

### Recommendations from the YICAS Round Table Meeting

The Lutheran World Federation – A Communion of Churches seeks to be an inclusive communion, proclaiming the risen Christ in our broken world. As LWF Council members, Youth Liaisons, youth workers, delegates to the 2003 LWF Assembly, and others from the LWF communion, we have participated in that proclamation as we gathered in Vienna, Austria, from 13 June to 19 June 2006 for the YICAS Roundtable Meeting. We worshipped together, we enjoyed fellowship with one another, we heard about how the Holy Spirit is active in our churches and in our world. And we mourned the brokenness that remains, not only in our world, but in our communion. We recognize that young people remain on the margins in many of our churches, or are absent altogether. As we strive to make visible the whole body of Christ, we must attend to this brokenness. As the goals and objectives found in our strategic plan show, the YICAS Desk has a key role to play in working towards an inclusive communion.

We began by reviewing the materials developed by The Rev. Mia Wrang, Consultant for Youth in Church and Society. Her Evaluation Report and our discussions confirmed that the programming of the YICAS Desk has been largely appreciated by those who have participated in YICAS work. Unfortunately, although the events themselves have been successful, they often have a limited impact within member churches and larger society. The Evaluation Report and our discussion revealed that a primary roadblock to the success and effectiveness of YICAS work is a lack of consistency and follow-up by the YICAS Desk and member churches. We recognize the practical difficulty that not all member churches have adequate structures in place for communication and collaboration between youth. Although this problem is beyond the scope of the work of the YICAS Desk (it would be impossible for the small desk in Geneva to implement structures in all 143 member churches), these structural problems greatly impact the effectiveness of YICAS work. We also recognize the impact of the financial strain faced by the LWF recently, and the resultant staff reductions. The work of YICAS is vital and we must find ways to negotiate these realities.

Based on these concerns, we offer two primary recommendations to guide the process of implementing the YICAS strategic plan. **The first is the imperative need for consistency, planning, and follow-up.** Although many of the events and activities YICAS has done in the past were successful by themselves, they were often discrete experiences in the life of the participants without strong continuity. Each event usually includes a number of new participants, or topics that are linked only because they are relevant to youth. One way to address this concern would be to launch a campaign around a particular topic that would link youth together around a particular issue between assemblies. Ideally, this issue would also be linked to other LWF work and would provide opportunities for youth to be engaged not only with one another but also with other members in the communion. Such a campaign would provide focus and direction for programming of YICAS. The campaign itself would provide consistency between events and meetings, and it would require planning and attention to follow-up between meetings.

**Our second primary recommendation is that the main function of the YICAS Desk is advocacy and facilitation.** As our mission statement says, “To work with and for youth as well as with and for LWF member churches to promote full inclusion of youth and youth concerns in the life and decision-making of church and society in close cooperation

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with other relevant networks.” Clearly, the YICAS Desk in Geneva cannot effectively do all the programmatic work necessary for young people. Therefore, it must focus on advocating through existing networks, such as youth organizations, member churches, regional desks, and the other LWF Departments. In some cases, this also means advocating through such networks for the development of communication structures that facilitate the work and promote the mission of YICAS. Furthermore, YICAS plays an important role in facilitating and building on the work already being done locally, regionally, and globally. Therefore, we recommend that YICAS pay special attention to opportunities for collaboration with other global, ecumenical organizations, as well as with local and regional organizations.

In order to effectively carry out this work of coordination, advocacy and facilitation, there must be a level of awareness and recognition of who YICAS is and what the YICAS Desk does at all levels of LWF work. The members of the Roundtable Meeting feel that YICAS is not a clear and accessible acronym. Youth and leaders in our local contexts do not immediately understand what YICAS is or who the youth of YICAS are. Therefore, we propose changing the name of YICAS to LWF-Youth. This would clearly identify our work as the work of the LWF Communion for and with youth, and would also clearly identify the youth as belonging to this particular confessional body.

Thank you for considering our recommendations as you read our strategic plan and for your continued support of the mission of YICAS (as it is currently named).

Respectively submitted,  
The participants of the 2006 Roundtable Meeting

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