

THE APS NETWORK

JANUARY 2020

NO. 2

THE CORE OF CONTEMPORARY ASIAN PEACEBUILDING



It's the start of a new decade! APSAN is continuously building its path to impact on peacebuilding worldwide. In the second issue of the APS Network, we celebrate achievements, new developments, and inspiring alumni stories. We also welcome alumni contributions with the new "Alumni Creations" segment. Plus, get to know about our amazing APSAN Executive Council!

The Newsletter Team

TNF CHAIR RECEIVED PRESTIGIOUS ADMU AWARD; APS CELEBRATES!

Manila, Philippines

On 10 September 2019, Mr. Yohei Sasakawa, the World Health Organization's Goodwill Ambassador for Leprosy Elimination and the Government of Japan's Goodwill Ambassador for the Human Rights of Persons Affected by Leprosy, was conferred a Doctor of Humanities, honoris causa, at the 2019 Traditional University Awards of the Ateneo de Manila University. Honorary degrees are bestowed upon persons who enjoy high reputation and recognition for their outstanding and indispensable achievements in their field.



The Chairperson of the Nippon Foundation was cited for his

“ Four decades of work to eliminate leprosy and the discrimination that persons with leprosy endure [and] for his leadership in establishing networks among governments, academe, and civil society to address global humanitarian and development issues.”

A luncheon was held to celebrate Chairperson Sasakawa's achievement. Over 80 scholars and alumni, including those of the Asian Peacebuilders Scholarship (APS), graced the event and celebrated the inspiring success of the Nippon Foundation Chairperson to the world.



APS/DIPS/ALP alumnx and students with Mr. Yohei Sasakawa at the celebratory luncheon

BE A PEACEBUILDER BE IN APS!

BY: GELIE ERIKA ESTEBAN

“In retrospect, I am who I am now because of APS. I was able to gain valuable learning and rich experience.”

MIKI YOSHIDA

APS 7, Japan

Born in Aomori Prefecture (1983), Miki Yoshida spent her childhood hearing her grandfather's anecdotes of war. Touched by these stories, she became interested in peacebuilding and media work focused on conflict and social issues. Miki then became interested in pursuing peacebuilding, with the United Nations as her ultimate goal.

Miki pursued a degree in communications at the University of California in Los Angeles. After graduation, she became a Japan Overseas Cooperation Agency (JICA) volunteer for community development in Burkina Faso and Senegal. She also worked at an international non-governmental organization assisting in the post-2010 earthquake recovery program in Haiti.

To further her career development, Miki decided to pursue her graduate studies under the Asian Peacebuilders Scholarship (APS) Cohort 7. She considered APS as an ideal academic programme for people who are passionate about peacebuilding but have limited international experience and/or financial means to study abroad. She did not hesitate to apply!

True enough, the APS program proved useful and exciting. Miki particularly enjoyed in-depth discussions about peace and conflict issues. She was able to openly discuss sensitive issues and to enrich her understanding and opinions of the world. “I think it is one of the greatest assets of APS, [that is,] to be able to make friends from all over the world and see the world through their eyes,” she said. In 2015, Miki finally obtained her M.A. in Media, Peace and Conflict Studies at University for Peace (UPEACE) and M.A. in Political Science-Global Politics at the Ateneo de Manila University (ADMU).



Miki's peacebuilding career developed further after her APS graduation. Following her dreams, she joined the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in 2016. Miki was initially dispatched as a Junior Professional Officer (JPO) by Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As a JPO, she was involved in all aspects of management in a wide range of projects on emergency assistance, education, health, and gender. She was eventually absorbed by UNRWA and was given expanded tasks in project and grant administration.

For Miki, APS made her career goal in peacebuilding possible. Her academic experience and interactions in a multi-cultural environment at UPEACE and ADMU greatly contributed to her work at the UN. She developed empathy and deep understanding of people affected by conflict, among others, which are very important in her career. “In retrospect, I am who I am now because of APS. I was able to gain valuable learning and rich experience,” Miki pronounced.



READ MORE

<https://humansofupeace.squarespace.com/studentsandalumni/2020/mikiyoshida>,
<https://nipponaps.wixsite.com/apsjp/alumni-story>



This is based on an interview by **Chihiro Masuho** (APS Cohort 5), and English translations by **Mario Takahashi** (APS Cohort 5) and Miki Yoshida.



'UPEACE NOSTALGIA' ALUMNI CREATIONS

By: Ja Seng Ra, APS 10, Myanmar

I have never imagined myself to be missing a tropical country as humid as my hometown, northern Myanmar. I have them all here -- what Costa Rica can offer -- including mountain ranges, tropical rains, waterfalls, misty clouds and all things tropical! What I have never had here though is the "Vibe", to be specific, the peaceful emotional vibe. Despite the similarities, like the common smell of familiar tropical flowers, the emotional environment is vitally different.

Leaving my hometown in the midst of a decades-long vicious armed conflict and heading to a country - where there is no military and which is located on the other side of the world - to study about "peace", are too paradoxical to dream about. While in Costa Rica, I tried to gain my grandmother's fascination by showing her what she had been missing out on. Of course, my grandma was not impressed. She was not impressed to see my photos of green mango trees, butterflies and mountains. She expected to see me

dwelling in skyscrapers and studying fancy "things" rather than topics about never-ending conflict, militarization or social justice. More importantly, she thought conflict was already too bitter to be experienced in real life, it did not make sense to bring it to her granddaughter's fancy classroom.

Against all the odds, I am now smiling as if I could actually see hummingbirds and butterflies by the UPEACE grounds where poles carrying various international flags stand tall.

In August, the academic year is welcomed by the deep green hue you can see all around UPEACE. Before long, however, the rain would fascinate you almost every day during the rainy season. At UPEACE, we did not have patience to wait for sunshine; we would just run around under the showering rain while rainbows shimmered beyond the UPEACE flagpole grounds. In the late monsoon season, flocks of colorful butterflies

would be flying around and looking at them generally improves my mood that I could not just stop staring.

The university cabin is a true cocoon for everyone. Whenever I have lunch near the library table, the incredible Toucan bird family attracts you to gaze at its beauty. Some exchange students often do not have chances to see the Toucan bird family singing or the yellowish flowers blooming as those are not permanent residents of UPEACE campus. At the same time, one of the smallest beauties that makes my heart flutter would be flying around you. Those little buzzers are my favorite dashing birds at UPEACE -- the "hummingbirds". It is always fascinating to see hummingbirds hovering along the UPEACE garden.

December can be a bit lonely at UPEACE. This is so because all the creatures, including people, enjoy spending Christmas vacation somewhere else. People just loved going to white, brown, or dark sandy beaches. Name it, Costa Rica has it all!

In January and February, UPEACE green trees give you colorful flowers to soothe your deep soul. On the way to campus, yellowish flowers attract

cont...



students' attention from studying on the bus. The Burmese-tea color mountain river which flows under the bridge on the way to UPEACE would be crystal clear by those times. Different kinds of birds would be giving you a free live concert everywhere around the campus. The new season is not the only time the birds sing, but they sing different songs. There were also times when the UPEACE neighborhood was covered in pink because of rosy trumpet trees, "roble sabana", bloom on all the mountains. There is nothing like laying down with a big coffee mug under the flowery trees lit by the warm sunshine.

Coffee trees along our romantic wooded way to UPEACE would have grown and get picked by the time winter comes. I would often remember my childhood while walking by the coffee cherry seeds that looked like those found in my grandma's lovely backyard. I would remember how my grandma would tell have told me not to play with coffee cherry seeds whenever I cannot resist picking them up. My grandmother? She was still not impressed by UPEACE at this point.

It has been a long while since my grandma and I have had a happy conversation about the beautiful hiking trails of our neighborhood. We learnt that landmines were installed on the side of the northern mountains near our summer hut. It seems like the armed conflict will not end at any time soon, at least not in my grandma's lifetime.

Indeed, it will be way harder for me to impress my grandma. She will not probably believe me when I tell her that we have in our hometown all that UPEACE has to offer, except one specific thing... the Vibe of... "Paz!"

May there be Peace for my beloved Grandma and my home, northern Myanmar!
-end-

UPDATES

Successful grantees of the AIA Fund, announced!

On 08 February 2020, the AIA workgroup of the APSAN Secretariat officially announced the recipients of AIA grants. Proponents of Paglaum (Philippines) and Hub Saidek for Change (Thailand) are expected to implement these projects until July 2020.

Alumni welcome new APS candidates!

On 22 December 2019, Myanmar-based APS alumni conducted information sessions for candidates of the 14th Cohort of the Asian Peacebuilders Scholarship programme in KBC Yangon.

APSAN is getting bigger!

The Nippon Foundation, University for Peace and Ateneo de Manila University handed testamurs to the graduating students of APS Cohort 12 on 13 December 2019. APS is thrilled to welcome 26 new members to the network!

APS Training Course Successfully Concludes

In January 2020, the UPEACE Executive Education Center, in partnership with the Asian Peacebuilders Scholarship, successfully concluded its online training course entitled "Designing Your Life: Innovating from the Inside Out". With the generous support of the Nippon Foundation, 26 APS alumni were able to participate in the course.

APSAN Activities are Brewing

The APS Alumni Network invites all members to stay in touch and watch out for the following exciting events in the first half of 2020:

- a. Celebration of the 40th Anniversary of University for Peace, to be held in Manila;
- b. Peacebuilding trainings to be conducted by APS alumni in Sri Lanka and Vietnam; and
- c. APS promotions in nine priority countries.

Featured:

The University for Peace in 'United Nations Special: The official magazine of international civil servants'. Click the link to read:

https://www.unspecial.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/UNSpecial_November2019_web.pdf?fbclid=IwAR1qu_wzc6zpUcTDIj6byevzhOUJVom6EWC6ys2Ya7d97BquzNTj9vU5gLU

GET TO KNOW

THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS OF APSAN SECRETARIAT!



GELIE ERIKA ESTEBAN

APS 11, Philippines

Gelie is a practicing human rights lawyer, a law lecturer, and a fellow of the Global Bertha Justice Initiative. In 2018, she completed her dual Master of Arts degree in International Law and Human Rights (UPEACE) and in Political Science major in Global Politics (ADMU) as part of the APS Cohort 11. She also works in the areas of peace and human rights education, gender justice and youth empowerment. She is currently the editor of the APSAN newsletter and the representative of the Media and Outreach workgroup of the APSAN Secretariat.



JAMILA-AISHA SANGULA

APS 5, Philippines

Jamila is founder of Women Empowered to Act for Dialogue and Peace in Mindanao and a current fellow of the Salzburg Global Seminar. She teaches Philippine and Mindanao history and actively promotes Silsilah's Culture of Dialogue as a Path to Peace. Jamila has been working on peacebuilding and interreligious dialogue in Mindanao for over nineteen years. She holds M.A. in Gender and Peacebuilding, and M.A. in Mindanao Studies. She is currently the representative of the Alumni led initiatives and career development workgroup of the APSAN Secretariat.



SAW THURA AUNG- BOSCO

APS 11, Myanmar

Bosco works as 'a youth, peace and security expert' and as 'the program manager of Search for Common Ground Myanmar'. He is working to connect the community voices to peace talk stakeholders both vertically and horizontally. Similarly, to increase the youth and women participation in the peace process, he is advocating and part time lecturing about Comprehensive peace process and Civilians led peace process. He holds M.A in International Peace Studies (UPEACE) and M.A in Political Sciences. Bosco is currently the representative of APSAN Management of Alumni Database and Events.



Are you an APS alumni? Join the APS Alumni Network's



<https://web.facebook.com/groups/2543407389054047/>, and be in the know of latest APS updates and of collaboration opportunities with your fellow Asian Peacebuilders!



Do you want to see your news, story, article, poem



or other creative writing on the next THE APS NETWORK issue? If so, please contact us at apsalumnisecretariat@upeace.org

