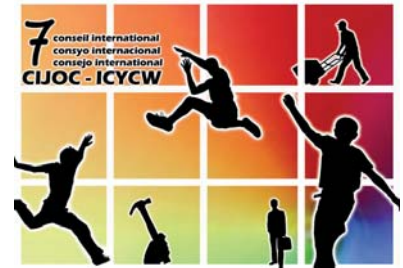


## Coming to Life: 7th International Council of ICYCW



The 7th International Council of the International Coordination of the YCW, called “Coming to Life”, was held in Paris from 21st June till 4th July 2008. It only happens once every four years, bringing together delegates of YCW movements from each country, representing the lives and concerns of a million young people. Mog Harris and Angela Clapham tell us about their experience of attending the International Council.



**By Mog Harris**

Have you ever been on a rollercoaster? I love them and after a rollercoaster-like week at International Council, I think I love them even more. The nervous excitement I felt on the first day of Council with all the delegates sitting row upon row facing the platform feels similar to those safety bars coming down over your head. My ear phones for the simultaneous translation dangled uncomfortably from my ears and I stared at the microphone that sat in the centre of the table and wondered quite what I had let myself in for. I looked over at Ernest, the National President of Malawi, who chaired for the day, and Teddy the representative for Uganda, who acted as Secretary. If they were as nervous as I was, they certainly didn't show it!

Understandably people were at first apprehensive but everyone opened up and began sharing the realities of their movements and the young workers of their countries as we knew they would. This is what I find makes YCW events so exciting, the warmth. You only have to look unsure or nervous for a second and you are taken under someone's wing. Before you know it you know everyone

### From the President's Desk

**There are a few things which I really want to bring to your attention:**

**Take Out** – everything you need in a Take Out pizza box to “take out” an action and transform your local community. The resource includes a training DVD. Available from HQ.

**Ambassadors for the Young** - Media Enquiries to encourage young people to consider how they are portrayed in the media and use their video mobile phones to make positive news stories promoting youth. Includes 7 mini training videos. Available from HQ.

**A Challenge to Lead - YCW start up pack**

Everything you need to start a YCW group for young adults. A DVD includes discussion starter clips and Scripture reflections to enable you to reflect on twelve different topics relevant to young adult's lives. Order yours now from HQ.

**Invitation to YCW NATIONAL COUNCIL**

October 17th-19th 2008, Wistaston Hall, Crewe. The annual meeting of YCWs to set the agenda for the next year.

*Danny*

and have contact details scrawled on every bit of paper, used receipt, and bare bit of flesh to hand. As an organisation there is a genuine desire to get to know each other, to care for each other and I was full of joy and beaming with pride to be a part of this.

Obviously we had to do some work at some point! It wasn't all just kick-about in the park and international entertainment evenings. Whilst divided into smaller groups I got the chance to develop and really deepen my understanding of the reality faced by other movements. This is such an exciting and valuable opportunity to understand how the Co-ordination seeks to function, and how we as member movements could assist them in their support for the Movement. We had prepared displays before Council to show the situation of YCW in our respective countries. These were a useful reference tool as the week progressed and we were eager to fill in the gaps of conversations or comments shared.



I came away with a renewed belief of the strength of YCW as a grass-roots organisation and excited about the potential and the actual practical importance of the groups we are creating. I was filled with confidence that these groups are the most important tool of the whole organization and excited at the potential we have for developing other young workers in the same way to become like those I spent the week with. The Masses and time spent singing prayerful songs from around the world really gelled us as a group and made my stomach flip in the way only the best rollercoaster rides do. I left International Council exhilarated and ready to go again!



**By Angela Clapham**

Attending the International Council was a fantastic experience. I met so many people and was able to discover the real experiences of their lives. To hear the stories of the problems faced by other young people made me realise that the issues in my own life are shared by others all over the world – many of them face much worse hardships.

Some YCW members came from war-torn countries, where YCW groups are trying to help rebuild the country and make life better for the people of their areas. The YCW in Haiti are trying to educate the poorest by setting up free schools, staffed by members of the YCW who are teachers. The members in Congo Brazzaville are trying to help improve the health of young people through sessions to educate them about different diseases and how to stay healthy.

In Europe people told how their YCW groups were challenging insecure working conditions and the debt that young people are facing because of our modern lifestyles. The Italian YCW have been looking at challenging the consumer society

we live in and challenge people to live more simply and less wastefully.

It was a privilege to be able to spend time with people whose commitment to making a difference was so powerful. One of the delegates was even prepared to risk his own job to attend the Council. He didn't know if he would still have a job when he returned home because the company hadn't said whether he could have the time off or not.

I made a lot of friends over the two weeks, from many parts of the world. The language difficulties stopped being a barrier as the two weeks went on. We communicated in the three languages of English, French and Spanish for our working sessions with the help of a fantastic group of translators. In our free time we managed to make ourselves understood (even with very limited skills like mine!) and began to develop what I hope are lasting friendships; friendships across the world which will help us to continue to challenge injustices and transform the lives of young people everywhere.

# Discovering the voices of the young

**The YCW group in Poplar, London, tell us about their work to discover what young people are concerned about, to help them to plan how to take action so they can make a real difference.**

Our mission – to boldly go into the depth of the Poplar neighbourhood, and talk to young people about their concerns. Were we to be chased out of our own area for bothering the kids? No. Were we to be “blanked” (ignored)? No. Were we to be shocked? Yes. If the YCW of Poplar learned anything about its young cohabitants, it’s that the young people are so much nicer than they are portrayed.

We started in arguably the heart of Poplar, Crisp Street Market. Determined to seek out young people to gain feedback we entered the library, or the ‘Idea Store’ as our Council like to call it. Here we found a group of boys who had just finished organising a trip to Thorpe Park. We asked them how safe they felt in their own neighbourhood. Almost instantly one began to tell of his past incident where he was attacked at a bus stop for his mobile phone, as he was not from the same postal code. However, luckily people did not turn a blind eye to this and help soon came to him. He shrugged it off, claiming these things just happen and that he was very grateful for the aid. We also asked, “what is there to do in the area?” They responded with, “not much”. They admitted that the facilities are there, it’s just accessing them. They gave the example of the library and how they used the internet on the computer to completely organise their trip. They noted that in the Poplar area itself there is little to do, but that the younger kids should find something to do.

When asked about Poplar problems, we were given a long list: “gangs, drugs, knives, robberies/muggings, noise in the morning due to young children and housing estate smells.” When asked about solutions to the problems, he suggested one for the criminal activities. “There should be organised trips taking younger kids to prisons. These have a more a lasting impression, than a football tournament which offers a 4-hour boredom crisis.” It seemed like a fresh



*Some of the YCW members in Poplar*

idea. When asked why this idea wasn’t shared they shrugged and stated that “this is the real world ... there long procedures and paperwork and somewhere in this our voices are lost, can’t be answered or [are] ignored.” Despite the seriousness of the conversation, there were long aspects of just a light-hearted talk – mostly of how Essex is supposedly better than Poplar, as one of the boys who moved often joked about.

We also spoke to younger people of 13 years of age who happily talked to us. These were a contrast to the older ones we talked to earlier. When asked “what concerns you”, they commented on knife crime and boredom. They claimed that “there is nothing to do for under-13s.” When asked what they do, they answered “play football in the pitches and just chill”, then a pause. They also commented that there should be more football/basketball pitches, as other people hang there.

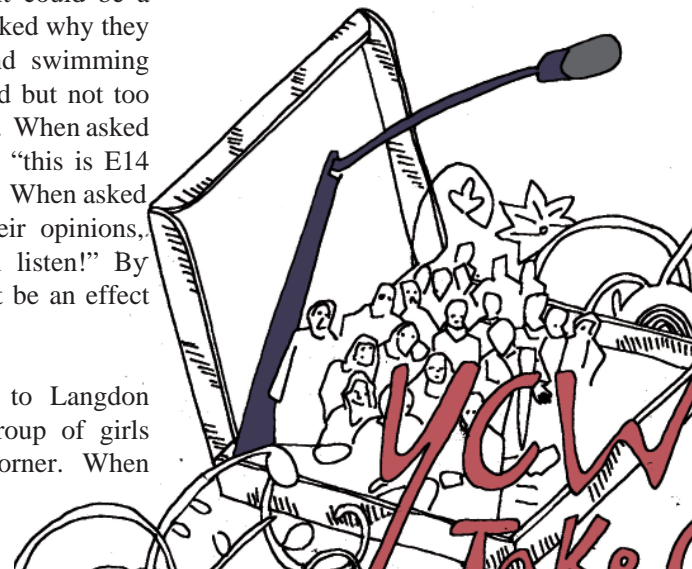
On asking a different group of boys on their views in the area, they voiced stronger opinions: “Look at Poplar baths, its been closed for ages, it could be a swimming pool.” When asked why they didn’t go to the Mile End swimming pool, they claimed they did but not too often, as it wasn’t their area. When asked what they mean, they said “this is E14 and Mile End is Mile End.” When asked why they didn’t voice their opinions, they answered, “who will listen!” By telling you there might not be an effect at all.

We then made our way to Langdon Park, where we met a group of girls congregating around a corner. When

asked what they were doing, they said “nothing, just waiting for a group of boys to hang around with.” When asked “what is it like for a girl being in Poplar?” they complained about it being tougher than for boys. They complained that there are areas they can’t go due to “beef” (a misunderstanding), and in their own area there is nothing to do. We then asked “What would you like to do?” they shrugged and said “shopping and stuff.” When asked why they didn’t do this, especially when Canary Wharf shopping centre, Stratford and the West India cinemas are so nearby, they claimed they can’t go: “we are poor, because no one would give us a job”. During our conversation with them, we were watched, called out to and then approached by a man in a blue hoodie. (We were quite reluctant to hug this hoodie.) He asked the girls their ages and then ours (probably as we looked older than the girls), and then began flirting and chatting them up right in front of us. Thankfully, his train came and the very awkward situation ceased. When asked if they get that a lot, a strong “yes!” came from all the girls. “We hang around a lot, so we just ignore them.” When asked if they feel safe in their regular situations like these, they said, “we’ve gotten use to it, and go out with the boys. so it’s OK.”

From this simple walkabout we found out that despite the fact young people are obviously willing to talk, there is a serious lack of communication between them and the Poplar authorities. Before anything can be achieved a bridge needs to be built.

*The YCW group are planning to use the new resource, Take Out, to give young people a voice in their community.*



# Welcome to our new International President

Hyo Jung Park, known as Seraphina, is the new International President of the International Coordination of the Young Christian Workers. She is from Korea, but she stayed with the National Team in London for a few weeks while she learned English; Mog found time to ask her a few questions!

**Seraphina, congratulations on being elected International President – and for being the first Korean to hold an international post at the ICYCW!**

First of all, thanks for your congratulations. I'm the first person from Korea to become International President at the ICYCW and also from any the Catholic international movements which are in Korea. So I hope I'll be the perfect example and I feel a huge sense of responsibility. I'll always discover the reasons why the Lord calls me, an imperfect person in my daily life. And I'll always pray that the discoveries become concrete actions for Young Workers and the kingdom of the Lord.

**Can you tell us how you met the YCW in Korea? How long have you been an YCW member?**

I first knew about the YCW movement through my aunt – she was a former member of the YCW during the 1980s. She is proud to have been a member of the YCW when she was young. When I was interested in being baptized a Catholic, she introduced to me the YCW movement. Actually I believed in the Lord but it was before my baptism. She suggested that I be baptized in the Church and share the experience with the other young people in YCW movement. I was attracted by that word – “sharing life” with other young people, so I visited the YCW centre. I started the Review of Life with 3 other young members in the YCW movement. During that time we learned about Catholic dogma for baptism in 2002. We were all workers so when we faced difficulties in our life, we discussed how to solve those problems together following the Lord's teaching. It became a very valuable time to meet the Lord, and it changed me slowly. I



joined in the YCW movement as soon as I was baptized in 2003.

**Are there many YCWs in Korea?**

The Korean YCW was resumed by new 12 young people of the Seoul archdiocese in 2003. I was one of them. There are about 130 young people in two archdioceses in Korea, the number of members of YCW continues to increase.

**What do you do in Korea? How long have you been doing that?**

I have worked for the Labor Pastoral Commission of Seoul Archdiocese as an accounting clerk since 2005, and I've been studying Creative Writing at college in the evening.

**Can you tell us something about how you see the role of the International President? How does ICYCW relate to national movements? What do you hope to achieve while you are the president?**

I'll try to give to all of YCW movements the opportunity to get the support of the international level. The role of the International President is to be a connecting system between all the different YCW movements for sharing their experiences and information properly and helping each other. Each YCW movement should encourage the other movements, even if they're located on opposite sides of the globe. Basically, the standard for these activities must stay with the Gospel and for young workers.

It's one of the most important factors when we work on it, so the effectiveness of the YCW movement is greater.

**You are here in England learning English. So far, what do you think about England?**

I'd like to say that the English summer is very “special”! England is an advanced country which has a long history and proud tradition, and new cultures coexist and get joined together well. It's impressive for me. There are many wonderful places in England. Especially, London is a city full of vitality, a young, international city. The north of England is colder but the people who live in the north have the warmest heart. I'm really happy to be in England”

**Have you got a message to all the young people in YCW and Impact in the UK?**

Pleased to meet you and thanks for the warm welcome. Always challenge new things with the Lord and YCW! I will always cheer you, and pray for you and support you. God Bless!

## Mog Harris

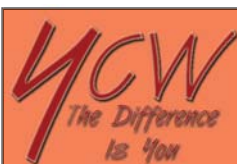
**Last issue we welcomed Mog to the team. Here she tells us a little about herself:**

WOW, what a six months it's been since returning to London after vowing never to live their again!



Oh dear, they always say “Never Say Never!” So I'm back, after a two year “visit” to my hometown in Warwick in the Midlands. My background, for any of you who don't know, is theatre set design (and a spot of lifeguarding!). So if you ever need any help with either don't hesitate to ask!

I've so enjoyed meeting and working with so many of you and I love hearing what you're all getting up to. Just to remind you all, you're all very welcome to visit us in London.



The YCW - Newsletter of YCW & Impact  
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