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"Do not say I am a youth"

- Empowered and Sustained by Spiritual Roots and Solidarity

Asia Pacific YMCA

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Our President writes.....

Revolutionary or “Rebelutionary”?

It seems as though in today's world these words have become synonymous. We are no longer able to see the difference. How would we describe Jesus? How did he propose to establish the Reign of God? It is important for us to ask these questions because we believe that our expressly stated mission is to extend that reign. How we decide to accomplish that will depend on how we understand the methods that Jesus adopted in the fulfilment of His mission.

There is absolutely no doubt that certain areas of our lives, and the communities we live in, need drastic change, especially those that hold us back from progress. Sometimes they are traditional practices and beliefs that hinder community. Many times it seems like it is just our very way of life that is dehumanising, and that must be changed.

There is such an outcry for change all over the world. The present young generation is restless until they see their expectations met. That is fine. But the manner in which that change is achieved makes a world of a difference. “Then how do we change the world?” you ask. “How do we break with dead tradition and bring about transformation? How do we correct the wrongs and injustices around us? How do we act on the convictions that drive us day and night?”

Even as I write this, the news headlines are screaming about the turbulence in Lebanon and the strife in Sri Lanka. East Timor, Thailand and Nepal are settling down after their share of turmoil. It is not just Asia that is going through all these troubles. This is worldwide. Sometimes it makes us wonder if there really is a future in the midst of all this. If there is what it is going to look like. How do we find it? The greater question for us is “how do we create the future that we want – that God wants”? A future where peace and justice will prevail and is the normal way of life? A future where we do not have to fight for these . . . a future where all these can be accomplished without conflict.

Am I being too idealistic? Do I sound too other-worldly? No, I don't think so. It is possible. We can make it happen. We are called to make it happen. That is the positive revolution that Christ initiated and has commissioned us to continue. That is exactly what we mean when we talk about the “reign of God” and our part in extending it on this earth.

The future no doubt is in the hands of today's young people. But often we hear them give excuses of every kind. When God called the prophet Jeremiah, he replied, “*Ah, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth*” (Jer 1:6). But God corrected him, “*Do not say, I am a youth.*” God gave several reasons why Jeremiah should not hesitate to accept His commission. We have thousands of young men and women today who are excusing themselves under one pretext or the other. To the young people of the YMCA today I too want to echo those same words. There is no excuse!

Yes, there will be criticism. Motives will be questioned. You may not find success in every effort. We will have to walk those steep steps to climb higher but we must persevere. We cannot afford to give up.

We have with us the assurance of God's constant enabling and empowering presence. His promise is both to guide us and to go with us. Because of that, I do believe we can make a difference in this world.

It is said that there are three types of people who respond to the call of service:

- (1) rowboat people - they have to be pushed wherever they go; to
- (2) sailboat people - they always go with the wind; and
- (3) steamboat people - they make up their mind where they ought to go and go there regardless of wind or weather.

Today we need more of these highly motivated “steamboat” type of young people in the YMCA who have decided where they want to go, how to get there and are ready and willing to make it happen.

Sam Stephens

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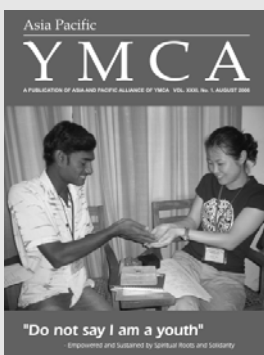
Why do I want peace?



Self-employment for youth.



Youth ...the continuance of YMCA Heritage.



Young Peacebuilders

IN THIS ISSUE

Youth acting together, can transform communities, given space, opportunities, and capacities. Our President writes, challenging us to be youthful, revolutionary and cutting-edge in our approaches, perspectives and responses. Our Cover Story emphasizes the need for development of youth as catalysts of change, who value and build peace with justice. It points to the YMCA's timely focus on participation of young people and the need to increase youth leadership in the movement. Despite constraints, the 3-Step Process of building a strong youth base and developing youth capacity is gradually making headway. We see glimpses of youth commitment to clear roles and responsibilities in the YMCA and its mission, and in youth concerns in the Cambodia YMCA, the action testimony from Myanmar, in what the Young Peace-builders want, and other programmes. We see the community building process led by a young team, and working in solidarity with the marginalized and neglected in the YMCA's Tsunami Responses on Nias Island, Indonesia, particularly among youth.

Our commitment towards partnerships, leadership development and movement strengthening are shared through the directions set at the Executive Committee Meeting.

Enhancing Youth Participation in



Building a new world.....

Youth – Focus for the Present, not only for the Future

The Leaders' Roundtable in Bangkok, Thailand in 2004 reviewed the mandates and quadrennial priorities for the Asia and Pacific Alliance. A key focus was Youth Participation and Leadership Development (YPLD). A task group was formed to examine the needs and determine possible responses towards greater and substantial participation of young people in the movement and developing youth leadership

aligned with the YMCA mission. We gathered information from 15 National YMCAs through a survey about the status of youth participation and leadership development in the YMCAs in the region. The survey results served as baseline data for further actions planned for the Quadrennium 2004-2007.

Through the guidelines set by the Task Group on YPLD and the YPLD Committee, we had sought information about youth membership, youth

the Region

volunteer and staff leadership, and youth involvement in YMCA programming, including its development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. We also enquired about possible barriers or obstacles to youth participation in the YMCAs.

Youth Membership

From the responses, we gathered that YMCAs in the region considered youth as being within a wide age range of between 9 and 40. This differed with the accepted world YMCA norms of youth being defined as between 18 and 30. Clarity in categorisation in terms of target constituents and consistency would be significant if responses and movement strengthening strategies were to fit into the developmental stages and roles of YMCA constituents.

The 15 respondents reported youth memberships ranging from 666 to 297,500. On the average, there were about 3,000 youth members in every local YMCA.

Youth Participation and Programmes

Young people were mostly involved in the YMCA as programme participants, at the rate of 49%. Full members who are young comprised 11% of the total membership. There were 39% Associate Members and 27% were youth volunteers. The differences in the roles/functions of the varying membership categories had not been covered by the survey. In terms of

YMCA programmes, youth participation was more substantial in programme development (46%) and implementation (42%), than in other aspects of programme management such as monitoring (21%) and evaluation (21%).

The YMCAs responded that the youth-related programmes and activities implemented included:

- socio-cultural activities such as sports and recreational activities,
- socio-political and economic involvements such as workshops on issues,
- training on crisis intervention,
- personal development, and
- capacity building and leadership development

Eighty-one (81) percent of the respondents organised and/or supported Student YMCAs and/or other youth groups. Activities of the groups were either YMCA-led or youth-initiated.

Youth in Decision-making

Ten percent of both the National and Local YMCAs' Boards consisted of young people. The most senior position held by the youth at the national level was Vice President while locally, there was an Association President. Only a handful however held these positions. Committee membership at the national level was at 15% while at the local level 17%. The percentage of the respondent YMCAs with a policy

on youth participation in decision-making processes was 46%, and 87% of them had a Youth Committee or a mechanism dealing with youth work/issues.

At the national level, 16% of the staff was youth. At the local YMCA it was 17%. The most senior post held by a young staff nationally was “Manager/Executive” and “Director/Senior Executive” locally. Eighty percent (80%) employed a staff responsible for youth work and the number of Youth Work Secretaries varied ranging from 1 to 209.

Barriers to Youth Participation

Lack of openness to youth (“Not open to youthful ideas”) was considered the main barrier to youth participation. Another key factor was an organizational culture that was not youth friendly resulting in the lack of youth members.

Need for Increased Participation

Genuine participation of young people in the YMCA as embodied in the *Challenge 21*, based on Paris Basis, expresses substantial participation in all aspects of carrying out the YMCA mission. The data indicated that there was an urgency for more serious thinking and greater scope of work in terms of increased and more visible presence of young people in the YMCAs. Young people were already involved in programmes, but there was a need to create and provide more space for participation so that they could influence the decisions and directions of the Movement.

Youth Membership Development: A Priority Agenda

The YMCA is a movement that seeks to empower and develop leadership of young people to realise the mission of building communities of peace. The movement, with this identity, needs to actively strengthen its youth work allowing for more youth-led and youth-initiated processes. From the analysis of the survey responses about the status of youth participation and leadership, it was clear that we need to do more to develop leaders who are knowledgeable

about the Movement’s vision, mission and context in which the YMCA works.

The APAY has adopted a three-phase strategy of building up a well-established youth base in the YMCAs.

The process includes:

Step 1: *Developing a strong base group at the local and national levels*

Actions of YMCAs such as Hong Kong, Japan and Korea that bring together young people for exposure and mentoring on particular issues regarding youth involvement, civil society building, poverty and other concerns of different countries had been found to stimulate interest among the youth in the YMCA. Some of the issues addressed were in line with the interests of youth in the region, such as peace-building, HIV and AIDS, education, and unemployment/poverty.

For instance, in 2005, the YMCAs of Japan and Korea had co-organised with APAY the International Peace Camp in East Timor. Interactions and discussions among participants motivated young people to deepen their understanding about peace, harmony and reconciliation. Peace caravans, peace camps and other related activities were also held at the local and national levels.



Induction of Hong Kong Young Leaders’ Roundtable.

Many youth-related activities were taking place in the YMCAs around the region. The YMCAs in Australia, Bangladesh, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Korea, Macau, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam gather young people for spiritual development, e.g. Bible seminars in Bangladesh, socio-cultural activities, service-oriented opportunities or allow space for response to the needs of the communities, outreach programmes in Singapore, volunteer involvement and work camps in tsunami-affected areas in Sri Lanka. In Vietnam, leadership seminars are organised. Discussions and immersion on social issues in the Philippines; environmental youth groups in Thailand, and seminars on youth participation in Myanmar help to strengthen their social responsibility and their value for peace and justice that characterises a transformed society.

The YMCAs have the environment and opportunities for Step 1, that is developing a strong youth base group at the national and local levels. These youth related activities may serve as initial steps towards broadening the youth membership that is in line with building a world of peace, justice and love.

Step 2: *Establishing formal space/structure at local and national level, e.g. YMCA Youth Committee or Youth Council*

Youth membership development in the YMCA is not merely to increase the number of members or participants in YMCA programmes, but it involves developing leadership for mission. Youth leadership entails participation in the YMCA's decision-making, direction setting and action-taking processes at all levels.

Many YMCAs have taken such actions through the formation of Youth Committees or Youth Leaders' Circle for young people to engage and connect to YMCA processes. In Hong Kong, a Young Leaders' Roundtable and a Young Members' Council have been

formed. Other initiatives include a Youth Network in Australia, a Committee on Youth in Japan and Uni-Y Committees in Hong Kong, Korea and Singapore. Youth Committees/Councils have been formed in Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, and Singapore. These Committees can provide the space for them to outline their tasks and responsibilities and provide strategic and meaningful inputs to the overall development of YMCA programmes and work. Youth participation in working committees and other activities can overcome the "danger of falling" into the trap of tokenism in our efforts to increase youth representation and leadership. YMCAs are encouraged to build capacities of the youth so that they could help define the mandates and priorities of the movement along with the rest of the membership.

Step 3: *Ensuring strong youth participation and representation at the regional level, e.g. at Youth Conference, in Youth Committee and other APAY Standing Committees*

YMCAs across the Asia and Pacific region have been actively participating in youth-related forums, events and meetings. Some may need to increase their representation and visibility. On the other hand, there is scope to broaden youth participation at the regional level by extending their involvement beyond youth issues. Young people are not and should not only be concerned about youth issues. YMCA members, including the youth, need to identify with the major thrusts of our mission expressions in the region. Youth representation and presence in deliberations and actions concerning various thrusts of the movement should then be promoted.

Young people from several movements in the region have been showing consistency of presence and influence in youth-related programmes. The level of involvement of young people in the regional and global affairs will be raised if support can be given to youth participation in concerns other than youth issues. Youth representation and contribution in

Committees and programmes beyond the Youth Committees should be seriously considered when Movements have wider sustained youth membership.

The APAY Executive Committee, the Youth Committee and the National General Secretaries Meeting may do an annual review and evaluation of these strategies vis-à-vis the Movements' responses.

YMCAs Developing Youth Participation and Leadership

Following are some YMCAs at different stages in implementing action plans for greater youth participation and leadership development:

Myanmar YMCA in the First Steps of Youth Membership Development

Richard Kaing, the National General Secretary of the Myanmar YMCA reported that the Youth Committee of the National Council of YMCAs of Myanmar was formed in 2002 with 7 members, 5 of who were young people. In 2006, the Committee adopted the theme "Together in Spirituality and Action" and planned to implement programmes related to the theme. The Committee focussed on: Youth Forums on Issues, Youth and Education, Youth Participation in YMCA, Capacity Building, and Youth Camps. Six of the 13 and newly formed local YMCAs in Myanmar have already formed their Youth Committees or established Youth Desks.



Youth Participate in Vision Building.

On 2-4 February 2006, the new associate YMCA, Pathein, in the southern part of the country conducted a Youth and Education Seminar attended by 25 participants. Mawlamyine YMCA implemented the programme "Youth Participation in the YMCA", on 17-19 February while Kut Kai YMCA had the same workshop on March 28-30. Other programmes have been planned for the year.

Challenges and Dilemmas for Korean YMCAs in Organising Uni-Ys

In most of the YMCAs in Korea, the leader of the University YMCA automatically becomes a member of the local YMCA Board. However, the extent of the youth member's participation in policy and decision making process is not clear. Without deep understanding about the YMCA identity and issues being discussed, it would not be easy for the young people to speak out their views in the Board.

Ms. Hwang Jung Hwa, a Programme Director at the National Council of YMCAs of Korea expressed that "The most urgent task for me therefore is to encourage these students to understand the YMCA better. This is my main task. It is important to gather members and provide the appropriate orientation about the vision and mission of the YMCA. Youth members are given orientation before participation in international programmes. Unfortunately they tend to associate YMCA only with international work." "I strive hard to help them think about the YMCA identity with three emphases: visioning and studying about an alternative world, reflecting about their community and culture, and creating activities to realise an alternative world. It is not easy to facilitate the understanding of these tasks among the youth. Moreover, if the staff got too involved, the youth would not have sufficient space to create their own identity. This year, I hope that they will be able to form their national representative structure."

Indian YMCAs Creating Space for Youth

Mr. Anjan Mukerjee, National Staff responsible for youth work, reported that a majority of the 700 local YMCAs in the Indian Movement have active youth groups, youth forums or youth cells. Many still continue to have Hi-Ys and Uni-Ys.

There has also been progress in establishing formal space and structures at local and national levels in the form of Youth Committees or Councils. The National Youth Work Committee meets once a year to deliberate on the youth constituency including students, and youth programmes. Recently, it set up a core group on a National Youth Policy that would be presented for discussion at various levels. The Committee comprises of Chairpersons of all Regional Youth Forums and the Presidents of National Uni-Y and Hi-Y Fellowships. Young people are also represented at the National Executive where there are currently 2 youth, and the National Board consists of 3 elected/co-opted youth members.

The Indian YMCA also organises regular national gatherings and meetings to increase youth participation in the Movement. The National Council holds the National Youth Assembly once in three years involving 100-150 youth representatives from across the 9 YMCA Regions. Since 2002, 2 Youth Assemblies have been held providing youth with experiences for their growth and development. The National Youth Forum meets once or twice a year and during the National Youth Assembly. The Forum has 18 members, including 3 women and 3 non-Christians and is chaired by one of the National Vice Presidents, mandated to be below 30 years. Regional Assemblies on the other hand, are held every year in all 9 regions. These are organised by the Regional Youth Forums comprising of representatives from sub-regions, women and youth from other faiths.

The Indian YMCA is seriously considering a proposal of “Dual Governance – House of Elders and House of Youth”. According to the Concept Paper “the House of Youth tentatively shall be entrusted with

programme planning and implementation, which is the main thrust of the movement. The Elders (House of Elders) will be entrusted with the dual responsibilities of finance and administration.” A 5-member task group with 3 youth members has been set up to look into the matter.

Exchanges between the regions of the Indian YMCA are also being promoted. Recently, the first-ever National Youth Cultural Exchange Programme was organised on 18-20 November 2005 with the theme ‘Youth Celebrating Cultural Diversity’. Eighty-five youth from all the regions participated in the event. Performances and a Panel Discussion were the highlights of the event, building cultural understanding and friendships in the midst of the Indian cultural diversity. The youth also had an opportunity to have an “Interface” with the National General Secretary.

The Way Forward

The journey towards increased youth participation in leadership and decision-making at all levels is long, given the entrenched views and various barriers that tend to prevent the wider space that youth need to fully develop their capacities. These moves to increase youth participation by some YMCAs are islands of hope that can spur the young leaders towards greater engagement in the programmes and structures. More YMCAs in the region, as can be seen from the survey responses, need to become more proactive in promoting youth participation and leadership. While doing this, we ought to bear in mind the leadership that we need – committed to the fulfilment of the vision of God’s reign in which love, peace and justice reach all of God’s creation.

We have a charge and a responsibility to develop the capabilities of youth that they may be leaders to build a better world. This is our challenge – to secure the future leadership of our movement for the continuous strive towards our mission thrusts as expressed within our respective contexts.

Youth Lead in Cambodia

Poverty, democracy, education and governance were among the concerns raised by the youth of Cambodia during the recent Cambodian Youth Leadership Forum on 12-14 May 2006. The Forum was organised by the Cambodian YMCA and Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs in Phnom Penh. It was attended by 30 youth from the YMCA and the Student Christian Mission (SCM), our ecumenical partner there. A staff person from Himeji YMCA, Japan also took part in the Forum.

Mr. Heav Veasna, Deputy Executive Director, Centre for Social Development, Cambodia shared his perspectives on Cambodian realities, with special reference to youth concerns. He affirmed the important role of youth in Cambodia's social development. He told them that they had the power to change the society. He encouraged them to secure a good education and to understand the Cambodian society better to assume responsibility in developing their society.

With the challenge and motivation from Mr. Veasna's presentation, the participants engaged and struggled with the challenge in the Leadership for Mission and Social Transformation Workshop. They shared their dreams for their present social situation and the transformation of the community, and their visions about their leadership role in this transformation. Their resolve to help the weak and powerless was further strengthened on the exposure visit to the Centre of Unaccompanied Associations, a refuge for poor orphans and widows. The participants gained inspiration from Mrs. Sar Sakada its Executive Director who had established the centre out of her experiences of hardship and suffering during after the years of the Pol Pot regime. She had sold her land and other properties to set up the centre. In so doing, she found peace and her commitment to serve the needy and God.



Cambodian Youth discussions on poverty, corruption.

The youth also learned more about the YMCA and its Mission. Yip Kok Choong, APAY General Secretary shared the YMCA's history, mission, thrusts and contemporary responses of YMCAs in the region. He called on the YMCA in Cambodia to respond to the challenges identified by the group and to develop the Cambodian YMCA Mission in response to the needs of society.

In the final session, action plans were developed to build the capacity of youth as active change agents in society, responding to pressing social issues and empowering youth and the people towards self-reliance. Youth forms a large percentage of the current membership of the YMCA in Cambodia. The Organising Committee of the YMCA is also youth-led. It is hoped that a formal inaugural membership meeting can be held before the end of the year - the final step in the formal establishment of the YMCA of Cambodia - a journey started in 1999.

Im Thano, Chairperson, Organising Committee of the YMCA in Cambodia, and Shella Quezada-Zagada, APAY Executive Secretary for Programmes facilitated the Forum.

Transformed....to give you a future and a hope!

Jeremiah 29:11-14

11. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, **to give you a future and a hope.** **12.** Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to me, and I will listen to you. **13.** And you will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. **14.** I will be found by you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back from your captivity.

Rev. Samuel D. Stephens, President and Mr. Yip Kok Choong, General Secretary of the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs visited the Myitkyina YMCA with Mr. Richard Kaing, National General Secretary of the YMCA of Myanmar from 21-24 March. Accompanied by Mr. Gun Shawng, the General Secretary of the Myitkyina YMCA, a visit was made to the home of Mr. Sinwa Aung a young man "with a mission", to visit the "street children" programme he was carrying out with support from the YMCA. There were 39 children dressed in an assortment of scruffy street clothes and karate gi waiting to greet us. We watched a demonstration of their karate routines, heard them recite the Psalm 23 and the Lord's Prayer, interacted with them as they washed up for dinner, and at their dinner.

We had a chance to talk at length with Mr. Sinwa Aung, the young man "with a mission" about his life and how he came to be doing "this mission".

Sinwa Aung, please tell us a little about your family background.

First of all, I praise and thank God for His love and the countless blessings I have received from him. I am an ethnic Kachin from the Kachin State in the

northern part of Myanmar. I was born on the 11 April 1971. Both of my parents are God's servants. As my parents are Christian, I have been a Christian since I was born. I heard about Jesus Christ when I was very young. But I did not understand the meaning of Christ's salvation and what Christianity actually was. I did not know and did not believe that Christ was my personal savior or deliverer.

We are very poor because my parents are not business people, but just preachers, servants of God. So I had a good taste of poverty when I was young. I have two brothers and a sister. I am the eldest of the four. We were brought up at In Jang Dung Quarter, Myitkyina. I was training in Karate under Mr. S. Gun Shawng at the YMCA from 12 to 19 years old. He trained me not only in Karate, but also in my behaviour and to practice good morals. I learnt how to follow rules and regulations. He also helped me gain much general knowledge. I soon achieved my Black Belt 1st Dan belt. But I neglected all these. I did not want to remain poor. I wanted to become a businessman and rich. So, I left everything and went to Hpakant Jade Mine to work and make my fortune. There was only one

thing in my mind. Make money. I thought that if I had money; I could do whatever I wanted to do and wanted to have.

So, you became “rich” working at the Jade Mine. How did it affect your life?

Soon my dream of being rich was coming true. I had many friends. We enjoyed ourselves. We consumed drugs, alcohol and gambled. We had many girlfriends. Although I had so much money I never thanked God. I forgot God’s grace totally. I became Satan’s slave. That Satan was drugs. I became the slave of drugs. I was on the road to destruction. I began doing evil deeds when I became high on narcotic drugs. I was unconscious every now and then, because of the overdose of the drugs that I took by injection. Soon I was arrested for some crimes that I had committed. I was treated cruelly. I was nearly killed. When I realised that I could be sentenced to death, I became afraid to die. At that time, I was friendless, helpless. I felt lonely and hopeless. My money had all gone. I thought of dying, but was afraid of what would become of me after death. If there were hell, I would surely be there, because I was a sinner.

You got into trouble with the law. Your money was all gone. All your friends had left you...

I became desperate. I did not know what to do. Then I remembered some of the stories of Jesus that I had heard. I asked myself, could I still be saved, after all the “bad” things I had done? Not knowing what else



Sinwa Aung and his young charges, Myitkyina.

to do, I prayed all night. I confessed all my sins. God heard my prayers as he had promised and saved me from death. God showed me His mercy. God saved me both from my physical and spiritual condition. I surrendered my life to Jesus Christ and accepted Him as my Lord and Saviour. I found that I was not afraid any more. I had Jesus’ assurance that he was there to save me. Somehow, I was soon released from jail.

What did you do after this experience?

I realised I had wasted my youthful days and my life. I was moved to learn more of the word of God. I now have a Bachelor’s Degree in Theology from a Bible College. The Bible, in 2 Corinthians 5:17 says: *“If any one is in Christ, he is a new creation the old has gone and the new has come”*. Today, I believe I am a new creation. All my sins are gone and I have become a child of God. Before my conversion, I hated everyone. But now, I want to help people and become a “peace-maker”.

This group of children is a very interesting “mix”. How did this group of children that we see here, come about?

Soon as I arrived home from Bible College, God sent six street children - orphans and very poor children to me. They were of different ages. They came from different places, were different ethnically, and had different cultures and religions. So I asked God, “Oh Lord, what kind of problems have you sent to me”. But I had no way, no other way, because Jesus had delivered me, trained me and remoulded me. I must obey His commands. I must follow His way, the Calvary Road.

I started working with these six children on 15 November 2004. Two months later, six more children came! Within two months we were together 12 members staying together. I found it very difficult to deal with these children. They were very difficult to control because of their difficult background in the streets. At first, I was worried, “What am I going to do?” “How can I take care of them? I do not even

have a job.” But they asked me to take pity on them and to help them. They said they had no hope for the future.

I decided to help these children. I have made this my “full-time job”. I wanted them to get new hope for life and to learn about Jesus and to accept Jesus Christ for eternal life. So, I allowed them to stay with me.

With only faith in God and without anything, I started taking in these children. It was fortunate that my father’s house has a large compound at the back. So with the help of the bigger boys, we built a shelter and a small classroom with split bamboo. They ate at a long table that we made in the open. The Myitkyina YMCA and Mr. Gun Shawng, the General Secretary has helped to raise some contributions for food from the local community and supported my work. There are now 34 children in my house.

Tell us more about these “street children” as you call them.

There are 9 girls among them. Most of the children are between 9 and 15 years old. The youngest of these children is 6 years old and the oldest is 20 years.

Some of these children were homeless. Before they arrived at my house, they slept along the banks of the river, or on the roadside. Some children were already involved in crime. Most of the children who came to me were drinking alcohol, smoking, and gambling. Some have also been involved in sex with “bad girls”. Some have parents who are HIV-positive. If I rejected them, they would continue to become addicted to drugs, and perhaps even contact HIV and AIDS. When I saw their faces and learnt about their lives I shed tears. I remembered my own foolish days.

What activities do you have for these children? Will they go back to school?

At first, I testified to them about my own life, I told them who had changed my terrible life. I believed that the word of God could change their lives, just as

they had changed mine. So, I teach them from the bible every day. They memorise and recite scripture verses everyday. Now I also teach them Karate for physical and mental strength. I teach them music, English, ethics and general knowledge as best as I could. My wife teaches them traditional Kachin dancing.

We are now running a 3-month summer programme for 39 children – bible study, karate training, dancing, music and learning English.

In the beginning, they found it very difficult to cut their bad habits. But, day-by-day, their situation became better. By the grace of God they have become the children of Light. I love them. Yes, eventually, we hope to encourage them to continue their schooling and graduate from high school.

What do you hope to achieve with what you are doing with, seeing that you do not have a full-time paid job, and are married with a lovely baby daughter?

My only purpose is to save and protect these children in their vulnerable situations, to lead them to a chance for a new life in Christ. This has now become my challenge – to share God’s Grace that has been so freely given to me.

This is because I have walked this road before. I do not want them to become like what I was. I want them to know the value of life. I want to nurture the children for a meaningful life. I want them to have hope for the future.



Hope for street youth in Myitkyina, Myanmar.

Why I Want Peace.....

We are working for peace. We are living in the Ampara District in the war-torn eastern province of Sri Lanka. The area we are living in is a very remote and dangerous place. Our daily lives are threatened by the on-going war. It is important for us young people to learn about peace and to practise ways of harmonious living in our daily lives.

“We are living and working in a community affected by the war. We came to learn more about building peace and how can we build peace in our area.” These were the expressions of Niluka Priyadharshani and her sister Renuka Sanjeewani as participants expressed their feelings and hopes as individuals and members of the YMCA.

A month after the workshop, the two sisters wrote, “at present we are engaged in a ‘peace community’ project for widows in Mangalagama, affected by the civil war. We are putting up some toilets and two wells. Later our YMCA will associate with a livelihood project for widows in Mangalagama, Ampara.”

Sanjeewani and Niluka are young members of the Ampara YMCA, a very remote village in the eastern province of Sri Lanka. The band of villages in their area has been identified as threatened villages where killings are taking place very often. They have become young peace practitioners and peace builders in their community.

We would like to build peace. Deepak Julius from Salem YMCA had different expectations as the coordinator for the rebuilding project of Indian YMCAs in tsunami-affected villages. He wanted to “learn more about peace, the techniques and skills to build peace among individuals, groups and the country.” As a YMCA staff he expressed his plan to

“implement peace initiatives in all the activities and actions in the tsunami-affected communities.”

Kim Kab Dong, a young staff from Daejeon YMCA of Korea expressed his wider expectations on the training workshop: “I hope we can start a young peace-builders movement as a follow-up of the workshop so that we can be engaged as young peace-builders in the region. As a staff of the Daejeon YMCA, I would like to have more experiences when youth can participate in peace-building.”

These were some of the expressions of participants at the APAY Young Peace-Builders Workshop hosted by the YMCA of Sri Lanka in Galle, from 20-26 April 2006. Twenty-three selected youth leaders from India, Korea, the Philippines and the northern and eastern parts of Sri Lanka, participated in the training workshop themed “Rebuilding Community, Rebuilding Peace”.

Rebuilding Community, Rebuilding Peace

The workshop focussed on building a culture of peace with young people as key peace-builders. Experienced peace builders and advocates facilitated workshops in conflict analysis and peace building.

The tensions in Sri Lanka as a result of the car bombing at the army headquarters in Colombo during the days that the workshop was being held only emphasised the urgent need to promote peace and reconciliation.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Yip Kok Choong, General Secretary of the Asia and Pacific Alliance told the participants, “that youth with their enthusiasm, energy and vision, are the hope for rebuilding community, rebuilding peace”. He called on youth to “recognise that the urgent task in the YMCA is what the United

Nations Charter of 1945 describes as a Culture of Peace ~ *to live together in peace with one another as good neighbours.*” He also said, “as we seek to build communities of peace with justice, we are called to promote a culture of prevention. This is an approach that places importance on preventing problems and anything that tends to create conflicts before they happen, preventing a culture of war. We can rebuild and strengthen our connections and community relationships. We can rebuild communities of trust. We can cement these relationships by using community trust, wisdom and cultural practices.”

Because of ethnic polarisation in the last twenty-five years, Thoumian, a young Tamil university student from the Jaffna YMCA in northern Sri Lanka confessed that his “experience” of the south was almost zero. “The practical experience of carrying out a *‘shiramadana’* programme where we had the opportunity to work in the YMCA Tsunami Housing Scheme in Matara with Sinhalese and other nationals was a new experience for me. Coming from the predominantly Tamil area in the north, participating in the Sinhala-Tamil New Year Celebration there was a new experience for me. This trip to the south was feasible only because of the current no-war situation. I cannot imagine travelling to the south if war broke out again which could result in the closure of the *A9 Road* (again) that links the north and south of Sri Lanka.”



Different perspectives different responses.

He further mentioned that the peace-building sessions facilitated by Prof. S.I. Keethaponkalan of the University of Colombo were knowledge-enhancing, especially when they shared their understanding and perspectives of peace within their own cultures and contexts. Based on these, participants were made to understand basic behavioural and attitudinal components of peace-building and its praxis. The session on conflict analysis led by Mr. Kassapa Diyabedange was a learning exercise where they discovered how a conflict situation could be transformed into a positive event and a non-violent situation. From these sessions participants understood the importance of understanding each other’s likes and dislikes, culture and their life-values. These are fundamental elements for peaceful coexistence among communities.

Theatre by Ms. Ruwanthi de Chikera as a peace-building technique helped the youth to appreciate the importance of viewing situations from different perspectives. A youth television production house, Young Asia TV (YA-TV) shared their “peace-casting” experiences. YA-TV is entirely staffed 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 were able to meet with Rev. Dr. Baddegama Samitha, the first Buddhist monk to be elected a member of parliament, and a well-known peace advocate. They learnt of his personal experiences in dealing with conflicts involving the marginalized in community.

The participants expressed that they were keen to practice peace and conflict resolution in their own communities. They expressed that they hoped to build peace groups in their own YMCAs. They also looked forward to wider networking opportunities to gain more knowledge in the area of peace-building and building communities.

Youth Actions and Activities Around the Region

Australia: Youth and Family Programmes

The Australian YMCA programmes conducts an array of programmes related to Youth and Community, providing an opportunity to serve the needs of the communities. These include the Juvenile Justice Programme, Alternatives to Incarceration for Non-Violent Offenders, Preventative Work, Mobile Youth Centres, and The Shed, amongst others.

The **Juvenile Justice Programme** provides recreation activities to the teenagers in the Melbourne Juvenile Justice Centre. A schools participation programme had been integrated where metropolitan and regional students visit the center to play sports with the young offenders. As a result, more and more people are giving up their time after school to make the games possible. The **Alternatives to Incarceration for Non-Violent Offenders** programme of the YMCA in Katherine, Northern Territories, works with Territory Police and the Justice System to support young offenders by providing alternatives to incarceration and encouraging them to face up to their actions, through a framework of honesty, caring, respect and responsibility.

The YMCA is committed to **Preventative Work** rather than just focusing on problems. With this methodology, they offer a pathway to strength. The YMCA of Newman developed a successful interactive stage production, *DRUGGED*. The play demonstrates the effects of drugs and alcohol by focusing on the experiences of a close group of friends. The production completed a tour of Western

Australia and was a top four-finalist in the 'Prevention and Education' category of the National Drug and Alcohol awards held in Sydney. On the same note, the **Mobile Youth Centres** of Perth YMCA encapsulates a community spirit by bringing activities, support and education to young people in metropolitan and regional Western Australia. Youth and community services utilise a preventative framework, rather than focusing on a deficit model, with long term, holistic goals in mind.

Modern living has seen an increase in the abuse and neglect of young people and has left some older people feeling isolated and alone. To reconnect these people as a community and to encourage the sharing of peoples' experience and knowledge, the Brisbane YMCA has established a community center called '**The Shed**', where the young and the old work together. An environment is created where older and retired people can meet with others and help young people to learn and enjoy a multitude of activities, from tinkering with cars and small motors, to arts, crafts, cooking and sewing.

Bangladesh and Japan: Youth Work Camp

Since the 1980's the Tokyo and Bangladesh YMCAs have been working together to fulfil the mission of the YMCAs through various efforts of empowering the powerless in Bangladesh. The partnership seeks to educate poor children, empower women, manage shelter for flood victims, provide medical facilities to the poor and ethnic minority groups and develop leadership among the youth. Cultural exchange

programmes, study tours and work camps are organised regularly to develop socially responsible youth leadership between Japan and Bangladesh.

This year, from 25 February to 19 March, a work camp was organised in Dinajpur. During the work camp, the participants installed 25 sanitary slab toilets and repaired 6 houses. The twenty-five participants had home-stays and participated in cultural exchanges. They learned about the culture and history of Bangladesh, the harsh realities of the rural communities and the slums in the urban area. They encountered and interacted with the people in the communities, NGOs, the churches, government and private schools, and hospitals. They also visited historical places.



Youth...raising issues.

Korea: Reinforcing Youth Participation in the Movement

The YMCA of Korea supports youth to grow as responsible citizens - subjects of their lives, to be given opportunities for autonomy and participation. The youth programmes include helping to eliminate social factors hindering holistic development of youth, organising social support networks, and intensifying the spaces of autonomy for the youth. Also included are club activities of middle school Y and Hi-Y, open youth forums organised by local YMCAs. The YMCA also provides youth counseling on sex and sexuality, drug-abuse, and employment opportunities.

New Zealand: Get An Edge – Youth Leadership

The New Zealand YMCA annually conducts the **Get An Edge** programme, a Youth Leadership programme for 11-18 year-olds of five “levels”. For all but the last level, there is a weekly or fortnightly commitment on the part of the participant. The programme aims at building self-esteem, integrity, develops leadership skills and a community spirit. The programme’s vision is to empower young people to make a difference in their lives and the lives of others by providing the place, the tools and the support to positively strengthen their own identity.

Each level consists of Core Leadership Skills, Skills Development, Service Learning, First Aid, and Assessment and Coaching. The Core Leadership Skills cover interrelated topics such as Leadership, Communication, Managing Risk, Awareness of Differences, etc. It looks at the person’s identity in relation to the wider community and the global village. Skills Development provides opportunities for participants to learn various skills, such as public speaking, drama, self-defence, outdoors skills etc. Service Learning provides opportunities for the youth to develop and implement a community project in a holistic approach and learn from their undertaking. Throughout the programme, participants are continuously coached.

Philippines: Youth Engagement in Rural Communities

Annually, the YMCA of Manila conducts a community development programme called the “**Summer Rural Work Camp**”. It is held in remote areas outside Metro Manila where the students of various fields of specialisation can make use of their skills to help the less privileged communities. Through the work camp, participants are immersed in the daily life of the communities. This helps them understand the daily realities of the people. Participants are selected students from different colleges and universities. They plan and conduct activities, jointly with the local residents, enabling them to respond to the community needs. In the process, participants not

only share their knowledge and skill, but also gain a deeper understanding of the spirit of service and volunteerism.

This year, the work camp was held in Barangay Pinaglubayan, Polillo, Quezon Province from April 18 to May 13. Seventeen students from the fields of engineering, education, social work, nursing, business and cooperative development lived with the community. The participants were able to work with the community in the areas of education, youth development, healthy recreation, engineering, healthcare and home management. Some of the activities conducted included, pre-school and remedial classes for the children and adult basic education; youth leadership seminars; sports clinics/tournaments; repair of school facilities, community hall, street signs and lights, etc. Seminars and training on primary health care, environmental sanitation, nutrition, mass circumcision, medical and dental missions were also conducted in the field of health. Home management included livelihood skills training, seminar on effective and responsible parenting, and food production and preservation.

Singapore: Developing Youth Through Uni-Y

The YMCA of Singapore has organised the University YMCA to fulfill its mission by harnessing and developing the potential of youth in local universities. A Uni-Y has been started at the Singapore Management University, Uni-Y @ SMU to provide space and opportunities to be involved in Community



Youth exchanges build understanding across borders.

Service and while serving, develop personal character and skills for character development.

The following are distinguishing features that characterise the Singapore Uni-Y:

Character Development

Committed to the character development of our members, programmes will be inclusive. They will emphasise “love to our neighbour” and service to the community to instil values such as servant-leadership, and humility through service learning.

Social Entrepreneurship

Through promotion of social entrepreneurship, students will learn how to utilise enterprising, innovative and creative methodologies to solve issues of social concern. Such skills will enable students to take community development to a different paradigm and equip them to be leaders who are both compassionate and competent.

Sustained Programmes

As opposed to one-off community service projects, the belief is that the best way to affect a positive change in the lives of people is by long-term, sustained commitment. The Uni-Y will enter into partnership with various voluntary organisations, and work towards such sustained partnership overseas.

Student-body Engagement

Students will form their own committees and work teams to initiate, plan and organise activities of Uni-Y, under the broad framework of Uni-Y’s aims and objectives. Other campus-wide events in partnership with other campus groups will also be organised. An upcoming activity is a community service camp for freshmen from 31 July to 3 August.

International Programmes

International exchanges and programmes will expose our members to be more world-ready and by participating in overseas programmes. In the recent months, the Uni-Y members have participated in the refurbishment of a school library with the YMCA Shanghai International Service Project and Chiangmai Service project with the Hong Kong Uni-Y.

Partnerships, Leadership Development and Major Concerns

Ninety-six representatives from 16 YMCA Movements in the region participated in the annual Executive and Related Standing Committee Meetings on 15-19 March in Hong Kong. The following are briefs of some key issues deliberated upon.

Present at the Opening Session and to greet us were Dr. Bart Shaha, Secretary General of the World Alliance of YMCAs; Dr. Prawate Khid-Arn, General Secretary of the Christian Conference of Asia, Ms. Necta Montes-Rocas, Regional 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.

A key focus of the Executive Committee and Related Meetings was on leadership development, in particular how to build transformational and visionary Leadership. Another concern 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 updates on the Tsunami Response Programmes in India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Sri Lanka.

President Calls for “Parakletic Partnership”

Rev. Samuel D. Stephens in his President's Address to the Executive Committee Meeting called on the movement to work together in what he described as “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



Rev. Samuel Stephens making President's Address.

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.”

The President surmised that:

- 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.

The President was confident that “we would have great success as long as we remain sensitive to these dynamics. We can and must develop and strengthen such *parakletic* partnerships”.

Visionary Leadership for Mission Relevance and Transformation

Mr. Louis Tong, Vice President of the Hong Kong Council of YMCAs shared his thoughts and reflections on “*Visionary Leadership for Mission Relevance and Transformation*”. He called on leaders to be visionary and transformational thinker-doers who are knowledgeable and 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 where there is sustainable development, and to build a harmonious global community based on holistic development. Interesting discussions followed the challenging presentation by Mr. Tong.

The Daily Biblical Reflections

were also focussed on “leadership”. Rev. Ng Ee Lin, 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* based on Jonah 3:1-5, 10; and *In the Midst of Storm* based on Matthew 14:22-33. Rev. Ng said, “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.”

World Alliance Matters

Dr. Bart Shaha, Secretary General, World Alliance of YMCAs spoke of positive changes at the World Alliance since the 2002 World Council 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 16th World Council in Durban, South Africa where almost 800 have registered to participate. The World Council would not be dealing with abstracts, but on concrete practices and responses. The process of “open space” appreciative enquiry and action planning will be used to focus on “movement strengthening”. Each participant can be actively involved in the Movement Strengthening Summit.

Another important event will be the Council Meeting that includes the Election of the Officers and Executive Committee Members, 2006-2010. There are 7 nominees for the Executive Committee, including a youth and 2 women, from the region. The position of Deputy President for which our President Rev. Samuel D. Stephens is a nominee, appears to be a



We have a right to assert our own identity....

“no-contest”. There are 3 nominees overall for the position of Treasurer.

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 Cambodia and East Timor, reported by Im Thano, Chairperson of the Organising Committee of the Cambodian YMCA, and Hideki Ishibashi seconded to APAY by the YMCA of Japan, 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 programmes.

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.

Active 2006 Programme Plan Adopted

The relevant Standing Committees deliberated on the respective components of the 2006 Programme Plan 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)

Building Community and A Culture of Peace (BCCP)

- Regional Young Peace Builders Training / Work Camp
- Regional Workshop on Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Development
- 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 (Focus on Fiji, Samoa, Papua New Guinea, Pakistan)
- East Timor YMCA Development
- Cambodia YMCA Development
- Integrated Leadership Development Plan Curriculum Planning (Task Group)

Youth Participation & Leadership Development (YPLD)

- 1st APAY Youth Assembly
- APAY Youth Work Camps (East Timor, Nias)
- Leadership Development (Cambodia)
- Regional Youth Exchange (2)
- Young Professional Programme
- EASY Net / Asia Pacific Students and Youth Week
- Youth-based Mission in Action Programme (MAP)

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)

Positive Responses to Quadrennial Programme Plan

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 expressed as a result of working together on the key thrusts of the QPP at the Leaders Quadrennial Roundtable (LQR) in Bangkok in 2004.

Preparation for 17th General Assembly Planning

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 Justpeace. The theme will be also 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. These are located some 30 minutes from the International Airport of Colombo, and 24 km. from Colombo city, facing the Gulf of Mannar.

The following were 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).

Youth Call for Greater Integration in 17th General Assembly

The Youth Participation and Leadership Development Committee has called for commitment to ensure their integration in the 17th General Assembly. They appreciated the space for their own Youth Assembly in 2006 and hoped that their concerns would be integrated into the General Assembly. They also called for National Movements to have their participants at the Youth Assembly participate in the 17th General Assembly.

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

Voices and Reports from the Field

The disaster response efforts of the YMCAs in India, Indonesia and Sri Lanka continue one and a half years after the disaster. The Housing Programmes in India and Sri Lanka are progressing well and nearing completion. In Sri Lanka, the repairs to damaged YMCAs are almost complete. 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.

In this Update, we highlight the social transformation emphasis of the Indonesian Tsunami Responses Programme.

Indonesia

Social Transformation, Cornerstone of Tsunami Response Programme

The major components of the YMCA Tsunami Response Programme (YTRP), are Community Rebuilding for Economic and Livelihood Recovery; Training and Development for young people to support the community in its development and



Community self-help in Nias.

reconstruction efforts; and Social Services such as psycho-social counselling, paralegal services to assist people and communities in recovery of documents, etc.

The major target group of the response programmes is Youth, including children. Other target groups include farmers, fisher-folk, small traders, teachers, and women.

Trauma Healing Programme

The Social Services component included the Trauma Healing programme initiated as part of the emergency response by Mr. Aad Kik a former National General Secretary of the YMCA Netherlands, and his wife Mettie. Eighty-three participants from YMCA and partner organisations had attended the 4 Traumatic Healing Training Programmes held between March to July 2005. Further training was conducted by Aad and Mettie Kik in November and December 2005 ~ Mentors' Training for former trainees and a Teachers' Training in Nias focused on "Teaching in Times of Disaster". The *Duta Kasih* Club (Ambassadors of Love) facilitated by the Medan YMCA has been formed by those trained as their continuing commitment towards humanitarian activities.

The participants were actively involved in reaching out to the many survivors of the tsunami in Aceh and in Nias. Trauma healing was a key entry response into the community in Nias Island, particularly after the earthquake of 28 March. The skills of the volunteers of the Medan YMCA were put to good use during the Mandala Air plane crash on 5 September 2006, shortly after takeoff from the Polonia Airport in Medan.

Social Transformation, Not Material Support

From the outset of the long-term response programme, the response team had, from the initial mapping and analysis carried out, planned to embark on a programme of social transformation. This was also in line with the call of the authorities in Nias to work together to build a “Nias Baru” (New Nias). They had taken note of the large number of relief and other NGOs providing material support. What was needed was to develop and sustain a new Nias, a new approach to a sustainable life. It seemed that the island had been neglected, services were lacking compared to the rest of Indonesia.

The task ahead for the YTRP Team was difficult – engaging in communities that were largely different ethnically, culturally, and linguistically. There were long days of discussions to identify people who were attitudinally ready to begin working with the team. This was against a scenario where material support, large offices and vehicles were the norm. We share here the long, challenging but rewarding processes:

Capacity Building in Villages

Capacity Building workshops were organised with the response team members and community leaders in the field of Community Rebuilding, and, Training and Development as part of their preparatory activities. The Medan YMCA tsunami response team met with the community leaders in 15 villages in the 4 districts of Nias in October and November 2005. In their discussions, the team introduced the YMCA Tsunami Response Programme (YTRP), explained its processes and briefed them about related activities.

The training workshop for the Community Rebuilding component, held on 7-8 November 2005 was attended by 25 participants while the workshop for Training and Development held on 9-10 November had as participants 28 coordinating staff, volunteers and the community leaders.

In the workshops, a brief introduction on the YMCA, its mission and work, was shared. The participants were also given time towards building self-awareness in relation to their community. They learned through discussions and illustrations about the various levels of awareness, as well as development concepts in the context of Indonesia and the communities. Concepts and steps for community organising were also covered. The participants were also equipped with tools for social analysis.

In work groups they then analysed their current situation, identified problems and sought solutions to the challenges. Among the problems identified and prioritised by participants in the Community Rebuilding training were: inadequate capital, unemployment, inadequate transportation and inaccessible roads, insufficient clean water, plant and animal diseases, marketing and the crops bought by



Youth group cooperative farm.

brokers at cheap prices and lack of education. Based on these problems, participants proposed the following: accessible marketing centres; improvement in transportation; community cooperation and cooperatives; technical counselling and sharing of knowledge on agriculture and other forms of livelihood; and capital support for livelihood.

The participants of the Training and Development component listed the following problems as priorities: Influence of outside youth on drug abuse; inadequate transportation and other facilities; unemployment; lack of capital; fish “bombing”; floods; apathy and social jealousy. The participants, mostly young people, recommended these solutions: vocational school/training, creating job opportunities, community cooperatives, seek government support for public facilities and other concerns, counseling/sharing of technical knowledge, create activities for young people, develop youth organisations.

Participants were also accompanied in the programme planning process where they proposed activities and schedules to address the identified challenges and responses. The discussion outputs matched those of the YTRP Team: data gathering, analysis/study, building contacts, meetings and routine discussion, capacity building (e.g. workshops on agriculture, pig breeding, home industries/enterprises), leadership training, group formation, developing networks and their support. Given the outcomes-group formation and training have been carried in 14 selected villages. Each village now has a youth group and an adult group. The implementation of the YTRP is proceeding with the support of the community.

Group Formation and Consultations for Community Rebuilding

Following the capacity building, the Medan YMCA initiated group formation processes and consultations between February and May 2006 to further the social transformation goals of the YTRP. The Community Rebuilding team conducted routine discussions and

consultations with community leaders, meeting a total of 777 residents in 15 villages in the process. The Training and Development team had meetings and regular discussions with a total of 749 residents in 15 villages.

In the village meetings, the team had encouraged group formation to provide space for the communities to find their own solutions to problems faced. Many of the local people had expected the YMCA to provide financial and monetary aid to them. The team explained that YMCA was working towards participatory empowerment processes that would facilitate building the community’s capacities and cooperation.

Social Services

The Social Services component of the project strengthened the other two components of the tsunami response. The Children’s Creativity Fair (in March 2006) that aimed at managing the traumatic experiences of children and women helped earn the trust of the community towards the YMCA efforts. With the focus on women and children, the YMCA increasingly gained the trust and confidence of the people such that even though it was not into building houses or providing material aid.

Threats/Obstacles

The YMCA had experienced some threats to the implementation of the YTRP, such as lack of human resources, inconsistencies among contacts, and comparison between YMCA and other NGO’s in terms of material assistance. There was suspicion from the people as to the purpose of the YMCA. The local leaders and communities have faced difficulties in coping/accepting changes discussed as other NGOs were mostly handing out material aid. Logistical difficulties including poor transportation and communication facilities, and lack of proper sanitation and health facilities were also experienced in the field by the coordinators.

In order to overcome these and to be able to work with the communities, the YTRP Team worked in cooperation with the local communities in many ways, such as opening and repairing roads, cleaning up waterways, helping to rebuild churches, encouraging villagers towards health and sanitation, and working in the farms.

The following impressions and observations of the programme coordinators and field organisers echo the above comments and difficulty of the work in Nias:

- People expect to receive financial aid and tangible support from NGOs, and dependency tendencies have become evident among them.
- Cultural knowledge and sensitivity are needed in working with the people. They were conscious of and respected the local culture and wisdom.
- Social preparation, organising, discussions and information sharing take a long time and much energy while people often get impatient for tangible outcomes. But the YTRP organizers kept to their commitment to educate, build awareness and facilitate the empowerment process towards social transformation.
- Nias lacks basic services and facilities that will support in improving the people's quality of life, such as transportation, water, health and other basic services.



Indian Tsunami Response PCG ...reviewing plans.

- Knowledge and technologies must be transferred directly to the people for them to benefit from the community rebuilding efforts.

India

Tsunami Rehabilitation Programme Moves into Phase 2

YMCAs Nearing Completion of Housing Programme

The priority in the Tsunami Rehabilitation Programme of the YMCAs of India was housing, considering the urgent need of relocating the people living in temporary shelters with sparse facilities and unhygienic surroundings. The housing programme is supported by Y CARE International UK and Ireland. The work is at completion level in most areas. As of 20 June 2006, 336 of 612 houses pledged have been completed and handed over to the beneficiaries in 8 locations. The repair of houses in Port Blair, Andaman and Nicobar Islands has progressed well with 102 of 150 damaged houses completed.

Community Development Activities

As part of the Plan, community-building initiatives were also taken up simultaneously. It was felt that providing material help alone would not help the community to move on from the severe trauma caused by the tsunami. The representatives of the local community as well as the local *Panchayat* authorities were involved in the planning process and various other programmes were undertaken as part of the community building initiatives. Even though these programme components as envisaged in the Tsunami Rehabilitation Programme were planned to be initiated in the second phase starting from July 2006, many of the implementing YMCAs (Madras, Madurai, Salem, Nagapattinam, Martandam, Southeast India Region, Southwest India Region, and Port Blair) have started different community development initiatives, e.g. livelihood activities, community building, health care, through local initiatives and resources.

Sri Lanka

Progress Amidst Situations of Insecurity and Renewed Conflicts

There has been general concern with the deteriorating security situation in the country, and in particular how it would affect the tsunami response work in the east and north. However, the tsunami response programmes are progressing in spite of local uncertainties at times.

Housing and Community Centres

Community centres will be built at three locations where housing work is underway or completed – Galle and Matara in the south, and Point Pedro in the north. Community Centres would also be built in Moratuwa in the south, and, Akkaraipattu and Kalmunai in the east. Further housing work would begin at Trincomalee when the general situation allows this. The Y CARE International supports the housing projects. The YMCA of Korea is supporting the construction of the Community Centre in Moratuwa.

Repairs to YMCAs – Kumari YMCA

The armed forces have ceased using the YMCA building and returned it to the YMCA. Renovation work has been planned and initiated. It is hoped that this work will be completed by September when the YMCA will be fully functioning again. Support for this has been received from YMCA of Australia.

Vocational Training

Support had been offered by the German YMCA to help with a needs assessment to determine the focus of vocational training and the operation of the new centres planned. It had been delayed because of the lack of progress in securing a site for vocational training work in the south.

Sports and Recreation Projects / Facilities

Construction work of Sports and Recreation Facilities was taking place in three locations, supported by the Malta YMCA. Y Global Norway will support the development of sports and recreational facilities, including in non-tsunami-affected YMCAs. The 2-year project began in May 2006.

Legal and Human Rights Advocacy

Action Churches Together (ACT) through the National Council of Churches, and Y CARE International are supporting this component in 6 YMCAs.

Movement Strengthening

The Sri Lanka National Council Executive Committee is taking overall leadership for Movement Strengthening work. The National Council's Annual General Meeting in May had focussed on movement strengthening, with workshops on programme development, governance and membership development to build support at local level for the Movement Strengthening programme. The YMCA of the USA is the partner providing the financial resources for the component.



Sri Lankan Tsunami Response PCG in group work.

Serving in Difficult Situations

Kazuki Yamane, Director, International Affairs of the National Council of YMCAs of Japan and Lakshan Dias, Executive Secretary of the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs visited the YMCA of Lahore from 21-28 May 2006. Meetings were held with the President Mr. Andrew McMullen, several Board members and Mr. John Shaffaq, the General Secretary of the Lahore YMCA cum National General Secretary of the YMCA of Pakistan, to discuss the situation of the YMCA and the earthquake relief work in the northern part of Pakistan. The Pakistan of YMCA has been facing difficult times especially in Karachi. The work of the National Council has been adversely affected. This preliminary visit was to examine the situation in Lahore and the relief work being carried out by the Lahore YMCA. This is a short report of the visit by Lakshan.

Lahore YMCA

The YMCA of Lahore, founded in 1876, runs programmes for children, youth, and women as some of the regular YMCA activities such as language classes and a hostel. Its Hostel boasts of many world-renowned guests in the past, including leaders of the Pakistan who were either hostelites or the long-term residents. They have been running a school programme for Afghan refugee children since 2002 with the support of the YMCA of Japan. The Lahore YMCA was also engaged in some relief activity during the 8 October-earthquake in the northern part of Pakistan.

Afghan Refugee Children Education Project

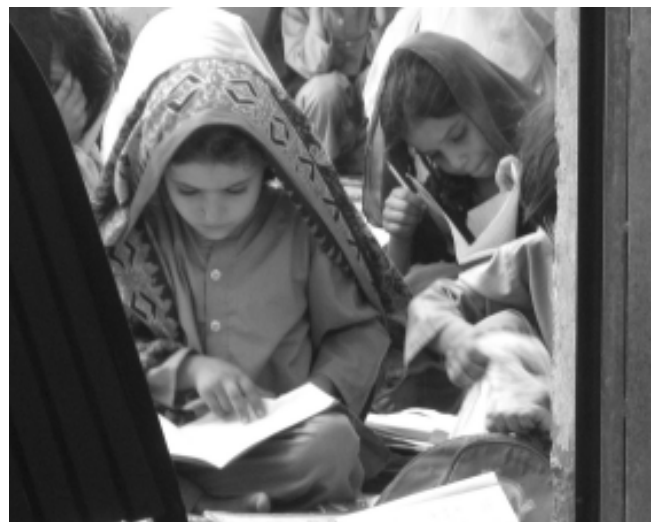
We visited the school (in a rented premise) for Afghan Refugee Children at the Manzoor Park. Most of the children in the school are living in the midst of a garbage dump without proper shelter, clean water and sanitation. They live in isolation from the rest of the community. There are nearly 80 children in the school. The parents are not interested in sending their

children for education as they look upon these children as potential income generators. To the credit of the Lahore YMCA they have been able to attract these children and obtain the consent of the parents to send their children to this school. According to Afghan culture it is not easy for Afghan girls to attend school. But the YMCA has overcome that. There are almost an equal number of girls and boys in this school. The YMCA has provided them with school uniforms, a mid-day meal and textbooks. There are two teachers and a YMCA staff person running the school. As most of these children are refugees they do not get any government support.

Apart from the education programme, the Lahore YMCA also provides medical support through a doctor. These children get basic medical check-ups, vitamins and medicine for their common illnesses.

Relief Work in the Earthquake Area

Almost all the buildings in the Balakot Township have been destroyed - the market place, roads and all the government buildings and houses. Balakot was once



Afghan children school run by Lahore YMCA.

a busy transit city in the Karakorm Highway from Pakistan to the Chinese border. It was a well-developed township. The earthquake has destroyed almost all the public utilities in Balakot, Manserha, Battagram and Muzaffarabad. More than 70,000 lives were lost due to the earthquake and later due to the severe winter weather conditions. The Government has already started reconstruction as a mid-term solution and designing new plans for long term rebuilding. The estimated number of schools destroyed or affected total nearly 2000, and about 500 schools were totally destroyed. The Government had agreed to provide US\$750 aid to those living in refugee camps to rebuild their houses, but no date had been fixed as to when the assistance would be given. Water, sanitation, roads and public utilities, e.g. hospitals, community centres, are yet to be restored. Many schools have re-started with temporary arrangements. They are run in tents. There is a shortage of teachers.

During the visit to the earthquake-hit area, the possibility of mid to long-term recovery support was

examined. In Manserha, Balakot, Muzaffarabad and Battagram where the most severe devastation occurred, we met Government officers, representatives of local NGOs, INGOs -UNICEF, Oxfam, Swiss Humanitarian Aid; Church World Service and Action of Churches Together (ACT). Most of the NGOs there are working in specialised fields with some providing multi- services. The three days spent in the affected areas were useful for gathering information and networking. The Earthquake Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Authority (ERRA) of the Pakistan Government is in its primary stages of its work. There are a number of local faith-based organisations in relief work there.

The Lahore YMCA had provided relief supplies to the victims of the earthquake in November 2006. There were local relief contributions and support from YMCA Australia and Y Care International. Support has also been received from the YMCAs of Japan, Korea and awaiting plans from the Lahore YMCA.

First Assembly for Youth Attracts More than 140

In recognition of youth's potential and capacities as key partners in the YMCA mission and in transforming our communities, the 1st Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs' Youth Assembly will be held from **26 August - 1 September 2006**. It will be held in Malaysia at the YMCA of Kuala Lumpur as the Local Host.

Spirituality, Solidarity and Sustainability are the key concepts to be explored. The theme? *YMCA Youth in Strengthening our Spiritual Roots for Solidarity towards Sustainability*. It is envisioned that youth perspectives will be integrated into the 17th General Assembly focus. These conceptual bases will be explored in practical, participatory, interactive and experiential processes. These include a camp-out in a forest reserve; teach-ins on "sustainability"; a dialogue to interact and listen to youth voices on multi-faceted

perspectives of pluralism, workshops for peace-building and harmony. The "*youth kampung*" or village will help to build solidarity on issues relating to our YMCA heritage, the community and mission imperatives as enunciated in *Challenge 21*.

On 31 August, participants will celebrate with Malaysians from every walk of life in Malaysia's 49th National Day, and experience the rich cultural diversity of Malaysia in Seremban, 45 minutes from KL City.

Participants will come from: *Australia (1); Bangladesh (7); Cambodia (3); East Timor (5); Hong Kong (15); India (17); Indonesia (2); Japan (11); Korea (14); Malaysia (4); Myanmar (3); Philippines (4); Singapore (7); Sri Lanka (2); Taiwan (24); Thailand (2); Vietnam (2); Canada (15); Y Care International (3); Interfaith Cooperation Forum (1)*.

Doing Mission Together

Yip Kok Choong, General Secretary



Solidarity for Sustainability for our Mission Journey, Grounded on Heritage

The YMCA as an agent of change should work together with the community to achieve its aspirations and dreams for change. The YMCA itself too, should change in order to become an effective agent of change. Youth are the “movers” and the “shakers” of the YMCA – they are the change-makers. Youth are our hopes. They have aspirations. They provide us a vision for the movement, rightly a youth movement. Together we can make the difference in a changing, challenging world.

I have just returned from paying respects to one of our great models for youth participation and leadership – the Rev. Lee Soo Min who passed away on 21 July 2006. The YMCA worldwide and we have lost a dedicated leader of outstanding qualities. He had served the World Alliance of YMCAs as its Secretary General from 1985 to 1991, and prior to that, the then Asia Alliance of YMCAs, from 1973 to 1985, bringing the same urgency and vision to shape the mission of the YMCA.

As General Secretary of the then Asia Alliance, Soo-Min made a great difference to the YMCA not only in Asia and Pacific, but also at the World level. We owe much to him. He was a leader of vision and foresight. He led us through countless struggles to shape and find the identity and mission thrust of the

YMCAs in the Asia and Pacific. He defined with urgency the need for leadership development for building a strong and viable YMCA in the region. During his tenure of service in the Area Alliance, he furthered the *“cause of Asian Solidarity and emphasizing development as the mission of the YMCAs in Asia.”*

He was a leader relentlessly working for change – to make the YMCA and its leaders “mindful” of the realities around us, amongst the people we serve, and to respond with compassion. Today, we draw on his wisdom and his example, as we forge ahead amidst new challenges to our identity and integrity. This is the mission journey that Soo Min has left to us as his legacy – developing and growing the young and the leadership for solidarity in mission.

As we all join hands now, regardless of age, female and male, amidst all imaginable diversities, in this mission journey begun in the past, we can look back at leaders like Soo Min to be reminded and inspired to carry out our mission tasks. We can draw inspiration and strength from his life to continue being and doing the YMCA where we are.

We celebrate and give thanks to God for Soo Min’s life and his mission journey as we continue the journeywith the youth leaders of the day....