Indonesia. It brought together participants from across the region, to discuss issues of human rights, the way they affect our individual countries and ways in which participants could be, or already are, involved in our work as part of WSCF or as ASCM.

How can I begin to describe such a tumultuous experience? The workshop itself began with a day of Indonesian presentations, and I am sorry to say that unfortunately my 'aduh! Makan ini pedas sekali' (wow, this food is hot) speaking level was not up to a discussion about the effect of neo-liberal policy on the Asia-Pacific region. However, despite this incomprehensible beginning, the workshop was profoundly educative, challenging, and change making.

The first ('ecumenical English') conversation I had began deceptively with 'hello, how did you sleep?' but was quickly followed by 'Do you think Australia really has a place in the Asia-Pacific?' Well that was a wake-up question, but what followed was an amazing sharing of national identities, and an understanding of how all our identities are manifold, complex and flexible.

However, the experience that left the deepest impression on me was during exposure. We stayed with a community who has been severely environmentally and socially affected by a local pulp plant (for a summary of their situation see the article by Jasmine and I, pp. 14-15). We listened to the local people share their experiences, hopes and sorrows. The local pastor with



whom we were staying showed a small film he made about the protests and people who had died. The desolation and powerlessness I felt were overwhelming, and I could not stop tears from falling.

One of the older women said to me, 'Why are you crying? Don't cry. This is old history, it hap-

*Hannah (third from left)
with her host in Porsea, Indonesia*



pened long ago.' My tears were not for the past, but rather for the injustices of the past that carry into our present, for the futility and the ugliness of the world, for the change we so desperately seek which can seem so out of reach.

The morning after this intense experience, our host sat down in front of me and began, emotionally, to speak. She said that my tears had made her realise that she is not alone in her fight; that all around the world perhaps, people felt their pain and upheld them, directly and indirectly, through similar struggles. (She began to cry). And that perhaps what they had was still worth fighting for, not giving up their struggle, not losing hope.

I was overwhelmed by her strength, compassion and commitment. A mother of two, she spent approximately two years in jail at the time as her husband as a result of protesting, whilst her children lived with family. She has seen friends from the protests brutally injured, others killed, been trampled on and then ignored by the government, and yet has the strength to say they will continue the fight. She was an inspiration.

These experiences brought so many emotions: joy and amazement at the strength and beauty of people; despair at the overwhelming facts of life, so horrific, unstable, fear-inducing for so many

in our region; guilt for the blind complacency that our life can sometimes bring; inspiration, with the means to change and the dreams or an existence we can aspire to; but most of all, love.

Love of friends, known and unknown, understood and confused, with our diverse backgrounds that collided for a moment in space to share a dream of betterment, a cry for change, a passion for freedoms. Love of difference, the diverse realities that are the potential of the human race, so many families, languages, dreams, sorrows, struggles, songs, frowns and smiles...

One of the memories that will continue to inspire me is of our 'every-night solidarity night'. After the first day of information overload, discussion, sharing, coffee and rice, people gravitated to a common area to sit and chat. The chat soon became song requests, and then a festival of singing and (occasionally) dancing. I remember listening to Myo Tun, a representative of Myanmar who did not speak much during the day, but when pressed sang us a song in his own language. He said, 'This song is called Broken Heart', and then began to sing. Everyone in the room sat silent and transfixed by the sound of his voice and the guitar. Not understanding what he sang, we nonetheless shared a moment of unity in appreciation of the beauty in another. The motivation for human rights begins when we see all people as equal in dignity, as from that stems our desire for equality and justice.

Throughout the workshop, I was increasingly made aware of the blessings we have in our Australian life. Criticisms of government, law and law enforcement can be made. We can act. We can speak out. We have these freedoms, these choices and this life. Therefore examine the impact your actions have, speak up about injustice and call for change.

Facing the Challenges of

New Reproductive Technologies

This article was originally published in AWID (Association for Women's Rights in Development) under the themed publication, Young Women and Leadership: Gender Equality and New Technologies, in issue No. 8, June 2004. The article is written by Kristy Evans and Ann Elisabeth S. Samson.

The realization of women's sexual and reproductive health and rights, including ensuring access to appropriate reproductive technologies, has been a cornerstone in the fights for women's human rights and freedoms.

Reproductive technologies (RTs) traditionally refers to a range of devices and procedures for assisting, preventing and/or manipulating contraception, fertility and reproductive practices. What makes **new reproductive technologies (NRTs)** different is not only their increasing effectiveness and invasiveness, but the globalized system of profit seeking and control in which they are being advanced. Not only are these technologies being used to manipulate contraception, fertility and reproductive practices, but they are creating new ways to have and influence characteristics of potential children. Never before have reproductive technologies been manufactured and marketed with such intensity. Vast amounts of resources are being put into these discoveries. Yet, the dialogue as to the ethics, potential dangers and consequences on women's bodies remains largely uncritical and unbalanced, often neglecting to examine the different experiences of NRTs depending on location, class, race, and gender.

Why NRTs are Significant for Young Women?

Rich or poor, from the North or the South, women will encounter NRTs. The question is how, when and what NRT they will come across. Do young women have access to information about sexual and reproductive health and rights including contraceptives and reproductive technologies? Younger women in certain parts of the world are more accustomed to NRTs and use them readily, often without realizing the battles fought by earlier generations to ensure availability of these technologies and reproductive rights. For others, their reproductive choices are a constant battle. Yet, for the current generation constantly bombarded with new technologies of all kinds, new challenges arise. These young women have been brought up in a world where unprecedented resources are filtered into the fields of science and technology. This means they must engage with and advocate in their own interests and in their own contexts - as NRTs affect young women differently.

Young women should be considering the following questions:

- What are the impacts of NRTs for/on me?
- How are NRTs being tested, marketed, promoted in my community?

nipulate reproductive functioning with contraceptives and birth control interventions. New methods of contraception and birth control exploded after the 1950s. This boom in RTs over the following two decades included the discovery and use of a variety of different types of birth control pills and intrauterine devices (IUDs) - some much more helpful or harmful to women than others. Feminists have long been involved in debates surrounding reproductive technologies, fighting for access to birth control and abortion, and in the 1970s and 80s, focusing on a more holistic vision of health and well being and working for reproductive rights.

One of the problems we are facing in developing countries in Latin America is that we have prenatal testing but no abortion. Why are these [new technologies] being brought into our countries without full reproductive rights? They want to bring them in without engaging in the possible problems of them. – Florencia Luna (Argentina) [2]

The late 1970s marked a shift away from a focus on contraception to assisted fertility technologies. The first test tube baby was born in 1978. In 1990, the Human Genome Project was launched, and the 'genome revolution' [3] began with health, pharmaceutical, and fertility research focused predominantly on genes as the fundamental determinants of health. At the same time, processes of globalization have eliminated barriers to research, development, and dissemination of new reproductive technologies. In a very short time, an explosion of technologies related to assisted reproduction and 'new and improved' contraceptive measures came into research and development, followed by critiques

from a wide range of players including gender equality advocates. Spanning the decade of the 90s, developments such as microbicides, female condoms, improvements in IVF (in vitro fertilization) and other fertility treatments, numerous experiments on genetic manipulation, and cloning all came into fruition [4].

In addition to the technological developments mentioned here, there has been a major shift of control of women's fertility to governments, family planning agencies, and development organizations in recent decades. Uneven control, Malthusian beliefs on population and even eugenics have haunted many family planning policies [5]. Now, critics of the unrestrained development of new human genetic technologies claim they have the potential to further technologize new eugenic or racist ideologies as well as exacerbate the differences between rich and poor.

Some of The Forces at Play

Debates around NRTs are becoming increasingly complex for a few reasons:

- The next generation of NRTs are sophisticated, technologically advanced, and invasive;
- We have a new generation of women dealing with them; and
- There are powerful forces acting and interacting to define women's experiences of NRTs.

As these technologies are researched, developed, and marketed around the world, they utilize and benefit from processes of globalization and trade liberalization. To protect women's rights we must incorporate the global nature of business, international institutions, governments, and science and technology into our analysis of NRTs, keeping in mind how women in differing realities and locations are exposed

In the meantime, women's wombs are becoming laboratories for invasive and often risky reproductive technological interventions.

The development and use of NRTs has been lead by men, seldom focused on women's needs, or on women's health and rights. In fact, many of the new fertility technologies, including sperm sorting and cloning, were originally developed for animals, for use in food production. They have now been aimed at women. Women's bodies are increasingly becoming the suppliers of genetic material for creating life outside of the womb and providing the raw material for scientific research driven by a patriarchal agenda.

Do NRTs Help or Hinder Women's Rights?

NRTs *do both* - help and hinder women's rights. When women have access to them, NRTs enhance women's reproductive freedom, allowing them to further control their own fertility. But when NRTs are used as a part of population control policies and forced sterilizations, women's rights are certainly violated. Women's rights are also hindered when their bodies are used as testing sites for new reproductive technologies without adequate protection for their rights, health, and for prior informed consent. NRTs are increasingly able to help manipulate the very characteristics, ways and qualities for which eggs, embryos, and eventually children are created and selected.

Some of the issues and new questions potentially impacting on women's rights and gender equality are:

- **Corporations and industry seeking to market new technologies are influencing structures regulating their development.** As industry has a substantial amount of money, they tend to have a dispro-

portionate amount of lobbying power. As many of the industries developing NRTs are located in the North, this allows for a power imbalance, where Northern values and priorities dictate the agenda for the development and regulation of NRTs. A great deal of the money that goes into research comes from the private sector, which has a vested interest in ensuring that research and discoveries take place [9]. Since governments need money flowing into their economies, this leaves a worrying situation where legislation is influenced by capitalism and corporate interest. What does this mean in terms of conflicts of interest? How can corporations balance the need for profit making with ensuring public safety and ethical behaviour?

Quinacrine, originally used as a malaria drug, has been used to chemically sterilize more than 100,000 women in around twenty developing countries. [10]

- **While NRTs do give women some control, they are not necessarily the appropriate technologies for women's needs.** For example, the quinacrine sterilization method could provide a nonsurgical permanent sterilization that is cheap and relatively easy to administer. Yet it is not the kind of technology that women need and its potential for misuse is great. The contraceptive pill is a similar case: many women around the world use this method of contraception, yet it does not prevent the spread of sexually transmitted infections like HIV/AIDS and requires women to take daily doses of hormones which in the long term may be harmful to

- **NRTs are challenging choice as the central value to reproductive rights.** As new questions are raised, many feminists are hesitant to endorse regulations that would ban NRTs, because they fear a ban would limit choice. The right to control or choose one's fertility is very different than applying more commercial notions of choice. The use of pro-choice language by those seeking to promote NRTs "is likely to foster confusion between the unprecedented and unjustifiable practice of 'enhancing' the genetic makeup of a future child, and the fundamental right to end an unwanted pregnancy" according to Marcy Darnovsky. To differentiate the use of this language, she suggests "it will take focused effort to make it clear that altering the genes of one's children and the genetic legacy of humanity is not among the reproductive rights for which so many women and women's organizations have struggled" [15]

HOW THE FORCES COLLIDE

The evolution of the HIV/AIDS pandemic has necessitated new technologies protecting people from not only unwanted pregnancy (e.g. the Pill) but also from transmission of STIs - especially HIV (e.g. microbicides and the female condom). Questions surrounding the efficacy of such technologies have been rife, including: Why are we focusing on women-controlled methods of protection? Are women really in a better place to negotiate their sexual interactions than they were two decades ago? Don't these technologies essentially put responsibility for the pan-

demic in the private sphere and in the hands of women? When are we going to start focusing on gender inequalities and male responsibility for reproduction and protection from STIs and HIV? Questionable use of resources and time are also key issues being raised when developing NRTs. Who will be able to access these? Who is really going to benefit - those vulnerable to HIV, those who can afford to buy the NRTs or the companies manufacturing these products? Who is dictating the research agenda for HIV/AIDS and how are decisions surrounding the funding of initiatives and campaigns being made; and by whom? The responses to HIV/AIDS are an illustration of how seemingly medical issues become intertwined with political, social and gender inequalities - often times fuelling them.

The Way Forward

In order to promote women's health and rights everywhere, we must be aware of new and changing debates and ensure that critical analysis takes into account the real effects of NRTs on women's lives throughout the world:

- **Young women in particular, are a generation that has frameworks in place - international human rights treaties and programs of action - taking into account sexual and reproductive rights.** Young women can use existing frameworks (such as the outcome documents of the ICPD conference [International Conference on Population and Development] in 1994 and Beijing in 1995) as entry points for mobilizing around NRTs. This generation can ask: Who is developing these NRTs? For whom are they

Endnotes:

1. Sharma, Dinesh C. Illegal tests done on 790 Indian women. Hindustan Times, 18 January 2004.
 2. Samson, Ann Elisabeth. Personal interview, 22 Mar. 2001.
 3. Rapp, Rayna and Ginsburg, Faye. Standing at the Crossroads of Genetic Testing: New Eugenics, Disability Consciousness, and Women's Work. 2002.
<<http://www.gene-watch.org/genewatch/articles/15-1crossroads.html>>
 4. The announcement of the birth of the cloned Dolly the Sheep met great excitement in 1997.
 5. Women in Peru, for example, have recently felt the effects of the Program for Reproductive Health and Family Planning, a population control policy encouraging sterilizations. Critics have pointed out that the campaign for sterilization has targeted poor and indigenous women, who have been pressured and bribed or deceived into accepting surgery. Some feminists have argued the policy's goal, as others around the world, was to reduce the birth rate as a way to combat poverty, a Malthusian notion. Schmidt, Brita. Forced Sterilization in Peru in Political Environments #6, Fall 1998.
<http://www.cwpe.org/issues/population_html/schmidt.html>
 6. Malpani Infertility Clinic. <<http://www.ivfindia.com/services.htm>>
 7. According to a study of nine pharmaceutical companies and drug prices by Family USA, marketing, advertising, and administration account for 32% (average) of total revenue as compared to 13% to research and development. Off the Charts: Pay, Profits and Spending by Drug Companies. <<http://www.familiesusa.org>>
 8. Arthur Caplan is a Bioethicist at the University of Pennsylvania. Caplan made these statements in an online interview with abcnews.com as reproduced on
<http://www.genetics-and-society.org/resources/cgs/2000_asilomar_letter.html>
 9. Asif Ismail. Regulating Cloning: The biotech industry pushes its agenda in the states. found on Genetics and Society website
<<http://www.genetics-and-society.org/newsletter/index.html#II>>
 10. Samson, Ann Elisabeth. The quinacrine controversy: a help or hindrance to women's rights? In AWIDNews Vol. 15, No. 3, Summer 2001.
<<http://www.awid.org/publications/news/Summer2001.pdf>>
 11. Lynette Clemetson, For Abortion Rights Cause, a New Diversity, NY Times, 24 April 2004.
 12. Laws regulating the buying and selling of eggs and sperm are on the books in France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Australia, Brazil, Peru, Austria, China, South Korea, and Canada.
 13. Stevens, Alison. Cloning Debate Splits Women's Health Movement, 9 June 2002.
<<http://www.womensenews.com/article.cfm/dyn/aid/935/context/archive>>
 14. The Council for Responsible Genetics. Women in Biotechnology.
<<http://www.gene-watch.org/programs/women.html>>
 15. Darnvosky, Marcy. Human Germline Manipulation and Cloning as Women's Issues, 20 November 2000. <<http://www.ourbodiesourselves.org/clone2.htm>>
-

network, etc. Because it was Christmas season and I had very limited time, I just involved in some of their activities/ program.

Manila, Documentation and Surveillance

One of the important thing I learned from my experience with Karapatan is documentation work to pursue and advocate cases of human rights violations. In Karapatan, I learned how to organize case files of victims of human rights violations. All the known cases are filed by year and every case has its own file. For example, the political killing documents file should contain: Fact Sheet, Autopsy Letter (if possible), Post Mortem Examination Letter from Municipal Health Office, Affidavit letter/s, News clipping, Fact Finding Mission Report, Minute of the Hearings, and other documents that are related to the case. A documentation officer is assigned to the case that will always update the documents depending on progress of the case, and they also have to make the summary for all the case monthly and yearly.

From 6th to 7th December 2006, I visited Karapatan's "safe house" or refuge to help take care of the victims, witnesses, or their families who felt unsafe or have been threatened. During my visit to this house I met with a young girl named Malaya whose parents were abducted/ disappeared since November 2006 in Davao, Mindanao. I accompanied her with other victims, Merdeka and Myra to look for her parents in several military camps and hospitals in Manila. Before we went to look for her parents, Karapatan/ EMJP staff prepared all the documents and letter about this case. We

started by sending the letters to the Human Rights Commission of Philippines office and the ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross). These agencies conducted an investigation of Malaya as she is the reporter of the case. The next day, accompanied by a lawyer, we looked for the missing persons at Camp Hospital (Private Military Hospital), we checked the register list; unfortunately we didn't found their name on the list yet. Believing that the military were involved in this case, we went to the safe houses of Camp Aguinaldo and Camp Crame (Police Hospital), but the military officer didn't allow us to enter; we just checked the register list and gave them the picture of Malaya's parents. The last place we visited was Philippines Army Hospital at Fort Bonafacio, Makati City. Before we left this place, we gave them the letters prepared by Karapatan/ EMJP to give them information in case they find these disappeared people in their custody.

Cebu, US Militarism Conference

I attended the US Militarism Conference in Cebu City, in the central provinces of the Philippines (1 hour by flight from Manila). When we arrived in Cebu City, we were informed that the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Summit was postponed until January 2007 because of a powerful typhoon

that was predicted to pass-through Cebu province. Later I found out that the "typhoon" was only a flimsy excuse by the authorities because the Philippine government is not prepared to hold the meeting amid the volatile political situation in the country. The confer-



Melva (center) with Donato Contiente (left), political prisoner for more than 15 years, and a relative of victims of extrajudicial killings.

am, we were given until 3:30 pm to finish our program inside NBP. The group was composed of 25 people. We brought food, presents, etc for the detainees. We were not allowed to bring cell phones inside the prison, but they let us brought the cameras. The objectives of this program were to gather families and friends of the political detainees on Christmas day, to strengthen and also to share the latest information out and inside the prison. During the program, I recalled one political prisoner making an interesting speech saying, "Yes, it is true that we are inside this prison now, but when we are released from this prison, we will enter the bigger prison that is the Philippines nation, because there is still no peace and justice out there". Hearing this statement led me to ask questions of the reality of life outside prison.

There are still a lot of human rights violations that I am unable to mention one by one in this short report. At least 4 people have been killed since I arrived 3 weeks ago, and the number of political killing, abduction/ kidnapping, harassment, massacre, forcible displacement, etc related to the human rights violations keep rising every day. Most of the attacks were carried out by unidentified assailants on motorcycles, at times wearing face masks, who were often described as "vigilantes" or hired killers allegedly linked to AFP (Armed Forces of Philippines) members. Who can stop these? When it will be stopped? I believe it is not only happening here in the Philippines, it might also happen in my country, Indonesia, or in your country.

"No one may be deprived of these rights and freedoms, whether by virtue of race, color, class, ethnicity, gender, creed, political, or other opinion. Anyone violating these rights and freedom violates not only the rights of the victims but also their human dignity."

CCA WSCF AP Joint Committee Meets in Bangkok



*Clockwise from right to left:
Chung Chih, Necta, Abigail,
Lesly, Nina and Roger*

The CCA WSCF Joint Program (CWP) Committee met at the Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT) Guest House in Bangkok, Thailand from Nov 10 to 12, 2006. Attending the meeting were Rev. Dr. Roger Gaikwad, Ms. Nina Nayoan, Necta Montes Rocas from WSCF AP, and Ms. Chang Chung Chih and Mr. Lesley Capus from CCA. CCA intern Abigail Peter was also present to record the minutes of the meeting. The CWP meeting's main agenda was to plan the CWP joint activities in 2007, which includes the School for Ecumenical Leadership Formation (SELF) in September 2007 in Sri Lanka or Korea, and the National Coordinator's and General Secretaries Meeting in November 2007 in Chiangmai. A brief review of the 2005 plans was also shared, specifically the National Consultation Meeting in Thailand organized by SCM Thailand and CCT Youth in December 2006 and the Baseline Research Project on Student Ministry in Asia Pacific. The meeting discussed the problems and the current priorities and programs of each organization and how it affected level of priorities and participation in joint undertakings and partnerships with other organization. While a major shift was noted in CCA's program structure affecting the CWP, both organizations re-affirmed their commitment to strengthen their partnership and pursue joint plans in 2007 and beyond.

The workshop ended with the following statement from the participants:

**Statement of the Workshop on Human Rights – Neoliberalism
Gerakan Mahasiswa Kristen Indonesia – World Student Christian Federation
Parapat, Indonesia, 9 September 2006**

We, the Student Christian Movements representing the World Student Christian Federation of the Asia-Pacific region, including Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Philippines, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, South Korea, Hong Kong and Taiwan, gathered in Parapat, North Sumatera, from the 3rd to 10th of September 2006, have discussed and addressed neoliberalism and its impact and relation to the burning human rights issues in the Asia-Pacific region.

It is our resolve that neoliberalism takes form in modern economic theories, promoting the market mechanisms and the free enterprise (policies of liberalisation, privatisation and deregulation) further aggravate the conditions of poverty. Neoliberalism is responsible for the majority of human rights violations in the region, such as the creation of landlessness in the society (contradicting the basic right to property), commodification of labor and environmental destruction.

The human rights situation in the Asia-Pacific region is worsening rapidly. The issues of torture, extra-judicial killings and enforced disappearances cause structural poverty, curtailment of the freedom of expression and persistent inequalities – although freedom to practise these rights is guaranteed in the constitutions of most countries – which are blatantly carried out throughout the region.

We came to the conclusion that we, the SCMerS further raise our commitment to act in all levels; global, regional, national and local, in the fight against the rampant human rights abuses perpetuating in the region and the impact and relation of neoliberalism to these abuses. This will include the work of human rights advocacy on a regional scale.

Specific actions taken to facilitate our campaign will be the establishment of platforms for information exchange, publicity and campaign where violations occur as well as building networks through student, church and other advocacy organizations, working on a common regional theme and formation of a Human Rights Committee to coordinate human rights campaigns in the region.

Together, we will stand united wheresoever there may occur situations of injustice and poverty, amongst any of our brothers and sisters in the Asia-Pacific region.

Justice for all the victims of human rights violations!
No to neoliberal globalisation! Down with US imperialism!
Justice and peace for all!

Participants of the WSCF AP 2006 Human Rights Workshop



Interfaith Workshop. During 20th-23rd October, we had an SCMI-HMI Interfaith Workshop in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh. The theme was: "Christian Spirituality in Pluralistic Religious Context: Understanding Islam". There was a good participation from the different areas, and all the participants were actively engaged during the workshop. It was fortunate that the Henry Martyn Institute (HMI) could co-organise the workshop. The HMI is an ecumenical centre that caters as a training and community development centre and offers courses on Islamic studies.

During these four days, the participants were introduced to the basics of Islamic faith, and were able to deliberate on interfaith harmony. We took part in *Iftar*, as this was the *Ramzan* month, we felt that sharing in religious festivities was an important way of building trust among different faith communities. Most important of all, through inputs by the resource persons and interactions during the workshop, the participants expressed the importance of tolerance towards others. It was a good experience that challenged us to break barriers and build relationships with people of other faiths. This programme was supported by Ecumenical Assistant Programme (EAP) of World Student Christian Federation, Inter-Regional Office.

Protest against Armed Forces Special Power Act (AFSPA) 1958. On the 2nd November, There was a nationwide protest against AFSPA, which operates in the state of Manipur. This draconian act has given authority to the security forces to operate without warrant and immunity against legal action. They can also shoot, arrest, and kill at the mere hint of suspicion. As a result violations against human rights take place in the form of brutal rape, murder, and extortion. The protests were triggered by Ms. Sharmila Irom who had been on hunger strike for six years demanding that the AFSPA be repealed from her home state. The SCMI took part in this peaceful protest on 2nd November, 2006 in Bangalore, Karnataka. The AFSPA, though not be fully repealed, has been recommended for amendments.

Workshops on Human Rights. As part of the human rights programme, we were able to have three regional workshops on human rights this year: 1) 11th November, West Bengal Region, 2) 23rd-25th November, 2006, the North Tamil Nadu region, 3) 9th-10th December, 2006, the Kanataka region. It was on the 9th December, 2006, that the SCMers formed a Rally commemorating Human Rights Day. There were different human rights groups joining in the rally in Bangalore, Karnataka. It was a moment of sheer joy to see us as part of the larger network of people struggling for human rights.

There will be regional human right meetings in NorthWest India, NorthEast India and Orissa, before the academic session for 2006 ends.

Some of our Future Programmes, which we can highlight at this point are -

Winter Workshop. The SCMI will have winter workshop in two places simultaneously during 29th December, 2006 - 2nd January, 2007. The themes are, "SCMI Trainers' Training on Human Rights" and "Challenging the Dalit Women's Status Amidst Economic Globalisation", in Orissa and Tamil Nadu respectively.

WCC General Secretary Visit to SCMI National Office. During the month of February, Samuel Kobia, General Secretary of WCC will visit SCMI National Office in Bangalore. The SCMI National Office will host a one-day programme at the SCMI programme centre on 14th February, where Mr. Kobia will inaugurate the EASY Net conference. We look forward to this date as it will mark an important milestone as the WCC General Secretary addresses SCMers.

WSCF AP SCHEDULE AND UPDATES (January to December 2007)

JANUARY	<p>SCM Timor Leste National Women's Program Dili, Timor Leste</p>
FEBRUARY	<p>5 to 10 – EASY Net Coordinator's Meeting and National Coordinator's Training Manila, Philippines</p> <p>8 to 14 – WSCF Staff Meeting Geneva, Switzerland</p> <p>19 to 20 – WSCF AP Regional Women's Coordinator's Meeting Hong Kong</p> <p>21 to 24 – WSCF AP Standing Committee and RWC Search Committee Meetings Hong Kong</p>
MARCH	<p>3 to 8 – CCA 50th Anniversary Celebration Parapat, Indonesia</p>
APRIL	<p>Regional Women's Program Coordinator Transition Period</p>
MAY – SEPTEMBER	<p>Joint SCM and WSCF Women's Programme (2 programmes)</p>
JUNE	<p>1 to 9 – WSCF Exco Meeting and Inter-regional Women's Programme Cairo, Egypt</p> <p>18 to 21 – WSCF AP Human Rights Defenders Workshop for Students Manila, Philippines</p> <p>22 to 26 – International Solidarity Mission for Students Manila, Philippines</p>
SEPTEMBER	<p>2 to 22 – School for Ecumenical Leadership Formation (SELF) Sri Lanka</p>
OCTOBER	<p>Joint CCA WSCF AP Programme (CWP) Meeting Chiangmai, Thailand</p> <p>27 to 29 – General Secretaries and National Coordinator's Meeting Chiangmai, Thailand</p>
NOVEMBER	<p>Women Doing Theology Workshop</p>