



# PRAXIS

Newsletter of the WSCF Asia Pacific Region

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Women and Identity:  
Going Beyond  
Gender and Religion

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## PRAXIS

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Women's identity in general is constructed, shaped and reinforced by patriarchal culture and religions. Subsequently, Christian women's lives are shaped by their faith, traditions, and customs which are influenced by the dominant Androcentric Theology. Androcentric Theology has changed our perception towards women which is often 'sexist'. Women are sidelined and women's leadership and authority are not recognized in the Bible. Women are projected as powerless, inferior, impure, and 'objects'. Women's body and sexuality are considered as sinful, and offensive. Thus it is justified to exclude women to identify with the main stream and they are deprived of being leaders in the religious institutions or otherwise. The patriarchal model of Church has pushed women into the periphery and women's identity as subject is suppressed and disregarded. In addition, this identity intersects with identities of race, ethnicity, culture, class, caste, nationality, age, sexual orientation.

This issue of Praxis explores the theme of Women's Identity or Identities. The major sections features the articles, bible studies and stories presented at the Women Doing Theology (WDT) in November 2009 in Jakarta. In the Perspective Section, Anna Marsiana highlights the issue of state's intervention to control women's body, sexuality and mobility by imposing discriminatory laws and policies against women in Indonesia. These Acts sanctioned by Islamic Religious Laws have found its way into the lives of women in the secular world. Her reflection paper on the "Socio-Political, Cultural, and Religious Implications on Women's Identity in Indonesian Context" tells us that state and religion have impacted women's identity in Indonesia.

Sharing of Her Stories are the stories from three young SCM women who participated in the Women Doing Theology Workshop. Christine Tsoi from Hong Kong shares her experience of identifying herself as a Christian woman behaving in a particular way as prescribed in Biblical texts and the expectation of her Church. Alzira's from East Timor shares her life journey of growing up as a Timorese woman under the military occupation by Indonesia. Her life journey is a witness to the violence and exploitation by the military power towards innocent people in Timor Leste. Xochi from Australia shares her reflections on multiple identities assigned by the society, family and the teachings of an ideal woman within Christianity,

challenging her to find her own self – a God given identity outside of her gender social construct.

The Biblical Reflections by Yong Ting Jin invites us to shift our traditional way of reading and interpretation to the text Luke 10: 38-42 by doing a critical feminist reading through her theological reflection on "Martha & Mary: "Diakonia" Discipleship of Equals - A Critical Feminist Reading of Luke 10: 38-42". Her hermeneutics of suspicion, evaluation and reconstruction discovers the real identity of Mary and Martha. Their leadership as disciples of the emancipatory basileia movement of which Jesus was also a part is eye opening.

Solidarity section features the statement and solidarity actions of WSCF on the illegal arrest and torture fo the 43 health workers in the Philippines. This issue likewise contains news of WSCF AP's participation in the 13th Assembly of the Christian Conference of Asia, the launch of Network of Student Christian Movement Senior Friends in the Asia Pacific Region (NESCAP) during the CCA assembly and news from the national movements.

We hope that you will find this issue of praxis for a meaningful reading. We welcome your suggestions, thoughts for future praxis.

Thanking you,

Sunita Suna



IN ORDER TO HONOR WOMEN and to protect them from any disrespectful acts by men, the provinces of Aceh, Padang, Tangerang, Garut, Batang, Bulukumba came up with the regional regulations for women to be implemented in 151 districts. Some regulations are directed to control women's body and mobility. For example, one regulation prohibits women from going out in public areas after 7PM. One also directs women on how to dress in "respectful manner" - meaning covering her whole body because women's bodies are "aurat" (objects of sexual desires). It prohibits women to wear trousers and jeans. These are a few examples from the regulations found in 151 regional regulations being applied in 151 districts all over Indonesia.

### On the Socio-Political Aspects

In an international ecumenical gathering held in Bali, where I was asked to speak on the topic - Women's Situation in Asia in general and in Indonesia in particular. I asked the participants how they perceived the women's situation in Indonesia. The general impression they got after being in Bali for five days was that Indonesian women have freedom in almost everything. They enjoy the public sphere as much as their fellow men and seem to be given equal rights to education and in jobs. According to their observation and experience in the country, they did not observe much of women being oppressed and discriminated in this country. The same impression was also shared by most of the Indonesian participants of the WSCF AP Women Doing Theology workshop, held in Jakarta in November 2009, where I took a session on the topic mentioned for this article.

The impression grew stronger when I shared with them that the Indonesian constitution guaranteed women to have equal rights and opportunity for education and jobs; that women are protected by the law from any forms of domestic violence; and that political participation is guaranteed by the legal system (Act on political party & Act of Election System - guaranteed minimum 30% of women are in the executive committee of a political party while minimum 30% of women to be named by political party for legislative election). We have the National Commission on Violence Against Women, the National Commission on Child Protection, and the Minister of Women's Empowerment Programme. It does sound like Indonesia is the perfect place for women to live.

Unfortunately, that is not the real picture of women's situation in Indonesia. Being the **biggest** Moslem populated country in Asia, the government and many Indonesians like to claim that Indonesia is a secular state and yet a religious nation. All religions are competing to show to the world that they are breeding faithful and devoted religious communities. Unfortunately, the easiest way to show this to

# A Reflection

## on the socio-political, cultural, and religious implications on women's identity in Indonesian context

by Anna Marsiana



the world is by imposing some rigid rules and laws on women. Worse, not only are they trying to impose it within their own religious communities but also at the wider context to the nation through the legal system. As I mentioned earlier, there are 151 regional regulations (at district level) influenced by religious beliefs (Islam in most cases but also Christian in minor case) targeting women as the main subject of law.

The laws imposed by the regional governments of this non-religious country are clearly trying to limit the movement and space for women by setting the time for them to be allowed to stay outside the house and restricting their bodies through dress codes. As a result, women are sent back to the domestic sphere and confined in the house in the name of protection and honor.

A woman teacher was once arrested (2007) while waiting for her husband to pick her up one evening. She was mistakenly arrested on the basis of "showing gesture that can be interpreted as inviting and/or signing for casual date" which was considered violating the *perda* (regional law) in Tangerang. This *perda* is just one of the 151 *perda* in the country and Tangerang is just bordering Jakarta.

At the national level, such a way of thinking is also present. The bill on Anti-Pornography which criminalizes the woman's body was passed last year. So far, two female singers have been arrested as they were accused arousing sexual desire in men through their performance and is considered porn.

Some women's organizations and other civil society organizations have submitted their request for a judicial review to the Constitution Court, but the Court has rejected it on 25 March 2010. What was interesting is a number of women's organizations, mostly religious based organizations, supported the passing of the bill on anti-pornography. In the name of morality and religious nation the minister of women's empowerment also supported the law to be approved and passed by the law makers.

### Cultural & Religious Aspects

Just like their fellow Asians in other parts of the continent, the Indonesians are deeply rooted in their traditions and cultures. We are so proud of

our cultures. It is commonly understood that one of our big tasks as Indonesians is to preserve our culture(s). Generally, cultures are understood as sacred traditions. They are called "*adat*". When one is against his own culture, he is called "*Tidak beradat*", literally meaning a person with no respect for his own culture. But the term "*tidak beradat*" in Indonesian language can also be applied to a person who violates the social norms. That is why in many tribal/ethnic

*Perspective, go to page 6*

***Women are forced to reconcile of two contradictory facts between reality and the (religious) teachings: between their dreams of what they wanted to be and the image of what good women and good wives should be.***



*Perspective, from page 5*

groups/communities when somebody is called “tidak berada”, s/he is considered as the lowest human being and deserves to be excluded from the community. This explains why many people are so cautious not to cross the line because of the fear of being excluded from the community. In big cities like Jakarta, though, such a practice is not observed closely anymore.

At a bigger scale, we deal with the issue of religion. Being uprooted from the traditional community and finding it difficult to form the same traditions-based community that preserves all the adats, people in big cities have searched for other means to bind them together and this meant re-rooting themselves in religion. This is not difficult to imagine given the social-political confusion stated earlier.

Basically, Indonesians have been made to believe that they are very religious people. That is very true as there is no place in this country for “non-religious” people. One has to state his/her religious belief (one of six legally recognized religions) in his/her ID card.

Religious teachings are everywhere but those in Indonesia have the big impact on the people in general and women in particular. Though one can find some new and more liberating interpretations of religion including feminist interpretation, the dominant patriarchal sexist teachings and interpretations against women and other gender-minority groups overshadow these initiatives.

In many cases, many religious teachings have created self-split images for many women. They are forced

to reconcile two contradictory facts between reality and the religious teachings; between their dreams of what they wanted to be and the image of what good women and good wives should be.

Moreover, religion in this country have been used for political reasons and mainly for the benefits of men at the cost of women. Religious teachings have been instrumentalized to domesticate, confine and even criminalize women in this country.

### **Women’s Identity is Imposed on Indonesian women**

What can you say now on women’s situation in Indonesia? What kind of identity the women in the country have or claim to have? The identity crisis of women or the dual images of women in the country is the reality which many of us experience here.

Women in Indonesia have reacted differently to this. Some decided to identify themselves either by ethnicity or religion. Some do not know how to deal with all conflicting elements and just try to get along. A small number of women have decided to use their bodies as political instruments to counter these biased laws and policies during protest rallies and in their daily lives.

This is just to show that talking about women’s identity in this country is unveiling layers of socio-political, cultural and religious aspects and contexts. I cannot but agree that this is a very important issue to discuss because otherwise, we will simply accept to live a self-split life.

# ALZIRA PINTO

## (East Timor)

IN 1975, INDONESIA INVADED East Timor. At that time I was three years old and the sixth of seven children in my family. In 1974 my first brother became a soldier under the Portuguese colonial period. During this period, we could not stay permanently in our house. We moved from one place to another in the mountains. During the day, we looked for food and return to the mountains in the to hide.

Until 1979, we could not move any more because we were already on top of the Matebian mountain. All towns and villages were already occupied by the Indonesian army including the surrounding of Matebian mountain. Airplanes were passing through our area from morning until afternoon. People were scared and didn't go out to look for food as we heard bombings and firing. The Fretilin let the people surrender and join with Indonesia since many were starving and became victims of the firing.

At that time, we were six siblings in my family. My oldest brother lived in the mountain with the Falintil (the Timorese soldiers for independence struggle) as a medic. So only five of us with our parents returned back to the town. On our way back to town, my third brother was forced by the Indonesian army to work for them and carry their food and military equipment. He was even forced to fight the Falintil groups who were hiding in the mountains. He had no choice but to follow their instructions.

In the municipality, only four of us lived with our parents. Our situation was pathetic. There was no food and people were dying of starvation. I lost my father during that time.

I could not go to school because many of my family members and relatives died. In 1980, my third brother returned to live with us and that was the time I started going to school. Somehow I completed my primary school until senior high school.

After I finished my senior high school, I wanted to continue to university but we could not afford it and I did not want my mother to suffer for this. I then decided to stay at home with her working as

a farmer and trying to earn some money by selling crops to meet my basic needs.

In 1997 I stayed with my elder sister in Dili since she was working as a teacher in the junior high school. I started a petty business of a small kiosk and sold small things for my survival.

In 1999, Timor Leste became an independent country. But we had lost everything during the war and we had to start from scratch.

In 2001, Crystal Superior Institution (ISC), an educational programme, opened. I saw a ray of hope to fulfil my dream to continue my study in the university level.

I supported my study by selling things through my small kiosk and finally I completed my studies in 2003 and graduated in 2005.

But again in 2006, there was a political crisis on the issue of Lorosae and Loromunu people. Houses were seized and burned down, including my house and all our household things. Many became displaced and lived in the camp as refugees. I too suddenly became a refugee and lived in the camp. I started teaching the children in the camp who had to leave their schools. After two years I returned to my home town, lived in a tarpaulin shed and continued to teach there.

This is my identity as a Timorese woman. My experiences of both positive and negative, pleasant and unpleasant. Those experiences showed me various realities of life that I have lived and it is difficult to accept this reality.





# XOCHI MACE (Australia)

I AM NOT SURE HOW I understand my identity as a growing up woman. I struggle for my identity.

I have never looked to society as a basis of identity, yet am acutely aware of gender social constructs.

I feel no need to submit fully to gender social constructs, but am very aware of the pressure to take on particular roles and define myself in a particular way and often feel like I am failing and feel guilty when I chose to have my own identity.

I think I have two separate identities; the first is me, living as I wish, finding my identity within the image of God. The second is the public me, the woman who lives as a socialised woman on the surface, to gain acceptance and tolerance by society.

It is necessary to live as a socialised woman to some degree if I desire the acceptance of society. I must realise that living as a socialised women is something that I do, not something that I am. The trick is finding the balance – how to live as a socialised woman and still keep your identity intact. If I do not live as a socialised woman, then I am slightly distrusted by society and they will become wary of who I am and less likely to listen and accept the things I say and who I am. As a future priest it is very important for me to retain the acceptance of society as I need society to be willing to listen and accept the truths that I speak. It is a delicate balance between living as a socialised woman and becoming a socialised woman.

There are several different identities I have. Within my family I am mother; I have the primary responsibility for the care of my children. I am responsible for most household chores, for the preparation of meals, I take the children to school and all after-school activities, I discipline, comfort and encourage the children, and I give tough and gentle love. I also have the role of wife; I am the nurturer, problem-solver, supporter, decision maker. I must be the stronghold who knows when to yield, the mediator, the one who smooths the way and maintains the balance. Within my children's schools I am helper and tutor, expected to provide answers to questions with the speed and range of a Google search engine with unlimited patience. At university I am studying theology, as

1 of only 3 women in a class of about 25. In church, due to being in the process of priestly formation, I am viewed as a future spiritual leader and am often sought for pastoral care as well as seen as a leader of different areas of ministry.

I imagine that I have been living as a socialised woman based on gender social construct in the following ways. As a woman with young children, I don't work. My primary responsibilities and duties are to my children, my husband and my home. The order of my responsibilities is children, husband, home, church, and then me. My passions, yearnings, the essence of who I am must be viewed and explored only when it doesn't interfere with those above me in the list. My studies are done only when all other jobs have been done.



Theology is my passion. Yet in a classroom setting I am seen to be confrontational and to be humoured as I bring up, once again, the issue of women's issues in a class who doesn't understand the importance or relevance and wants to know why I am so passionate about always having to look at it from a feminist perspective. Can't I just accept it? I live as a socialised woman at University because so very often I didn't ask the questions that are burning inside of me, because so often I think 'I had better not question that point, it might challenge too many of the men in the class and make them feel uncomfortable.' As a socialised woman I continue to put care of others ahead of care for myself.

This makes it difficult to discover my identity because I don't have enough time to look at myself and my needs. When there are so many external demands on my time it is easiest to forget about my needs than others – they loudly remind me often.

I have only in the last couple of years become Anglican, I was up to that point, Roman Catholic. The use of Mary as an aspiration for women was originally very negative in my discovery and living out of my identity. In the Roman Catholic church, Mary set all the ideals of what the church believed women should emulate; to be submission, loving, gentle, tolerate, quietly shoulder life's burdens, gentle of spirit, passive, completely responsive to requests, self-sacrificing, virtuous, chaste, a virgin etc. I felt it provided very little support for women who didn't find themselves in this identity.

Something about Australian cultures gender constructs that is both positive and negative is that we have a gender construct (for both men and women) that is not fixed. We don't have a duty to exist completely within our social gender constructs. We have the freedom to choose to do whatever we want to. The negative side is that although we are not fixed within our gender constructs, we

are still expected to fulfil them. I may be studying full-time and working part-time and my husband may be working full-time, but the responsibility for the care of the children and maintenance of the house will still naturally fall on my shoulders.

What I would like to gain from this experience is a deeper understanding of how other women view and experience their identity and a confidence that will allow me to more fully define and embrace my God given identity outside of my gender social construct.

## CHRISTINE TSOI (Hong Kong)

IN MY MEMORY AS A CHILD, my family did not force me to do "what girls should do" and they did not ask me to be "what girls should be". Even my father and my mother seldom asked me to do the housework most daughters in the Chinese tradition should do. Maybe because I am the only child in my family and there is no comparison between me and other siblings. But there were times I was asked to behave like a woman or a lady in some occasions by my parents. Otherwise my parents gave me a carefree environment to grow up. Thus, I didn't really realize the identity of a woman discriminatory from a man in my family.

I began going to Church when I was a Form 5 student. The Church is the first place I learned about God and Bible. When I started reading the Bible I could see the given identity of men and women. The prescriptions for man

and woman are clearly written, one of the examples: 1 Corinthians 11:3-10; 1 Timothy 2:9-15. I was confused and didn't know how to interpret these texts. We are taught to believe that the Bible is the word of God, so do we (women) need to submit ourselves and obey men? However, these teachings didn't work on me, since I have never been treated like a 'woman' as how these texts in the Bible say.

But it began to work on me when I was fascinated with a boy in my Church. The teachings of the Bible about a woman's image became the guidelines for me. People appreciate if a woman behaves in certain manners. So I tried to be a religious woman like the Bible says to please my friend whom I liked. But soon I realized that I am not the woman the Bible describes. My new identity and the guidelines became one of my pressures. I questioned myself

why should I follow these rules to let a boy like me? I found no reasons why a woman should be submissive and obey man if God created everyone equally.

I felt it is a suppression of my own personalities, my own self which was making me to another person. There was no meaning for me to become another person in order to make someone happy. I realized that one should not change his/her own self for the interest of others.

Recently, I read a book called Woman at point zero. It tells about the story of an Islamic woman in Egypt, from her experience of circumcision to her awakening of self-liberation. Her story inspired me. Women should live for themselves. I am now trying to be an independent person and trying not to pretend to be a "woman" who I am not. The others should appreciate my real personality, who I am.



# Martha & Mary:

*"Diakonia" Discipleship  
of Equals  
A Critical Feminist Reading  
of Luke 10:38-42*

**MORE THAN THIRTY YEARS AGO**  
I believed sincerely the “Mary and Martha” story sermonized from the pulpit several times. From my teens through seminary student years and as a pastor [unordained] I heard the same storyline preached by other seminarians and church pastors. They had one common message and interpretation.



*Yong Ting Jin  
Out-going Coordinator  
Asian Women Resource  
Center (AWRC)*

Each sermon ended with a spiritual moral lesson that women must note and model themselves after Mary who had chosen the best portion! Shun Martha’s attitude of “complaining/nagging” and getting distracted! Be like Mary who chose to listen to “God’s Word” and not be distracted or grumpy! Mary is the model for she knew how to spend time wisely

and devote herself foremost to God as a priority over her domestic chores! And that’s the best choice! The impact of this “spiritual message” has resulted in much damage to the lives of Christian women and men too as they are continuously bombarded with, brainwashed and socialised to accept and internalise this kind of message easily.

The above scenario and outcome seem to be revisited similarly almost every time when this text was read in various women’s programmes, the most recent being the WSCF-AP’s WDT workshop in November 2009, Jakarta. The participants were divided into 3 small groups. They were asked to recall the text Lk 10: 38-42 without looking into the bible in order to reflect how they heard the text preached or taught to them. Each small group was requested to write down the story/text in sequence as they would remember it. Then two groups read aloud their written story while the third group did a role play. The two groups recorded Martha’s action as “distracted by her serving” and “very busy serving the visitors”

while the role play dramatised Martha saying to this effect: “I need to go to the market to buy things for cooking”. As the process continued the participants discovered and realised that the text they described came and stayed in their memory as it was preached or taught. Therefore they remembered what was told about the text as a familiar story than what is in the text. We then read the text again carefully and compared with what were written and role-played. If we do not agree with the interpretation, how then do we re-read this text?

#### **Re-reading Martha and Mary Story: A Hermeneutics of Suspicion and Evaluation**

The text reads a conversation between Martha and Jesus upon the arrival of Jesus. Martha, the house owner and host welcomes Jesus. The immediate dialogue is initiated by Martha! Martha is the subject. She welcomes Jesus to her house. It is said “house” is a technical term related to a house community. Martha’s house is a house church. And Martha is head of this Christian community in her house. Note now the text is a context of an entirely different setting from the context of “kitchen” or domestic household! Martha has a sister called Mary, who is secondary in the text. Yet focus and attention is drawn immediately to Mary describing that she is sitting at the feet of Jesus soon after Jesus enters Martha’s house and is welcomed. Mary is praised and affirmed for her action. By Mary’s role model as “listening”, Martha is judged with negative implication in the “many tasks/things” she is busy with; that she is “distracted” by them. To “sit at the feet” in the Jewish context is engaging in discussion. The listener or disciple is on equal level with the

person teaching, arguing and debating. While Mary is depicted as listening quietly, but in reality the text reflects a scenario of the first Christian house community gathered together. Mary is an active disciple, teaching, learning, arguing and engaging in discussion with Jesus. As the active “diakonia” leader, Martha is busy preparing for the function and role of “eucharistic table service, proclamation, and ecclesial leadership” in her house church.

A hermeneutics of suspicion and evaluation of the text raise many questions: why a “division” between Martha and Mary is being created, opposing and playing against each other – the listener is the silenced one while the doer is silenced when she speaks. Also very often our androcentric mind/eyes read v. 40 as an admonition of Jesus to Martha by placing Martha within the kitchen/domestic set up with her action of “serving” or doing “housework”, etc. Many versions use the words “serving”. New King James Version has the heading “Mary and Martha Worship and Serve” and v.40 “But Martha was distracted with much serving” while the New Living Translation records “But Martha was distracted by the big dinner she was preparing”. The Gideons International Bible (The Revised Berkeley Version in Modern English) translates “But Martha got worried about much housework” in v. 40.

By using “serving/housework/cooking/dinner” and describing the “feminised” behaviours of Mary and Martha in relation to Jesus, we maintain this line of traditional-patriarchal bias that divides men and women based on their socio-cultural constructed gender roles. This is itself a patriarchally/kyriarchally socially constructed role that reinscribes a kyriarchal and patriarchal reading of the text again. More than this, “serving/housework/cooking” are devalued compared to being a quiet listener as making the best choice that would not be taken away from her. This is the typical interpretation of Lk 10: 38-42. It has been extremely detrimental to the lives of women. Reading the text in such a manner both reflects but also reinforces kyriarchal power relations of domination and subordination based on socialised gender roles. It also reproduces the socially constructed gender identities, roles and responsibilities therein, which becomes the substance of the socio-cultural, political and theological discourse based on sex/gender dualism.

The focus “Martha was distracted” is problematised

and trivialised as female and womanly. Hence the word “complain” is “naturally” associated to the rest of the text with cultural discrimination; and that it is also “natural” that Jesus thus “scolded” Martha. It is a dominant male-patriarchal perception and description of socially gendered women who are characterised as being easily “distracted” by many things as well as always “complain/whining”. Martha’s action and words are pitted against Mary’s good behaviour as one who sits quietly, submissively and listens to God’s word.

### **A Hermeneutics of Reconstruction, Remembering and Proclamation**

Many feminist readings attempted to move away from and reconstruct the predominantly androcentric text and interpretation. However many remain trapped by their gender/women’s perspective, which is only a reconfiguration within the kyriarchal-patriarchal hegemonic gender discourse. At best it is a revisionist gender-based hermeneutics or revisionist feminist biblical apologetic. Such readings show that one can be easily trapped in reinscribing the socio-cultural sex and gender system within the kyriarchal patriarchal discourse.

In reconstruction, the text is not about “household/domestic chores” or listening to God’s word as a passive listener or being “distracted by serving/many tasks”. Also these words are merely a reflection of the kyriarchal-patriarchal language and political ideology to confine women to the domestic realm, to keep women within the sex and gender system for control and power over. Thus, the text needs to be freed from such hegemonic interpretations!

Martha and Mary were disciples of the emancipatory basileia movement of which Jesus was also a part. The two sisters hold active leadership positions in the Jesus basileia movement. The text reflects a power struggle and many questions in the first century Christian communities with Martha and Mary cast in the centre of controversy. There is a tension between “teaching” and “diakonia”. As highlighted by Schüssler Fiorenza and Jane Schaberg, this text is a result of the power struggle, which the term integrated “diakonia” was separated into two models of ministry, namely teaching and “diakonia” as narrowly defined into “serving”. Schaberg critiques how the word diakonia has been associated as “distracted with much serving”. Quoting

*A hermeneutics of suspicion and evaluation of the text raise many questions: why a "division" between*



*Martha and Mary is being created, Opposing and playing against each other - the listener is the silenced one while the doer is silenced*

Schüssler Fiorenza that this technical term carries an original meaning in the Christian usage, which depicts diakonia to mean "eucharistic table service, proclamation, and ecclesial leadership", Schaberg makes a point from Schüssler Fiorenza's research that the context of the text in Lk 10: 38-42 reflects the "de-bate at the end of the first century C.E. both over the roles of women and over emerging offices in the house-churches, some of which were founded and led by women." Thus this text raises suspicion on the author Luke who posed the role of diakonia of Martha as different from and even opposed to that of Mary's "listening to the word" when in fact diakonia carries all three: "eucharistic table service, proclamation, and ecclesial leadership". It is one integrated role without distinction but Luke had now distinguished the "different" roles between Martha and Mary. Schaberg supports Schüssler Fiorenza's

argument that this condition was prescribed for the church of the time, which did not exist then or earlier. She asserts, "With that split, the diakonia of women is reduced and discredited. Finally, it disappears: Acts does not mention any diakonia of women, but only of men (1:17; 6:1; 11:29; 12:25)."

But the author Luke uses them as two women models by splitting their one integrated ministry of "diakonia"! It is a political separation of two women or sisters fighting against each other. The outcome is that both Martha and Mary and their "diakonia" ministry are put down and devalued because one was distracted and the other listened. Women are put in female-gender role type and gender focus is reinforced. The equal role and apostleship of Martha as in Peter and Paul has disappeared in the text. But in church history and already in the biblical texts and canon, Martha is

confined to the “kitchen” or “household”, which has become derogatory, trivial and unimportant. Thus it is crucial to remember women and their active agency in history, their participation and leadership, which existed and formed the Jesus basileia movement and “ekklesia of wo/men” today. It is equally important to lift up the fact that androcentric-oriented history has missed out the perspective of wo/men, made them invisible and muted them to silence and invisibility.

In the Women’s Bible Commentary, Jane Schaberg’s interpretation of “Luke” and the text on Martha and Mary offers a different perspective. Schaberg observes that the two sisters have been made to compete with each other as well as not speaking to each other while Jesus was made to come in between them. Following Martha’s question to Jesus, she was summarily silenced. Schaberg points out that Mary’s study style, which is “totally receptive and passive, not creative learning” is impressed on the readers because she “sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to what he was saying”

(v. 39). Readers are then supposed to follow Mary as the example and not Martha. In Schaberg’s finding,

she says that different commentaries have “no agreement about its basic meaning” of this familiar story. Also she says “The textual variant found in

some manu–scripts at v. 42 (“few things are necessary or only one”) is often understood incorrectly as a comment on the menu for a meal and Martha’s excessive preparations.” Even the brief commentary in the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible gives the similar interpretation that “Jesus rebuked Martha’s choice of values; a simple meal (one dish) is sufficient for hospitality. Jesus approved Mary’s preference for listening to his teaching (thereby accepting a woman as a disciple) as contrasted with Martha’s unneeded acts of hospitality (the more usual woman’s role).” While this devalues the role and “many tasks” that Martha was doing, Schaberg is also critical of the view that Jesus defends Mary’s right to study with him because this is not correct, as Jewish women were not denied the right to study Torah during Jesus’ time. It is also not accurate to put Jesus in opposition to Judaism. Both



*Martha’s action and words are pitted against Mary’s good behaviour as one who sits quietly, submissively and listens to God’s word.*

Schüssler Fiorenza and Schaberg believe that Mary’s position at the feet of Jesus is like Paul who sat at

the feet of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3) his teacher. The difference however is that Paul claimed to be an apostle whereas Luke's narrative is ambiguous about Mary, who was portrayed as a silent listener and has no follow-up action in the rest of the gospel account. It is misleading the readers concluding "What she has heard and learned at the Lord's feet is private; it does not instruct and shape the whole community."

Jesus addresses twice to "Martha, Martha". As in the Bible few other occasions the name of a person is called twice, e.g. Abraham, Moses, Samuel, Peter, Paul, and Martha! Martha is the only woman called twice. This calling twice is a call to ministry or "diakonia", a special vocation! Martha has a special and prominent vocation in the first century C. E. of the Jesus basileia movement and community church.

In John's gospel, Martha's confession of Jesus is likened to Peter's confession. They are both leaders in John's gospel. Martha's confession in John 11 and 12 reveals that Martha was a prominent member of the basileia movement of which Jesus was a member together with Mary. Both of them were "leaders" in their own capacity among the discipleship of equals. In John's account it is a different scenario to hear of Martha's deep theological insight about Jesus.

From the Lukan narrative, we do not see this side of Martha or Mary. If Martha was such a distracted person in household chores, the shift from an unthinking domestic help to such deep theological insights about life and Jesus seemed rather implausible. There seems to be a missing link. A critical reading of John's gospel can be the basis

for critiquing and suspecting Luke's narrative. For Martha to be able to hold her own and engage Jesus in that confession seems too big a leap overnight. Thus simply put, Martha was already a prominent leader in her community in the Jesus basileia movement and hence she was able to engage with Jesus at any point in time and even more so at a situation where death overshadowed life. Thus it is necessary to apply a feminist hermeneutics of suspicion throughout Lk 10: 38-42 based on a critical feminist reading of John's narrative.

### **Towards Liberation and Transformative Action**

Towards the end of the WDT workshop in November 2009, each participant was asked what has been oppressive, negative and inhibiting? What has been liberating, empowering and transforming based on one's experience of struggle for change, liberation and transformation?

We also discussed: Who was Martha? Who was Mary? What kind of identities and roles were ascribed to them? We discussed about how the text and many traditional as well as women's interpretations could be drawn into a hegemonic gender discourse and thus reinscribing the social-cultural sex and gender system within the kyriarchal patriarchal discourse.

In conclusion towards a liberational process, a suggestion was made to the participants in small groups to: 1. Write a letter to Martha; or 2. Write a letter to Luke the author; or 3. Write a letter to Jesus. Each letter may be read to the whole group for further reflection and discussion among themselves.

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# The World Student Christian Federation calls for an immediate release of 43 doctors and health workers in the Philippines on February 6, 2010.

***“Freedom is what we have—Christ has set us free! Stand, and do not allow yourselves to become slaves again.” Galatians 5:1***

The World Student Christian Federation expresses shock and dismay at the arrest and torture of 43 doctors, nurses and community health practitioners by the Armed Forces in the Philippines and the Philippines National Police. Among the arrested Dr. Alexis Montes is a relative of our colleague, World Student Christian Federation Asia Pacific Regional Secretary Necta Montes. Dr. Montes, is a devoted doctor who has tirelessly served the poor and marginalized people as the longtime head of the healing and health ministry of the United Church of Christ of the Philippines (UCCP) and the Community Medical Foundation (COMMED), an NGO that provides medical services to community health workers and volunteers working in depressed communities in the Philippines.

The World Student Christian Federation has learnt from its partners in the Philippines that Dr. Montes and the other 42 detainees were victim of illegal arrest, detention and torture. We join our partners in the Philippines to call the government of President Gloria Arroyo for the respect of the human rights of Dr. Alex Montes and the 42 other detained health workers, including their rights to legal counsel, access to visitors, and due process.

The WSCF has learnt that the arrests were carried out in the early morning (6am) of February 6, 2010 by the 202nd Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army and the Rizal Philippine National Police at a retreat center in Morong Rizal, Philippines owned by Dr. Velmonte, a renowned and respectable infectious disease specialist. The doctors and health workers were attending the First Responders Training for health workers co-sponsored by the Community Medical Foundation, Inc. (COMMED), and Council for Health and Development (CHD)

beginning February 1, 2010. Dr. Merry Mia, the Education and Training Services coordinator for CHD and Dr. Alex Montes of Community Medicine Development Foundation, who were conducting the training, are dedicated proponents of community health care and worked many years with their respective NGOs. Initial reports say that more than 300 military and police raided the retreat center at gunpoint. They arrested the 43 participants before even searching the premises. They later showed a shoddy search warrant for a certain Mari Condes as supposed basis for their raid.

The unfounded claims by the military that the training during which the medical workers were arrested was in actuality on bomb-making and that the detainees were members of the New People's Army lead us to believe that these actions are part of intimidation tactics to frighten and weaken those who struggle for human rights and to alleviate the sufferings of the marginalized and the opposition forces engaged in campaigning for the Presidential Election of May 2010, a definite political threats to those currently in power.

The World Student Christian Federation has been aware and concerned for a long times about the extrajudicial killings that have been perpetrated by factions of the military in the Philippines against young people, students, trade unionist and people opposing Ms. Arroyo's government and continues to be extremely apprehensive about the possibility of an escalation of political violence such as the massacre in Maguindanao the run up to the upcoming elections. These abuses will

# Federation of s arrested 6, 2010

## then as free people latians 5:1

infringe on the rights of Filipino citizens to vote freely and without fear of intimidation in the Presidential election.

We join the voices of our partners and many international groups in calling on President Macapagal Arroyo to immediately order the release of the 43 health care workers who are now in illegal detention.

We call on the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the Philippine National Police and all other government security forces and apparatus to end all forms of abuses, harassment, intimidation and violence against candidates, political parties and organizations, including party list groups, who are critical of the government.

We reiterate our call to the Philippine Government to implement the recommendations of the United Nations Special Rapporteur, Philip Alston, and scrap its counter-insurgency campaign, Operation Plan Bantay Laya II.

We call on all governments to condemn the arrest of the 43 health workers and call for their immediate release.

Horacio Mesones  
WSCF Chair

Michael Wallace  
WSCF General Secretary





# WSCF Europe

Dear President Macapagal-Arroyo,

We are writing to express our deepest concern for and sympathy with the forty-three doctors and health care workers, including Dr. Alexis Montes, who have been victims of a military raid, abduction and torture. The World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) Europe region share in the anguish felt by those who have been repressed under this regime and sends its prayers to the victims and their families.

WSCF, a 114 year old ecumenical global community, is committed to dialogue and action for unity, equality and dignity of all human beings, peace, and social justice. We condemn the violation of human rights in all forms, every arbitrary use of power, and the exploitation of human beings and creation.

We request the following: Immediate release of health workers who have been illegally arrested and detained at Camp Capinpin, Tanay, Rizal; That the government ensures the safety of the victims, they are not harmed and their belongings are returned to them immediately; An immediate formation of an independent fact-finding and investigation team composed of representatives from human rights groups, the Church, local government, and the Commission on Human Rights that will look into raid and illegal arrest of the health workers conducting health skills training in Morong, Rizal; The Philippine Government to be reminded that it is a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and that it is also a party to all the major Human Rights instruments, thus it is bound to observe all of these instruments' provisions.

We condemn the actions of the military and Philippine government and remind you that the freedom of people can't be taken away without any reason. We stand united with our brothers and sisters of Christ.

Sincerely,

On behalf of the European Regional Committee of the WSCF

Jooa Vuorinen,  
Regional Secretary

Cc: Gen. Avelino Razon; Norberto Gonzales; Atty. Agnes Devanadera; Atty. Leila De Lima.

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# WSCF Africa

H.E. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo

President of the Republic Malacanang Palace,  
JP Laurel St, San Miguel  
Manilla Philippines

Dear Sir/Madam,

RELEASE OF DR. ALEX MONTES AND OTHER  
HEALTH WORKERS

On 6th February 2010, Dr. Alex Montes uncle to Necta Montes (WSCF-AP Regional Secretary) and other 42 health workers were illegally arrested and tortured by the Military forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police. This occurred during the training session for health workers in Morong, Rizal where the Military forces reported that there was a bomb making in the training session and they claimed to have found C4 explosives and a pistol.

Due to lack of witness from the search operations, there should be an immediate formation of independent fact finding and investigation team composed of representatives from Human rights groups, the Church, local government and commission on Human rights that will look into raid and illegal arrest of 43 health workers.

The military should stop the labeling and targeting of Human Rights defenders as members of front organizations of the communists and enemies of the state.

Dr. Alex Monte a good health Ministries Coordinator and the other 42 health workers detained deserve the respect of the human rights. WSCF – Africa Region call for their immediate release and the government should ensure safety of the victims, they get all their belongings and they should not be tortured nor harmed.

WSCF-AFRICA REGION.



# Message of SCM Canada with personal messages from their leaders

9 March 2010

Dearest Necta,

We are gathered in Calgary for the winter meeting of the Board of the Student Christian Movement of Canada. We would like to express our deepest concerns about the abduction and torture of your uncle and the other 42 health workers at the hands of the military in the Philippines.

As member of the WSCF family we are worried about the suffering that this has brought upon you and your family. Some of us have met you in person and hold you dear to our heart and suffer with you as you endure this pain. As students and senior friends concerned and active in social justice and peace we are outraged by the continued arrogance and impunity with which the military and the police defend the power and the status quo of the elites all over the world.

Some of us have just returned from the protests at the Olympic Games in Vancouver to remind the world about the raging homelessness in our cities and specifically in Vancouver where poor people's communities have been displaced by the games preparation and will not see the economic and social benefits promised by the authorities every time such events are held.

The violence exercised by the police against those who opposed the Olympics and a world order that places profits over people was traumatizing for those of us who were there. Although the consequences of such acts are not as dire as those endured by the 43 health workers and all those who have been victimized by the extra-judicial killings in the Philippines, we are aware that the intimidation of people fighting for a more just world is a common tactic all over the world to protect the interests of the few.

We continue to believe that the militarization of the North and the South at the expenses of the marginalized and those who try advocate with them affect us all in this oppressive system. We commend your uncle and the other health workers for their service to poor

communities in the Philippines and we are in solidarity with you, the SCM of the Philippines and the WSCF Asia-Pacific as you show such resilience in resisting the autocratic regime of the Gloria Arroyo government. We pray for the immediate release of your uncle and his colleagues and for the healing of their bodies and souls after such a harrowing experience. We pray for you and your family in this painful struggle. May God the liberator, the one who chooses to stand by the least of us, the one who cries out together with you for justice, accompany you, your family and your community in this trying time.

Yours in solidarity

The Board of the Student Christian Movement of Canada

## PERSONAL MESSAGES OF SOLIDARITY

Alongside your comrades here in Canada, I have been praying and advocating for you, your family, and for the SCM Philippines and all activists there. In gratitude for the solidarity and unity between our movements.  
*(David Ball, General Secretary)*

Necta, my prayers are with you and your family in particular, as well as your SCM and your country. Know that you are not alone and that there are many deeply concerned about this situation.  
*(Sheryl Johnson, Co-Chair)*

My thoughts and prayers are with you, your family, and all others affected by this tragedy.  
*(Tanner Watt, Finance & Fundraising Coordinator)*

I will be praying for all those affected by this cruel atrocity.  
*(Ryan Tristin Chapman, Anti-Oppression Co-Coordinator)*

# SCM Australia

H.E. Ernesto H. De Leon  
Philippine Embassy  
1 Moonah Pl  
Yarralumla ACT 2600

3 February 2010

Dear Ambassador De Leon,

I am writing on behalf of the Australian Student Christian Movement, in solidarity with our sister organisation, the Student Christian Movement of the Philippines. We wish to express our deep sadness and condemnation of the massacre of 57 people which took place in Maguindanao province, Mindanao, on November 23, 2009.

This brutal murder of civilians, including human rights lawyers and journalists, is merely the most egregious example of the deterioration of human rights in the Philippines in recent years. Although we acknowledge and applaud the lifting of martial law in Maguindanao, we remain concerned about the continued militarisation of society in that region. We urge you to curtail the use of police and national security forces by local warlords and to disband their para-military forces.

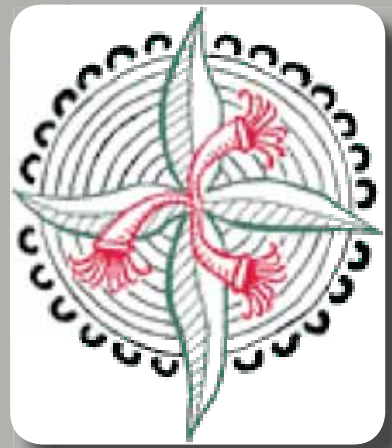
Moreover, as the trial of the perpetrators begins, we call on you to ensure a thorough investigation of the instigation of the massacre, and to protect the ongoing safety of witnesses, so that justice may be done.

In solidarity with the Student Christian Movement of the Philippines, we support the following five demands:

1. That your government dismantle and disarm paramilitary groups, not just in Maguindanao but on a national scale.
2. That an independent and credible fact-finding mission be formed to look into the massacre and monitor the human rights situation in Maguindanao province, Mindanao.
3. Martial Law having been lifted, that your government support fully the strengthening of civilian institutions, media and courts in Maguindanao.
4. That the Philippine government implement the major recommendations of United Nations Special Rapporteur on Extra-judicial, summary or arbitrary executions.
5. That independent monitoring of elections in May 2010 be permitted.

Yours sincerely,

Timothy Ngui  
National Coordinator  
Australian Student Christian Movement



*SCM Canada, from page 19*

And I pray that they may find strength and courage to endure the hardships they are facing, and that the community of Christ will work together to uphold our values of justice and mercy.

*(Kristine Deisman, Western Coordinator)*

May the peace of Christ and the love of friends near and far help you though this time of hardship.

*(Katherine Tuck, Outreach Coordinator)*

My prayer is that you and your family would know God's justice and liberation. Peace.

*(Geoff Dice, Co-Chair)*

With prayers for you, for those unjustly incarcerated, and for all who work to overcome the unjust systems in this world. Godspeed.

*(Chris Miller, Eastern Coordinator)*

Our prayers are with you, and people of integrity everywhere are sorrowed by these atrocities and called to action.

*(Lana Wilson, Communications and Resources Coordinator)*

<http://scmcanada.org/statements/2010/03/05/scm-canada-open-letter-of-solidarity-to-wscf-asia-pacific-regarding-arrests-torture/>

# SCMer's Diary

*Monika Biswas*  
SCM Bangladesh



PARTICIPATING IN THE 54TH United Nations Commission on the Status on Women (UNCSW) was a unique experience

The First World Conference on Women, almost thirty-five years ago, promoted the vision of “equality, development and peace” as a guide for enhanced global, regional and national actions to advance the status of women. In Copenhagen and Nairobi, commitments to women’s rights continued to be articulated. The adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action for Equality, Development and Peace was, then, a consolidation of previous efforts to link the issues and major obstacles for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women. These documents, which outline twelve critical areas of concern and actions needed to address them is still in 2010 the global policy framework for women and girls. Hence the 54th CSW planned to review the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action as the priority theme during the session.

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is a functional commission of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), dedicated exclusively to gender equality and advancement of women. It is the principal global policy-making body. Every year, representatives of Member States gather at United Nations Headquarters in New York to evaluate progress on gender equality, identify challenges, set global standards and formulate concrete policies to promote gender equality and advancement of women worldwide.

This year the 54th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) was held on 1st March to 12th March 2010 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. The CSW focused on reviewing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which was adopted 15 years ago with the support of 40,000 women. Around 8500 women and men from the NGOs, civil societies, faith based groups, students, youth, government officials participated in the said event.

For the past 3 years, WSCF has been bringing a delegation of young women and men to the UNCSW and have been making a strong advocacy impact as well as gaining skills, training, networks and relationships to bring back to our SCMs. This year also WSCF participated in a joint-delegation with the World Council of Churches through the Ecumenical Women, which is an international coalition

of Christian denominations and ecumenical organizations at UN ([www.ecumenicalwomen.org](http://www.ecumenicalwomen.org)) . 18 Ecumenical organizations participated through the network of Ecumenical Women. Eight delegates from six regions (Africa, Asia pacific, Europe, Middle East, North America & South America) represented WSCF

The CSW was a platform for various activists to discuss/debate to strengthen the ongoing struggle for women’s emancipation. In addition to the many events, the NGO committee also facilitated various activities on different women’s issues. This was also a time for the Ecumenical Women network to praying and worshipping together as we continue to participate on the forums.

WSCF and WCC jointly organized the forums on End Impunity violence Against Women, Establish Economic Justice, Gender, Power and Decision-Making. I also had an opportunity to bring the concerns of violence again women in

Monika Biswas (right most) and Christine Housel, WSCF Program Officer (second from the right), with SCM senior friends at UNCSW.



SCMer's Diary, from p. 21

Bangladesh to the forum. I could see the global solidarity in the forum which made me feel empowered while speaking about the women in Bangladesh. My country is far from achieving our goal and it is a challenge to keep this movement going. The faith based groups have a greater responsibility to restore violence free society, hence it is important to address the issue of gender equity within the Church as a faith based organization. The church ought to be the model for society through its wholistic approach for God's creation and the youth and student movements like SCMs should act an agent to promote gender justice.

This was a wonderful opportunity for me to gain this unique experience. This platform provided a space for me to interact with various women involved in the struggle for gender justice in grassroots level and also in the decision making level to learn from each other and establish network for the common cause.

Apart from the great experience through the CSW, I too had some challenges to attend this event. I was anxious due to the complicated visa process for a South Asian woman. the 2nd challenge was the language. Since English is not my 1st language, I had to struggle a bit to cope up, but with the help and cooperation of the friends in WSCF I was able to overcome this barrier. I am very much thankful to WSCF for providing this wonderful opportunity to participate in the 54th UNCSW.

Monika Biswas  
SCM Bangladesh

# Christian celebrated assembly Called to F and Heal

**The Christian  
Conference of Asia  
(CCA) is Asia's  
oldest ecumenical  
organization  
which draws its  
membership  
from nearly 100  
churches and 15  
national councils  
from 19 countries.**

# Conference of Asia the 13th General on the theme: Prophecy, Reconcile

It brings together member churches and councils for seminars and conferences to equip and nurture them to go back to their countries and engage in God's mission. Every five years CCA holds its General Assembly and gathers more than 300 members to celebrate life, discuss and set policy to re-enact God's mission in Asia. CCA held its 13th general Assembly in Kuala Lumpur from April 14-21, 2010. Necta Montes Rocas, Immanuel Kitnan and Sunita Suna from the World Student Christian Federation – Asia Pacific region attended the 13th GA of CCA as ecumenical partners.

*Immanuel Kitnan, second from the right, with participants of the CCA Youth Forum*



# Pre-Assembly Youth Forum

The Pre Assembly Youth Forum of 13th General Assembly of the Christian Conference of Asia held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from 10th-13th April 2010. Diverse and dynamic young people from different countries, churches, national councils, and Christian Youth Organizations from 19 countries of Asia and the Pacific participated at this Youth Forum.

The participants of the Youth Forum reclaimed their role as bearers of hope and their calling to take on the challenge in the renewal of the Church and society. Describing his experience in the Youth Forum, Immanuel Kitnan, WSCF AP Exco said that, "as a person molded in the SCM, I was deeply challenged to work with institutionalized hierarchical of the church structure and motivated to go beyond these barriers with stronger commitment & concern towards the society as sisters and brothers, which I saw among the young people who participated in the conference."

The Youth Statement presented at the preceding CCA General Assembly, reflected the strong intention of the young people to assert their voices in the CCA and its member churches to make youth work a priority of CCA

and its member councils and churches. In particular, they recommended that the CCA Youth Secretary's position be immediately filled, to increase the budget allocation for youth programs and explore possibilities for the Youth Committee and Women's Committee to be separated, which are now jointly organizing meetings under the Ecumenical Formation for Gender and Youth (EGY) of CCA.

The Youth Statement outlined the prophetic voice of the youth, "We as youth realized our prophetic role and being a part of an active Ecumenical Youth Movement, we believe that we are the voice that speaks on behalf of the muffled voice of young people all over Asia. We identified ourselves with those who are 'sinned against': the poor, the marginalized, the oppressed and those of our brothers and sisters that are suffering because of the lack of peace, Poverty, Environment Degradation, Human Rights Violations, Unfair Education, Health, Discrimination and Terrorism. Furthermore, we were in acceptance of our own flaws and limitations stemming from our inaction and apathy as those who sin against the marginalized."

# Celebrating Life: Women Prophets, Healers and Reconcilers

The Women's Pre-Assembly of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) was held on the above said theme from April 10-13, 2010 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. More than 60 women and few men from Asia and the Pacific representing the churches and ecumenical organizations participated the event. The pre assembly was intent to promote wider participation of women Church leaders in the decision making process of CCA in its ecumenical pilgrimage. This event was also aimed to strengthen Asian Ecumenical Movements to promote gender justice in Church and Society and also to recognize the prophetic voices of Asian women in building communities of peace.

There were participatory Bible studies, plenary, workshops to share and listen our stories as women and articulate and interpret for empowerment. The powerful stories from the women leaders who are not only challenging the hierarchical structure within the Church but also fighting against the oppressive military government for democratization were empowering. The struggle to create an inclusive community also challenged the men – how they can be genuine partners with women in building inclusive communities of peace. During the sharing and dialogue the women



*Sunita Suna, back row, second from right, with some participants of the CCA Pre-Women's Assembly*

also realized and recommend that churches must come forward to address the issue of violence against women in a more meaningful way. One of the recommendations to CCA in the statement was to create and adopt policy against sexual harassment and encourage the churches to do so.

Overall, the pre women's assembly was a time of fellowship and celebration, and a place to share and to listen stories of women as prophets, healers and reconcilers. Thanks to CCA especially to Moumita Biswas the executive secretary, EGY for creating this unique space and bringing together the women from different parts of Asia.

**WSCF AP  
congratulates  
and welcomes  
the new  
leadership in  
CCA for 2010  
to 2015**

## **General Secretary**

Rev. Dr. Henriette Tabita Hutabarat-Lebang the first woman general secretary in CCA. She is a vice-president of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and is a member of the Joint Working Group between the WCC and the Roman Catholic Church.

## **Presidium**

Rev. Rex RB Reyes, Jr currently the General Secretary of NCC Philippines. He was formerly the Program Secretary for Christian Unity and Ecumenical Relations of NCC Philippines and also taught Ecumenics at St. Andrew's Theological Seminary.

Rev. Ms Retno Ngapon a pastor of the Pasundan Christian Church in Jakarta, Indonesia. She is currently the Moderator of the Jakarta district of GKP (Gereja Kristen Pasundan) consisting of 12 local congregations.

Dr Kali Bahudar Rokaya is General Secretary of NCCP Nepal, lay pastor of Sagarmatha Church, Vice-President of the Interreligious Council of Nepal,



*Necta Montes Rocas, (left most) speaking at the Hypothetical Session of the CCA GA. To her right is M.P. Joseph, a theologian from India; Kaythi Min Din, SCM Myanmar Coordinator, and Rev. Andrew Tiver from Australia*

# Greetings from the WSCF AP by the Regional Secretary to the General Assembly

## ***Greetings to the 13th General Assembly of the Christian Conference of Asia.***

***It is my pleasure to extend greetings and congratulations from the World Student Christian Federation and the Student Christian Movements in Asia and the Pacific to this 13th General Assembly of CCA. We are in your midst, in the midst of this General Assembly. Some of us are here as stewards, delegates, observers, guest and staff of CCA.***

***We are here to join you in celebrating the life and the journey of CCA. Over the years, we have worked together in partnership with CCA to build the capacity of our youth for ecumenical leadership thru the SELF and organize grassroots ecumenical youth movements together with the Catholic youth movements thru EASYNET. It is not an easy journey. The constrains we face in building the EYM far greater than the situation decades ago. However, we believe that we shall overcome.***

***We are here to affirm our commitment to empower our young people and remind all of us that we need to put the youth agenda in the forefront of our ministries. Commitment to youth empowerment is not enough, action and the will to change our priorities and mindset is required. We remain faithful to the covenant made in 1966 by then EACC and WCC, re-affirmed once again in 1981 at the Bangalore Assembly, for common ecumenical witness and service to the universities and academic communities.***

***We are also here to show our respect and appreciation to our foremothers and forefathers who have made significant contributions to the Ecumenical Movement and the life and mission of CCA. We draw inspiration from your examples of leadership and we commit to carry-on the ecumenical vision that you planted on this soil.***

***We ask that you continue to uphold the voices of the people in the margins, to seek for their liberation from oppression. To heal, reconcile and prophesy is to be in solidarity with them in their struggles.***

***With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, may this General Assembly fulfill its mandate and may we all leave this Assembly inspired and filled with hope for the future of the Ecumenical Movement in Asia Pacific.***

***Thank you very much.***

# EASYNET Regional Coordinating Team appoints World YWCA as Moderation for Year 2010

The Ecumenical Asia Pacific Student and Youth Network (EASYNET) Regional Coordinating Team (NCT) had its annual meeting last January 23 to 25, 2010 at the YMCA National Office in Manila, Philippines. The meeting was attended by Ms. Cristina Dalope from Asia Alliance of YMCA, Mr. Adrian Periera and Mr. Raxy Richard Gomes from the International Movement of Catholic Students (IMCS), Mr. Deepak Raj from the International Young Christian Students (IYCS), Ms. Neriza Llena and Ms. Maria Galvelo from the World Young Women Christian Association (WYMCA), Ms. Necta Montes Rocas from WSCF Asia Pacific and Ms. Cristina Miranda, Regional Coordinator of EASYNET.

Highlights of the meeting included the appointment Ms. Neriza Llena of World YWCA as the Moderator of EASYNET for the year 2010, evaluation of the National Coordinators Training (NCT) in Malaysia last July 2009, and planning for the EASYNET Creative

Workshop in June 2010 in Chennai, India and the EASYNET Youth Week Celebration in October 2010. In its evaluation of EASYNET work in 2009, the team

expressed concern of CCA's role as Moderator for 2009 in pursuing the plans and encouraging member movements to actively participate in the life of EASYNET.

The NCT also reviewed the EASYNET Terms of Reference and Constitution and

made some changes and recommendations, specifically adding provisions on criteria for membership in the network. The team likewise suggested an evaluation design and plans for the 10-year anniversary celebration of EASYNET's in January 2011. After the meeting, the NCT members joined the thanksgiving fellowship at the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) compound in Quezon City for Adrian Periera, who completed his term as IMCS Regional Coordinator and EASYNET Moderator for 2009.



*EASYNET CT members: (L-R: Maria Galvelo, YWCA; Cristina Miranda, EASYNET Regional Coordinator; Deepak Raj, IYCS; Adrian Periera, IMCS; Necta Montes Rocas, WSCF AP; Cristina Dalope, APA YMCA; Neriza Llena, EASYNET Moderator/YWCA; Raxy Richard Gomez, IMCS)*

*WSCF AP Congratulates, from page 25*

National Coordinator of Nepal Intellectuals' Forum, and Member of the National Human Rights Commission.

Ms Van Arun Rasmey is currently acting General Secretary of the Kampuchea Christian Council (KCC) and Chair of its Women's Committee, Formerly she was the Vice Chair of KCC

## Treasurer

Mr Augustine Karmakar is currently the honorary general secretary of the Church of Bangladesh and a member of the NCCB Executive Committee. He has been honorary treasurer of NCCB and of the national council of the YMCA. He is also a Senior friend of Student Christian Movement of Bangladesh

We wish them our best wishes and look forward to working together as ecumenical partner.



## WSCF AP Launch Network of Student Christian Movements Senior Friends in the Asia Pacific Region (NESCAP)

The WSCF and SCM Senior Friends Gathering was held on 19th April 2010 during the 13th General Assembly of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) in Kuala Lumpur Malaysia. The purpose of this gathering was an initiative by the WSCF AP to bring together the senior friends and students who were attending the CCA assembly for a time of fellowship and also to share the life and work of the WSCF AP. In addition to this the gathering was also an opportunity to launch the Network of Student Christian Movements Senior Friends in the Asia Pacific Region (NESCAP). 40 senior friends and students attended the event.

With the limited time available for the Gathering, the brief program was moderated by Immanuel Kitnan, WSCF Exco member from Sri Lanka. After a brief introduction by the participants, Necta Montes and Sunita Suna, WSCF AP staff shared the current situation and the ongoing programmes and

activities of WSCF AP. This was followed by a sharing from David Das, senior friend from SCM Bangladesh on their experience of forming the senior friend group called, "SANGKO" or bridge in Bangla. He added that SANGKO, although newly formed, has initiated activities aimed at supporting the work of the current SCM and creating a platform for senior friends to regularly meet and support each other. SANGKO's future plan includes the construction of an SCM Development Center that will provide space for the SCM office and activities and lodging for SCM students coming from the provinces who are studying in Dhaka.

Philip Mathew, senior friend from SCM India, who is also part of the Gathering's Coordinating Committee shared the concept of NESCAP and asked the group to discuss on suggestions of how it can be structured and plans for possible action in the next six months.

The larger groups were divided into 4 smaller groups and shared the following points:

- \* Senior friends group initiate and appoint contact persons in national level;
- \* Each SCM should nominate 2 Sr. friends (1 woman, 1 man) as contact persons for the network;
- \* Connect with the local strong senior friends\* Organize Sr. friends fellowship\*
- \* Set up a support group in regional level\*
- \* Work out strong strategies to strengthen the network of Sr. friends\*
- \* Strengthen network by electronic means – e mails, social sites, e groups, etc for sharing information\*
- \* Create discussion forum to share stories and ideas\*
- \* Visit each other as group\*
- \* Priorities this as a prime concern
- \* Regional office need to communicate with this group and other interested senior friends\*
- \* Should not have much expectation but need some support, resources and group interaction\*
- \* Set up an e group for the Sr. friends\*
- \* Meeting like this should take place often\*
- \* Find out the gifts, talents, professions of Sr. friends and invite them as resource persons for the programmes and activities
- \* The Sr. friends can take responsibility to initiate, motivate, mobilize and promote the students to join SCMs / connect to SCMs – this would also challenge the speedy growth of evangelism/ evangelical groups in the Campuses\*
- \* Regional office must communicate with this group

After the sharing, the NESCAP was concluded with a small worship prepared for the Universal Day of Prayer for Students 2010, led by the students.

As a follow up, WSCF AP has created named “Network of SCM Senior Friends in Asia Pacific (NESCAP)” on face book. Please join!



## SCM Bangladesh holds 21st Central Assembly

With the theme: “Move with Christ: Take the Challenge & Make the Difference”, Bangladesh SCM successfully conducted the ‘Pre Assembly Workshop and 21st Central Assembly’ on 17 -20 March 2010 at Khulna, Bangladesh. The Pre-Assembly Workshop was scheduled for first one and half days and was followed by the Assembly business session. Forty-one delegates and two observers from eight local units (Dhaka, Savar, Faridpur, Barisal, Khulna, Jessore, Meherpur and Pabna) were present at the assembly.

This Workshop started with an opening ceremony and worship at the evening of the 17th March. Gracing the occasion were distinguished church priests and church leaders from different denominations and Christian organizations, and advisors and senior friends. Fr. James Romen Bairagi, Vicar General of the Catholic Church of Khulna Diocese gave the keynote address. Throughout his session, student delegates had the opportunity to learn about their role in the society as follower of Jesus Christ.

The Pre-Assembly Workshop was aimed to improve better understanding and knowledge about SCM in Global and National perspective and to renew the leadership spirit and commitment in the light of the above theme. The activities of the workshop were (i) Bible Study; (ii) WSCF history, mission, aims and mandates; (iii) Why Christian students involved in SCM? (iv) Bangladesh SCM aims and activities; and (v) Leadership concept and attributes in SCM perspective. All sessions were done through participatory discussions and group work where Bangladesh SCM Chairperson Mr. Alison Subrata Baroi and General Secretary Mr. Godfrey Rothin Sarker were the moderators. After the workshop, the business session of 21st Assembly began with agreed agenda and ended with renewed spirit and commitment: “Move with Christ; Take the challenge, Make the difference”.

# SCM Sri Lanka holds 98th Annual General Meeting



The 98th Annual General meeting (AGM) of SCM Sri Lanka was held on 29th March 2010 at the Carey College Chapel in Colombo on the theme "Student Ministry in Sri Lanka". Rev.Sanath Madagamgoda a senior friend of the SCM SL addressed the gathering on the role of SCM and challenges for students in the present context. The follow up discussion was to come up with plans and strategies to

respond the present situation in Sri Lanka as a student community. Around 70 Students from different part of the country participated in the event along with senior friends of the movement.

The new Executive Committee members for the year 2010-2011 elected at this AGM and office bearers are: Chairperson - Rev.Lalith Lakshendrakumar, General Secretary - Timothy

Pathum Kumarathunga, and Treasurer - Immanuel Gopala Kitnan.

We strongly believe that SCM Sri Lanka will be able to overcome the challenges in the past and will be engaged in the student ministry in Sri Lanka more actively and effectively and be a voice of the student community in Sri Lanka with the support of the WSCF & SCM family.

## SCM HK Dialogues with Dr. K.C.Abraham



The Student Christian Movement of Hong Kong organized a mini-forum to have a dialogue with Dr. K.C. Abraham on the topic *Challenges and Prospects of Ecumenism and Ecumenical Movements*. Around 15 SCM members gathered on 22nd March at the WSCF AP office in Hong Kong. Dr. K.C said, "The word ecumenism or Oikumene is about the whole inhabited world. The unity that is envisaged by it is not only worldwide but also embraces unity of all creation."

He furthered: "Ecumenism consists of a Vision, a Commitment

to values, and structure of relationship. We need to strive for vision of unity, relationship of humanity and commitment to values, which can be celebrated. There are three important things to experience ecumenism of freedom as opposed to that of domination: participatory structure, sustainability structure and just structure, .

Dr. K. C Abraham is a theologian from South India. A senior friend of SCM India, he became a visiting professor in the Divinity School of Chung Chi College, Hong Kong.





*MAIDA COALDRAKE is an ASCM Senior Friend who was born in 1919 and died on 31 January 2010.*

*Maida undertook tertiary study in Tasmania at a time when it was unusual for women to pursue an academic career.*

*She was one of only five full-time female students at the University of Tasmania in 1937 and was editor of the University of Tasmania's *Togatus*. After graduating with a Bachelor of Arts, she moved to Melbourne to research her masters thesis on Tasmania's role in the constitutional movement.*

*After her marriage in 1949, Maida lived in Japan for seven years where her husband was working as an Anglican missionary priest in Yokohama. Since returning to Australia in 1956, she played a leading role in Japanese studies. She took up a position as senior tutor in history at Sydney University and at the same time established the University's first Japanese language and history course.*

*Maida was awarded one of the highest honours conferred by Japan. On 5 December 1997, she received the Order of the Precious Crown (Wistaria level) by His Majesty Emperor Akihito for her contribution to the promotion of the studies of Japanese history and language. The order of the Precious Crown is the equivalent of a British knighthood and it is rare for a foreigner to be honoured in this way.*

## WSCF AP CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### **AWRC Coordinating Team Members Meeting**

*Jogjakarta , Indonesia  
May 17-22*

### **RWP –SCM Joint Women's Programme on Women and Men in Partnership**

*Yangon, Myanmar  
June 22-26*

### **Pre Women's Meeting & Regional Committee Meeting**

*Manado, Indonesia  
July 18-27*

### **RWP –SCM Joint Women's Programme on Women Doing Theology**

*Chiangmai, Thailand  
August 20-24*

### **Human Rights Justice and Peace (HRJP) Workshop on Indigenous Human Rights**

*Alice Spring, NT, Australia  
September 24-29*

### **Student Empowerment and Transformation (SET) and Ecumenical Assistant Programme Training (EAP)**

*Sri Lanka  
3rd week of October*

