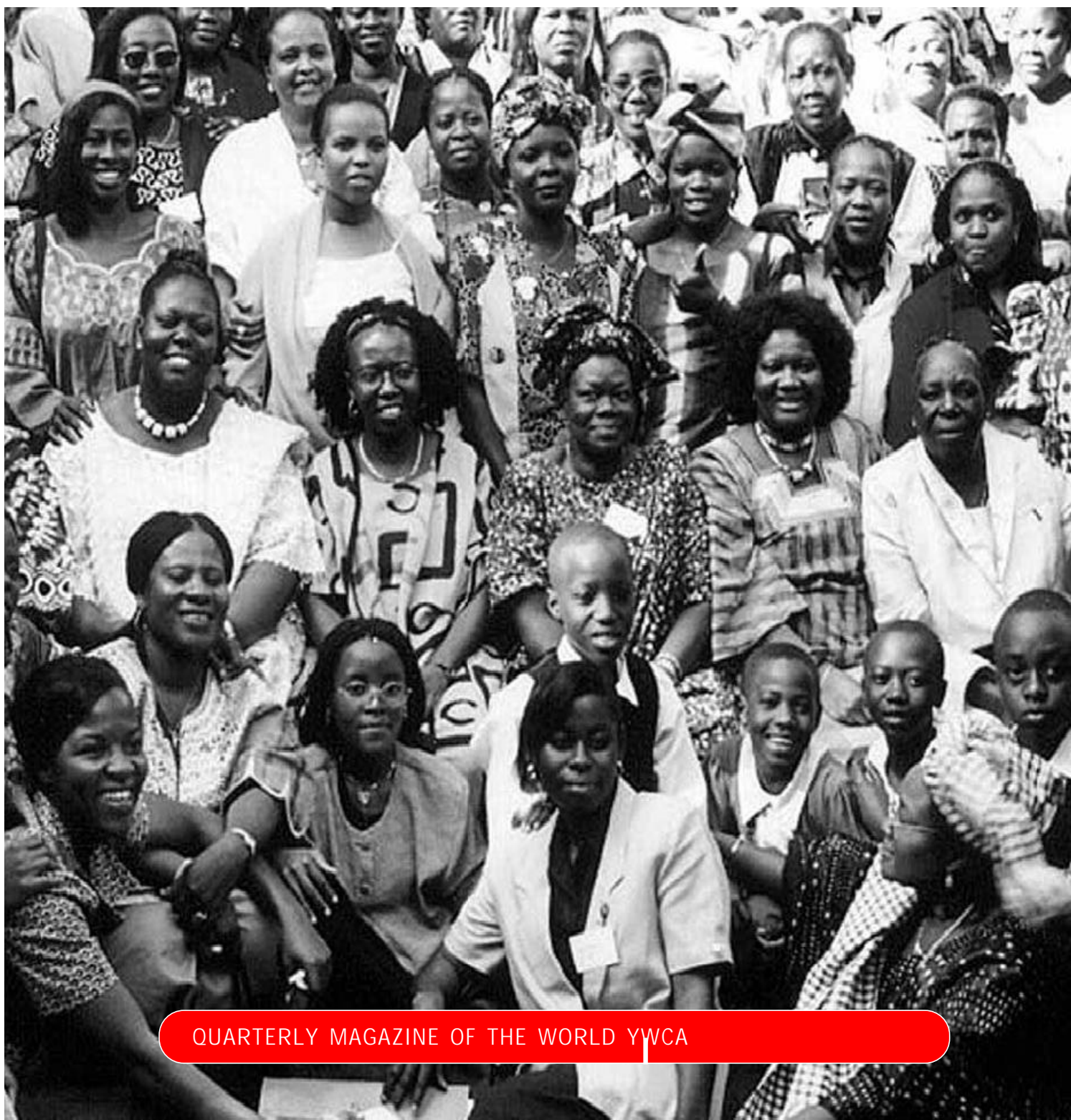




Common Concern

responding to the casualties of war

african women lead the fight against HIV/AIDS
ywca of kenya rescues child brides



QUARTERLY MAGAZINE OF THE WORLD YWCA

inside

	EDITORIAL	1
	PRESIDENT'S CHRISTMAS MESSAGE	2
	PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: CHILD BRIDES	3
	AROUND THE GLOBE	4
FEATURE:	RESPONDING TO THE CASUALTIES OF WAR	6
	FEATURE: WOMEN & WAR	8
	LEADING CHANGE: HIV/AIDS	10
	LEADERSHIP & TRAINING	12
	YOUNG WOMEN	13
	OPPORTUNITIES & RESOURCES	13
	NEWS IN BRIEF	14
	FAREWELL & NEW APPOINTMENTS	16
	SUPPORTERS	17



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editorial

musimbi kanyoro
world general secretary



Christmas is coming. Christians associate Christmas with peace. It is at such a time when we think of families, friends and those who we care for and attempt to get together to celebrate Christmas by sharing food, worship and gifts. Yet every Christmas carries with it sadness for many people.

This Christmas, our thoughts go to those who have lost loved ones in war, disasters, acts of terrorism, accidents, illnesses, natural and human caused deaths over the year. May God be near on this first Christmas without a beloved one.

The horror of the September 11th terrorist attacks on the USA and the resulting military attacks against Afghanistan have raised queries about our policies on peace, war and terrorism. The World YWCA has never supported war and the current situation does not change our stand. The movement will always promote options other than war. This does not mean that we condone terrorism. We condemn terrorism wherever it exists and in any form it takes. We advocate for finding the perpetrators and bringing them to justice within the framework of international criminal law and the United Nations. We affirm that peace and justice cannot be achieved through actions that further devalue or destroy life.

While we cannot forget about the events of September 11, we will not depart from our proclamation of peace and we will continue to provide leadership that values all human life. The days ahead are likely to be more difficult, but we hope you will uphold a vision of a fully inclusive world where justice, peace, health, human dignity, freedom and care for the environment are promoted and sustained through women's leadership.

It is in this manner, women in the YWCA continue to look for ways to respond to situations of war and conflict. The annual YWCA Week Without Violence on October 14-20, 2001 prompted some of these discussions through the World YWCA Young Women's Forum and other email lists involving YWCA leaders working at the local, national and international level. You can read about some of the suggested strategies emerging from these discussions in our women and war feature in this edition of Common Concern, along with our work to rebuild families and communities affected by war. Many of the projects funded through the World YWCA support women in countries affected by war or tribal violence. In places such as Rwanda, Fiji, Sri Lanka and El Salvador, our work includes building new YWCA branches, developing infrastructure, offering counselling services, facilitating peace and reconciliation workshops, and working with refugees and rape victims.

May peace be with you and your family over Christmas and the coming year.

president's christmas message

jane lee wolfe world ywca president



I have thought of many things to write as a Christmas communication, but nothing is as good as the letter you see below recently written by George Back, an Episcopal (Anglican) priest, and Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in Oklahoma City in the USA. He is a friend of my sister, and as you will see, an amazing person. Since the letter is about a baby, baby Jesus comes to mind; in fact, if you change "Aidan" to "Jesus" when you read along, you will get some wonderful insights into what the baby in the manger was probably like.

Merry Christmas!

Dear Friends,

As a brand new grandfather I am deep into the mystery of 'baby-love'. Aidan, our seven-week-old grandchild came back from a gathering with his little head covered by lipstick marks. He was obviously popular with the ladies.

What is it that makes babies so lovable? They are not very good at conversation, a gurgle or two, maybe. They don't tell stories, impart knowledge, or pay compliments. But the slightest smile sends oodling adults into delight.

Aidan has never achieved anything. He has never worked a day in his life. On the contrary he demands room service. There is no task too small or too embarrassing for him not to scream for. He makes his demands as loud as possible, day or night. If he were an adult we would complain, 'he behaves just like a baby!'

It seems like Aidan's skin is so transparent that you can see the inside of him. One sees pure 'human beingness.' One sees a soul before it is covered with all the presumptions, exaggerations, distortions and illusions we struggle for years to teach children.

Aidan has pure faith. He does not doubt his self-worth. He does not condition his expression, with 'if it

pleases you'. He asks, and expects to receive. He seeks, and you'd better be there. He assumes that he is completely and totally loved. Woe, says Jesus, to you that teach God's children otherwise. Your fate is to swim your life away with a millstone, 'death-preserver', around your neck.

We see in the infant something immensely attractive about the nature of human nature. It is something we have inside ourselves, even though we may have smothered it with years of crust and grime. In the baby we see spiritual truth, we see open, possible, unbounded, pure, made-by-God, human-beingness!

Aidan is filled with pre-historic cell information, billions of years old. He has genetic body information, hundreds of thousands of years old. He is prepared to engage a future filled with sights, sounds, words, images, stories, faces, situations, activities and experiences of amazing diversity and complexity. A baby is a magnificent creation, so very ancient and so freshly new.

Woe to those who impose their own narrow limitations or oppressive emotions on children. Blessed are they who let a baby teach them the positive love of God in the flesh of humanity.

Faithfully yours,
George Back

child brides

The Kajiado District in Kenya is home to the Maasai tribe. Though neighbouring the city of Nairobi, the Maasai have not embraced modern culture. They have maintained their tribal customs, including the marrying off of girls at a tender age.

'Once a girl becomes attractive, you can get something for her', says the Principal of the African Inland Church (AIC) Girls Boarding School.

Economic need is often the impetus for parents selling their daughters into early marriage, coupled with an embedded cultural belief that a woman's place is in the kitchen.

Girls as young as six years old have been forced into marriages with men four to six times their age. They are usually withdrawn from education, and begin a daily routine of servitude. Such marriages place them in relationships where they hold little power and a limited sense of self determination. They are denied the right to education and employment.

'These girls are married off before they can make their own decisions and are raised by their husbands until they are old enough to perform their duties', the Principal said.

In an effort to reduce the incidence of forced marriages among school age girls, the AIC established a boarding school just outside of Kajiado town, where girls rescued from early marriages could seek refuge and comfort. The school integrates these girls with other girls from homes in the district. It is the only school for child brides in Kenya. Most of the time, the girls are removed by force from the marital home with the help of local administration and advocates for the girl child.

According to the Principal, 'when they hear of a girl being given away, they go and collect her. Some girls are gotten before they are given away. Others are rescued after one or two weeks in a marriage. On the first day they see a doctor and a psychologist if needed. There has been one case of pregnancy.'

Once a girl is removed from a forced marriage, her family will disown her and she is unable to return home for fear of being married off again. These girls have nowhere to go during school holidays when the school is closed. Currently, there are 62 girls in the AIC Girls Boarding School with no families to return to during the three months of holidays each year.

It is this group of girls who are determined to pursue their education against heavy odds that motivated the Nairobi Branch of the YWCA to begin a Y-Teen Club with the aim of keeping girls occupied during school holidays. Girls learn woodwork, sewing, cooking, knitting, and other skills that will assist them to become self-reliant. The school is also the only primary school within the district that offers computer classes for its student.

'In this school, we encourage girls to speak out. They know their rights – the right to life and the right to education, and they are saying no to early marriages. Let them sell off their cows, but not our girls'.

A group of young women in Kenya saved from early marriages, are unable to return home this holiday season. Instead they will join the YWCA family this Christmas...



'We want to keep the good things about our culture, not the bad'

building bridges across europe

The end of Soviet Union rule in Eastern and Central Europe has been marked by many social and economic difficulties throughout the region. Discontinuation of State support for healthcare, social services and employment systems has led to a breakdown in infrastructure and rapidly increasing poverty. These challenging conditions for women have paved the way for the renewal and expansion of YWCA work in the region. Over the past decade, ten new associations in Europe have been affiliated with additional interest emerging from Armenia and Georgia.

In an effort to support women in Eastern and Central Europe to develop the capacity to lead their communities and societies towards a positive future, the World YWCA has established a multilateral model of co-operation. Drawing on the interest from women in Georgia, the World YWCA has matched this association in formation with two partner YWCAs - a well-established YWCA in Western Europe with a strong grounding in YWCA history, structure and programme work; and a newly affiliated YWCA in Eastern/Central Europe with a common understanding of the Soviet regime and the process for working towards World YWCA affiliation. The World YWCA co-ordinates the partnership with support from European YWCAs, from World YWCA Consultant, Elsie Siepe, and Programme Director for Europe, Laurence Levrat-Pictet.

The objective of the partnership model is primarily to support the establishment of YWCAs in Georgia, including the development of democratic leadership structures, trained leaders and programmes relevant to the needs of local women. In addition, the partnership encourages solidarity, understanding and unity among women in Western, Eastern and Central Europe.

The first phase of the programme commenced in October 2001, with a meeting of the women establishing a YWCA in Georgia and the three partners, namely

the YWCA of Belgium (established in 1919), the YWCA of Ukraine (affiliated in 1999) and the World YWCA. The visit to Georgia provided increased understanding of the people, history and issues in partner countries, and featured discussions and action planning on programme development, fundraising and constitutional issues.

'During the partnership program, I found out that women are not alone in their struggle with different problems that they have. It was important to see that human relations are the same everywhere, despite politics, geographical location or language barriers,' said Patricia Kiknadze from the YWCA of Georgia.

The multilateral partnership will culminate in July 2003 with the affiliation of YWCA of Georgia at World Council in Australia. Other phases within the partnership will include site visits to Belgium and the Ukraine and participation in the European regional meeting in September 2002.

'We face the task to assemble a strong bridge between differing cultures and ways of life - between Georgia, Ukraine and Belgium. This co-operation between different cultures, this pure voluntary action to improve women's life no matter what religious or cultural background, is what the world needs at the moment. Women can more easily share what unites them and set aside what eventually could divide them,' said Valentina from the YWCA of the Ukraine.



'This co-operation between different cultures ... is what the world needs at the moment.'

Valentina, YWCA of Ukraine

YWCA FORMS IN INDONESIA

In May 2001, a committee was established to revive the YWCA of Indonesia. The group has been actively working to develop an institutional presence, expand its membership base and begin activities. It has the support of other NGOs including the Indonesian Council of Churches, the YMCA and the Student Christian Movement. World YWCA Programme Secretary for Asia-Pacific, Clarissa Balan, visited the association in formation in September 2001 to meet with the National Board of the YWCA.

'Given the turmoil that beset the country since 1997 and the growing strength of Islamic fundamentalist groups, the need for an organisation that would cater to the needs of women, both Christian and Muslims, seems stronger than ever before...Towards this end, groups like the YWCA along with other Christian and Muslim organisations will have an important role to play' - Clarissa Balan.

building economic independence



supporting breast cancer survivors

The YWCA of Princeton in the USA reaches over 40,000 women annually through its Breast Cancer Resource Centre. The Centre provides information and support services for women before and after breast surgery, including community outreach programmes, seminars, a 24 hour hotline and support groups. It also has a lending library, free prostheses and a wig bank to assist the increasing numbers of women affected by breast cancer. The Resource Centre actively promotes the importance of early detection through breast self-examinations, mammograms and clinical breast examinations in its community outreach work.

Nearly 300 women in Myanmar have participated in the YWCA's Grassroots Embroidery and Sewing Skills Training. The 12 week course taught skills in hand and machine sewing in order to foster self-reliance among women. Participants have utilised the training to establish a home business or obtain employment in local textile factories. They have also been able to save money by making clothes for their families. Through the programme, credit was provided to participants to purchase a sewing machine, which was repaid through the sale of garments made during the course. The women have used these sewing machines to train other women in their local areas. The project was funded through the World YWCA Women and Development Fund.

'The World YWCA stands in solidarity with the victims of violence through its programmes, shelters and education for peace' – Musimbi Kanyoro, World YWCA General Secretary

local responses to violence

YWCA's around the globe commemorated the annual YWCA Week Without Violence from October 14-20, promoting local solutions to the global problem of violence. YWCA's in the USA responded to the aftermath of the September 11th terrorist attacks on Washington DC and New York, offering post-traumatic counselling to the families of victims and working with children in their day care centres to discuss the recent attacks. In Lethbridge, Canada, the YWCA held a candlelight walk against violence, and in Canberra, Australia, the YWCA explored the incidence of violence at public events with a panel discussion among government representatives and community leaders. In Alexandria, Egypt, the YWCA co-ordinated a seminar to develop strategies to overcome violence, and in the Ukraine, the YWCA continued to train women to respond effectively to violent situations. Sri Lanka marked the YWCA Week Without Violence with a bible study during the week and in Nepal, the YWCA raised awareness of violence among young women living in their hostel and crisis centre.

STOP PRESS: YWCA of Japan has halted the adoption of new history textbooks which conceal Japanese brutality and the sexual slavery of women during World War II. The books were to be released in public schools, but successful lobbying efforts resulted in an adoption rate of less than 0.1% (refer to Common Concern, September 2001 for further details).



responding to the casualties of war

Imagine living in a country that has experienced three decades of civil conflict, and where one landmine is planted for every man, woman and child; a country where over 800,000 lives have been lost, one million people face starvation and 1.25 million are internally displaced, all because of war.

This is the reality of Angola, a country which is known to have endured one of the worst conflicts in the history of humanity, where war has raged almost continuously since 1961.

Women are among the casualties of war. Thousands have been displaced and injured through landmines. Others have been separated from husbands, fathers, brothers and sons and left to assume responsibility for children, the elderly and the infirm. Armed conflict has forced women into unfamiliar roles and demanded new and different coping skills.

The YWCA of Angola emerged in response to the specific needs of women affected by war. The association, which is working towards affiliation to the World YWCA, helps women to acquire skills for their survival, their education and their children's health. Its programmes develop literacy skills, educate on nutrition and health, and provide initial funding for the establishment of small businesses. The YWCA also runs a kindergarten to ensure basic education for children, and offers sewing classes for women as another means for income generation. Through these programmes that expand the choices available to women and develop their capacity to provide leadership in their families, the YWCA is working to address the poverty and illiteracy caused by decades of war.

The YWCA, working jointly with the YMCA, was one of the first voluntary agents to work in camps for displaced people in Europe immediately after the second World War. Today, many YWCAs around the globe continue this tradition, working in conflict areas or communities in the post-war transition period. These are often the places where the YWCA is most needed to bring about long term, sustainable change in the lives of women. YWCA programmes in war affected regions respond to the local needs of women and empower women to take leadership roles in rebuilding their lives and communities.

Sexual violence and rape disproportionately impact on women during wartime. They often bring associated consequences of pregnancy or HIV/AIDS, and the long term psychological impact of sexual violation.

'The rebel war in my country, Sierra Leone has almost come to an end. Many people are now returning to their towns and villages... and there are a lot of things that need to be done, like counselling and detraumatizing their minds because... some young women were raped in the open or taken to join the rebels in the bush,' explains Mamie Nallo from the YWCA of Sierra Leone.

Through the War Affected Girls programme, the YWCA of Sierra Leone co-ordinates training and support for women who have been sexually exploited. The programme includes rehabilitation, medical care and raising awareness on violence against women. It also offers education and vocational training to participants, with classes in computers, sewing, home economics, and soap making. War also leaves many people displaced, with women and their children comprising 80% of the 53 million refugees uprooted by conflict. Many YWCAs work with refugees providing training and support for women in refugee camps, and assisting with integration into new countries.

The YWCA of Antwerp in Belgium has a strong history of working with refugee women through the YWCA-Mwasi training programme. It is one of the few programmes in the country targeting refugee women, and has provided support to women from over 50 countries. Activities include Dutch language training, skills development and the provision of information on housing, employment, education and human rights.

The beginning of the YWCA in Albania has its roots in the Kosovo refugee crisis in early 1999, where thousands of people were violently forced to leave their country and seek refuge in Albania. While many humanitarian organisations were providing emergency support to refugees, there was an urgent need for programmes to support the integration of women into Albanian society. There were also many unresolved issues for women associated with living in an economically poor society and an overwhelmingly masculine culture.

YWCA of Albania established an information centre for Kosovar refugee women and children in 1999, which assisted in reconnecting families separated by war, offered psychological counselling, humanitarian and medical aid, and co-ordinated events to integrate young refugee women into Albanian society. The work with Kosovo refugees gave rise to many training events and activities with young women, including programmes aimed at improving women's employment options and education.

In Palestine, the YWCA also delivers educational programmes in refugee camps on the West Bank, including kindergartens and professional re-integration programmes.

The Palestinian issue is high on the global advocacy agenda for the YWCA. In partnership with the World Alliance of YMCAs, the World YWCA resourced one of the first international observers in Palestine and Israel to provide independent information on the conflict.

The World YWCA also participates in the NGO Working Group on the Middle East and actively promotes peace negotiations between Palestine and Israel.

The strength of the YWCA movement in responding to the needs of women affected by war lies in more than a century of experience in grassroots development work with women, and our globally connected network of women in over 100 countries. The YWCA plays a crucial role in rebuilding the lives of women affected by war through local programmes, and global advocacy to bring about conflict resolution and humanitarian support to those affected by war.

LOCAL YWCA RESPONSES

YWCA responses to the impact of war on women include workshops in Liberia, El Salvador and Columbia to raise awareness of violence among women. In Liberia, the YWCA also teaches reading and writing skills to refugees. The YWCA of Sri Lanka runs youth camps on peace, and a skills training and counselling project in one of the regions affected by war. In Rwanda, the YWCA co-ordinates a resettlement project, which develops income generation skills among women to improve their living standards. The YWCA of Canada has developed the Playing with Rainbows play programme for 'at risk' refugee children, which includes an informative mini-site at www.ywccanada.ca/PlayingWithRainbows. In the Baqu'a refugee camp, the YWCA of Jordan runs a nursery school for 250 children and offers training and employment for refugee women in a sewing production centre.

Armed conflict in 25 countries today has uprooted 53 million refugees. 80% are women and children.

'We are the young generation, and this is our future. Shall we watch our dreams be distorted because of war and violence, and stay silent?'

— GHADA HADDAD, WORLD YWCA INTERN FROM JORDAN

TAKE
ACTION

ON THE GROUND...

- Ø Encourage dialogue among women of different backgrounds, beliefs and racial groups
- Ø Be neutral in conflict situations in order to offer a safe place for all war victims
- Ø Empower women through training to participate in conflict resolution processes
- Ø Initiate post-conflict activities including trauma counselling, healthcare, job training, refugee support programmes and assistance to search for missing family members
- Ø Co-ordinate peace and reconciliation activities among women and communities

ON THE GLOBAL LEVEL...

- Ø Raise awareness about the specific ways that war and conflict affect women
- Ø Send monitors or observers to study the conflict situation and report back to the international community
- Ø Lobby opposing parties in a war to promote peace negotiations
- Ø Lobby for humanitarian assistance for people affected by war
- Ø Encourage Special Rapporteurs at the United Nations level to focus on the specific needs of women within their mandate
- Ø Condemn the arms trade and governments that provide weapons for wars to continue
- Ø Work closely with institutions, such as the churches and religious organisations, to use their power and influence to bring about an end to conflict



Call to Action on Afghanistan...

More than fifty Afghan women from different organisations met as part of the Afghan Women's Network on 7 November 2001 in Peshawar, Pakistan. This is their appeal for action:

7 November, 2001

'An area that needs attention is post-conflict work, including trauma counselling, health care, job training, help to search for missing family members, and peace and reconciliation work'

– VALSA VERGHESE, WORLD YWCA STAFF



USEFUL WEBSITES

www.cfcsc.dnd.ca/links/war – a map of all contemporary conflicts and background information

www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice – a world service news in 43 different languages with the latest information on all major conflicts

www.iwpr.net – Institute for War and Peace

www.icrc.org - International Committee of Red Cross website with a special report on women facing war

www.unhcr.ch – the primary international body for refugee protection

www.womenscommission.org - an advocacy organisation for women and children refugees.

www.wilpf.int.ch - Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

www.warwidows.org - War Widows International Peace Alliance (WIPA)

www.ywcaCanada.ca/

PlayingWithRainbows.htm - YWCA programme for at-risk refugee children

For more than two decades the Afghan nation has been passing through the most difficult experiences of war, human rights violations and brutality. While we struggle to survive, we are scared for life, losing our dear ones, seeing our children traumatized, our neighbors killed, our husbands disabled by a war fought under different banners but yet with the same tragic consequences. In whatever name the war might be fought, jihad, justice, terrorism etc. We ask you to stop it.

The waging and continuation of the war affects us more deeply every passing day by hearing that someone else has been added to the list of victims.

Perhaps a million Afghans are in movement facing closed borders, a hostile reception and already jammed camps with the most miserable conditions of life.

Stop this war in the name of the Afghan child, the Afghan mother and a nation who have sacrificed more than enough. The continuation of war will not only be adding to the existing misery of the Afghan nation, but will hinder the chances of a peaceful solution in the future. We call upon the international community and the countries and groups involved in this war to support us by listening to us and ensuring our rights as citizens of the world are respected. Help us in seeking our right to survival.

We request the following:

- The military action in Afghanistan be stopped immediately.
- The anti-terrorism campaign should not be fought at the expense of restricting or violating human rights of Afghans. It should be dealt with in accordance with international law and procedures by an international tribunal.
- The neighboring countries of Afghanistan should open their borders to Afghan families fleeing the war.
- Afghans should be supported in the peace process and nation building effort in such a way, which ensures the respect of its diverse ethnic groups and religious sects, women and children.
- Afghan women's participation in the peace process must be assured.

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WLUML - international solidarity network
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WWW: www.wluml.org

leading change:

african women acting together against HIV/AIDS



YWCAs in Africa will lead the fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which has already taken the lives of 20 million Africans in less than two decades.

Over 100 women from 23 African countries met in Nairobi, Kenya from November 1-10, 2001 for the African Regional Training Institute (ARTI). The theme of the World YWCA event was African Women Acting Together Against HIV/AIDS (AWATAH). It focussed on developing skills and action plans to respond to the pandemic.

'The future of Africa cannot exist without African women being the key to life in Africa' said Helene Yinda, World YWCA Programme Director for Africa and the Middle East.

Each YWCA developed a national action plan to respond to HIV/AIDS, based on extensive research on its prevalence in their country, and the sharing of effective strategies for disease prevention and control. The ARTI also developed the skills of participants to be effective agents of change in combating the pandemic. Training sessions included strategic and project planning, financial development and effecting cultural change.

The ARTI was preceded by a meeting of 45 young women, who identified common problems facing African youth. They committed to work regionally on HIV/AIDS, and declared that whatever constraints they face, they have the power to change.

National action plans build on existing YWCA programmes and share a common focus of tackling HIV/AIDS at all levels: prevention, community support, care and advocacy.

YWCA responses to HIV/AIDS in Africa will also target cultural practices and beliefs that increase women's vulnerability to infection. The ARTI discussed the role of practices such as polygamy, inheritance laws, female

circumcision, tribal tattooing and ceremonial sexual practices in exposing women to infection. YWCAs will initiate community education about the relationship between these practices and HIV/AIDS, and develop alternate ways to pass on the cultural values associated with these practices. The YWCA of Tanzania, in particular, will train trainers to go into the community and re-educate about cultural norms and practices which are harmful to women.

Prevention

At the centre of the YWCA's overall strategy to combat HIV/AIDS is a focus on addressing the root causes of HIV infection and high risk behaviours.

The link between poverty and HIV/AIDS infection rates is widely recognised in Africa. An increasing number of young women, for example, are entering prostitution out of economic necessity and exposing themselves to increased risk of infection. Many YWCAs in Africa have extensive experience in building economic independence among women through micro-credit and income generation schemes.

In Zimbabwe, for example, the YWCA targeted 21 early school leavers in a recent project, which aimed to develop financial security among participants. Working in collaboration with Africare, the YWCA provided young people with materials and advice to further income generation projects, including sewing machines, chickens, sunflower seeds and an oil press. Participants utilised these resources in developing a permanent source of income. The YWCA has also been able to share information about HIV/AIDS and reproductive health issues through the project.

The financial empowerment of women through poverty alleviation and income

generation projects will form a priority for many YWCAs. The YWCA of Kenya will equip women and girls with information, skills and resources to make informed decisions about their livelihood. Their methods will include a train-the-trainer programme, awareness and outreach campaigns, and micro-credit programmes. The YWCA of Lesotho will also focus its efforts on building self-reliance and income generation skills among groups most vulnerable to infection, namely commercial sex workers and street kids.

Awareness raising is a major component of YWCA initiatives to prevent the further spread of HIV/AIDS across Africa. YWCAs will use a range of innovative methods to educate their communities about HIV/AIDS and its transmission. The YWCA of Ghana will expand its radio programme to five more regions over the next year, targeting women, out of school youth and street children. Malawi will utilise radio drama to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS in remote villages, and the YWCA of Cameroon will target schools, educating young people through drama, poetry, song and a website.

Peer counselling has proved a highly effective method in controlling HIV/AIDS infection rates. The YWCA of Botswana, in particular, has over a decade of experience in the area, which has revealed general ignorance among young people about human sexuality issues. Their response has been the highly successful programme, Peer Approach to Counselling by Teens (PACT), which operates in 11 schools throughout the country. The programme trains a critical mass of young women and men with the capacity to influence their broader peer group. Participants explore issues of self-worth and identity, discuss the challenges facing their peer group, and develop skills and knowledge to work with others to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS. The

'If the pandemic is going to change in Africa, then we are going to be the ones who carry that responsibility... HIV/AIDS is now calling for leadership' - Jane Muita, Trainer at the African RTI.

programme has already reached over 10,000 young people since its inception in 1990 and has expanded to include a pilot Anti-AIDS Parenting Education Programme to address poor parent and child communication about human sexuality. In Madagascar, the YWCA will also encourage open discussions among parents and young people about sex.

In Namibia, where 20% of the population has HIV/AIDS and half of those infected are between 15-24 years, the YWCA developed a peer counselling programme in 1999. The programme trains young people as community facilitators to give information and support to other young people in dealing with issues such as HIV/AIDS. Since 1999, the 20 young people who were initially trained, have gone on to train and share information with another 150 young people from eight schools who now act as peer counsellors in their communities.

A large number of YWCAs utilise the peer counselling method in preventing HIV/AIDS infection among young people, including Lesotho, South Africa, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Zambia and Zimbabwe. This will continue to be a major component of national action plans in Africa, with an increased focus on effecting behavioural change among young people.

Community Support & Care

South Africa has the fastest spreading incidence of HIV/AIDS in Africa. Hospitals are unable to handle the growing number of patients, and families are ill-equipped to support their loved ones living with the illness. The World Affiliated YWCA of South Africa will fill this void by training home based caregivers to nurse and support HIV/AIDS patients in their homes. They will also offer counselling and guidance to family members. The Zambian YWCA will deliver similar services in their community, training local women in basic nursing, organising home visits and counselling. Other YWCAs will join these efforts to support the victims of HIV/AIDS. In Nigeria, the YWCA will build counselling centres for the infected and affected, and the YWCA of Liberia will

establish a care and social support department for people living with HIV/AIDS. The YWCA of Mauritius will alleviate the stigma facing HIV infected women in employment, by creating job opportunities and promoting the YWCA as a welcoming environment.

One of the largest support needs in addressing the HIV/AIDS pandemic is the 12.1 million African children who have been orphaned by AIDS. A number of YWCA will work with orphans, including Ethiopia, Zimbabwe and South Africa, to provide support in accessing education, foster parenting and an adequate diet. YWCAs will also offer counselling to assist orphans in dealing with the loss of a family member.

Advocacy

Advocacy on HIV/AIDS is a crucial component of YWCA strategies to combat the pandemic. Key target groups include other NGOs, religious institutions, health care providers, governments and influential tribal leaders. The YWCA of Kenya, in particular, will focus its advocacy efforts on the rights of women and access to health care services. In Rwanda, the YWCA will offer human rights training within the community. The YWCA of Mauritius will lobby for the affordability of HIV/AIDS treatment and availability of appropriate care for people living with HIV/AIDS. Collectively, YWCAs in Africa will continue to lobby for gender sensitive government policies, including recognition of the social and cultural practices which increase women's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS infection.

'The rising statistics on women and girls' infection by HIV/AIDS continue to shock us and we cannot but become more vigilant... HIV/AIDS is the number one priority for YWCAs in Africa. We will demonstrate this by including it in everything we do', said Musimbi Kanyoro, World General Secretary.

For further information on the YWCA's strategy to combat HIV/AIDS, contact the World YWCA: worldoffice@worldywca.org.



'There has been silence regarding sexual behaviour and gender inequalities that drive the epidemic. The world is also acknowledging that because of their gender, women and girls have limited access to HIV/AIDS related information, prevention treatment, care, support and services.'

Mwajuma Alice Abok
National General Secretary, YWCA of Kenya
& World Executive Committee Member



'The future of Africa cannot exist without African women being the key to life in Africa'

Helene Yinda, World YWCA Programme Director for Africa and the Middle East.



leadership & training



Latin American Regional Training Institute

More than 60 women from nine YWCAs attended the Latin American Regional Training Institute in Buenos Aires, Argentina from October 2-5, 2001. Twenty percent of the participants were young women under the age of thirty. The Institute was opened by the First Lady of Argentina, Ines Portine de La Rua, and explored the growing problem of HIV/AIDS in the region. World YWCA General Secretary, Musimbi Kanyoro highlighted the importance of young women's leadership in the work of the YWCA and World President, Jane Lee Wolfe spoke about the changing nature of voluntarism. Programme Director for the Americas and the Carribean, Cecilia Millan gave training on strategic planning, organisational management and using a gender framework in advocacy and programme work. In addition, World Vice President, Monica Zetsche launched the Global Campaign for the leadership development of women and girls. The event included an internet café to increase training and access to the internet and email.

Decade of Internships

2001 marks a decade since the World YWCA began its internship programme for young women. The programme was established to develop the skills of young leaders and provide them with an insight into the global movement. 25 young women from far-reaching places such as Sierra Leone, Argentina, Jordan, Barbados, Australia and India have participated in the one-year internship at the World Office learning skills in programme development, advocacy, communications, leadership and financial management. The programme began with two interns working in Geneva for one year, and now includes an additional four short-term advocacy interns who participate in the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in New York and the Commission on Human Rights in Geneva. A recent evaluation identified that almost all interns have gone on to be leaders in their associations. Three stayed on as World YWCA staff members.



"1996 was an extraordinary year for me. My knowledge and horizons grew tremendously – learning about the international women's movement and the UN systems was fantastic. The internship programme opens up the world to young women" Natalie Fisher, Canada (1996)

"Being here at the World YWCA office in Geneva is the greatest experience and challenge, meeting all these great women, watching them and learning how they do things has been a remarkable time in my life... I have seen how abandoned children live in care houses, and have had the chance to be with diplomats in the UN 57th Commission of Human Rights. How could I forget or regret these marks the YWCA experience made on me?" Ghada Haddad, Jordan (2001)



World YWCA Interns – 1991-2001 Elizabeth Yavana (Sierra Leone) Muna Kaldawi-Killingback (USA) Brigid Inder (New Zealand) Caroline Maneno (Kenya) Maria Del Carmen Devoto (Peru) Jeong Rin Kim (Korea) Kay Ferguson (St. Vincent) Leda Digion (Argentina) Mardia Potter (Liberia) Sarah Goulding (Australia) Kavita Das (India) Ana Lia Ocanto (Argentina) Zin Mar Oo (Myanmar) Margaret Nagita (Uganda) Natalie Fisher (Canada) Anita Tleel (Jordan) Merete Mikkelsen (Norway) Grace Kyriakos (Lebanon) Kathyanne Neblett (Barbados) Afia Nathaniel (Pakistan) Judith Vink (Belgium) Grace Soko (Tanzania) Marilyn Cortez (Philippines) Ghada Haddad (Jordan) Natallia Aleksandrovich (Belarus)

UNESCO Youth Forum



words natallia aleksandrovich

The World YWCA participated in the United Nations Economic, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Youth Forum on October 12-14, 2001 in Paris. World YWCA Intern, Natasha Aleksandrovich reports...

The UNESCO Youth Forum brought together young people from member states of UNESCO and international youth organisations. The forum focused on the eradication of poverty and information and communication technologies. The declaration from the Youth Forum to the 31st General Assembly of UNESCO, emerged out of many heated discussions. It contained new ideas and concrete actions for the future.

Poverty was recognised as a global problem that deserves greater attention from international organisations such as UNESCO, particularly to address the extreme poverty existing in many third world countries. The Youth Forum also called for urgent and sustained action to eradicate poverty among young people, noting that poverty alleviation would be more achievable in the short term. Participants highlighted that young people represent the future, and improvements in their living conditions would benefit all of human kind.

The Youth Forum recognised the different forms of information and communication technologies and urged that these projects not be limited to the Internet. Radio and television were highlighted as important media for education and information sharing about illiteracy and HIV/AIDS. The Youth Forum called for greater partnerships between UNESCO and NGOs to promote the use of ICT among youth organisations and young people.

expand your horizons

The World YWCA co-ordinates an exchange programme for young women in the YWCA to gain global experience and develop new skills that will benefit their local or national association upon their return. The programme provides financial assistance for young women to participate in formal training, fieldwork or an information exchange with a host local or national association abroad. The exchange is funded for up to two months and is open to women under 30 years of age, who are YWCA volunteers or staff. For more information, visit the Young Women's Web on the World YWCA website and consult the Skills Bank to see what training opportunities exist. www.worldywca.org

designing projects

Guía práctica para las asociaciones de la YWCA - Cómo diseñar un proyecto
A practical guide for YWCAs - How to design a project.

Programme Director for the Americas and Carribean, Cecilia Millan has developed a practical guide to designing and formulating development projects. It covers all of the steps associated with project planning - from defining and formulating a project, setting objectives, results and indicators, to monitoring and evaluating a project. The guide also assists associations in their search for funding to implement local and national initiatives. It is available in Spanish. English and French versions will follow in early 2002. To obtain a copy, please contact worldoffice@worldywca.org

why a blue triangle?

In 1920, the World YWCA adopted its current blue triangle logo as the symbol of the global movement. The three equal sides of a triangle represented the equal importance YWCAs placed on women's development in the three areas of mind, body and spirit. This triangle was enclosed in a circle to represent the global sphere of the organisation's work. The blue triangle symbol first appeared in Great Britain in 1915 after the First World War broke out. Hundreds of women of foreign nationality were stranded in Great Britain, and many British women were coming in from rural areas for factory work, often arriving by train late at night or early in the morning. The YWCA established 'Blue Triangle Huts' to meet the growing demand for a safe place for women to meet or to rest when coming into the city. The 'Huts' also offered recreational activities, a canteen and a place to gather in prayer for an end to the war. Former World YWCA staff member, Sheila Barnett, has developed a paper on the history of the blue triangle, which is available from the World Office.

news in brief

faith issues

CROSSING BORDERS:

Engaging Women in a Dialogue of Life

The World YWCA in partnership with YWCA of Finland will host a women's interfaith encounter on April 22-28, 2002 in Helsinki, Finland. The international event will bring together women from local and national YWCAs, other ecumenical organisations, different religious traditions, and those working in pluralistic contexts to promote interfaith dialogue as a means of fostering peace and reconciliation.

The current global situation and the aftermath of the September 11th tragedy in the USA, has increased the need for interfaith dialogue among women to address issues of peace and justice. It is also important for women to explore the challenges within different religious traditions that reinforce the exclusion, oppression and subjugation of women. The encounter aims to identify successful models and practices, as well as develop resources to enable women to promote peace and reconciliation in their own communities and to provide leadership in inter-religious and intercultural understanding.

For more information please contact Clarissa Balan:
clarissa.balan@worldywca.org

EQUAL IN THE EYES OF GOD:

World YWCA/YMCA Week of Prayer

The YWCA and YMCA joined together in Geneva on November 12, 2001 for a service marking the launch of the World YWCA-YMCA Week of Prayer and World Fellowship. The theme for this year's Week was Equal in the Eyes of God, challenging YWCA and YMCA members to work against injustice and promote unity among all people.

'Injustice rooted in discrimination, prejudice or racism is an affront to human dignity', said Jane Lee Wolfe (World President, YWCA) and Martin Vogler (World President, YMCA). 'Humankind was created in the image of God. This image does not allow for people or groups to assume superiority over another person or group'.

Around the globe, YWCAs joined in the Week of Prayer with prayer and reflection in their local communities. Each day focussed on different aspects of prejudice and discrimination, including racism, gender, identity, ethnicity, class and caste, along with the plight of indigenous people and the role of the media in perpetuating stereotypes.

During an international meeting in Montreal in October 2001, women from 35 countries unanimously agreed to continue their fight against poverty and violence against women. The World March of Women is women's movement established by the Fédération des Femmes du Québec, who came up with the idea of organising a global march to voice their demands on the elimination of poverty and all forms of violence. This idea became a reality in New York on October 17, 2000, when over ten thousand women from all over the world came together to present

countless numbers of signatures to UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan.

The WMW is committed to raising awareness of the situation facing Afghan women and participating in relevant international meetings to provide feminist analyses of issues. At the national level, coordinating bodies in each country will continue to pressure their governments to implement laws regarding women's rights and fight poverty. Local and grassroots groups will maintain their focus on improving women's living conditions. Together, women will continue their

joint march towards the elimination of poverty and violence against women.

YWCA's in Australia, Belgium, Burundi, Canada, Democratic Republic of Congo, India, Japan, the Netherlands and the USA are part of this global movement. Two delegates from the YWCA of the Netherlands attended the recent meeting in Montreal in October 2001. For more information, contact the YWCA of the Netherlands - ywcanl@planet.nl or the International Secretariat of the WMW - marche2000@ffq.qc.ca



World YWCA Executive Committee Supports Global Campaign

World Executive members pledged their support for the YWCA's Global Campaign for the Leadership Development of Women and Girls, at their recent meeting in Switzerland from September 17-22, 2001. The Committee reached its 100% financial pledge goal, with members also making personal commitments to promote the Campaign in their regions and encourage others to give.

The Committee reviewed progress in fundraising for the Global Campaign, along with implementation of the World YWCA Strategic Plan over the past twelve months. They endorsed priorities for the coming year, and approved the audited financial statements for 2000-2001. YWCA of Australia President, Fiona Jolly and World Council Co-ordinator, Juli Dougdale joined the Committee in planning for World Council 2003.

WORLD MARCH CONTINUES

Montreal, October 2001

WORLD SERVICE COUNCIL YWCA of the USA

World President, Jane Lee Wolfe and World General Secretary, Musimbi Kanyoro attended an the 81st Annual Meeting of the World Service Council on October 19, 2001. The Council supports projects which strengthen YWCAs and nurture and train young women for leadership and management roles.

'At no time in our history has it been more important to foster mutual understanding among peoples, strengthen the international competence of women, and build global problem solving capabilities', said Joyce Mims, Chair of the World Service Council.

The meeting explored the future of the World Service Council and affirmed continued financial support of the World YWCA.

The World President and General Secretary also took the opportunity to visit YWCAs in the USA to coincide with the meeting, including New York City, Pittsburgh and Princeton.



World President, Jane Lee Wolfe (far left) and World General Secretary, Musimbi Kanyoro (far right) with representatives of the YWCA of New York City.



WORLD YWCA COUNCIL Brisbane, Australia, July 6-10, 2003

A world conference of women leaders from around the globe will be a key feature of the YWCA's World Council meeting in Brisbane, Australia from July 6-10, 2003. The conference will focus on women leading change in the areas of peace, justice, human rights, health and the environment, providing a stimulus for YWCA advocacy priorities over the following four years. A parallel training programme will coincide with the business meeting of World Council, building the capacity of YWCA leaders to sustain and lead change in their communities.

The meeting will be held at the Brisbane Convention Centre, an expansive facility which allows for the full number of official delegates from national associations and an unlimited number of observers. The World Office encourages YWCAs to begin planning for Brisbane as this is a great opportunity for all members to gain exposure to the global movement, as well as participate in training and setting our international advocacy agenda. World Council will include Pre-Council Meetings from July 4-5, 2003 for young women and new associations, as well as a meeting on volunteer-staff relationships. A meeting of indigenous women will be co-ordinated in the lead up to the event.

coming events

UN SPECIAL SESSION ON CHILDREN New York, USA, 2002

The UN Special Session on Children and Children's Forum, scheduled to take place in New York in September 2001, were postponed due to the September 11th attacks on the USA. The Special Session is an unprecedented meeting of the UN General Assembly, bringing together government leaders, Heads of State, NGOs, children's advocates and young people. It presents an opportunity to change the way the world views and treats children. The Special Session is expected to produce a global agenda through goal-setting and an action plan on three essential outcomes:

1. The best possible start in life for all children
2. Good quality basic education for all children
3. Opportunities for all children, especially adolescents, to meaningfully participate in their communities.

World YWCA volunteer, Linda Olson will be co-ordinating World YWCA involvement in the event and can be contacted through the World Office.

farewell & new appointments



Valaiporn Viriyakovint was appointed **National General Secretary of the YWCA of Thailand** in September 2001. Valaiporn has been active on the Executive Committee of her national association, and headed the Religious Department in the YWCA of Bangkok for many years. She has been a radio and television announcer for Christian Far East Broadcasting and a special events fundraiser for World Vision. She is the co-founder of the Muang Thai Church and the current chairwoman of the Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand Women's Ministry. Valaiporn holds Bachelor Degrees in Christian Education and Business Administration.



Esther Tsikwe is the new **National General Secretary of the YWCA of South Africa**, a position she has held since September 2001. New to the YWCA, Esther has spent the past decade working in early childhood development, where she has been responsible for financial management, fundraising, administration, staffing and networking. Her tertiary education includes secretarial courses at a technical college, a Certificate in Adult Education and a Bachelor in Management and Leadership, specialising in human resource management.

farewell ghada & natallia

The World YWCA bids farewell to its two interns as the year 2001 draws to a close.

Ghada Haddad, 26, from Jordan has worked on the Global Campaign for leadership, and print and electronic communications. She edited *Young Women on the Move* and was moderator of the Young Women's Electronic Forum. During the year, Ghada provided support to the Middle East/Africa Regional Desk and represented the World YWCA at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva. She also worked on advocacy programmes and with the NGO Coalition on the Question of Palestine.

Natallia Aleksandrovich, 24, from Belarus supported the European Regional Desk during her internship, participated in the Young Women's Seminar in Budapest, and represented the World YWCA at the UNESCO Youth Assembly in Paris. She also coordinated the development of the quadrennial programme and statistical report form for national associations.

Both women participated in and were part of the leadership team for the 2001 International Training Institute on Management. The World YWCA wishes Ghada and Natallia success in their future endeavours, and extends its sincere thanks for their contribution, insight and leadership over the year.

Twenty-nine year old, **Ingeborg Sommer** is the newly elected **President of the Norwegian YWCA** and Vice-President of the Norwegian YWCA-YMCA. Ingeborg is a student chaplain at Diakonhjemmet College in Oslo, Norway and became a member of the YWCA-YMCA as a teenager. Ingeborg served on the National Board for three years in 1995, and visited the YWCA of Madagascar in 1997 to gain an insight into the global dimension of the YWCA. 'This motivated me to further work with the YWCA, both on a national and international level'.

GENERAL SECRETARY

Ines Toribio de Lecuona
YWCA of Argentina

Flaurette Fongang
YWCA of Cameroon

N. Cornelia Michael
YWCA of Antigua

Maria America de Lima Alvarez
YWCA of Brazil

Grace Eneme
YWCA of Cameroon

Ulla Pullola
YWCA of Finland

Nuzhat Williams
YWCA of Pakistan

Mary Rushwaya
YWCA of Zimbabwe

APPOINTMENTS: NATIONAL PRESIDENT

gifts from friends of the world ywca

Our sincere thanks to the following individuals and YWCAs who financially contributed to the World YWCA over the past three months:

ACF de Medellin (Colombia) *in memory of Marina Londono*
 Martha Alexander (USA)
 Irine Asanji (Cameroon)
 Sheila Barnett (Switzerland)
 Fresia Barrios de Guembes (Peru)
 Michelle Beg (Switzerland) *in memory of Goran Andersson*
 Jane Bennett (Switzerland) *in memory of Goran Andersson*
 Hedy Berthoud (Switzerland)
 Elizabeth Bowen (USA) *in honour of Carmen Lusan*
 Elaine Carlson (Switzerland) *in memory of Goran Andersson*
 Tonia Chandler (USA)
 Lilian Chirombe (Zimbabwe)
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 Cosette Menzies (Switzerland)
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 Jacqueline Regamey (Switzerland)
 Inger Johanne Kjorven Skarpaas (Norway)
 Antoinette Santschi (Switzerland) *in memory of Goran Andersson*
 Juliarty Soejarman-Masson (Switzerland) *in memory of Goran Andersson*
 Sarah Makiko Sogi (USA)
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 Yvette Melendez Thiesfield (USA)
 Valsa Verghese-Chacko (Switzerland) *in memory of Goran Andersson*
 Riitta Virkkunen (Finland)
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 XYZ Group of Perth YWCA (Australia)
 YWCA of Antwerpen (Belgium)
 YWCA of Argentina
 YWCA of South Africa
 YWCA of Taiwan
 YWCA of Zimbabwe
 Hélène Yinda (Switzerland) *in memory of Goran Andersson*
 Frine C. Zaballero (Philippines)
 Monica Zetzsche (Argentina)



THE WORLD YWCA IS A GLOBAL MOVEMENT OF 25 MILLION WOMEN AND GIRLS IN OVER 100 COUNTRIES. IT PROMOTES AND SUSTAINS WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP TO ADVANCE JUSTICE, PEACE, HEALTH, HUMAN DIGNITY, FREEDOM AND CARE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT.

'Peace only runs free when there are great disasters, when something happens that strips the bars of difference away, and we treat each other with the love and equality and dignity that expresses the heart of who we really are. In great disasters we pay no attention to race, colour, creed, politics, culture or any of the things we generally use to separate each other. We see each other in the face and in the heart, and we help each other no matter what. We have to see that Peace runs free in times other than tragedy. We have to let this beautiful creature have space in our lives so that he can breathe and live and show us the joy and hope and freedom he is made of. Peace is always beautiful, but Peace is most beautiful when he is outside the cages of our prejudices and preferences. Peace is most beautiful when we are most beautiful; when we greet each other heart to heart, when there is no difference between your heart and mine.'

Jane Lee Wolfe, World YWCA President