Adventist seminar addresses national domestic violence in Bangladesh

Leaders in Malaysia use Vacation Bible School to enhance adult evangelism, and more.

Headlines

- Adventist seminar addresses national domestic violence in Bangladesh
- Leaders in Malaysia use Vacation Bible School to enhance adult evangelism
- Children’s spiritual celebration attracts more than 900 participants in Indonesia
- Adventist Risk Management’s "Seven" campaign transitions to "enditnow"
- Highlighting the peace-making power of religion, despite its mixed track record

Adventist seminar addresses national domestic violence in Bangladesh

More than 300 members participate in ‘enditnow’ initiative.
Adventists recently responded to the challenge of domestic violence which is a national concern in Bangladesh. Leaders from the Bangladesh Adventist Union Mission (BAUM) as well as the Dhaka Seventh-day Adventist church offered a one-day seminar about domestic violence on August 15. A crowd of approximately 300 participated in this enditnow initiative.

According to the Violence against Women Survey 2011 (VAW) produced by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics in partnership with the United Nations Population Fund, 87% of women in Bangladesh have experienced some form of domestic violence within the home – either physical, psychological, sexual, and/or economic which involves finances as a method of control.

Read more at news.adventist.org.

Leaders in Malaysia use Vacation Bible School to enhance adult evangelism
A recent Adventist evangelistic series in Sarawak, Malaysia featured a unique variation on ministry to children. As church leaders in Kampung Simboh prepared for the August 2-8 evangelistic series, the original plan focused on adult programming. However, they soon realized children’s programming was also needed to more fully reach families in the surrounding communities.

When it was suggested that they run a nightly Vacation Bible School (VBS) for the children, the rest of the organizers enthusiastically agreed. Although VBS is more traditionally used during the daytime hours of summer seasons or school breaks, the leaders discovered that it complimented the adult programming well with few adjustments needed.

Read more at news.adventist.org.

Children’s spiritual celebration attracts more than 900 participants in Indonesia
Adventist children’s ministry leaders in West Java, Indonesia use a variety of activities to encourage a more vibrant relationship with Jesus among children. On August 9, more than 700 children and 200 staff from 25 Adventist churches joined in a one-day Children’s Spiritual Celebration at Indonesian Adventist University (Universitas Advent Indonesia) in Bandung.

With a theme of “Christ loves children of different nations”, participants aged 2-14 years old spent the day in age-appropriate activities, seminars and break-out sessions. The younger children enjoyed more active programming while the older ones participated in life skills preparation such as lectures on health and sexual purity as well as cooking and gardening classes.
Adventist Risk Management's "Seven" campaign transitions to "enditnow"

August 22 is "enditnow" day.

Adventist Risk Management, Inc. (ARM) is transitioning its campaign that focused on preventing child abuse to the enditnow campaign, led by the Women’s Ministries department of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the World Divisions. The move will enhance the resources provided by the enditnow campaign and expand its focus to children in distress. The transition will be completed this fall.

“We’re grateful that ARM is sharing its resources with us. This is a meaningful contribution to our mission to protect women and children around the world from abuse and neglect,” said Heather-Dawn Small, director of Women’s Ministries for the Seventh-day Adventist World Church. “It is a natural progression in our journey to reach not only women in trouble but their children as well.”

Highlighting the peace-making power of religion, despite its mixed track record

At the 17th annual meeting of religious liberty experts, scholars examine both the destructive and healing power of faith in society.
A group of scholars, lawyers and religious freedom advocates met last week to challenge a widespread belief that religion is primarily a divisive force in society, fuelling tension and violence. The 17th annual "Meeting of Experts," organized by the International Religious Liberty Association (IRLA), brought together some 20 academics at Pepperdine University School of Law in Malibu, California, to consider the role of religion in current global conflicts, and to focus on ways that faith can, instead, be a powerful force for peacemaking and conflict resolution.

“We need to use faith anchored in forgiveness and reconciliation,” said Ambassador Robert A. Seiple, a former United States Ambassador at large for Religious Freedom, and current IRLA president. “We need to know our own faith, and likewise, we need to understand our neighbour’s faith and respect it.”

Read more at news.adventist.org.
Adventist seminar addresses national domestic violence in Bangladesh

Mahuna Roy, BAUM women's ministries director, shares during an August 15 domestic violence awareness seminar in Dhaka, Bangladesh. [Photo courtesy of BAUM Women's Ministries department]

More than 300 members participate in 'enditnow' initiative.

August 24, 2015 | Bangladesh | Teresa Costello with additional reporting by Mahuya Roy and Eshita Mondo

Adventists recently responded to the challenge of domestic violence which is a national concern in Bangladesh. Leaders from the Bangladesh Adventist Union Mission (BAUM) as well as the Dhaka Seventh-day Adventist church offered a one-day seminar about domestic violence on August 15. A crowd of approximately 300 participated in this enditnow initiative.

According to the Violence against Women Survey 2011 (VAW) produced by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics in partnership with the United Nations Population Fund, 87% of women in Bangladesh have experienced some form of domestic violence within the home – either physical, psychological, sexual, and/or economic which involves finances as a method of control.

"Violence should not be part of the home as we are one family under God," emphasized Mahuya Roy, BAUM Women's Ministries director during one of the seminars. "Instead, we must love each other and help each other as God loves us so much," she concluded.

The seminar included a family violence prevention session, women's rights information, a special youth emphasis and a question and answer time.

The focus on youth was an important addition because the VAW statistics revealed 41.8% of girls aged 10-14 and 34.3% of young women aged 15-19 in Bangladesh are victims of sexual violence.

Organizers feel the seminar provided participants with vital information that could not only benefit them but their family, friends and neighbors who are affected by domestic violence.

According to a statement by the Women's Ministries department of the world church, "enditnow is a global campaign to raise awareness and advocate for the end of violence against women and girls around the world. It aims to mobilize Adventists around the world and invites other community groups to join in to resolve this worldwide issue."

Bangladesh is a southern Asia country bordered by India, Myanmar and the Bay of Bengal. Approximately 90% of its more than 150 million residents are Muslim. Bangladesh is one of the 14 countries within the Southern Asia-Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists region. There are more than 28,000 Adventists worshipping in 121 churches throughout the country. In addition, the Adventist church operates one dental clinic, 158 elementary schools, nine secondary schools and one college.
Leaders in Malaysia use Vacation Bible School to enhance adult evangelism

Almost 200 children filled the venue for the final evangelistic program on Sabbath, August 8 in Kampung Simboh in Sarawak, Malaysia.

A recent Adventist evangelistic series in Sarawak, Malaysia featured a unique variation on ministry to children. As church leaders in Kampung Simboh prepared for the August 2-8 evangelistic series, the original plan focused on adult programming. However, they soon realized children's programming was also needed to more fully reach families in the surrounding communities.

When it was suggested that they run a nightly Vacation Bible School (VBS) for the children, the rest of the organizers enthusiastically agreed. Although VBS is more traditionally used during the daytime hours of summer seasons or school breaks, the leaders discovered that it complimented the adult programming well with few adjustments needed.

How did the children respond? The first night 89 children attended, but the following night the attendance among both the children and adults increased. The theme “Kids of the King – a Royal Adventure” seemed to enthral the children as they learned through games, crafts and interactive stories.

VBS attendance increased each night until it reached 135 on Friday night. When the VBS leaders invited the children to attend the final program the next day, they weren’t sure how many would actually come because it would be on Sabbath morning.

To their surprise, 179 children came with many of the regular participants bringing friends and relatives who had not previously attended. As surprising as this was to the leaders, the responses of the children brought even more joy. The children shared that they were very happy to have this kind of program because it was active and they felt they had a special part. The children expressed hope that there would be another program like this next year.

Their responses made an impact upon leaders. “I was happy to share in the joy and celebration that we had during our recent Women’s Ministries and VBS evangelism,” commented Pastor Joggery Gelu, Children’s Ministries director for the Sarawak Mission. He added, “Every night the attendance of both the children and adults increased until the average attendance was 300-350 in spite of their busy schedules. Really though, it is not the attendance totals that are most important but the experience and things that they learn for their future life and a spiritual connection to the Creator and Lord Jesus Christ.”

With a total of 69 baptisms from the evangelistic series, organizers have learned that family-centered programming with a particular emphasis on children’s ministry can be a vital tool in religiously diverse areas.

Kampung Simboh is located approximately 23 kilometers from the Sarawak Mission headquarters in Kuching. Malaysia is a predominantly Islamic country but Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism, various Chinese religions,
indigenous religions and Christianity are also freely practiced among its population of over 23 million people. It is home to 28 Adventist churches and over 5,500 members.

Back to list
Children’s spiritual celebration attracts more than 900 participants in Indonesia

Dedicated children’s ministries leaders guide children in prayer and Bible study during WIUM children’s ministries events. [Photo courtesy of Nelly Sihotang]

August 24, 2015 | Indonesia | Teresa Costello with additional reporting by Gay Deles

Adventist children’s ministry leaders in West Java, Indonesia use a variety of activities to encourage a more vibrant relationship with Jesus among children. On August 9, more than 700 children and 200 staff from 25 Adventist churches joined in a one-day Children’s Spiritual Celebration at Indonesian Adventist University (Universitas Advent Indonesia) in Bandung.

With a theme of “Christ loves children of different nations”, participants aged 2-14 years old spent the day in age-appropriate activities, seminars and break-out sessions. The younger children enjoyed more active programming while the older ones participated in life skills preparation such as lectures on health and sexual purity as well as cooking and gardening classes.

The day also focused on music and cultural expression. Attendees enthusiastically joined in a festival of songs as well as displayed their national outfits.

This annual event began in 2013 when Nelly Sihotang, West Indonesia Union Mission (WIUM) Children’s Ministries director, saw a need for innovative children’s events that would progressively offer a spiritual foundation. From that initial year, organizers see returning attendees each year. Some attend classes while others now assist the leaders. This trend follows the leaders’ goal of emphasizing “leadership, spiritual development and how to be a friend to others," according to Linda Purba, West Java Conference (WJC) children’s ministries director.

In addition to this event, West Java Conference hosts other children ministries’ events to enhance spiritual growth. Earlier this year in March, WJC children attended the first division-wide children’s prayer conference. Purba notes that during the three-day event, the children “showed more interest in prayer and…the Bible." This was followed a conference-level prayer conference attended by 250 children.

Ultimately, leaders such as Sihotang and Purba strive to equip children with a personal faith experience. “I like to see children maintain a connection with God even without the presence of their mothers or fathers. They will feel that peace wherever they are, like when they are in [school] dormitories [and other places],” shares Sihotang.

In addition to medallions to commemorate their participation at the August 9 event, attendees left with a greater appreciation for each other and for the Savior who celebrates children.
Children’s spiritual celebration attracts more than 900 participants in Ind...
Adventist Risk Management's "Seven" campaign transitions to "enditnow"

August 22 is "enditnow" day.

Adventist Risk Management, Inc. (ARM) is transitioning its campaign that focused on preventing child abuse to the enditnow campaign, led by the Women’s Ministries department of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the World Divisions. The move will enhance the resources provided by the enditnow campaign and expand its focus to children in distress. The transition will be completed this fall.

“We’re grateful that ARM is sharing its resources with us. This is a meaningful contribution to our mission to protect women and children around the world from abuse and neglect,” said Heather-Dawn Small, director of Women’s Ministries for the Seventh-day Adventist World Church. “It is a natural progression in our journey to reach not only women in trouble but their children as well.”

Launched in 2012, the Seven Campaign raised awareness on child abuse, including bullying, neglect, physical and sexual abuse against children. The transition comes as leaders at ARM felt enditnow would be a better platform to share preventive resources globally. enditnow is a well-known and established initiative that has called attention to the plight of women around the world who suffer in silence against physical and emotional abuse.

“We’ve seen that enditnow has impacted the lives of many women and we want this important focus to expand to children who are in danger,” said Bob Kyte, president of ARM. “Our mission is to encourage risk management and any way we can help other ministries of the Adventist Church protect the most vulnerable.”

August 22 is enditnow day for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. If you want to learn how your church can get involved, here are some resources your church can use. You can also get involved by making a donation to this cause.

Back to list
Highlighting the peace-making power of religion, despite its mixed track record

[photo by Barry Bussey]

At the 17th Annual Meeting of Religious Liberty Experts, scholars examine both the destructive and healing power of faith in society.

August 19, 2015 | Silver Spring, Maryland, United States | Bettina Krause and Barry Bussey

A group of scholars, lawyers and religious freedom advocates met last week to challenge a widespread belief that religion is primarily a divisive force in society, fuelling tension and violence. The 17th annual "Meeting of Experts," organized by the International Religious Liberty Association (IRLA), brought together some 20 academics at Pepperdine University School of Law in Malibu, California, to consider the role of religion in current global conflicts, and to focus on ways that faith can, instead, be a powerful force for peacemaking and conflict resolution.

"We need to use faith anchored in forgiveness and reconciliation," said Ambassador Robert A. Seiple, a former United States Ambassador at large for Religious Freedom, and current IRLA president. "We need to know our own faith, and likewise, we need to understand our neighbour’s faith and respect it."

Ambassador Seiple, who gave the first of ten major presentations, focused on his firsthand experience with the horrific 1994 Rwandan genocide. He described visiting the country in the aftermath of the violence and standing on a bridge over a river clogged with hundreds of decaying bodies. According to Ambassador Seiple, one of the most troubling aspects of the Rwandan genocide is that it took place within a "Christianized" country—some 85 percent of the total population identified themselves as Christian. But in spite of this colossal failure on the part of churches in 1994, religious values have since played a vital role in rebuilding social stability. As Rwandans have reclaimed their country, they have shown the world the power of forgiveness, said Ambassador Seiple. He noted that many perpetrators of the genocide are today living side-by-side with their victims.

According to Dr. Ganoune Diop, Secretary General of the IRLA, each presentation during the four-day event was shaped in some way by two key questions: “How can we live with our deepest differences?” And, “How can the best of religions overcome the abysmal record of religious wars, religious ethnic cleansing, and genocides fuelled by religious discrimination?”

Although the Meeting of Experts examines these questions from a scholarly perspective, the issues that drive the work of these scholars are far from abstract. “Too many people suffer discrimination, persecution, or even martyrdom or genocide because of their religious differences,” says Dr. Diop. According to a Pew Forum study released earlier this year, some 5.5 billion people—or 77 percent of the world’s population—live in countries with “a high or very high overall level of restrictions on religion.”[1]

The meeting brought together a diverse panel of scholars who represented universities and organizations from...
several countries. Presenters included Dr. David Little, Professor Emeritus of Harvard Divinity School; Reverend Canon Brian Cox, Senior Vice President of the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy; Professor Cole Durham, President of the International Consortium for Law and Religion Studies based in Milan, Italy; Professor T. Jeremy Gunn, professor of International Relations at Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane, Morocco; and, Dr. Amal Idrissi, law professor at the University of Moulay Ismael in Meknes, Morocco.

Over the past two decades, the Meeting of Experts has aimed to bring together some of the world's foremost scholars and practitioners in the field of religious freedom to track legal and sociological trends. Papers presented at the annual meetings are published, and have produced a significant body of academic and practical resources. The papers from this year's Meeting of Experts will be published in the 2015 edition of Fides et Libetas, which will be available later this year from the IRLA, which can be contacted through its website at www.irla.org or its Facebook page at www.facebook.com/IRLA.HQ.

The IRLA was established by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1893 and is the world's oldest religious freedom advocacy organization. It promotes freedom of belief for all people, regardless of faith, and has non-governmental organization status at the United Nations. Along with the annual Meeting of Experts, the IRLA sponsors regional religious freedom festivals and forums, and every five years organizes a world congress, which attracts an international mix of scholars, legal practitioners, government officials and human rights advocates.

[1] For the full study, visit the Pew Forum website at www.pewforum.org/2015/02/26/religious-hostilities/