

The Report of Ecology, Economy and Accountability Conference held in Korea, from 13 -18 May 2008

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

A four day conference on Ecology, Economy and Accountability was held in South Korea, with the participation of Asian ecumenical partners and concern activists from other NGO's, from 13-18 May 2008. This long felt need for the Asian ecumenicals in the region was initiated by CCA's – JID and the National Council of Churches in Korea graciously incurred all the conference expenses and organized it. A Total number of twenty seven delegates, from eleven countries, participated in the conference; where the delegates were stimulated and challenged for interaction, especially among discussion groups for a sustainable purpose to be fulfilled in the Asian Church. Biblical reflections provided cutting edge fundamentals, to break the Asian ecumenical movement's long silence, in this regard. In addition, the country presentations, and the exposure visit to the Oil Spill coastal area of the Southern Korean Sea, exposed the participants to a greater magnitude. Further, the Action Plan formulated on the final day, set precedence to a formidable and ecumenical eco partnership in Asia.



The Aim: of the conference was defined as: *To create Awareness among the present day generation and challenge the ecumenical constituencies, to treasure the earth as a habitable or rather as 'habitat earth', in order to preserve it for the future generation.*

Objective: *This included gathering of key ecumenical people from all walks of life, cultures, creed, race, gender and caliber; in order to impact and enable them to identify; that mankind on the habitat, are accountable to the creation of God, whereby they could become promoters of peace on mother earth, which is already groaning.*

Response-capacity was approached in terms of a series of building blocks, in the categories of **Funding, Specialism of Resource Personnel, Advocacy, Lobbying, Work Shops, Networks, Action Plan and Dissemination.** Funding included the content and quality of Concept Papers, Theological Reflections, Accommodation and Travel.

As **Smarter Objective achieved** could be stated as: bringing together ecumenical leaders, ecologists and environmental activists; to explore and decide on the cause of 'Action Plan' to build up local campaigns; to pressurize their own governments, authorities and implement Awareness Building and Advocacy Programs, at National and Regional Levels.

Implementation: of the **Action Plans** discussed during the final day of the conference can be measured as one of the significant achievements, during a very short time of Theological discourses and group interaction. Finally, the value of good **Networks**, and the necessity to have strong emphasis of **eco-centrism** amongst the ecumenical organizations, like minded people, activists and authorities, could be measured as a successful accomplishment.

Evaluation forms: - revealed a generally high level of satisfaction, in the areas of Content, selection and expertise of Resource Personal and logistics; although the benefits of some sessions were reduced by the limited time allocation. Every delegate seems to have experienced maximum fulfillment of the conference after the hands on experience with the Exposure Visit. The tangible benefits from the conference will only be attained by the commitment of participants, to refine and implement the **Action Plans** drawn up on the final day. CCA's –JID promised to assist in this process.

Introduction:

The conference was held at Lee Grand, Beach Hotel, Boryeongsi, Choonganam in South Korea; located in close proximity to the South Korean beach. Twenty seven participants from 11 countries including: India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Korea, Sri Lanka, Australia, Thailand, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Myanmar, and New Zealand in Asia and Pacific, enriched the four day seminar with interaction and meaningful field exposure experience. Although, it was a long drive of 350 Km, from the Inching International Air Port, to the destination of the conference, the delegates were able to witness the beautiful landscape and the eco friendly environment of the country side. Thus, it was in fact, a welcome drive although way to the destination. Furthermore, the expertise of the moderators and the practicality of theologians from the sub continent thoroughly enriched the sessions and established the topics assigned to them, whereby all of them built a strong biblical foundation for the

conference. Every delegate seems to enjoy the traditional Korean food and the *sleep on the floor - on mattresses*. On the third day of the conference, the delegates were able to expose themselves to a wonderful Field experience, by practically cleaning the rubble kept against the erosion in the coastal line, where the tragic oil spill incident took place in the Southern Korean Sea.

Day 01

Devotions:

The morning devotion was conducted by **Rev. Kim Hong II** from the Anglican Church in Korea and he drew spiritual strength from the scripture readings taken from the book of Genesis chapter 1 – ‘creation’ and Romans chapter 8 on ‘the groaning of the whole creation’. Furthermore, the serenity and meditational flavour was added by tapping very mildly on a brass bowl mixed with wood, in Korean traditional woodcarving. It was a very unique manner to begin a devotional session, where the delegates were really attracted with.



Rev. Kim Hong II

This set precedence for the remaining topics of the day, on “Ecology, Economy and Accountability”, to be probed from God’s perspective.

Greetings:

Rev. Freddy De Alwis, Joint Executive Secretary of CCA-JID, welcomed all the delegates on behalf of CCA and thanked all the participants for their presence and especially appreciated the hosting country Korea, for organizing the conference with much commitment in grand scale style. In addition, he made a brief introductory overview of the current crisis, on ‘Global Warming’. Furthermore, he made some inroads into Asian dilemma amongst the ecumenical churches and its related bodies; indicating, as to why we have still not been able to make a strong voice or an impact in a forceful manner, to the campaign carrying in the West. In this regard, he emphasized that CCA’s – JID, initiated this conference in Korea, having great aspirations, to exhibit and inform the West, about the Asia’s challenge and the responsibility to eco sensitivity; especially by placing faith on those who were gathered for discussion, consultation and consensus.

Bible Study:

Thereafter, Rev. Dr. Rienzi Perera commenced the bible study focusing on **Ecology Crisis**. At the very beginning of his discourse, he invited the delegates to explore with him, certain biblical words and concepts, in order to understand the issues of Ecology and Economy. To this extent, from the very inception of His systematic study, he created hope in the hearts of the delegates. He ascertained saying; that in our deliberations, we will be able to draw insights from the scriptures and traditions of other Asian living religions.

Opening the speech he explained, that the “Environmental crisis” does not adequately describe what ails us today. He said: “Environment” means; that which surrounds us. He clarified the above saying further and said: that the truth is contrary to this understanding especially, **‘as the world around us is also within. We are an expression of it; it is an expression of us’** (Read Genesis 3: 19).



Rev. Dr. Rienzi Perera

The theologian from CCA went on to explain, the biblical usage of the Greek word "**Oikos**" – as "**Habitat earth**". Explaining further the word 'Oikos', he said that it means: 'at home' in both classical Greek and the street Greek of the NT (Koine). What is most decisive for the whole inhabited earth (oikoumene) is that it to be "habitable"! He drew parallel from this Greek word, to three other core words: 'economy, ecology and ecumenicity'. He explained further about the word "Oikos" and its concept of earth, as a "*vast sustainable habitat*".

This foundational fact-that we all need a fitted space for these basics -is the one great element of "democracy" in life. More than two thirds of the world is crying for this space and democracy. That is an echo of the crisis we are faced with. Defining the word **Economic**, he stressed: the fact that **eco** – implying, (habitat as the household) together (+) **nomos** as (the rules or law). Thus, Economics means, knowing how things work and arrange these "home systems", which in return, explains the idea of "ecosystem". Therefore, the household is established as a hospitable habitat.

Towards the later part of his exposition of the word of God, he elevated the attention of the delegates to a higher platter, by emphasizing – 'Anthropocentrism' and 'Cosmocentrism'; signifying *humankind's* own spiritual bankruptcy, by bringing a parallel from the life of Job and polarizing the holistic suffering of creation, mentioned in the book of Romans.

In conclusion, he reminded us that God in his mercy has made several key covenants in the Old Testament, in order to fulfill God's eternal plan for the whole creation.

(Full text of the Bible study is available in the CCA Website: www.cca.org.hk).

Session 1 – "Linking Poverty, Wealth and Ecology in Asia by Dr. MP Joseph"



Dr. MP Joseph

Dr. Joseph commenced his lecture by defining the word 'Ecology'. He stressed that both Economy and Ecology *derive* from the original Greek word "Oikos". He also mentioned that the word "Oikos", in which all of us live, makes our borrowed or rendered home. But we need to overcome the less important concept or *rendered house* concept; so that this physical home - Earth, would be nurtured and secured by all its inhabitants.

He went on to explain the earth as a habitable place, where the members of the household would find satisfaction, as Dr. Rienzi, called it "Habitat Earth".

Our relationship with the Earth – Oikos, has an emotional attachment. But he stressed, that we should remember the elementary facts about this all important principle, emotional attachment.

Subsequently he shared with the delegates, that there are two main objectives in this emotional attachment. One primarily objects is to sustain life, where it qualifies as a sustainable one only when the members of the '*Household*' extend its due support and care. Furthermore, lineage must be maintained, in order to see lasting and effective sustainable results. When a traditional house maintains the lineage, it thrives, as a sustainable house. If the lineage is broken, the household will be curtailed.

Secondly, the elementary knowledge in Household is based on relationships. It is a web of relationships, together with uncles, aunts and other family members. Nevertheless, whenever the household members are divided and if anybody exploits it, it will not sustain.

Likewise, even in social science also when the nature and environment is destroyed and not considered as a significant place, where we ought to live with emotional attachment, it will not enhance our existence either.

All are created by God, is a Social statement. Since all are created, we need to respect each other, as well as the surrounding to which we have been created for. Therefore, when we break the rule of the nature, we all are destroyed within no time. Study of these elementary factors has revealed that unless people take interest to sustain their lineage, it will not thrive longer.

In essence, after explaining a passage of scripture from the book of Zachariah, which people misinterpret most of the time he concluded his speech.

Country Presentations:

The session was chaired by Dr. Evangeline from India, and each representative was given fifteen minutes – maximum for the presentation.

(Details of the presentation are available in the CCA Website: www.cca.org.hk)

Day – 02

Bible Study: “Theology of Accountability in God’s Creation”



Dr. Evangeline Anderson

Dr. Evangeline Anderson – Rajkumar from, India did the exposition of the word of God, on the above topic. **“Co-workers with God for Justice”**, was the title she gave for her bible study. She quoted from 1 Kings 17: 1-16 to build her exposition. It was focused on bringing to the fore, how God uses insignificant people from unexpected walks of life, for works of justice; particularly illustrating about the widow from Zarephath. A woman who worshiped Baal dares to trust the words of Prophet Elijah and also provides him with a meal, which was solely preserved for herself & her son; in fact, this was a “last meal” for both of them.

Dr. Evangeline mentioned that Jesus refers to the widow of Zarephath, when he used two examples, to challenge those who listened to him from Isaiah. She pointed out, that God has always used “those that we consider insignificant.”

She stressed further, that if we aim for change & transformation in society; then we need to be in solidarity especially with the marginalized and they are the source of hope for transformation.

In conclusion she said; that they are not only the **hope** of transformation, but the **source** and **the subject** of transformation also.

(Full text of the Bible study is available in the CCA Website: www.cca.org.hk).

Session - 01: “Globalization: the Myth, Reality, and Alternatives”



This session was addressed by Mr. Sarath Fernando, highly respected personality among the activist groups and NGO circle in Sri Lanka. From the vast source of knowledge and expertise in the fields of current economic trends and Globalization, he based his discourse. With this ability he simply submerged the participants in the above topic and measured the depth of Globalization’s destruction.

He traced the origin of **Globalization**, as a demand for the open market policy adopted by rich countries, in the West and the development of ideology of neo-liberalism. He described the World Bank and IMF, as the key actors in these destructive forces of darkness’ operation against Asia and also as the agents of the economic monopoly, working behind the scene. He compared over and over again, how the developed countries put unprecedented pressure, above the already existing debt burden of the developing countries, by intimidating to impose other trade and economic oriented, subtle sanctions.

Tracing the development of Globalization, he pointed out, how these powerful monetary agencies and the developed countries began to dictate terms with regard to economy & trade conditions in the third world. In fact, he said; that these elements compelled the developing countries to accept them, as decision makers.

Towards the later part of his lecture, he emphatically said; that **Globalization** is a **Myth**; simply because, it has terribly failed and increased disastrous consequences, to the already chaotic economy, in the underdeveloped countries in Asia.

In conclusion, he explained in detail about the Asian financial crisis, also as a fine result of Globalization. Thereafter, group discussions were held on the basis of this topic.

(Full text of the speech is available in the CCA Website: www.cca.org.hk).

Session 2 - “Global Warming”



Rev. Yang Jae – Sung (Right)

During the next session on “Global Warming” from Korean perspective, **Rev. Yang Jae – Sung** quoted from the Korean broadcast and said; as a result of honeybee’s rapid disappearance from the earth, this has caused serious threats, to the plants and the earth. He backed his claim with a quotation of Einstein’s predictions; as to the extinct of honeybees and how all the living creatures on the earth would be exterminated within four years.

He explicitly pointed out, from the winners of Noble Peace Price in 2007, that environmental disaster would be the worst cause to damage peace. He observed further stating, that ‘Ten hottest years’ had been witnessed, since the first weather observation, done after 1990.

Referring to the Ecological mission, he mentioned that we believe in God, as the creator and we got to declare, that God created the universe. Therefore, we can not challenge God, by discriminating or underestimating his creation.

In conclusion he said; that Ecological mission is the way to save this generation from the environmental crisis. Finally he said; this is an absolute demand of God and when we evade this demand, God will remove the candle stick from us.

(Full text of the speech is available in the CCA Website: www.cca.org.hk).

Country Presentations: Asia Pacific Presentation from the Australian Perspective:

Dr. Geoff Rigby gave a detailed analysis and a comprehensive presentation on 'Climate Change' in the Asia Pacific and what actions to be looked at from an Australian perspective. He stressed human induced greenhouse gas emissions have been attributed to the increases of global temperature, which has drawn the attention of widespread media and general community concern, about many of the future consequences.



Dr. Geoff Rigby (Right)

He showed statistics indicating why the residents of the regions face a number of serious consequences arising such as; increased sea levels, extreme change of weather patterns, and acidification of the ocean...etc.

In his elaborated speech he mentioned that, a large portion of greenhouse gases are produced from power generation. At this juncture, he pointed out that immediate mitigation strategies need to be implemented in order to overcome this precarious situation. Furthermore, he pointed out that current programmes in Australia and China represent a start in this direction.

(Full text of the speech is available in the CCA Website: www.cca.org.hk).

Day 03 Exposure Visit:



All the delegates were accompanied by a Korean interpreter, to the Oil Spilt and polluted South Korean costal line, by 7.45 am to a Presbyterian Church situated close to the coastal line. After the formal welcomed by Rev. Dr. Seong Gi Cho, General Secretary for the Korean Church – Volunteers, which has originated as a result of the catastrophe, occurred on the costal line. He explained the efforts taken by the Korean church, to express their concern and commitment in preserving the environment in their country. He also said; that this has eventually led for more consensuses to be developed among the Korean churches, and now they are been more comprehensively equipped for future Disaster Mitigation, as well.

The entire contingent of participants were given overalls and rubber boots to getting into the sea water rock area, for cleaning rubble one by one, with a clean cloth and pile up separately. For many delegates it was a novel exposure and every one was able to realize the damaged caused by the magnitude of oil spilt disaster, to a one time eco friendly tourist coastal line. As a result of this disaster, delegates observed how the one time tourist destination and its industry has been totally devastated and most of the area tourist's shops were closed. The delegates were taken to a museum recently erected, solely for this purpose, by the Korean Church's Volunteer' to display various items collected from the homes and shops of the costal line, where the oil disaster has destroyed.



Delegates Cleaning the Oil Spilt Costal line's.....

(More Pictures are available in the CCA Website: www.cca.org.hk)

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Day 04:

After the morning Bible Study, it was decided unanimously to write two letters; one in conjunction with the Oil Spilt tragedy in the South Korean Sea, to its predator the Samsung Company of Korea, condemning the callous act and the non responsive attitude which they have exhibited so far and not been willing to accept the damage they have caused. The other letter was to be written in appreciation of the solidarity volunteer work coordinated by the General Secretary of the Korean Voluntary Force: Rev. Dr. Seong Gi Cho, to the eco vulnerability in the Korean soil. (Two letters are available in the CCA Website: www.cca.org.hk).

The **Action Plans** of the conference took high precedence as delegates from each country put forward a three year Action Plan Commitment. This is to be guided by CCA's - JID. Follow – up and review gathering of the conference was decided to be held towards the latter part of this year.

The Composition:

Annexure A - indicates the gender composition of the conference and how it provided a substantial force in group dynamics, session discussions and field visit analysis.

Conclusions and Reflections

- One of the key focuses on this conference was to make an impact among the Asian ecumenical groups to become more sensitive to the Global Warming issue and take seriously the message of Ecology, Environment and Accountability to their parishes and civil societies; in order to create more dynamism and vigorousness among the Global lobbying groups. This factor was achieved to great extent, when the country presentations were made and explained their achievability.
- Furthermore, the request of the delegates to disseminate information pertaining to 'Global Warming and Accountability' in the future was significant enough to believe, that cohesive purpose of the conference had been achieved.
- The group of participants was very diverse in levels of English, seniority / position, in their represented organizations. There was also a mixture of policy makers, trainers, activists, clergy, field personalities who were presenting a challenge to the facilitators.
- The Exposure Visit can be mentioned as a highlight of the week for many as it gave them the opportunity and challenge; to apply the classroom theory to the reality of eco disasters. In addition, to practical lessons observed lessons were learnt on general approaches to vulnerable groups in the area; including the need for sensitivity, when dealing with people, whose livelihood has been basically destroyed by these destructive forces of disasters. Everybody expressed their high ratings for the Exposure Visit and apparently has stamped their approval for such a grand scale of tour arrangement.
- The theological expositions were highly appreciated by the delegates. This was indicated in their evaluation sheets, as they have given excellent scales to Theologians, beginning from Dr. Rienzie Perera - CCA. It is noteworthy to mention, his ability in applying deep theological truths, in most simplistic form. This was indicated when he was evaluated on the column 5 of the evaluation scale.
- Dr. M. P. Joseph – Taiwan, was also evaluated on the excellent scale in the evaluation sheet. In fact, this was another remarkable evidence to believe, that the intentions of the conference have achieved far greater impact.
- There was a high level of perceived relevance and usefulness of the session conducted by Mr Sarath Fernando, and he too was given the significant rating as excellent, in the evaluation sheet. It is no doubt that he drove the session point home, for every body.

- Dr. Evangeline who shared on “Theology of Accountability in God’s Creation” was also received the outstanding excellent scale, in the evaluation form.
- The Administrative back-up was excellent and commendable, which was provided by NCK. Handouts and other materials were provided within short notice and circulated. It’s recommended that future hosts also should provide admin support at a similar level.
- Pertaining to the Korean Conference on Ecology, Environment and Accountability would be published in the near future, particularly to be used by NCC’S and other Church based organizations as a Resource Book.

Annexure – A

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(Annexure B)
Ecology Economy and Accountability
14 – 18 May 2008, Seoul Korea
Time Table

Tuesday 13 May 2008

- **Arrival & Registration** -

Wednesday 14 May 2008

08.30 – 09.00	Devotion - Rev.Kim Hong Il – Anglican Church Kore
09.00 – 10.15	Introduction – Freddy De Alwis Ex. Secretary – JID, CCA Bible Study: Ecology, Economy and Accountability in Biblical Perspective by Rev. Dr. Rienzie Perera
10.15 – 10.30	Coffee Break
10.30 – 12.20	Linking Poverty Wealth and Ecology in Asia, Dr. M.P Joseph
12.20 – 12.30	Group Formation
12.30 – 14.00	Lunch
14:00 – 15:00	Group Discussion Cont...PWE
15:00 – 15.15	Coffee Break
15:15 – 15.45	Group Presentations
15:45 – 18:00	Country Presentation (India, Bangladesh, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Myanmar, Thailand, Philippine.
19.00	Dinner

Thursday 15 May 2008

08.00 – 09.00	Bible Study: Theology of Accountability in God's Creation – Dr. Evangeline Anderson-Rajkumar
09.00 – 09.15	Day 1 - Review
09.15 – 10.30	Globalization: the Myth, Reality and alternatives Mr. Sarath Fernando
10.30 – 10:45	Coffee Break
10.45 – 12.00	Group Discussions
12.30 – 14.00	Lunch
14.00 – 14.45	Group Presentations
14.45 - 15.00	Mr. Sarath Fernando
15.00 – 15.30	Coffee
15.30 – 16.45	“Global warming”- Korean Prospective Rev. Yang Jae-sung
16.45 – 17.00	Discussion on the above topic
17.00 – 18.15	Asia Pacific Presentation – Dr. Geoff Rigby Australian perspective in the context of Asia - Pacific

18.15 – 18.30 Discussion on the above topic
19.00 Dinner

Friday 16 May 2008

Exposure Visit-

The Oil Spilt and polluted South Korean costal line,

Saturday 17 May 2008

08.00 – 09.00 Bible Study: Theology of Accountability in God’s Creation
09.00 – 10.15 Exposure Trip Report and Sharing
10.15 – 10.30 Coffee Break
10.30 – 12.00 Workshop Report “sum up session”
12.00 – 12.30 Discussion
12.30 – 14.00 Lunch
14.00 – 15.30 Action Plan
15.30 – 16.00 Coffee Break
16.00 – 16.30 Closing Worship

Sunday 18 May 2008

Departure

Thanks

Freddy De Alwis – JID, CCA