

# DO NOT BURY YOUR TALENT

Secretary General's Speech to the General Assembly of YMCA Europe 2009,  
Dassel, Germany, Thursday May 21, 2009  
Rev. Johan Vilhelm Eltvik

## 1. INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME – THEOLOGICAL AND ORGANISATIONAL

### 1.1. DO NOT BURY YOUR TALENT!

There once was a YMCA in a location I shall not disclose to you. Their YMCA building was old and really in need of painting and renovation. They fundraised for paint, but it was not a very successful fundraising campaign. So the money could not buy the amount of paint needed. What to do? They decided to make the paint thinner by adding some cheap fluid. The building looked good that night, but unfortunately a heavy rain came and washed away most of the thin paint. Then a thunderstorm came, and from the thunder came a voice from above and made the YMCA leaders tremble in their shoes. The voice said: REPAINT! REPAINT! AND THIN NO MORE!

When we want to repaint the YMCA's capacity to fundraise and market itself better, the motivation for this is not budgets with red figures, but first of all the motivation comes from what I refer to as the power station of the YMCA.

I am so proud to belong to an inclusive, very open Christian movement. We are wide open for all people, people of faith and people of no faith. In this way we are very different from a soccer club and from soccer fans, only focused on their own identity and culture. There are hooligans in the worldwide church, aggressive hooligans, but we do not belong to them.

In the middle of all our diversity there is one uniting symbol, the symbol of the cross. The man on the cross, Jesus Christ, gave the deepest and most dramatic expression of friendship when he gave his life for his friends.

I often reflect on the weak fellowship of disciples around Jesus. They were not easy people. They were fighting for the best positions and very focused on themselves, seeking confirmation that they were the most important, and therefore quarrelling a lot. And he gave his life for them.

When I go to the cross to kneel, I have no arguments and no strategy. I am there to receive again and again the forgiveness. I need that for myself. But it is also wider, I need to have one place to go to, to hand over all the evilness of the different fellowships I participate in, including my YMCA, my country, the Western world, the southern world. It is an existential need to somehow relate to this massive guilt and darkness in our world.

When I stand up afterwards, I have experienced renewal, renewed forgiveness, renewed hopes and expectations, renewed faith in the YMCA and my friends there.

When I walk away from the cross, I am a bit more relaxed with myself and my needs for general self confirmation (which always makes us difficult people to be with), and for a while I am not looking for competition or enemies, I am looking for friends and partners to share the road with, to walk together with, to work together with. And in my ears are the words from Jesus Christ giving the direction for my walk. He did not tell me: I forgive you. Have a nice day! No, he said, I forgive you. Now go and change your ways, change your thinking, cut new paths in the wilderness. Because out there are the treasures hidden, out there are the blessings waiting for you, out there are the funds and resources to help you grow. They are no longer here, you have to go and find them. His words become more direct and concrete. I have given you what you are, your life and strength and energy and talents. Go and invest yourself in the fellowship of my servants. Invest yourself and the resources you have and come back next year and show me the results. Whow! You remember the story Jesus told. A Master travels abroad, and before he leaves, he gives a part of his money to three different servants and orders them to invest

his money. Two of them double what they were given, the third one dug a hole in the ground and just hid the money and then returned them.

To this servant came the words, here quoted from a modern translation:

“The master of the servant told him: You are lazy and good-for-nothing! You know that I harvest what I don’t plant and gather crops where I have not scattered seed. You could have at least put my money in the bank, so that I could have earned interest on it.

Then the master said, Now your money will be taken away and given to the servant with ten thousand coins! Everyone who has something will be given more, and they will have more than enough. But everything will be taken from those who don’t have anything. You are a worthless servant, and you will be thrown out into the dark where people will cry and grit their teeth in pain.”

To kneel at the cross is not to run away from responsibility, on the contrary, it is running straight into responsibility. Jesus challenges us, no he orders us, to be courageous and brave and risk taking!

## **1.2. BUILDING NEW CAPACITY FOR RESOURCE MOBILISATION**

A one-dollar bill met a twenty-dollar bill and said, "Hey, where've you been? I haven't seen you around here much."

The twenty answered, "I've been hanging out at the casinos, went on a cruise and did the rounds of the ship, back to the United States for a while, went to a couple of baseball games, to the mall, that kind of stuff. How about you?"

The one dollar bill said, "You know, same old stuff ... church, church, church."

The worldwide YMCA family decided in the 1990s to repaint the movement and renew the YMCA. No cheap fluid was put into the paint. It was properly done, with the help of consultants and the voices of all National Movements were heard.

First came the Mission Review process. That gave us Challenge 21. Then came the Organisation Review process – the question was: How can we work better together to make the YMCA stronger? This process gave us the Global Staff Team, where all the areas of the global YMCA work together with the World Alliance of YMCAs. Out of the Global Staff Team came the suggestion to form a Global Operating Plan for Movement Strengthening.

It may sound very much like the Grey Music, and quite boring. I have been part of the Global Staff Team since it was formed nearly ten years ago, and I can tell you it is far from boring or grey. I work in the Global Staff Team together with my good friend Miguel from LACA, Selma, Bart and the leaders of the other areas. It is a fascinating place to work, and after we decided through the Organisation Review process that we have different roles to play and what those roles are, there has been no more fight, but a lot of Blue Music, laughter, friendship, collaboration, inspiring discussions and good ideas. One of these good ideas is the need for strongly improved Resource Mobilisation in the world wide YMCA, so that we can fund the Global Operating Plan and reach much longer and do much more in a better and more professional way.

And then one day we may not have to do as the preacher who got up one Sunday and announced to his congregation: "I have good news and bad news. The good news is, we have enough money to pay for our new building program. The bad news is, it's still out there in your pockets.

- Last year the World Alliance of YMCAs met in Litomysl for the Executive Committee meeting. The focus at that meeting was on Resource Mobilisation. The World Fellowship fund which was collected around the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the WAY, 250 000 dollars, was given to support this new process. It was a moment of history when one individual after the other got up during that meeting and donated private money to the same cause, and then National Movements and area organisations donated as much as they could, so that we now have almost reached 450 000 dollars. This is a strong sign of commitment and faith, and we in the Global Staff Team feel that this is almost holy money, and we handle this money very, very carefully. It is money invested in a process of change, it is money invested to build capacity in the

area organisations so that with the help of this new capacity the areas can assist their member movements to become stronger and more professional fundraisers and resource mobilisers. We experienced a moment of history at that meeting in Litomysl. It was a great and encouraging symbol of unity and collaboration.

- The work in the GST on GOP and Resource Mobilisation is fascinating. How does this unity look on world level? Just a snap shot. USA sent us 450 participants to the last festival and from Latin America came more than 100. In a couple of years there may be a Festival in the US and they are consulting with us. Last month I was invited to Montevideo, Uruguay, to give a keynote speech reflecting European experiences. Fernando Ondarza from Mexico, and treasurer of WAY, was on his way to Dassel to share with us the very successful Mexican experience with what they call a Culture of Philanthropy. Only the health situation in Mexico stopped him from coming. Sam Stephens from Asia Pacific is our guest of honour here, and he will offer a workshop straight after my speech. Yamada from Japan, the new Secretary General in Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs, is very interested to learn more about the decentralised way we organise YMCA Europe. Mary Tikalsky is the chief Fundraiser in the YMCA of the USA and is here to help us. Carlos from Africa Alliance came to Spain three weeks ago to discuss a new and exciting joint project on Migration, shared by Africa Alliance and YMCA Europe, Senegal and Spain. Wolfgang and I are planning to go to the Middle East this autumn to learn from some very successful Resource Mobilisation models for instance in Lebanon.
- Can we learn from the Global Staff Team and do the same in Europe? Can we develop more of the interactive networking, not only from West to East, but also West to West, North to South. Migration is a huge challenge, not only for the countries in the South, but in fact for most countries in Europe. We can do a lot more together than isolated in our own backyards.
- In the wild west of the United States there once was a little saloon in a dusty little town. On the bar was a dry, rather old lemon and a sign said that anybody who could squeeze a drop of lemon out of this sad looking fruit would be given 100 dollars and a free beer. Many tried, but none succeeded until one day a thin, elderly looking man came into the saloon and wanted to try the lemon. Everybody in the saloon laughed at him, but then silence fell over them as they saw this feeble little man squeezing not one drop, but maybe ten drops of lemon out of the dried fruit. In astonishment they asked him who he was? With dry voice he answered them: I am the treasurer of YMCA Europe!

## **2. THANK YOU FOR GOOD WORK LAST YEAR**

- Thank you for the successful fundraising campaign for the YMCA Europe Training Centre in Litomysl. It gave us more than € 80 000 and we have fulfilled all our obligations. The TC has operated two years with surplus!
- Thank you YMCA Ukraine and YMCA Germany for your openness and courage inviting the YMCA Europe Resource Team (YERT) to run a diagnostic analysis of your movements. Thank you to the team members for excellent work. Please talk to me about YERT and your YMCA.
- Thank you to ICCO, EED and HEKS for the great Roots for Reconciliation Project in Caucasus, now running for the third year on a budget of € 500 000.
- Thank you YMCA of the USA for again having channelled more than \$ 200 000 to the development work of YMCA Europe and our member movements.
- Thank you for Catch the Vision in Shkoder, Albania, paid for by Council of Europe. That gave us a fascinating week with focus on inter faith dialogue.
- Thank you Horyzon for solid support for our work in Balkan.
- Thank you Sweden for good support to our TPD course for the NIS countries.
- Thank you to the YMCA College in Kassel for the new leadership-training project planned for Kassel, Litomysl and Yerevan and congratulation with your status as a University!
- Thank you for the new project Master Class to train volunteer leaders.
- Thank you for all the good work done by you and your movements in the Programme Groups and in the Field and Partner Groups, in the Group of Representatives and in the YES Group.
- Thank you to the Executive Committee and the staff.
- And last, but not least thank you for the great Festival we had last summer. Let us for a moment rest from all these words and again visit the festival site in Prague. What a wonderful time that was!

### 3. VISIT TO THE FESTIVAL

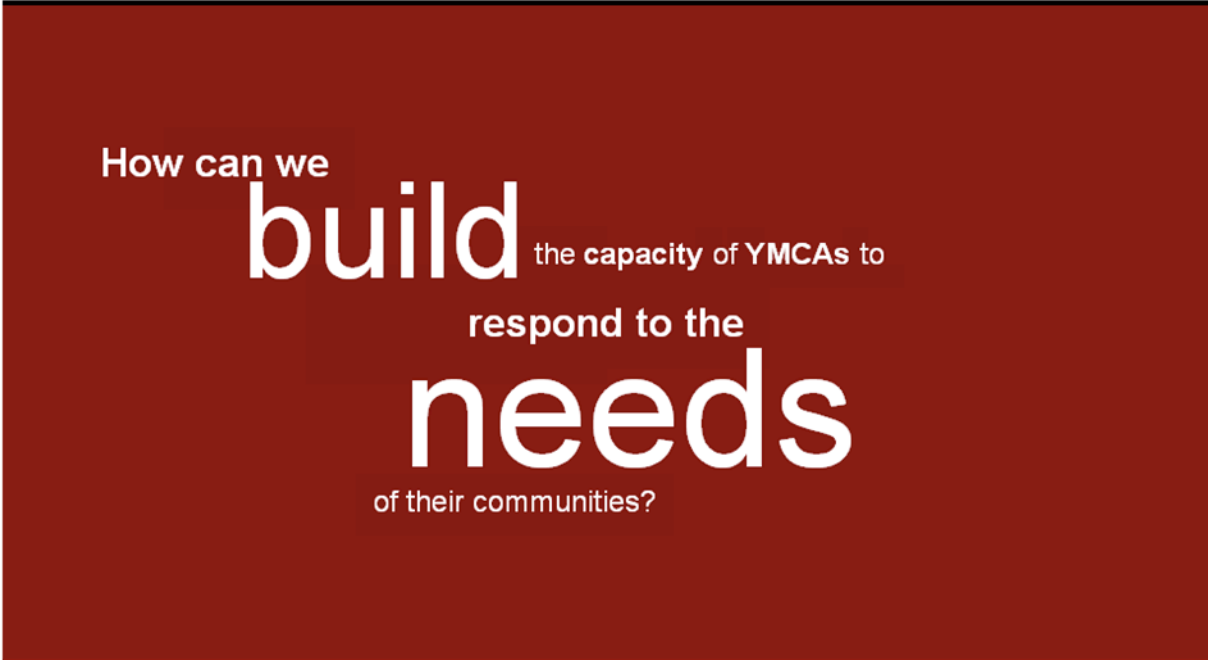
VIDEO “ WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD”

### 4. KEY SLIDES FROM THE RESOURCE MOBILISATION PROCESS IN THE GLOBAL STAFF TEAM

A presentation slide with a dark blue background. At the top, there is a red horizontal bar with a faint, stylized circular pattern. The main title is in white, lowercase, sans-serif font. At the bottom, there is a line of small, white, uppercase text.

# resource mobilisation for movement strengthening

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A presentation slide with a solid dark red background. The text is in white, sans-serif font, arranged in a central, stacked layout.

How can we  
**build** the capacity of YMCAs to  
respond to the  
**needs**  
of their communities?

# Overview about resource mobilisation

Based on planning sessions conducted in recent years, and informed by national movement inputs at key stages, the World Alliance in conjunction with the Global Staff Team (GST) is working to create a **coordinated YMCA strategy** for development of new resources at the local, national, regional, and global levels. This strategy can **transform and strengthen** the YMCA and help ensure its long-term sustainability and relevance.

Resource mobilisation involves generating **new funds** and **new fund sources** based on greater appreciation for the work of the YMCA family. It involves money invested by **donors of all types** (individuals/families, businesses, foundations, governments, and non-governmental organisations), who come from **all geographic regions**, to support the worldwide YMCA movement at **all levels** (local through global) in one or more of the following areas:

- A. Providing programmes
- B. Building capacity
- C. Strengthening financial sustainability

This work is

breaking new  
ground

for the global movement

## We are learning that...

**This resource mobilisation process is transformational**

- It is changing our view of *all* our work, and of our working relationships
- It is likely to transform others in similar ways as they become more involved... including the Executive Committee

**This work is complex**

- And our dynamics as a global team are complex
- Resource mobilisation requires continuous learning

## Funding streams

**Analysis illustrates the diversity of national movements**

- Some are increasing revenues; some are decreasing revenues
- Some have a healthy mix of sources; some are over-dependent on few sources

**The leading source varies by nation:** *membership fees, NGOs, fees for service, fundraising, YMCA family, government*

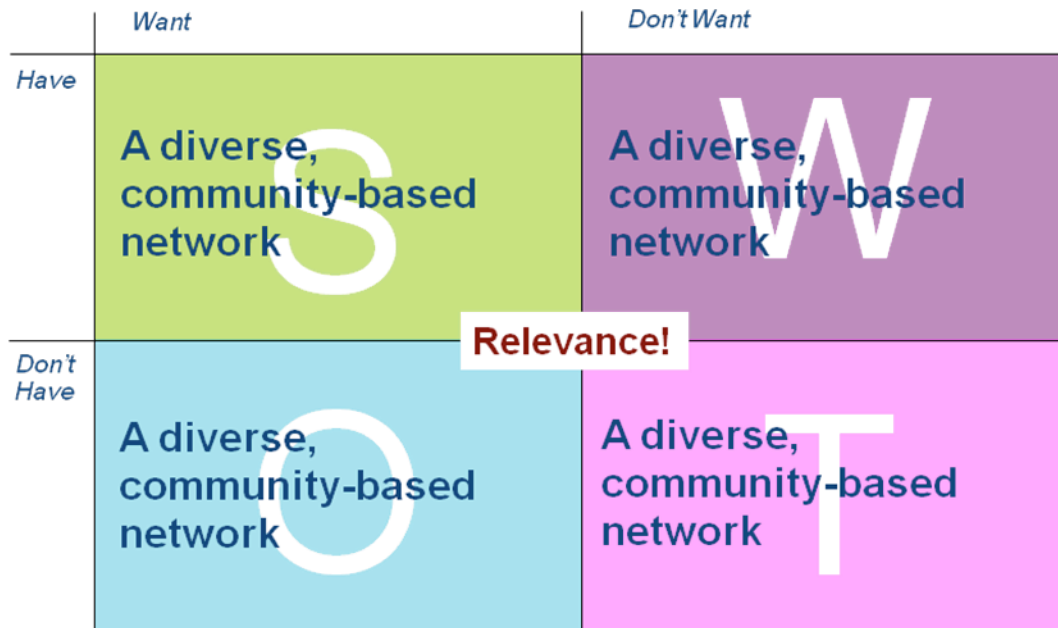
- Some have significant member dues; some have little dues revenue
- Each nation is a unique circumstance based on economics, government, etc.

**Relatively few national movements are financially sound:** *most face significant challenge – or crisis*

- Both old and young movements are struggling
- National fundraising would be a new practice in many places
- Some have, some lack, structures to enable national/regional fundraising
- Innovations in some areas (partnerships, agreements) provide opportunities for experimentation and learning

**We all see opportunity to engage new funders and donor segments.**

# SWOT analysis



## What about the economic downturn?

*Now, more than ever, is the time for resource mobilisation.*

- Human needs are **growing** in all parts of the world
- The YMCA is **present and proven** around the globe
- There is a sufficient abundance of resources available, if we can **sharpen** our story and strategically **connect** with the funders and partners who find us most relevant to their interests
- This will be a difficult period. It is a challenge and opportunity for **leadership**. It provides the possibility to create a stronger resource mobilisation capability (and relationships) and a stronger, more sustainable movement
- We know that the challenging economic environment can **attract** more movement members to this resource mobilisation effort

# Goals/indicators of success

**The YMCA movement serving more people, communities, youth**

- With clearer and measurable impact

**A broader, more diverse resource base: a healthier movement**

**Increased capacity to do this work**

- More movements are capacitated to participate in the process
- More volunteers are engaged in generating financial sustainability
- Increased competence in areas such as governance and accountability
- Increased technical capacity

**A process that is alive at all levels—with all national movements engaged**

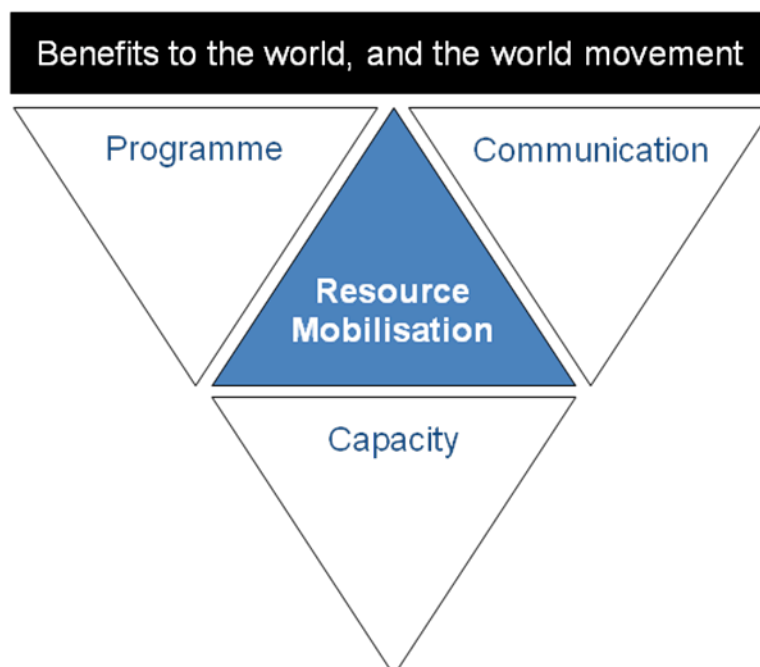
- With agreed, mutually supported roles in place

**Increased visibility and media attention**

- Recognition of the YMCA as a critical actor on youth issues
- YMCA becomes a reference point and model for others, and a sought-after partner
- Increased public recognition and understanding of the YMCA

**Increased pride in belonging to the YMCA**

## Achieving our potential





# Sequencing matters

**Long-term viability** is built on:

1. Strong capacity
2. Relevant programmes
3. Effective communication



We need to urgently focus on building a strong foundation of capacity, while also recognising that fundraising is ongoing today. As current fundraising efforts are implemented, we want to improve our ability to **learn by doing** in two ways:

- Using current efforts to better understand and address capacity requirements
- Communicating with others to better inform our strategies and enhance our collective success

## Capacity analysis

### Summary

- We have a generally underdeveloped culture of fundraising
- Fundraising is a new concept to many (some have significant capability)
- Many lack professional fundraisers, fundraising skills
- Motivation of executives/boards varies, is critical
- Focus on measurable results is essential
- Lack financial management systems: globally, in many areas

**We have mission clarity—an essential foundation for building capacity. However, we lack a common understanding of the *requirements* for capacity to engage in resource mobilisation.**

# resource mobilisation for movement strengthening

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## 5. PLANS AND ACTION STEPS FOR THE NEAR FUTURE

- We do not have the funds to employ experts to help us. It would have been a wise and good investment, but we simply do not have the funds – yet! Therefore we shall reorganise the resources we do have already, change some priorities and try to have a real impact on our capacity to improve our brand and image, to communicate internally and externally in a more efficient way. In short: We shall tell the story better, we shall write the story with more passion and we shall use this story to ask for resources, time, engagement and money. We shall ask in places where we never asked before, and we shall ask in a much more professional way supported by good material and trustworthy research on impact and change.

### 5.1. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO TELL THE STORY?

I will just mention a few key elements from the work we did in the task force for Impact Assessment.

- We need to focus our stories so we slowly tell the same story. Youth being changed; then changing their communities, because they are in the YMCA.
- Building a brand – rebuilding a brand – rebranding the YMCA. If we succeed, we will win a strong strategic position. Such a position we need to take actively, not receive passively.
- We need to be accurate and build on facts and therefore become trustworthy and reliable.
- We need seriously to invest in research and we have to challenge our universities to engage in serious research.

## - **A. Impact Assessment Framework**

- The impact assessment task force agreed on the importance of developing a simple yet substantive framework to systematize how the YMCA captures and communicates mission impact on three levels: 1. *Youth* 2. *Community* 3. *YMCA*

## - **B. Impact Assessment Tools and Techniques**

- The first critical step is to improve how YMCAs capture impact through a focused approach with national movements. The task force concentrated on four basic tools and techniques to capture impact for internal and external audiences. These include both qualitative and quantitative examples of impact:
  - 1) *Testimonials* of individuals or groups impacted by YMCA programs and services
  - 2) *Surveys* of YMCA members and program participants
  - 3) *Case studies* of highly effective YMCA youth programs
  - 4) *External evaluations* of YMCA programs and institutional development initiatives
- The task force members believe that impact assessment should not be seen as complicated or academic. It is everyone's responsibility to improve how the YMCA captures and communicates impact.

## - **C. Impact Assessment Communications**

- The second important step is to improve how YMCAs communicate impact through websites, annual reports, newsletters, mass media, brochures, presentations, videos and face-to-face meetings (elevator speech). Significant investment and training is required to improve the quality and consistency of the YMCA's communication of mission impact. YMCAs also need to learn how to present and package information for distinct audiences. The team believes there is significant information available to communicate the global impact to diverse individual, foundation and corporate and governmental donors.

### **5.2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO REORGANISE THE EXISTING RESOURCES?**

Last year we got 20 000 dollars for consultancies and research for a needs assessment, a SWOT analysis of YMCA in Europe and where we are in Resource Mobilisation and then to create a strategy to enable us to improve the situation. This paper came as a result of this process and has been distributed to all National Movements last year. We have been given 40-50 000 dollars this year, the exact amount is till being negotiated.

We plan to hire a bookkeeper for two years in our office in Prague. In this way we can free the time and capacity of Radek Hlavsa, now working with book keeping for most of his time. He has been a part time student in Marketing and Communication and is now ready to devote his time to develop marketing and communication in YMCA Europe, so that we can see improvements in branding, marketing and internal and external communication. We are looking for new and interesting ways to present our annual report, we want to develop printed material to support fundraising campaigns and we want to change and improve our website and make it more interactive and regularly updated and actual.

We shall focus part of Vardan Hambardzumyan's time to assist me in leading and facilitating this process of improved communication and fundraising. In all my years in YMCA Europe fundraising has been a vital part of my job. All our projects, all our field operations and development of new YMCAs are totally based on fundraising. An increasing part of the core budget, the administration, is also depending on fundraising. Therefore I shall continue to spend a lot of time on fundraising, telling the story and making the ask. I learnt a lot of that from my predecessor, Dölf Weder. He called it to Sing Ave Maria.

Michal is a trained researcher and shall focus some of his time on research and impact assessment.

Field Staff shall contribute with photos and stories from the field.

All staff, all volunteers, need to see Resource Mobilisation as an integral part of our work, part of our shared responsibility, we need a new spirit of Resource Mobilisation to infuse this organisation with strength and innovation.

We shall build a pool of experts, some of them present among us here. In this way we make sure that the national Movements have full insight as well as ownership of the process and that we can access already existing resources and expertise.

We have identified 11 National Movements and challenged them to work with us in YE to look for new and innovative ways to fundraise together. And then I hope that a number of exiting pilot projects will follow. Projects where two or three National Movements can go together and help one another to search for funds in churches and governments and corporate companies and thereby not only increase income, but also increase experience and learning and sharing all of that with the rest of us. This is the way we can learn by doing and grow together.

### - **5.3. NEW INITIATIVES**

- Application to The Structural Fund in EU organised by Radek.
- Application to the UN Development fund for Balkan, especially focused on democracy building, assistance to Roma population and to women in rural areas in Albania
- A new project focused on Migration, this is a joint project between Africa Alliance and YMCA Europe, Senegal and Spain, and we are developing this just now.
- Negotiations for a continuation of the ICCO/EED based project in Caucasus

Behind these projects and figures and names you will find the Roma children in Shkoder who really need a hand to hold. Behind this you will find the teenagers from Russia and Georgia coming together with people from Armenia and Nagorno Karabagh to have fellowship despite all conflicts and borders. Migrants in Madrid and Barcelona are smiling through the figures and budgets. When you know too little about all this, which is the real results and the exciting development in our work, it is because we are not good enough to tell our story, and that is what we are going to change now!

## **6. INSPIRED TO SERVE!**

Friends! A lot of Grey Music today – but it is needed. This is a transformational process, and I am fascinated, because it changes me. All of a sudden the Grey Music turns into Blue Music of change and hope. I know it can be overwhelming, all these challenges, all these changes. In the middle of hard work with this process, I heard a Franciscan talking to a few of us gathered in Barcelona. He talked about incarnation, my favourite theological term. He said: You in the YMCA are not only an important part of the universal church – you are much more! You are the incarnated church, out there where young people need a hand to hold, out there where a drug addict needs a sister, where a displaced refugee needs a brother. You are there; you are not only talking about it.

We are the incarnated Word of God, inspired to serve, serve Real People in Real Life. We are sent out to do the work of God.

That is why we will never walk alone. That is why we are never ashamed of asking, asking for time, resources and money.

Jesus orders us to invest all what we have and all what we are in this life saving work. He asks us not to bury our talent. He orders us to be risk takers.

This process is giving me hope, bigger and brighter than ever. I hope that you share in this hope. This hope is from God, and he sets us free.

*So, Work like you don't need money.  
Love like you've never been hurt  
and Dance Like no one's watching.*