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

Sobbing in peace education class

The rumor is that the peace education class that Chisato majored in, was very unique.

When it comes to peace studies, people tend to think that they learn about war, international issues, and issues in foreign countries, but in peace education classes, we were often told to “face ourselves on a deep level.” The first assignment of the peace education class was to write a report based on my own experience – not knowledge and information, on about 30 different issues that contribute to conflict, such as discrimination, inequality, bullying, and ethnic minorities. I was talking with my classmates that it was difficult because I didn’t experience everything, but when I began writing, I noticed a series of relationships between those 30 issues and myself.

After graduation, I wanted to be involved in the education in Japan, so I got involved in JICA’s education for international understanding and project supporting the development education. Although the focus was on promoting education for international understanding in cooperation with local governments and educational institutions, I was also involved in a project in which the National Institute Educational Policy Research of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology and JICA Global Plaza jointly conducted a nation-specific survey of international
education in six countries. With the aim of getting suggestions on Japan’s future of international education and JICA’s education for international understanding support project, I was in charge of coordinating the entire project and conducting field surveys in the United States. While I felt that it was worthwhile to work for a large framework of education, on the other hand, I had an urge to share the valuable experience of APS with young people, so I chose to work as a teacher at the major of International Cooperation at J.F. Oberin University after working at JICA. Currently, I am in charge of courses in which students study about developing countries through lectures and fieldwork, my network at UPEACE has been very useful.

Looking back, it was my experience at APS that greatly changed my values. I think that it is because I was able to see eye-to-eye with students from various countries with conflict and social issues, such as the Philippines and Costa Rica, and learn the importance of peace education. I am now working to pass this onto young people in Japan. Lastly, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to APS for giving me a life-changing experience.

Harsha joined APS as a peace building practitioner and an academic from Sri Lanka. He obtained the M.A. degree in Political Science-Global Politics at the Ateneo de Manila University (ADMU) and the M.A in International Peace Studies from University for Peace (UPEACE).

Harsha’s 13-year journey with experience in and outside of Sri Lanka as a peace builder, researcher and a humanitarian worker, has become more outstanding with the experience he gained joining APS. He values the unique and priceless space that was created within APS academic environment to share best practices and lessons learnt of peacebuilding contexts in the region of South East Asia with like minded fellows across the region. Harsha also sees both UPEACE and ADMU experiences as places where he could expose to a vast level of diversity which disclosed cultural values and norms of approximately around 90 nationalities. He says being a member of APS is the best place to learn cultural diversity, to discuss and produce knowledge on numerous issues related to peace building and to gain a vast subject knowledge on peace building. Harsha remembers APS journey as one of the most significant and unprecedented memories of his life.

“APS created a path to expose to a diverse world, it is the best place in the world to accept and learn about diversity”

Harsha Amarathunga (APS 7, Sri Lanka)

Harsha joined the United Nations Mission in South Sudan as a civil affairs officer after the APS avenue. He is now engaged in supporting conflicting communities by providing solutions through community driven approaches such as mediation, negotiation and dialogue to promote social cohesion. Amid the massive level of health, economic and social issues in South Sudan, Harsha continues his mission to serve warring communities not only in Sri Lanka but also internationally. Joining APS had been a major milestone in Harsha’s journey where he became an academically sound professional to work in the international peace building arena.
This striking passage introduces this issue’s featured alumni creation, Black: A Memoir by Kyle Kao. With a good mix of literary artistry, Kyle’s work captures his journey that taught him important life lessons.

Kyle Kao is an APS 10 alumnus from Cambodia. He has been working on Black for the past three years. According to Kyle, “Black holds dear to me because it is my life journey across childhood trauma, mental disorder and redemption.”

Kyle considers that Black gives relevant lessons to the present generation: “It is relevant... because behind every addiction there was a victim, behind every makeup there is insecurity, and behind depression there is the truth.” Through the APS Alumni Network, Kyle wishes to reach out to his fellow alumni and share his memoir.

Black was launched on KINDLE and Kyle is likewise so generous to share a free version to his fellow APSAN members upon request to kaosokmao1@gmail.com.
4 Peace Training for Youth in Vietnam “Peace and development for all”

A training on ‘Peace and development for all’ was organised by APSAN - Vietnam team. The training was held from June 27 & 28, 2020 at the National Village for Ethnic Culture, Hanoi. It was facilitated by APSAN-Vietnam members Binh Tran (APS 8), Nghia Le (APS 8), Huyen Hoang (APS12), Phat Nguyen (APS 10), Nhung Nguyen (APS 9), and supported by other APSAN-Vietnam members. 31 participants were selected from 50 applications and the training was attended by 27 university students, and 4 lectures. Detailed report will be added to the APSAN website www.apsan.org.

6 Alumna coached scholars to prepare for APS life and new challenges.

Covid-19 forced a sudden and unexpected change in the study and living environment of current APS students (cohort 13 & 14). Since March all classes at APS have been conducted online, with students participating from their respective homes. In addition, students have had their social interactions severely limited. This has compounded the challenges for students, right in the middle of their transformative APS journey.

From March to June 2020, Aya Terasawa (APS6) provided online individual and group coaching sessions to APS13 and facilitated an coaching orientation with APS14. Key activities included goal-setting, stress management and active listening. Based on the feedback, the majority of the participants found the session meaningful and useful in their APS journey. They likewise appreciated the opportunity to connect and interact with their batchmates.

The APS Alumni Network thanks Aya for her effective support in the activity’s design and implementation. Aya joined the APS/ALP 6 and obtained her M.A. in International Law and Human Rights in UPEACE. After graduation, she joined Bridge Asia Japan and, later, led the IT start-up company TEAMFLOW. (Her story is available at https://humansofupeace.squarespace.com/)

5 Collaborative webinar conducted by Isti (APS 10) and Candy (APS 9)

On 21 July 2020, PANDAI - Indonesia’s Peace Education- established by Isti Toq‘ah and Visions for Peace Philippines -co-founded by Candy Diaz- collaborated to create an online peace class by using IGTV (Instagram TV) as the platform. The topic was “Saving self from unchosen identity: Challenge in time of pandemics” inspired by the life of a missing journalist kidnapped by ISIS in Iraq, Kamaran Najm. His life can be the inspiration for children and young ones to never give up regardless the identities they carry when they were born such as family’s religion, race, skin color, nationality, and social status.

7 APS promotions during COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic did not halt alumni-led promotional activities. APS alumni held online information-sharing in Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Myanmar before the deadline of application submissions for the APS 2021-2022.

8 Announcement:

APSAN has scheduled multiple activities to be conducted in the first half of the year. However, it was decided to postpone the activities under AIA grant programme, the Peace and development training scheduled in Sri Lanka. UPEACE is celebrating its’40th anniversary this year and the scheduled APSAN member gathering too was postponed.
Dear Respected Seniors and Friends,

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to you all. Thank you so much for being part of the APS Alumni Network, and thank you indeed for supporting our activities. The world is currently going through an uncertain time. We may feel isolated due to the lack of face-to-face interaction, yet I believe we have found that the human connection is more important than ever. Despite the challenges in front of us, this is a great opportunity for us to create innovative ways to communicate with one another at distance while encouraging a sense of community and acknowledging the collective need. To me, the APS Alumni Network is a platform – hub of talented individuals - that shows me the meaning of resilience and compassion. Your presence is a source of energy to vision how we live for the future in a transformative way.

Please stay safe, healthy and most importantly be YOU no matter how hard the world pushes our life. Big hug from Costa Rica!!

Maya Mizuno (APS 9)
Programme Coordinator, UPEACE

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