



APAY NEWS

Monthly e-Newsletter of the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs

No. 04 ~ May 2008

DISASTER UPDATES

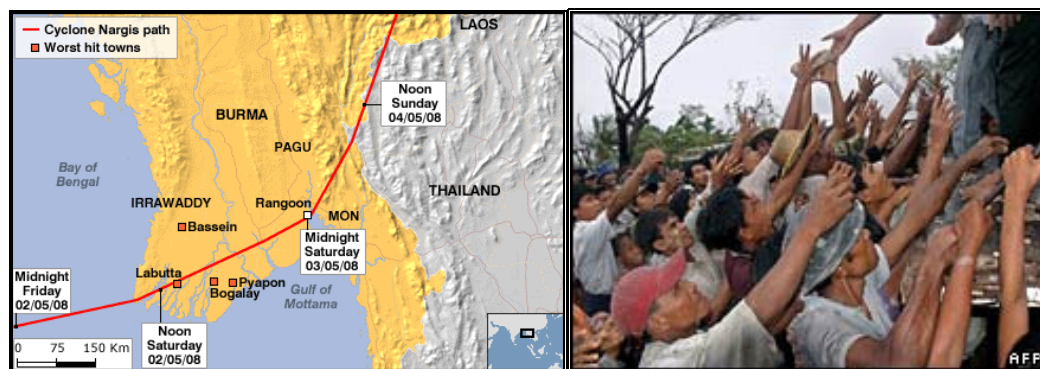
Challenged Yet Again by CalamityCyclone Nargis Devastates Myanmar, 2-3 May

Excerpts from BBC NEWS online...6-8May 2008

- Up to a million people are thought to have been left homeless in the crisis, which has left thousands of square kilometres of the Irrawaddy delta under water.
- More than 22,000 people were killed, says the government, but the top US diplomat in Burma warned that without speedy action that could top 100,000.
- Amid the "increasingly horrendous" situation, there is a "real risk" of disease outbreak, said the head of the US embassy in Burma, Shari Villarosa.
- In the area worst affected by Saturday's cyclone, the vast Irrawaddy delta, survivors have walked for days past dead bodies to find help.
- They are hungry, thirsty and vulnerable to disease - but roads and bridges are blocked and aid has been slow to arrive.

BBC NEWS online...16-May 2008

- **Burma death toll jumps to 78,000**
- The official death toll for Burma's cyclone disaster has jumped to almost 78,000 people, with nearly 56,000 missing, according to state TV.
- Previously, Burma was giving a toll of 43,000 dead and 28,000 missing while the Red Cross and United Nations had estimated a death toll above 100,000.



FROM Acting National General Secretary, Dr. Sonny Than Nyan

I spoke with Sonny on 12 and 13 May while he was in Bangkok and at the Thai-Burma border. He had come to Bangkok to secure much-needed medical and other supplies to be transported to Yangon by road via the Mae Sot border crossing in North-west Thailand. The YMCA has been taking care of victims who had lost their homes in the Hlaing Thayar township some 30-45 minutes drive from Yangon, where the Yangon YMCA runs an education programme and an eye clinic; and also at Yangon YMCA.

To those YMCAs that had enquired about solidarity visits or sending relief work teams, he advises that it might be better to wait some time. Foreigners are 'not allowed' to travel to affected areas yet – you would also have read this in the media. The Myanmar YMCA has been granted permission to enter affected areas.

He will advise when travel into Myanmar can be arranged and he will help facilitate that when possible.

The funds through the APAY Appeal will go towards relief in part and the rest for rehabilitation of YMCAs, including the National YMCA Building, and in the Hlaing Thayar community.

With the communication difficulties, according to Sonny e-mails are still not possible from Yangon. He has not been able to furnish much or precise details. He will try to send a brief report. Sonny may be contacted at **95-98033445** or **95-98033446**, *but you will need to be patient...not easy to get through.*

FROM NCY Korea As It Readies Medical Relief Teams

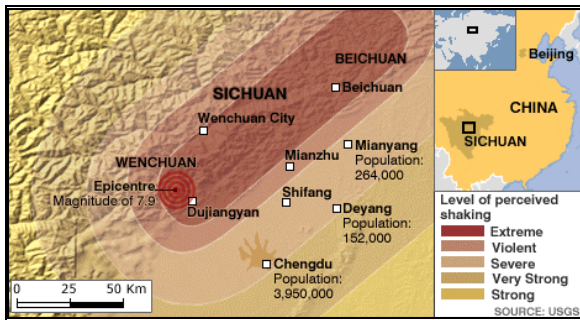
The NCY Korea had from the outset of the disaster discussed with the APAY Secretariat the possibility of sending medical teams to support the NCY Myanmar in its relief work, especially in the Hlaing Thayar township.

The following is from an e-mail received today.

“We are preparing to send our emergency aid team, in cooperation with the Korea Medical Association, and Daewoo International Corporation, Ltd., to the Yangon YMCA Hlaing Thayar Clinic as soon as possible. We are now still on the process of the fundraising campaign, and we will inform you the exact total amount by the end of the month. The team will consist of medical doctors, nurses, YMCA volunteers. They are expecting to work in the fields of medical service, preventive activities against epidemics, food and water supply and so on. We are now in the process of application for entry visas. We are waiting for positive response from the Myanmar Embassy in Seoul.”

We thank the NCY Korea for their efforts in fund-raising and in mounting this initiative.

And then without warning Earthquake in Sichuan, China, 12 May



An earthquake of intensity 7.9 on the Richter scale devastated large parts of Sichuan on 12 May, at 2.48 p.m.



Rescuers try to help a stranded student out of the debris of a primary school in Mianzhu

BBC NEWS

FROM Ms. Jin Wei, Acting National General Secretary

Excerpt from e-mail from National Committee of YMCAs in China, 13 May 2008

"The Day The Earth Moved" -- this is the headline in today's (13 May), China Daily. When the earthquake took place yesterday afternoon, even in Shanghai we felt it for a couple of minutes. We tried to contact the Chengdu YMCA, but failed as telecom and transportation links were cut. Communications are still difficult, especially with mobile phones. The distance between the epicentre of the earthquake and Chengdu is 92km.

Early this morning (13 May), we were able to talk with the General Secretary of Chengdu YMCA, Ms. Isabella Hua who had stayed overnight at the YMCA, and received the following information:

- All the staff of the Chengdu YMCA are safe.
- The roof of the Chengdu YMCA was seriously damaged, and so too the surrounding walls at the YMCA Jintang Primary School. All the pupils were safely evacuated.
- YMCA staff at the primary school put up some tents for the children who used to live in the YMCA orphanage.

We will keep close contact with the Chengdu YMCA and try our best in respond to the immediate needs there.

Again, the YMCA China appreciates the goodwill and fellowship expressed. Thank you for your kind concern and prayers for the victims in Sichuan and the YMCA in Chengdu. May God strengthen us with calm, confidence and courage.

[Ms Jin Wei left for Chengdu on 15 May with the reopening of the airport, to assess the situation in Chengdu YMCA and surrounding work sites.]

From media reports and Ms. Jin Wei's e-mail, you would be aware of the devastation caused by the earthquake in southwest Sichuan on 12th May. The intensity of the quake was so great that it was felt as far away as Beijing and the Thai capital, Bangkok. It was the worst to strike China since the Tangshan earthquake in 1976 that killed more than 240,000 people.

Response to Appeal to Support of Rehabilitation Work in Myanmar from 7-17 May

We thank the following movements for their support to date, amounting to a total of US\$ 41,600; US\$40,000 for NCY Korea medical relief teams' mission; and another provisional US\$12,000 pending further plans. Some YMCAs are continuing their fund-raising efforts following their initial commitments.

YMCA Argentina
YMCA Australia
YMCA Canada
Council of YMCAs of Hong Kong
YMCA Japan
YMCA Korea + Korea Medical Association +Daewoo International Ltd.
YMCA Malaysia
YMCA New Zealand
YMCA Singapore – YMCA of Singapore, Metropolitan YMCA
YMCA Taiwan
YMCA of the USA – World Service

Response to Appeal to Support of Rehabilitation Work in Chengdu from 15-17 May

In response to the discussion with Ms. Jin Wei, we are making an initial appeal to support the rehabilitation of the Chengdu YMCA and the YMCA Primary School. We will furnish details as soon as we receive them from Ms. Jin Wei.

We thank the following movements for their support to date, amounting to a total of US\$ 21,000.

YMCA Canada
YMCA Japan
YMCA Malaysia
YMCA Singapore – YMCA of Singapore, Metropolitan YMCA
YMCA Taiwan
YMCA of the USA – World Service

The APAY Officers, Executive Committee, Secretariat Team, Constituent Members express deepest condolence to the peoples and YMCAs of Myanmar and China on the loss of lives in the recent disasters.

We pray in solidarity with you for comfort, strength and courage to overcome the loss and grief and in rebuilding lives and community....

LATEST ON SICHUAN QUAKE

People's Daily Online, 18 May 2008

China's Quake Toll Rises to 28, 881

The death toll from the earthquake in southwest China's Sichuan Province has risen to 28,881 nationwide as of 2 p.m. Saturday, while 198,347 people were injured, according to the Information Office of the State Council.

As of 11 a.m. Saturday, 145 aftershocks measuring 4 or higher on the Richter scale had been monitored since May 12..... . Quakes measuring above 5 on the Richter scale numbered 23.



A candlelight vigil to commemorate earthquake victims at Hongshan Park, Wuhan, Central China's Hubei Province

Source, People's Daily Online



Sichuan -Survivors face uncertain future

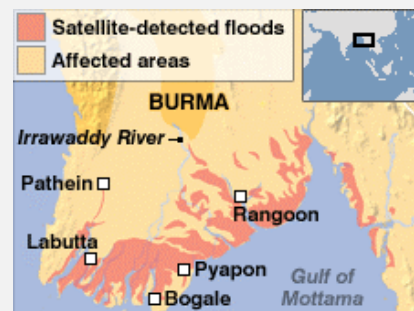
Source, BBC News

Partners' Coordinating Group for YMCA Myanmar Rehabilitation Programme

YMCAs are invited to participate in a Partners' Coordinating Group for the YMCA Myanmar Cyclone Response-Rehabilitation Programme being put together by the Myanmar NCY. Please drop a line to indicate intention to be part of this PCG that will begin 'meeting' electronically given the current visa and travel situation in Myanmar.

MYANMAR – LATEST, 17 MAY

Myanmar has said that more than 133,000 people were dead or missing in the cyclone disaster, nearly doubling the official toll two weeks after the storm left the country's rice-growing south in ruins. State television put the latest toll at 77,738 dead and 55,917 missing -- numbers close to estimates by international aid groups in recent days as the full scope of the destruction in the Irrawaddy Delta becomes known.



BBC/AFP

1. Roundtable to Set YMCA on the Way Forward as Global Citizens in Mission

Rev. David Selvaraj, Executive Director, *Visthar*, Bangalore, India; Dr. J.B. Wiratma SJ, Professor at *Duta Wacana* Christian University, Jogjakarta, Indonesia; and Ms. Carla S. Santos, Director for Movement Building and Field Operations, Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement, Philippines, will provide the key inputs on the three Quadrennial Thrusts, *Global Citizenship and Social Responsibility*, *Peace with Justice*, and *Sustainability of Life*, respectively. Apart from the inputs of the resource persons, relevant exposures and case stories will be presented for deepening understanding and ground experiences.

The Roundtable seeks to explore and deliberate on perspectives that will serve as a common platform for YMCAs to be socially more relevant and responsive. It will also pave the way for more specific in-depth and concrete conceptual formulations and contextual responses.

The deadline for Registration is 10 June 2008. Contact your National Movement or visit the *APAY Website* for participation details.

Regrettably, we have just been informed that the opening of the Indah Inn at the Philippine National YMCA Building has been delayed. We are now finalising an alternative venue in Manila that will be informed soon.

2. YMCA Youth As Change Agents To Tackle Globalisation Impacts

APAY youth shall have the opportunity to deliberate, share and develop a common framework for practical responses on identified focus areas and specific issues affecting them at the Regional Youth Roundtable. There will be interactive input presentations and case stories to deepen their understanding on the changing globalised world. The roundtable will also include exposures to action with community and to experience some real-life issues in a globalised local environment. Several programmes are also planned at the “*hiroba*” circle.

We thank the National Council of YMCAs of Japan for hosting this Youth Roundtable scheduled on 7-11 July 2008 in the International YMCA Conference Center, Tozanso, Japan. *Documents have been sent to National Movements and posted on our website. Application deadline on 20 June 2008*

3. Youth in Peace-building in Timor Leste (East Timor)

The 3rd International YMCA Youth Peace Camp in Timor Leste is scheduled for 5-13 August 2008. This is in line with the Quadrennial Thrust of peace and justice. Youth will interact and learn from the life experiences of the East Timorese children, youth and community in their struggle for peace and reconciliation amidst continuing conflicts. They will also join in work to support the people’s efforts towards building a sustainable community. It is also an effort to strengthen the emerging YMCA movement in East Timor. Ishibashi Hideki, APAY Coordinator in Dili will coordinate the programme with the local YMCA youth leaders.

This is a multi-lateral partnership programme of the YMCAs of Japan, Korea, East Timor and the Asia and Pacific Alliance. *Contact the National YMCA Office or see APAY Website.*

4. Uni-Y Regional Conference to Focus on Poverty and Social Responsibility

We invite Uni-Y members to the 1st Asia & Pacific University YMCAs Regional Conference on 2-8 August hosted by the Chinese YMCA of Hong Kong at the YMCA Wu Kai Sha Youth Village. Programmes will focus on "*Extreme Disparity between the Rich and the Poor: Social Responsibility of Youth*". Exposures and service to the socially and economically disadvantaged will be a key learning experience. There will also be a preparatory meeting for the Chinese YMCA's proposed formation of a coalition of Uni-Ys in the region. *More details found at <http://www.ymca.org.hk/apuy08> or APAY website.*

5. Ecumenical Students and Youth to Gather for Building a Culture of Peace

The *EASY Net's* Asian Students and Youth Gathering 2008 on **25-31 August 2008 in Korea** aims to provide an avenue for youth and students across Asia-Pacific to collectively study, reflect and take actions towards contributing in building a culture of peace. The *Culture of Peace* as defined by UN is a set of values, attitudes and forms of behavior that reflect respect for life, human beings and their dignity and for all human rights. It is the rejection of violence in all its forms and commitment to the principles of freedom, justice, solidarity, tolerance and understanding among peoples and between groups and individuals.

We encourage National Movements to send youth participants to this quadrennial programme. *Visit [APAY Website](#).*

6. Applications Invited for 26th Advanced Studies Programme

Applications are invited from National Movements for suitably qualified professional secretaries for selection to participate in the 26th Advanced Studies Programme. It will be held from **26 October 2008 to 29 November 2008** at the YMCA Wu Kwai Sha Youth Village, Hong Kong.

Closing date for application is 20 July. *Details on [APAY Website](#).*

7. Fund-raising for Myanmar Cyclone Survivors

Responding to APAY's appeal for support for those affected by Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar Uni-Y members of National University of Singapore initiated a fund-raising campaign. The members hope to raise funds for food and medicines to affected villages in Myanmar. Donors will receive a Uni-Y Mountain Climber-T for a minimum donation of \$10.



Osaka YMCA public-fund raising

8. Celebrating Youthfulness with Love, Peace and Happiness

Youth are invited by the Sri Lanka YMCA to join them in their International Youth Festival from 8-14 October 2008 at St Joseph College, Colombo.

- **International Sports Festival** - Share / learn different skills and talents.
- **International Cultural Festival** - cultural experiences with 1500 young people from YMCAs, Churches, Schools and Universities: Dramas Folk Singing Folk Dancing
- **Grand Musical Extravaganza "Y" Youth Festival 2008** - all night singing and dancing with most popular Sri Lankan artistes performing Bathiya, Santhush, Centigredz
- **Work Camp** - Rambukkana YMCA sponsored community project (near to Elephant Orphanage – Kandy)
- **Peace Through Entertainment** - Intercity train Journey of Peace between Colombo – Negombo cities with singing of peace.
- **Prison Visits** - understand prison conditions and human rights of inmates.
- **HIV/Aids Campaign** among school children

For International Participants: Participation Fee, US\$ 150; Registration Fee, US\$ 10
Please contact NCY Sri Lanka for participation: srilankaymca@eurela.lk

9. NZ YMCA Annual Convention /75th Anniversary New Plymouth YMCA

The National Council of YMCAs of New Zealand will hold its Annual Convention and Annual General Meeting on 5-8 June 2008 in New Plymouth. Inspiring and captivating speakers will address a Leaders Forum/Seminar on YMCA Beyond 2008 to challenge YMCA leaders. The National Movement will also join the New Plymouth YMCA in the celebration of its 75th Anniversary. (*from YMCA New Zealand website*)

10. India YMCA National Women's Assembly to Empower Women

One hundred twenty five women and YMCA professional staff representing 50 YMCAs from all the 9 regions of Indian YMCAs attended the 5th National Women's Assembly on 11-13 April 2008 in YMCA Margao, Goa. The theme was "*Striving Together to Empower Women for Changing Lives, Changing, Communities*". The Standing Committee on Women's Empowerment and Gender Concerns chaired by Dr. Ann Thomas also met to review and plan their programmes. Rev. Samuel D. Stephens, Deputy President of the World Alliance of YMCAs the keynote speaker commended the YMCA for mainstreaming the involvement of women in the YMCA in addressing prevalent and pressing issues faced in the Indian societies.

Reported by Rajiv John, National Programmes Secretary, NCY India

11. Building Young Leaders Towards A Stronger Movement

S.T. Thoumiyan, Joint Chairperson, Nation Youth Committee/Vice-president NCY Sri Lanka reports:

On 23-25 April 2008, thirty young people from 18 local YMCAs of Sri Lanka gathered in Kalmunai for a pre-AGM National Youth Conference. The theme was "*Building Young Leaders Towards A Stronger Movement*" with the keynote delivered by Mr. Yip Kok Choong, APAY General Secretary. Discussions were focused on leadership, movement strengthening and youth roles in the YMCA and in society. The participants identified action programmes to address youth unemployment, youth participation, understanding between Sinhala/Tamil youth/communities, and to create social awareness.

12. World YMCA at Global Aids Conference - *Universal Action Now*

The World Alliance of YMCAs will participate at the International AIDS Conference on 3-8 August 2008 in Mexico City with a 14-member delegation. Peter Borges Coordinator of the HIV-AIDS Programme of Nagpur YMCA, India will be a member of the delegation. AIDS 2008 will focus on the theme **Universal Action Now**. It will focus on the need for continued urgency in the worldwide response and action on HIV/AIDS. Ecumenical and Youth Pre-Conference Meetings will take place on 31 July to August 2. See www.aids2008.org

13. Upcoming Events, June to August 2008

DATES	EVENTS	VENUE
JUNE 25-2	Regional Roundtable on YMCA as Global Citizens in Mission 21	Manila, Philippines
JUNE 29	Partnership in Mission: Triangular Deliberation of YMCA – YWCA – Y's Men	Manila, Philippines
JULY 7-11	Regional Youth Roundtable ~ Globalisation and Global Citizenship: Impacts on Youth in Society	Tozanso, Japan
JULY 14-19	Partners' Coordinating Group, Indonesia Tsunami Response Programme	Nias, Indonesia
AUG 2-8	1 st Regional Uni-Y Conference ~ "Extreme Disparity Between the Rich and the Poor: Social Responsibility of Youth".	Ma On Shan, Hong Kong
Aug 5-13	3 rd International Youth Peace Work Camp	Dili, East Timor
Aug 25-31	EASY Net Asian Students and Youth Gathering ~ Building a Culture of Peace Across Borders	Seoul, Korea

OBITUARY: Former AAY Vice President Barrister P. K. Kurian

Former Vice President of the then Asia Alliance of YMCAs from 1990-1994, and a veteran leader of the Indian YMCA, Barrister P.K. Kurian passed away on 2nd January 2008 at 78. He was the President of the National Council of YMCAs of India from 1985-1991. He had also been a member of the Executive Committee of the World Alliance of YMCAs. He leaves behind his wife Mrs. Molly Kurian and two sons and one daughter.

We thank God for his life of dedicated service to the Lord and to the YMCA and convey our deep sorrow and condolence to the bereaved family and the YMCA of India.

May his soul rest in peace.

14. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS ~ *There is in all things ... a hidden wholeness*

The month brought sudden challenges to us in the region. On 2 and 12 May nature unleashed its terrible forces on Myanmar and China, respectively. Raging winds and tidal waves, earthquake/aftershocks and landslides..... the impact was similar – devastation and death; untold sorrow and suffering. But again as in the aftermath of the 26 December 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, people in the affected countries, in the region and other parts of the world responded. With one single purpose – to bring relief, care to the stricken and suffering, to save lives bring hope!

I recalled an article I was reading recently (the title of which I have borrowed) by Parker J. Palmer, in the *YES! Magazine*. His prolific writing includes *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life* (Jossey-Bass, 2004) from which the article was adapted.

There is in all things, a hidden wholeness. These were the words of Thomas Merton, a Trappist monk and mystic. He was speaking of the human world as well as the world of nature. I thought about the recent calamities and my recent visit to the YMCAs in eastern Sri Lanka. These words brought fresh reflections to my mind. Reflections about real people, real relationships, real earth events.....

I was in the eastern part of Sri Lanka from 21-27 April. It was to fulfil a promise to visit the YMCAs affected by the tsunami, and to address the National AGM held in Kalmunai. I visited the Kandy, Ampara, Akkaraipattu, Batticaloa, Kallar, Kalmunai, Komari, and Thuraineelavanai, and Valachchenai YMCAs. As I travelled to these YMCAs, the daily life-situations and struggles of the people came alive. They became real to me, as they were to the people.

I took in the beautiful natural surroundings. Verdant greenery, egrets, grey herons.... Gently moving azure waters of the lagoons, or swift tumbling waters of rivers. But, sadly, these were marred by the ugly sandbagged checkpoints, barbed wires. Stretches of bare land cleared of the lush vegetation to deny cover. Mile upon mile of heavily pot-holed roads, making travel laboriously slow. Police/soldiers every few hundred metres, rain or shine. Peoples and communities divided. People and nature separated, but, not by choice.

The small YMCAs I visited were 'real' YMCAs, a part of the community. The village people I met were 'real' people. They had genuinely close relationships – Buddhist, Hindu, Christian, Muslim, regardless. They interacted in the YMCA. They worked the fertile land. They fished the rivers, the lagoons. However challenging the situation that threatened to separate them, from each other or from nature.

There is this 'hidden wholeness' that Merton had written about. The 'divided life' may be there, not by their choice, but 'wholeness is always a choice'. Oftentimes, we choose to evade or not to see this 'wholeness' possible in each thing we see. We deny what we see. We become equivocal – *how can we be sure? We fear – what if.....?* The challenge for the YMCA and all of us, is becoming 'whole'.....again.

In the calamities, we are all challenged. Children search for parents. Parents grief over the loss of children. The elderly are saddened to see uprooted banyan trees that sheltered them in their youth as they played. Where houses, schools once stood, piles of rubble..... as China began three days of mourning on 19 May, one week after the quake, it rained the whole day in Hong Kong. Myanmar begins 3 days mourning on 20 May. How can we show our solidarity, our oneness as a 'whole', a family, bound together by the love of God. The love of a God of the suffering, the disadvantaged, the weak, of the community, of all of us?

Do we see the 'human-human', 'human-nature' divides in these natural disasters? How can we rebuild them, find the wholeness in these? To rebuild lives. Communities. To rebuild the 'whole' from the broken lives, the devastated communities, the ravaged earth.....

The choice is ours.... to see the wholeness in all things!

The Lord bless and keep us all as we seek to see and build the hidden wholeness in all things.

5 July 2008: International Day of Cooperatives

International Day of Cooperatives is observed on the first Saturday of July. On this day, in 1895, the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) an umbrella group of organisations with 760 million members of cooperatives in 100 countries was formed. This year's theme is focusing on **Confronting Climate Change through Cooperative Enterprise**. Concern for community is one of the Cooperative Principles which guides the work of cooperatives around the world. This year in recognition of the significant contribution that cooperatives can make to mitigate climate change, the United Nations will highlight how cooperatives are addressing climate change. Today, cooperatives are already pioneering programmes that not only reduce carbon emissions, but also promote sustainable development in general.

11 July: World Population Day

On 11 July 2008, people around the world celebrate the 19th World Population Day. The Day's inception in 1989 by UNFPA then-Governing Council prompted its endorsement by the United Nations General Assembly as an opportunity to build better awareness of population issues and their relation to development. Forty years ago, world leaders proclaimed that individuals have a basic human right to determine freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children. Forty years later, contraception and family planning information remain out of reach for hundreds of millions of women, men and young people. This unmet need is extreme among the poor and marginalized. The theme for this year's World Population Day is "**It's a right, let's make it real.**" The right to plan your family is among the rights and fundamental freedoms that apply to every person, everywhere. Its protection and promotion is the responsibility of Governments. Family planning gives choice to all people on the number and spacing of children, and it gives women greater freedom.