



# HEADLINES

Newsletter of the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs No. 46 / October 2005

## # South Asia Quake ~ 8 October 2005

On the morning of 8 October 2005, at 8.32 am, an earthquake measuring 7.6 on the Richter Scale hit the border areas of Pakistan, Indian and Afghanistan. The devastation has been described as the worst in the history of Pakistan, the worst hit area as the epicentre was near Muzaffarabad, the main town in Pakistan-controlled Kashmir. Latest reports put the number of deaths at 30,000 and is expected to rise as rescuers continue their work.

We have contacted Mr. John Shaffaq, the National General Secretary of the YMCA in Pakistan, in Lahore. The YMCA in Lahore has not suffered any damage. Mr. T. Thomas, National General Secretary of the Indian YMCA when contacted reported that the YMCA in Srinagar in India-controlled Kashmir did not suffer any damage. Both the NGSs will keep us informed of developments.

We thank those movements and colleagues who have sent messages expressing their solidarity and enquiring about our YMCAs and colleagues in India and Pakistan.

We express our sadness at the loss of lives and property and pray that those who have lost loved ones will be comforted and those who have lost all but their lives, will find the strength and support to rebuild their lives. May God be with all the affected at this time of disaster.

## 1. Regional Disaster Preparedness, Mitigation and Response Workshop

Fifty-three participants from 12 countries attended the regional Workshop on Disaster Preparedness, Mitigation and Response Workshop held at the YMCA International Centre Colombo, Sri Lanka from 1 to 6 October 2005. Case studies and interactive sharing of experiences and knowledge helped to understand more on emergency relief handling, disaster management, post-disaster rebuilding efforts that have been adopted in disaster-hit countries in our region. The workshop recognised the urgency to move beyond discussing issues to examine strategies that could be adopted to make our disaster preparedness, mitigation and resource management more effective for the community.

It also affirmed that existing outreach programmes could be expanded and deepened, focussing on the marginalised and the poorest. We should encourage more participation from the marginalised communities in YMCA programmes. Working with local communities, there is and will continue to have hope.

## **2. Tianjin YMCA, China Celebrates 110<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

Tianjin is the first city YMCA established in China in 1895. It has organised six major activities to commemorate its founding. One significant activity was a symposium on “Tianjin YMCA and Social Development in Tianjin” held on 21 May.

Overseas guests from India, Japan, Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, United States and YMCAs in China joined the Tianjin YMCA at their Thanksgiving and Celebration event on 24-27 September 2005. Ms. Jin Wei, the Atg. General Secretary of the National Committee of YMCAs in China was present. Dr. Bart Shaha, Secretary General of the World Alliance, Rev. Samuel D. Stephens, President of the APAY and I were among the overseas guests.

A Peace Forum examining the urgent tasks that YMCA could undertake to create a peaceful environment within a multi-cultural context was one of the highlights of the Celebrations. This is a timely intervention and deliberation on one of the quadrennial thrusts of the YMCAs in the region. Among those who presented papers from our region: Mr. J. Alexander, National President, YMCA of India; Ms. Jin Wei, Atg. General Secretary of the National Committee of YMCAs in China; Mr. Kohei Yamada, National General Secretary, YMCA of Japan; Mr. Song Jin Ho, Sr. Executive Director, National Council of YMCAs of Korea, and myself.

## **3. Beijing YMCA Opens New Nolita Centre**

The Beijing YMCA welcomed guests from India, Japan, Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, and YMCAs in China to celebrate the Official Opening of their new YMCA Centre in the residential area of Nolita on 28-30 September 2005. The developer of the housing project for the YMCA had built the premises for the YMCA to provide services and programmes for the community, especially children and families. Ms. Jin Wei, the Atg. General Secretary of the National Committee of YMCAs in China was present. Dr. Bart Shaha, Secretary General of the World Alliance, Rev. Samuel D. Stephens, President of the APAY and I were among the overseas guests.

## **4. Building Gender Responsiveness – Youth Exchange in Bangladesh**

Ms. Lalaine Lumpas, a staff from the Philippine YMCA has started her exchange programme in Bangladesh from mid-September. She will be involved in micro-credit women empowerment.

She writes from Bangladesh:

*Dear friends,*

*How are you? I arrived here in Bangladesh safely. I am thankful for the warmth and hospitality of my hosts. I am now getting accustomed to the people and culture here, which are quite different from my own. I am writing from a local YMCA here and have now started my journey of learning and sharing with them. In just a few days, I have already learned a lot not only from talking with the people but also by observing my surroundings including the socio-political situation in the country. Thank you for this opportunity and I will keep you posted.*

Movements are invited to support young women in gaining mission-oriented experience that they could share through this Programme, and/or to host the Gender Leaders' Exchange Programme that we hope can be implemented in the following months.

## **5. SRI LANKA YMCA INTERNATIONAL CENTER OPENED**

The YMCA International Centre (YIC), a project of the National Council of YMCAs of Sri Lanka was officially dedicated and opened by Mr. Oddvar Laegreid, Charge d'Affairs of the Norwegian Embassy on 27 August 2005. A 5-storied building, it has 20 guest rooms, a large conference room and 4 function rooms. Y Global Norway and Norwegian donors contributed two-thirds of the cost of the project. The balance was raised by the YMCA Sri Lanka. Our congratulations!

## **6. Leadership Development Review**

The Leadership Development Review will be carried out on **10-14 November** at the YMCA Wu Kwai Sha Youth Village, Hong Kong. The Review will examine how best to strengthen the leadership capacity (both volunteer and professional) in the region through established and new initiatives. Focus will be on the development of the Intermediate Studies Programme for professional secretaries and programmes for volunteer leaders.

Four volunteer leaders (including 3 facilitators of the Advanced Studies Programme), four National General Secretaries and fourteen participants of the Advanced Studies Programme will be involved in the review.

## **7. Asia Pacific Students and Youth Week**

The EASY Net's National Ecumenical Teams (NETs) representing member organisations are gearing up for the Celebration of Asia Pacific Students and Youth Week (APSYW). The NET's of Australia, Indonesia, Korea, Myanmar and Pakistan are preparing to observe the APSYW with seminars on the theme Youth Education in the Context of Globalisation.

YMCAs are invited to organise programmes related to the theme "*Knowledge and Discretion to the Youth*" and the education available for youth today and future generations. YMCAs have been promoting holistic education through the development of spirit, mind and body with individuals as an integral part of the community. The APSYW will be a time when we can share our vision and mission with our ecumenical partners with regard to the issues related to a holistic education. We therefore encourage your YMCA and the youth members to initiate and/or join other ecumenical partners in carrying out the APSYW. The Celebration dates may be adjusted as necessary.

## 8. Interfaith School for Peace

*The Interfaith Co-operation Forum (ICF) is a joint interfaith initiative of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), APAY and the Church Development Service (EED) of Germany bringing together persons involved in grassroots interfaith actions for justice and peace.*

Arising from the consultations and workshops implemented by the ICF since 2003, is this plan to work “towards a vision of justpeace in ourselves, our communities and our world.” The School of Peace (ISP) is designed to “encourage young people from around Asia to become agents of transformation in the task of building cultures and commitment of justpeace.”

The Objectives that will govern the ISP are:

- Encourage individual transformation.
- Encourage the development of a national strategy for justpeace through local action.
- Encourage the development of a regional strategy for justpeace advocacy.

Twenty participants will be selected from areas of conflict/violence or potential violence within Asia. These should be supported by a local organisation, between 20 to 30 years of age and active in peace and justice issues at the local level.

National movements from areas of conflict/violence or potential violence interested in nominating a person(s) for selection to participate in the ISP are requested to discuss the matter with me.

## 9. Tsunami Response ~ Selected Updates

### Sri Lanka:

- **Capacity building for YMCA Staff:** Forty-five staff persons attended a training programme from 23-25 September. Seven affected YMCAs have been also given institutional strengthening support.
- **Home Sustenance:** Up to now, 13 YMCAs have helped 2,743 affected persons under the mid-term assistance programme.
- **House Repairs:** Financial and technical support has been provided to families through 14 YMCAs.
- **Housing:** Construction of houses have commenced in Point Pedro in the North East, and Matara District in the southern province.
- **Seed Capital for Economic Recovery:** Fifteen YMCAs have provided seed capital to 30 persons each to assist them with tools and capital to make a daily living.
- **Tsunami Service Centres:** Community based recreational centres will be built in Point Pedro, Negombo and Kaluwanchikudi. Four YMCA-based community centres will be established in Moratuwa, Akkaraipattu, Valaichchinai and Kalmunai.
- **Scholarship Scheme:** The scheme supports 900 students in 13 YMCAs with financial assistance for fees, tuition and transportation.
- **Work Camps Held:**  
Twenty-five youth from YMCA of Hong Kong held a one-week work camp in Negombo. Eleven youth from Munich YMCA, Germany held a 10-day work camp Point Pedro.

## **India:**

The housing projects in different affected part of South India are in progress and are expected to be completed soon.

## **Indonesia:**

- The Medan YMCA conducted a further Training of Trainers Programme for Trauma Counselling in July with the assistance of Aad and Mettie Kik from the Netherlands.
- The implementation of the response programmes will begin this month with capacity building for the appointed coordinators of the different components of the plan.

## **10. In Memory: Mr. Boyd Perera, Former National General Secretary of Sri Lanka**

Mr. Boyd Perera passed away on the morning of 3 October 2005 after a brief illness at the age of 80. He had served as the National General Secretary of the Sri Lanka YMCA from 1969 until he retired in 1988. The late Mr. Perera had been associated with the YMCA from the 1950s.

For the many of us who have had the privilege of knowing him, we will remember his warm personality, his integrity and his commitment to the YMCA and its Mission. He was instrumental in growing and strengthening the YMCA Movement in Sri Lanka and securing its National Headquarters building that was also a step towards its self-reliance. He did not really “retire” from the YMCA. Following his stepping down as the National General Secretary, he joined the World Fellowship of YMCA Retirees and has served as its Vice President. He was also instrumental in forming the South Asia Fellowship of YMCA Retirees.

We express our heartfelt condolences to the Perera family and to the National Council of YMCAs of Sri Lanka on the sad loss of Mr. Boyd Perera.

## **11. Anniversaries..... Congratulations!**

October 14 Dhaka YMCA, 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
October 26 Manila Downtown, 85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
October 27 Kuala Lumpur, 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

*(Let us know of your YMCA's Anniversary.....)*

## **12. Concluding Thoughts**

Rev. Samuel D. Stephens our President and I were in China from 24-30 September 2005 for the celebration of the 110<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Tianjin YMCA and the Grand Opening of the Nolita Branch in Beijing. For both of us it was our first visit to the YMCA in China. What we saw was a great inspiration to us. There was strong and vibrant leadership. The commitment was exemplary. The large number of young volunteers lively, enthusiastic, eager to learn. The YMCAs in China had experienced difficulties in the past decades, but it has emerged strong and I believe will grow stronger with time. .

When we look at the YMCA in China and then examine the state of our movements, we realise then that in many of our movements, we need to go beyond rhetoric. Instead, we need to create programmes that transform, and empower. When we look at the concept of transformation, we realise it is not only of ourselves, but our institutions. When we look at growing our movement, we remember that it involves children, youth, and as well as adults in activities that build and transform. In any process there will be struggles, so too our strife to make the YMCA relevant and meaningful to all who come within our doors. There will be disappointments. We need to stay in touch with new ways of thinking that will restore community and build restorative justice.

The struggle we go through in the YMCA as we strive to strengthen ourselves to fulfil the Mission entrusted to us, creates hope and helps us to see a new vision of a new society for everyone.

**The great thing in life is not where we stand, but what direction we are heading.**

May God bless and keep all of us.....

Yip Kok Choong  
General Secretary

---

*With Executive Secretaries Shella Quezada-Zagada and Lakshan Dias*

**Visit our Website : [www.asiapacificymca.org](http://www.asiapacificymca.org)**