

Project Title: WACC Asia Region Pre-Assembly Seminar:
Communicating Climate Justice

Reference No. 1319

Region/Country: Asia / Regional

Project Holder: WACC- Asia Region Executive Committee
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Introduction:

The impacts of climate change are being felt by marginalized communities, especially in the South, who have very little to do with the causes of climate crisis. High level international summits, have by far, failed to deliver on their promised meaningful solutions to the problem. Past Conferences of Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change have not resulted in forging binding emissions reduction targets after the commitments made in Kyoto have expired, and are now leaning more towards market-based solutions and voluntary pledges from the industrialized North that are seen to exacerbate the problem.

The proposed project hoped to examine the issue from a Christian communicator’s lens, and contribute to strengthening the advocacy for a social justice perspective of the climate problem.

Project Objectives:

The project “Communicating Climate Justice” aimed to address the following in the short-term:

- (a) Expound on the issue of climate change and its effects on the people, especially in the South.
- (b) Provide a space for a critical reflection on the issue of climate crisis and how it is ultimately an issue of social justice
- (c) Identify the challenges of communicating climate justice from a Christian communication lens and develop strategies such from a faith-based perspective.

Strategically, the project sees it contributing to the global civil society advocacy for climate justice by:

- (a) Strengthening capacities for analyzing problems and proposed solutions from a Christian communication lens.
- (b) Developing strategies for Christian communicators in Asia in advocating for climate justice.
- (c) Contributing towards WACC's thrust of 'taking sides' with the marginalized by providing a rich evidence-base of information and analysis of the impacts and causes of climate change in the region.
- (d) Develop a pro-South and pro-poor framework for effective international climate action (mitigation and adaptation).
- (e) Increased engagement of people in national, regional and international processes under a climate regime.

Activities which implemented the objectives:

The World Association for Christian Communication- Asia Region (WACC-AR) held its Pre-Assembly Seminar last May 16-17 LPP Garden Hotel in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The theme for the seminar was "Communicating Climate Justice."

The Seminar sought to expound on key issues in current discourse on the climate crisis, and bring into it a Christian communicator's perspective. The Seminar was organized as a pre-event of the Asia Region Triennial Assembly, keeping in mind that whatever unities and resolutions arrived at during the seminar would be taken forward immediately after and be given mandate by the members of the association.

The Seminar began with an outdoor symbolic dance ritual that was led by Muslim and Christian students from the Dayak University. It was a creative depiction of the destruction of rainforests due to corporate interests, and the ensuing struggle for climate justice.

Fr. Agustinus Sarwanto, SJ, Executive Director of Kanisius Publishing House, warmly welcomed the participants and guests to Yogyakarta, Indonesia. He spoke of how Yogyakarta was a fitting choice to talk about climate justice, as Yogyakarta is a testament to environmental challenges as well as the people's commitment towards rehabilitation and rebuilding. In 2006, Yogyakarta was affected by a large earthquake, and barely a year ago, was again challenged with the eruption of Mount Merapi. Meanwhile, Rev. Karin Achtelstetter, WACC General Secretary, expressed her appreciation for being part of the regional seminar and assembly, and explained that the WACC was in the midst of a process of reflection and rethinking in order for it to be more responsive to the needs of the times and of its constituency. Rev.

Achtelstetter also mentioned that if the Asia region so mandates, it could bring its leadership on climate justice as its contribution to the global WACC family.

Dr. Dennis Smith, WACC president, delivered the keynote speech on “***Communicating Climate Justice: A Christian communicators’ response to the challenges of the climate crisis***” where he highlighted that both climate change and environmental destruction are problems caused by human beings. These problems, he added, were the result of choices made by those holding political power and economic power – that have generated wealth for a few, while leading to the deaths of untold millions. Dr. Smith challenged the Assembly that climate justice is not a lens that is brought regularly to the reading of sacred texts nor to people’s understanding of what it means to be faithful. While the particularities of the struggle for climate justice will vary from one community to the next, the vision that WACC proposes, as communicators and as people of faith, remains the same. According to him, the Christian Principles of Communication provides a useful roadmap to influence public policy, in that: (a) we seek to create community; (b) we seek to promote participation (especially in becoming actors of our own history); (c) we seek to promote freedom; (d) we support, defend and develop human culture; and (e) we speak prophetically to power.

The other sessions during the seminar provided the space to enrich the participants’ understanding of the nature, causes and impacts of the climate crisis, especially among the poor and marginalized communities in Asia. WACC need not look far for resource persons and experts as its partners members of the Regional Executive Committee made specific contributions to the Seminar. Local resource persons were also tapped to give their insights and share their experiences. In particular, there were interventions from an Indonesian journalist, theologian/academician, as well as from the local support group that works on the rehabilitation of areas affected by the Mount Merapi eruption.

Other activities that contributed to meeting the Seminar objectives included the break out groups – from which the general unities and affirmation of commitment to work on climate justice was arrived at; and the exposure to Mount Merapi – which provided the Seminar participants the opportunity to touch base with the local community, and engage in some reforestation activity.

People involved in the planning/management/implementation of the project

The Pre-Assembly Seminar was primarily the result of the efforts of the WACC-Asia Region Executive Committee to contribute in developing a Christian communicator’s response to the global climate problem. The program was conceptualized and designed by the Executive Committee. The Excom undertook preparations for the said activity. The Excom deliberated on the project proposal, the program design, resource persons, and other details for the project. However, much of the technical and logistical groundwork was very ably facilitated by Fr. Agustinus Sarwanto, SJ – WACC Asia Region Vice-Chairperson – and Director of Kanisius Publishing House, and the staff of Kanisius.

1. Self-evaluation results

a) Gains and benefits to church/organisations/community, resulting from the project

The Pre-Assembly Seminar expounded on a very urgent global issue, with the value-added of contributing to the knowledge base of understanding climate justice from a Christian communicator's perspective. In addition, the Pre-Assembly Seminar paved the way for a number of positive results insofar as providing mandate for the medium-term direction and focus for Regional Association. Specifically,

- It was able to facilitate the identification of key issues/priority areas for the Regional Association, particularly in regard to 'communicating climate justice' at the country-level. This demonstrates the region's commitment towards further work around the seminar topic. This is also important in the thrust towards animating the WACC as a membership-based association;
- The activity showed the region's ability to provide leadership and initiative on an urgent global issue;
- The seminar yielded a rich resource base of references on climate justice, which could feed in not only for Asia members, but to the other global WACC regions as well (*see separate attachment of presentations*);
- The activity served to unite the membership on the need for the Regional Association to continue to develop its work and advocacy; and
- The Yogyakarta 2011 declaration is a testament to the unities arrived at during the seminar (*see attachment*)

b) Specific problems and set-backs encountered

Preparations for the Seminar were generally smooth. The Secretariat released two circulars through the listserv, individual emails and the website that provided information on the Pre-assembly Seminar and Triennial Assembly, during the second and last quarter of 2010. Deadlines for registering and confirming participation were also extended since it was noticed that a number of participants would confirm even beyond the deadlines set.

The programme was discussed extensively by the Regional Executive Committee and the local hosts. Possible resource persons were identified early on with preference for WACC regional officers, members and partners. That the WACC partners' meeting was held as a pre-activity was also well-appreciated since some WACC partners were also invited to become resource persons to the Seminar. Last-minute cancellations from resource persons were addressed immediately with WACC Executive Committee members stepping up and volunteering to replace.

Logistics coordination with the local host Kanisius was also very efficient and professional.

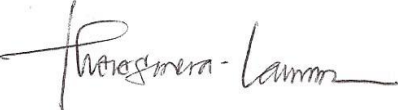
2. Plans for further development of the project

The results of the Group Discussions as well as the Yogyakarta Declaration will serve as a guidepost for future actions and direction of the Regional Association. Already, there are a number of ideas and recommendations for future projects, which is an important input for consideration for the newly-elected members of the Regional Executive Committee.


Among the possibilities for moving forward the climate justice advocacy include the following: capacity development for effective engagement on climate change at the local, national and international levels; adoption of Green Sunday, reflections on ecological theology; coordinated days of action; linking climate justice to other development issues, including on alternative development models with effective communication and messaging; production of resource materials and resource sharing in different media; and promotion of concrete doable alternatives.

The Regional Association has also taken on the WACC General Secretary's challenge of Asia providing leadership and initiative on climate justice to the global WACC family. As of this writing, the new Executive Committee has already carried forward advocacy for climate justice by producing a reflection guide for the Asia Communication Sunday 2011 held last June.

Submitted by:



Maria Theresa Nera-Lauron



Noted by:

Rev. Dr. Samuel Meshack
Chairperson, WACC Asia Region

ANNEX 1

**WACC- Asia Region Pre-Assembly Seminar
'Communicating Climate Justice'
May 16-17, 2011
Yogyakarta, Indonesia**

May 15 (Sunday)		
Full Day	Arrival and registration of participants	
7:00 – 8:30 pm	Dinner and welcome	
May 16 (Monday)		
7:30 – 8:30 am	Breakfast	
9:00 – 10:00 am	Opening Worship Greetings	Dayak students Fr. Agustinus Sarwanto Executive Director, Kanisius Publishing House Rev. Karin Achtelstetter General Secretary WACC
10:00 – 11:00 am	Keynote Address: <i>Communicating Climate Justice: A Christian communicators' response to the challenges of the climate crisis</i>	Dr. Dennis Smith President WACC
11:00– 11:15 am	Tea Break	
11: 15 – 12:30 pm	Session1: <i>The Global Climate Crisis: Impacting the poor and marginalized peoples in the South</i> <i>Perspectives from the South:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Pakistan</i> - <i>Myanmar</i> 	Fr. Dr. Al Andang Binawan, SJ Episcopal Vicar for Categorial Apostolate and Environment Team, Archdiocese of Jakarta

	<i>Open Forum</i>	Ms. Naveen Qayyum Rev. Saw Mya Lwin Min
12:30 - 1:30 pm	Lunch Break	
1:30 – 2:30 pm	Session 2: Current Initiatives towards solving the climate crisis <i>The UNFCCC process</i> <i>The Cochabamba Peoples Accord</i> <i>Civil society and social movement responses</i> <i>Open Forum</i>	Ms. Maria Theresa Lauron IBON Climate Justice Programme Mr. Frances Laminero Mindanao In-Peace
2:30 – 3:30 pm	Southern Voices on Climate Change Film presentations and discussion	PALM Reforestation Merapi Movement
3:30 – 4:00 pm	Tea Break	
4:00 - 5:00 pm	Session 3: Theological Reflections on Climate Change Open Forum	Prof. Dr. Emanuel Gerrit Singgih Duta Wacana Christian University of Yogyakarta
5:00 -	Free Time/Dinner	
May 17 (Tuesday)		
7:30 – 8:30 am	Breakfast	
9:00 – 9:30 am	Devotion	South Asia
9:30- 10:30 am	Session 4: Gender justice and Climate justice Communicating Climate Justice	Ms. Brigita Isworo Laksmi Journalist, KOMPAS Ms. Yiping Cai ISIS International Dr. Arul Aram Indian Online Media Forum
10:30– 10:45 am	Coffee/Tea Break	
10:45 – 12:30 pm	Session 5: Break out Groups	

12:30 – 1:30 pm	Lunch	
1:30 – 3:30 pm	Session 6: Report Back and Discussion	
3:30 – 4:00 pm	Tea Break	
4:00 -5:00 pm	Session 6: Summary and Ways Forward	

ANNEX 2

GUIDE FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Briefly have a country-sharing of “communicating climate justice” issues.
2. Looking beyond our own countries, what would be your impressions on the state of communicating climate justice?
3. As Christian communicators in Asia, how do we define our roles in communicating climate justice and what would be the key issues relating to the seminar theme that you feel WACC –AR should be working on?
4. How do we now translate this commitment for communicating climate justice into concrete plans of action and mechanisms for coordination for WACC Asia?
 - Please assign facilitator and rapporteur for each group
 - Highlights to be reported back to plenary
 - Notes from rapporteur to be submitted to the Secretariat/Statement Committee



**World Association for Christian Communication - Asia Region (WACC-AR)
Triennial Assembly
Yogyakarta, Indonesia
16-21 May 2008**

Yogyakarta Declaration 2011

We, the 51 delegates coming from Bangladesh, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Taiwan and Thailand, met in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, for the Triennial Assembly of the WACC-AR from 16-21 May 2011 and deliberated on the theme: 'Communicating Climate Justice'. We submit the following proposals for deliberation, adaptation and implementation at the local, national, and regional levels:

We acknowledge the devastation caused by climate change and its drastic impact on vulnerable communities. Human lives, particularly women, children, the poor and indigenous communities, are affected by compromised health, financial burdens, food and water shortages, and social and cultural disruptions. We observe that the people least responsible for climate change pay the highest price.

We understand that climate change adversely affects food production, deepens food shortages and aggravates rural poverty, unemployment and misery, as people face crop losses through climate disasters such as droughts and floods. Many countries in Asia like Bangladesh, Myanmar, Pakistan, China, Thailand and Indonesia have faced the disastrous aftermaths of climate change. This has resulted in the devastation of most vulnerable communities and displacement of people.

With gaps in taking timely measures since the 'Bali Road Map 2007', Copenhagen Accord 2009 and Cancun Consensus 2010, the tipping point for runaway climate change will be reached by 2015. The number of people being displaced as climate refugees due to flooding, shoreline erosion, drop in agricultural yield, landslides, unusual rain, melting of glaciers in the Himalayas, and desertification (due to deforestation, scant rainfall and floods) will drastically increase by 2050. Reduced agricultural yield results due to land grabbing and land conversion may endanger food sovereignty. Worse, people who suffered from environmental destructions are the same victims of land conversion and land grabbing by big agri-business corporations and those in power.

We raise concern over the United Nations Environment Programme prediction in 2005 according to which climate change would create 50 million climate refugees by 2010.

These people would flee a range of disasters including sea level rise, increases in the numbers and severity of tropical storms, and disruption in food production.

We condemn a market-driven and profit oriented economic model which ignores the needs of sustainable development. This includes global economic and political systems in which corporate monopoly and outright consumerism are the order of the day. Because governments side with the business interests, they fail to take measures required to protect the well being of their own people and the eco-systems. The impoverished communities and people around the world face the consequences.

We, as Christian communicators and members of WACC-AR, stand up against the false climate solutions that continue to harm communities, which reinforce corporate control and consumerism. We renew our commitment to fulfill our responsibility to stand up for climate justice and voice the concerns of peoples in Asia.

We affirm the Christian principles of upholding the integrity of God's creation and establishing healthy relationship with fellow beings of the Earth. We aim to promote green theology and uphold Christian values of "take care" (Genesis 2:15) of the Earth where God has put us. We support green theology and urge churches to create congregations sensitive to ecological justice ministries. We emphasize interpreting and understanding Christian doctrine in the light of evolving knowledge on ecology and environment. We encourage our churches to take a proactive stand by promoting awareness about climate justice among congregations and observing Green Sundays coordinating with international days of action.

We also demand reparation and financing for ecological debt. We also share concern about the closing of borders, especially by the developed countries in prospect of exodus of climate refugees. There has to be considerate measures regarding the climate refugees adopted by the governments. The United Nations should come up with international guidelines supporting the communities displaced by the climate change.

We recommend the use of traditional media as well as innovative forms of the media to create awareness with a special focus on grassroots people. We also recommend an increased use of social media for advocacy and campaigning on the issues of climate justice. Other alternative media such as community radio and other community-appropriate forms shall also be used for this purpose.

We should encourage communities and develop peoples' capacities in eco-friendly practices, such as renewable and alternative energy sources, organic farming, ban on plastics, and reforestation. Good practices of specific communities should be replicated elsewhere too, such as indigenous knowledge systems and practices - facilitating networks among them.

We call for climate justice issues to be incorporated in general education (formal and non-formal), and theological education, curriculum, and preaching. We recommend a preparation of 'Green Guidelines for Communicators and Theologians'. Peoples'

movements for climate justice should be strengthened. Linkages of climate change with other development issues should be established. We also invoke a common response to the climate injustices as faith communities. This should include collaborative initiatives like production of resource materials in local languages such as posters, books, brochures, and other communication means.

We aim to influence the governments, corporations, international organizations and the private sector to develop and implement pro-people and ecologically sustainable policies on climate change, working along with civil society organizations, international organizations as well as churches. As Christian communicators we also hold governments accountable to fulfill their promises to maintain balanced ecological systems and
| implement pro-people policies to ensure climate justice.

We also seek collaborations and express solidarity with other WACC regions, demanding climate justice with focus on underprivileged communities. As WACC we reclaim our prophetic role as Christian communicators to support people's movements for climate justice, voicing the concerns of marginalized communities by holding governments, corporate organizations as well as political and economic mechanisms responsible, which are adding to climate change.