



HEADLINES

Newsletter of the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs ~ No. 49 / January 2006

1. YMCA Tsunami Response: Looking Back and Moving Forward

Partners for YMCA Tsunami Response will meet to review the progress of tsunami-related work in India and Sri Lanka on 25-27 January and 1-3 February, respectively. The meetings will discuss continuing actions in the years ahead. Visits to affected communities and YMCA areas are being arranged prior to or after the scheduled meetings.

The PCG for Indonesia will be held in May 2006. The APAY Secretariat will have an informal mid-term meeting with the Indonesian YMCA team on 6-9 February.

2. Pakistan Quake - Update

Mr. Kazuki Yamane, a colleague from the National Council of Japan, visited Lahore YMCA on behalf of his National Council and the Area Alliance from 11-17 December 2005. In addition to visiting the Afghan Refugees (children) Programme supported by local YMCAs in Japan, he discussed earthquake response programmes with John Shaffaq, General Secretary of the Lahore YMCA on our behalf. We are now waiting for these proposals from the Lahore YMCA. We will share these for your support after review.

3. Opportunities for YMCA Youth in Working with Communities

Work Camps are planned for this year as opportunities for youth participation and leadership in the YMCA. The camps will provide opportunities to learn about issues young people and societies are facing, particularly those recovering from recent disasters, and socio-historical difficulties.

A solidarity camp with youth affected by the tsunami and earthquakes in Nias, Indonesia this coming March will be organised by the YMCA of Japan, a member of the Indonesian Tsunami Response Partners' Coordinating Group. The emerging YMCA in Cambodia will host a leadership forum in May with young people as the main participants. In July/August, Japan YMCA will coordinate a Youth Peace Camp in East Timor following up on the Peace Camp which was initiated and coordinated by the Korea YMCA last year.

National YMCAs and young people across the region are encouraged to participate in these multi-cultural programmes. Full details will be announced soon.

4. Training for Youth as Peacebuilders

A Young Peacebuilders Training Workshop will be organised by APAY jointly with the YMCA Sri Lanka to promote peacebuilding efforts by young people. To be held in Galle, Sri Lanka from **20-26 April 2006**, the training workshop is aimed at training youth leaders to promote a Youth Peace Culture among YMCA youth. The workshop will be an opportunity for youth leaders to share experiences and express aspirations for peace and justice and facilitate national and regional youth peace networks. The training programme will include work experiences in a tsunami reconstruction workcamp and field visits to interact with people affected by the tsunami in the southern coastal areas. Details soon.

5. REMINDER: Executive Committee and Related Meetings 2006

The dates for our Executive Committee and Related Meetings, 2006 to be held at the International House, Chinese YMCA of Hong Kong are as follow:

15 March	Special Session on Emerging YMCAs (Cambodia, East Timor, Mongolia)	16:30 – 18:30
16 – 18 March	Executive Committee Meeting Standing Committees Meetings	09:00 – 18:00
19 March	National General Secretaries' Meeting	09:00 – 17:00

The **Special Session on 15 March**, Wednesday, will focus on *Strengthening of the emerging YMCAs in Cambodia, East Timor and Mongolia*. We invite National movements to learn about the progress in the development of these YMCAs and to consider how they can support their further development into full-fledged YMCAs.

Following the positive response to the Presentation on “Ecumenism, The Way Forward for the YMCA” and noting the growing concern about leadership formation, there will be a *presentation on “Visionary Leadership for Mission Relevance”*. This is on **16 March**, Thursday.

To *take stock of how we have progressed with the incorporation of the quadrennial thrusts* in our programming at different levels, *sub-regions will meet to share experiences and to learn from each other* on **16 March**, Thursday. This will bring wider input and more participation in the Standing Committees.

The detailed Schedule and Registration Forms have been sent to National Movements. These are also available on the APAY Website.

6. Young Leaders, Key Partners ~ Towards the First APAY Youth Assembly 2006

The 1st APAY Youth Assembly will be held on **26 August - 1 September 2006** (Arrival: 26 August, Departure: 1 September) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The Youth Assembly is planned in recognition of youth’s potential and capacities as key partners in the YMCA mission and in transforming our communities. It will replace the 2-day Youth Forum normally held prior to the APAY General Assembly.

Youth will have more opportunities and space of their own to explore and examine contemporary issues affecting them, their YMCAs, and societies. They will be able to immerse in the community to learn about life in another context with their friends and networks. They will envision and define their role in the YMCA, pose challenges and offer their wisdom to the YMCA.

Supporting participation in the coming Assembly, National Movements will promote youth participation and leadership development. Recommendations from the Youth Assembly will be incorporated into the planning for the 17th General Assembly 2007 in Sri Lanka when young people are expected to participate as key partners and leaders.

7. International Women's Day 2006: Women in Decision Making

The International Women's Day is rooted in the centuries-old struggle of women to participate in society for their rights and dignity and an equal footing with men. The idea grew in the midst of expansion and instability, booming population growth and radical ideologies at the beginning of the 1900s.

We would like to draw attention to the theme for this year's **International Women's Day (10 March) ~ "Women in Decision-Making"**. The YMCA is a movement that seeks to empower women, and to build partnerships between men and women. We therefore encourage YMCAs to commemorate the International Women's Day. We encourage Local and National YMCAs to organise appropriate programmes to celebrate women's contributions to society and address the theme and issues, e.g. inequality and discrimination against women, women's political and social rights, etc.

8. EASY Net To Draw Up Ecumenical Agenda

The Core Team of the Ecumenical Asia Pacific Students and Youth Network (EASY Net) will meet on 14-15 January in Manila to define its programmatic thrusts and activities for the year. The network of six ecumenical organisations, of which we are the current moderator, will plan ways to support and strengthen local youth ecumenical networks and motivate them to continue working together for a common vision. It will also discuss plans for the annual Asia Pacific Students and Youth Week held on the 3rd week of October.

9. Youth Participation and Exchange 2005

The Bangladesh YMCA hosted Ms. Lalaine Lumpas, a young staff of the Philippine YMCA in an exchange programme from September to December 2005. The programme focussed on youth participation and empowerment of women through community organising with micro-finance as a key component. She had the opportunity to learn about the Bangladesh situation through her encounters with the Bangladeshi society. She also shared her knowledge and skills in organising communities and HIV/AIDS prevention activities, as she is involved in women empowerment and development work in the Philippines. She has committed to share her learning from the exchange programme that she says is part of her Journey of Life. The exposure has strengthened her belief that *"If you educate a man, you educate a person. But if you educate a woman, you educate the whole family."*

We thank the YMCA of Japan for their financial support under the Mission in Action Programme, and the Bangladesh YMCA for hosting and caring for Lalaine.

10. Globalising Economic Justice and Social Sustainability

More than 200 participants from major religious faiths and traditions, from 29 countries met at the YMCA Wu Kai Sha Village, Hong Kong, from 9-10 December 2005. The conference deliberated on key issues related to the 6th Ministerial Meeting of the WTO held from 13-18 December 2005 in Hong Kong.

The keynote presentations by Ms. Fatima Burnad (India), Rev. Han Kyung Ho (Korea) and Prof. Jane Kelsey (New Zealand) were focused on *“Economic Justice and Social Sustainability in the Context of WTO and the Globalised World ”*. Dr. Ophelia Ortega (Cuba) spoke on *“The Role of Faith Community in Creating Alternatives”*.

Participants analysed the impact of WTO and globalisation on the poor and explored ways to strengthen the role of faith communities, civil society and peoples’ movements in building alternative community and resistance to unjust economic practices. The major discussions were focussed on Human Security, Food Sovereignty, Privatisation, Corporate Social Responsibility, Religion and Globalisation, Ecology, Land and Water Resources, and Labour Migration, increasing religious animosities and, indifference to and contempt for the law. Farmers and the marginalised sectors have lost livelihoods and are forced into labour migration.

On 11 December the participants participated in the anti-WTO Protest Rally and March with other NGOs and peoples’ movements, such as migrant workers’ groups, farmers’ organisations labour unions, etc. The event was organised by the Hong Kong People’s Alliance on WTO.

The Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs, a member of the joint Organising Committee for the Conference, prepared a thematic paper on Human Security. Cristina M. Dalope General Secretary of the Pangasinan YMCA, Philippines and Im Thano, Chairperson of the Interim Committee of the YMCA of Cambodia were facilitators of the thematic workgroup on Human Security.

The faith-based coalition submitted a formal objection to the Hong Kong Police on the treatment of more than 900 demonstrators arrested in the early hours of 18 December and the charges of unlawful assembly against 14 of the arrested protestors (some kept on the street for hours, some for more than 12 hours, and it was one of the coldest nights in Hong Kong).

11. Korean YMCA Promotes Youth Peace Culture

The National Council of YMCAs of Korea recently organised an international Youth Peace Camp on 20-24 December 2005 in Seoul. The participants were young people of other nationalities living in Korea and three representatives of the YMCA of East Timor. Hideki Ishibashi, staff coordinator of the YMCA of East Timor was also present. Representatives from different nationalities shared experiences related to peace. There were creative workshops, audiovisual presentations on peace and exposures. Lakshan Dias, Executive Secretary for Programmes delivered the keynote on *“Promoting Peace and Non-violence and Promote Youth Peace Culture Among YMCA Youth”*.

12. Thoughts at the Beginning of a New Year.....

Another year has come to pass. A new year is unfolding before us. 2005 was a year of many disasters, natural or caused by humankind. There were opportunities for response in compassion, rebuilding lives and communities, reconciliation, and our own re-commitment to God and the YMCA mission. As a YMCA movement, we were in solidarity with people affected by the tsunami, earthquakes, floods, and typhoons, in their sorrow and suffering. As a worldwide family, we were involved in the compassion of the emergency relief. We continue to be part of the long-term healing and rebuilding processes of our people.

As a region, we deliberated on Disaster Preparedness, Mitigation and Response in October. We examined the pressing issue of YMCA leadership in November. We examined the leadership we want, in the context of our YMCA mission in the current context and how to transform communities into ones that are just, lifegiving and in harmony with God's creation.

Young people actively participated in community and peacebuilding in disaster-hit areas. They found space at regional and global events to share their vision of the YMCA Mission and to achieve higher level of participation and leadership in the YMCAs. Women shared their continuing dedication to be partners in our mission.

We gathered in Paris as an international family in March to launch the 150th Anniversary Celebration of the adoption of our founding principles, the Paris Basis and the founding of the World Alliance of YMCAs. We met again in Mumbai, India in August to commemorate the 150th Anniversary and to envision the future. Further commitments towards building just-peace were forged.

We expressed our solidarity with the global civil society, social movements and faith communities through our ecumenical networking. YMCAs in the region have responded and joined in the struggle against poverty, neo-liberal globalisation, HIV/AIDS, violence against women, war and conflicts.

As we enter into 2006, we need to "break camp" once again, leave behind baggages that hamper our journey with God. We need to be renewed in our resolve to be with the "least" whom God loves dearly ~ children, women discriminated against, the weak and the powerless, those who directly and indirectly denounce peace and righteousness. Let us live 2006 and beyond with a God-given peace, sharing the love and peace we have from God, and continue our work in building for the common good.

The **Week of Prayer for Christian Unity** highlights that "there is more that unites than divides us". will be celebrated on **18-25 January 2006**. The theme for the Week this year is "*Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them*" (Mt 18:20). (See <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/faith/wop2006contents.html> for details/materials.) The theme reminds us that we are not alone in our Mission. The love of Jesus binds us as members of the worldwide ecumenical family, to share peace and love with the marginalised and the least of our sisters and brothers. We are reminded to practise a love that sacrifices and suffers with the people as we seek to bring hope for the future.

Yip Kok Choong
General Secretary

With Executive Secretaries Shella Quezada-Zagada and Lakshan Dias