

cross the lines

franchir les lignes
 cruzar las fronteras

29 September/December 2006

Ambushes, rice fields and peace

It didn't look like a nonviolence training. The truck carrying 20 refugees under the hot Thai sun was being ambushed. A masked man threatened the driver with a knife, while his accomplice dragged a peacekeeper into the rice field.

It was all part of a half-day simulation, designed and role played by participants in the Nonviolent Peaceforce's (NP) first Training of Trainers. The training took place 9 to 19 July 2006 in the village of Ban Mai, Thailand. "This will be a historic landmark for peace teams," said NP trainer David Grant, opening the event. The goal was to build up an international pool of qualified conflict transformation trainers in order for NP "to train hundreds of field team members for possible large scale peace team deployments in the next several years".

Nonviolent Peaceforce is a federation of over 90 member organizations from around the world. In partnership with local groups, unarmed NP field team members apply proven strategies to protect human rights, deter violence, and help create space for local peacemakers to carry out their work. The NP's mission is to build a trained, international civilian peace force committed to third-party nonviolent intervention. With field team members now in Sri Lanka, NP will soon send team members to the Philippines.

Some 23 participants, all experienced trainers in their own right, were selected for the NP Training of Trainers from around the world, including Argentina, Australia, Guinea Bissau, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Romania the UK, Uruguay and the USA. Several trainers active with the Women Peacemakers Program were invited, including Netsai Mushonga (Zimbabwe), Kabale Mukunto (Zambia) and Shelley Anderson (Netherlands).

What you can say yes to

The four co-facilitators Winnie Romeril (of Peace Brigades International, USA), Baht Latumbo (Philippines), Ouyporn Khuankaew (Thailand) and David Grant (USA) used a highly participatory methodology during the training, which focused on developing four competency areas. There were small group discussions and role plays, presentations on deterrence theory and games. During the first week individual



Photo: S. Anderson

Nonviolent Peaceforce trainers from Italy, Zimbabwe, the USA and South Africa take a break from training to help build a mud house.

participants were called upon to develop and conduct exercises on the daily theme; later, participants had to work in teams to develop sessions on topics such as gender, power and identity. One very powerful learning tool was the above mentioned simulation, developed by a team of participants. The scenario involved a group of six NP team members trying to move 40 refugees (played by 40 of the local Thai villagers) to a Red Cross camp through a cordon of hostile military checkpoints, spies, unfriendly government officials and rebels—all played by participants and co-facilitators.

Baht Latumbo said during the debriefing afterwards that NP field team members, when asked after their trainings what they remember the most, usually cite the day-long simulation. Simulations help give team members a taste of the confusion and fear that is often the reality in the field. During the Training of Trainers, participants appreciated the presence of Oloo Otieno (Kenya), an NP field team member currently working in Sri Lanka. Otieno was able to provide practical details of how NP training he had undergone had prepared him for his work on the ground with local Sri Lankan peacemakers.

Tensions within the team, and not just between the NP team and local actors on all sides of the conflict, had to be dealt with, he said. Gender was one such issue, as female team members in Sri Lanka complained of being underutilized, and of pressure to be more 'heroic' (i.e., to be more willing to put themselves into physical danger). Several participants during the Training of Trainers were also dissatisfied with

how gender was—or was not—taught, and proposed that a gender task force be formed within NP. Several very practical recommendations came out of the gender sessions which NP staff present said they would take back to the leadership.

The Nonviolent Peaceforce, said a co-facilitator, is what you can say yes to when you say no to war. Saying yes to peace involves a commitment to building and honing training for peace. NP's first Training of Trainers highlighted the need for a gender perspective in training—and for a continuing exploration and development of unarmed peacekeeping. In a time when peacekeeping in many eyes is synonymous with military peacekeeping, the Nonviolent Peaceforce's vision is both pioneering and essential.

For more information on the Nonviolent Peaceforce see www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org. A 12-minute video/DVD, "The Nonviolent Peaceforce," is now available in English, depicting NP's work and vision. Contact: the Nonviolent Peaceforce USA, 425 Oak Grove Street, Minneapolis MN 55403, US. Tel. +1 612 871 0005; fax +1 612 871 0006; email: info@nonviolentpeaceforce.org.

Nonviolent Peaceforce will hold a training for field team members and for reserve members (members who will be available for future team work) November 15 to December 9, in Nairobi, Kenya. Applicants will be considered for teams in Sri Lanka and the Philippines, and for future teams. Applicants must be at least 21 years old, fluent in English, be willing to deploy for a minimum of 18 months, and have knowledge and skills in conflict transformation or peacekeeping. Contact the Peaceworkers register (www.peaceworkers.org.uk) and send an email to: gbettencourt@nonviolentpeaceforce.org to confirm your interest.

To learn and to share: the WPP Training of Trainers

"As trainers, if we haven't learned a lot, we've failed," said the facilitator to the 13 women listening attentively.



Photo: S. Anderson

Trainers from 10 different countries (Burundi, Israel, Kosovo/a, Mozambique, Pakistan, Palestine, Romania, Sudan, Sweden and Thailand) participated in this year's WPP Training of Trainers.

There was little chance of this group of experienced activists failing to learn. They had traveled from Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East precisely to share their experiences and to learn more about how women are building peace in other countries. The event was the Women Peacemakers Program's annual Training of Trainers, held 12 to 24 June, in the Netherlands. The co-facilitator speaking was Dr. Diana Francis (UK), who led the group in an intensive week-long exploration of gender-sensitive active nonviolence.

An opening exercise on sharing hopes and fears for the training revealed some surprising commonalities. While the context the women worked in varied a great deal, all the participants identified discrimination against women as a serious obstacle to peace. The two activists from Pakistan summed up many of the women's hopes in desiring "a change in how men think about women. We want a just society where women are treated fairly and are free from traditions that discriminate against women." Several participants spoke about a fear of losing faith in nonviolent struggle. "The media does not listen to you unless there is violence," complained one participant. One common concern was how to implement what is learned at the training back home.

One highlight of the first week involved an exercise of designing a training participants will give back home. Participants, working in pairs, then presented their design for constructive criticism. The trainings, which will serve as a basis for a gender-sensitive nonviolence training participants must conduct in their own country, deal with many critical issues. There were trainings on raising awareness of 1325 in Burundi; on enhancing lobbying and advocacy skills for women in Mozambique; on developing a gender analysis of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; and on increasing gender sensitivity among peace leaders in Sweden.

The second week began with sessions on specific skills and conceptual tools. There were sessions on United Nations Resolution 1325; on how to develop indicators to best measure the effectiveness of one's peace work; on fundraising; negotiation; and how to use the media. One eye-opening workshop was conducted by Dr. Jens van Tricht (the Netherlands), on masculinity. The session challenged the assumption that gender only involves women, and explored the role concepts of masculinity play in peace building. Van Tricht urged the participants to approach men with "critical compassion".

The 13 activists will return next year for a two-week follow-up training, to share their experiences as trainers and, as one participant said, "to continue the learning."

Buddhism and Social Change

The space was a thatched hut overlooking a rice field. There were times of absolute silence and other times of excited discussion, of meditation and classes in Thai cooking and massage. Fifteen women had come together in a quiet village in northern Thailand from India, the Philippines, Sri Lanka,



Photo: S. Anderson

Thailand's first female monk, Ven. Dhammananda, speaks to participants about the struggle for women's equality within Buddhism.

Thailand and the USA to learn about two subjects that often are not linked: Buddhism and social change.

It was the course "Allies for Social Change: Buddhism and Peacebuilding", held July 24 to August 2, in Ban Mai, Thailand. The goal of the course, according to International Women's Partnership for Peace and Justice (IWP) organizers Ouyporn Khuankaew and Ginger Norwood, was to "focus on bringing a Buddhist framework to cultivating inner peace while engaging in social action in our communities and the world."

The participants, who included a lawyer, a farmer, a trade union organizer, students and retirees, came from different religious traditions, Christianity and Hinduism among them. Yet there was agreement that peace within brought a stability and clarity that greatly improved their work for social change. The connection between inner peace and peace in the world was explored through many small group discussions. Other important topics included an introduction to Buddhist teachings; the development of a Buddhist and feminist analysis to contemporary social issues; participatory exercises on understanding structural violence, power, privilege and social action; and building peace within through daily mindfulness practice.

The contradictions that many women of faith experience were not ignored. While messages of liberation and equality are inherent in most spiritual traditions, discrimination against women is also common. Deconstructing such harmful messages and analyzing structural violence were tackled during different exercises.

"This was so inspiring," said one participant after the course. "I learned more than I thought I would. I have much more hope now. Activists need more courses like this."

International Women's Partnership for Peace and Justice, PO Box 3, Mae Rim Post Office, Mae Rim, Chiang Mai, Thailand 50103. Tel. +66 53 376 103. Web: www.womenforpeaceandjustice.org; email: info@womenforpeaceandjustice.org.

News from WPP

The WPP supports nonviolence trainings for women peace activists around the world by providing financial grants and training materials, and by linking groups to experienced trainers. This year grants were awarded to the Women and Children's Rights Protection Project of the Cambodian Women Peacemakers in Phnom Penh, for two workshops and monitoring and evaluation; to Women's Action of Rijeka, in Croatia, for a training on women and a culture of peace; and to Save Somali Women and Children, Somalia, for a leadership training as part of their work on Women at the Negotiating Table.

Interested in peace work?

The WPP offers an annual internship to two young women through its International Orientation Program. The goal of the internship is to help young women improve their skills as peace activists. The internship is approximately six weeks long at the IFOR international secretariat in the Netherlands. The costs of international travel, food, accommodation costs, insurance and visa are covered by the WPP. Requirements include a prior commitment to peace issues and/or gender issues; 30 years of age or younger; and adequate English-speaking skills. The deadline to apply for 2007 is 1 November, 2006. Contact WPP Education Officer Janne Poort-van Eeden at j.vaneeden@ifor.org for more information.

Welcome to WPP Interns!



Suheir Abu Mohor (left, from Palestine) and Ina Curic (right, from Romania) were this year's WPP interns, and enthusiastic participants in the WPP's Training of Trainers. Photo: S. Anderson

In April Khaldoun Frijat was an intern with the WPP. Khaldoun, from Palestine, did his internship as part of his study with the Conflict Transformation Forum (ForumZFD) in Bonn, Germany. "I learned a lot at the WPP, and appreciate the opportunity I was given," he said.

In May Ina Curic (Romania) and Suheir Abu Mohor (Palestine) joined the WPP's annual International Orientation. They worked at the WPP's office for a month, learning more on international peace work and producing a newsletter on youth and peace. "For the first time I was in an environment where gender sensitivity was part of the everyday language and awareness rather than a constant struggle as I was used to. This was very inspiring and invigorating," said Ina.

WPP at European Parliament

The Women Peacemakers Program was the only civil society organization invited to speak at the European Parliament Panel Discussion on Women for Peace, held 3 May, in Brussels. WPP was represented by Amy Shifflette, former IFOR Communications Officer. Some 80 people participated. Amy joined MEP Veronique de Keyser (Belgium) and researcher Dr. Elena Diez Jorge. De Keyser emphasized the importance of adequately training peacekeeping forces before deployment to conflict areas. De Keyser also spoke about UN SC Resolution 1325 and the current lack of implementation from the grassroots up to national levels. Diez Jorge stressed that women contribute to a culture of peace in part due to their gender roles—that women are the ‘friendly’ face of power and often initiate peace talks.

Shifflette introduced the work of the WPP, stressing that practical training in peacemaking is a prerequisite in building peace. The WPP’s training program contributes to this. She also gave specific recommendations to policy makers about the need to increase support (financial and otherwise) for women’s organizations.

Calendar

October 26-29: International conference “Engaging the Other: The Power of Compassion”, Kalamazoo, Michigan USA. Contact: Common Bond Institute, 12170 S. Pine Ayr Drive, Climax, Michigan 49034, USA. Tel/Fax: +1 269 665 9393. Email: SOLweean@aol.com. Web: www.cbiworld.org

November 6-10: Annual interfaith gathering Bearing Witness Retreat at Auschwitz-Birkenau, Poland. Web: www.zenpeacemakers.org

November 9-11: AWID international conference “Money and Women’s Movements”, Oaxaca, Mexico. Contact: Association for Women’s Rights in Development (AWID), Zamora 169, Casa 2 Colonia Condesa, CP 06140, Mexico DF, MEXICO. Email: zcanto@awid.org Fax: + 5255 5212 0626. Web: www.awid.org

November 13-17: “Transforming the Legacies of Conflict, War and Genocide through Dialogue” conference, Passionist Center, Riverdale, NY, USA. Web: www.one-by-one.org

November 25-December 10: 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence. This year’s theme is “Advance Human Rights—end Violence Against Women”. For action kit and more information: Center for Women’s Global Leadership, Rutgers University, 160 Ryders Lane, New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8555 USA. Tel. +1 732 932 8782. Fax: +1 732 932 1180. Email: cwgl@igc.org Web: www.cwgl.rutgers.edu

January 14-21, 2007: International School on Disarmament and Research on Conflicts 20th winter course “Terrorism, Counterterrorism and Human Rights”, Andalo (Trento), Italy. Web: www.isodarco.it. Email: isodarco@roma2.infn.it. Tel. +39 06 725 94560/1

Cross the Lines is produced three times a year in English, French, Spanish, Russian, Dutch and Arabic. A German edition is available on line. A contribution of EURO 10, GBP 5 or USD 10 will help us spread the news about women’s initiatives for peace among groups and individuals unable to pay. Cheques may be made out to ‘IFOR / Women Peacemakers Program’ in British pounds (drawn on a British bank) or in US dollars (drawn on a US bank). Payment may also be made by VISA or Mastercard, or by transfer of Euros to IFOR’s Postbank account 2704182 (in the name of ‘Stichting IFOR’).

For more information about IFOR’s Women Peacemakers Program, contact editor Shelley Anderson, IFOR, WPP (address below; email: s.anderson@ifor.org)

The Women Peacemakers Program is an initiative of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR). Since 1919, IFOR has pioneered spiritually-based active nonviolence. For more information about the WPP or for the IFOR branch in your country, please contact the IFOR international secretariat.

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ISSN: 1388-1345

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More information about the WPP can be found on the WPP website: www.ifor.org/WPP.

November 2007: 3rd Feminist advocacy Training Program, Venue to be announced. Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), web: www.dawnnet.org

Imaging Ourselves

The International Museum of Women (IMOW), a WPP partner, is extending its innovative Imaging Ourselves project for one more year. In November and December 2006 there will be an online discussion on dialogue and conflict. Every two months audio, films, images and texts from young women will be accepted for publication and discussion on topics such as War and Peace; Image and Identity; and Work and Office. A special discussion for young men will also be organized, asking what defines their generation: fatherhood, relationships, culture? *Deadline for submissions is 1 December. IMOW, PO Box 190038, San Francisco, CA, USA 94119-0038. Email: info@imow.org. Web: www.imow.org*