



HEADLINES

Newsletter of the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs ~ No. 51 / March ~ April 2006

1. Executive Committee 2006 ~ Focus on Partnerships and Leadership Development

Ninety-six representatives from YMCA Movements in the region participated in the annual Executive Committee and Related Meetings on 15-19 March in Hong Kong.

A key focus of the Executive Committee was on leadership, in particular how to build transformational and visionary Leadership. Another key focus was on how movements had incorporated the Quadrennial thrusts into their programmes in a mid-term evaluation. Programme plans for the year 2006 were deliberated at the Standing Committees. Special sessions were held on strengthening emerging YMCAs in Cambodia, East Timor and Mongolia and the Tsunami Response Programmes in India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Sri Lanka.

Present at the Opening Session and to greet us were Dr. Bart Shaha, Secretary General of the World Alliance of YMCAs; Dr. Prawate Khid-An, General Secretary of the Christian Conference of Asia, Ms. Necta Montes-Rocas, General Secretary of Asia-Pacific World Students' Christian Federation; Ms. Janet Siew, President, Asia Area Y's Men International; Ms. Boon Chin Tan, Sr. Associate Director, International Group, YMCA of the USA; and Ms. Kate Gannon, Asia-Middle East Desk, Y-Care International UK and Ireland.

1.1 President Calls for “*Parakletic* Partnership” in Address

Rev. Samuel D. Stephens in his President's Address to the Executive Committee called on the movement to work together in what he termed “*parakletic*” partnership “to effectively carry out our Mission and the purpose for which we exist. We are created and set up to live interdependently. The more we learn to live that way, the more we will grow. We need each other. The more we lean on each other the better it is for all of us to face the storms of the present time.

As greater opportunities become available for such encounters we must move towards a greater level of maturity in our partnership as we strive together in the accomplishment of Mission. There is a very beautiful word in the Greek language used in the Bible to describe the work of the Holy Spirit. It is the word “*Paraklete*” - the encourager of the weary runner. It essentially means one who runs alongside encouraging.

- ❑ These partnerships must not impose but must instil and build confidence and competence.
- ❑ They must help break free from dependency and help establish sustainability and the strengthening of movements.
- ❑ These partnerships must allow space for growth and maturity based on mutual accountability and transparency.

We will have great success as long as we remain sensitive to these dynamics. We can and must develop and strengthen such “*parakletic* partnerships”.

1.2 Visionary Leadership for Mission Relevance and Transformation

Mr. Louis Tong, Vice President of the Hong Kong Council of YMCAs in his presentation “Visionary Leadership for Mission Relevance and Transformation” called on leaders to be visionary and transformational thinker-doers who are knowledgeable, who can analyse, plan and act. These visionary leaders should have Jesus as their role model and have the vision of a New Earth, a New Day. They are committed to build a more equitable world based on *Justpeace*, to build an eco-friendly world based on sustainable development and to build a harmonious global community based on holistic development. Interesting discussions followed the challenging presentation by Mr. Tong.

The Daily Reflections were also focussed on “leadership”. Rev. Ng Ee Lin, President of the YMCA Kuala Lumpur and Chairperson of the Committee on Contemporary Mission and Social Relevance reflected on the themes *Power of One* based on Ezekiel 34:11-16; 20-24; *The Reluctant Prophet* (God’s Crackpots) based on Jonah 3:1-5, 10 and *In the Midst of Storm* based on Matthew 14:22-33. “Even though you are one, you can be an influence for change, transformation, and empowerment. Get others to join you. You may not be perfect or highly qualified but you can still contribute. You may not be able to do everything but you can do your thing the best way you can.” (*Available on Website ~ Updates*)

1.3 Dr. Bart Shaha on World Alliance Matters

Dr Bart Shaha, Secretary General, World Alliance of YMCAs spoke of positive changes at the World Alliance since the last World Council in 2002 in Mexico. Much focus has been placed on the Global Operating Plan (GOP) based on the “movement strengthening” strategy.

He also shared information on the forth-coming World Council to be held in Durban, South Africa. So far 800 have registered. The World Council will not be dealing with abstracts, but the concrete. The process of “open space”, appreciative enquiry and action planning will be used to focus on “movement strengthening” – making each participant actively involved.

Another important event will be the business meetings, which include the election of the Officers and Executive Committee Members. The Asia and Pacific Region has a guaranteed 3 members on the Executive Committee, and possible additional Youth and/or Woman member. There are 7 nominees for the Executive Committee, including a youth and 2 women, from the region. They will therefore be elected through due process. The nominee for the Deputy President appears to be a “no-contest”. There are 3 nominees overall for the position of Treasurer.

1.4 Strengthening Emerging YMCAs in the Region

Twenty-five lay and professional leaders attended a special session focusing on emerging YMCAs in the region on 15 March. There was much interest in the progress of the work in East Timor and Cambodia, reported by Hideki Ishibashi seconded to APAY by the YMCA of Japan and Im Thanu, Chairperson of the Organising Committee of the Cambodian YMCA, respectively. Song Jin Ho, Sr. Executive Director of the YMCA of Korea shared a very frank and objective report of the YMCA in Ulan Bator, Mongolia.

During the year that he has been in Dili, East Timor, Ishibashi has been able to establish 2 programme bases, one in Dili and another in Same District where the Korean YMCA has its

fair trade coffee project. Programmes for children and youth are being organised in Dili and a Peace Work Camp was also organised last year. The YMCA in Cambodia have organised monthly study programmes and two leadership development activities.

1.5 Tsunami Response Programmes ~ Updates

The National Movements of India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Thailand presented reports of the progress of the response programmes thus far. Housing programmes in India and Sri Lanka were progressing well and due for completion by June in India. Community rebuilding and capacity building programmes are continuing in India, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka. Partners including YMCAs in Australia, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, Singapore, the USA; Y Care International UK and Ireland, and HorYzon Switzerland are supporting these response programmes. Programmes in support of affected fishing communities in Penang, Malaysia and the coastal areas in the south coastal area of Thailand were also carried out with local and nationally raised support.

1.6 Positive Responses Recorded in Quadrennial Programme Plan Review

Sub-regions in separate workgroups reviewed the Quadrennial Programme Plan (QPP) 2004-2007 and its implementation within their area. Responses were positive. Some needs were expressed. The general opinion was that the QPP was helpful in affirming the work being done by national movements, or in focusing and prioritising on key issues important in their respective movements. Ownership of the QPP was felt as a result of working together on the key thrusts of the QPP at the Leaders Quadrennial Roundtable (LQR) in Bangkok in 2004. The Executive Committee officially endorsed the QPP at the 2005 session.

1.7 Programme Plan 2006 Adopted

The relevant Standing Committees deliberated on the respective components of the 2006 Programme Plan developed, based on the QPP 2004-2007:

Contemporary Mission & Social Relevance (CMSR)

- Roundtable on Mission & Membership
- 17th General Assembly - Planning and Preparation
- Contemporary Mission - Faith & Worship Study and Planning Workshop
- Interfaith Cooperation within Indigenous Populations (Joint Programme with CCA/EED) (with Building Community and A Culture of Peace)

Building Community and A Culture of Peace (BCCP)

- Regional Young Peace Builders Training Camp/ Work Camp
- Regional Workshop on Poverty Alleviation & Participatory Development
- Interfaith Cooperation within Indigenous Populations (Joint Programme with CCA/EED)
- Youth Peace-builders E-Forum
- Network of YMCAs Engaged in Migrant Workers Issues
- Mission in Action Programme on *Building Community and A Culture of Peace*

Movement Strengthening (MS)

- Regional Organisational Scan
- Movement Strengthening Visits
- East Timor YMCA Development
- Cambodia YMCA Development
- Curriculum Development Meeting (Task Group)

Youth Participation & Leadership Development (YPLD)

- 1st APAY Youth Assembly
- APAY Youth Work Camp/Leadership Development
- Regional Youth Exchange (2)
- Young Professional Programme
- EASY NET

Gender Equity(GE)

- Regional Leadership Capacity Building For Women
- Gender Leaders' Exchange (2 exchanges)
- Women's E-Forum
- Gender-based Mission in Action Programme (MAP)

1.8 Preparation for 17th General Assembly Planning Moves Ahead

The Executive Committee endorsed the proposed theme “ *Strengthening our Spiritual Roots for Solidarity Towards Sustainability*”. Sub-themes will be developed to focus on our spiritual roots and heritage, building solidarity and partnerships with the community, and fostering sustainable development and peace. The same theme will be adopted for the First APAY Youth Assembly at the YMCA in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from 26 August to 1 September 2006.

The main venue will be the Pegasus Reef Resort, with the Palm Village as a spill-over accommodation venue, located some 30 minutes from the International Airport of Colombo, and 10 km. from Colombo city.

The following have been appointed to the Planning Committee for the Assembly:

- Rev. Ng Ee Lin, Chairperson CMSR – Malaysia
- Drs. Supardan, Chairperson BCCP – Indonesia
- Ms. Cristina Miranda, Chairperson YPLD – Philippines
- Ms. Toshiko Takeda, Chairperson GE – Japan
- Mr. T. Thomas, Chairperson NGSs Group – India
- Mr. Song Jin Ho, East Asia – Korea
- Ms. Caz Bosch, Pacific – Australia
- Dr. Patcharawan Srisilapanan, South East Asia – Thailand
- Mr. Duncan Chowdury, South Asia – Bangladesh

The Officers (Rev. Samuel D. Stephens, Dr. Park Jai Chang, Ms. Caz Bosch, Mr. David Lua, Mr. Eraj Wijesinghe and Mr. Doug Oxley) will be Ex-officio members together with the Host Committee Co-Chairpersons (Mr. Eraj Wijesinghe and Mr. Sriyantha Senaratna) and the Host National General Secretary (Mr. Chrisantha Hettiaratchi).

1.9 Youth Call for Greater Integration in 17th General Assembly

The Youth Participation and Leadership Development Committee has called for commitment to ensure their integration into the 17th General Assembly. While appreciating the space for their own Youth Assembly, they were concerned that opportunities should be availed to the *same participants* of the Youth Assembly to participate in the 17th General Assembly. We urge YMCAs to note this call as they select participants for the Youth Assembly.

1.10 Nominations Committee Appointed

As per Constitution and By-laws of the APAY, the following have been appointed as members of the Nomination Committee for Election of Officers 2007-2011:

Chairperson:	Rev. Samuel D. Stephens, President APAY
Members:	Ms. Toshiko Takeda, Japan - East Asia
	Mr. Peter Malone, Australia - Pacific
	Mr. Edward Ong, Singapore - South East Asia
	Mr. Sriyantha Senaratna, Sri Lanka - South Asia

2. Young Peace Builders Training in Galle, Sri Lanka

The Young Peace-builders Training Workshop jointly organised by the APAY and the YMCA Sri Lanka aims to promote peace-building efforts by young people. It will be held in Galle, Sri Lanka from 20-26 April 2006. The training will encourage youth leaders to promote a Youth Peace Culture within the community and to play a role in building a harmonious society. It is planned that youth leaders through sharing experiences and aspirations for peace, participating in conflict analysis and peace-building techniques will be more confident in participating in building peace efforts. The participants will experience interacting and working alongside youth and the community in a tsunami reconstruction work camp in the southern coastal area. Resource persons experienced in peace-building will facilitate the participatory learning processes.

3. Developing YMCA Young Leaders in Cambodia

To strengthen the emerging YMCA in Cambodia a 4-day Youth Leadership Forum will be held on 11-14 May 2006 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. This is the third leadership development programme following leadership programmes carried out in 2003 and 2004 jointly with the Students' Christian Mission (Movement) of Cambodia. The programme will be organised with the Cambodian YMCA Committee chaired by Mr. Im Thanu who was recently at the APAY Executive Committee.

Presentations, discussions and action planning will focus on understanding current realities of the Cambodian society, the YMCA mission and responses, and leadership for mission and social transformation. There will also be an exposure to re-visit their historical past and share lessons for peace and reconciliation. The participants will be Cambodian YMCA youth members. Interested international partners are invited to send youth leaders to participate in the programme to share and learn with the local members and explore ways for future international cooperation.

4. Towards the First APAY Youth Assembly 2006

The 1st APAY Youth Assembly planned in recognition of youth's potential and capacities as key partners in the YMCA mission and in transforming our communities will be held on **26 August - 1 September 2006** (Arrival: 26 August, Departure: 1 September) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The Youth Assembly will provide greater opportunities and more space to explore and examine contemporary issues and youth's roles in their YMCAs and societies. Based on the theme “ *Strengthening our Spiritual Roots For Solidarity Towards Sustainability*”, the programme will include a live-in in a forest reserve for greater impact in dealing with issues on “sustainability”. Solidarity and peace issues will be explored with youth from other faith-based religions and a “religious walkabout”.

The Youth Participation and Leadership Development Committee has expressed the strong desire and hope that National Movements will promote participation in the Youth Assembly with a view that the *same participants* will also be supported to participate in the 17th General Assembly 2007 in Sri Lanka. This is indeed a challenge to all Movements and Young Leaders to “walk the talk”!

5. Youth Work Camps in East Timor and Nias Island, Indonesia

The National Council of YMCAs of Japan will be planning and coordinating the Youth Peace Camp in East Timor (end July/beginning August) and the Youth Disaster-related Work Camp in Nias, Indonesia (22-27 August). More details will be available soon.

6. 24th Advanced Studies Programme ~ Leadership for Movement Strengthening

The 24th Advanced Studies Programme will be from 29 October to 3 December 2006. It will be held in the YMCA Wu Kwai Sha Youth Village in Ma On Shan, New Territories, Hong Kong.

Applications are invited from National Movements for suitably qualified professional secretaries ~ undergone Basic Secretaries Training; a minimum of 3 years professional service with the YMCA or equivalent; with the commitment and positive attitude towards service and mission of the YMCA.

Closing date for application is 15 July. Selection will be completed by end July and successful applicants informed by 1 August, This schedule will allow sufficient time for the processing of training visas for entry into Hong Kong.

7. Nominations for the World Alliance Executive Committee from the Region

At the closing of the Nominations for election to the World Alliance Executive Committee, we have been able to confirm that the following have been nominated from our region:

- Deputy President** – Rev. STEPHENS, Samuel D., India
- Treasurer** – Mr. PERUMANE, Kalum ~ Sri Lanka
- Members**
 - Mr. ALEXANDER, John ~ India
 - Mr. GOMES, Marcel ~ Bangladesh
 - Ms. McEWAN, Helen ~ New Zealand (Woman)
 - Ms. MIRANDA, Cristina ~ Philippines (Youth)
 - Ms. NAGAO, Hiromi ~Japan (Woman)
 - Dr. PARK Jai Chang, ~ Korea
 - Mr. PERUMANE, Kalum ~ Sri Lanka

***Note:** As per the Nomination and Election Process stipulated in Governance Policies of the World Alliance, our region can have 3 members elected with the possibility of an additional Youth Member or Woman Member. We can only have one member elected as an Officer. National Movements are encouraged to study the Nominees' Profiles provided by the World Alliance.*

*We plan to hold an informal meeting at the World Council to introduce our nominees to the region's delegates. **The date/time/venue will be informed.***

8. Philippines: Prayer for Disaster Victims and Democracy

Massive landslides buried the entire village of Guinsaugon in the southern part of Leyte province, Visayas region, Philippines on 17 February. The Philippine National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) reported 84 fatalities, 19 injured and 415 survivors as of 22 February. Still missing are 1,023 people including 253 staff and students of the Guinsaugon Elementary School.

The Cebu YMCA, Talisay YMCA in nearby Cebu Province, and the Ormoc YMCA in Leyte in collaboration with the Y's Men Philippine Region, the Rotary and Lion's Clubs of Cebu have delivered 2 dump trucks load of rice, noodles, canned goods, mineral water and clothing to the victims on Friday February 24.

A solidarity letter was sent to the National Council of Philippines. We have also enquired what help could be given for YMCA rehabilitation work in the disaster area. We pray for the victims, survivors, their families and friends, the rescuers and volunteers and those affected by the disaster. May the suffering Christ be with them in this time of grief.

We also pray for the Filipino people as they struggle to protect their democracy and freedom in the midst of the recent disasters, suffering, rising poverty and political tensions.

9. Easy Net writing workshop

Youth Protecting the Oikoumene (whole inhabited world) will be the theme of this year's Ecumenical Students and Youth Week in October. God has given humanity the responsibility to be caretakers and partners of Creation. We have however taken God's blessing as authority to exploit and destroy the abundant resources we have been given. In the present-day "throw-away" and "instant gratification" society we need to deeply reflect on our relationship with and our role as *oikonomos* [stewards] of God's creation towards sustainable development and environmental protection.

The EASY Net Creative Writing Workshop will gather representatives from the 6 member organisations to reflect and prepare resources for the celebration in October. Ms. Nam Won Mi from the Korean YMCA will represent the APAY at the Workshop to be held on 1-7 April 2006 in Chiangmai, Thailand.

10. World YMCA Revisits HIV and AIDS Strategy

The World Alliance of YMCAs recently held a strategy meeting on 14-18 March in Geneva. It brought together key YMCA actors on the urgent issue of HIV and AIDS to identify ways in which the YMCA could be more effective in delivering programmes on HIV and AIDS and to develop a strategic relationship with the international institutions dealing with HIV and AIDS.

It has been noted that most of the YMCA's HIV-AIDS programmes are confined to Adolescent Reproductive Health and are becoming redundant. More innovative programmes that will impact positively the lives of those who are affected and infected need to be developed so that the responses to the pandemic are appropriate and effective.

The following representatives from the YMCAs of India, Philippines and Thailand were invited from our region to participate: *Mr. Christopher Bachmann ~ Patna, Mr. J.P. Fernandes ~ Nagpur YMCA, India; Ms. Eloisa (Elsie) Borreo ~ National Council of YMCAs of Philippines; Ms. Suwan Limsumphan ~ Bangkok YMCA, Thailand.*

11. Ubuntu: Three Months to the World Council

Over 800 delegates from all over the world will convene in Durban, South Africa from 10-15 July for the 16th World Council. From the Asia and Pacific Region there will be over 140+ participants including 20+ youth. The World Alliance is finalising detailed programme plans to bring “*Ubuntu: Striving together for life and peace*” alive for participants. Open space discussions will be used to bring focus on Movement Strengthening and its delivery system, the Global Operating Plan. Special discussions on interfaith and gender justice will be held to highlight the urgency of the concerns. Around 200 youth leaders will deliberate on issues of community building, justice and peace; and transformational leadership at the World Youth Council on 5-10 July. Details available at www.ymca.int

12. International Women’s Day

This year’s International Women’s Day (8 March) highlighted ***Women and Decision-making: Meeting Challenges and Creating Change***. This theme is emphasised in *Challenge 21* the contemporary expression of our Mission:

- Empowering all, *especially* young people and women to take increased responsibilities and assume leadership at all levels and working towards an equitable society.
- Advocating for and promoting the rights of women and upholding the rights of children.

13. Congratulations to Rev. Toshimasa Yamamoto

We convey our congratulations to Rev. Toshimasa Yamamoto, member of the Standing Committee on Contemporary Mission and Social Relevance, on his re-election as the General Secretary of the National Christian Council in Japan for the next three years. We pray for God’s guidance as he continues to serve the churches in Japan and the YMCA of Japan.

14. Dr. Gwee Ah Leng, YMCA Stalwart From Singapore Passes Away

It is with deep regret and sadness that we received news of the passing away of Dr. Gwee Ah Leng at 1.00am on 31 March 2006, at the age of 85. He was the President of the Metropolitan YMCA of Singapore from 1968 to 1974. He continued to serve as a member of the Board the Metropolitan YMCA of Singapore until 1990.

The Founder President of the National Council of YMCAs in Singapore in 1971, he led the Council until 1987. He was among the leaders in Asia asserting for the autonomy of the Asia Area of YMCAs within the World Alliance of YMCAs. He was Chairperson of the Asia Area Policy and Structure review Committee and was responsible for streamlining its Constitution. He continued to be actively involved in the then Asia Alliance of YMCAs.

We thank God for his life and contributions to the YMCA in Singapore and the region. We pray for the loved ones he leaves behind as he rests in the Lord.

15. Concluding Remarks ~ Counting Blessings and Catching Visions of Hope

Equinox, (20 or 21 March) the day of equal length of daylight and night, is celebrated as International Earth Day. It is the most significant day of the year because people from all nations, backgrounds, races, colours, and religions celebrate their similarities: *living on Earth*. That's much to be thankful for. Leave aside for a moment, the suffering, the poverty, conflicts that surround us, and thank God for our blessings, for life and for living on earth.

The Executive Committee Meeting from 15-18 March was a positive experience. In my Report for the Year 2005, I had acknowledged that we sometimes consciously or subconsciously, or unconsciously, dwelt much on the grim, the sadness and struggles around us. They are important as reminders to us of our calling, we do not doubt. They are the realities on which we set our mission thrusts and focus. They are the contextual settings for expression of God's Love, Peace and Justice to all. But, we need to remember to thank God for blessings.

The President and I were in Myanmar to facilitate a National Seminar on Leadership Challenges for Myanmar. We took the opportunity to visit the Myitkyina and Mogaung YMCAs in northern Myanmar. We saw the poverty and the struggles of the people. We could see them in their faces, their houses, their dressing. We saw environmental destruction – rivers being dredged by “dragon boats” for gold and being slowly being polluted by the mercury used to amalgamate the gold pieces on site, i.e. the river. Arid patches of land were common. Electricity cuts with only about 6 hours of supply daily. There were also the modern day threats of HIV and AIDS, drugs and alcohol consumption. With such difficult conditions – they have developed the know-how to survive, the will to press on. But, we also realised that they do have a glimmer of hope for a better life, for a better future.

As in so many places we passed by, the sun's rays penetrate through the bamboo thickets – bringing rays of light to light up the dark shades amidst the bamboo. It was also in these two YMCAs that we saw rays of hope breaking through the grim sadness of those affected by HIV-AIDS. In Mogaung, the YMCA with its very limited resources has started a centre for them to be able to generate income through making brooms for sale. Candle-making will start soon. There is great need for candles, given the constant power outage at night.

The Myitkyina YMCA works with a young volunteer who returned to the Lord after years of “wild living” – drugs, alcohol, gambling, and girls. He started his “work” with 5 children – and today he cares for 30 street children in a make-shift split bamboo shelter and a “classroom” in the back compound of his father's house. These street children are from homes where the parents are HIV positive, or they are taking drugs or consuming alcohol – some as young as 8 years. Some are orphans. Others come from homes of extreme poverty. Tuberculosis is another danger to these children. At first approach, it was heart-wrenching to see the solemn and sad faces of some of the children – who probably came to the “centre” broken and seemingly without hope.

Now, in a summer programme of 3 months, they study the Bible 3 times a day. It was touching to hear them say in unison Psalm 23 and the Lord's Prayer led by a 13 year old. Especially so when they recited, "*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. For you are with me. Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.*" "*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.*"

For discipline and building self-esteem, they practice dancing and karate. They also have daily moral lessons. Their dinner fare was rice and some vegetables – they hardly have meat. The YMCA raises local support to feed the children. The volunteer and his wife are involved in the programme, teaching. They do this "work" as volunteers.

This is the determination of a young man who had gone the wrong way, returned to the Lord and striving now to bring hope to these children, to help them to vision a brighter future, and to achieve their dreams. It was inspiring. It was moving, to say the least.

Here was a vision of hope. How significant, because God loved and cared for this ONE young man, Sinwa Aung. A dream, a life to live, a life to give!

As Rev. Ng Ee Lin shared in his first Biblical reflection during the Executive Committee Meeting, here was "*the power of one*" before our very eyes!

The Lord bless and keep all of us

Yip Kok Choong
General Secretary

With Shella Quezada-Zagada and Lakshan Dias, Executive Secretaries

Visit the APAY Website ~ www.asiapacificymca.org