

# YMCA World

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September 2010



## 17<sup>th</sup> World Council of YMCAs



The World Alliance of YMCAs is a federation of YMCAs in 125 countries with a membership of over 45 million. YMCAs seek to share the Christian ideal of building a human community of peace with justice for all, irrespective of race, class, religion, or gender. Formed in 1844, the YMCA is one of the largest and oldest youth movements in the world.



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# Striving for Global Citizenship for All



Editor  
Rebecca Morton Doherty  
World Alliance of YMCAs

**From 19 – 24th July 2010, over 1,000 YMCA staff and volunteers came together in Hong Kong SAR for the 17th World Council of YMCAs under the theme of “Striving for Global Citizenship for All.”**

The World Council is the highest decision making body of the World Alliance of YMCAs. It meets every four years and is responsible for setting the policies and direction of the World Alliance, electing its Officers and Executive Committee, evaluating the work of the last four years, and deliberating on priorities for the next quadrennium.

We were overwhelmed by the level of participation this year despite the financial crisis that has affected each and every YMCA and the long distances many delegates had to travel to reach Hong Kong. In total, 1,134 YMCA delegates from 80 National Movements participated, making the 17th World Council a truly international gathering with an impressive diversity of nationalities, languages, and cultures.

The World Council programme combined the mandatory business sessions with opportunities for skills-building, exchange of experience, fellowship, and worship. World Council delegates were also exposed to Hong Kong’s rich local culture and traditions through various cultural performances, and exposure visits to YMCA programmes in Hong Kong. At the “Global Village”, YMCA Area Alliances and National Movements had a space to display their publications, posters, souvenirs etc. and an opportunity to share and learn about each other’s latest programmes, plans, and opportunities to work together.

Throughout the week, music, as a powerful medium for celebration, reflection, inspiration, worship and unity, was very important; and we were honoured to have a group of talented, professional musicians with us at World Council including: Terry

MacArthur (USA), Lim Swee-Hong (Singapore), Juwita Suwito (Malaysia), Chemphe (Ghana), and Ruth and Inchai Srisewan (Thailand).

The World Council was preceded by a 3-day International Youth Forum at the same venue, which brought together YMCA youth from across the Movement under the same theme. This edition of YMCA World shares some of the highlights from these two exciting events, and includes a selection of photographs, together with reflections from some of the participants.

The World Alliance of YMCAs would like to take this opportunity to thank all the individuals and organisations who contributed to the success of the 17th World Council, particularly the sponsors and resource persons, and staff and volunteers of the host YMCA Movement – the Council of YMCAs of Hong Kong.

World Council Participants



Photo by Simon Williams



Outgoing President  
Mr. Martin Meißner  
World Alliance of YMCAs

## Presidents' Messages

This was a large World Council – more than 1,100 delegates gathered in Hong Kong, many more than we had expected. And above all: More than 400 young people! When I think back on that week I see so many faces of young men and women, committed, interested, open minded, encouraged to participate.

We concluded and agreed that Movement Strengthening must continue to be a priority. We need strong YMCAs if we want to face the challenges of this world and improve the situation of young people. We looked back and forward – and there was no doubt that we must continue on this way and stand together, if we want to be successful.

It was a great World Council – having the opportunity to meet so many different people was a testimony of unity and mutual understanding. “That we all may be one” was and still is the biblical motto of the World Alliance since 1855. More than ever we lived this great experience of unity despite our different backgrounds, cultures and experiences.

And it was a decisive World Council – a new President and a new Executive Committee was elected, a new Secretary General appointed, and we had to say farewell to the outgoing Secretary General. Let me take this opportunity to express my most sincere thanks to all of you for the great support you have given us over

the last four years – you Members of the Executive Committee, and above all you, dear Bart Shaha as our Secretary General for eight years. The World Alliance was blessed with your great commitment. And let me take this opportunity to congratulate you, dear Ken Colloton, as my successor as President of the World Alliance and the new Executive Committee, and you, dear Johan Vilhelm Eltvik as the incoming Secretary General in 2011.

Our Lord bless all of you! Our Lord bless the World Alliance of YMCAs!



Incoming President  
Mr. Ken Colloton  
World Alliance of YMCAs

Well, we continue to have fond memories of our time together in Hong Kong in July. We had a great celebration of our progress over the last four years under the outstanding stewardship of Bart and the World Alliance staff; our Global Staff Team; our excellent Officers, Martin, Sam and Fernando; and our World Alliance Executive Committee. Thanks so much to each of them for their commitment and as well to our Hong Kong YMCAs for being outstanding hosts.

It is also a time to focus on our next quadrennial together as a global Movement. We do already know that some part of the next four years will be economically challenged, which means that we need to be good stewards of our charitable funds and budgets. We do also know that our global organisation will continue to compete for the time, talent and treasure of staff, volunteers, and philanthropic entities in each of our countries that we serve.

But, great organisations are best defined and positioned in difficult times, which is our opportunity together. Our long history of faith, values, and principles, make us a stronger organisation than most, as well as our physical presence in 125 countries. Our mission blesses us to think clearly and work together in times of opportunity. The “organisational heart” of our YMCA National Movements, Area Alliances and World Alliance is stronger than ever, as I have proudly witnessed over the last few years. Together, we have strong vision and strategic plans to guide us continually forward to help us innovate the delivery of our mission services.

I am thankful to the World Council Writing Group for documenting our time together and collecting the views of our many constituents. I use their paper to recall some of our opportunities together over the next four years:

- Movement Strengthening must remain the top strategic priority for the World Alliance and the global YMCA Movement.
- Resource Mobilisation is the main driver of Movement Strengthening.
- “Standing for Youth” is a significant contemporary milestone for the YMCA Movement.
- The genius of our YMCA organisation is our mission, programmes, and advocacy that are delivered locally. Together we must better understand and articulate our impact on youths, families, and communities.
- Global Knowledge Sharing, Communications, and Branding, are continuing priorities within the movement.

I am very proud and excited to represent our YMCA global movement as we advance our mission over the next four years. Thank you again for the opportunity to serve.

God Bless, Ken

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Photo by Simon Williams

# The 17th World Council of YMCAs

Rebecca Morton Doherty  
Executive Secretary  
World Alliance of YMCAs

## Venue and Hosts

This year's World Council was hosted by the Council of YMCAs of Hong Kong. Established in 1961, it acts as a co-ordinating committee for its two constituent YMCAs: the Chinese YMCA of Hong Kong and the YMCA of Hong Kong. Today, these two YMCAs collectively operate 54 centres around the city of Hong Kong and partner with hundreds of likeminded organisations to support work in education, healthy lifestyles, environmental issues, advocacy, employment, and support to ethnic minorities and disadvantaged persons.

With their support, the 17th World Council was held at the YMCA Wu Kwai Sha Youth Village in Hong Kong - a self contained youth camp with accommodation, catering services, sports facilities, and meeting spaces, approximately 40 minutes from the centre of Hong Kong.

## The Theme: "Striving for Global Citizenship for All"

As we begin the second decade of the 21st century, we are faced with multiple crises and critical issues emerging from the rapid and intensive process of globalisation.

A huge number of our world population live in dire need, particularly in remote villages, slums or shanty towns and daily they face: hunger and starvation, grinding poverty, unemployment or underemployment, pandemic diseases, malnutrition, and gross violation of human rights. Inequalities between nations and between peoples within a nation are widening. Some people are connected while most are in total isolation. And youth in particular are most affected due to their marginalisation and vulnerability.

The YMCA has a presence in over 12,000 local units around the world. Daily we deal with the impact of globalisation and seek innovative responses at a community level. At the same time, we are in a unique position to respond globally through advocacy and education. Thus the theme "Striving for Global Citizenship for All", is about global solidarity on these local challenges, and a global agenda to empower especially our youth to be active citizens to make a difference in their communities, countries, continents and the world.

The Chief Guest at the World Council Opening Ceremony, the Honourable Donald Tsang, Chief Executive of Hong Kong, shared an inspiring input on the theme. He said, "*While the widespread use of the term "global citizenship" is relatively new, the*

*concept is not. Indeed the YMCA was founded on a commitment to promote caring, unity and equality back in 1844. The YMCA brought this message to Hong Kong more than 100 years ago with the establishment of the local YMCA in 1901."*

For the first time ever, the World Alliance also received a message from the UN Secretary General, Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, stating that "*the theme of this year's World Council -- "Global Citizenship for All" -- sends an appropriate message as the United Nations prepares for a Summit on the Millennium Development Goals in September at which we hope to adopt the strongest possible action plan for accelerating progress."* Mr. Ban Ki-Moon congratulated the YMCA for its efforts in strengthening local communities, and its engagement in programme and advocacy work for the Millennium Development Goals.



Photo by Simon Williams



The Honourable Donald Tsang, Chief Executive of Hong Kong SAR.

Photo by Simon Williams

This message was further developed by Mr. Amir Dossal, Executive Director of the United Nations Office for Partnerships in New York, who gave a keynote address at the Opening Ceremony. He noted that *“In order to achieve true Global Citizenship, we must first build a world that meets the basic needs of all its people. Unfortunately, nearly two billion people—our global neighbours—still live below the poverty line. There are only five years left until the 2015 deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). I know that you will join me in saying that now is the time to push forward. We need to redouble our collective efforts to ensure that the Millennium Development Goals become a reality.”*

#### YMCA and the MDGs

Speaking about the YMCA’s work on MDG issues Mr. Dossal said, *“With your help, we continue to make significant progress in key areas like school enrolment, child health, access to safe water, malaria control and AIDS treatment. But other targets, such as improving maternal health, fighting hunger, and expanding access to sanitation are lagging far behind...I urge you all to remain vigorously active in your YMCA programmes, and continue to develop new initiatives that will help achieve the Millennium Development Goals. There is strong recognition among Member States that non-governmental organizations like the YMCA are essential. You bring key resources to the fore—your knowledge, expertise, access, and global reach—that are critical in advancing the UN’s Goals. Your voice carries globally—you have a unique opportunity to bring about positive change”.*

#### Life-Giving Civilisation

Dr. Park Seong-Won, scholar and ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church of Korea, also shared his reflections on the theme of global citizenship in a keynote address delivered to World Council delegates on Tuesday 20th July.

Dr. Seong-Won began with a reflection on the situation of global society today. He noted that, *“At the end of the first decade of this 21st century, our entire global civilization faces an integral crisis of multiple dimensions - a crisis which is rooted in the world’s power structure. It is a combination of economic, ecological and geo-political crises and at its base is a spiritual crisis.”* Speaking about the economy he said, *“The economy of life has been replaced by that of profit maximization for a select few at the cost and sacrifice of the life of many.”*

He went on to say that *“global warming and climate change have [also] become one of the most serious life-threatening global problems that the whole creation is facing today...and on the geo-political level under the rule of global empire, wars have been radically transformed in nature, into a permanent and limitless war in time and space. In the name of peace and security, the global empire is exercising the “omnipotent” power of military weapons systems of mass destruction, and intensive and total war.”*

To face the current global situation, Dr. Seong-Won said *“I believe that what we need today is a Life-Giving Civilization. There is an urgent need for transforming the current life-stealing, life-killing and life-destroying civilization into a Life-Giving Civilization.”*

To illustrate this point, Dr. Seong-Won shared two stories of pioneers who struggled to bring about life giving civilization. The first was Mahatma Gandhi, and Asian global citizen whose core values of non-violence, truth, simplicity, spiritual and practical purity, and faith need to be promoted in today’s consumerist society. The second was a 60-year old farmer by the name of Kimura Akinori, who struggled for many years, never giving up, to build a successful natural farming business; Akinori believed that if his business failed, it would also be the world’s failure.

This is the attitude we need to transform the current life-killing civilization into a life-giving civilization.

Dr. Seong-Won concluded by urging the YMCA Movement to stand up as global citizens to make a change, *“We need a citizen’s Movement on a global scale...if the YMCA gave up, it would mean global society gives up.”*

#### Reporting on the Last Four Years

On Tuesday 20th and Wednesday 21st July, World Council delegates heard from the World Alliance Secretary General and Treasurer about the work and finances of the World Alliance over the last four years.

Dr. Bart Shaha, Secretary General, reported that over the last four years the World Alliance of YMCAs had continued to prioritise “Movement Strengthening”, with work taking place in three key areas: capacity building and resource mobilisation, advocacy on issues relevant to young people, and communications and branding.

#### Advocacy

Dr. Shaha reported on work done to empower young people from across the movement to actively participate in global forums such as the International AIDS Conference in Mexico in 2008 and the UN Conference on Climate Change in Copenhagen in 2009. He also noted that the World Alliance had been working in partnership with Y Care International since 2008 in implementing an international advocacy strategy around youth justice targeted at the UN Human Rights Council.

Bart Shaha also reported on the work done in partnership with other international and ecumenical organisations such as the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance, the Alliance of Youth CEOs, the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Status with the UN (CONGO) and the International Coordinating Meeting of Youth NGOs (ICMYO). He also highlighted the importance of leadership development in the YMCA, focusing on transformational leadership i.e. leadership that addresses the root causes of problems faced by young people and their communities. He said, *“if the World Alliance is to continue to be relevant to the needs of its member movements as well as the youth and communities they serve then we must continue to be on the cutting-edge of things; we must be courageous enough to speak out even if it means facing tough questions;”*

*we must be innovative in our programmes for young people and be sincerely committed to making their voices heard in many platforms locally, nationally and globally.”*

### **Communications and Branding**

Reporting on communications activities between 2006-2010, Dr. Shaha said, “we used a diverse range of print, multimedia and web-based tools to deliver news updates, launch emergency appeals, as well as share good practices, resources and training within the Movement. The World Alliance also used these tools to communicate the work of the YMCA Movement to external audiences including other civil society partners, potential donors, and the general public.” He also noted that in September 2008, “the World Alliance’s Communications strategy was updated to align with an emerging focus on resource mobilisation. This new strategy gave emphasis to increasing the visibility and recognisability of the YMCA, and resulted in some changes to existing tools such as the website and quarterly magazine, as well as the development of new communications tools including a popular Annual Report.”

### **Capacity Building**

In a special report on the “Global Operating Plan for Movement Strengthening (GOP)”, Dr. Shaha shared that 24 National YMCA Movements and Area Alliances have been supported to build their capacities, and improve their social relevance, mission clarity and institutional viability. Many of these Movements have developed new strategic plans and signature programmes, developed new partnerships with governments and civil society partners, increased membership and funding sources. He also shared some of the challenge and lessons learnt – particularly that



Photo by Simon Williams

there is no “one size fits all” solution for Movement strengthening, every YMCA is different.

### **Resource Mobilisation**

Dr. Shaha highlighted that since 2008, the World Alliance and all Area Alliances have created a coordinated strategy for YMCA resource mobilisation at the local, national, regional, and global levels. He said, “we have created and tested a working model to help advance resource mobilisation across the global movement. This model provides us with a framework for success. It includes the things that must be accomplished in harmony for resource mobilisation to take place. These things are: 1) Developing programmes that have genuine relevance to, and impact on, youth and communities; 2) Communicating this impact so the YMCA is recognised for its value; 3) And using this impact and visibility as the basis to solicit and raise new funds.”

Dr Shaha shared examples from around the world of ongoing work to advance in each of these three areas using a seed fund of USD 500,000 contributed by the World Alliance, as well individuals and YMCAs around the world.

### **Strengthening the YMCA: Investing in Youth and Community, Mobilising Resources to deliver Challenge 21**

On Thursday 22nd July, the discussions on Resource Mobilisation continued with a plenary session focusing on how the YMCA can optimise its resources using innovative and creative methods.

A panel of speakers including representatives from YMCAs in Belarus, Canada, Liberia, South Africa and Vietnam and shared their experiences in fundraising; each came from a very different context, and brought interesting insights into how YMCAs can raise funds through membership, partnerships with government and other foundations, popular annual campaigns, and corporate social responsibility for example.

At the end of the session, delegates were invited to take part in an “Investor’s Circle Meeting” later that day.

### **Investor’s Circle**

Over 100 YMCA leaders from all over the world took part in the Investor’s Circle meeting that took place on Thursday 22nd July 2010. Dr Bart Shaha, Secretary General of the World Alliance of YMCAs, and Rev. Johan Vilhelm Eltvik, General Secretary of YMCA Europe,



Photo by Simon Williams

shared information on the resource mobilisation process that was initiated in 2008, and that is already reaping significant rewards.

YMCA Area leaders from Africa, Asia and Pacific, Europe, and Latin America presented plans for Phase II of this work (2010-2014), which aims to raise a further USD 3 million from external sources to strengthen YMCAs worldwide and increase their impact on youth and communities. Impressed and inspired by the success of Phase I, 34 individuals and 15 YMCAs, representing all the regions, instantly pledged financial support to continue the work.

The Circle was presented with a “million dollar investment opportunity”; the chance to invest in the future of the global YMCA Movement and change the lives of thousands more young people around the world. YMCA England sent a powerful message to other National Movements, by making the first pledge of USD 50,000 to support this process. John Lilley of YMCA Canada was the first to make a personal commitment to be an individual donor to this process with USD 1,000. In total, over USD 100,000 was pledged from YMCAs, individual staff, volunteers and youth.

### **Strengthening the YMCA: Global Visibility, Global Presence**

On Friday 23rd July, discussions moved to the issue of branding and communications. Bob Tobin (USA), World Alliance consultant for resource mobilisation, began by introducing World Council delegates to the concept of brand and its significance for effective resource mobilisation. He noted that “*Resource mobilisation requires being known—this is a reality... Becoming known for social impact is essential.*”

Defining the concept of branding, Mr. Tobin said, “*branding is a way to make your every day work more visible and more connected to your audiences. It is the way people feel and think about your organisation. It is their perception of you. It is your image. It lives in the minds of the people who recognise you. Ideally the perception of your organisation in the minds of your audience, matches the perception you desire.*”

Rebecca Morton Doherty continued the presentation, speaking about the issues of brand and visibility in the YMCA context. She began by sharing that in 2008, Areas leaders from Africa, Europe and Asia and Pacific expressed concern that the YMCA’s visibility with the general public, media and other civil society actors was low in their regions, and there were often misconceptions about the mission and activities of the YMCA. Ms Morton Doherty shared that the situation in the Americas was different, as the YMCA is very well known, with for example 95% of Canadians and 91% of the general public in the USA who are aware of the YMCA. However, in the USA, despite being so well known, the YMCA has also struggled with its identity.

Ms Morton Doherty noted that work is being done in all Areas, as well at World Alliance level to improve communications and brand, including new websites, annual reports, training in communications, and branding processes.

She then shared reflections on the case for a global branding strategy for the YMCA Movement, noting that there was interest and willingness in the Movement, that it would require a collaborative and Movement-wide process, as well as time and additional resources. She concluded by inviting World Council delegates to think further about the question at the heart of

this discussion: “*How can we work together globally to increase the visibility of all YMCAs, and improve perception?*”

### **Building Skills**

Throughout World Council, in addition to the official business and reporting sessions, significant emphasis was placed on creating opportunities for delegates to share experiences and knowledge, and learn skills. From Wednesday 21st July to Friday 23rd, one session per day was therefore allocated to skills building workshops and dialogues on cutting-edge issues that impact YMCA work. Workshops were run by experts from across the YMCA Movement, as well as external resource persons from partner organisations such as the World Council of Churches. In total, twenty-five workshops were run concurrently each day, focusing on three main topics: institutional capacity building and resource mobilisation, advocacy and programmes, and communications and branding.

### **Strengthening External Relations**

In addition to YMCA delegates, we were delighted at this World Council to also welcome participants from our closest partner organisations. They included: Fr. Gosbert Byamungu, Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Vatican; Mr. Liberato Bautista, President, Conference of NGOs in Consultative Status with the United Nations; Mr. Hirotoshi Fujii, Y’s Men International; Susan Brennan, President and Ping Lee, Vice President of the World YWCA; and a representative of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches.



Photos by Simon Williams



Photo by Simon Williams

## No Longer Strangers: Towards a New Spirituality for Global Citizenship

Clarissa Balan  
Executive Secretary  
World Alliance of YMCAs

Every YMCA World Council bears its own imprint, and this imprint will be personal and unique to every individual who was there.

For one person it may be the inspiring words of a speaker, and for another, the fact of being elected into office. For me, it will be the memory of the daily devotions whose messages will remain fresh and alive for all YMCA individuals who are striving to be good global citizens in their own communities, in their own ways. One of the greatest achievements of the Hong Kong World Council is enabling this new spirituality for global citizenship to take root in the YMCA Movement.

Led by Rev. Terry MacArthur and our World Council Worship team, devotions took place early every morning before we began our working sessions.

### Day One: The Earth is God's

*"The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it belongs to God,  
Not to banks, not to corporations,  
not to politicians,  
Neither to you nor to me."*

Our early Christian education taught us that the earth was entrusted to us by God, to care for and love that it may flourish. But economics and our consumer mentality make us act as if we are the owners of the earth and it is there for us to exploit, to serve our inexhaustible needs. This was

evident in the space where we had our devotions which was littered everyday with empty plastic bottles, copies of speeches and reports lying on the floor. On the first day of worship we affirmed one of the basic tenets of our faith: that the earth and all the resources in it are not ours but God's, and with this we were asked to approach the globe in the centre of the hall and with a gentle touch "express our longings for the earth."

### Day Two: Awareness and Repentance

If an image conveys a thousand words then the image of the deflated globe, surrounded by all the rubbish from our meeting was enough to make us realize that we all play a part in the harm that is inflicted on an already depleted world.

*"Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord?  
And who shall stand in God's holy place?  
Those who have clean hands and pure hearts  
Clean hands?  
And pure hearts.  
Who has clean hands and a pure heart?"*

It was hard to be awakened to the fact that I am doing harm to the earth. We were told that repentance begins with an awareness and acknowledgement of the "damage that we do to the world we share." To

demonstrate this we were invited to approach the globe and deface it, to "make visible the violence we do, even when we don't want to or are not aware of it." The act of "defacing" the globe put to light the simple truth: that we are all, in varying degrees, to blame for the earth's degradation. Defaced and deflated, the globe in our midst looked sick and forlorn.

### Days Three and Four: Earth Listening, Mending

*Voice of the earth  
Speaking what we do not want to hear  
Word of truth,  
Amplifying what we muffle,  
Song of mourning  
Lying heavy on the soul,  
Can you save us?  
Have we burned too much, wasted too much,  
killed too much?  
Is there some escape from the rising seas  
From the cursed conflicts over diminishing resources?  
Reconnect us, God, to the earth from which we come,  
To the land which needs our care,  
To each other  
Through Jesus Christ. Amen.*

In 1977, two young Buddhist monks set out on a pilgrimage of peace through the Buddhist practice, Three Steps and a Bow. The whole journey covered 800 miles and took almost three years to complete. “They bowed in peace, for peace. Touching their foreheads to the ground, opening their hearts with one wish for the world. Peace. For everyone, everyday, everywhere.”<sup>1</sup>

At the morning devotion on the third day of World Council we imitated the practice, Three Steps and a Bow, to the sound of big drums, circling the forlorn, defaced and deflated globe. As we did so, we were told to open our hearts and listen to what the earth was telling us. The few of us who tried realised only too soon that it was not that easy to listen. We are so used to making the earth serve our own purposes that it is difficult to change to the role of listener! However, after a few steps and a few bows we did it, clumsily at first, but intent on touching the earth with our foreheads. Now looking back, I am not sure if I listened or heard but I know that the act of bowing established a connection, a relationship of oneness with everything that could not be expressed in words.

*Can we dream of the world God imagines,  
New heavens and a new earth,  
Where there are trees whose leaves are for the healing  
of the nations,*

1 <http://www.urbandharma.org/udharma7/3steps.html>



Photo by John Ainsworth

*With God dwelling in our midst,  
Light penetrating the deepest night,  
Until God's glory and honour fill the whole creation.*

After having listened, we started the work of mending. We were invited to “come and fix the globe” and to think of “concrete actions (we) might take to be a part of healing the world, of letting it rest.”

This time, many joined in to undertake that small symbolic action of “fixing” the globe. My hope is that our small action will reverberate and become real actions with real impact in our communities and that these will be sustained and passed on generation after generation for the healing of the world.

### Day Five: A Question of Balance

*How can you forgive us, God?  
Turn our feet to walk your path,  
Lighten our step so our tread is harmony.  
Balance our stride so our eyes stay focused on the  
way of Jesus Christ, your Beloved. Amen.*

The Epistle reading for the morning devotions on the fifth day of World Council talked about St. Paul's advice to the people of Corinth and their support for the beleaguered Christians of Palestine. He encouraged them to live as a genuine community where there was a fair balance,

where the need of one was to be addressed by the abundance of the other. In order to demonstrate the need to restore a fair balance in the world, we were invited to lift the globe and pass it on using our feet and with our “back on the ground and (your) feet in the air, seek God's guidance so those with little don't have too little.”

And so we passed the globe with our feet and hands from one side of the hall to the other. Now looking back, this had strong symbolic meaning- it marked a shift of paradigm, from one of taking and using the earth for our own needs to a paradigm that treated the earth with respect and love.

### Closing Worship: No Longer Strangers

*“...So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling-place for God.” (Ephesians 2:20-22)*

In the closing worship we expressed our desire for a global human community that did not exclude the poor or the stranger.

We dedicated our new leaders as global citizens who “will hold together those far and those near, keeping the whole structure joined together so that members of the YMCA all over the world live out their calling to be citizens with the saints, caring for each other and our common home, the earth.”

We danced around the globe, in the way Korean farmers danced for their harvest and we celebrated the work that has been done and the many possibilities that were before us, as we begin a new quadrennium, as global citizens yearning for a world of justice and peace for all creation.

# THROUGH THE LENS:

A Visual Journey of World Council 2010



# Opening Ceremony

Photos by Simon Williams



# Worship

Photos by John Ainsworth



Globe photo by Simon Williams

# Chinese and International Cultural Night

Photos by Simon Williams



# Skills Building Workshops

Photos by Simon Williams



# International Youth Forum

Photos by Simon Williams



# Tribute to Gaia: A Concert on the Environment

Photos by Simon Williams





## YMCA International Youth Forum: “Nothing about us, without us”

Rebecca Morton Doherty  
Executive Secretary  
World Alliance of YMCAs

From 17-19 July, 400 young people from over 60 YMCA National Movements gathered at the Wu Kwai Sha Youth Village in Hong Kong for the YMCA International Youth Forum (IYF).

The forum, which was also held under the theme: ‘Striving for Global Citizenship for All’ provided training for youth delegates for active participation at World Council, as well as opportunities for sharing knowledge and experiences, skills building, and strategising for the future. There was a strong focus on how the YMCA can contribute to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Highlights of the 3-day event included: an inter-generational dialogue with speakers spanning three generations discussing the challenges facing youth today and how to overcome them; a festival of good practices with workshops on MDG issues including gender, HIV/AIDS, and the environment; a public music concert, “A Tribute to Gaia”, featuring internationally renowned artists; and inputs from guest speakers including Athena Peralta, World Council of Churches, and Mr. Liberato C. Bautista, of CoNGO.

### Youth Advocacy and the MDGs

Mr. Liberato C. Bautista, President of CoNGO (Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations), gave a thought-provoking and inspiring keynote address at the Youth Forum. Speaking about the MDGs he said:

*“When agreed to by 189 heads of state at the 2000 Millennium Summit of the General Assembly of the United Nations, the MDGs were meant to be a commitment by these states to work together and build a safer, more prosperous and equitable world for all. This commitment, the UN member states said, was a reaffirmation of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations—for human rights and social justice, for international peace and security, for social progress and sustainable development—which they said were timeless and universal in an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world.”*

*But the lackluster commitment to financing for development, including the flow of official development aid, there is, and whatever commitments governments have already said but not matched by political will and actual cash layout, are already threatening the non-achievement of the MDGs. Add to these the multiple crises that have visited upon our world in the decade of the effort to implement the MDGs—the crises of food, finance and fuel, and the crises in our economy and ecology—and here we have a potent mix of spoilers that will imperil the achievement of the MDG targets.”*

Youth delegates were deeply touched by Mr. Bautista’s words. During group discussions they stressed the importance of an institutional focus and commitment to realizing the MDGs. They noted that there are growing concerns that the MDGs will not be met before the deadline, and called for the world YMCA Movement to scale up efforts, especially in universal primary education, eradicating poverty and hunger, ensuring environmental sustainability and gender equality.

## Telling our Stories

Throughout the Forum, young people who have been affected by Millennium Development Goal (MDG) issues, or are working on them, were invited to share their personal stories. This was followed by group discussions, with an opportunity for participants to share their own experiences, and strategise on how to strengthen their work on these issues. Below are four examples.

### HIV/AIDS

Peter F. Borges, Executive Director of Human Touch India and former staff of YMCA Nagpur gave a presentation on “Meaningful youth participation in global HIV response”. He noted that as of 2007 an estimated 5.4 million youth were living with HIV, and 40% of all new infections are amongst 15 – 24 year olds, most of them female. Peter stressed that young people living with HIV often face discrimination, stigma and abuse and are often driven “underground”, too fearful to access health services. MDG 6 aims to stop and reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other deadly diseases by 2015. Peter encouraged IYF delegates to support work towards MDG 6 by getting involved in global youth initiatives such as the HIV Youth Leader’s Fund and the Global Youth Coalition on HIV/AIDS.

### Gender

Necta Montes Rocas, Regional Secretary for Asia and Pacific at the World Student Christian Federation spoke about gender inequalities and what can be done to help achieve gender justice. She noted that of the 1.3 billion people living in poverty

around the world, 70% are women. Although women now represent 41% of all workers in developing countries, their wages are 30-40% less than those of men for comparable work. Globally, at least one in three women and girls is beaten or sexually abused in her lifetime. Necta highlighted that although the situation of women has improved in some parts of the world, we need to “raise our voices, continue to organize and strategise”, and promote women’s empowerment through our programmes.

### Masculinities

Gleeson Job, Young Professional at the World Alliance of YMCAs, spoke about the need to challenge traditional forms of masculinity. He noted that dominant and violent masculinities are packaged in ways that appeal to young minds. Through the print media, films, advertisements, toys, and video games for example, young boys and men are taught at an early age that this is a man’s world and that violence is the norm. Gleeson shared some of the work being done by the YMCA in Trinidad and Tobago to help change this. Male “mentors” are identified and trained to work with young boys to facilitate dialogue on cultural gender stereotypes and traditional beliefs that can be harmful to both young men and women. Open communication, and positive conflict resolution between young men and women is also encouraged.

### Peace building

Mariam Abuamasha, a young volunteer from YMCA East Jerusalem, spoke about her experience growing up in Palestine. She said, “Many nights we had to escape from our home because it was a very dangerous area...

*our house was shelled several times...I was scared to death...it stole two years of my childhood”. Mariam went on to say that keeping hope alive in these situations is nearly impossible, but strong community ties and relationships can make it easier. “Joining the YMCA made believe that I and any other person can make a change. Meeting people from different YMCAs all over the world, and hearing their stories, has made me realise that life is not easy everywhere. But working together, uniting our efforts for justice and peace, we can make a difference. It gives me hope.”*

### Youth Participation in Decision-Making

Throughout the Youth Forum, a small group of youth delegates was appointed to collect the various findings, recommendations and ideas put forward, and capture them in a youth statement that would be read at the opening ceremony of the World Council of YMCAs.

In his keynote address, Mr. Bautista encouraged youth delegates to take this statement seriously, and participate actively and meaningfully in the World Council to make their voices heard: “Young people, spare no time to assert your place in decision making. Nothing about you without you. Indeed, nothing about youth without the youth participating fully and directly in the development and implementation of policy about them. You are not hope for the future but of today. You have the power to redirect your energies to better, more peaceful and just uses. Through a message that you will craft and deliver, your gathering today, as a pre-Council event, has the potential to impact the World Council in ways that remind them of your anxieties about your lives and world and seek assurance from those gathered that your participation in acting upon your world and including you as full participants is a necessary ingredient of global citizenship.”



Photo by Simon Williams

## Message from the YMCA International Youth Forum 2010 to the 17th World Council of YMCAs

### SHAPING OUR COLLECTIVE FUTURE IN MISSION AND UNITY

Three days, 62 YMCA movements from around the globe, over 400 individual voices - unified by one mission - gathered to explore the ideas of global citizenship for all. We leave with a call to internalize and act to become global citizens ourselves. Therefore, we stand here, ready to walk our talk and BE the change we wish to see in this youth movement, in the YMCA, and in the world.

We take pride in our lives as young people; We respect the efforts and experiences our peers have brought to this event; We value and cherish the opportunity to exchange this wealth of knowledge, good practices and experiential learning.

However, none of these is enough.

Now is our time to act. Our responsibility is to provide a renewed focus on critical challenges affecting our identity, our mission and our purpose. We, the young leaders of the International Youth Forum 2010, put forth the following three objectives moving forward:

1. We acknowledge the challenges of meeting Challenge 21 and the Millennium Development Goals, and we know that the YMCA is not acting alone. However, we believe that as a Global movement, we can most effectively create the strongest positive impact, through a more robust and unified response on these key issues:

- a) Education (Formal and Informal)
- b) Combating HIV/AIDS
- c) Climate change and environmental degradation
- d) Responses to Worldwide Disaster Relief
- e) Gender Equity
- f) Drug-related issues

2. We acknowledge the need to strengthen our movement from within, through:

Harnessing technology to establish a worldwide network for knowledge sharing and leadership development, to attract and empower young leaders in the YMCA of the future; Strengthening the “C” in the YMCA, by upholding the Christian principles of the YMCA mission; Communicating the YMCA identity and brand in a coordinated manner, for the worldwide audience.

3. We acknowledge the responsibility we share in determining the future course of youth involvement in decision-making for the YMCA. We seek proactive participation, in all aspects. YMCA does not work for youth. The youth is the heart and soul of the movement. As such, we demand accountability while also holding ourselves accountable.

We claim the ideals put forth by this forum, that we are “not subjects but citizens,” and there is “nothing about us without us.”



**The International Youth Forum was a truly enriching experience for the young participants, who are enthusiastic about leading change in the world. Young people represent the hope and aspiration of a generation that is poised to overcome the barriers set by generational, cultural, geographical, racial and religious divides, reflecting the motto of the YMCA: ‘That they all may be one.’ With an increased understanding of global citizenship and the MDGs as well as its milestones and setbacks, young people are committed to building partnerships and linkages that will strengthen their calls for concrete actions that will transform our world.**



**Timotheus Kamaboakai, YMCA Liberia.**



Photo by Simon Williams

## Breaking Through Barriers: An Inter-generational Dialogue

Dr. Lucia Quintillo  
YMCA Peru  
Member of World Alliance Youth Committee

Over the years, the generation gap has grown larger and larger; the differences between parents and their children are multiplying. Younger generations are growing up with very different cultural practices, social norms, ways of thinking, and challenges. This makes the need for dialogue between generations even more important and urgent.

As the basic building block of society, families are an ideal place to promote reflection and create opportunities for inter-generational dialogue. In our case, the YMCA is a large family, united in its conviction to work towards a world with social justice and peace. Bringing together 45 million members from 125 countries, the YMCA allows us to constantly share, understand and learn from people of different cultures, faiths and political ideologies. Above all, it gives us the opportunity to develop tolerance and engage in respectful and productive exchanges that recognise differences, whilst valuing common ground among people of different generations.

In a local YMCA Movement, when we see a young person leading a group of children, an adult leading a space for youth training, or children doing an artistic presentation for adults, we are witnessing a clear demonstration of the opportunities for dialogue between different generations.

During the YMCA International Youth Forum, a plenary session entitled “Breaking through Barriers: Intergenerational Dialogue” was organised with a small panel of speakers spanning four generations. As one of these panellists, I had the opportunity to share with people from different countries, languages, professions, family roles, and positions within their YMCAs. Each of us had different perspectives on youth issues, but we were all convinced of the need to take action and work together.

Participating in this session helped me realise that what unites all generations is that all of us (though with greater intensity in our youth) have struggled or will struggle to generate positive changes to the reality we live in, raising our voices, sometimes for the same reasons, sometimes for totally different ones. History is full of stories of generations who fought for civil and political rights; generations who defended economic, social and cultural rights; generations who waved the flag of gender rights for example. Sexual and reproductive health, education, and environmental conservation, are some of the issues that inspire our generation today to speak out.

As an organisation we must encourage open communication between different generations, ensure that YMCA members take seriously their responsibility to continue education younger generations, and ensure that people of all ages are involved in the leadership of the YMCA.

In our communities we have a responsibility to generate opportunities to build bridges across the generation gaps that separate youth and adults, encouraging them to work together for the common good. We need to be clear that this dialogue will be only be effective if we build enough confidence in individuals to share their experiences and emotions, and if we promote the concept of an inclusive community, rather than the idea of different generations living in parallel.

I am proud to be part of an organisation that has intergenerational communication and work at its heart, and that seeks to balance the energy of youth with the experience of adulthood.

Photo by Simon Williams



# Youth Pay Tribute to Mother Earth through Music

Gil Harper  
Africa Alliance of YMCAs

On Sunday 18 July, a crowd of 1,200 gathered in Hong Kong's Victoria Park for "Tribute to Gaia: A Concert on the Environment" to celebrate Mother Earth with the power of music.

The concert, part of the YMCA International Youth Forum, included dynamic and inspiring performances from Hong Kong, Thailand, Ghana, Trinidad and Malaysia.

*"Sustainable development has always been one of my priorities as a pop artist and a social activist. Performing here is a great privilege and opportunity to inspire youths from all parts of the world to make this a way of life."* said Juwita Suwito, acclaimed Malaysian singer-songwriter, whose album Brand New World was selected as the best local English album by the Malaysian music industry.

Echoing Suwito, Chemphe, from Ghana, who performs "Urban Life music," a blend of rhythm and blues with a local African beat said, *"I hope to see young people really empowered, really able to be held or accepted as citizens, and be part of everything that the country or the continent is about. The whole focus of the song is to empower the youth."* Earlier this year, Chemphe was recognized as a Peace Ambassador by the President of Ghana. He also garnered the title of "Lyricist of the year" in Ghana's 2008 Music Awards.

Chemphe recently teamed up with African YMCA youth to produce a song called Subject to Citizen, about youth empowerment in Africa. During the day preceding the concert, Chemphe produced a revised version of this song especially for the con-

cert, with a focus on the environment and global citizenship. He was joined on stage for the performance of this song, by 40 YMCA youth from 15 countries.

*"It was amazing. I think that music connects all people, and it is like a global voice. Music is the best form of communication."* said Mirza Cruz, from Mexico City, a participant in Chemphe's workshop.

Through songs and music, the performers and YMCA youth expressed a common concern for global issues, especially with regard to environmental protection.

Photos by Simon Williams





Photo by Simon Williams

## Looking Ahead: 2010 - 2014

Newly Elected Officers (Left to Right): Ken Colloton - President, Helen McEwan - Treasurer, and Fernando Ondarza - Deputy President

In addition to evaluating the work of the last four years, the World Council of YMCAs is responsible for setting the policies and direction of the World Alliance for the next quadrennium, and electing its Officers and Executive Committee.

In many ways, the 17th World Council of YMCAs therefore marked the beginning of a new chapter for the global YMCA Movement, with a new leadership entering to steer the Movement towards new aspirations and strategies based on the work of the past. These new directions were clearly expressed in the plenaries, workshops and Resolutions adopted by the World Council, and captured in the Report of the World Council Writing Group.

### New World Alliance Leadership

#### Officers and Executive Committee 2010 - 2014

##### *President, Ken Colloton (USA)*

Newly elected World Alliance President, Ken Colloton of the YMCA of the USA, is "honoured to serve in this role and will work with YMCA leadership, especially our youth leaders, to

*ensure that the global Movement remains strong and innovative so that we can continue to address the critical challenges facing communities worldwide".* With more than 30 years of service to the YMCA, Colloton began as a volunteer at the Capital District YMCA in Albany, N.Y., and has since held several positions at the local, national and international levels. Most notably, he served as YMCA of the USA's Board Chair (2007 – 2010) and as a member of the Executive Committee of the World Alliance since 2006.

Colloton is the Senior Vice President and a Director of Government Banking at RBS Citizens Bank, N.A. He holds a bachelor's degree in accounting and management from York College of Pennsylvania and an advanced degree from the Bank Administration Institute of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He is the recipient of a number of honours, including the Jefferson Award, a national award to recognise and honour leaders in community and public service.

In his acceptance speech, Colloton recalled that "every day we are witness to economic, religious, political, gender and age injustices. Every day, we do God's work to help the meek,

*the poor in spirit, those who hunger and thirst and those who are persecuted. Our Christian heritage and identity provides the guiding framework for strengthening values and ethics, increasing inclusion and interfaith dialogue and positively transforming local and global communities."*

Speaking about the future of the global YMCA Movement he said "now is the time that our global organisation speaks with one articulate voice on behalf of our global presence and communicates the good work being done by the Area Alliances and National Movements. Now is the time that our Movement understands our global strengths and priorities and we develop common language and positioning to advocate for ourselves. Now is the time for our young adults to take a greater leadership role in our global affairs... Now is the time that the global Movement sets an example around women leadership and participation."

Colloton concluded by saying that "our YMCA was founded in 1844. The YMCA's leadership, innovation, support and expansion over the last 166 years has resulted in a global Movement that is physically positioned and advantaged over all other NGOs. YMCAs can aspire to be one of the most recognised and valued international human services organisations that we can be... May we go forward as one."

**Deputy President, Fernando Ondarza (Mexico)**

A delighted Fernando Ondarza from Mexico, was elected as Deputy President. *"I think it is time, as it has always been, for the YMCA to be a voice, to be a platform and to be the space where young people can develop,"* he said.

With 30 years involvement in the YMCA, Ondarza holds leadership positions in his local YMCA, the Latin America & Caribbean Alliance of YMCAs, and is the immediate past Treasurer of the World Alliance. An architect by profession, he has been responsible for many important building and restoration projects in Mexico, and has been curator of various museum expositions. He is also a director of a publishing company and founding partner of an organisation producing cultural and scientific programmes.

**Treasurer, Helen McEwan (New Zealand)**

Newly elected Treasurer, Helen McEwan, said *"I'd like to see the YMCA really growing and becoming stronger and more vibrant. The stronger we can get, the more people we can reach."*

With 26 years experience in accountancy, and a Bachelor of Commerce, she is a Partner of a Chartered Accountancy firm. Helen has held treasurer and leadership positions locally and nationally and served as a member of the World Alliance Executive Committee in the immediate past term.

**World Alliance Secretary General, Johan Vilhelm Eltvik (Norway)**

At the World Alliance Executive Committee Meeting held on 18th July, Rev. Johan Vilhelm Eltvik was appointed as the new Secretary General of the World Alliance of YMCAs. Eltvik will take up his new position on 1 January 2011, and succeeds Dr. Bart Shaha who will complete his second term of office at the end of this year.

Born in Norway, Eltvik has served as a staff member of the YMCA since 1986. In the eighties he introduced Ten Sing at the YMCA in Germany. Ten Sing is a youth-led programme focusing on leadership and expression through music, arts and drama. He has served as Leadership Development Director for YWCA/YMCA Norway, before taking up leadership positions at YMCA Europe level.

In 2004, he received the Cavalier Cross of the Polish Order of Merit from the State President of Poland. Eltvik is currently serving as General Secretary of YMCA Europe.

Below are some excerpts from Eltvik's official acceptance speech delivered on the last day of the World Council:

*"It is with humility and respect for you and respect for the huge challenge, that I accept your nomination to become the Secretary General of the World Alliance of YMCAs. I shall ask for your prayers and for your help."*

*What shaped my visions?*

*I have walked through the ruins of a fallen empire...I am referring to the Soviet empire. It so happened that the fall of the Berlin Wall was at the same time as I started to work for the international YMCA...and this walk shaped me, changed me, inspired me and opened up a wealth of new insights and understanding and gave my life new direction...I walked together with former enemies, now my closest friends, and we started to build YMCAs together.*

*This crucial experience has made me believe in the power of friendship, believe in the power of the YMCA to change life perspectives and build new ones. It has made me believe in hope against mighty walls and friendship against iron curtains and made me believe more than ever in the weaponless armies of the YMCA when they go to fight for love against hate. I believe in the words of the famous writer James Joyce: "To live, to fail, to fall, to win, to recreate life from life."*

*What did I learn?*

*When we helped build or rebuild 20 National YMCAs in Eastern Europe, they did not want to become copies of other traditions, they wanted to create their own vision of the YMCA, relevant to their needs, and rooted in their own spirituality and history. How important it is that the local people themselves take ownership of their own development and never give it up.*

*All of that helped me to understand how crucial it is that each and every YMCA is rooted in its own culture and values, and in its own history.*

*Where shall we walk together?*

*The Paris Basis gives us a strong Christian foundation and the ecumenical perspective. The Kampala Principles and Challenge 21 give us the wide*



Photo by Simon Williams

*overview of the social change and programmatic priorities the YMCA shall implement worldwide according to local needs.*

*In January 2008 a representative group of global YMCA leaders confirmed very strongly that our focus is on youth. I am totally dedicated to that. The agenda I envision recognises that the YMCA can only reach its potential to empower youth and transform communities if it is four things:*

- socially relevant;
- fully capable of achieving impact;
- highly visible and admired; and
- financially strong.

*In other words, this agenda is the agenda of our Global Operating Plan for Movement Strengthening, and of Resource Mobilisation.*

*In 1946 John R. Mott was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Not because he was good at collecting money, but because of what he had done with the money collected. The Nobel committee said that he got the prize because he had mobilised the vast resources of his YMCA in two world wars, initiating huge operations to create welfare for soldiers and help prisoners of war on both sides, and in this way limiting hate and giving love a chance. And this, said the Nobel Committee, in a time when most international organisations fell apart and disappeared.*

*John R. Mott and his team had given the YMCA vision and strength and in this way made it ready to face the huge challenges of their time."*

*Now, dear friends, it is our time!"*

## Report of the World Council Writing Group

The Writing Group, a small team of YMCA experts from across the Movement, was established to help the World Council clearly identify priorities for the World Alliance for 2010 – 2014 in three key areas: Movement Strengthening and Resource Mobilisation, Programmes and Advocacy, Communications and Branding. To do this, the Writing Group drew from several sources including: outcomes of the International Youth Forum, written reports to the World Council, plenary presentations and debates, and workshops. The Writing Group tested its findings in three working groups made up of World Council delegates; a final report was then presented to the full World Council for its endorsement. Below is a brief summary of the main findings:

### **1: Movement Strengthening and Resource Mobilisation**

Movement strengthening must remain the top strategic priority for the World Alliance and the global YMCA Movement, and Resource Mobilisation needs to be its main driver to achieve it.

We need to give capacity building through training of staff and volunteers, especially young people, a priority, and we need to develop a framework of common standards and sample tools and documentation. The YMCA Universities Network has the potential to play a role in providing common standards, training and knowledge sharing.

Resource Mobilisation is vital to the Movement's sustainability and to fulfilling the YMCA's potential to empower youth and transform communities. The World Alliance and all Area Alliances have created a coordinated strategy for YMCA resource mobilisation at the local, national, regional and global levels. National Movements have contributed to shaping this strategy, and it has been tested in all regions of the world. Considerable progress has been made during this first phase.

### **2: Programmes and Advocacy**

The YMCA is well positioned to bring about change in a world that is challenged by injustice and poverty that have such a high impact on the lives of so many of the world's young people. The YMCA's mission statement, Challenge 21, conveys a clear message of solidarity with the oppressed and a commitment to justice, and paves the way for the implementation of relevant programmes that meet the needs of young people.

#### *YMCA style advocacy*

The World Alliance takes a wide definition of advocacy, including awareness raising, training, leadership development, as well as lobbying and campaigning.

Advocacy should arise from our experience of delivering programmes that are relevant to the needs of young people. Since our advocacy work arises out of our experience of working with young people, this gives the YMCA particular credibility and ability to influence policy making that relates to young people.

In order to build the quality of advocacy, the YMCA's programmes and advocacy should be measurable, contextual and evidence based, so that our programmes are relevant and effective and our policy engagement is substantiated by our findings and experience.

#### *Humanitarian intervention*

YMCAs across the world do seek to respond to emergencies and to meet the needs of the communities they already serve in such situations. Even if we are not an emergency-response based organisation, we need to foresee future events whose occurrence is likely to worsen the lives of our children and young people. The more prepared we are for disasters, the more mission-relevant our potential interventions can be.

#### *Youth voice*

Our young people have made it clear that they want their voice to be heard at all levels within the Movement and that our programmes should be focussed on the needs of young people. At the same time, young people should be central in developing our programmes and advocacy, and we need to ensure that young people are given the training and capacity in order to participate most effectively. 'Nothing about us without us'.

Photo by Simon Williams



### 3: Communications and Branding

The World Alliance uses a wide range of print, multimedia and web based tools to communicate its work, and share resources (including good practices and training materials). The World Alliance communications strategy was recently updated to support resource mobilisation efforts; this resulted in the production of a new annual report, and re-launch of the website.

There is interest and willingness in the movement to further improve communications, particularly with relation to branding, and communicating the YMCA's impact. Since 2008 the World Alliance has been exploring the case for a global YMCA brand (brand is understood to encompass messaging, perception, reputation and visual identity). Some YMCA National Movements and Area Alliances are already engaged in their own brand processes, but would still like to explore the possibility for a global effort.

How can we work together globally to help every YMCA increase its visibility, and improve its perception?

Concrete recommendations included: the development of global messages on critical issues affecting youth, by consulting with youth; and creating a global YMCA task group on branding to assess the current situation and help develop a global branding strategy.

#### 17th World Council Resolutions

This year's World Council saw the adoption of resolutions on: Youth Representation;

A YMCA World Record at the 2012 Olympics; Climate Change; and Alternative Tourism.

#### • Youth Representation in World Council Voting Process

Put forward by 24 YMCA National Movements and 3 YMCA Area Alliances this resolution called for "a formal reassessment of the election and voting procedure of the World Council... to secure a place for the youth voice in the decision-making processes of the World Council." The aim is to ensure that in the future every YMCA National Movement with more than one voting delegate, includes one youth (aged 30 or under) among its voting delegates.



Photo by Simon Williams

#### • YMCA Hoop Springs Eternal

This resolution, proposed by YMCA England, endorses the "YMCA Hoop Springs Eternal" event organised by Central YMCA to be held on the day of the basketball final at the 2012 Olympic and Paralympics Games in London. The aim is to organise a world-wide YMCA-based record attempt to establish a Guinness World Record for the greatest number of participants in a single basketball hoop shooting event. The resolution "urges every member of the YMCA Movement to commit to and participate fully in this exciting and very public event...to be led and organised by Central YMCA, the Movement's founding association, as an authentic expression of world YMCA identity, unity and common values."



Photo by Simon Williams

#### • YMCA Global Citizens: Acting and Advocating for Climate Justice

Proposed by YWCA-YMCA Sweden, and with support from YMCAs in Belarus, Denmark and New Zealand, this resolution recalls that "the social and economic impact of global warming has increased poverty, threatened food security, destroyed the livelihood of millions of people, created environmental refugees, increased migration flows and further increased the vulnerability of women, children and young people", and that "YMCAs around the world have for the last decades been working on environmental issues locally, nationally and regionally". It calls on the World Alliance of YMCAs to "further strengthen its advocacy work on issues related to Climate Change and make sure that youth from all over the world are given possibilities to be active on different levels," and urges National YMCA Movements to "start and/or continue to act and advocate for climate justice focusing on youth and assuring youth involvement in this process."

#### • Alternative Tourism

Tabled by the YMCA of Thailand, with support from nine YMCAs, this resolution recalls that "even though tourism could contribute to the development process of the receiving country, in reality the benefits of the tourism are not reaching local communities, rather they become victims of different forms of exploitation. In many countries in Asia, tourism is a story of the displacement of farmers, fisher communities, indigenous people and other communities to make way for the arrival of a tourism enterprise... it is the story of ecological damage. However, if negative impacts are addressed, tourism can be of immense benefit to host communities and bring global solidarity for addressing global challenges."

The resolution calls on YMCAs to "study the negative impact of tourism ... and appropriately consider community based Alternative Tourism Initiatives for bringing changes... and consider the establishment of a Task Group on Alternative Tourism at the World Alliance of YMCAs."



## Make a Change, Be the Change: Y's Men International Youth Meet in Japan

Paska Kinuthia  
Youth Intern  
Y's Men International

### The 13th International Youth Convocation (IYC) took place in Japan from 2nd – 8th August 2010.

Since it was organised just after the 17th World Council of YMCAs (Hong Kong), many young people were able to stay in the region and travel the short distance to Japan for the meeting.

The IYC aimed to: help participants to better understand Y's Men International and its relationship with the YMCA; plan the way forward for the youth movement; evaluate the ground covered in the two years since the previous IYC; provide a platform for personal development; and promote cultural understanding.

This IYC, which had a special focus on the environment, was unique in many ways. We had the largest representation of countries so far with approximately 150 participants from 30 countries! The theme was "Make a Change, Be the Change." We chose this theme with the hope of inspiring youth to realise that they are the leaders of today and if they want change to take place, then they must aspire to be the change they want to see.

For the first time ever, the IYC was held in two venues. The first two days were spent at YMCA Tozanso, and the next three were spent at YMCA Fujisan, an Eco-village very close to Mount Fuji with spectacular views of the mountain. This gave

young people a chance to stay at an eco-village, in line with our focus on the environment, but also helped foster the strong relationship between the YMCA and Y's Men. We were also very lucky to have Gleeson Job, Young Professional from the World Alliance of YMCAs in Geneva attending the IYC. Gleeson gave an introduction to the YMCA and its work, particularly in the area of advocacy.

We had several workshops and excursions focusing on the environment and a keynote speech by Professor Eiji Hosoda from the University of Keio, Japan. Professor Hosoda is an environmental economist; he made a very powerful presentation exploring factors affecting the environment, as well as how domestic and international politics are affecting environmental policies. Youth participants then had a chance to discuss further with the Professor in an exciting Q&A session.

The youth attending this IYC said they were "people of action". During the workshops on the environment, participants agreed on a project that they would carry out when they got back to their home countries. Japanese youth set a great example by sharing an environmental project they are already involved in called Uchimizu. This is the practice of

sprinkling water in Japanese gardens and streets to cool the surroundings and thus reduce the use of air conditioning. IYC participants took part in this project, and actually did it outside the International Convention venue in Yokohama, Japan.

During this IYC, youth participants also took a huge step by launching a new Global Initiative supporting the fight against Tuberculosis (TB), which will be implemented in partnership with the Red Cross. Y's Men International youth will be involved in fundraising and advocacy for the project. Since many of our youth come from countries with high prevalence rates of TB otherwise known as High Burden countries, we decided to undertake three pilot projects in India, Uganda and Kenya.

In conclusion, the IYC was very successful and we believe that our youth walked away having met all the objectives of the IYC and possibly even more! We look forward to the next meeting in 2012 which will be held in Stavanger, Norway. We also look forward to the continued support we receive from the YMCA as we work together to build a better world for all mankind.



## On 30th June 2010, the World Alliance of YMCAs launched its new website: [www.ymca.int](http://www.ymca.int)

This new site is the result of a comprehensive eight month review process that began in November 2009. This is the first time since 2006, that our website has undergone such a detailed review and change process.

In November 2009, we engaged a US-based firm, the Nielsen Group to support us in reviewing our website and making recommendations for change. The Director of this company is one of the world's most famous and well-respected website analysts: Jakob Nielsen. Over the last ten years this group has reviewed the websites of companies such as Amazon, Philip Morris, MTV, and Microsoft.

### Preparing for the Review

The working process with the Nielsen Group was a very interesting one. As a first step we were asked to define the World Alliance's objectives, mission and work, and the role of our website in the World Alliance's global communications strategy. We were then given several weeks to reflect on a set of critical questions about our website including:

- 1) Issues of primary concern with our website
- 2) Target audience
- 3) Top tasks to be accomplished by visitors to the website
- 4) Website Statistics, top 200 site-search terms
- 5) Top 10 services offered to visitors
- 6) Main competitor's sites

### User Task Scenarios

We were also asked to prepare a set of "user task scenarios". This meant imagining what types of people would access our website (e.g. media, prospective donors, members, staff, young people) and what tasks each type of person may want to accomplish on our website. Why do this? The Nielsen Group philosophy is to make your website user-orientated. Here are some examples of the scenarios we imagined for the World Alliance of YMCAs website:

- 1) Paula, a YMCA staff member from Italy, learnt via the "YMCA Info" mailing list that a series of webinars will be organised next month, she wants to get more information on the programme, how to register, the topics etc.
- 2) Alexander, works for youth-focused YMCA, he remembers seeing a copy of the World Alliance magazine in a meeting last week, but he cannot remember the exact name of the publication, and he would like to subscribe to it.
- 3) Ilona is travelling to New York and wants to know if there is a YMCA hotel in this city.

The Nielsen Group used a set of 10 - 15 "scenarios" like this in the review process, to determine how easy it was for website visitors to accomplish these basic tasks, and whether the existing website architecture was appropriate.

In January 2010 we received the Nielsen Group's full report; this 60 page document contained concrete analysis and recommendations under the following headings: Communicating site purposes, organisation of information, content writing, navigation and search functions, graphics and animation, design, and url.

The old website was found to have the following shortcomings:

- The mission and impact of the World Alliance of YMCAs was not clear from the homepage.
- The homepage did not communicate to visitors how the website could be used.
- The homepage was not interactive; there were very few "calls to action" – i.e. visitors weren't actively encouraged to sign up to our newsletter or donate for example.
- The World Alliance logo was difficult to read.
- The labels for different sections of the website were often quite cryptic; visitors would find it difficult to know exactly where to find what they are looking for.
- There was an overwhelming number of links on the home page (187!).
- There was no specific "media" or "press" section.
- Contact information was not visible.

In light of these and other observations, the Nielsen Group made recommendations regarding the structure, navigation, labelling and design of the site, including for example the need to provide assertive “calls to action” on the homepage, directing visitors to areas of the website that would meet their needs.

Using these recommendations, World Alliance staff worked closely with a web developer and designer to give the website a new look, and update the content. It has been a very dynamic and exciting process; we really hope that you will enjoy our new website.

Some new additions to the website include:

- A.) A “mega dropdown” menu.
- B.) Donate button on the front page.
- C.) A “fat footer” plus links to social networks such as Facebook and Twitter.

**B** **Support the Development of Young Leaders**

You can support programmes that equip young people with the knowledge and skills to become agents of change in their communities, and within the YMCA Movement.

[Donate](#)

**A**

What We Do	Where We Work	Newsroom
<p><u>Advocating for Change</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Climate Change</li> <li>→ Gender Equality</li> <li>→ Global Citizenship</li> <li>→ HIV / AIDS</li> <li>→ Migration</li> <li>→ Right to Food</li> <li>→ Youth Justice</li> </ul> <p><u>Developing Young Leaders</u></p>	<p><u>Building Vibrant YMCAs</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ What is the GOP (Global Operating Plan)?</li> <li>→ What are the Three Pillars of a Vibrant YMCA?</li> <li>→ How Do We Support Each Other?</li> <li>→ How Can I Provide or Receive Support?</li> <li>→ GOP News</li> <li>→ Resources</li> </ul> <p><u>Responding to Emergencies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Haiti 2010</li> <li>→ Sudan 2009</li> <li>→ Sri Lanka 2009</li> <li>→ Ecuador 2008</li> </ul>	

**C**

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Who We Are	What We Do	Where We Work	Newsroom
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Mission</li> <li>&gt;&gt; Paris Basis - 1855</li> <li>&gt;&gt; Kampala Principles - 1973</li> <li>&gt;&gt; Challenge 21 - 1998</li> <li>&gt; History</li> <li>&gt;&gt; YMCA Historical Figures</li> <li>&gt;&gt; YMCA Logo - History</li> <li>&gt;&gt; Basketball : a YMCA Invention</li> <li>&gt; Structure</li> <li>&gt;&gt; Executive Committee 2010-2014</li> <li>&gt;&gt; World Alliance Staff</li> <li>&gt;&gt; World Council of YMCAs</li> <li>&gt;&gt; YMCA Area Alliances</li> <li>&gt; Partners</li> <li>&gt;&gt; Ecumenical Organisations</li> <li>&gt;&gt; United Nations</li> <li>&gt;&gt; International NGOs and Networks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Advocating for Change</li> <li>&gt;&gt; Climate Change</li> <li>&gt;&gt; Gender Equality</li> <li>&gt;&gt; Global Citizenship</li> <li>&gt;&gt; HIV / AIDS</li> <li>&gt;&gt; Migration</li> <li>&gt;&gt; Right to Food</li> <li>&gt;&gt; Youth Justice</li> <li>&gt; Building Vibrant YMCAs</li> <li>&gt;&gt; What is the GOP (Global Operating Plan)?</li> <li>&gt;&gt; What are the Three Pillars of a Vibrant YMCA?</li> <li>&gt;&gt; How Do We Support Each Other?</li> <li>&gt;&gt; How Can I Provide or Receive Support?</li> <li>&gt;&gt; GOP News</li> <li>&gt;&gt; Resources</li> <li>&gt; Developing Young Leaders</li> <li>&gt; Responding to Emergencies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; YMCA Country Profiles</li> <li>&gt;&gt; Africa</li> <li>&gt;&gt; Asia and Pacific</li> <li>&gt;&gt; Canada</li> <li>&gt;&gt; Europe</li> <li>&gt;&gt; Latin America and Caribbean</li> <li>&gt;&gt; Middle East</li> <li>&gt;&gt; USA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Latest News</li> <li>&gt; YMCA Success Stories</li> <li>&gt; Photos</li> <li>&gt; Videos</li> <li>&gt; Media Contacts</li> </ul>

**For more information please visit:**

**Nielsen Group**  
<http://www.nngroup.com/>

**Jakob Nielsen website on usability:**  
<http://www.useit.com/> (with more than 100'000 visitors per month)

**My reviews of two of Nielsen's books:**  
<http://www.ymca.int/podcast.0.html#7308>

**“Jakob Nielsen: The web design guru that web designers love to hate”**  
 The Guardian - <http://tinyurl.com/2rt3ds>



Secretary General  
Dr. Bart Shaha  
World Alliance of YMCAs

## Revisiting Our Roots: Justice and Unity

The 8th of May this year was a very significant day for the World Alliance. It was the birthday of one of our key founding leaders, Henry Dunant; and as this year marks his 100th death anniversary, the Dunant and Moynier Foundation in Geneva commemorated the day with an extensive programme. Last year, some of the leaders of the Foundation, including its President and the great-grandnephew of Henry Dunant, Bernard Dunant, visited our office and we collaborated with them for this special day-long programme. It included an Opening Ceremony at the City Hall attended by key national figures and leaders from the Canton of Geneva and civil society.

It is said of Henry Dunant that he was 100 years ahead of his time in Ecumenical thinking. Dunant made invaluable contributions to human rights, for it was this prophetic leader who had envisioned the Geneva Convention after witnessing the plight of thousands of sick and dying soldiers in the battlefields in Solferino, Italy in 1859.

George Williams was only 23 when he initiated the first YMCA in London in 1844. What moved him was the plight of young people as they poured into London City working in factories or business houses in extremely difficult conditions. He noticed the great divisions existing even amongst Christians. So he called for unity to address the social conditions. The YMCA idea spread very fast and many new YMCAs were born in different countries. Within 10 years, in 1855, the first international meeting of the YMCA was organised in Paris.

The motto of the YMCA that was decided upon at that meeting was from John 17, 21: "That They All May Be One." These two men, Henry Dunant and George Williams, with such distinct focus (one on justice and human rights; the other on unity) give us courage and inspiration to pursue the mission of the YMCA in progressive and creative ways.

The Paris Basis has, in my view, two basic elements: that the YMCA is about uniting people of whatever background, irrespective of race, gender, colour or creed; secondly it is about Jesus Christ's call to "extend the Kingdom of God" which many theologians today interpret as working for God's reign of justice, love and peace.

For Christians, justice refers to the command Jesus gave to "love your neighbour as yourself" (Mt. 22, 39). "It seeks humanising activities leading to right relationships with one's self, the community, its social structures and to the environment itself."

During Jesus' life on earth, He constantly sought to bring people into right relationships ("leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift" (Mt. 5, 23-25)). In the context of the current process of globalisation, we are faced with new challenges to address widespread injustice.

As mentioned earlier, it is in response to the call from Jesus Christ himself, who proclaimed the Kingdom of God and asks us to work so it be fulfilled, that we are in the YMCA. Over the decades, YMCA leaders, concerned about clearly pursuing the mission of the YMCA, felt the need to interpret the Paris Basis from time to time. Therefore at the 6th World Council in Kampala, Uganda, in 1973 the movement adopted the "Kampala Principles" with a focus on human development. Considering issues of contemporary times, the YMCA adopted "Challenge 21" in 1998 in Frechen, Germany, at the 14th World Council. The text of Challenge 21 is so inspiring, as it articulates very clearly our vision and mission today. The Preamble states: "...the YMCA ... seeks to share the Christian ideal of building a human community of justice with love, peace and reconciliation for the fullness of life for all creation."

There are several imperatives identified for our response in Challenge 21. A good question perhaps for us as we move on to the second decade of the 21st century is to ask ourselves: What challenges amongst those listed imperatives have we prioritised for our own YMCA?

For example, have we strived for spiritual, intellectual, and physical well-being of individuals and wholeness of communities according to Jesus Christ's teachings and made efforts to share his message of justice and peace? Have we empowered young people to take increased responsibilities in their communities? Have we advocated for the rights of women and upheld rights of children? Have we fostered dialogue and partnership with people of different faiths? Have we worked in solidarity with the poor and dispossessed? Have we sought to be mediators and reconcilers in sit-

uations of conflict? Have we defended God's creation against all that would destroy it?

At this World Council, it will be our task to share with each other our experiences and insights and join together on common issues to create more impact. We need to join from different countries, from different continents so that our voices of unity as a global body will bear weight in fostering change. And this leads us to the theme of this World Council: "Striving for Global Citizenship for All."

Here in this YMCA Village, Wu Kwai Sha, we will look at our world, we will analyse the issues people face, we will identify good practices and together deliberate on how we could all be one world, one community, with everyone – from North America to Asia and the Pacific Islands, from the Middle East to Africa, from Europe to Latin America and the Caribbean. We will open our hearts and minds to become true global citizens.

### Blossoming in Spirituality

I have often shared that growing in spirituality means not only prayers and deep union with our Creator God, but also "Response-ability", i.e. the ability to respond. In other words, we grow in spirituality by responding meaningfully to the situations we face. Obviously, as mentioned earlier, it is a calling to understand the context and make relevant responses so that justice and peace prevail.

Obviously, for such a transformational agenda we would need a strong spirituality. This spirituality will continue to generate new hope in spite of all the desperation and hopelessness that we see around us, knowing for sure that there will be a new day when long-established injustices will be dismantled forever. In this, we are inspired by a beautiful poem of Seamus Heaney:

*"History says, Don't hope  
On this side of the grave,  
But then, once in a lifetime  
The longed-for tidal wave  
Of justice can rise up  
And hope and history rhyme."\**

Aren't our efforts in the YMCA to rhyme hope and history?

(\*Poem from: Seamus Heaney, *The Cure at Troy: A Version of Sophocles' Philoctetes*, Faber and Faber, London, 1991 (Quoted in Amartya Sen, *The Idea of Justice*, p. 27). Heaney was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1995.)

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