



# cross the lines

franchir les lignes  
cruzar las fronteras

# 31 May/August 2007

## Young Women Needed to Transform Society

*“Once again I wondered why the adult peace movement does not seize the opportunity to make use of the energy that young people have. They have so much liveliness, power, creativity and fun to share, but are mostly not even thought of.”*

Nina Perkowski, an IFOR volunteer, was one of the young women in the WPP delegation to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) meeting in New York. She made the remark above after having visited a reception for girls there. The fifty-first session of the CSW took place from 26 February to 9 March 2007. In accordance with its multi-year programme of work for 2007-2009, the Commission considered *‘The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child’* as its priority theme. Because of this theme, WPP decided to send a delegation with young girls to New York in order to strengthen the voice of youth at the CSW and to introduce and demystify the UN system to the young activists. Shelley Anderson escorted two girls on their trip to New York: Nelly Njoki, activist with Family Mediation and Education Centre (FAMEC) from Kenia and Nina Perkowski, IFOR volunteer for ASF (Aktion Sühnezeichen Friedensdienste / Action Reconciliation Service for Peace) from Germany.

The agreed conclusions of the 51st session of the Commission on the Status of Women are to be found under:  
[http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw51/pdfs/CSW51\\_agreed%20conclusions\\_ADVANCE%20UNEDITED%20VERSION.pdf](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw51/pdfs/CSW51_agreed%20conclusions_ADVANCE%20UNEDITED%20VERSION.pdf)

## From Nina’s Travel Log

*February 27*

My first day at the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is over. I’m totally exhausted. After the registration, we attended a workshop for girls offered by the International Women’s Tribune Center (IWTC) - entertaining and enjoyable. We then watched a play by young US scholars. They centered the unreal ideal of beauty prevailing amongst youth, and powerfully conveyed their message ‘no matter what, you *are* beautiful!’ I found their performance impressive and went on to a workshop on a new resource website for women politicians. Later, I roamed through the UN bookshop. We also attended the linkage caucus where all regional caucuses came together to decide on strategies to influence the CSW. I could hardly follow the conversation meant for insiders. Terms like “G77”, “UNDP”, or “the One UN” flew through the room - I had never heard them

*Nelly Njoki and Nina Petrowski at the UN*

before. I realized that there were no youth attending the caucus. Where decisions were made, no girls were seen or heard...

*February 28*

This morning, we had a meeting with Jo Becker from Human Rights Watch in the Empire State Building. For the first time, we learned a bit about lobbying at the UN - what exactly it meant and how one could do it. After having left, we prepared for our workshop ‘Not Only Victims: Girls as Social Change Agents’ which we would give at 2 pm in the Church Centre.

As a start for the workshop, everybody had to get up and stand in a line according to their age - it became obvious that the largest part was over 40 years of age. Nelly and I demonstrated how girls often face a lack of support when they first want to get involved in NGO work. We then shared our stories of activism and talked about the challenges we had faced within the peace movement.

The participants could then talk about their experiences, an opportunity which was appreciated and seized. We had lively discussions while Shelley was writing down the suggestions people had on how to support girls’ activism. As a conclusion, Nelly and I gave our recommendations. After the workshop, young girls told us that they could identify with our struggles; that they felt inspired and strengthened. Also older people came to thank us and express their support and understanding.

It was a great feeling to have that task over and done, especially since it went fairly well. In the evening, we met a young participant from the workshop to discuss what we had talked about. The idea of developing a mentorship program within IFOR crossed my mind, and I still can’t get it out of my head...



### March 1

We went to a workshop on violence held by young women which, unfortunately, didn't turn out to be very impressive. We left early and Nelly and I attended a reception for girls by the IWTC. There, the goal was to bring the girls attending the CSW together, having them talk and interact. It was amazing how different the atmosphere was: the girls were dancing, cheering, laughing and having a wonderful time. Once again I wondered why the adult peace movement does not seize the opportunity to make use of the energy that young people have. They have so much liveliness, power, creativity and fun to share, but are mostly not even thought of.

### Recommendations

from the WPP workshop at the CSW 'Not Only Victims: Girls as Social Change Agents':

- NGOs must provide spaces for girls to grow
- NGOs and activists must listen to girls
- Mentorships where older and younger activists can talk to each other are important
- Parenting needs to promote children's self-confidence
- More support is needed for reintegration into the community for survivors of sexual violence during conflict
- More attention needs to be paid to rural young women
- Girls' decision-making must be encouraged and respected
- Girls' leadership must be encouraged
- Support must be given to girls in claiming their rights and space
- Girls should be invited to conferences—and funds should be raised for this
- Peace NGOs need more internships
- Leadership needs to be reinvented
- Older activists must be role models and mentor younger women
- Strategic networks and alliances for youth need to be promoted.

### March 5

Nelly and I went to a caucus on fundraising for gender equality. People there mainly focused on the coordination of the 52nd CSW in 2008... For us, this was difficult to follow and we decided to leave. We used the time to enter the official session of the CSW for the first time.

We watched the countries make corrections in a document they would agree upon before the end of the CSW. We watched the scenario for a while; it was interesting to see which countries were active, and how Germany represented the European Union – what a weight it gave their comments! Then, we left to attend the next workshop on sexual violence against women in conflict. The panelists talked about the difficulties to punish soldiers for sexual crimes— usually, the responsibility was with the troop contributing country, not with the ICC, and perpetrators were often not made accountable at all. Eve Ensler, author of the "Vagina Monologues", read a strong passage about crimes committed against women in conflict. Her words really touched me, and I left the room with a somewhat uneasy feeling, preoccupied with thoughts.

I nevertheless decided to attend the Girls Caucus – a big disappointment. The girls present there were meek and thankful that they got to see the UN. Of course it was a great opportunity for them to attend the meeting, but they didn't see that they had also something to offer – especially if the topic was 'violence against girls'! They didn't think about telling the adults how *they* perceived the violence, or the struggle against it, or the peace movement...

The evening I spent at the hotel, pondering about the workshops I had attended.

### March 6

Today, the General Assembly came together. Even Ban Ki-moon was there to speak about violence against women. It was impressive to see the General Assembly Room – it conveyed a feeling of dignity, and importance by itself. Unfortunately, it was an informal meeting and there was very little participation – less than a quarter of the seats was taken. Soon, also the Secretary General left the meeting... The discourses that followed turned out to be rather tiring, and after we had watched the scenario for a while, Nelly and I decided to leave. We decided to attend another workshop on young girls and coercive sex in Africa. A lady from the Guttmacher Institute presented the results of a study conducted in four African countries. What they had found was not astonishing; I had already figured that many girls had sex unwillingly. What might have been the results if the study had been done in Germany? – I suppose some figures would have been similar. It struck me that the CSW seemed to focus on Africa and Asia *only*, European women were not very present. Those who were at the conference were often working on African women's issues. Is emancipation in Europe over and done? Many tend to believe that... I was disappointed when I saw this attitude reflected in the CSW – I had expected to find people who thought differently. Women from Africa and South East Asia were fighting so passionately for their rights! My compatriots were invisible...

### March 7

It is odd to be back to everyday life in Alkmaar now. After my arrival I met other youth. During the CSW, I felt like this world could be changed, I was strengthened by the activists' passion and perseverance. Now I'm back amongst young people whose thoughts are *not* primarily circulating around the improvement



Workshop entitled 'Echoes of Eve', focusing on 'no matter what, you are beautiful!'

of the world. I had to remember that the normal world is different from the NGO one I visited in New York...

However, I still believe that we should do everything to work for a better future. The UN might not always work effectively, it might not always make the right decisions, but it *can* be used to bring great changes about. It's in the hands of everybody, and I am definitely not going to miss this chance...

## 2007 CSW: A Message of Hope

by Nelly Njoki

When I was growing up the unspoken message was "children are there to be seen and not to be heard". Times have changed, I thought to myself; indeed, things are looking better for children all over the world. The place was a room filled with girls, women young and old and a few men, the story was the struggles of girls from different spheres of life and race. Each girl representing their culture had a story of stereotypes, inferiority and the struggles of growing up as a girl but with that too, came the message of hope and addressing the wrongs. It was captivating; eye opening and a stark reality of the world girls live in, it did beg a question, how many girls are aware of how the environment they are living in is shaping them? That was the theme of this year's Commission on the Status of Women: The elimination of all forms of discrimination against the girl child, running from 26<sup>th</sup> February- 9<sup>th</sup> March 2007, New York

The theme could not be more timely; girls from all walks of life had stories to tell from harmful cultural practices, e.g. female genital mutilation, child marriages and honour crimes to trafficking, violence against girls, HIV/AIDS and children in conflict. The problems were perturbing and drove many listeners to tears. The forum provided an opportunity and safe space for girls and women to share their challenges and success stories, the struggles did not seem too much to bear when they are shared. They engaged in networking, building alliances and gathering resources among the diverse communities all in an effort to bring change within our individual communities.

With the awareness came the need to identify the interventions necessary to change the situation. It was apparent that the girls knew what was needed. It was time to legislate on issues affecting the girl child. Tough penalties were required to end discrimination against the girl child. One girl from Democratic Republic of Congo opined that "there is need for a working legal framework to protect girls, a supportive environment and good will from the government"

The forum also highlighted the accomplishment of girls and young women making a difference as social change agents. They provided beacons of hope from girls and young women who are challenging the status society has put them into, girls saying no to harmful cultural practices, rising against the odds and supporting each other. Within every person lies an activist, said one participant and we only need to nurture that activist. We however, must also be prepared to pay the price for change.

It is evident that we must walk the talk, as individuals we must not give up on the struggle to eliminate violence against girls by creating awareness and providing support and mentorship to girls. We must also hold our governments accountable to

the promises they make on such international forums for implementation at the national levels. For instance in Kenya, one of the efforts in support of the theme was the formation of a multisectoral task force to look into implementation of the Sexual Offence Act 2006. The taskforce was formed in April 2007 and will create awareness on sexual violence/exploitation issues affecting girls and empower the judiciary in implementing it. The civil society is actively engaged in promoting girl child rights which criminalize cultural practices such as female genital mutilation and child marriages. A lot is yet to be done but there are strides to the right direction.

Most importantly, girls have to realize that change will not be offered to them if they do not take responsibility and action for themselves. Empowering today's girl is empowering tomorrow's woman and consequently empowering a society and that was the theme of the CSW, it is time for girls to be seen, heard and supported.

## News

### Peace Awards

The American branch of IFOR, FOR/USA has recently closed the call for candidates for its two annual awards, the Pfeffer Peace Prize and the Martin Luther King award. Annually, the Fellowship of Reconciliation awards two peace prizes to individuals whose commitment to peace, justice and reconciliation is recognized as a life-long commitment. The awardees receive a cash prize and a commemorative scroll.

**The International Pfeffer Peace Prize** was established in 1989 by Leo and Freda Pfeffer to particularly honor those around the world working for peace with justice. **The Martin Luther King, Jr. Award** was established by FOR/USA in 1979 to recognize unheralded persons or groups working in the United States in the tradition of Martin Luther King, Jr. FOR/USA, 521 N. Broadway Nyack, New York 10960; Phone: 845-358-4601 email: for@forusa.org  
[www.forusa.org/programs/pfefferprize.html](http://www.forusa.org/programs/pfefferprize.html)

### Youth Internships

The United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY Peacebuilders) offer young people an opportunity to have work experience in the field of peace-building, join an enthusiastic international team, learn new skills and be in contact with youth and organizations from around the world. The work is mainly in the areas of peace-building, conflict transformation, youth advocacy, peace education and human rights. Interns define together with their supervisor and the Project Coordinator of UNOY Peacebuilders a series of learning objectives which do not only focus on knowledge and skills, but also encourage them to reflect on their attitudes as part of their personal and professional growth. The internships are unpaid, simple lunch and work related travel expenses within The Netherlands will be reimbursed. Also volunteers receive in house training and are fully part of the team in the office. Volunteers will be involved in short term projects if and when available. Important notice: at this moment only internships to legal residents or citizens of the European Union can be offered. . UNOY Peacebuilders Ms. Marthe Hesselmans; Javastraat 58, 2585 AR The Hague, Netherlands; Tel ++31-703-647799, Fax ++31-703-622633, E-mail: [coordinator@unoy.org](mailto:coordinator@unoy.org) Website: [www.unoy.org](http://www.unoy.org)

## Resources

**The May 24 International Women's Day for Peace and Disarmament action pack** for 2007 is out. This year's theme is "Girls change the world". With articles about Girl Soldiers and their children; Girls making change in Africa; Young Women have the Courage to resist; Peace building for Youth; Challenges for Iranian Girls; Training Girls as leaders; Girls build peace in Cambodia, and several more issues. As usual, the action pack contains an elaborated International Directory of Women's Peace Groups all over the world. The May 24 action pack is made in cooperation with the International Peace Bureau. For a copy, contact the WPP address.

### Global Report on Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict

The Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) is preparing a Global Report on Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict. The first part of the Report has been completed: country profiles that bring together data on sexual violence in conflict. We hope that you might review those countries of which you have particular knowledge, and share these drafts within your networks and organizations for others to provide input. Contact for country profiles for Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe & the Middle East: Megan Bastick, Special Programmes Coordinator – DCAF [m.bastick@dcaf.ch](mailto:m.bastick@dcaf.ch) The Introduction to the Report is also available upon request to DCAF. Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, Rue de Chantepoulet 11, CH-1211 Geneva; Tel : +41 (0) 22 741 77 34

## Calendar

### June 11-15: Training: Conflict Resolution

The Annual INCORE Summer School is an intensive week of discussion, reflection, learning and networking, facilitated by leading academics and practitioners. The courses reflect the state of the art in conflict resolution thinking and practice, bringing people involved in conflict management together to enhance their practice. This year three courses are offered: The Management of Peace Processes; Evaluation and Impact Assessment of Peacebuilding Programmes; Reconciliation For more information, visit:

[www.incore.ulster.ac.uk/courses/ss/ss.html](http://www.incore.ulster.ac.uk/courses/ss/ss.html)

**June 24-30:** Training on Making Governance Gender Responsive (MGGR). MGGR is a generic course that can be adapted and modified to suit the needs of the different countries in Asia-Pacific. The initial MGGR Training module was developed by CAPWIP with the funding support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) through its Asia-Pacific Gender Equality Network (APGEN) and the Regional Governance Programme for Asia and the Pacific (UNDP-PARAGON). Center for Asia-Pacific Women in Politics or CAPWIP Institute for Gender, Governance & Leadership (CIGGL); Hostelling International Manila 4227-4229 Tomas Claudio Street Baclaran, Parañaque City, Metro Manila, Philippines Tel. (632) 8516934; Tele Fax:(632) 8522112; Mobile +639189403711 E-mail: [trainings@capwip.org](mailto:trainings@capwip.org); [capwip.trainings@gmail.com](mailto:capwip.trainings@gmail.com) Web: [www.capwip.org](http://www.capwip.org) [www.onlinewomeninpolitics.org](http://www.onlinewomeninpolitics.org)

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, CPB 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](mailto:s.anderson@ifor.org))

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

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**July 10-15:** International Women's Peace Conference  
The purpose of the conference is to empower peacemakers by teaching peace skills, such as mediation, negotiation and communication.

Delegates will meet and strategize with Nobel Peace Laureates, elected officials, and grass roots organizers from other countries, faiths, philosophies, and backgrounds. Daily keynote addresses by world-renowned peacemakers and workshops, providing practical, applicable peacemaking skills, will be provided at the conference. For more information, visit: [www.womenspeaceconference.org](http://www.womenspeaceconference.org)

**August 2007.** Gender and militarism; New Profile/WRI seminar, Israel. The Seminar will bring together activists and academics from all over the world to study the mutual connections between militarism and gender. The seminar is organised by War Resisters' International together with the Israeli feminist antimilitarist movement New Profile. See: [www.incore.ulster.ac.uk/courses/ss/ss.html](http://www.incore.ulster.ac.uk/courses/ss/ss.html)