



HEADLINES

Newsletter of the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs ~ No. 61/February 2007

1. Executive Committee 2007 ~ Only Two Weeks Away!

To date, about 90 YMCA leaders, volunteers and professional staff have registered for the Executive Committee and Related Meetings on 8-10 March 2007 in Hong Kong. In addition to the regular Related Committees' Meetings and work, focus will also be on the 17th General Assembly. Rev. Samuel D. Stephens, the President will share his thoughts on the crucial issue of **Leadership and Governance Towards a Strong Movement** and point to ways to fill existing gaps (*Circular: 8 December 2006*) as we seek to strengthen our constituent movements and the APAY.

National Movements that have not registered are requested to register their participants immediately.

2. Chiang Mai Confirmed 17th General Assembly Venue

The Executive Committee has endorsed Chiang Mai as the venue for the 17th General Assembly from **5-10 September 2007**, with 22 positive responses from the 31 Executive Committee members. There were no negative responses. The Assembly will be held at the Empress Hotel (www.empresshotels.com), close to the heart of Chiang Mai city.

In anticipation of the opportunity to host the Assembly, the Chiang Mai YMCA that has been assigned the local hosts' responsibilities by the Thai Alliance of YMCAs, has swung into action. They have formed the relevant committees to ensure a meaningful and most memorable assembly.

3. Calcutta YMCA Launches 150th Anniversary Celebrations

The Calcutta YMCA launched its 150th Anniversary Celebrations with a Thanksgiving Worship at the St. Paul's Cathedral on 4 February and a Public Gathering at the YMCA Hall on 5 February. The Chief Guest was Dr. Bart Shaha, Secretary General of the World Alliance. Guests of Honour included Rev. Samuel D. Stephens, President of APAY and Deputy President, World Alliance; Mr. J. Alexander, National President, YMCA of India; Mr. T. Thomas, National General Secretary, YMCA of India; the Hon. Justice Biswanath Somadder,

Kolkata High Court Judge and Mr. Yip Kok Choong, APAY General Secretary. Following the Address by the Chief Guest and felicitations from the Guests of Honour, a cultural Programme was presented by local students and the YMCA of Bangladesh.

We congratulate Mr. E.A. Aviet, the President, the members of the Board, Mr. Swaraj Sircar, the General Secretary, Staff and members of the Calcutta YMCA as they begin a year-long celebration of thanksgiving for the way that the YMCA has renewed itself to continue to pursue their mission expression among the poor and marginalized in Kolkata. Since its establishment on 27 February 1857, as the first YMCA in India and in Asia, the Calcutta YMCA has always served the community well.

4. Tsunami PCG Partners Visit Rehabilitation Work Sites in Sri Lanka

The Partners' Coordination Group (PCG) that supports the Sri Lankan YMCA Tsunami Response met from 26-31 January 2007. On 27-29 January, the partners visited the eastern and southern provinces of Sri Lanka to witness the progress in the tsunami rehabilitation work undertaken by the Sri Lankan YMCAs. They saw first-hand the difficult social realities and conditions under which the rehabilitation work was being done in Valachchenai, Batticaloa, Akkaraipattu, Kalmunai and Trincomalee areas. Most of the YMCAs that had premises damaged had completed the repair or reconstruction of their buildings. Many have re-started their regular programmes for the membership and community. These buildings were planned to provide means towards sustainability for the YMCA and the community. Representatives of Y Care International, and YMCAs of Australia, Malta and Singapore had the honour of officiating at the "handing over" of completed building projects. The YMCA of Singapore also laid the foundation stone for the Batticaloa YMCA's Community Centre. The PCG Then met on 30-31 January to evaluate and review community rebuilding and movement strengthening plans for the coming year.

5. Networking in Solidarity with Migrant Workers

Dr. Victor V. Perez, the new National President of the YMCA of the Philippines officially opened the Workshop for Networking of YMCAs working on migrant workers' issues. This Networking Workshop held from 1-4 February 2007 was a joint initiative of the Manila Downtown YMCA, the Philippine YMCA Migrant Resource Centre and the APAY. Sixteen representatives from the YMCAs in the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, Japan, and Taiwan, addressed the needs and concerns of the migrant workers in the light of increasing cases of unfair treatment and abuse. Ms. Ellene Sana, Executive Director of Centre for Migrants' Advocacy provided a very comprehensive input for understanding and better appreciation of the issues of migrant workers. Several partnership programmes were proposed for action of the network.

Our appreciation to the Philippine YMCA Migrant Resource Centre for their technical expertise in this networking initiative, and the Manila Downtown YMCA for hosting the workshop and support for the participation of representatives from YMCAs in the Philippines.

6. Elsie Inducted as New Philippine YMCA National General Secretary

The National Board of the YMCA of the Philippines meeting on 17 February has appointed and inducted Ms. Eloisa D. Borreo as the National General Secretary of the YMCA of the Philippines.

Our congratulations to her and we pray for God's guidance as she serves in the leadership of the Philippine YMCA together with Dr. Victor Perez, the newly elected President. Our congratulations too are due to Dr. Perez and the new National Board that was also inducted on that day.

Elsie as she is commonly known, joined the YMCA of the Philippines after graduating from Centro Escolar University, Manila in 1981 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Social Work. She obtained her Masters Degree in Community Development from the University of the Philippines in 1996. She has worked in various fields within the YMCA. She has also served as General Secretary of the YMCA of Quezon City. As the Special Projects Secretary and later as the National Programme Secretary of the National Council of YMCAs of the Philippines, she has coordinated the Migrants Resource Centre for Migrant Workers; programmes for Women's Empowerment and Development, STI, HIV/AIDS Education and Prevention, Youth Empowerment and YMCA Disaster Response.

7. Partnering for Mission in Action Programmes (MAP)

The Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs' Mission in Action Programmes (MAP) introduced in 2004 aims to build multilateral partnerships for national or local action programmes for transformation within the community. MAP has so far provided multilateral sharing of experiences and resources in 14 such action programmes. Partner National Movements include the YMCAs of Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Japan, Korea, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Vietnam.

We are again inviting National Movements to submit local or national proposals for ***Mission in Action Programme (MAP)*** partnership support. Maximum support for MAP proposals will be between US\$4,000 – 5,000.

Applications may also be made for the ***Y's Men International Time of Fast (TOF)*** support for programmes on Peace-building.

Please refer to the relevant documents that have been sent to National Movements.

8. Young Professional Home-movement Based Support for the Region

We are inviting applications for youth leaders who are committed to a continued leadership role in the local/national YMCA to participate in an APAY Home-based Young Professional Programme for a one-year period from July 2007 to June 2008.

The APAY Home-based Young Professional Programme is a fresh initiative to developing youth leadership and participation in the region. As a young professional based at the APAY Secretariat incurs high costs, this home-based programme will bring benefits to both the home movement and APAY. *(Please refer to HEADLINES 59, December 2006)*. Up to five (5) participants may be accommodated for this pilot programme scheduled to begin by **July 2007**. Support for allowances, office space and participation in at least one international programme should be borne by the Home Movement.

The selected youth leader (volunteer or professional) will be provided with exposure to the regional YMCA mission-oriented work and thrusts through coordination with the APAY Secretariat. Participants will gain experience as they carry out designated work with the APAY under the mentoring of a National Executive Staff and an APAY Executive Staff.

Please note that National Movements should endorse the applications and send them to the APAY Secretariat by **31 March 2007**. Kindly refer to the circular sent to the Movements for details.

9. Enriching Grassroots Ecumenism ~ EASYNet

The Ecumenical Asia Pacific Students and Youth Network (EASYNet) aims to provide an impetus to the building of grassroots ecumenism. National Ecumenical Teams were formed to further engage and deepen young people's involvement and understanding of the ecumenical vision. The EASYNet organised the National Ecumenical Team Coordinators' Training on 5-9 February 2007 in Quezon City, Philippines. Representatives from 9 countries participated. The training covered the foundations and history of ecumenism, challenges and prospects of the ecumenical youth movement, sharing and discussion of national ecumenical issues, challenges and responses in the context of regional realities, and interfaith cooperation. The 2008 Asia Pacific Students and Youth Gathering (ASYG) was also discussed.

The EASYNet Core Team, comprising representatives of member organisations, met on 9-10 February, to review past actions. It also deliberated on strategies for mobilisation of support and participation from national movements in the EASYNet's ecumenical journey for transformation of societies and movements.

10. CCA Golden Jubilee ~ 50 Years of Life Together

The year 2007 marks the 50th anniversary of the inception of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) in March 1957 in Parapat, Indonesia. The CCA will gather together in Medan and Parapat, Indonesia from 3-8 March to celebrate, giving thanks to God for His blessings on the life and work of CCA for the past fifty years under the Theme: *50 Years of Life Together: Affirming Our Common Mission and Witness*. Since its inception the CCA has faced many challenges in doing God's mission for justice, peace, reconciliation and sustainable development in the region. There were times of joy and sorrow, times of difficulties and of celebration.

**We extend our congratulations to the CCA ~
The Presidium and General Secretary, the General Committee,
Constituent Member Churches and Staff
as they celebrate, giving thanks to God for their 50 years
in the ecumenical journey of witnessing to the unity of Christ in Asia, and
as “God's instrument for bringing love, peace, unity and the fullness of life
in the years ahead”.**

11. Interfaith Cooperation Forum ~ 2nd School of Peace

Mr. Max Ediger, the ICF Coordinator recently wrote from Bangalore where the 3-month Interfaith School of Peace recently commenced: “ *The programme is now on the third week. We have (18) participants from Nepal, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Philippines, Cambodia, Thailand and Burma. The programme is going well. We have sessions every weekday and also Saturday morning. Evenings are devoted to small group discussions, watching films and sometimes just gathering for a more relaxing time together. We have been able to join several larger meetings and seminars in Bangalore that has given participants an opportunity to meet interesting local people, enjoy local culture and foods and listen to some very interesting lectures. This Thursday (15 Feb.) we will leave for our first field trip and everyone is looking forward to this very much.*” For further information: daga.n3.net/icp or daga.n3.net/max

12. FINAL REMINDER ~ Nominations for Election as APAY Officers in 2007

National Movements are reminded that the Nominations process for the election to the positions of President, Vice Presidents (4) and Treasurer for the Quadrennium 2007-2011 will close **on 28 February 2007**. The Nominations Committee will meet on 7 March 2007 in Hong Kong to review the Nominations received.

13. Upcoming Events ~ March 2007

| DATE | PROGRAMME | VENUE |
|--|--|---|
| Mar 07 09:00 11:00 15:00 17:30 | - APAY Nominations Committee - Officers Meeting - NGSs Meeting - 17 th General Assembly Planning Committee | Chinese YMCA, Hong Kong 6 th Floor Conference Room Chinese YMCA Admin Building |
| Mar 08 – 10 | - APAY Executive Committee Meeting - Standing Committee Meetings | Chinese YMCA, Hong Kong |
| Mar 26 – 31 | India PCG Tsunami Response (Meeting/Site Visit) | Chennai, India |

14. Concluding Remarks ~ Catch the Little Foxes Song of Solomon 2: 15

One key thought has been playing in my mind since we began the process of reviewing our leadership stock in the region. Do we lack leadership at the different levels of the movement? What do we lack? What is missing in our leadership? Rev. Samuel D. Stephens and I was discussing this matter too when we spent time reflecting together (and drinking tea, course!) in between the celebration events at the 150th Anniversary of the Calcutta YMCA recently. The nagging question was “Do we really lack leaders?” On reflection, we concluded that “No, we do not.” Why? Because, as expressed during our Leadership Review Processes in November 2005 and June 2006, there are potential and younger leaders ready and willing to take up the mantle of leadership and to sacrifice for the mission we have from God.

As described by one Review participant, “*many have the crab-mentality, pulling down any crab that is on the way up the wall of a basket, to get up and out, so that it may go up itself*”. (This description was new to me!) Another common reason for the apparent lack of leadership emerging was that many “*overstay and are not willing to make way*”. My response to the President was that we do have the “stock”, but they have not been given the opportunity and space to emerge.

I was reading the Song of Solomon 2 and verse 15 caught my attention: “*Catch us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the grapes.....*”

Reflecting on it (with the help of a Study Bible), I thought, perhaps this is what we need to do “catch the little foxes”. We do have “little foxes” around that can spoil our work, ruin our movement, prevent the growth of new leadership or new expressions of the Mission – “spoiling our grapes”. What or who are these little foxes within our movement? Maybe unclear mission or lack of mission altogether? Negative attitudes, lack of encouragement? Poor communication? Gossip? Self or vested interests? Unwillingness to sacrifice? Often we have to give up something for something new to emerge. Or to mould, like the lump of clay in the potters hands. Or break, like the clay jars, to reveal the treasure hidden within.

What are we to do? We should listen for the sound of the feet of the little foxes in the midst of our YMCAs and catch them before they ruin us. As has been said, “*It’s better to build a fence at the top of the hill than a hospital at the bottom!*”

May the Lord bless us and keep us as we seek to strengthen and renew our leadership for our Mission Journey.....

Yip Kok Choong
General Secretary

Shella Q. Zagada and lakshan Dias
Executive Secretaries