

Comments by significant persons on the IDG2020

Ciara Gae Borja from Philippines: designer of all the infographics on IDG2020

When the opportunity to help in the Asia Pacific International Day of the Girl Child Campaign came up, I was excited but scared at the same time. The idea of producing something to be distributed across countries daunted me. It put a lot of pressure on my shoulders. But, deep in my heart, I knew I had to do it, because there is so, so, so much that must be done for girls in our region. If I could contribute just this little thing, I would do it in a heartbeat.

Melissa Ram and her daughters Deepika and Deepthi from Malaysia were emcees for the IDG2020 panel event.

We felt very honoured and grateful for the opportunity to share the momentous day with the Good Shepherd family and all the Girl Child around the Asia Pacific Region. We definitely learnt a lot about the Good Shepherd cause and was amazed with all the sharing and discussion that transpired with the main panel event. The Moderator and Panelists were all very inspiring! It was definitely a memorable experience for my daughters and I. We are truly heartened by the extraordinary hard work and effort by Good Shepherd in empowering the Girl Child...so very thankful and blessed to be part of the special occasion celebrating the International Day of the Girl Child. Thank you.

Jillian Fernandez from Philippines: Panelist

It is overwhelming to see the impact that we made during the IDG panel. The overflowing love and support people gave us actually brought me to tears. Personally, I did not expect that my simple story would have that kind of impact to girls of different ages. This goes to show the similarity of LGBT experiences and the need for these stories to be heard. Now that my story is out in the open, I hope that this will encourage meaningful discussion and forward policy interventions towards the realization of the rights and dignities of LGBTQ+ individuals.

Merrylove Glory Albert from Malaysia: Panelist

I had always hoped for a platform where a group of powerful voices gather together to elevate and discuss about issues faced by girls around the world. When I received an email from Madam Chin Poh Choo about the Good Shepherd Asia Pacific Forum, I felt truly blessed.

Hearing the sharings from other panelists, I felt a significant sense of altruism and empowerment. Hearing about Sanjana's advocacy work for girls in the rural areas has ignited a fire of inspiration in me. I continue to hope that her efforts will continue to change lives.

When I heard about the heartbreaking real life experience of May as a child refugee, a survivor of child trafficking and abuse, it shattered my heart knowing that there are thousands of other children being stripped off their rights to live a happy, safe and healthy life.

Jill, breaking the barrier and had presented a very powerful talk about LGBTQ+ Community had hit very close to home for me. Growing up in a Roman Catholic community, the subject of LGBTQ+ has always been a great taboo. I had witnessed close friends of mine getting bashed because of opening up about their sexuality. Quoting from Sister Mary Euphrasia "Just love", Jillian had delivered a powerful message and gain support and love from the participants.

I myself had been given the opportunity to speak about the child marriage issue here in Sabah, Malaysia. Children as young as nine years old are married off to their rapists as a way to cover up the shame. Law had failed us by allowing children as young as 16 or younger to be married off, giving an easy access for predators to continually exploit children and escape penance for their crime. One child bride is way too many child brides. Society must accept that children are children. Care for the future and happiness of each child. Respect our rights not only as the investment of tomorrow's world, but because we are just as human as adults are and we have all the rights to all the virtues the world has to offer.

The forum, as said by Sister Winifred is not a political debate, is a platform where we elevate the issues faced by girls around the world, a safe space where we can discuss, spread awareness, empower and be educated.

Sanjana Angeline K: Panelist, advocate for Rural Girls

"I was extremely privileged to be a panelist in the panel event conducted on October 11th to commemorate the International Day of the Girl. This event has helped me share my story of advocacy and has also given me the opportunity to meet other powerful girl activists and advocates for the rights of girl children at least virtually. This has been such a huge learning experience because I now know of the various struggles and bondages that girls undergo internationally. Sharing my story has also given me confidence and helped me grow and reach out as an advocate for girl's rights. I can now proudly say that I am raising my voice for an equal future!"

Sr Joan Lopez, Asia Pacific Circle of Leaders Co-ordinator

Congratulations and thank you, Theresa Symons, Regional Manager of the Good Shepherd Asia Pacific Mission Development Office for initiating and organising this year's International Day of the Girl Child celebration with the theme 'My voice equals our future' and making it a historic event spanning the 19 countries of Asia Pacific where Good Shepherd carries out the mission. Mooting this two-month celebration beginning from 11 October, which is International Day of the Girl Child and completing on 10 December, which is International

Human Rights Day, Good Shepherd social, educational and pastoral services and communities have come together in solidarity in an unprecedented way. Through projects and campaigns, it is a time of learning and growing in awareness and engagement that will highlight experiences of marginalisation and progresses of the girl child in their locations.

The webinar on 11 October, 2020 was an excellent platform for bringing together thousands of Good Shepherd people and friends for this cause and celebration. The webinar began delightfully with a mother and her twin daughters of 6 years of age, being the Emcees. We are grateful to Winifred Doherty, Good Shepherd UN NGO Representative who moderated the very vibrant and enlightening conversation with her four panellists. The voices of these young activists, Sanjana..., Jillian..., May Twe... and Merrylove... who shared their experiences on issues faced by the girl child raised questions for us as adults. They advocated for policies and championed programmes that recognize the girl child's rights. Their voices challenged us to responsible action. Action that requires a shift in consciousness, a change in our own attitudes and behaviours and a commitment to work with duty bearers towards positive change. As Good Shepherd people, we must work together in partnership with others to create environments that ensure the rights of all children are respected and upheld; not leaving behind the girl child.