

# VARQA FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER

*Inspiring agents of change*

AUGUST 2008

## IN THIS ISSUE:

Message from the Board of Varqa Foundation  
Partnerships  
Research Programme  
News from the Regions  
Upcoming Dates



## A Message from THE BOARD OF VARQA FOUNDATION

Dear Friends,

This has been a very exciting period since the last Newsletter in May 2008. Eighty five persons gathered for the Youth Can Move the World (YCMTW) Animators training in Georgetown from July 8th to 12th. The participants came from all regions of Guyana, including six friends from Rupununi. Following the Animator's training the participants divided in groups to work with Junior Youth, aged 11 to 14 years, in different parts of the country. This Newsletter highlights the successes of these training programmes in; Georgetown, Joanna Cecilia, NOC, Lima Sands, WCD, De Willem, Cotton Field, New Amsterdam, Corriverton, Coverden, Enmore and Lethem. At present more than 600 Junior Youth are participating on a regular basis at these different venues. Plans are now being made to consolidate these classes from September onwards. As this Newsletter is being written new YCMTW programmes are being conducted in Annai, Karasabai and Lethem.

Warmest greetings,  
Varqa Foundation

*O Lord! Strengthen these fragile seedlings that each one may become a fruitful tree, verdant and flourishing. Render these souls victorious through the potency of Thy celestial hosts, that they may be able to crush the forces of error and ignorance and to unfurl the standard of fellowship and guidance amidst the people; that they may, even as the reviving breaths of the spring, refresh and quicken the trees of human souls and like unto vernal showers make the meads of that region green and fertile.*

*-Abdu'l-Bahá*

## PARTNERSHIPS

A significant feature of this period has been the very valuable partnerships that have been formed with other agencies. An inspiring three week YCMTW training programme was conducted at Camille's Institute in Coverden. A similar exercise was conducted at Urmilla's School in ECD. Parent Workshops were conducted in partnership with the Mother's Union and the National Commission on the Rights of the Child with the First Lady, Varshanie Jagdeo, inspiring groups in Georgetown and New Amsterdam.



## RESEARCH PROGRAMME

Varqa has formed a partnership with the University of Ulster to research the effectiveness of the YCMTW programme. In August 2008 Varqa secured a grant from the Government of Ireland for the research. World renowned educator, Professor Roy McConkey, from the University of Ulster will be visiting Guyana in November to develop the research plan. In addition Dr Shoma Stout from Harvard Medical School is planning on writing a book on Varqa Foundation. She was in Guyana recently, along with her research assistant, Nikita Srinivasan, to carry out the research for the book.

*“The betterment of the world  
can be accomplished through pure and  
goodly deeds, through commendable  
and seemly conduct.”*

## NEWS FROM THE REGIONS



*“...they all have hidden talents that  
they want to show.”*



*“Every person who attended the three  
week training left with spiritual and  
material knowledge.”*

### West Coast Demerara

Gordon Roberts, YCMTW Regional Coordinator writes:

From July 14th to 25th and August 4th to 8th a team of facilitators worked with a group of Junior Youth in De Willem, WCD. Gordon Roberts said, “This has been a huge achievement for WCD ..... before it was always difficult to gather together a core group of youth for training.” A strong team of nine YCMTW Animators worked with the Junior Youth. A total of 32 junior youth gathered each morning at the Baha’i Centre in De Willem to study the YCMTW programme and the Ruhi junior youth books. In the afternoons a further 28 youth gathered to study about social issues, use of the arts and the Ruhi books. The Animators spoke about the serious involvement of all the participants throughout the 15 days of training in their region. Plans are now in train for two regular Junior Youth groups in this region. Gordon observed, “The youth were at first conservative and shy. As we proceeded into the middle of the training, they began talking, smiling, reading and discussing. When it came to expressing their thoughts they participated fully..... what attracted them to the program was the arts session ..... they were into developing their skills; painting banners and dance..... they all have hidden talents that they want to show. There are a lot of things you wouldn’t expect from them.”

### East Berbice

Diya Dwarka, YCMTW Regional Coordinator writes:

Diya wrote, “New Amsterdam Junior Youth and Youth came alive this summer at the YCMTW training at School of Nations in New Amsterdam. Every person who attended the three week training left with spiritual and material knowledge. They also discovered unknown talents in the arts in making banners, puppets and song writing. Sadly we saw that many of the youth had already learned first hand about many of the social issues, e.g. domestic violence and drug & alcohol abuse.

15 youth attended the entire programme. There are now four regular Junior Youth groups in the East Berbice area, two are at School of Nations (on Tuesdays & Wednesdays) and two are at Theatre Alley on Wednesdays & Fridays. These groups are attended by 55 junior youth on a regular basis.

## Upper Corentyne

Anis Ade-Thomas, YCMTW Regional Coordinator writes:

Seven YCMTW Animators worked in Upper Corentyne from August 4th to 15th. They worked with 14 youth on a daily basis. The group was joined by Aunty Mona from Suriname. Congratulations to Neemias, Jesmar & Tahirih for finishing Ruhi book two and to Vijai for finishing book three. A further 16 youth are soon to complete Ruhi Book #1. The youth are also in the process of learning dances on social themes through Anis on step dance, racism and equality. In the words of Anis, "YCMTW has come with a bang to this region." A regular junior youth group is now planned for Corriverton. More than 150 persons attended the YCMTW Festival hosted at the end of the training. Anis noted, "The participants enjoyed identifying with something important. Now they see the need to be part of the group – it's part of their identity. Their coming here is like their second home. They are interested in helping and being of service to their community."



*They are interested in helping and being of service to their community."*

## Essequibo

Abeka Dupan, YCMTW Regional Coordinator writes:

Even before the YCMTW intensive programme started in July there were already a number of vibrant Junior Youth groups in Essequibo in Joanna Cecilia, Anna Regina, Lima Sands, NOC and Cotton Field. The Regional Education Officer gave permission for Abeka to visit schools to invite youth to attend the YCMTW programme. Essequibo then undertook a three week intensive YCMTW training. Plans are now in train to have 9 junior youth groups on a regular basis in Essequibo. Abeka noted that many of the junior youth struggle with reading – plans are in train therefore to work on their literacy skills as part of the YCMTW programme. Despite this the junior youth vie with each other to see who knows more quotations. Abeka observed, "You can just see the virtues of love and unity within them." Nalita, Shellon, Darshanie, Alexie & Annalisa all completed Ruhi Book 3 in this period as part of the YCMTW programme. The 10 youth on the YCMTW programme in Capoey are planting trees as their service project.



*"You can just see the virtues of love and unity within them."*

## East Coast Demerara

Shallini Misir, YCMTW Regional Coordinator writes:

In Urmilla's School in Enmore the team has been working with 20 Junior Youth and 20 Youth. 18 persons are currently studying Ruhi Book 1, two are doing Book 2 and one is to start Book 3. Urmilla's School now plans to host a regular YCMTW junior youth group as a result of this training.

## Georgetown

Anil Singh, YCMTW Coordinator for writes:

I was in Canada for part of this period. Whilst in Canada I met with friends to discuss future collaboration on the YCMTW programme. Before leaving we worked with a group of about 40 junior youth at School of Nations in Georgetown. The youth came from Tiger Bay, Sophia and Campbeville. At the end of the two week training they put on an outstanding performance for their parents. Plans are now being made for three regular junior youth groups in Georgetown.

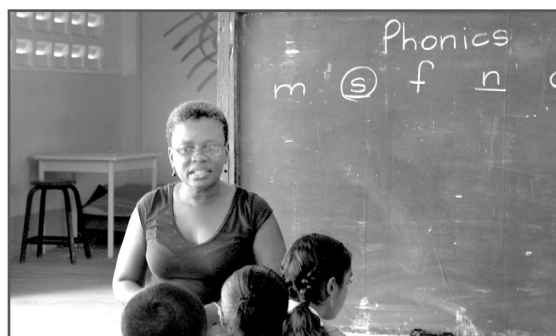
## UNITY FOUNDATION

We were delighted to welcome Anissa Fallahzadeh, from Luxembourg, and Sebastien Dawant, from Belgium, to Guyana for 6 weeks. They came representing our funders, Unity Foundation. They travelled throughout Guyana in their time here and won the hearts of everyone they met. They are presently organizing a Conference in Luxembourg that Dr Brian O'Toole will attend. The Conference is to chart future collaboration.



## LITERACY TRAINING

On the weekend of August 9th & 10th a group of 65 YCMTW Animators attended a training in literacy using the "On the Wings of Words" materials. The training was conducted by Penny Gaime from Bahamas and Carol Mancey from Guyana. Literacy training is now one of the key lines of action of the YCMTW Animators.



## UPCOMING DATES

### **Wednesday August 27th**

National YCMTW Festival  
at School of Nations, Georgetown  
with cultural presentation at Theatre  
Guild at 1:30 pm

### **Saturday September 27th**

Meeting of YCMTW Animators from  
all parts of Guyana  
at School of Nations, Georgetown  
from 9 am to 3 pm

## THANKS FOR YOUR HELP

We are very happy that the following persons came to help the project from overseas this summer: Pedram Melaknejad, Nur Shodjai, Neda Roberts, Charisse Johnson, Geoff & Lita Cameron and John Beaver. Charisse is from USA, all the others are from Canada. A big thank you to Canada, once again. Geoff & Lita have worked hard at analyzing the results of the intensive programme, writing the report and producing a video documentary on YCMTW – many, many thanks to you both !

### **Thanks too to**

The work of Rosheni Takechandra and Lomerharshan Lall throughout this intensive period has been invaluable. They travelled from one area of the country to the other providing loving guidance and support.

## WEBSITE & NEWSLETTER

We are delighted by the support given by Lua and Cairan O'Toole in redesigning our website. The new Varqa Foundation website at [www.varqafoundation.org](http://www.varqafoundation.org) should be up and running by September 2008. Lua also designed this Newsletter. Many thanks to you !!