



Interview with Geethani Peries, President of the International Young Christian Worker



Question: *The slogan of the IC 2012 is: “Young Workers as Actors of Change”. What led you to choose this slogan?*



Geethani: Since the last council in 2008 major events and issues have been taking place in the general and young workers' reality around the world. The youth have been at the forefront and the focus of these issues either as actors, beneficiaries or affected people. Their actions in these events and issues are the testimony to the whole world that youth are involved, concerned and not indifferent to issues affecting them.

At the same time we are happy to identify that a lot of actions have been carried out by young workers inside our movements around the world. The focus of these actions is demanding Social Protection: Just work, Gender Equality and Quality Education for life and work. These actions are inspiring other young workers and promote change in the life of young people involved in the action. At the international level we have collected actions and this is the most powerful proof that the young workers participate, question the contradictions of the capitalistic system, and demand a new world. In this context we choose our slogan as “Young workers as Actors of change”

Question: *Was there any specific reason to choose Ghana to be the host of the IC?*

Geethani: Ghana is situated in the north western part of Africa. It is a peaceful country with a stable democracy. The economy of Ghana was listed as the World's Fastest Growing Economy in 2011 in the economic research led by Economy Watch. However, the economic benefits have not reached all sections of society. The unemployment rate is about 21% among the youth and it constitutes about 26 per cent of the entire population. Also, statistics indicate that about 250,000 young people enter the labour market annually. The formal sector is just able to engage less than 5,000 (2%), leaving about 98 per cent to survive in the informal sector or outrightly unemployed. It is therefore not a surprise that the issue of youth unemployment has been a thorn in the flesh of Ghana's government.

Young women in Ghana are even more vulnerable. They are given the second priority when it comes to education in the family. Most women are working as self-employed in order to support their family.

In this reality, YCW Ghana has been organizing the informal workers and the young women who are self-employed into YCW groups. YCW Ghana is taking initiatives to promote skills of young women workers and associations of informal workers.

In this context we believe that YCW Ghana will benefit from the exchanges and the XIII International Council by developing a clear vision of the actions with informal workers and self-employed young women and by defining concrete strategies and means to empower women in base groups. Together with all young workers in Ghana, they will raise their voices and become actors of change.

Question: *How many delegates do you expect? How many countries will participate?*

Geethani: We are expecting 70 delegates from 35 to 40 countries.

Question: *How are the preparations going on? Are there any difficulties or challenges?*

All National Movements are involved in the preparation, technically and politically. The International team provided the base documents as tools to have preparation in content level. National movements are using their own strategies and means to prepare for this. Technically, Ghana YCW is working hard with their young leaders to make this event happen. They are working with Governments on visa process organising 3 exchanges in 3 different places and the other logistical preparations also. We see Finance as a challenge to organise this big event. Not only the International team, but also all National movements need to work hard to overcome the financial difficulties and make this council happen!

Question: *Will the delegates get an opportunity to witness the reality of young workers in Ghana?*

Geethani: Of course all delegates will be part of the exchange. Delegates can visit the working and living place of Young workers in Ghana. They will have opportunity to be closer to the reality and experience their life. And there will be enough space to exchange the different realities and actions happening in their own movements.

Moreover, the day offs will be used by the delegates to experience the socio-cultural life of the young workers.

Question: *The IC 2012 is not your first IC – is it for you something like a routine or are you nevertheless excited?*

Geethani: Of course this is not my first International council. I was part of 2000 IC. That was my first and 2004 and 2008 I was able to participate with different responsibility; every 4 years this international council is being hosted on rotation between continents. 2006 Council will be held in Europe. It's most probably will be in Germany. That's an opportunity to hosting national Movement too. I'm so excited to participate in 2012 IC in Ghana. It's very important because as an international movement we come together to look back our way and to decide as a movement where to go in the future.

Question: *What do you expect from the IC?*

Geethani: I expect this council will reflect on the situation of the International movement today especially its spirituality, methodology in today's context.

I hope this council will analyse the situation of young workers in the current economic and financial crisis situation and come up with a concrete plan to strengthen the actions process that gives emphasis on the dignity of young workers around the world.

Question: What are the main topics/agenda of the IC 2012?

Geethani: The Council will have 3 exchanges in 3 different places in Ghana, a Public opening with street march, the discussion on Analysis and actions of young workers, Extension of the movement, coordination and Finance, International Plan of Action and Election of New International team

Question: Have you any wish or any message for the Young Christian Workers of Germany?

Geethani: I believe in the capacities of all the young workers. This XIII International Council is a very important event in our International Movement. We are not just YCW Germany. We are International. It's very important to bring out the International dimension of the movement. All activities we are holding in the movement need to bring up this aspect. Germany YCW is contributing well as a part of the International movement. I wish and believe German YCW will involve more young people to have discussions on the movement today in all levels and bring their action experiences to International council.

Thank you very much for your answers!!