



HEADLINES

Newsletter of the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs ~ No. 52 / May 2006

1. Rebuilding Community, Rebuilding Peace

The recently held Young Peace-builders Workshop jointly organised by the APAY and hosted by the YMCA of Sri Lanka focussed on building a culture of peace with young people as key peace builders. The current tensions in the country in the days that the workshop was held in Galle, Sri Lanka from 20-26 April 2006 only emphasised the urgent need to promote peace and reconciliation.

Twenty-three selected youth leaders from India, Korea, the Philippines and Sri Lanka, especially from the north and east, participated in the training workshop focussed on “Rebuilding Community, Rebuilding Peace”. The participatory workshops in conflict analysis and peace-building were facilitated by experienced peace-builders and advocates. A session on theatre as a peace-building technique helped the youth to appreciate the importance of viewing situations from different perspectives. A youth media company, Young Asia TV (YA-TV) shared their “peacecasting” experiences. YA-TV is staffed totally by a group of multi-ethnic, multi-religious youth – all below 25 years of age. Using film and other media, conflict, peace, and related issues have been brought to the common person using human stories gathered from all around the country.

The participants shared experiences in conflict resolution and transformation, aspirations and action plans for peace. They experienced interacting and working alongside youth and the community in the tsunami housing project in Matara. They joined the community in multi-ethnic and multi-religious Sri Lankan New Year celebrations, engaging with the community in special community games played during the New Year. They met with Rev. Dr. Samitha, the first Buddhist monk to be elected a member of parliament, and learnt of his personal experiences in dealing with conflicts involving the marginalized in community.

2. Youth Leaders to Meet for Visioning the YMCA in Cambodia ~ Update

Thirty young people from the Cambodian YMCA and partners are expected to participate in the Youth Leadership Forum to be held on 11-14 May 2006 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. This will be a visioning process for the YMCA in Cambodia. The youth leaders will examine the social, political and cultural context of the country to develop mission bases that would be socially relevant to the Cambodian context. Lessons of the past and work for peace and reconciliation will be shared through exposure visits. They will also look into the heritage of the YMCA and its mission imperatives in the light of leadership for mission and social transformation.

It is expected that the young people will contribute towards the strengthening of the Cambodian YMCA and its responsiveness to the issues faced by society. 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. Deadline of registration is on **5 May 2006**.

3. Towards the First APAY Youth Assembly 2006

Spirituality, Solidarity and Sustainability are the key concepts that will be explored in the Youth Assembly with its theme: ***YMCA Youth in Strengthening our Spiritual Roots for Solidarity towards Sustainability***, and thus integrating fully into the 17th General Assembly focus. These conceptual bases will be explored in practical, participatory, interactive and experiential processes e.g. camp-out and teach-in on “sustainability”; dialogue and walk-about to interact and listen to other youth voices on diversity and harmony; participating in the “youth *kampung*” or *village* to seek solidarity on issues relating to our YMCA heritage, the community and *Challenge 21*.

The APAY Youth Assembly scheduled on **26 August – 1 September** has been planned in recognition of youth’s potential and capacities as key partners in the YMCA mission and in transforming our communities. Dr. Chandra Muzaffar, President of JUST International, an internationally renowned advocator for peace, justice, and solidarity for sustainable development will explore the theme with the Assembly.

We urge National Movements to provide the opportunities for their youth to join with other youth in this experience. We encourage young leaders in the YMCA to take this opportunity to realise greater involvement and leadership in the YMCA. Registration is now open. The closing date for registration will be **30 June 2006**.

Details available at the APAY website or at your National YMCA.

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

August 2006 will be indeed a busy month for young leaders in our Region. In addition to the First APAY Youth Assembly, a Youth Peace Camp will take place in East Timor from 2 – 13 August. A Youth Disaster-related Work Camp will take place in Sirombu on Nias, Indonesia from 22-27 August. The National Council of YMCAs of Japan is coordinating both these camps aimed at promoting youth participation and leadership in building communities of peace and harmony.

The **International YMCA Love & Affection Youth Camp in Nias Island, Indonesia** has been set for **20- 27 August** in Nias Island and Medan, Indonesia. We recognise the pain and suffering of the people, particularly the children, in Nias who have been affected by the tsunami and earthquakes. The Indonesian Camp hopes to promote youth participation towards healing and sustainable development in Nias Island through regional YMCA collaboration.

This work camp will involve implementing children’s programs and cultural exchanges. Participants are expected to learn about the people’s situation by living and interacting with them as well as share about their own cultures and social situation.

The **International Youth Peace Camp in East Timor** has been scheduled for **2-13 August 2006**. This is the second such camp (initiated in 2005 through the Korean YMCA) to build solidarity with the people of East Timor who have gone through painful experiences and are now rebuilding their lives and communities. It is also aimed at strengthening the YMCA in East Timor through the multilateral cooperation of the YMCAs of Korea and Japan, and the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs.

The campers with local youth and the community will carry out work at the community centre. They will also conduct recreational activities, visitations and encounters with the people. Study sessions and cultural exchanges are also key activities in the Peace Camp.

Interested youth are invited to send their registration to the National Council of YMCAs of Japan for both Camps on or before **30 June 2006**. More details are found in the APAY website and your YMCA.

5. Invitation for Application for 24th Advanced Studies Programme

Applications are invited from National Movements for suitably qualified professional secretaries for selection to participate in the 24th Advanced Studies Programme. It will be held from **30 October to 4 December 2006** at the YMCA Wu Kwai Sha Youth Village, Hong Kong.

Closing date for application is 15 July. Selection will be completed by end July and successful applicants informed by 1 August.

6. Integrated Leadership Development Plan (ILDP) To Be Finalised

Six invited volunteer and professional leaders from the sub-regions engaged and experienced in training and human resource development will meet to further develop the curriculum framework of the ILDP presented to the Executive Committee. The meeting will take place at the APAY Secretariat from **9-12 June 2006**.

We welcome comments and feedback from movements on the proposed ILDP curriculum framework shared in the Report of the Leadership Formation Review (*Roots, Relevance and Rejuvenation*), if possible **by 2 June**.

7. Mission in Action Programmes (MAPs) to Focus on Community Building

The Mission in Action Programmes (MAPs), the APAY's multi-lateral initiative for engagement in the Mission imperatives of *Challenge 2*, have been supporting a variety of community building and issue-based programmes in Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam. The focus for the 2006/2007 tranche of MAPs will focus on community building action programmes.

The short-listed proposals will be circulated to National Movements for their consideration for support through multilateral partnerships soon.

8. APAY Programme Calendar 2006

The Programme Calendar of events for the year has been tentatively set based on the Reports of the Standing Committees at the Executive Committee Meeting in March. The Programme Calendar is attached for your kind information and forward planning.

9. Position of Executive Secretary ~ Vacancy 2007

Invitations are invited for the position of Executive Secretary in 2007. The incumbent will be part of a staff team that will be engaged in the major focus areas of the Quadrennial Plan but will have specific functions in the focus areas of Youth Participation and Leadership Development, and Gender Equity.

Suitably qualified persons, with proven experience in the specific focus areas, and interest/experience in other focus areas of the APAY should submit their application in writing to the General Secretary, Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs **by 15 August 2006**.

Any enquiry about this invitation for applications may be directed to the General Secretary, Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs in confidence.

10. Prayers for Peace

We express our solidarity with our sisters and brothers in Nepal, Sri Lanka and other parts of the world where conflicts continue, and where human rights and democracy are threatened. We pray with them for lasting peace and that people's hopes and aspirations for a life of dignity are placed among the highest priority.

Our recognition and respect to those who work for peace and the Workers of the world who sacrifice their lives for true peace, freedom and harmony.

11. *Ubuntu*: Two Months to the World Council

Over 140 participants including 20 youth from the Asia and Pacific region will join over 650 other delegates from over 80 countries in Durban, South Africa from 10-15 July for the 16th World Council. The theme "*Ubuntu: Striving together for life and peace*" will come alive for participants through Open Space Discussions and sharing of mission imperatives from all over the world. The directions of the world movement for the next four will be deliberated and formulated at the World Council. This will be an opportunity to contribute to bring to the global YMCA family the issues and priorities of the region as well as share and learn from the movements across the world. The World Alliance has planned various activities and forums to bring to light the pulse of the movement and develop consensus on the way forward. This will be an opportunity to be a part of the process of direction setting for the world movement.

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 and the 3rd World Council Bulletin available at www.ymca.int

Delegates from the region are all invited to an APAY Regional Meeting during the Council (*date/time/venue to be announced*). There will be an informal discussion about the region's participation in enriching the Council and to introduce the region's nominees for election to the World Alliance Executive Committee.

12. United Nations Designated Dates and Events to Remember

We invite Movements to pray and act for the following special days and commemorations in May as designated by the United Nations:

World Press Freedom Day - May 3

Press freedom serves as a cornerstone of human rights and a guarantee of other freedoms and justice. Freedom of the press is a bridge of understanding and knowledge. It is essential for the exchange of ideas between nations and cultures, a condition for true understanding and lasting cooperation.

International Day of Families, May 15

The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed that 15 May of every year as the International Day of Families. For 2006, the theme of the observance is "*Changing Families: Challenges and Opportunities*".

World Day of Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development, May 21

The Day provides an opportunity to deepen understanding of the values of cultural diversity and to learn to "live together" better; to promote greater awareness of the crucial relationship between culture and development and the important role of information and communication in this relationship.

International Day for Biological Diversity, May 22

This Day aims to increase understanding and awareness of biodiversity issues and to reflect on responsibility to safeguard this precious heritage for future generations. Biodiversity is the source of the essential goods and ecological services that constitute the source of life for all.

World Tobacco Day, May 31

Tobacco addiction is a global epidemic increasingly ravaging countries and regions that can least afford its toll of disability, disease, lost productivity and death. The tobacco industry continues to put profits before life; its own expansion before the health of future generations; its own economic gain ahead of the sustainable development of struggling countries. This year, World Tobacco Day will be highlighted with its theme - *Tobacco: Deadly in any form or disguise*.

Adapted: Source ~ UN Website

13. Concluding Remarks ~ Rebuilding Communities, Rebuilding Peace

Lakshan and I were in Galle, Sri Lanka with 23 young leaders engaged in participatory and experiential exploration of different perspectives of conflicts, peace and young people's role in building a peaceful and harmonious society, from 20-26 April. Even as we were engaged in these learning experiences, the situation in north and eastern Sri Lanka was becoming

more uncertain as there had been different incidents involving the military and the LTTE in those areas recently. On 22 April, the day I was to travel with NGS Chrisantha to the YMCAs engaged in Tsunami Response Programmes (Komari, Kalmunai, Kallar, Kalawanchikudi, Valaichhenai and Batticaloa) in the east, a hartal was declared. It was unfortunate, but we had to cancel the visitation to our great disappointment. On 25 April, 8 people were killed and the Army Commander severely injured when a suspected female suicide bomber blew herself up at the Army Headquarters in Colombo. Such was the reality in which the young leaders struggled together with experienced resource persons to learn skills in conflict transformation and peacebuilding.

Eight Korean YMCA volunteer and professional leaders were also in Sri Lanka from 24-27 April on what a “Peace Pilgrimage”. They visited the tsunami response programme in Galle and the Young Peacebuilders Training Workshop. They then visited the Moratuwa YMCA where a community centre will be built soon to serve those affected by the tsunami. A visit was also made to the YMCA Vavuniya implementing a Mission in Action Programme on interfaith cooperation. Korean YMCAs are supporting partners for both projects.

This Peace Pilgrimage is a concrete expression of solidarity and partnership in mission. Mission became real as partners met and interacted, in spite of language difficulties. Compassion in solidarity was the common language that connected the partners.

I wish to recall what Rev. Samuel D. Stephens, our President said in the President’s Address to the Executive Committee. He had encouraged the practice of what he termed “*parakletic* partnership”. The Greek work “*Paraklete*” used in the Bible describes the work of the Holy Spirit, and essentially means “one who runs alongside encouraging”.

In Rev. Stephens’ call then, we see these encounters in Sri Lanka being the ones that become important as we progress in our partnerships, maturing and encouraging each other. Instilling confidence and competence in the partner, but not imposing. Ensuring the partner breaks free of dependency to self-reliance and sustainability. Creating space for growth and maturity based on mutual accountability and transparency.

Thus, as we continue to join hands and journey together in mission, let us remember that we need to develop our partnerships into “*parakletic* partnerships”. We have since the beginning of the Quadrennium taken steps to fulfil the mandate of the 16th General Assembly – to find new ways of doing partnerships for the mutual growth of all. Volunteer and professional leaders have participated together in processes to develop mutual partnerships and the leadership needed towards self-reliance and sustainability, not only within the YMCA, but also in the community in which we have our being.

The Lord bless and keep all of us

Yip Kok Choong
General Secretary

With Shella Quezada-Zagada and Lakshan Dias, Executive Secretaries