



WORLD ALLIANCE OF YMCAS - JANUARY 2013 E-NEWS

Story #1

INTRODUCING YMCA WORLD E-NEWS

The WAY has been building its digital communication platform for several years. What began with e-mail and a website now includes a [blog](#) and social media spaces such as [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). At the end of last year, we suspended publication of our print magazine to take a more integrated and interactive approach to communication as the next step in this process.

Today, we're unveiling a new section to our [website](#) where you can find an update on our work every Wednesday. Once a month, we'll also send you – our colleagues and subscribers – an e-mail like this one that provides summaries and links to the stories posted over the past four weeks. For those who have limited internet access, we'll post a downloadable, print version on our website.

You will also be able access and share this information via social media and your own websites or blogs – and we certainly hope you do! Please help us create a chain of well-informed YMCA friends and supporters that encircles the entire globe.

So, what do you think? Are we moving in the right direction? What would you like to hear more about in the months ahead?

Now that we're connected in so many ways, let's keep the conversation going!

Carlos Sanvee

Advisor to the Secretary General, Communication and Branding

January 2013

Story #2

WELCOME 2013!

This month, we've arrived at a significant milestone – the halfway mark in our [2011 – 2014 strategic plan](#) for greater global relevance, visibility and sustainability. Behind us is the [decision](#) to focus on youth empowerment. An [invitation](#) to take concrete action is in front of us. Beside us are new partners who are ready to join us in this work.

The Giant is Waking

In this moment, the Giant is no longer asleep but he is not fully awake. We've all experienced that feeling on the edge of wakefulness. The grogginess. The initial discomfort and disorientation caused by the light. The hesitation in the split second before readiness to welcome the day.

As the Giant continues to wake up, we are poised to have an unforgettable year:

- 200 young YMCA Change Agents and their mentors will be on the move. They are preparing to participate in local, national and international meetings and events, including the six-day [YMCA Europe Youth Festival](#) in Prague this August.
- One million young people will be raising their voices. We're getting organized to listen closely to the hopes and concerns of this generation. What we learn from this initiative will be shared at the World Council of YMCAs in 2014.
- National, Area and World YMCA leaders will continue working on our global strategy. In preparation for the next World Council, National General Secretaries will meet outside of London in February. The World Council's Executive Committee will meet in Jericho in April. The Global Staff Team will meet in February, April and October.
- Global communication will be easier, faster and more collaborative. We'll make online communication—including our website and social media—our primary channel for distributing information, sharing resources and raising the YMCA's profile globally.
- Employment, health, civic engagement and environmental concerns will be on our global advocacy agenda. We'll continue to raise the YMCA flag at the [United Nations](#) and at other multilateral tables where global development goals are debated. We'll make sure that young people are there – at the podium, in the corridors, and wherever decisions that affect them are being made.
- YMCAs worldwide will be getting stronger. Along with our colleagues in the Area Alliances, we'll continue to work through country focus groups, partner groups, and field groups.

We're sharpening our tools for movement strengthening too, including organisational assessments, workplans and impact measurement tools.

- The call to action will be heard around the globe. We'll raise \$3 million in new financial resources and leverage an estimated value of \$2 million through collaborations, in addition to providing ongoing technical assistance, coaching and mentoring through Area Alliances.
- YMCA leaders everywhere will be engaged in preparing for World Council 2014. We're planning and promoting the next World Council in a highly participatory way. We're picturing unprecedented numbers of delegates coming together to experience, once again, what it means to be a movement.

Action Precedes Passion

A couple of years ago, a young American gave a TED talk about how to start a movement. You can see it [here](#). He got me thinking about how the YMCA started in different countries and how it has been restarted at different moments over the past 170 years. I'm struck by the bold moves made by these young leaders in response to the music, and I'm reminded that action precedes passion. We have to experience something before we can know if we feel passionate about it.

Do you remember the feelings that followed your first YMCA experience? How about your first global encounter?

I look forward to hearing your stories, and hope you'll join me in welcoming this new year with the kind of global action that renews our collective passion.

Johan Vilhelm Eltvik
Secretary-General
January 2013

Story #3

YOUNG, EMPOWERED AND LEADING THE WAY

Meet Marcus, George, Sunniva, Håvard, Sofia and Andreas. These six young adults are part of a [global YMCA network](#) advocating for a sustainable society. They were the YMCA's delegates to the UN climate conference in Qatar last November, building on the groundwork done at conferences in Denmark, Mexico, South Africa and Brasil in recent years.

Their [posts](#), [videos](#), [photos](#) and [tweets](#) reveal the inner workings of international negotiations on climate change, helping us understand the implications of complex global issues and processes. Through their eyes, we see the unique role of civil society in holding public officials and private interests accountable to the values, aspirations and expectations of their generation.

Youth Empowerment in Action

This global advocacy work, backed by the [YMCA-YWCA of Sweden](#) and other national movements, is an exciting example of youth empowerment in action. It involves creating and protecting the kind of open and welcoming space in which young people can discover and live out their values in the world. In this space, they find support for their leadership journeys. Along the way, they have learning experiences and opportunities for personal development that they describe as transformational. They are profoundly changed from the inside out. The impact is personal and political. Equipped with new knowledge, skills and awareness, they are now global citizens fully empowered to affect positive change in the lives of others.

Space. Transformation. Impact.

Space. Transformation. Impact. These three words entered our global discussions about the YMCA a little over a year ago. They have taken on an important role in communicating what is distinctive about who we are, what we do and why we do it. They also help us think about how we affect lasting, positive change as a global movement dedicated to the holistic development of young people. If we think of these words as the components of a [change model](#), they become a tool for working collaboratively across diverse contexts.

The YMCA Youth Empowerment Change Model

Looking back, we can see that the very process of creating and using this change model has changed us as a global organization. In Nairobi last year, it helped 80 YMCA leaders from all continents find their [collective voice](#). It guided us in mounting the highly successful [YMCA World Challenge](#) in October. It is also animating our strategic conversations about the [YMCA Change Agents program](#), the One Million Voices research initiative, and World Council 2014. It is keeping us grounded in our shared mission.

A Personal Perspective

This process has also changed me as a person and as a YMCA professional. In my role as the Executive Secretary for Youth Empowerment, I have received the gift of the kind of space that transforms and has a profound impact. In this space, I've come to know what it feels like to be trusted and to trust others to make decisions and determine a course of action. Nothing is possible without trust and everything is possible with it.

Is this your experience too? Who was your first YMCA mentor? How did you become empowered and ready to lead?

Deepening Commitment and Building Trust

Looking forward, we imagine this process continuing. Our renewed commitment to youth empowerment will deepen as we reach out, first to 200 YMCA Change Agents and then to one million young people. By working faithfully with the YMCA Youth Empowerment Change Model, our stores of trust will grow – within ourselves, across generations, and among YMCA colleagues and partners. I have no doubt that everyone involved in this challenging work will too.

Romulo Dantas
Executive Secretary for Youth Empowerment
January 2013

Story #4

THE WAY'S YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AGENDA

Just three days before the start of the YMCA World Challenge, an important meeting took place at John R. Mott House in Geneva. Johan, Romulo, Samuel and I sat down with two colleagues from the [International Labour Organization](#) (ILO) to talk collaboration. Worrisome global youth labour market trends – and strategies to reverse them – were on our minds.

What We're Learning

According to [UNICEF](#), young people aged 10 to 30 represent 50% of the world's population. If you are between 15 and 24 years of age, you represent almost 25% of the world's working-age population. A very high percentage of young people live in developing economies. In 2009, the ILO reported that there were approximately 81 million unemployed youth worldwide.

What We Already Know

YMCA leaders around the world know a large segment of this group by name. They are not statistics to us. We know their struggle to combine work and school. We know the consequences of leaving school early, losing a job, or doing a job that does not provide a living wage. We can see the barriers to decent work in the attitudes, policies and practices of governments, businesses and society at large.

Our Agenda

When the WAY sits down to talk with the ILO about youth employment, everyone sees a more complete picture of the problems and possibilities. Here's some of what we've been communicating on your behalf:

- The search for understanding and solutions must be led by young people. We need to hear their analysis of issues and their views in the process of developing policies, designing programs and creating experiences that enhance employability.
- The YMCA's approach to youth employment is based on proven practices. Our methodology includes rigorous assessment, evaluation and identification of promising practices in vocational education and training, microcredit, and entrepreneurship with constant upgrades and enhancements.
- Collective impact depends on well-defined roles and responsibilities among partners. We enter into partnerships and alliances to transform the lives of individuals, families, communities and social, political and economic systems over time.

Next Steps

This year, we'll continue to build the ILO-YMCA relationship and to advocate for investments in

global youth employment strategies. You can count on the WAY to fly the YMCA flag at multi-lateral conferences related to education and employment opportunities for young people. To strengthen our position and our case for support, we're undertaking research to understand the impact of YMCA youth employment work locally, regionally, nationally, and globally. In collaboration with 10 to 20 national YMCA movements, we look forward to learning more about the impact of this work and to create a scalable model – a hybrid of best practices and ideas for accelerated action.

Think of this research as a deep dive into this core YMCA program. Romulo and I are excited to be collaborating with a youth advisory committee and colleagues in national and area alliance offices to this end. We're wondering:

How have you been personally affected in any way by the crisis in youth employment? What do you think the YMCA is best positioned to do to reverse the trends and improve employment prospects?

I invite you to take a few minutes to listen to [Romulo's speech at the ILO's 101th session](#) last spring. He tells his story and our story. He speaks to the role of the International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organizations (ICMYO) as the ILO's partner. He advocates for an official, independent and proper space for young people in this arena. The session concluded with a call for urgent action on the global youth employment agenda in the final declaration. It was a proud moment for all of us – and just the beginning!

Selma Zaidi
Senior Executive Secretary for Movement Strengthening

Story #5

Y'S MEN INTERNATIONAL INVEST IN CHANGE

Last summer, I traveled to my wife Ingunn's hometown Stavanger in Norway to speak at the 70th Annual World Convention of the [Y's Men International](#). The Y's Men are among the YMCA's oldest friends because of our mutual concern for young people.

It is not surprising then that they were among the first to learn about the WAY's [Waking the Sleeping Giant Campaign](#). The goal of this campaign is to raise \$700,000 for our work on youth empowerment – “to give youth the platform and tools they need (whatever that may be, depending on the young person's starting point) to feel needed, trusted, and able to believe in possibilities, to further trust themselves to lead and believe they can make a difference, thereby becoming a change maker in the world.”

Over two years, we'll identify, train and mobilise 200 YMCA Change Agents from every continent to unite us behind this goal. They will “learn by doing,” participating in training sessions while working.

All of them will go to Prague in August to work with 10,000 young people from 60 countries at the [YMCA Europe Youth Festival](#). There, they will work with the YMCA Youth Empowerment Change Model and talk about related issues. After learning how to work with a large crowd, they'll travel to World Council 2014 to help facilitate a very new style of global gathering.

I invited the Y's Men to be our partners in this new venture. As they have in the past, they rose to this challenge by pledging financial support for the campaign. While they will be formally recognized for their leadership at World Council 2014, we thank them today for investing in change and in the future of our great global movement.

Have you made your pledge to the [Waking the Sleeping Giant Campaign](#)?

Johan Vilhelm Eltvik
Secretary-General
January 2013