



Intersection of the Rights of Rohingya, Mexican Migrants and Adivasi People discussed by students at the WSCF Dhaka Program

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“Rohingya refugees are humans without human rights,” said Chaithra Lakshminarayan, SCM student from the Bishop Cotton Women’s Christian Law College in Bengaluru India after hearing the Rohingya situation at the WSCF Program on Refugees and Migrants Rights held in Dhaka Bangladesh in December 1 to 6, 2016. “Apart from being stateless they (Rohingyas) have been subjected to various forms of discrimination, persecution and exploitation. These include forced labour, extortion, and no freedom of movement, absence of residence rights, inequitable marriage regulations and land confiscation. And their limited access to education and other social benefits is a clear violation of the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” Lakshminarayan added in her program essay.

Elizabeth Rueda Herrera, a young Latina from Seattle shared similar views of the Mexican migrants situation, drawing similarities from her experience at the WSCF North America’s US-Mexico Border Solidarity Program in Arizona in October. “There are awful ways in which migrants crossing the US-Mexico border are having every one of their basic human rights violated in the name of national safety and security and are left with no course of action to seek justice afterwards,” Reuda Herrera said. “The physical walls are there,” showing photos of the 21-foot high “fence” dividing Douglas, Arizona and Agua Prieta, Sonora.

Students learn about the important connections of their local issues to the situation of other marginalised communities in the WSCF Program. “The exposure to meet the indigenous people was meaningful and overwhelming,” Lakshminarayan said about her experience visiting the KAPAEENG Foundation, an *Adivasi* or Indigenous people organization advocating for human rights. Headed by Executive Director Pallab Chakma, an *Adivasi* leader himself, he told the participants of the “various human rights violations faced by the indigenous people especially in relation to land acquisition, lack of legislative enactments to support their rights, struggles of the indigenous community to overcome discrimination, violence and political discord, leads to migration and human trafficking.” Indigenous young people leave their communities as migrant workers to seek job in the city or abroad.

“Influencing decisions, policies and practice of powerful decision makers to address underlying causes of poverty, bring justice, support, and good development. Advocacy FOR, advocacy WITH, advocacy BY and how we understand these words in different context and the spirituality of advocacy” were important advocacy principles that [María Camila Ulloa](#), a student from Argentina learned from the sessions of Rev. Malcolm Damon of the Ecumenical Justice Network (EJN) in South Africa.



Mr. Mervin Toquero from the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) and Coordinator of the Churches Witnessing With Migrants (CWWM), shared their experience in leading the Mary Jane Veloso Campaign, an international campaign to stop the execution of Mary Jane Veloso, a Filipina migrant worker on death row in Indonesia victimized by drug traffickers and illegal recruiters. In advocacy work, Toquero emphasized the need for a clear Campaign Plan to sustain the advocacy work and achieve its goal. “A Plan with a beginning and an end and most importantly, a specific standpoint focusing on the rights of the poor and the marginalized people.”



Gathering fifteen students and young people from Cameroon, Benin, Argentina, Myanmar, India, Philippines, Bangladesh, UK, USA, and Canada, the WSCF Inter-regional Leadership Training and Advocacy Program (IRLTP) increased the awareness and capacity of the participants to advocate for justice and human rights and stand in solidarity with the migrants and refugees at the national and international levels. The Program highlighted the importance of intersectional and solidarity work as distinct WSCF advocacy work.

The Program concluded with a call to action from Ms. Eni Lestari, Chairperson of the International Migrant Alliance (IMA). Lestari, an Indonesian migrant domestic worker leader from Hong Kong urged the students to “support and stand in solidarity with the migrants and refugees, not forgetting to listen and let the migrants and refugees speak for themselves.” She highlighted forced migration and the role of global economic systems and political structures in the massive displacement and movement of people.

The Program hosted by the Student Christian Movement of Bangladesh (SCMB) was held at the CCDB Hope Centre and supported by Karibu Foundation, Otto Per Mille of the Waldensian Church Italy, the United Church of Canada and United Church USA.

Photo credits: Amnesty International (Rohingyas), Caro Ibrahim, IRLTP participants

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