



Special Edition: Youth Peace Camp in Timor Leste (No.1)

The 2nd YMCA Timor Leste Youth Peace Camp, sponsored by the Asia Pacific Alliance of YMCAs, was held from 1 – 8 August in Dili, Timor Leste. Five human participants (and Popoki) from Japan, nine from Korea, six from Hong Kong and about thirty youth from Timor Leste joined in the camp. Activities included a peace school for local children with crafts, games, songs and dancing, community work including tree planting, a soccer match with local youth, as well as a series of Popoki peace workshops and activities, generally run by Ronni with the help of the Japanese participants.

This issue of *Popoki's News* contains short reflections and photographs from the participants from Japan: Yuria YOKOYAMA, Rika YUNOMAE, Yuki KIMURA, Emi YANO and Ronni and Popoki. It was a very intense ten days, and in keeping with Popoki's style, this issue focuses on what we felt.

Hopefully soon there will also be reflections and photos from the participants from Korea, Hong Kong and Timor Leste. They will be arranged in a second Special Issue of *Popoki's News*. We are all looking forward to reading them.



(We begin with the essay by Emi, who gives an overview of the program focusing on children)

Popoki and the Children in Terra Santa

YANO, Emi

(International Christian University Student YMCA)

The International YMCA Youth Peace Camp was held in Terra Santa, Dili, Timor Leste for 8 days in the beginning of August. Popoki became “Kolega Diak!” (means “good friend!”) of the children there through the “peace school” and the following programs.

In the “peace school” program, children, youth and adults enjoyed singing, dance, art and sports together in each group. Popoki was busy especially in the Art Group as children drew Popoki, made planes using paper on which Popoki was printed, and so forth. In the other groups, the drawings of Popoki decorated each classroom. The children also participated in painting Popoki on the walls of community center on the second-to-last day. On the same day, when we sang Popoki Song (titled “Ba Ne’ebe Popoki”, meaning “Popoki, where are you going?”) together, the big voice of the children was prominent.

It was not a chance for the children to think about “peace” in a direct way, however children could tell the things like “everyone is talking about Popoki,” or “everyone loves Popoki”.

I could not get to know in what situation the children live, what they are feeling in their lives, and what this peace camp meant to them. However I hope that the experience of this camp where children, youth adults from 4 countries had a good time with Popoki, will be a driving power for the children to create their “peace,” as the experience is also a driving power for me.



Making paper airplanes from paper Popoki with picture of Popoki



A boy coloring in a picture of Popoki



In front of paintings of Popoki



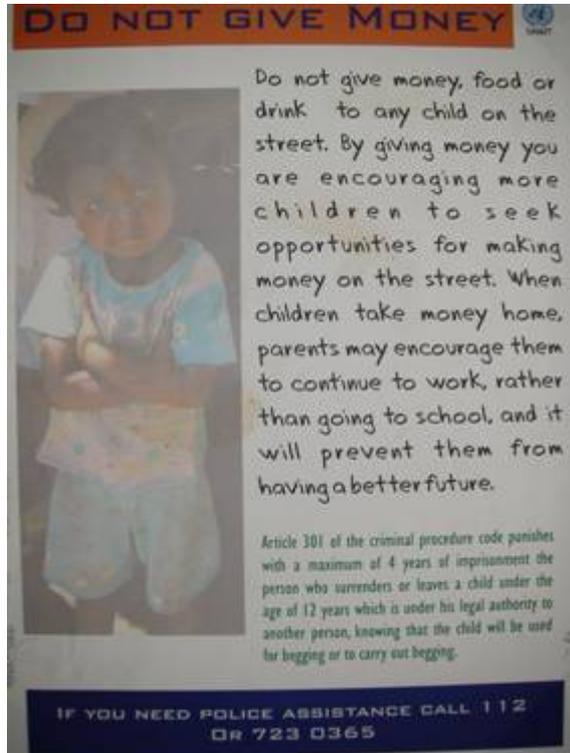
Popoki by Ino (age 9)

(Yuki also wrote about the children)

Meeting the Children in Timor Leste

Yuki KIMURA

Shiga University Dept. of Education, Art Education Course



The first thing I noticed upon arriving in Timor Leste was a poster on the airport wall. “Do not give money to any child...” At first, perhaps because I had just arrived, I did not really think that this poster applied to me, and so I did not think seriously about its implications.

At the exit of the terminal building, there were many people, children and adults. I had heard from the Japanese director who was traveling with us that we would be met at the airport, so I thought that the children had come to meet us.

The moment we left the airport building, the children came running up to us, smiling and greeting us and trying to take our luggage. I thought they were very nice children, but one of the local YMCA staff members said, “Don’t pay attention to the children.” At that time, I could not understand why I was supposed to ignore such nice and friendly children.

However, when we arrived at our truck and loaded our luggage, the children suddenly began to say, “Give me something! Give me money!” At that moment, I understood the reality referred to in the poster. Following instructions from the staff person, I jumped into the truck bed. Even after I was in the truck, the children stretched out their hands, and some even tried to get onto the truck.

The children ran after our truck as we pulled out of the airport. Not knowing what to do, I sat silently, trying not to look at the children trying frantically to catch up with us. One of them yelled “Fuck you!” I couldn’t help looking at that boy, and saw that his expression was very earnest.



This photo was taken the first day when we arrived at the primary school where we would stay. I had just given this boy a blue wristband.

After the experience with the children at the airport, I felt some mistrust of the children. I was afraid of them. At first, the boy in this picture smiled and greeted me. He spoke to me in Tetun, and held my hand. I thought that since he was one of the children in the school, he was different from those at the airport, and relaxed somewhat.

The next instant, the boy saw the blue band on my wrist and pointed first at the band and then at himself. I was very surprised, and was afraid that if I ignored him as I had the children at the airport he would display the same attitude.

I had no reservations about giving him the blue band, but I did not know whether giving it to him would be a good thing or not. In the end, I gave in to his demand and gave him the blue band. He was delighted and I felt better. The next day when I saw the boy again, he thanked me for the blue band, but from that time until the time we left, every time he saw me he would point to something of mine and ask me to give it to him. I finally began to understand the meaning of the poster in the airport.

If a person has something, it is easy to give it away to someone else. But is that act of just giving someone something really good for that person? It is the same with developed countries giving things to developing countries. If developing countries are not asked to find their own solutions and instead an endless stream of goods just comes to them, they will remain dependent and never be able to develop.

Every time I met the boy, I wondered whether I should have given him the blue band.



On 5 August, the youth from Timor Leste did a drama based on a scene from the Bible for our Sunday worship. It was held on a nearby mountain and the some of the children who often came to the school joined us in climbing.

As the program reached its climax, and we neared the summit, we arrived at a place with a fabulous view of the city, as can be seen in this photo.

Until that moment, the attention of the children had been focused on the drama, but one child noticed the view and gave a cry of excitement. The others heard him and crying out in excitement, they all rushed over to have a look.

I could not understand what the children were saying, but as they looked at the view they pointed and stretched out their arms, and seemed a bit excited. What did they discover in this view? What were they feeling? What were they talking about? Perhaps it was the size of Timor Leste, or the beauty of the ocean, or hope for tomorrow. In any event, this discovery undoubtedly had some effect on them.



The first day of the 'Peace School' was 3 August. I was to play soccer with the local children. The children were going to play barefoot or wearing sandals, on the rough soil. It was something that would never happen in Japan. As I watched the children, I wondered if they would know the rules, or if they had ever played soccer at

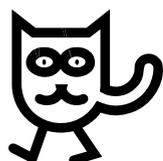


all, or if a game would even be possible. I decided if the children were not going to wear shoes, then I would abandon my shoes too, and play in sandals.

We began to play. I was amazed at the soccer sense and ability of the children. In spite of the fact they had no one to teach

them how to play, they played so well! I was very surprised.

Several days later, I saw some children playing soccer with an old worn-out ball. I really felt the potential of those children. I realized that it was possible to learn everywhere, and that it was up to one's self whether or not one took advantage of the opportunity.



(Rika wrote about communication)

Reflections on the International YMCA Youth Peace Camp in Timor Leste

Rika YUNOMAE

Kobe YMCA International Volunteer

In this camp, Popoki was very busy to join in workshops, to sing, to be a paper airplane! However no matter how busy he was, he always had a smile, and people who thought about Popoki or drew Popoki had smiles as well. When people were

nervous or sad when they thought about violence, Popoki seemed so sad. Thinking about peace with people of China, Korea, Timor Leste and Japan was my hope for this camp, and also is my anxiety about it, because there is a difference of language. “Peace” doesn’t have a clear definition. One youth of Timor Leste said, “Peace becomes violence.” And I realized that peace for each person varied even if they had the same culture and the same language. In that case, what is the meaning of considering peace along with our friends? It may be to know ‘what is peace for our friends?’ Then, this will be a hint about violence for our friends as well. We have to understand peace or violence for them, and this situation is not only under the conflict, but also in daily life. I could consider peace and conflict deeply, and could learn many things in Timor Leste. At the same time, I realized that I still had many things to consider and learn. Now, I feel strongly that must not neglect to think or learn about peace and violence in my daily life. There are a lot of Popokis on the walls of the community center in Timor Leste. And they all have smiles! Popoki taught many people many things bridging over differences in languages and cultures.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH, POPOKI!!!!!!

【The walls were covered with many different painted Popokis】



Moment of liberation for Peace with Popoki

Yuria Yokoyama

The National Council of YMCAs of Japan

When we talk about peace in youth gatherings of YMCA, the discussion often becomes vague and it tends to end up with only “conclusion, presentation and plan of action” with vague words like globalization, reconciliation, justice, and responsibility. It lacks ideas for specific action like “what I am doing” or “what I want to do.” This maybe is because people want to avoid tension or disagreement in international discussions or because some may feel inferiority of in their English ability.

However, with Popoki, the image of “peace” grows internally in one’s consciousness, and she/he realizes the condition “not in peace (violence)” around her/him without difficulty. Our usual conception of “peace as non violence,” was broken. This experience could make one’s rigid mind more flexible to be able to imagine the peace. “What color is peace? ...It maybe is different for each person....” We could call this experience the “moment of liberation for Peace.” In the work camp, these various and colorful moments of liberation came to each participant with confusion, joy, fun, friendship, bravery and hope, and they could share them among themselves. Popoki will keep showing us each colorful ways to build World Peace in Timor Leste, Hong Kong, Japan and Korea, even after this camp.



One of the Popokis drawn on the community center wall. It shows Popoki peering out from behind a tree, and graffiti, the scrawled name of a local gang. Perhaps we all shared both the desire to be part of the group and the struggle and hope for peace.



One of my most memorable experiences. This is a 'father' who began reading *Popoki, What Color is Peace?* to some children. His big eyes shone, and the children and I felt his excitement, surprise and gentleness.

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The young people from Japan worked hard, giving their own Popoki workshop, presentation on Japan and worship service.



On the last day, everyone wrote messages on their new Popoki T-shirts, made with the cooperation of the Kobe YMCA.



Violence, Non-Violence and Peace: Thoughts from Timor Leste

Ronni and Popoki

In the past year, Popoki has met many people and made many friends. It seems that he has some quality that moves people. I am always surprised when I do workshops, but people meeting Popoki always wind up smiling and being very creative. I call this phenomenon 'Popoki magic.' Before going to Timor Leste, I did not know whether 'Popoki magic' would work with people from conflict areas or people who suffer from the effects of armed conflict. One of my reasons for wanting to go to participate in this peace camp was to see how Popoki would fare there.

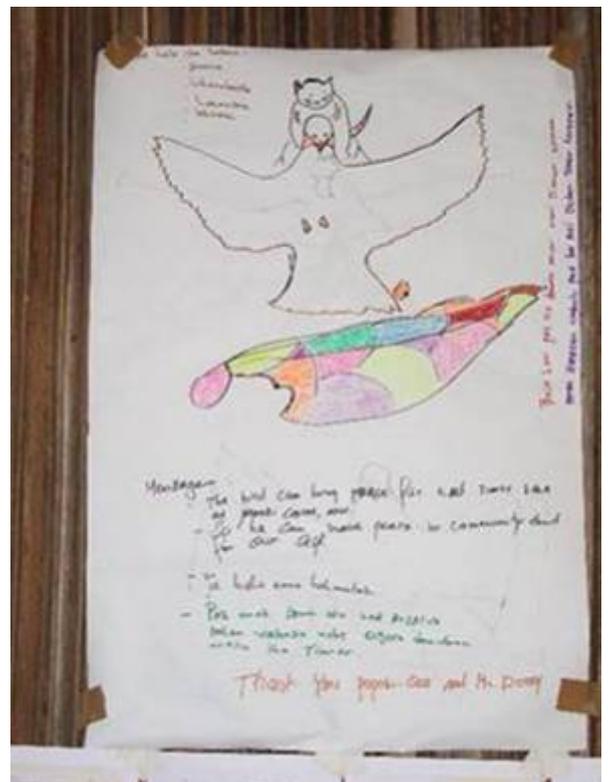
In Timor Leste, I felt both the power of the culture of violence and the difficulty of non-violence. I reconfirmed my belief that in order to really achieve non-violence, one must have passion, courage and strength. At the same time, I renewed my personal commitment to non-violence and to continuing to work with Popoki to create truly positive peace.

The most impressive thing was everybody's smiling face! Thank you!

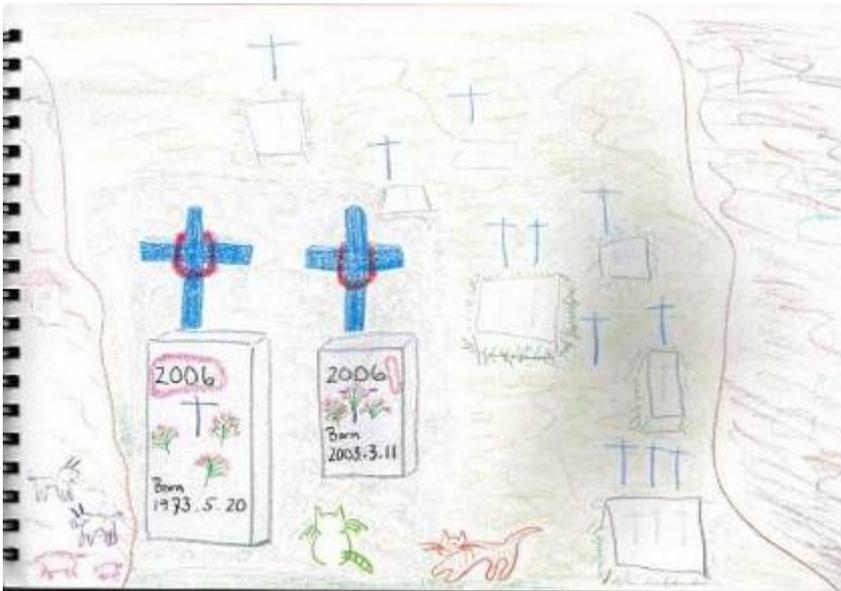


← At the first workshop, participants drew the “violence which surrounds us.” I was moved by the crying Popoki.

Next, participants were asked to show how it would be if the “violence were eliminated and peace was established.” I really liked this drawing.→



From Ronni's sketchbook



← Conflict affects everyone. When we were helping to clean the cemetery, one of the Timorese members showed me the grave of her grandfather and younger sister who were killed in the

crisis last year. I really felt the impact of the violence.

On our last day, we were escorted to the airport by the UN police. Is this peace? What does non-violence mean in this context? I continue to think about this, even after leaving Timor Leste.



← Ronni loved drawing on the wall, and Popoki loved all of his new friends!

How to Purchase Popoki Outside of Japan

Thanks to a very satisfied customer, *Popoki, What Color is Peace? Popoki's Peace Book 1* can be ordered from Kinokuniya Bookstore in Los Angeles. The bookstore is at www.los_angeles@kinokuniya.com and the telephone number is 213.687.4480. The price is US\$20.00 plus tax.

How to Purchase Popoki in Japan

There are various ways.

From the publisher, Epic: TEL: 078-241-7561 · FAX: 078-241-1918

From Amazon.co.jp or your local bookseller

From the Popoki Peace Project (popokipeace.yahoo.co.jp)

Contributions are always welcome!

Popoki Peace Project popokipeace@yahoo.co.jp



<http://popoki.cruisejapan.com>

From within Japan, please use Popoki's Postal account.

Account Name ポーポキ・ピース・プロジェクト神戸

Account number: 00920-4-280350

Contributions are used to promote the work of the Popoki Peace Project. These include translations, peace camps, peace workshops and other activities.



THANK YOU FROM POPOKI !

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