

VARQA FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER

Inspiring agents of change

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JANUARY 2010



New Varqa volunteer from Montreal, Mona Ghadirian, working with children in Berbice



"Youth" of all ages take part in Varqa projects



Intensive YCMTW training in Essequibo



Essequibo youth at YCMTW training

O MY SERVANT!

Thou art even as a finely tempered sword concealed in the darkness of its sheath and its value hidden from the artificer's knowledge. Wherefore come forth from the sheath of self and desire that thy worth may be made resplendent and manifest unto all the world.

– Bahá'u'lláh

YCMTW Intensive Training Programme December 12th to 16th:

New Amsterdam

18 persons attended the December YCMTW training at School of Nations in New Amsterdam. Trevor Clark, from UNDP, spoke on the role of youth as peace makers in their communities. Vidya Kissoon, of Help & Shelter, presented a workshop on how to combat domestic violence. Each day 4 to 5 hours was spent on Ruhi training.

Mainstay Village, Essequibo Coast

27 persons attended the five day December intensive training programme in Essequibo. They came from Lima Sands, McNabb, Reliance, Mainstay, Richmond and the Little Red Village. The daily programme comprised: Arts, Social issues, Ruhi and service projects. In total 15 hours was spent on Ruhi training, which allowed 8 of the 17 Book 1 participants to complete that book, while the remaining persons are on the last section of the book. On the last day of the course the Arts were presented in the form of a Talent Show. This allowed the participants the opportunity to express what they had learnt.

Georgetown, 12th and 13th December

10 persons attended the training in Georgetown on 12th December. Vidya Kissoon facilitated a workshop on "Abuse" and spoke in depth about relationships between the sexes. The workshop was interactive and the participants seemed to gain a good deal. The next day Trevor Clark had an informal discussion with the youth present about their aspirations in life and then went into a workshop titled "The Third Side" which was based on conflict resolution. Trevor expressed the need for youth to take an active role in becoming facilitators of conflict resolution in all aspects of life and highlighted the opportunity we have to make a difference in the lives of the youth from the Tiger Bay area. After lunch they discussed the role of Ruhi training in the course. The participants thoroughly enjoyed discussing the aspects of truthfulness and life after death from Book 1. The final part of the programme focused on the arts with the making of banners. It was a joy to see creativity at work.

JUNIOR YOUTH PROJECTS IN GUYANA

There are currently 22 junior youth groups in Guyana with a total of 415 junior youth participating.

ANIMATOR (S)	VENUE	TIME	NO. OF JUNIOR YOUTH	MATERIAL USED
Abeika Dupan	JC Secondary School	Thursdays 10:30- 11:30	28	Walking the Straight Path
Abeika Dupan	Charity School	Monday 9 - 10:15	35	Walking the Straight Path
Ryan, Dave & Ravi	Aurora School (x2 groups)	Wednesday 8:30- 10	35	Walking the Straight Path
Abeika Dupan	Darmouth School (x2 groups)	Wednesday 1:30- 2:30	35	Walking the Straight Path
Lisa Ramsahai	Affiance	Saturdays	7	Breezes of Confirmation
Abeika, Charishma, & David	Anna Regina	Mondays 3:45 to 5:30	32	Walking the Straight Path
Charishma	Mainstay,	Mondays and Wednesdays - 3:30 to 5:30	8	Breezes of Confirmation
Abeika Dupan and Dave	Cotton Field Secondary	Thursday 8:30 – 10	34	
Subrina and Rosheni	418 Crane Housing Scheme, WCD	Wednesday 5 p.m.	7	Walking the Straight Path
Natalia Jay	Bartica	Wednesday 5 p.m.	15	
Carol Livan	9th St., 4th Avenue, Bartica	Tuesday & Thursday- 4pm-5:30 p.m.	12	YCMTW Junior youth manual
Uma and Trishaun	School of the Nations, Berbice	Monday 1:50- 2:30 p.m.	17	Walking the Straight Path
Uma and Trishaun	School of the Nations, Berbice	Tuesday 10:50 - 11:30	10	Glimmerings of Hope
Uma and Trishaun	School of the Nations, Berbice	Fridays 1:50- 2:30 p.m.	8	Breezes of Confirmation
Keron and Tomecia	West Bank Demerara	Saturday-3 p.m.	8	Breezes of Confirmation
Anis Thomas	#77 Village, Corriverton	Saturday 12 p.m. and Sunday 10	6	Breezes of Confirmation
Pride Thomas	Angoy's Avenue	Saturday 10 a.m.	8	Breezes of Confirmation
Rosheni and 6 th Formers	School of the Nations - Georgetown	Tuesdays and Thursdays - 4-5 p.m.	13	Breezes of Confirmation
Anil and 6 th Formers	School of the Nations - Georgetown	Tuesdays and Thursdays - 4-5 p.m.	15	Breezes of Confirmation
Andy Ramaldo	Line Path Village	Mondays - 3:30	3 - 6	Breezes of Confirmation
Indira and group	Mac Nab	Saturdays	25	Breezes of Confirmation
Abeka and Group	Lima Sands	Saturdays	35	Breezes of Confirmation
David, Treshaun and Christel	New Amsterdam	Weekly	7	Breezes of Confirmations
Pride and Cyntiyah	New Amsterdam	Weekly	10	Breezes of Confirmation
Abbas, Jaren, Stephanie, Shaunnette,	New Amsterdam	Weekly	16	Breezes of Confirmation

Animators' Comments

From David, Treshaun and Christel, in New Amsterdam, Berbice:

"Starting the Junior Youth group has posed many challenges. To begin with there was a lot of disunity and lack of motivation. We asked one youth, "Why do you come?" and they replied, "I don't know". But now we are really improving. The junior youth are now participating more and more. We see a real improvement in the behavior in these Junior Youth. We are working together to strengthen our relationship as a group and as a family. We look forward to helping these Junior Youth take more ownership of the group."

Pride and Cynthia, from Berbice note:

"The Junior Youth are now understanding the goals of the programme. Working together as one we are on the path to achieving these goals."

Abbas, Jaren, Stephanie, and Shaunnette, from New Amsterdam observe:

"Every Junior Youth is unique: they come from different social backgrounds and serve with different capacities. These Junior Youth have learnt to work together. They are taking much more ownership of the group and are developing a sense of identity. The Junior Youth are very open to the spiritual concept of this program and are striving to develop their own spirituality. This group has become a family."



Children class in Essequibo



Junior Youth at work in Essequibo

PARENTAL WORKSHOPS

There was a Parental Workshop, attended by 9 persons, on the 11th of January, at School of the Nations in Georgetown. This was organized for the parents of the children and junior youth who attend the afternoon classes and junior youth groups to consult on the format they would like to adopt for the Workshops. There were also 6 UNV Volunteers and one Varqa staff member present at the workshop. The workshop started with prayers, each of the UNVs was then introduced and their role on the Varqa programme explained. The plan is to have these Parent Workshops every two weeks. The first four Workshops will focus on: HIV/AIDS, Domestic Violence, Child Abuse/Neglect/Incest and Drug Abuse. UNV Karen Fontenelle is the key organizer of these workshops.

The second Parental Workshop took place on 25th January. There were 10 participants, all are single and/or working mothers. The workshop focused on HIV/AIDS. A local business, German's Restaurant, sponsored the snacks for the programme. Participants were given a pretest and posttest on their knowledge of HIV/AIDS. UNV, Mark Ross coordinated the session.

RESEARCH

VF is presently engaged in a three year research partnership with the University of Ulster in Northern Ireland to evaluate the YCMTW programme. Dr O'Toole met with Professor Roy McConkey in Belfast, UK, in December to discuss the research plan.



*Internationally known educator,
Professor Roy McConkey of the University of Ulster, UK*



Promotion of the arts

NEW VOLUNTEERS

Varqa welcomes new volunteers:

- Anissa and Sebastien Dawant from Belgium and Luxembourg, are based at Essequibo Coast for 6 months
- Adora Youssefian from Japan has just arrived to begin 4 months of service and will be based in New Amsterdam.
- Mona Ghadirian, from Montreal, is also based in Berbice for 6 months.

We welcome each one of these friends.



Mona Ghadirian



Anissa & Sebastien Dawant

MEDIA COVERAGE

The YCMTW has attracted extensive media attention over recent weeks with a number of articles in the national newspapers.

An amazing gesture by School of the Nations

SCHOOL of the Nations recent press release of offering classes to its new neighbourhood children is indeed an amazing gesture and this is also an ideal practice of community development.

I view it as a once in a lifetime opportunity for the selected candidates to garner personal self development, become role models and ambassadors for their community which has on many occasions in the past came under a lot of negative outlook.

The elders of this community also need to display their input in supporting the young ones in every way possible especially with encouragement. The end products will be a representative of all in the community and I am also confident that if the selected

participants produce unbelievable results, the institution might eventually consider offering to some, the opportunity of attending full time classes.

Change is good because I believe it brings about progression and positive image development and I now wonder if the community would consider participating in a discussion with a government official, a representative of the institution and support a name change of the community from "Tiger Bay" to "Nation's Bay."

If the answer is yes, it would be an awesome decision and this in many ways can be a perfect example of community upgrading.

Take it from here and have the project executed.

T. PEMBERTON

UNDP SUPPORT

The UNDP in Guyana has provided a grant and 7 full time United Nations Volunteers to the Junior Youth aspect of the programme. We warmly acknowledge the support of Trevor Clark, Monica Sharma and Megumi Ito in getting this support from UNDP through the EPTSI (Enhanced Public Trust Security and Exclusion) programme.

UNVs attached to Varqa Foundation

The following persons have been assigned by UNDP to Varqa Foundation on a full time basis:

- Ershad Bacchus: working on creative writing with Junior Youth
- Steven Broodhagen: responsible for computer training, science and sports with Junior Youth
- Karen Fontenelle: parent education programme
- Leon Niles: responsible for computer training, science and sports with Junior Youth
- Odessa Primus: Theatre production with Junior Youth and On the Wings of Words
- Mark Ross: Research and On the Wings of Words
- Rosheni Takechandra: Varqa Project Manager

We warmly welcome each of them to Varqa Foundation.



There is always time for sports on the YCMTW programme



Youth from Georgetown, Berbice and Essequibo meet together

RESPONSE TO HAITI

School of Nations and Varqa Foundation collaborated on Saturday 16th January to hold a car wash in aid of the devastation in Haiti. More than 30 students from School of Nations gave their Saturday to wash cars. They were ably assisted by 15 youth from the Tiger Bay community. School of Nations and Varqa Foundation have been working since September with 75 children and youth from the Tiger Bay community who come to Nations each afternoon for free after school classes in literacy, maths, computers, science, arts and sports. The intervention is funded by UNDP through their EPTSI programme. One of the persons who was having his car washed commented that more important than the money collected was the awareness that is being created that our neighbours are suffering. Another person stated how impressed she was to see children and youth from Tiger Bay also helping. She said that it helped us appreciate that there are always people in a more difficult condition than ourselves.

More than \$300,000 was raised in this one exercise alone.



FUTURE PLANS

Summer Intensive:

The following is a brief outline of the Summer Programme:

- July 5th to 16th : intensive YCMTW training at School of Nations, Georgetown. This will be for persons aged 15 to 25 years
- The training focuses on YCMTW social themes, how to promote literacy, use of the arts and Ruhi training
- The training will run from Monday to Friday to allow time/opportunity for participants to do the practice elements of Ruhi

- The above Intensive training will be immediately followed by training for Junior youth within their own regions:
- VF is presently meeting with the various regional agencies throughout the country to map out this programme for Junior Youth in their areas;
- The work with Junior Youth will therefore continue throughout the summer
- In the afternoons the Junior Youth would gather for YCMTW, arts and Ruhi
- In the mornings the Animators would gather for further YCMTW training and study of the Ruhi sequence

Focus on Amerindian areas

An integral part of the above programme will include a three month intensive YCMTW training in Amerindian areas in Rupununi (on the border with Brazil) and in the North West District (on the border with Venezuela). The programme in these interior regions will be similar to the one outlined above. Already we have some pledges from youth from Montreal to support this aspect of Varqa's programme for the summer. A team of Amerindians from both Rupununi and NWD will attend the intensive training in Georgetown from July 5th to 16th. They would then return to their own regions, along with a team of resource persons to carry on the programme with Junior Youth in their own villages and communities.

If you live overseas and would like to support this programme:

- Send an application to the address below along with a letter of reference
- Volunteers from overseas need to pay US\$200 per month to cover food & accommodation

Be assured of a warm welcome:

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FUNDED BY

Unity Foundation (Luxembourg) and
the Government of Luxembourg