



peace and reconciliation journal



Mennonite Church Canada
WITNESS

A MONTHLY PRAYER LETTER PUBLISHED BY DANN & JOJI PANTOJA
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Working with PeaceBuilders Community, Inc., Republic of the Philippines

AUGUST 2011 EDITION

PAR REGION 10 COMPLETES FIRST LEADERS' TRAINING

25 key Christian leaders—bishops, pastors, local government executives, business people, and civil society organization executives—participated in the First Part of the Peace and Reconciliation Leadership Development Program for Region 10. It was held last 4-5 August 2010 in Ozamiz City, Province of Misamis Occidental.

Region 10 is composed of five (5) provinces in Northern Mindanao—Bukidnon, Camiguin, Lanao del Norte, Misamis Occidental, and Misamis Oriental.

Each of the 25 leaders who participated in this program has agreed to develop a PAR Community in their respective provinces. The Provincial PAR Community, in turn, would develop PAR Teams in their own municipalities.



Region 10 PAR members and PBCI team

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PEACE WITHOUT BORDERS: A REFLECTION



Regina Mondez, presenting the modern Philippine cultural attire during the NARPI Cultural Night

Part of PBCI staff development is to encourage our staff to undergo trainings that would enhance their performance as peacebuilders and also widen their perspectives on peacebuilding. Our Church Resourcing Coordinator, Regina Mondez, attended the first Northeast Asia Regional Peacebuilding Institute (NARPI) Summer Training held in Seoul City and DMZ, South Korea. Three Filipinos from different parts of the country participated, and Miss Mondez is the only youth participant from the Philippines. The following is her reflection on the experience.

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PAR REGION 10...

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PAR Communities are groups of community leaders—church leaders, local government leaders, civil society organization leaders, academic leaders, business leaders, or any mix of these—

- who have expressed interest to have a working relationship with us as a consulting and training team focused on Peace and Reconciliation, or as a training arm of the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches' PAR Commission (PCEC-PARCom);

- who have made a commitment to embrace Peace Theology;

- who have invited us to teach them our PAR Seminar Series;

- who have a vision to work with us in developing a PAR Program needed in their area; and,

- who have organized themselves as a catalyst group to organize PAR Teams in their particular province.

PAR Teams are composed of local volunteers from various communities who are trained for 8 months to be an on-going, rapidly-mobilized teams who will implement their PAR Communities' programs. The general objectives of PAR Teams are:

- to promote peace and reconciliation in our land by giving skilled, courageous support to communities experiencing various conflicts



- to inspire various parties-in-conflict to discard violence in favor of nonviolent action as a means of settling differences
- to provide various communities with first-hand information and resources for responding to situations of conflict, and to urge their active involvement
- to interpret a nonviolent perspective to the media and to our nation as a whole.

Bishop Genesis Udang of PCEC Mindanao leads the formation of PAR Commission in this region.

This session is the first part of a series of three sessions:

- :: August 05, 2011 in Ozamiz City
- :: September 02, 2011 in Cagayan de Oro City
- :: October 11, 2011 in Malaybalay City. 🌱

We welcome your contributions for our support and invite you to send these to:

MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA,
600 SHAFTESBURY BLVD.,
WINNIPEG, MB R3P 0M4

Please designate to:
Dann & Joji Pantoja,
PeaceBuilders Community, Inc., Philippines

PEACE WITHOUT BORDERS...

From page 1

On August 15-29, 2011, I attended the Northeast Asia Regional Peacebuilding Institute (NARPI) Summer Training. On week 1, I took the course on *A Framework for Restorative Justice*. There, I learned how restorative justice is very much needed in a society where punishment is seen as the only symbol of justice. Restorative justice realizes the needs of all the people involved in injustices. It realizes what issues needed to be addressed rather than what laws were broken and what punishments are deserved. Restorative justice restores the human dignity and relationships, and builds lasting peace. This is what we need in our society where history brings pain to our people. Colonizers in history are demonized rather than being humanized. We need to understand each other in order to achieve justice. After all, it is not the punishment that satisfies the needs of the victims, but merely the act of recognizing what harm has been done and what needs to be done in order to prevent future mistakes.

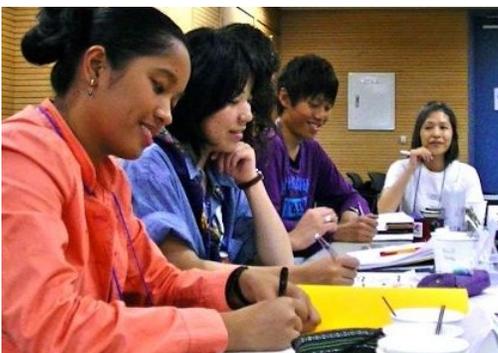
On the second week, I took the course on *Peacebuilding Skills: Focus on Mediation*. Interesting stories and exercises made me more confident on the peacebuilding work that I am doing in my own country. The course especially inspired me to become a good mediator—in spite of and despite of my own flaws and imperfections as a human being. Mediation is a pretty tough task, and yet it is a fulfilling one, as long as you are very well ready and “armed” with the proper skills.

The highlight of the training was during our Field trip. We went to the Korean De-Militarized Zone (DMZ), the border between North and South Korea. There we had a brief orientation about what the place looks like and how beautiful the creatures are that can be found in the area.

The Korean DMZ is a stretch of 2 kilometers North and 2 kilometers South of the border, where no civilian can enter. We viewed the border through the use of highly technological devices. We actually saw North Korean soldiers on duty. With this, we know that the North Korean soldiers are also perhaps looking at us that very moment. It seemed very peaceful. The Korean war created a rich ecological environment where plants and animals interact harmoniously with each other, without fear of being exploited by human beings.

The de-militarized zone is currently flourishing as a symbol of peace. It is ironic how a war can create such a peaceful and rich environment. It is ironic how such a rich nature can no longer be witnessed by human beings because they are not allowed to. It is ironic how there seems to be peace in an area that is in the middle of two conflicting lands.

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Reg, in her Restorative Justice class



Beyond this fence is 2 kilometers away from the Korean border



Overlooking the “punch bowl”- the immediate town from DMZ

PEACE WITHOUT BORDERS...

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While I was standing there, 2 kilometers away from North Korea, I cannot help but cry. I cannot help but think how much money, energy, time, and life has been spent just to protect this border. I cannot help but feel for the soldiers who do nothing but to make sure that no North Koreans will cross that border. I cannot help but realize how much resources are wasted because of war. How we tend to create a synthetically peaceful environment, and yet the citizens of these two countries could not even see and greet each other as people with the same ancestors, same language, and same culture.

Near the border of North and South Korea, I realized that we, human beings, also tend to limit ourselves with borders. As human beings created for unique purposes and called for different tasks, we tend to create borders that seem peaceful, and yet, in reality, is actually a symbol of inner struggle and discomfort. As a peacebuilder, I sometimes limit myself and my capabilities with borders. I tend to stay in places where I am comfortable at. I tend to be with people whom I am comfortable with. I tend to do things that I am comfortable doing. And yet, these borders do not make me peaceful at all. Near the Korean border, I realized that real and lasting peace must be without borders. Real peace transcends differences, cultures, languages, and preferences. The DMZ experience convicted me to transcend fear. It made me braver and realize that peacebuilding should not be limited with comfort borders. If I am called to build peace anywhere, then I should go. Peace without borders requires peacebuilding beyond borders. 🌱

Reported by Regina Lyn G. Mondez

PRAY FOR THE PBCI STAFF



Dann Pantoja. Please pray for our peace and reconciliation engagements in critical areas in Mindanao and the project team leaders, assistant project team leaders, and field workers who will be assigned. Pray for the flexibility and continued excellence of the PBCI Staff as we all deal with overwhelming changes and demands in our service.



Joji Pantoja. Please pray for PBCI and CFP staff who were affected by the flash flood in Davao City. Please pray that we may raise Php 40, 000.00 to help some of the staff rebuild their homes which were washed away by the flood.



Bennette Tenecio. Please pray for her as she spearheads the fundraising for the PAR 80 by 2015 vision of PBCI (see <http://peacebuilderscommunity.org/invitations/give/>).



Kriz Cruzado. Pray for more wisdom as she directs our Field Operations, patience as she deals with untoward events, good health so she could always function well, economic stability for her family so she does not have to worry for her finances, creativity and resourcefulness so she can continue innovating new approaches and strategies in achieving Field Ops goals.



Mei Solocasa. Please pray for God's blessings of wisdom and strength for the Poona Piagapo and Kolambugan HealthCare Teams and wisdom for her as she coordinates the Maguindanao HealthCare Team.



Regina Mondez. Please pray for wisdom as she deals with many people and tough decisions; for growth, as she experiences struggles in the different areas of her life; for strength and energy so she can overcome and finish with excellence all the challenges and responsibilities she is facing right now.



Matt Tiessen. Please pray for wisdom and motivation, as he goes back home to Canada.



Keith Grubaugh. Keith is our new intern specializing in Technical Support—Accounting. Please pray for wisdom and strength.



Jenna Grubaugh. Please pray for a healthy heart, mind, and body so that she would be able to work to her full potential in making the theater production come to life.



Arjay Freg Balabag. Please pray for him and his family, as they rebuild their home which was washed away by the recent typhoon.



Joy Betios. Please pray for renewed strength for her work from day to day, as their home and everything they possess were washed away by the recent flash flood in Davao City.



Freddie Abelitado. Please pray for energy and strength as he continues to be a good member of PBCI family. Also pray for his health and his family's needs.