

Message from the President

Where's the Y in the YWCA?

We are under 5 % !!! Shocking Statistics for our Nation Wide Study !!!

I am happy to address the youth of the movement through this column "Where is the Youth". This question is relevant in today's scenario in India and also now that the memory of the recently held World Council is fresh in our mind. The recently held election for the World Board and the executive committee was an eye opener. 4 out of the 6 Vice Presidents are below the age of 30 and the other 2 are also in their early 30s

What is the total number of youth in our country where we boast of 85 associations and 7000 members? The number is less than 400. What will be the impact of this on our existence as an association of the world movement? India will definitely stop having representatives on the world board. That is certain.

What can be done in order to prevent such a situation from happening? More and more programmes should be initiated for the youth to participate. How can we ensure their participation? Meaningful and interesting programmes should be conducted so that the youth gets enthused. Where does the onus lie? On senior members who will give space and opportunity for the youth to participate and allocate a budget for youth activities.

Why should the youth make use of this opportunity? In this age of stiff competition it is not only academic excellence that is important but also experience of working in NGOs and there by reaching out to marginalised people. By getting involved in organisations like the Y you can hone your

oratorical skills and build up your confidence levels. The Y provides an opportunity for the enhancement of all these skills. Make the best use of all the facilities and opportunities that the Y can offer so that it adds value to your personality.

What can the youth do? At the UN the year commencing Aug 12, 2010 was designated the International year of Youth to encourage young people "to devote their energy, enthusiasm and creativity" to the resolution of the problems confronting mankind. As seen in the examples of Mahatma Gandhi and Dr Martin Luther King Jr. who both became active in their 20s many human rights struggles have been initiated and sustained through the power and passion of youth. We expect you to invest your energy and creativity to give an impetus to this movement.

Intergenerational and transformative leadership is what we are aiming at and we need young leaders to step into the second line of leadership so that there are leaders to take this movement to greater heights in the years to come.

I am here by announcing an activity for the youth all across the nation to take up. We need an anthem for the YWCA and the best anthem that comes will be declared the anthem of the movement. So create the lyrics and compose the tune and let it come to the National office by the end of November. I am sure this activity can bring all of you together.

Cheers,

*Rema Daniel
National President
YWCA of India*

Creating Space for Young Women

In our movement, the theme going around the world has been women creating a safe world. This also means creating a space for young women's development. As the young women's department in the YWCA of India, who have launched their first newsletter, I am encouraged to see that a space has been created, to express their concerns, their vision, and looking at the world today through their eyes. Such platforms are more crucial in the movement today, as we see fewer & fewer young women joining us, and this is one way of engaging their leadership and participation in addressing social concerns. Creating a space, which also recognises their contribution, and that allows them the freedom to express creatively, should be the movement's prerogative. I do not believe they are the leaders waiting for a new tomorrow, but leaders of now, who can make a difference. Let's challenge ourselves to look with them, & through their eyes.....

Wishing success & success alone for Y's eyes.

*Leila Passah
National General Secretary*

A Leap of Faith

I had been talking about it, reading about it yet here I was struggling to explain a ten year old the concept of interfaith harmony. It took him only a fraction of a second to come up with a concept for his art work for the same, after I finished rambling.

India has often been touted as a land of diversity, one that is home to more than 30 recognised languages, 28 different cultures, and all major world religions and yet when it comes to the simplest of things we find ourselves at logger heads with each other, indifferent, and cold. India has also seen some of the worst riots in the name of religion tearing down families and leaving indelible scars in the memories of people. Could we then look back at faith itself for answers, to create a world we would want to gift our children?

What is amazing is the capacity of human beings to display such varied emotions. The decade has on one hand been witness to acts of such gross injustice and violence, as was seen in the Norway shoot out where a right wing Norwegian open fired at people at a summer camp. At the same time the flow of humanitarian aid that rushes into disaster struck areas cannot be undermined, be it Tsunami stricken Japan, or earthquake hit Haiti. Would it not be unfair for us to then think that all is lost?

In this first issue of the YWCA newsletter we will take a deep look at our faith and try to come up with solutions as we talk to young people and hear out their views on Interfaith harmony and the way ahead.

"Interfaith is a beautiful train with many boggies and compartments." Explains Roshan Sajan, student of Jamia Milia Islamia, New Delhi, illustratively. "Each compartment has a group of followers of one religion so Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Buddhist, Sikhs are all there. One person goes into each compartment and listens to what they say and discovers that everyone says the same. He does not find any difference in fundamental ideas and teachings of various religions. So message of God is one, and all prophets have brought the same message. The inter-religious relations and religious resources of the world must be conceived as the common property of the whole humanity."

One may argue that people of different religions live differently and have different customs that we may or may not be open to but when one lives in a pluralistic society such as ours, what we should look at as the common thread binding all human beings that are the ideas of peace, happiness, non violence, compassion and love. All religions have space for these ideas and hence should form the basis for any discussion on an interfaith approach. An interfaith approach at this point should not be taken lightly as it not only gives solutions but also seeks to eliminate the root cause of dangers posed by fundamentalists committing acts

of violence in the name of religion.

The GNRC intercultural and interfaith programme for ethics education manual suggests, 'four dimensions of responsibility' for those who want to encourage sensitivity, and respect for other people's rights. These are

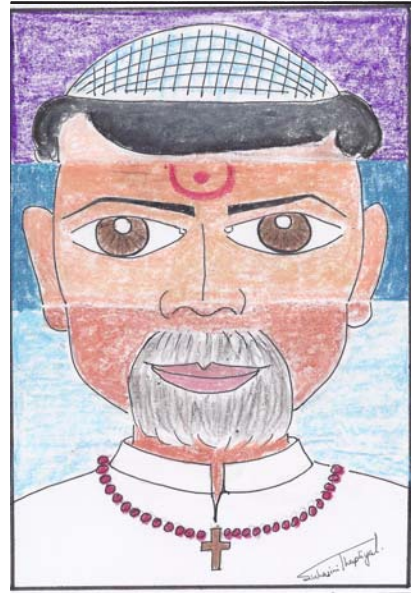
-Children must be taught about their own faith and traditions in a way that respects others and accepts the "otherness" of others. Children can often grow up ill equipped to handle those different from their own selves.

-Religious traditions must make a conscious effort to promote openness, honesty and above all compassion towards fellow human beings.

-We must recognise that though our traditions might be different from one another we need to look for commonality and overlapping values that bring us together.

-We need to know and appreciate not only our own religion but also have an informed understanding of what others believe too.

Like Blessy, a young volunteer of the YWCA of Bombay explains, "it's not about emulating the other but understanding the difference and respecting each one for the person they are. Through an exposure to other cultures we get to exchange ideas , thoughts, lifestyles."



Nisha a young woman, National Secretary –Communication & Publication at the YWCA of India, a believes, "we need to open up our minds. We should not say or believe that only one faith or religion is good or bad and divide people on that basis. The attitudinal change would be possible if people are more aware about other faiths as well. In Quran (Surat-aal-Imraan (3), ayah 45) said and believed that'... the son of Mary, held in honour in this life and the hereafter, and will be one of those who are near to Allah... How many of us even believe that it's written in the Quran?? It's all about increasing awareness which would open up our minds and attitudes towards accepting and understanding different religions."

"Humans have the potential to make their present and future better with their humble and committed efforts, if they are willing to walk together striving towards a better tomorrow. Young people from various faiths need to commit to networking together mainly focusing on four major common concerns that threaten the future of human existence i.e. Poverty, Violence, Climate Change and Gender Justice."-shares Vineeth Koshy,Executive Secretary - Commission on Youth,National Council of Churches in India.

Learning to Live Together

The YWCA of India has been conducting training workshops with GNRC(Global Network of Religions for Children). The GNRC is a worldwide interfaith network exclusively devoted to working for child rights and other children's issues. The YWCA of India, as a part of the network has organized a series of workshops on interfaith.

Rohini, a young member of the YWCA of Simla shares her experience of the workshop, "This training of trainers was organized to give opportunity to people to teach and learn, to help us become proficient enough to teach others how to live in harmony with one another."

" Faith means accepting divinity. No one can live without faith. Faith gives hope and leads to fear when it is weakened. Every Faith has spiritual aspects as well as social aspects Spiritual teachings are everlasting and do not change with time; however social teachings change from time to time. Different religions show us the way to live but we can't choose our religion. Our society guides us how to live or have the right conduct. Ignorance of our and of other religions leads to doubts, fears and suspicion."

Something to do

What you will need: a packet of pebbles and images of different faiths.

The Story of Chang La

Chang La (Chang Pass), in Ladakh, is the world's second highest motorable road at 17,586 feet. Chang La Baba, the divine guardian of the pass, is believed to protect those who pass this route. People passing Chang La place a stone to pass safely with pictures and idols of their faith, for safety. Today, it is a shrine that acknowledges all faiths, the existence of God and religious oneness.

What you can do : share the story of Chang La and ask everyone to place a stone to create their own shrine of love and reflect on the exercise, with their experiences.

In 2004, what sparked off a public debate was when France banned girls from wearing burqas to school. It was all over the media and it all made us think about our understanding of the word secular. In India it would not be odd for us to see girls in hijab merrily walk down to college, whereas in the west it was seen as interference of religious symbols with its commitment to secularism and its secular culture. When educational institutions keep religion at bay they do not acknowledge it as a potential tool of education. Considering the growing stress and intolerance among the youth and acts of violence committed by misguided people, religion should be looked at as a something that embraces and not something that divides. Faith and adopting religious symbols are a matter of choice, and they should be respected as one would their own kind. Roshan Sajan says, "We need to create better understanding among people of different faiths and look forward for facilitating the process of reconciliation and dialogue. The efforts should be grounded in the contemporary context of the generally prevalent inter-religious misunderstanding and even violence, and the consequent need to undertake activities that remove prejudice, resolve conflict and increase trust and cooperation between individuals and groups. This is where the role of youths is necessary."

With people living in an atmosphere of constant fear, of getting hurt if they are not careful enough, or if they fail to please those in power, one may wonder if we are breeding a generation of cowards, who turn a cold shoulder to those in need, turn a blind eye to the burning issues that need to be addressed, just so as to avoid trouble? The answer to this lies in a change in our attitude from our traditional 'God fearing' approach to a 'God loving' approach, points out Roshan. This would enable people to incorporate love and humility in their attitude. Laurentina another young woman with the YWCA suggests, "Interfaith dialogue is something which will expose us to different faiths This way we can share and obtain ideas, and find solutions to the global issues, personal doubts and have a clarity of Faith which is very important in today's world." An inter faith dialogue must be one that reaches out to bring people together, and aims to transform the world. This can be achieved through an attitude of being in 'another person's shoes' and through an attitude of reconciliation.

An ancient Jewish folk tale describes a scene in hell as one where all the people were seated along long tables with beautiful table cloth, cutlery and bountiful food in front of them. Yet no one ate, and the people all wailed in grief, and anger. On looking closely one found out that no one could bend their elbows, so though they saw the food, they could not touch it or eat it.

The Scene in Heaven was almost the same with the grand setting and bountiful food and all the people with the same handicap of not being able to bend their arms at the elbows. Yet the people smiled, and looked happy- because they all served their neighbour. Well, this sure proves one thing --morals stories aren't just for children.



Something to do:

Want to have an interfaith dialoge? Want to know if you or people around you face discrimination? want to inculcate a sensitive and inclusive environment? Here are some suggestions as to how you could begin:

- 1) Ask Questions: encourage and entertain a questioning spirit. Ask yourself questions like

Do I feel respected? Do I treat people with respect? Do I respect differences without being disrespectful? How can I gather feedback from people with diverse backgrounds? Do my policies/my actions express that we are open to new and diverse ideas?. Questioning ourselves or our policies at workplace help us grow as individuals, and help us remove barriers to promote inclusion.

- 2) Discuss: Discussions could be a one to one discussion, round table discussion, debate or narrating real life incidents, and dilemmas. Such discussions throw up ideas and solutions to promote understanding two different point of views. Also helps develop listening skills.

- 3) Storytelling: This tool is particularly beneficial at home when dealing with children. Telling children folk tales or mythological stories with morals not only lets children's imaginations flourish they also learn to put themselves in another person's shoes.

- 4) Film viewing: Viewing films together as a community helps breed a sense of togetherness and if the film is topical it may lead to a healthy debate. Suggested viewing: Crash, Babel, Life is beautiful, Schindler's list, Fire (Deepa Mehta), Blood Diamond, The Pianist, Bandit Queen, Hotel Rwanda, In the name of God (Anand Patwardhan), The Kite runner, The Hurt Locker, The Motorcycle Diaries.

Write to us: We look forward to hearing from you on the outcomes from these discussions.

By Samridhi Thapliyal
(The writer is a student filmmaker
a young volunteer of the YWCA of India)
mail in your feedback at: samy.thapliyal@gmail.com

Voices from The World YWCA Council

Young women all around the world live in societies that discriminate against them. At the world YWCA Council in Zurich we met Raisa, a participant from Chechnya, who boldly voiced the concerns of safety and freedom of choice for women. majority of the Chechen population is Islamists & the freedom of choice for women, their individual beliefs and liberty are often be under threat.

Q Can you tell us about the situation of women in Chechnya?

A The situation for women in Chechnya is not very promising because when president Kadyrov came to power he started this huge propaganda against women by imposing dress code. For instance, all female school girls from 6 years old and up are obliged to wear head scarves in schools which is against Russian constitution and Chechnya is a part of Russian.

They run a huge propaganda against women in every mosque. When men are gathering for Friday's prayer the imams are always talking about women, they encourage men to limit women's activities. So in every school there are representatives of a new foundation called centre for moral and spiritual education of youth which was created under initiative of Kadyrov.

"I was shot with this paintball gun. I experienced not just physical hurt, but worse than physical hurt was the humiliation because they threatened me as whore just because I was not wearing the headscarves"

According to them women have to cover their bodies, which never was the case in Chechnya. We are Muslims but we also have our traditions and according to our those women do not wear Hijab. They do not cover the bodies entirely, this is something new which came in 1999. Anyway we have our small chechnian headscarves that women used to wear. It was always initiatives of family, if father and brother allow you to not to cover your head you could do that, but with Kadyrov, first time in the story of Chechnya it comes from the government, the government imposes things against women and step by step this has started to be more violent.

The security services they even started to use physical aggression against women for example last year, the security services, the armed men patrolling the district and they were shooting young women who were not wearing headscarves, they were shooting them with paintball and bullet, which is very painful. I was shot with this paintball gun. I experienced not just physical hurt, but worse than physical hurt was the humiliation because they threatened me as whore just because I was not wearing the headscarves, actually I have never worn this headscarf and nobody never threatened me as a whore.

Q Do you think that these bans are more religious or political?

A It cannot be religious, because if you want to establish religion it must be established for both genders. To restrict women is one thing, but the men are Muslims as well, they must also be restricted to not drink, to not smoke to be like the classic Muslim but no, everything is allowed to men. So I think this is not religion.

Q What would be your message for women in India?

A Well I'm pretty sure the women in India understand us .Your women are also experiencing abuse but the Indian women have, as I learned here in Zurich, very strong movement. We don't have this and my message is –take this opportunity, just join them, be powerful, one woman is just one woman, but together a movement. Don't forget, women are half of population, this is really huge work, this is a tsunami. Don't allow men to abuse you because every woman deserves to be loved and to love. To have a choice of marriage, to have a choice whether she wants to study or not. I hope every women in India and around the world will understand that she represents a real power, she can play an active role. Why not??

*I hope every women
in India and around
the world will
understand that she
represents a real
power, she can play
an active role.*

Why not???

For the full interview log on to our facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=116097538421293>

*Awake my mind by the sacred shore of India's sea of humanity
(Tagore in Gitanjali)*

A Numb Chalk

"The strategic adversary is fascism. The fascism is in us all, in our heads and in our everyday behavior, the fascism that causes us to love, power to desire the very thing that dominate and exploit us"

This I happen to listen to a learnt researcher's talk, a subject generally which I tend to ignore.

Fascism if looked in appropriate outlook is a form of secular politics born of the convulsions of modernity whose belief in the nation or race rather than God's Word as the foundation of reality makes it in theory the antithesis of fundamentalism.

Another critical issue humanity globally faces is the rise of religious fundamentalism. Religious fundamentalism is a global religious impulse particularly evident in the 20th century that seeks to recover and publicly institutionalize aspects of the past that modern life has obscured. Religious fundamentalists take their cues from a sacred text; they maximize the distinction between humanity and religion.

The religious dichotomy which leads to tolerance of faith or ideology often leaves a cold fingerprint of the realm of its identity in this socio-political world. When religion is seen through the lens of faith, it gives us an opportunity to think whether an individual should continue in a particular religion and help sincerely in the religious life. Whereas ideology on the other hand is seen on the grounds of communal disharmony. At times, it is the cost of our identity that a need for a community should be created for a better tomorrow, which can pioneer the roots of faiths. Even if the religion asks us to be inhuman in our lives, we should betray our religion for the sake of justice and peace in our well being. It is through deeper understanding of the religious texts and scriptures that a balance can be maintained by tacking the unjustified notions of interpretation.

Why faith?

Faith of some form in the Higher brings a balance to one's thinking and behavior and a quiet confidence and claim. But it should not be a blind belief which will only lead to superstitious. It should be a faith tempered with understanding. Faith is like the heat of the flame. The heat of the flame makes the letters of the scriptures with their message clear. Our faith in God should be combined with our best effort and also be combined with love and humility. Devotion of such faith can be projected as practical, useful and self empowering rather than a guilt-creating and fearsome one. The idea must be to enable the youths of tomorrow who would follow the footsteps of discipline and policies guided by this socialized and stereotype society to become "God-loving" rather than "God-fearing", basically a traditional approach. Power of faith serves the wonderful equilibrium support or satisfaction to all ages especially to children as they grow and also the aged. Faith is often projected as a confidence-builder. Some of the world's most famous and successful people have had God as a partner in all what they did. What is important is to make clear whether rationality is needed to be opposed to faith? One can have both, with the awareness as to when to use them.

We need to perceive real co-existence between each other's religion. In today's modern world, people have more social interaction with each other than ever before. Tolerance of believers in one religion to another is an essential need. Every religion with its fundamental ideas on God, human and the world has its followers, carrying their faith. If they reject the provisions in others faith, it is prejudice.

All religious experiences and traditions are simultaneously ours. We do not have any one particular religious tradition alone as our own and others as belonging to others. It is a religious perspective in which while remaining in one's own religious faith-experience; one can consider other faiths as one's own, as the common property of humanity, for an increasingly blessed and enriched life. It should be noted that if one is intimately familiar with one's own religious system alone, that is a very religiously poverty stricken condition. We need to create better understanding among people of different faiths and look forward for facilitating the process of reconciliation and dialogue. The efforts should be grounded in the contemporary context of the generally prevalent inter-religious misunderstanding and even violence, and the consequent need to undertake activities that remove prejudice, resolve conflict and increase trust and cooperation between individuals and groups. This is where the role of youths is necessary; the young eager minds of tomorrow, both young men and women who want to be reasons for others should come into effect.

Women should understand their potential to form opinions and engage in interfaith dialogue and cooperation. This includes interfaith meetings, seminars, workshops and interaction with local religious groups. It involves in identifying women's perspective in underlying issues in existing conflicts especially in the context of the places covered in the women's interfaith journey. It is also important to explore alternative models of conflict resolution and peace building that arises out of women's experiences and collaborations.

Investing in today's youth is about investing in future both for country and the world. It needs to be reiterated that investing in the youth is investing in the future and not doing so is the surest recipe for spread of social tensions. As it is well known, religions are different roads to the same destination that is, different religious talk of values aimed at achieving the general good of society. There have been several religious leaders who have echoed this again and again. Morality, justice and love form the cornerstone of the major religions of the world. There may be different ways and means to reach the ultimate God but spiritual quest has been unhindered over the years though material culture and values have pervaded our social fabric.

The love and understanding propagated in all major religions have sometimes been misinterpreted to put one group against the other. This has led to hatred and violence amongst the other. This has led to hatred and violence amongst religious groups, giving a bad name to religion and its lofty values.

What is earnestly needed is to reinterpret our scriptures for a society meant for all where living together is possible regardless of our identity. Inter-religious and inter-cultural beliefs as also the underlying theme of all religions of truth love and sacrifice. At the end, the religion is a noun which brings fruits of adjective and takes the shape of a verb for a harmonized society.

By Roshan Sajan
A student of Jamia Milia Islamia, New Delhi

Sue

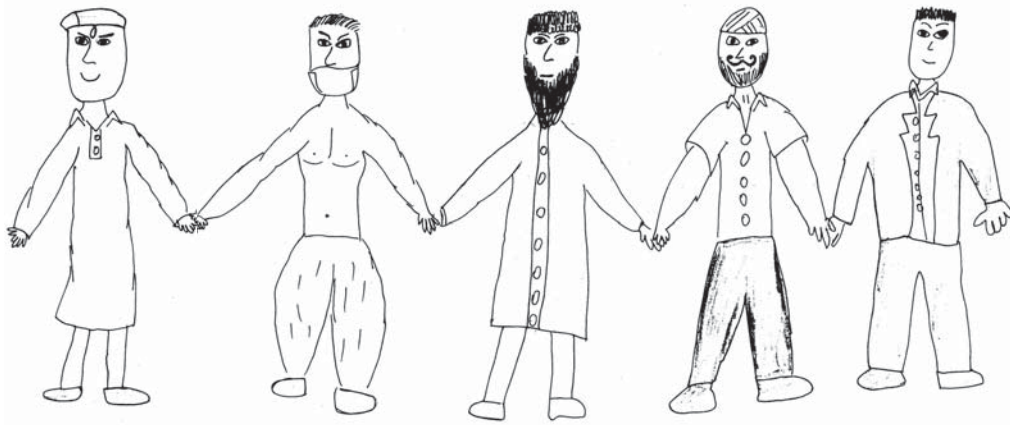
Feasts And Fasts



By: Suhasini Thapliyal
Courtesy: Farheen Khan

(Feedback:
suhasini.thapliyal@gmail.com)

We are Indians



Parth Mangain:
Interfaith through the eyes of an
8 year old

The International Scene

Young Women's Leadership Dialogue at the World YWCA Council 2011:

The Council provided a platform for young women leaders from YWCAs across the world to come together to-

- Implement goals
- strategies as a global movement
- network with YWCAs from across the world
- build skill through workshops
- Share the work of the National Movements



Young Women's Leadership Dialogue at the World Council 2011:

Vandana G Masih (Chairperson-National Young Women's Committee) and Divya Vinod (National Secretary - Youth Development) represented the YWCA of India. It was organized around the Council Theme: "Women Creating a Safe World". Training sessions were held on: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and positive sexuality (given by Ms Katie Chau from IPPF and Ms Vicky Rojas from the YWCA of Chile), on Leadership (given by several young women leaders of the World YWCA movement) and on women's rights and technology (given by Ms Beatrice Frey from UN Women and Ms Sarah Davies, General Secretary of the YWCA of Aoteroa/New Zealand).

Key points made at the training workshop-

- Use of modern technology as an advocacy tool: google groups, social networking sites etc are being used to promote social messages, movies and other creative mediums need to be used to engage young people.
- While sexuality has been positively associated with pleasure, attraction and sex, reproductive health rights are associated with a lot of negative issues such as violence, maternal mortality. Hence, there is a need to promote awareness about reproductive rights.
- To promote mentoring programmes for young women in order to bring up a generation of young women leaders.

Positive Women's Network: The Positive Women's Forum at the International Women's Forum gives women living with HIV a platform to come together and take leadership on future policy and action., The YWCA of India was represented at the forum by Lalchhuanzuali a HIV positive young woman from YWCA of Aizawl, who shared her work in the communities as a peer counselor/ educator on prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and advocacy.

Solidarity Visit to Myanmar: For the first time in YWCA history an ecumenical visit was made by a delegation of 10 members from Asia between 27th March - 1st April 2011, to visit the various programmes of the YWCA of Myanmar. Giving them an insight of the community work they have been doing at the grassroots.



Nisha Soman, National Secretary-Communications & Publications represented the YWCA of India on the delegation. The purpose of the visit

was to understand the situation of young women and girls in Myanmar, post-cyclone Nargis. The delegation also looked into community rebuilding, and to explore the possibility for young women's internship programme in Asia's YWCAs for young women from Myanmar.

National News

Young Women's Training on Adolescent Health: at the National Convention in 2010, young women in the movement have committed to work on human rights, and identified health as a major area to be looked into for the future. The YWCA of India has organized 2 of a series of regional leadership training workshops on Adolescent Health-in Jaipur (for the Northern Region) and in Shillong (for the Eastern Region) , organized by the National Young Women's Committee. Through the training young women are also looking at regional concerns. Highlights from the workshop-



Northern Region (30th April-1st May 2011): Focus: Caste Issue

- Inclusion of young dalit women, the youngest participants, 13 year olds at the workshop
- The training included and exposure to a medical camp in the dalit community of traditional puppet makers, called Katputli Colony

Eastern Region (3rd -6th June 2011): Focus HIV/AIDS and health issues:

Sessions were led by Lalchhunzuali, from the YWCA of Aizawl, who is HIV+ :who shared her story and work in the community on HIV and AIDS

- Young women developed projects around health issues that concern them, which they would implement as a follow-up to the training.
- Exposure visit was organized to Jowai, where young women engaged in creative methods of awareness raising through street plays, quizzes etc.



Interview with A. Laurentina Sushima (YWCA of Secunderabad): the first intern at the YWCA of India!!!

Q How was your internship experience?

A I think as young women we can do many things there are a lot of things which I can put into action that I have learnt from this internship and I am happy in the future there will be many other young women like me who will benefit from this programme

Q What would you do as follow up with your association once you return to?

A I would like to impart young women leadership training so that they can grow and become a resource for their local association and at regional national level, networking with women's organization with ecumenical partners and focus on programmes around social issues, environment issues.

Q What are your recommendations for future training programmes?

A Since I'm your first intern here, I would say that it was a pretty good experience even though it was only for a week. But then I personally feel that it should be for at least one month so that we get a better exposure for work

Young Women & Advocacy

Young Women have been at the forefront of Activism: Lobbying for Justice; Campaigning for Human Rights Concerns: Some of the key issues addressed by young women include:

Impacting National Policies: Young women have been actively involved through consultation with NGO partners in important discussion:

- Expectations of Christian Community from the 12th 5 Year plan
- National Consultation of Dalit Christians
- Focus consultation on the Rights of the Dalit girl child
- Compensation on women victims of crime

At these advocacy platforms YWCA provided young women's perspectives on issues, which are usually ignored

Lobbying for the Gender Budget: A memorandum was submitted to the Finance Minister Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, and Divya Vinod, National Youth Secretary pushed for adequate allocation of resources for women using the media, through interviews and panel discussion in women's news channel-Focus TV before and after the Budget Session in Parliament.

Advocacy for the Women's Reservation Bill: along with its network partners, the YWCA of India is continue to demand for the Women's Reservation Bill, with Young Women taking a lead on the campaign, through demonstrations and active lobbying with women parliamentarians.



Networking for Peace in Palestine with Ecumenical Partners: YWCA of India has joined hands with other National Ecumenical movements and the National Council of Churches, to develop advocacy based projects and increase people's awareness and involvement with the struggles of the Palestinians through joint programmes on advocacy and community action.

The network a held candle light vigils in the capital city during Palm Sunday, to express our solidarity with the Palestinian Christians who were denied their basic rights to worship in holy places in Jerusalem and made a short advocacy video (youtube link- <http://youtu.be/I132mb-VFGU>) which was screened on the wall of Jerusalem during world week for peace organised by the WCC.

News from Local Associations

NORTHERN REGION

YWCA of Jabalpur: The PIYA committee organized an inter school elocution competition on 6th February 2011 where more than forty students had participated in both Hindi & English elocution. They also organized a painting competition and the topic was "**GO GREEN**" and the latter half of the day there was an essay writing competition.

YWCA of Delhi: The YWCA of Delhi observed the International Youth Day on August 12, 2011. This day marked the end of the International Year of Youth declared by the U.N. from August 2010 – August 2011 with the theme "Dialogue and Mutual Understanding."

More than 250 youth from diverse backgrounds participated in the colorful and vibrant programme. Ms. Kiran Mehra-Kerpelman, Director, U.N. Information Centre for India and Bhutan graced the occasion as the Chief Guest.

Ms. Kiran Mehra-Kerpelman delivered the inaugural address and also conveyed greetings from the Secretary General of the U.N. Mr. Ban Ki-moon and a banner was displayed outside the hall for the youth to put their hand prints in different colours as a mark of solidarity and protect our environment.



Singing competition, Dance competition and Skit competition were organized. The celebration culminated with a, rock show.

EASTERN REGION:

YWCA of Cuttack: Young volunteers had exposure visit to 'Orissa Orphanage' a place for destitute and abandoned children. The volunteers shared some time with father Anthony and children.

International Women's day on 8th March 2010. Youth performed a skit around the theme 'anti-dowry' on the World YWCA day the 24th April 2010.

Young Women conducted Inter school talent competition on Children's day.

Awareness Programme for young volunteers on World Aids day with interaction with the Doctors.

YWCA of Berhampur: A programme addressing Global warming and Climate change was organized by the YWCA of Berhampur and supported by 'Church's Auxiliary for Social Action(CASA)'. Dr.Sushant Agarwal, director CASA and Mr.Aishya Prakash State Coordinator explained the goal setting and objectives of the workshop, while Ms. Ratna Sahu, President of YWCA Berhampur, aptly put in Biblical and theological reflection on climate change. Mr.Suchit Singh, a resource person from CASA gave a vivid presentation on the subjects, followed by a group discussion. Dr. Sailabala Padhi took the session on Global warming and Climate Change, Adaptation and mitigation measures. Plan of action that the group came up with was to **Communicate, Convince, Change, Commitment**. A poem was composed by one of the members after the two day programme that was recorded and telecasted on Oriya T.V. channels.

WESTERN REGION

YWCA of Pune: A Training program focused on safe sex, importance of condom, STI and STD infection was organised explain the importance of awareness about the symptoms of the diseases.

The sessions discussed Personal Hygiene, Menstrual cycle, Importance of Health etc, with Personality development as the focus area. and creating a safe world. The nursing students conducted a session on health and hygiene, at the basti level. The Mahila Mandal is very active in the community, and independently handles and solves the problems.

YWCA of Goa (Group in Formation): The YWCA of Goa (mostly recently formed group in January 2011), organized a summer programme for children aged 12 to 15 years. The six day long programme turned out to be the perfect platform for kids to interact, showcase their skills.



With sessions on Good Housekeeping, yoga, Cooking Sessions, Public Speaking, First Aid Tips, Environment Awareness, Dance lessons, Debates and Games etc the kids got ample opportunity to develop their individual skills, talents and therefore turned out to be an enriching experience.

YWCA of Bombay: Now boasts of its first college hub in DY Patil college, to engage young women in social issues and build a carder of young activist and leaders for the movement. They had their first exposure programme to a juvenile home.

SOUTH WEST REGION

YWCA of Tiruvalla: The YWCA of Tiruvalla drafted a letter stating the issue of protection for women during train journeys. They spoke about how urgent it was to take immediate steps for the protection of women. The letter also spoke about anti social elements, and beggars be banned from trains, further suggesting that ladies compartment be attached at the central part of the train, that includes a police personel on duty. Keeping the Mahila Vahini Police Company in Mumbai they requested the railway minister to extend the same to Kerala as well.

SOUTH EAST REGION

YWCA of Coimbatore: The YWCA hostel participated in a special program the topic being "**FIRST IMPRESSION**". Ms Pamela Suresh and Ms Sandra stressed the need for proper communication, dress code, Personal grooming etc. so that the first impression would surely be the best impression. The future plan of the youth committee is trekking, tree planting, painting competition for the school children, work shop and training.

Palayamkottai: Awareness Program on 'Global Warming' was held on the 30th of March, 2011, for the members and residents of YWCA. The meeting was attended by Mr. Kathiravan, Associate Prof., Dept. of Economics, St. John's College, Palayamkottai, who spoke on the three R's – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.

Intimation via SMS/ Email: Intimation to members regarding weekly meetings, circulars, reminders, etc. are sent via SMS, and letters to the National and other associations and NGOs are sent via Email. Moreover, bulbs and tube lights have been replaced by Compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) in the YWCA Hostel.

World AIDS Day: Babita, a transgender, shared her views on positive prevention of HIV/AIDS on 1 December 2011.

Madras: A spoken English Programme has been started for two projects at the YWCA Madras with the help of a college (Women's Christian College), it will become a regular feature with the new school year

Eco Nature Walk. The YWCA of Madras has a natural pond that houses quite a few flora and fauna. Schools have been coming to the campus while the Youth encourage them to observe the nature around them and also teach them about the birds they can see in the city.

YWCA of Secunderabad: The YWCA of Secunderabad had an awareness program on the World Cancer Day on the 10th of February 2011. Prevention and control being the key word for the day, The Krishna Institute of Medical Sciences (KIMS) pitched in to increase awareness and emphasis on the urgency to treat cancer at the initial stage.

Training on NGO Management at Vishwa Yuvak Kendra–Delhi: Laurentina Sushma, a young volunteer of the YWCA of Secunderabad attended the workshop organized by VYK between the 3rd of March 2011 to 11th March 2011. As she shares her experience she emphasizes on three vital points-

- It is important for organizations to work with systematic planning and transparency.
- Interact and communicate for better networking with organizations.
- Developing good programme proposals for better fundraising.

Upcoming Events

- o Young Women's Leadership Training on Adolescent Health in the South East Region in November
- o Regional Conferences in the following regions: North, East, West, South West
- o Asia Pacific Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect, 6-9 October 2011, New Delhi : Lalchhonzuali a young woman from the YWCA of Aizawl will be presenting the work on HIV and Young Women and girls.
- o Training of Trainers in Civic Education for Political Participation of Women, 20-22 October 2011, Mumbai
- o Orientation & Meeting of the National Young Women's Committee: 23-24 October 2011, Mumbai