

Religions for Peace Japan **Report for 2014-2015**

Report for August 2014 – June 2015

Overview

Religions for Peace Japan has been actively involved in the domestic and international important issues through inter-religious network and in cooperation with other sectors.

This year, *Religions for Peace* Japan advanced our projects under the main theme of “Prayer and Act for Shared Security” and with its sub-theme of “Supporting reconstruction of the East Japan Earthquake disaster as religious leaders,” “Questioning on nuclear energy and modern civilization,” and “Pursuing dialogue and communication with religious leaders in East Asia and Middle East.”

Especially, we had active commitment in the 8th assembly of ACRP held in Incheon, Korea on August 2014 with more than 100 participants from Japan including religious leaders and press. They proactively engaged in the plenary and session meetings with serving for moderators and panels. Also we officially announced “the Message of *Religions for Peace* Japan for the 8th Assembly” during the assembly time.

4 taskforce teams ---1) Reconstruction Support for the East Japan earthquake, 2) Nuclear Abolition and Disarmament, 3) UN Millennium Development Goals, and 4) Peace Education---which were established within *Religions for Peace* Japan in 2012 and consist of affiliate members, promoted their mission projects in each area.

We continuously push forward the projects on the basis of Declarations of the 9th World Assembly of *Religions for Peace* and the 8th ACRP Assembly.

I. Inter-religious cooperation through inter-religious dialogue and network

1. Participation in inter-religious network

1.1 IPCR International Seminar

Six delegates from *Religions for Peace* Japan participated in the Seminar held for 8-10 December in Gyeongju city, on the theme of “Searching for Common Ground for Building Peace Community in the Northeast Asia.” They served as a keynote speaker and panels, and were actively involved in the discussion with the delegates from Korea and China, on finding common ground from various aspects in East Asia. The report of IPCR Seminar 2012, which was officially published by RfP Japan, was also presented during the seminar.

The report of IPCR seminar 2014 is now in process of creation.

1.2 Meeting with Secretary General of KCRP

Rev. Gwang-Joon, Kim, Secretary General of KCRP visited Japan and had a meeting with President, Chair and Secretary General of *Religions for Peace* Japan on the 29th January 2015. They shared common understanding to foster mutual relationship between Korea and Japan.

1.3. Meeting with Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue

Fr. Indunil J. Kodithuwakku K, Undersecretary of the Pontifical Council of Interreligious Dialogue, Fr. Ryohei Miyashita Secretary General of Catholic

Bishops' Conference of Japan and Mr. Maria de Gorge, Deputy director of Shinmeizan Centr visited *Religions for Peace* Japan office on the 1st August 2014 and discussed importance of inter-religious dialogue for peace.

1.4 *Religions for Peace* International EC meeting

Rev. Tomokazu Y. Hatakeyama participated in the EC meeting of *Religions for Peace* International EC meeting held in September 2014 at the Columbia University.

1.5 Dialogue between Muslims and Religious Leaders in Japan

Religions for Peace Japan and the Muslim World League (MWL) co-hosted "Dialogue between Muslims and Religious Leaders in Japan ---in Pursuit of Shared Visions for Peace---" in Tokyo from 9-10 April 2015, in cooperation with Japan Muslim Association and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. The conference was attended by about 300 people, including Dr. Abdullah Bin Abdelmohsin Al-Turki, Secretary General of MWL, and Muslim leaders of MWL from Pakistan, Malaysia, Korea, Taiwan and Indonesia as well as Japanese religious leaders, scholars, press and individual members. Responding to the prevalence of phenomena of terrorism across the world and increasing tensions among religions, the conference was held for overcoming prejudice and ignorance among religions and fostering mutual respect and tolerance through dialogue.

Setting up four sessions --1) Religions and Peace, 2) Religious Differences and the Culture of Hatred, 3) Religious Values and Common Challenges and 4) Future Plan--, delegates engaged in a lively discussion to reinforce mutual understanding and find common challenges against the current issues. At conclusion, a joint communique was issued, which notes that Islam calls for mercy and peace and condemns any violence act and terrorism perpetrated by extremist groups. It also highlights that religions can become a powerful tool to achieve peace in society and world, and should make effort for peace. The communique calls MWL and RfP Japan for explaining true divine messages and organizing continuous dialogues.

This conference was broadcasted on TV by NHK (Japan Broadcasting Cooperation).

1.6 Participation in the Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapon

Mr. Yoshinori Shinohara, Director of Sendai Office from *Religions for Peace* Japan, participated in the Third International Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons held in Vienna for 8-9 December 2014. Hosted by Austrian government, delegates of countries, NGOs and civil groups from 160 countries were gathered at the conference. It highlighted the evidence and devastating effects of nuclear weapons once used, and also advanced the discussion for prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons.

1.7. Meeting with RfP Myanmar leaders

Religions for Peace Japan MDGs Taskforce members visited Yangon Myanmar on April 2014 and had a meeting with RfP Myanmar. RfP Japan and Myanmar agreed to launch a joint program "MDGs Street Theater Project" for advancing children's public health and enhancing a mutual trust among inter-religious youths.

2. Support for reconstruction after the earthquake and tsunami 2011

Religions for Peace Japan continuously support for the people and area affected by the earthquake and tsunami 2011.

2.1 Public Seminar

Religions for Peace Japan held a public seminar in Fukushima city on 29 October

2014, to understand the current situation and challenges in Fukushima. Scholar, doctor, women activists and Buddhist monk who are actively engaged in reconstruction work in Fukushima were invited as speakers. The symposium noted a severe situation of people in Fukushima where many challenges remained due to the exposure of radiation by the atomic power accident. Participants discussed a role of religious communities for early recovery in Fukushima.

2.2 Symposium on the UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction

A symposium “Disaster Risk Reduction and Religion” was held on the occasion of the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai Miyagi prefecture on 16 March 2015. *Religions for Peace* Japan was one of the host organizations on that event. The symposium reviewed the relief effort led by religious communities for 2011 earthquake, and explored its role, challenges and potentiality at the time of disaster. It convened about 400 people including religious leaders, scholars and staffs of NGOs/NPOs.

After the symposium, inter-religious prayer service was held at the monument to the East Japan earthquake disaster in Natori city where a devastating tsunami hit in 2011. 100 people, including religious leaders of Buddhist, Shinto, Sectarian Shinto, Christian and Muslim with local religious leaders, shared the time of prayer and silence for the victims and for the reconstruction.

2.3 Children’s camping in Fukushima

Religions for Peace Japan supports an event of Children’s camping, organized by child support network in Fukushima. The camping is for evacuee children of the atomic power accident to play outside and experience the nature. We dispatched religious youths to the camping as volunteer supporters from July to August and on November 2014.

2.4 Fukushima Community Project

Religions for Peace Japan financially supported 25 groups which engage in community recovery work in Fukushima.

2.5 Summer Festival in Sanriku

We supported having Summer Festival held in Yamada town Iwate Prefecture on 11th August 2014 in cooperation with local NPO “Tono Magokoro Net”. Despite the effect of Typhoon, about 500 people from local area joined the festival and traditional arts and dancing were performed.

II. Symposium and Seminars

Religions for Peace Japan organized 4 symposiums and seminars to provide opportunities to learn and to promote more understanding about the issues for peace. The main symposiums and seminars are as follows;

1. New Year Symposium

We hold a symposium on the 29th of January 2015 under the theme of “Achievements and Challenges of MDGs in Asia – Efforts of Religious Leaders in Japan—“to discuss comprehensive assessment of MDGs in Asia and find out a future approach for post MDGs. Mr. Hideto Yoshioka, a doctor and the head of NPO “Japan Heart” serving for medical activities in Myanmar was invited as a keynote speaker, and about 200 members including board members and individual members gathered for the symposium.

2. Peace University Symposium

Religions for Peace Japan and its Peace Research Institute held Peace University Symposium under the theme of “Searching for Coexistence with Others” in Kyoto on 6 March 2015. Prof. Nobuo Mori, Professor of Takushoku University and Director of Shariah Research Institute of the university, served as a keynote speaker at symposium speaking on a basic understanding of Islam. As panels, the members of Peace Research Institutes and Prof. Katsuhiko Ohara, a professor of Doshisha University actively involved in a discussion on the issues of welcoming the other in various communities. About 70 members including board members and individual members participated in the symposium.

3. Seminar on the nuclear abolition and disarmament

The seminar was held on the 4th December 2014 in Tokyo with its theme of “the Challenges of Nuclear Abolition in the 70th anniversary of dropping the atomic bombs”, inviting Prof. Tsutomu Ishiguri, Professor of Kyoto University of Foreign Studies as a keynote speaker.

4. Roundtable Seminar on Peace Education

Peace Education Taskforce team from *Religions for Peace* Japan held a roundtable seminar on the 27th September 2014 in Hyogo to exchange the practical reports on peace education at schools which is based on religion. Professors from Christian, Tenrikyo, Shinto and Buddhist Universities were invited as speakers and reported their feature of peace education at the classroom.

III. Advocacy

1. Release of the statement against the self-proclaimed Islamic extremist group Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)

Religions for Peace Japan issued the statement on 6 February 2015 about the hostages and killing crisis of two Japanese citizens, who were held hostage by self-proclaimed Islamic extremist group ISIL. It protests strongly against the unforgivable act by ISIL of killing hostages and longs for the immediate release of all people who are still held in hostage. The statement was delivered in English and Arabic to the public within and out of Japan through *Religions for Peace* Japan network.

2. Roundtable Meeting on Disarmament with Parliament members (Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament/ PNND)

PNND is a group of parliamentarians of Japanese diet, which engages in their work to formulate a concrete policy regarding nuclear disarmament as an international network body of parliamentarians working in various parts of the world. *Religions for Peace* Japan and PNND co-organize a special forum on the occasion of NPT Review Conference held in NY, May 2015 to promote mutual understanding and cooperation between political and religious leaders for the issues of nuclear disarmament. In preparation for this special forum in NY, *Religions for Peace* Japan convened a meeting with PNND on 21 April at Diet Member’s office to present their work and discuss the ways of sustainable collaboration pursuing for nuclear disarmament at national and international levels.

3. Participation in Hiroshima and Nagasaki programs

Representatives of *Religions for Peace* Japan joined in the inter-religious prayer for peace organized by the local inter-faith associations, and in the memorial services of the both cities, in August 2014.

4. Calling for a cooperation of Post MDGs

Religions for Peace Japan called for our member's cooperation with the UN led campaign on new global development goals on 2016 and beyond.

IV. Research and Study for Peace

Peace Research Institute of *Religions for Peace* Japan continued research and study for peace, and hold six seminars. It consists of ten professors coming from the Buddhist, Catholic, Protestant, Muslim and Shinto faith traditions. A book to report of the seminars was published, and the copies were distributed to religious communities, universities, libraries, research institutes, and media.

V. Women's Committee

1. Opinion toll on 'life' to young people

Women's Committee has conducted the opinion toll on 'life' to young people, aiming to develop effective action plan to promote dignity of life since 2008. The survey was targeted for students at ordinary schools (high school and universities) and at schools based on religion. Women's Committee analyzed the data and published a report book including the date, its analysis and recommendation on January 2015. They held a symposium to inform the outcome of the survey on November 2014, and about 100 participants were gathered. Based on the analysis and recommendation, Women's Committee formulate action plans to promote dignity of life in various communities.

2. Advocacy Committee

Women's Committee launched a working group "Advocacy Committee" to advocate a need of preparation for special assistance on disabled and aged people at the time of disaster. Women's Committee visited the affected area of East Japan earthquake and tsunami several times and interacted with a group organized by mothers who have disabled children in that area. Disabled people, who evacuated to the public shelters soon after the earthquake, had many difficulties to live in the shelter due to the lack of public understanding to them. Advocacy Committee does advocacy work for those who seek special assistance in natural disasters among local governments as well as religious facilities which may be functioned as a shelter.

3. Study Tour

The members of Women's Committee visited to Ittoen, a member group of *Religions for Peace* Japan, and Chion-in Temple in Kyoto. They learned about Ittoen's community of people who seek to live a life of having no possessions together with service, in a spirit of penitence.

VI. Youth Committee

1. Summer Camp 2014

Youth Committee organized Summer Camp 2014 with the theme of "Welcoming nature and people" for 19-21 July 2014. 37 young people from 8 religious communities gathered at Tsubaki Okamiyashiro shrine experienced Shinto practices such as *misogi* ablution—a purification ceremony-, and discussed on the issues of coexistence with nature and people.

2. Seminar

Youth Committee hold a seminar on 11 September 2014 in Sendai-city Miyagi prefecture. They visited the affected area hit by tsunami in 2011, and offered inter-religious prayer for commemorating victims of the tsunami.

3. Participation in *Religions for Peace* International Youth Committee(IYC)
On behalf of Youth Committee Japan, Mr. Noriyuki Tsubouchi, Secretary General of Youth Committee Japan, participated in IYC meeting held for 30 September to 2 October 2014 in Tunisia. At the meeting IYC members shared their areal action plans and idea for global campaign on “welcoming the other.”

VII. Publicity

1. Publicity

- 1.1 *Religions for Peace* Japan issued about 40 press releases to the media.
- 1.2 We hold a meeting with press people of mainly newspapers in Kyoto on March 2015 to inform the up-coming conference “Dialogue between Muslims and Religious Leaders in Japan.” The press conference was also held after that Dialogue.
- 1.3 *Religions for Peace* Japan updated its website quite often.
- 1.4 We produced English brochure of *Religions for Peace* Japan.

2. Publication

- 2.1 Monthly newsletter, “WCRP”
3,000 copies of “WCRP” have been distributed each month not only to the members but also to the scholars, UN agencies, NGOs/NPOs and other public sectors.
- 2.2 3,000 copies of the annual report 2014.
- 2.3 Books
- Report of the 8th Assembly of ACRP is now in process of creation.

VIII. Management

4 board meetings and 2 council meetings were held at different religious facilities, as Buddhist temple, Shinto shrine and so on.

Religions for Peace Japan newly elected Rev. Keiji Kunitomi from Rissho Kosei-kai to Secretary General at the council meeting on 29 January 2015. Rev. Kunitomi has served as a board member and a head of MDGs Taskforce in *Religions for Peace* Japan. The former SG Rev. Tomokazu Y. Hatakeyamato was appointed to Secretary General of ACRP at the 8th assembly 2014.