

## General Report of FUTURE FAITH LEADERS Program

### **BACKGROUND**

The establishment of Asia Pacific Regional Interfaith Dialogue which first took place in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, in 2004 turned to be quite an important element for improving understandings, tolerance, and networks among civil societies within the region. The first Regional Interfaith Dialogue (RID) initially organized by Indonesia and Australia, mostly aimed to raise the voice of the moderates as one of ways to respond acts of terrorism occurred in Indonesia at that time. Various countries in the region gathered to collaboratively express their supports and solidarity to oust religious and cultural prejudice. It resulted Yogyakarta Statement.

The Philippines then hosted RID-2 in Cebu (2006), followed with RID-3 in Waitangi, New Zealand (2007); RID-4 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia (2008); RID-5 in Perth, Australia (2009); and the current RID in Semarang, Indonesia (2012). As agreed by the co-sponsor countries of the RID (Australia, Indonesia, New Zealand, and the Philippines), the next RID would be in 2014. Indonesia, as the 2012 RID host, is the RID Secretariat until the following RID.

The participants of the RID are so far faith/religious leaders, scholars, civil societies, and media practitioners from 15 countries: Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Fiji, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor Leste, and Vietnam.

The participants believe that the forum could be useful to promote understanding and foster harmony between faith communities across the region. Indonesia, along with other participants, affirms that RID should be followed with activities intended to strengthen people-to-people engagements, as reflected in the product of RID-6: Semarang Plan of Action.

At the moment, participating countries start to focus more on concrete and practical cooperation. This year, as suggested in 2012 Semarang Plan of Action, Indonesian Government offers programs related with future faith leaders and peace journalism workshop. Future faith leader program had been carried out on 24 May to 9 June 2012 in Jakarta and Yogyakarta, while peace journalism will be started in the second semester of 2013.

This general report is made based on evaluation towards FFL projects that just completed a while ago. It is our hope that the report could be a benefit for RID's stake holders and at the same time could be a useful inspiration so RID delegates could further cooperation among themselves.

## **FUTURE FAITH LEADERS (FFL) PROGRAM**

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia had collaborated with Yogyakarta-based Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga (Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University) in arranging the program. The university also sent its professor as member of Indonesian delegate in RID-6.

### **Objectives**

There are some objectives of this program:

- As an implementation program specifically intended for RID participants, as mandated in Semarang Plan of Action.
- The program is expected to stimulate more linkages among RID participants, both initiated by governments and most especially by non-government actors.
- FFL Program had been designed to facilitate future faith leaders of the region to meet, discuss, and collaborate with each other about religious and cultural practice as well as understanding in order to reach harmony among civilizations.
- The program should strengthen networking among grass-root levels in Asia and Pacific, which eventually could promote peace and security within the region.

### **The Participants**

FFL are intended for 15 participants, each representing RID countries. Indonesia had the privilege to have the participants with the help of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of respective RID countries. Participants of FFL are as follow:

<b>No</b>	<b>Names</b>	<b>Countries</b>	<b>Faiths</b>
1	Anusha Yatawara, Ms.	Australia	Buddha
2	Emily Fraser, Ms.	Australia	Christian (Anglican)
3	Laisaini Baleibou, Ms.	Fiji	Christian (Methodist)
4	Tavite Uluilakeba, Mr.	Fiji	Christian (Catholic)
5	Andrian Liem, Mr.	Indonesia	Christian (Catholic)
6	I Nyoman Wija, Mr.	Indonesia	Hindu
7	Muqarramah S. Kurdi, Ms.	Indonesia	Islam
8	Duongsamone Nanthalat, Ms.	Lao PDR	Buddha
9	Akhrun bin Musa, Mr.	Malaysia	Islam
10	U Tin Hlaing, Mr.	Myanmar	Buddha
11	Carlo Giovanni A. David, Mr.	New Zealand	Christian (Catholic)
12	Daryl Tan Yue Hwa, Mr.	Singapore	Buddha
13	Kongdej Komchanton, Mr.	Thailand	Buddha
14	Jeremiah G. Dalida, Mr.	The Philippines	Christian (Evangelist)
15	Duong Minh Tho, Mr.	Vietnam	Buddha

Since Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Papua New Guinea, and Timor Leste did not participate in the program, and at the same time not all countries could nominate more than one participant in such short time. Australia and Fiji were fortunately able

to delegate 2 participants while Indonesia unavoidably had to send 3 participants to fill up the available slots.

### **Activities**

The program had been designed to give more exposures for participants to better understand, accept, appreciate, and value faith as well as cultural differences. As a home to nearly 300 separate linguistic groups with more than 300 ethnic groups and different faiths all around the country, Indonesian pluralism might be a good place for the participants to have more comprehension about interfaith and intercultural practices. Though Indonesia is the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation, yet not an Islamic state, the country has proven that Islam, modernity and democracy could go hand-in-hand.

On the other hand, the program had been intended so Indonesian future faith leaders could also learn about different faiths and culture of other participants. Once the participants of FFL valued the attractiveness of interfaith and intercultural, that would equally serve the purpose of this program.

There are some general activities that the participants had partaken:

- Outbound. A two-day activity intended to acquire better bondage among participants.
- In-class courses. Participants learn about some materials presented to them with different topics, such as: Religious and Cultural Diversity in Indonesia; Religion, State, and Civil Society in Indonesia; Religion and Local Culture; and some other more. Well-known and senior professors, religious leaders, and artists were asked to be the resource persons for the courses.
- Discussion and share of experiences and best practices. Participants' different backgrounds, cultures, and experiences are valuable assets for them to share and learn with each other. The themes were sometimes sensitive, making several serious debates among them.

Participants also held discussions with personnel in 20 NGOs, government institutions, think-tanks, schools, religious house of worships and schools, and various communities in Yogyakarta and its surrounding cities.

- Site visits. This activity was to give more exposures to the participants on diverse Indonesian culture, such as Gede Kauman Mosque, Ganjuran Church, Yogyakarta Castle, Mendut Monestery, Borobudur Temple, Prambanan Temple, Sam Poo Kong Confusion Temple, and some more.
- Excursion. Participants were given some leisure time to ease themselves in a more relaxing atmosphere. They visited Merapi Mountain, attending Ramayana Ballet in Prambanan Temple open theatre, learning how to do Batik, including visited museums and beaches.

## Outcome

Aside of feedback paper that they submitted to the Foreign Affairs Ministry, almost all of them came up with essays discussing particular issues based on their expertise, observations and impressions they made during the FFL program.

No	Names	Countries	Essays
1	Anusha Yatawara, Ms.	Australia	Religion and Education
2	Emily Fraser, Ms.	Australia	Religion and Conflict Resolution
3	Laisaini Baleibou, Ms.	Fiji	HIV/AIDS and Reproduction Issue
4	Tavite Uluilakeba, Mr.	Fiji	The Call to Interfaith Dialogue
5	Andrian Liem, Mr.	Indonesia	Region-Faith in Gender and HIV Issues: Part of the Problem or Part of the Solution?
6	I Nyoman Wija, Mr.	Indonesia	Religion and Local Cultures
7	Muqarramah S. Kurdi, Ms.	Indonesia	Religion and Local Cultures
8	Duong samone Nanthalat, Ms.	Lao PDR	Religion and Local Culture
9	Akhrun bin Musa, Mr.	Malaysia	Religion and Conflicts Resolution
10	U Tin Hlaing, Mr.	Myanmar	Religion and Local Cultures
11	Carlo Giovanni A. David, Mr.	New Zealand	The Channel of Peace
12	Daryl Tan Yue Hwa, Mr.	Singapore	Religion and Conflict Resolution
13	Jeremiah G. Dalida, Mr.	The Philippines	Introducing the Essence of Philippine Culture in a Christian Perspective
14	Kongdej Komchanton, Mr.	Thailand	--
15	Duong Minh Tho, Mr.	Vietnam	--

## Recommendations

- Based on evaluation the Committee made, and inputs received from the participants, this program should be scheduled as regular program;
- Next representatives should be directly involved in religious and/or inter-religious affairs and they should be really interested in this specific concern;
- RID co-sponsor countries should give more opportunities for the FFL participants to be involved in next RID meetings as participants or moderators or even resource persons.

## Closing

The point of having future faith leader program is to share, learn, celebrate and appreciate differences. Through the program, it is expected that all participants could rationally comprehend how to analyze and observe particular sensitive issues related to religions and culture. By doing so, wider misunderstanding and misperception on interfaith and intercultural issues which often occur could be avoided.