

World Student Christian Federation Asia-Pacific (WSCF A-P)

School for Ecumenical Leadership Formation (SELF) 2009

October 4 to 25, 2009 Manila, Philippines

(Deadline of Application: 1 September 2009)

“Revitalizing the Ecumenical Movement through Ecumenical Leadership Formation for the Youth and Students”

Background

The so-called “Ecumenical Landscape” is rapidly changing which has admittedly weakened the life and witness of the Ecumenical Movement in the past years. One visible factor that has been acknowledged by the WCC and CCA in their efforts to analyze the situation has been the decline of youth participation and interest in the life of the churches and the ecumenical movement in particular. This observation needs to be substantiated by understanding the context of the young people in the Churches today and the challenges that hinders them from engaging the life of Churches and the Ecumenical Movement.

Youth and students comprising the majority of the population in Asia Pacific face specific difficulties related to their social sector. The rising cost of education due to privatization prevents them from pursuing higher learning and fulfilling their dreams of better lives in the future. The orientation of the Educational Systems in many countries in Asia and Pacific has changed dramatically over the years. Institutions of Higher Education, both in developed and developing countries have been re-oriented to fulfil the demand of the market economies, rather than nurturing the dreams, aspiration, intellect and development of knowledge among the youth.

This situation pushes young people to different directions, primarily to compete for greater achievement and material success on the one hand or take up the heavy burden and role of providing for their families like the majority of the young migrant workers in Asia today. An alarming trend has been that students have practically limited or no time to engage in social causes as most of them are working to provide for their own education in the University as education continues to be privatized in the developed countries. Failure to climb up the success ladder, gives rise to frustration, where cases of youth suicide are increasingly noticeable in the past years.

This context has created a deep void and growing desire for spiritual fulfillment among the young. The growth of the evangelical youth movements and spiritual revival movements represents a major shift in the nature of the Christian youth movements in the Asia Pacific region. Young people are leaving the mainline protestant and catholic churches and joining the spiritual movements. Veering away from the ‘old’ and the ‘traditional’ is a popular culture among the young, and this is reinforced by media industry that promotes individualism and mono-culture.

Churches reaction to this trend is varied, however there is a growing tendency to keep the young people working within the denominational confines and prevent them from engaging meaningfully in the ecumenical youth movement. This draws serious concern on the role, participation and leadership of the youth in the churches, the ecumenical movement and society in general. The need to provide alternatives spaces and platforms where young people can engage meaningfully in the mission and ministry of the Churches are much greater in this age of economic globalization.

The Ecumenical Youth Movement (EYM) does not operate or exist outside the realities and context of the Churches and the world. The EYM is intrinsically part of the one Ecumenical Movement and should therefore respond to the challenge of Revitalizing the Ecumenical Movement in the 21st Century.

The World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) has actively involved and contributed to ecumenical movement through producing the much needed leadership in continuing and fulfilling the spirit of

ecumenism. Hence WSCF believes in the importance to uphold ecumenism through the tradition of producing ecumenical leaders for the churches and the ecumenical movement. However, this tradition is seen to be weakening at the present moment due to several reasons. One of the main reasons is that the ecumenical student and youth organizations are unable to provide a challenging platform for the young people to receive the appropriate training, knowledge, skills and network to improve themselves as qualified ecumenical leaders.

It is in this light that the idea of the first School for Ecumenical Leadership Formation (SELF) Program was jointly developed by WSCF-AP region and Christian Conference of Asia Youth desk in 2001. The SELF is a response to what was seen as a gap in the development of ecumenical leadership formation. It hopes to re-examine the causes of weakening and re-develop the scope of ecumenical leadership. As bi-annual leadership development project, the SELF targets frontline leaders of the SCM such as staff and officers aged between 22 to 35. SELF is an intensive 3-weeks program and an effective venue to train young ecumenist working closely with young people in the different parts of Asia and the Pacific.

The first SELF was organized in Chiangmai, Thailand in July, 2001 inviting 28 participants from the region, and the second SELF was implemented in 2003 participated in by 20 SCM leaders. The third SELF was organized in September, 2005, Bangalore, India with 18 participants and the fourth SELF was organized in Sri Lanka in 2007 with 30 participants.

To date, we have trained 90 young leaders through the SELF Program, many of them are now actively working in their local churches, ecumenical institutions, NGOs and national movements and engaged in various ministries and programs. WSCF is confident that through the SELF program, we were able to contribute young leaders who are equipped with the necessary knowledge and principles in working with people of other faith and the vision of the ecumenical movement.

Objectives:

Generally, SELF seeks to enable participants to:

- Sharpen their awareness and analysis of the social, political and economic setting of the world in the context of Asian Pacific societies and challenge to the churches through sharing of experiences, exposure, studies and reflections.
- Articulate the biblical and theological perspectives on the global burning issues such as globalization, militarization/war on terror, justice, peace, ecology, feminism, etc.
- Trace the history of ecumenical movement in the national, regional and global levels, identifying convergence, challenges and possibilities.
- Search alternative approach to communicate and advocate ecumenical witness among students and youth in the concrete life of the peoples.
- Strengthen each other in their ecumenical journey and aspiration.
- Develop leadership skills, movement organizing skills and approaches to work with students and young people.

Basic Outline of the SELF module:

Module 1: Building our Ecumenical Community

Aims: To develop a sense of community among the participants and provide space to learn and understand self and social milieu. The module also includes understanding the background of the SCM and WSCF as an ecumenical community of youth and students.

- Introduction of participants, host and resource people

- Community Building
- Personal History and Social History
- Introduction of WSCF-AP and the SCMs, its History, Vision and Mission

Module 2: The Ecumenical Movement

Aims: To understand and basis, principles of the Ecumenical Movement. challenge the prevalent practices and ideology in the current ecumenical movement. It also hopes to provide theological base for the ecumenical agenda.

- Basis, Principles, Vision and Agenda of the Ecumenical Movement
- A Historical overview of ecumenical movement:
- Challenges and Prospect of the Ecumenical Youth Movement in the 21st Century
- Developing Skills on Theological Perspectives

Module 3: Defining Our Context

Aims: To have more critical understanding about the reality of the socio- political and economic setting of the world in the context of the Asian society. Participants are also expected to be aware of the different trends of movements in Asia.

- Understanding the host country
- Exposure Program and Practical work in the Communities
- Developing Tools of Social Critical Analysis and Contextual Analysis
- Analysis of socio-political and economic setting of Asia and world
- Understanding new social movements, the trend of civil movements and alternative global movements

Module 4: Reading The Signs of the Times

Aims: This is an intensive study module to clarify the burning issues in Asia as well as world. The participants will articulate their theological positions with regard to these issues. Through this module, the participants will also have acquired a strong theoretical as well as theological base in ecumenical work.

- Ecology Justice, Human Rights, Feminism, Sexuality, Inter-faith dialogue
- Globalization and economic justice
- Justice and Peace Building

Module 5: Ecumenical Leadership and Movement Building Skills

Aims: To set guiding principles for promoting ecumenical leadership to the students and youth and experiment the different forms of movement building and. To wrap up this extended training program by reflections on what the participants have learned and to suggest ways to moving forward in challenging the ecumenical movement, be it local, regional and global.

- Leadership Development Skills
- Movement Building Strategies
- Developing and managing movements and organizations
- Developing projects and activities for youth and students
- Learning to express and communicate ecumenism by curriculum writing, liturgy, symbols, arts and images, conducting Bible Studies
- Facilitation Skills, speakers training
- Articles writing on certain issues, topics or possible actions and work plans

Guidelines and requirements for Participation

- Newly elected leaders or second-line of leaders from either national or regional ecumenical or church youth movements
- participants aged should be between 22 to 35
- at least one-year involvement in the SCMs or church youth organization
- endorsed by churches or SCMs
- basic knowledge in English (oral and writing)
- commitment to serve the youth and student movements after the SELF Program