



HEADLINES

Newsletter of the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs ~ No. 50 / February 2006

1. Tsunami Response Updates

The YMCA Tsunami Response Partners Coordination Groups (PCGs) for India and Sri Lanka met on 25-27 January and 1-3 February, respectively. The Partners reviewed the work thus far. They discussed programmes and plans for 2006.

In India almost 60% of the proposed 350 houses to be built has been completed. The “housing phase” is due for completion by April. Some community rebuilding and livelihood recovery programmes, “children in crisis” programmes have been initiated, e.g. in Salem, Madurai and Madras. Greater emphasis will be on community rebuilding and livelihood-recovery in the next phase of the long-term plan.

In Sri Lanka, the “housing programme” has not reached its maximum implementation schedule yet in several locations due to various factors, e.g. legal land matters. By the end of March, 29 houses will be handed over to affected families. The construction of community centers and livelihood programmes have begun in various affected parts in the south and east. A total of 384 houses have been repaired. More than 350 persons have received seed capital to restart their small businesses and 5000 families home recovery assistance.

The PCG for **Indonesia** will meet before end June at a date to be fixed. Representatives from the YMCA Japan and the Kumamoto YMCA and related APAY Executives met with the Indonesian YMCA team on 6-9 February in Medan. An implementation follow-up visit was made to Nias Island, the focus area for the tsunami response programmes.

The Tsunami Response Programmes have highlighted the significance and value of multilateral partnerships. The worldwide family in solidarity with the movements implementing the response programmes, is supporting a way forward in “doing mission together”.

2. 17th GA Preparatory Planning

Following the Tsunami Response PCG Meeting in Sri Lanka, a 17th General Assembly preparatory meeting was held on 3-6 February. Several proposed venues for the Assembly were visited. Participants brainstormed on the Assembly programme contents and formats after reviewing the quadrennial thrusts on transformational actions for justice. These will be finalised during the Executive Committee Meeting. Representatives from the host National YMCA, Mr. Eraj Wijesinghe, Mr. Ravi Algama, Mr. Kalum Peramune, Mr. Sriyantha Senaratna, Mr. Jude Simion, and Mr. Chrisantha Hettiaratchi; Mr. David Lua, APAY Vice-president; Ms. Hiromi Nagao, Japan - woman; Ms. Cristina Miranda, Philippines – Youth; and APAY Executive Staff were present. Rev. Samuel D. Stephens, APAY President chaired the meeting.

Mr.T Thomas, India – APAY NGSs group, unfortunately was unable to join us due to a workers strike at the Delhi airport.

3. Young Peace-builders Training Workshop/Workcamp

A Young Peace-builders Training Workshop/Workcamp will be organised 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 justice and peace. It is planned that facilitate national and regional youth peace networks can then be established. The programme will include work experiences in a tsunami-affected area and field visits to interact with people affected by the tsunami in the southern coastal areas.

National Movements are urged to select youth leaders who will be able to play a role in spearheading peace-building activities and training after the programme. The deadline for registration is **26 March 2006**.

4. Japan YMCA to Co-ordinate Youth Work Camp in Nias Island

Kazuki Yamanae of YMCA Japan and Kazuo Okubo of Kumamoto YMCA visited Medan and Nias on 6-10 February to prepare for the Youth Disaster-related Work Camp in Nias, Indonesia. The camp is scheduled for August 2006. It is planned to train youth leaders for trauma healing for children through interactive play therapy and community support. There will also be work sessions in the community. The Medan and Japan YMCAs will coordinate the programmes with the community. There will also be programmes to foster cultural exchanges.

5. Nominations to World Alliance Executive Committee, 2006-2009

The Provisional List of Nominees for election to the Executive Committee 2006-2009 was recently released by the World Alliance of YMCAs. Nominees from our region submitted to the Election Committee are:

Deputy President : Rev. Samuel D. Stephens, India
Treasurer : Mr. Kalum Peramune, Sri Lanka
Executive Committee : Mr. Alexander John Joseph, India
Mr. Marcel Gomes, Bangladesh
Ms. Cristina Maria Miranda, Philippines
Ms. Hiromi Nagao, Japan
Dr. Park Jai Chang, Korea
Mr. Kalum Peramune, Sri Lanka

The World Alliance Executive Committee should consist of 23 Members, but so far only 21 nominations have been received. The Asia and Pacific Region has an allocation of 3 seats (adult) on the Executive Committee.

The Constitution requires 8 women and 8 young people to be elected. There are now 8 women nominees, and only 5 youth nominees. Our region could have one additional member on the Executive Committee under each of these two categories.

Mr. Bjørn Solberg, Chair of the Election Committee of the Elections Committee of the World Alliance in a letter to National Movements said, *“In order to have a meaningful election, it is vital that more nominations are received, particularly of youth and women, therefore I urge you to send me these (c/o the office of the World Alliance in Geneva) as soon as possible. The final closing date for receiving nominations, as per the World Alliance By-Laws, is 10th March 2006.”*

6. Run-up to the World Council ~ “Ubuntu: Striving Together for Life and Peace”

YMCAs from the region yet to register for the quadrennial 16th World Council this 10-15 July in Durban, South Africa are encouraged to do so urgently. *“Ubuntu: Striving Together for Life and Peace”* will be the main focus of the Council. Its major events are the Council Meetings including the election of the new Officers and Executive Committee members, the Movement Strengthening Summit, YMCA action stories, and discussions on interfaith dialogue and gender justice. There will also be a National General Secretaries’ Meeting, Spouses Programmes and Exhibition.

The World Youth Council on 5-10 July will include sessions on transformational leadership, issue-based discussions and community building activities. The Justice in Action programme on 3-6 July is an immersion and exposure to the work of South African YMCAs and their context. Visit www.ymca.int for details.

7. Appeal for Peace in Sri Lanka

The National Council of YMCAs of Sri Lanka issued a letter of appeal for peace on January 17th to the Sri Lankan Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The National YMCA called on the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE to return to the negotiation table.

In a recent development, the Sri Lankan government and the Tamil Tiger leaders have agreed to hold talks in Geneva, Switzerland possibly in February. "Both sides agreed there is a need to come together to decide how the ceasefire agreement can be implemented in a better manner," Mr. Erik Sølheim, a Norwegian peace envoy said after meeting both sides.

8. Towards the First APAY Youth Assembly 2006

A Youth Assembly Prep Group has been initiated to discuss and develop via the internet a draft plan for the Youth Participation and Leadership Development Committee’s deliberation in March. The Youth Assembly will be held on **26 August - 1 September 2006** in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Cristina Miranda, Chairperson - Youth Participation and Leadership Development Committee, was at the recent Prep-meeting for the 17th General Assembly Planning in Colombo. Shella Zagada, APAY Executive Secretary was at the Kuala Lumpur YMCA enroute from a tsunami response follow-up in Medan, with me to discuss plans for the Assembly.

9. EASY Net Set for 2006 Actions

The Core Team of the Ecumenical Asia Pacific Students and Youth Network (EASY Net) met on 14-15 January in Manila. The priority plans for 2006 will be to increase the involvement of youth and students in the ecumenical movement at the national/local level and promote grassroots ecumenism. The Celebration of the Asia Pacific Students and Youth Week will be encouraged among the partners and local counterparts. Materials on the issue of environment and actions - developed from the Creative Writing Workshop from April 1 – 7 will be used.

10. World Social Forum: Turn Your Eyes to the Poor

The World Social Forum held polycentric meetings parallel to the annual World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland in Caracas, Venezuela (24-29 January) and Bamako, Mali (19-23 January). Thousands of activists from the global civil society and social movements reiterated their call for fairer global trade in which poorer countries have better opportunities to advance themselves. Anti-war issues, fair trade, debt and indigenous rights were highlighted. Issues of poverty, disease, environmental destruction, women's rights, clean water, GM crops, racism etc. were also on the discussion agenda. Religious and ecumenical voices were also present at the platform for globalisation alternatives.

The World Social Forum opposes globalisation. It urges corporations and developed countries' governments to do more for the poor and the developing world. Many activists lauded the work and strategies of Latin American leaders who resisted neo-liberal globalisation and implemented policies and actions for the welfare of the people, especially the poor in their societies.

11. Asian Camping Congress

Our YMCA Japan colleagues have requested to share about the Asian Camping Congress to be held in Ipoh, Malaysia on 17-20 August 2006. The theme is *Tropical Forest - A Heritage to be Shared*. The Congress will be jointly organised by the Asian Camping Fellowship, the National Camping Association of Malaysia and the Perak State Development Corporation. The programme includes a wide range of tours, presentations, workshops and conferences. The registration fee is USD 400 (USD 350 for early birds). For details, visit <http://www.ncam.org.my/acc2006/index.xml>

12. Reminder ~ Survey on Engagement in Migrant Workers' Issues

A survey on engagement in migrant workers' issues was carried out in August and September 2005 to gather information on YMCA's responses and initiatives in this concern. The information would be useful for the future planning in relation to migrant workers programmes. We are updating the information from National Movements. We would appreciate the cooperation of those YMCAs that responded (to update), and other YMCAs that did not respond last year, to do so this year. Kindly return the Survey Form that was e-mailed to National Movements **on 18 January**, to us by **3 March 2006**.

13. Reminder ~ Executive Committee and Related Meetings 2006, Hong Kong

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

To facilitate room reservations and preparation of materials, National Movements are urged to submit their delegates' registration forms at the latest by 24 February.

14. Concluding Thoughts

From 25 January to 10 February, the Executive Staff were on the "tsunami-round" with the Lunar New Year/Spring Festival in between. We have also taken the opportunity to do some preparatory work for the 1st APAY Youth Assembly and the 17th APAY General Assembly in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and Colombo, Sri Lanka, respectively.

A year into the tsunami response programmes, we have become even more convinced of the significance of multilateral participation in the total rebuilding process, and the sense of solidarity that has been experienced. We have planned together. Together, we have faced and overcome various difficulties. We have grown closer to the communities we are engaged in. As Partners' Coordination Groups we have worked together to ensure the recovery and rebuilding of communities, and the capacity of the implementing YMCAs. Progress has been made in the implementation of the Tsunami Response Programmes, though not without delays, difficulties and anxieties.

It was encouraging to hear the local young organisers in Nias Island, Indonesia speak of their vision and belief in the emergence of a "Nias Baru" (New Nias) in their "Tano Nias" (Land of Nias). Two young teachers, Sep and Ganiel, from Lahusa and two students, Introspeksi and Kelvin, from Mandrehe shared their initial hesitation in responding to the Medan YMCA's approach of community mapping, participation and "mindset" change for rebuilding Nias. Kelvin shared, " We realise now that material aid given by INGOs don't last long, but what the YMCA Medan is doing is changing us and Nias for the future." "We do need this approach for a Nias Baru". These are the young leaders raised through the challenge of the tsunami response in Nias. They represent the dreams and hopes of the people of Nias. They can be the vehicles of change for a Nias Baru. They will be the vehicles of change for a Nias Baru.

As we approach the annual Executive Committee and Related Meetings, let us remember the challenges before us as we seek to transform and to rebuild communities. Let the spirit of the youth of Nias challenge us and give us hope for the future.

The Lord bless us and keep us all.....

Yip Kok Choong
General Secretary

With Executive Secretaries Shella Quezada-Zagada and Lakshan Dia

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