



Interfaith Workshop 11-15 Dec 2012

Mindol Metta Karuna, Siem
Reap, Cambodia



Act Justly, Love Tenderly, Walk Humbly

The Main Idea:

Buddhists, Christians and Muslims were invited together to explore how their faith traditions called them to act for justice. Together drawing on these different traditions, all collaborated to reflect and plan non-violent ways to address current challenges in Cambodia.

Since the horrible days of the killing fields Cambodia has made some beautiful steps to peace, reconciliation and justice. However this is a long journey and more needs to happen so that Cambodia is truly part of the just and peaceful world desired by all faith traditions.



The four areas of focus included: ***Environment, Forced Displacement, Land and Disability.***

Objectives

- ❖ Listen to stories of people who have been injured by war, displaced from land or their home country, or experienced effects of environmental degradation.
- ❖ Draw on wisdom from different faiths of Buddhism, Islam and Christianity to motivate action for justice.
- ❖ Pledge ways to act both together and individually to help justice and peace grow deeper in Cambodia.



Actual Process

“Power of those who bear sufferings without losing hope. They are the engines of transformation of the society.”

-Anonymous, quote from memory wall

The conference began with testimonies of individuals who have been affected by each of the conference topics. A Rohingya refugee told his story of exile and statelessness. Forcibly displaced from her land, one woman told her story of multiple evictions. Courageously, a youth who lost both legs and an arm to a landmine shared his experiences. And a monk affected by degradation of his forest told his story.

Together, participants reflected on the stories and shared responses. Brief written comments were posted on the memory wall for inspiration. Resources on each of the topics were provided in the welcome pack for each participant.

Expert knowledge was shared on each issue including regional and national perspectives. What people are actually doing to better the situations and overcome obstacles, and

important questions that still need answers were discussed.

Learning circles were formed in each of the four areas to have further dialogues around the given topic. In small interfaith groups, people were able to benefit from in-depth discussions, share experiences and insight, and challenge one another. Each group came up with ways to promote action.

Finally, after dwelling on some of the challenges in Cambodia, a new day began with sharing of insights from each of the faith traditions. Inspiring quotes from each tradition were compiled into a booklet “Words of Faith.” Additionally a speaker who has deeply integrated teachings from Christianity, Buddhism and Sufism challenged the group to ban landmines of the heart and walk day by day for justice.



*"Nature
always gives
you life, but
would you
give to
nature? And
how much
have you done
to keep it?"*

*-Anonymous, quote from
memory wall*

1

Forced Displacement

Rohingya are a Muslim minority in Burma who have been stripped of citizenship. They are currently stateless and are considered one of the world's most persecuted minorities. They have been forced to flee the country in search of protection.

Groups Discussed: the importance of understanding the root of the conflict—is this territorial, ancestral, religious? Why aren't community leaders stepping up? The School Of Peace was used as an example to discuss three modules of conflict resolution: identity, roots of conflict, and transformation.

2

Land Evictions

Cambodia struggles with land grabbing and forced land evictions. Many families have been displaced losing their land, homes, jobs, and livelihoods. After the war, many families do not have land titles and hence no land security.

Groups Discussed: Communities must be strategic and unified and raise awareness amongst Cambodian people. People of different faiths can be supportive of transformative acts including the land titling initiative.

3

Environment

It was recalled that during the Khmer Rouge, when the people are suffering and are sad, nature also shows signs of sadness. Humanity and nature are interconnected. By destroying the environment, we are destroying our teacher and spiritual life.

Groups Discussed: Building a good model for children and future generations. Work together to prevent environmentally destructive practices. Plant trees!

Disability

Many people in Cambodia struggle with disabilities caused by the war and diseases. People with disabilities and victims of UXO's have worked together to ban landmines in Cambodia and promote disability rights.

4

Groups Discussed: Considering minority status as a form of disability. The importance of walking in the shoes of another to understand different experiences. Ban landmines of the heart.

What Do Our Faith Traditions Say?

Justice in *Islam* means love for others; revenge is not an option but you must be patient

Adherence to the 5 precepts of *Buddhism*: do not harm living beings, do not steal, abstain from sexual misconduct, do not lie, and not fall into intoxication

In the *Christian* tradition, forgiveness is a grace that enables conflicting parties to change; to become a compassionate and loving person.

Compassion, *Metta Karuna*, is the key to all traditions in Cambodia.



Participants Pledged To:

1. Publicize and uphold the rights of people with disability everywhere.
2. Raise awareness of the situation of the Rohingya people, and invite knowledgeable people to plan an effective strategy
3. Encourage all efforts for just land titling and peaceful collaborative action against unjust land evictions.
4. Encourage respect for environment, sanitation, tree planting and beauty.

Following the ritual of the interfaith tree planting, participant agreed to mobilize interfaith groups in Interfaith Harmony Week.

Outcomes

Listened to stories of people who had endured suffering.

Saw that this suffering brought tears and hopelessness at first, which transformed to resilience, compassion and courage to act for justice.

Felt in our hearts the compassion that suffering evokes in us.

Learned the challenges of land eviction, disability, forced displacement and the environment and how they can all be interconnected.

Reflected on our religious traditions and their insight, which impel us to act for justice.

Expressed a renewed understanding of compassion, wisdom, justice, dignity of each other, forgiveness, reconciliation, love, and refusal to hate and take revenge, the jihad of the heart.

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