

ANNUAL REPORT 20 24

WORLD YMCA: Secours Spéciaux Fund



Secours Spéciaux Fund
YMCA Emergency Retiree & Staff Fund



Message from our Committee Chair

Dear Friends,

It is an honour to serve as Chair of the Committee for the Secours Spéciaux Fund and to witness firsthand the profound impact of your compassion and generosity.

This past year, our committee has continued its careful stewardship of the Fund, ensuring that each request for support is met with dignity, confidentiality, and urgency. Behind every application is a story—a life of service, a moment of crisis, and, thanks to you, a response rooted in care and solidarity.

We are deeply aware that our work is made possible by a global community of donors who believe in standing by those who have given so much to the YMCA movement. Each contribution—no matter the size—sends a clear message: you are seen, you are valued, and you are not alone.

As we move forward, we remain committed to transparency, accountability, and responsiveness. We are continually reviewing our processes to ensure that support reaches those in greatest need as quickly and equitably as possible.

Thank you for your trust, your support, and your belief in the power of community. Together, we are upholding a legacy of care that defines the very heart of the YMCA.

With gratitude,

Philip Dwyer
Committee Chair



Secours Spéciaux Fund Committee Members

Phil Dwyer, Chair, United States

James Ekow Rhule, Ghana

John Haddock, Canada

Eckard Geisler, Germany

Bonnie Mairs, United States

John Naylor, Scotland

Guenter Ozdyk, Germany

Alicia Sanjuro, Uruguay

Kohei Yamada, Japan

About the Secours Spéciaux Committee

The Secours Spéciaux Committee plays a vital role in guiding the mission and impact of the Fund. Its purpose is threefold: to grow the Fund through partnerships and donor engagement; to oversee and recommend support for applications in line with established guidelines; and to promote awareness of the Fund among potential beneficiaries to ensure access and inclusion.

This volunteer committee, appointed by the Secretary General of the World YMCAs in coordination with Executive Committee officers, is composed of 7 to 9 members representing global YMCA areas, major contributing movements, and the World Fellowship of YMCA Retirees. Members serve four-year terms aligned with World Council meetings.

Together, the committee ensures that the Secours Spéciaux Fund remains a compassionate and effective resource for YMCA staff and retirees around the world.

History of the Fund

A LEGACY OF CARE

The Secours Spéciaux Fund was established in the 1950s in response to the closure of YMCAs in Eastern Europe under communist regimes, which left many dedicated staff and volunteers in crisis. The initiative began with Mrs. Anna Limbert, whose personal commitment to support affected YMCA members inspired broader organizational involvement.

Initially focused on Eastern Europe, the Fund expanded in 1983 to support those facing hardship in other parts of the world, and in 1990, it began assisting YMCA members affected by injustice and human rights violations. In 1991, the Fund's mission further grew to address the pressing issue of retirement insecurity among long-serving YMCA staff.

Over the decades, the Fund has been sustained by the generosity of YMCA retirees and supporters worldwide. In 1997, it was officially prioritized by the World Fellowship of YMCA Retirees (WFYR), with South Asia leading the first organized campaign.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Fund responded swiftly to the urgent needs of the YMCA community. Financial assistance was extended to nearly 100 retirees facing health, economic, and social challenges as a result of the crisis—offering comfort and stability during an extraordinarily difficult time.

Today, the Fund continues to provide vital support to retired YMCA staff and volunteers in countries across Africa, Asia, and Latin America—honoring their service with dignity, solidarity, and hope.



Financial Report

 **52,665**

Contributions to
the Fund

 **39,303**

Distributions from
Fund

50%

Increase in donations
in 2024 vs 2023

67%

Increase in distributions
in 2024 vs 2023

10

Beneficiaries

In 2024, beneficiaries of the Secours Spéciaux Fund came from across the globe, including Venezuela, Russia, Nigeria, Georgia, Poland, Honduras, Kenya, Peru, and Colombia—reflecting the truly international reach and impact of your support.



Real Stories, Real Impact

- ◀ A YMCA staff member in Georgia faced a life-threatening brain tumor that required immediate surgery abroad. With \$20,000 already raised by friends, family, and YMCA Europe, he was still \$5,000 short and running out of time. Within a week of applying to the Secours Fund, the remaining amount was granted—allowing him to undergo a successful emergency operation in Turkey.
- ◀ In Honduras, a dedicated staff member was critically injured in a severe car accident. Thanks to swift support from the Fund, emergency hospital bills were covered, playing a vital role in saving his life and aiding his recovery.
- ◀ After the death of a YMCA staff member in Kenya due to COVID-19, his widow received financial support from the Fund. This assistance ensured that their children could continue their education despite the devastating loss.
- ◀ *"Secours Spéciaux is a classic YMCA Program. It is a clear expression of "who we are" as it demonstrates our lifelong values of caring and respect. The inspiration of the origin of Secours Spéciaux lives on today as hundreds of retired Y people continue to voluntarily extend a hand to support a colleague in need."*

The YMCA is a world-wide movement that transcends borders and unifies us with purpose and impact. The majority of Canadian Y Alumni are active contributors to this worthy cause."

John Haddock
Committee Member, Canadian YMCA Alumni



Support. Share. Strengthen.

JOIN US IN SUSTAINING THE SECOURS SPÉCIAUX FUND.

► Support the Fund

For over 70 years, the Secours Spéciaux Fund has provided vital financial assistance to YMCA staff and retirees facing crisis, displacement, or unsecured retirement. This lifeline exists because of generous donors like you.

Your support ensures that no one who has dedicated their life to the YMCA is left alone in times of hardship. Every gift—large or small—makes a real difference in providing dignity, hope, and emergency relief.

Ways to Give:

- Through your National YMCA Movement
- Via your local YMCA Retiree or Alumni Association
- Online at www.ymca.int

BE THE BRIDGE: SHARE THE FUND WITH THOSE IN NEED

Many YMCA staff and retirees around the world still do not know that this support exists. You can help change that. If you know a colleague, friend, or retiree who is experiencing hardship due to illness, conflict, displacement, or lack of retirement security, please encourage them to reach out. The Fund is here to help—with respect, confidentiality, and compassion.

For information around eligibility or to apply, visit www.ymca.int or contact your National Movement or Retiree Association.

Let's ensure that every YMCA colleague knows they are not alone. By giving and sharing, you strengthen our global movement.



Message from our Secretary General

Dear Friends,

Each year, as we reflect on the impact of the Secours Spéciaux Fund, we are reminded of the bonds that unite our global YMCA family, bonds built on compassion, solidarity, and shared purpose.

This fund exists because of you. Your generosity and commitment have provided a vital lifeline to our YMCA staff and retirees—many of whom have dedicated their lives to serving others, often in the most challenging of circumstances. Thanks to your support, they are not forgotten. They are not alone.

In many countries, YMCA staff members work for decades with no access to pensions, retirement benefits, or even emergency funds in times of crisis. When illness strikes, when disaster hits, or when they reach the end of their working years, there is often nowhere to turn. Your support has stepped into that gap—offering dignity, stability, and hope.

Whether facing medical emergencies, displacement due to conflict or disaster, or the challenges of aging without a safety net, our colleagues know they are part of a global movement that cares deeply for them.

This is the true spirit of the YMCA in action—lifting each other up in times of need, and showing that even in the most difficult moments, no one is ever alone.

With heartfelt gratitude,

Carlos Sanvee
Secretary General



World YMCA Highlights from 2024

- **Accelerating impact:** Held the Vision 2030 Accelerator Summit in Mombasa, Kenya, with 430 delegates from over 60 countries and 40 global and regional partners.
- Chaired the **Global Youth Mobilization**, supporting youth-led projects with grants, including USD 140,000 for 7 projects. Also supported 7 young YMCA leaders from 6 countries.
- **Taking the global stage:** Participated in the UN General Assembly, launched the UN Funders Collective, co-chaired the Commission of the Business Council for Tackling Inequality, and attended COP29 in Baku.
- **Strengthening global partnerships:** Partnered with organizations like HP, Accenture, Macquarie Group Foundation, Deloitte, and Ernst & Young, receiving financial, pro bono, and equipment support.
- **Launching two Vision 2030 Pillars:** Developed Meaningful Work Global Standards based on a survey of 10,000 young people worldwide and prepared a draft manual for Sustainable Planet goals.
- **Exploring our 21st Century Christian identity:** Held three pilot meetings with YMCA leaders and young people, planning for a global consultation in 2025 and a Resolution at World Council in Toronto 2026.
- Graduated 100 members of Cohort 5 of the **YMCA Change Agent** program and presented the first YMCA Impact Awards for transformative projects.
- **Keeping the Movement connected:** Hosted 6 meetings of YMCA National General Secretaries and 1 National Board Chairs Meeting. World YMCA Officers, Secretary General, and staff visited about 15 YMCAs worldwide.
- **Providing emergency and moral support:** Supported refugees in Ukraine and neighbors, YMCA Gaza colleagues, launched appeals for YMCA Lebanon, and YMCA Rio Grande Do Sol and YMCA Valencia.



World YMCA
Chemin de Mouille-Galand 1
1214 Vernier Geneva - Switzerland
+41-22-849 51 00
office@ymca.int
www.ymca.int

April 2025