



# HEADLINES

Newsletter of the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs ~ No. 57/ October 2006

## 1. YMCA Vietnam Responds to Bring Relief to Victims of Typhoon Xangsane

Typhoon Xangsane (Strength No.6) made landfall in Central Vietnam 280km South East of Quang Tri, Ha Tinh at 21: 30 on 24 September 2006. Destruction was severe in 9 central coastal provinces: Binh Dinh, Quang Ngai, Quang Nam, Hoi An, Da Nang, Hue, Quang Tri, Quang Binh and Ha Tinh. Lives and properties, including houses, agricultural crops, livestock were lost, washed away or destroyed.

An urgent appeal was made on 6 October when we received an appeal for support from the YMCA Vietnam. The Vietnam YMCA has been involved in many such relief and rehabilitation operations in its short history of 15 years. The relief/rehabilitation work of the YMCA in disaster situations has always gained much appreciation from the provincial governments and people. *(See Website for details/pictures.) Let us pause to remember in prayer those who have lost loved ones and who have suffered greatly in this disaster and for those working to bring relief to them.*

### The Relief Plan Proposed by the YMCA Vietnam

The YMCA of Vietnam hopes to receive US\$15,000 (240,000,000 VND) for the planned relief programme. Working with local authorities, 200 families affected by the typhoon will be selected to receive the relief that will be held before the end of October 2006.

The expected relief budget of 240,000,000 VND (US\$15,000 USD\*) will be used as follows:

- One time special cash relief: 900,000 VND/family x 200 = 180,000,000 VND
- Purchase of essentials e.g. medicine, rice, noodles....etc. for 200 families: 50,000,000 VND
- Distribution of T-shirts produced by VN YMCA Sewing Workshop, clothing, school materials collected by YMCA for 200 families;
- Coordination and transport + meals + accommodation for the relief team of VN YMCA: 10,000,000 VND.

**\* Note: 1 US\$ = 16,000 Vietnamese Dong**

*We have transferred an advance of US\$5,000 to the Vietnam YMCA to begin the Relief Work. Since issuing the appeal, we have received commitments from the YMCAs of Australia, Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur, Taiwan, Singapore, Sri Lanka and World Service, YMCA USA. We are looking forward to further commitments soon.*

## **2. Solidarity with the Ulaan Bataar YMCA, Mongolia**

The APAY appreciates the support and efforts of the Seoul YMCA, Korea to establish the Ulaan Bataar YMCA (UB-YMCA), Mongolia in 2000 and since then. In response to a joint report to the Committee on Movement Strengthening by the Seoul YMCA and the National Council of YMCAs of Korea, a Movement Strengthening visit was made to the UB-YMCA from 17-21 August. The team comprised of the President/CEO of the Seoul YMCA, and the National General Secretaries of the YMCA of Korea, YMCA of Japan and APAY. The main purpose was to familiarise with the present situation of the UB-YMCA, its leadership, membership and activities, and context in which the UB-YMCA was working. A further meeting was held with the President of the UB-YMCA on 22 September in Seoul to discuss strategies as follow-up of the visit. Among the urgent tasks agreed upon are:

- ❑ *The UB-YMCA Board of Directors draws up a 3-year Strategic Plan (2007-2009) and a long-term Strategic Plan for the UB-YMCA's future development and growth.*
- ❑ *The Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs organises a multi-lateral Partners' Coordinating Group of YMCAs from around the region to support the initiative undertaken by the Seoul YMCA. The APAY Secretariat will work in close collaboration with the Seoul YMCA and the National Council of YMCAs of Korea to achieve this, and will take all necessary steps to ensure the further development of the YMCA movement in Mongolia.*

## **3. Nominations Called for Election as Officers in 2007**

National Movements have been invited to submit Nominations for the positions of President, Vice Presidents (4) and Treasurer for the Quadrennium 2007-2011, **by 28 February 2007.**

The Nominations Committee formed at the last Executive Committee Meeting held on 16-18 March 2006 comprises Rev. Samuel D. Stephens (APAY President, Chairperson), Ms. Toshiko Takeda (Japan), Mr. Sriyantha Senaratna (Sri Lanka), Mr. Edward Ong, (Singapore), Mr. Peter Malone (Australia).

The Nominations Committee will meet on 7 March 2007 in Hong Kong to review the Nomination received.

## **4. Leadership Roundtable: Building Membership for Mission**

There will be 36 volunteer and professional staff leaders from 16 movements at the Roundtable from 15-19 October, with the YMCA of Singapore as local host. The previous Membership Consultation was held in 1977 in Hong Kong. The Roundtable will review the profound changes in the YMCA, its membership, and roles in fulfilling the contextual mission of the YMCA towards the transformation of society. Participants will also deliberate on other membership and leadership related concerns and policies within the movement.

Visits have been arranged to community-based volunteer (members) programmes and a Uni-Y initiative. Two inputs, case stories, experiences and processes of participating movements will form the bases for the discussions. The Roundtable will explore strategies and best practices for building a membership socially responsive to the contextual realities of the region and respective countries.

### **5. Building and Creating Sustainability for Life**

This Training Workshop to be held in the Philippines on 12-17 November will expose staff and volunteers of YMCAs involved in poverty reduction and alleviation programmes to a grassroots community approach. Participants will experience a fishing community in Anda Island, Pangasinan Province, including an overnight home-stay. They will be guided into a process to learn from the community and from participants' case stories, using appreciative inquiry. It is aimed at strengthening the participants' capacity and widening their perspectives on poverty issues and building sustainability. The theme will be "*Alleviating Poverty, Building and Creating Sustainability for Life*". **Registration deadline: 25 October 2006.** (*Details circulated to National Movements and on Website.*)

### **6. Spirituality and Peace-building in Indigenous Communities**

This Spirituality and Peace-building Workshop for indigenous populations is jointly organised by the Asia Pacific Alliance of YMCAs and Interfaith Cooperation Forum in Bogra, Bangladesh, 4-9 December 2006. (*There has been a venue change due to various considerations.*) The Forum will bring together 25 selected grassroots participants from indigenous communities to provide opportunities for sharing about their spirituality and how it integrates them with the earth, nature and its ecosystems. The workshop aspires to create a bridge between indigenous religions/faiths and other religions to build a respectful understanding and dialogue between religious traditions and how we could all work together to build peace with justice.

### **7. Building Capacity Towards Gender Responsiveness in the YMCA**

Movements in the region are invited to send women leaders to participate in the Training on Capacity Building for Women in the YMCA Towards Gender Responsiveness and a Gender-just Society. The Workshop will be held on 5-10 November 2006 in Chiangmai YMCA, Thailand.

Rev. Dr. Sirirat Pusurinkham, a theologian actively involved in the women's movement, will present the Keynote on "Perspectives on Feminism, Women, Gender and Leadership". Participants will be able to build and/or enhance skills to tackle gender responsiveness issues, including media and advocacy, training and facilitation, and, governance and decision-making. Action planning for future work will form an important component of the Workshop. (*Details circulated to National Movements; available at APAY website.*)

## **8. Faith and Mission Workshop - Worship Study and Planning**

Information on the Faith and Mission Workshop on 6- 10 December 2006 in Colombo, Sri Lanka has been circulated to National Movements. We encourage Movements to send creative talents with commitment to enriching our faith community through worship resources to the Workshop. The Workshop will create and formulate contemporary creative liturgies and worship resources reflective of the region's diverse cultures (including music, songs, prayers, poems, dance, etc). This process will also help participants to examine contemporary participatory and interactive expressions of the YMCA Mission and doing Biblical Reflections. The worship resources and related materials developed will be used at the 17<sup>th</sup> General Assembly and published for wider popular use.

## **9. Appeal: Support of Mission in Action Programmes (MAPs)**

**We are still in need of multi-lateral partners' support for some of the 10 short-listed Mission in Action Programmes (MAPs) focussing on Community Building actions. Please contact the Secretariat for information of MAPs that are still in need of support.**

The **Cambodian YMCA** (MAP request - US\$7,000) is still in need of support for their capacity building activities. To strengthen capacity of the YMCA in Cambodia, a building has been rented for a year as the YMCA Centre for US\$3,450 in Phnom Penh. We have advanced US\$4,000 for the advance rental for the year and deposit as required in Cambodia, with the balance for furnishing and programmes. With the premises, we look forward to increased capacity building activities and membership growth in the Cambodian YMCA.

*The YMCAs in Singapore have both made contributions in support of the YMCA in Cambodia. Others?*

## **10. 24<sup>th</sup> Advanced Studies to Welcome YMCA Japan STEP II Participants**

The 24<sup>th</sup> Advanced Studies Programme from 30 October – 3 December 2006 at the YMCA Wu Kai Sha Youth Village, Hong Kong will welcome 14 senior YMCA Secretaries undergoing their 70-day STEP II Programme, from 2-5 November. They will join the 14 Advanced Studies participants in a session on Contemporary Theological Perspectives and visit community programmes of the YMCA in Hong Kong.

## **11. Mission-based, Action-oriented Youth and Gender Exchanges**

The APAY is committed to promote Youth Participation and Leadership Development, and, Gender Responsiveness at all levels of the YMCA. We invite movements with interest – either to send or to host participants – to contact the Secretariat (Ms. Shella Quezada-Zagada, Executive Secretary for Programmes). *Details of these programmes are found at the APAY website and National Councils.*

## 12. APSY Week Call for Responsible Stewardship of the Earth

As we celebrate the Asia Pacific Students and Youth Week (APSYW) on 15-21 October let us reflect on the Four Principles of Eco-Justice shared by Dr. Salvador Ramirez in the EASY Net Workshop that prepared the Resource Book, “Youth Protecting the Oikoumene”:

1. **Sustainability** – concern for health of future generations ~ Ps 104:30, 145:15-16; Gen 1:28, 2:15:
2. **Sufficiency** – sharing goods of creation ~ Ex 16, Ex 23:11, Jn 10:10:
3. **Participation** – concern for interest of all forms of life ~ Amos 2:6-7; Hos. 10:12-14
4. **Solidarity**- kinship and interdependence of all forms of life ~ I Cor 12:26

*“Our God, who have created this wondrous Earth from which we subsist and owe our existence. Forgive us for we have abused the source of our borrowed life. Teach us to redeem our responsible stewardship of the earth.” Prayer from EASY Net Resource Book*

## 13. Anniversaries Around the Region.....

**We extend our congratulations to the following YMCAs that have informed us of their anniversary celebrations:**

- ❑ **Chiangmai YMCA, Thailand – 36<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on 11 September 2006**
- ❑ **Chinese YMCA of Hong Kong – 105<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2006**  
*Mr. Martin Meissner, President of the World Alliance of YMCAs, and Rev. Samuel D. Stephens, President of the Asia and Pacific Alliance cum Deputy President, World Alliance of YMCAs will grace the occasion.*
- ❑ **Metropolitan YMCA of Singapore – 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on 12 November 2006**

## 14. Congratulations to Former AAY General Secretary Tan Chi Kiong

We congratulate Dr. Tan Chi Kiong on the conferment of a Doctor of Philosophy in Humanities (h.c.) Degree by the Wesleyan College of Manila, Inc., Pasay City, Philippines in recognition of his work and contribution to humanity, on 8 September 2006. Chi Kiong served as General Secretary of the then Asia Alliance of YMCAs from 1986 to 1995. He then served as the Executive Director of the Asian Migrant Centre from 1996 to 1999, and as the Director of the Ecumenical Coalition for Third World Tourism from 2001 to 2004.

## 15. Upcoming Events ~ October 2006 to March 2007

DATE	PROGRAMME	VENUE
Oct 15 – 19	Roundtable on Building Membership for Mission	Singapore
Oct 15 – 21	Asia Pacific Students and Youth Week (APSYW)	Movements/EASY Net
Oct 30 – Dec 3	24 <sup>th</sup> Advanced Studies Programme	Hong Kong
Nov 5 – 10	Capacity Building for Women in the YMCA Towards Gender Responsiveness and a Gender-just Society	Chiangmai, Thailand
Nov 12 – 17	Training Workshop on Poverty Alleviation and Sustainability	Pangasinan, Philippines
Dec 4-9	Spirituality and Peace-building in Indigenous Communities (Joint Programme with ICF)	Bogra, Bangladesh
Dec 6 – 10	Participatory Worship and Liturgy Workshop	Colombo, Sri Lanka
Jan 26 – 31	PCG Tsunami Response, Sri Lanka (Meeting/Site Visit)	Colombo, Sri Lanka
Feb 2 – 4	YMCA Networking Workshop: Working with Migrant Workers, Focus on Host Countries	Manila Downtown YMCA, Philippines
Mar 7 AM PM	- APAY Nominations Committee - NGSs Meeting	Chinese YMCA, Hong Kong
Mar 8 – 10	- APAY Executive Committee Meeting - Standing Committee Meetings	Chinese YMCA, Hong Kong
Mar 11 – 15	Partners' Solidarity Visit to YMCA Ulaan Bataar, Mongolia	Ulaan Bataar, Mongolia
Mar 25 – 30	PCG Tsunami Response, India (Meeting/Site Visit)	Chennai, India

## 16. World YMCA-YWCA Week of Prayer and World Fellowship

November 12-18 marks the YMCA/YWCA Week of Prayer with the theme: *"Changing Lives, Changing Communities."* In these days of individualism living in communion with one another is a challenging task. But, surely we can change lives and communities if we allow ourselves to ..... As a global movement, let us go to our communities and move them away from conflict and injustice towards life and peace. Movements are reminded to celebrate the Week of Prayer and World Fellowship with YWCAs and YMCAs worldwide. The Week culminates in the celebration of YMCA Peace Day on 18<sup>th</sup> November.

## 17. Concluding Remarks ~ Away from Myth and Rhetoric to Reality

In the last issue of *Headlines*, I concluded with a critical look at our youth constituency and where we really are. We have often said that we have in our YMCAs a strong youth constituency. The Youth Assembly showed us that this oft repeated statement is "not quite so". Yes, we did have more 136 youth at the Assembly including 19 from YMCAs and Partners from outside the region. Yes, but it pointed to us that we have to provide more space and resources to develop this diverse group of youth from our YMCAs we had at the Assembly.

The Survey on Youth Work/Programmes in the region yielded hard facts about our real youth constituency situation. We need to move on from mere rhetoric to real commitment to youth development. The same is true of the women constituency in the YMCA. The Survey on Women Concerns and Gender Equity revealed equally stark realities. We really still have many local YMCAs that have yet to be more socially inclusive and to accept women as full members.

The responses to the surveys on Youth Participation and Women's Concern/Gender Equity, are indications that we are caught up in an illusion that we are strong as a youth movement, that we are gender responsive. In some YMCAs, the "tokensim" to youth and women participation and leadership in decision-making has still to be addressed. We will need to consciously integrate all sectors of our constituencies to be truly faithful to our heritage of the YMCA and its founders. We will have to work to separate the facts from the illusions, the rhetoric from the realities we face.

We will have to develop our social capital that according to Cohen and Prusak "consists of the stock of active connections among people: the trust, mutual understanding, and shared values and behaviours that bind the members of human networks and communities and make cooperative action possible." (*Cohen, D. and Prusak, L., 2001, In Good Company. How social capital makes organizations work, Boston, Harvard Business School Press.*) The truth is that many of our YMCAs still do not have this kind of "active connection, trust, mutual understanding, shared values and behaviour" within the different sectors of our membership, especially the youth and women. We need less rhetoric, and more real actions in the words of Rev. Samuel D. Stephens, our President, for the "*parakletic partnership*" ~ one where each accompanies the other ..... as we grow and strengthen our membership, our YMCA, and in turn our community and society.

May the Lord bless us and keep us as we journey together, recapturing the heritage of our membership and the reality of our Mission.

Yip Kok Choong  
General Secretary

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

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

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## UNITED NATIONS DESIGNATED DAYS AND EVENTS TO REMEMBER

*This section of brief notes on United Nations Designated Days and Events January – March 2007 (adapted: UN Website sources) is an awareness-building feature. This instalment completes the list of Days and Events for the whole year. The whole list will be placed on the APAY Website for future reference.)*

### **International Mother Language Day, 21 February**

The International Mother Language Day was proclaimed by UNESCO's General Conference in November 1999. The International Mother Language Day has been observed every year since February 2000 to promote linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism. Languages are the most powerful instruments of preserving and developing our tangible and intangible heritage. All moves to promote the dissemination of mother tongues will serve not only to encourage linguistic diversity and multilingual education but also the development of fuller awareness of linguistic and cultural traditions throughout the world and to inspire solidarity based on understanding, tolerance and dialogue.

### **International Women's Day, 8 March**

In 1977, the UN General Assembly invited states to proclaim, in accordance with their historical and national traditions and customs, any day of the year as United Nations Day for Women's Rights and International Peace. States were called upon to contribute to creating conditions for the elimination of discrimination against women and for their full and equal participation in social development. That action came on the wake of the International Women's Year (1975) and the United Nations Decade for Women (1976-1985). The United Nations began observing International Women's Day, 8 March, in 1975.

### **International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination/Solidarity with the Peoples Struggling Against Racism and Racial Discrimination, 21 March**

On 21 March 1960, the massacre by police, of 69 civilian demonstrators against apartheid's "pass laws", in the township of Sharpeville, South Africa, is only one illustration of the heroic protest of the people of South Africa against racial discrimination. This day was designated by the United Nations General Assembly, as a landmark to commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and begins the entire week of Solidarity with the Peoples Struggling against Racism and Racial Discrimination.

The world community must be aware of the importance of combating racism in order to ensure a better future for all people without any distinction. We have to learn from history to avert future tragedies attributable to racial discrimination and put into effect "a culture of prevention" rather than a culture of reaction. Furthermore, the vicious cycle of poverty maintained through racial and class segregation has to be ruptured if we are to attain the eradication of poverty.

### World Day for Water, 22 March

The General Assembly has declared 22 March as World Day for Water. International observance of this Day grew out of the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro. It promotes awareness of the extent to which water resource development contributes to economic productivity and social well-being.

Each year more than 1 billion of our fellow human beings have little choice but to resort to using potentially harmful sources of water. This perpetuates a silent humanitarian crisis that kills some 3900 children every day and thwarts progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Integrated development and management of water resources are crucial to the success or failure of all the MDGs, as water is central to the livelihood systems of the poor.

### World Meteorological Day, 23 March

World Meteorological Day marks the formation, in 1950, of the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO). UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, has called the WMO "the original networker" because the agency is based on a strong programme of networking and co-operation between national meteorological services. Today 185 member countries contribute to and benefit from this process.

The World Meteorological Day recalls how advances in predicting weather have improved the well-being of humankind. The world climate situation calls for new and more sophisticated types of meteorological and hydrological services, since virtually every human activity is influenced by weather, climate and water. Accurate predictions of the weather, he said, can radically improve people's chances of living in safety.

### World Tuberculosis Day, 24 March

**World Tuberculosis Day, 24 March** is designed to build public awareness that tuberculosis today remains an epidemic in much of the world, causing the deaths of several million people each year, mostly in the Third World. It commemorates the day in 1882 when Dr Robert Koch astounded the scientific community by announcing that he had discovered the cause of tuberculosis, the TB bacillus. At the time of Koch's announcement in Berlin, TB was raging through Europe and the Americas, causing the death of one out of every seven people. Koch's discovery opened the way toward diagnosing and curing tuberculosis. In 1982, on the one-hundredth anniversary of Dr Koch's presentation, the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (IUATLD) proposed that 24 March be proclaimed an official World TB Day. In 1996, the World Health Organization (WHO) joined with the IUATLD and a wide range of other concerned organizations to increase the impact of World TB Day.

### World Health Day, 7 April

The World Health Organization held the First World Health Assembly in 1948 which had decided to celebrate 7th April of each year, with effect from 1950, as the World Health Day. The Day is celebrated to create "awareness of a specific health theme to highlight a priority area of concern for the World Health Organization (WHO)". In April this year, World Health Day was celebrated with

the theme “ Working together for health” prioritising on educating and training health workers, supporting and helping health workers, enhancing the effectiveness of the health workforce and tackling imbalances and inequities.

### World Book and Copyright Day, 23 April

**World Book and Copyright Day** (also known as **International Day of the Book** or **World Book Day**) is organised by UNESCO to promote reading, publishing and the protection of intellectual property through copyright. The Day was first celebrated in 1995. The connection between April 23 and books was first made in 1923 by bookseller in Catalonia as a way to honour the author Miguel de Cervantes who died on the day. This became a part of the celebrations of the Saint George's Day (also April 23) in the region, where it has been traditional to give roses to their lovers and since 1925 for the woman to give a book in exchange. In 1995, UNESCO decided that the World Book and Copyright Day would be celebrated on this date because of the Catalonian festival and because the date is also anniversary of the birth and death of William Shakespeare, the death of Inca Garcilaso de la Vega and Josep Pla, the birth of Maurice Druon, Vladimir Nabokov, Manuel Mejía Vallejo and Halldór Laxness.