



This is “Cross the Lines”, number 26 September/December 2005, the newsletter of the Women Peacemakers Program.

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We Need to Move!”: Asia Gender and Nonviolence Training

The objects on the small table in the middle of the circle included business cards, a hair tie, brochures and a tissue. It was all wrapped in a shining web of blue, green and red ribbons.

Each object had been contributed by one of the 20 female and male participants and represented something they wanted to share in the next few days, and something they wanted to take back home with them. The tissue was contributed ‘because it can absorb a lot’. A small jar of medicinal ointment was ‘Asian medicine to heal the suffering of gender inequality.’

And what did they want to take back after the training? “I want to learn more about gender.” “I’m eager to learn new experiences about how to teach indigenous women to confront gender violence.” “I want a network.” were some of the responses.

It was the opening exercise for the WPP Asian regional training on gender and nonviolence, organized 31 October to 6 November, 2004, at the WE-Train center near Bangkok, Thailand. Co-trainers Ouyporn Khuankaew (Thailand) and Stella Tamang (Nepal) helped the participants, who came from nine different Asian countries, deepen their understanding of gender and its role in building peace.

While participants worked in different areas (such as legal advocacy for women in Pakistan; nonviolent communication and reconciliation in Sri Lanka; youth and peace issues in India and Nepal; and refugee rights in Bhutan), there was consensus that gender inequality was an obstacle to both peace and development. Looking at tradition and identity were critical for any Asian analysis of gender, participants concluded. Through participatory exercises and lively small group discussions concepts such as socialization, peace building, power and privilege were explored.

During the last day the group examined the question of how they would integrate gender into their peace work upon their return home. Activists from Sri Lanka decided to develop a training module on gender and nonviolence, while two Indian participants decided to hold a workshop on gender and peace at Aligarh Muslim University. Others looked at changing school curriculum or spreading what they had learned to village women. There was agreement that a follow-up training, with more reference materials, would be useful, and that more men should be invited to such gender trainings.

“In Nepal if we give gender training, men will not come, because gender is seen as only for women. I really appreciate the men who have come here and their openness,” said one participant. “We all need to work for a society where there is no discrimination, where women and men can be equal.”

Building Bridges: Migrant Women Peacemakers

Refugees, migrants and exiles are often seen as problems in peacebuilding, as partisan sources of weapons, fighters and propaganda in armed conflicts. A pioneering group of women in the Netherlands is challenging this view and leading the way to increasing women’s involvement in peacebuilding.

The Multicultural Women Peacemakers Network (MWPN) organized the recent conference “Let’s Bridge and Link: the role of women in diaspora in peace building and conflict resolution” in September in the Hague, the Netherlands. Some 50 women, from Burundi, Indonesia, the Philippines, Somalia, Sudan, and elsewhere attended. The keynote speakers included MWPN chair Alem Desta (Ethiopia), who addressed the question as to why migrant and refugee women are concerned about peacebuilding issues. “Women migrate because of war, occupation and violence,” she stated. Initiatives by migrant women “don’t get the attention they deserve. Our efforts in peacemaking, in peace negotiations are not heard. In fact women have no voice about anything to do in reconstruction” despite the fact that women are the “backbone of society.”

Desta pointed out the disproportionate ways the burdens of war fall on women’s shoulders and then introduced two activists who have returned to war-weary countries. Stephanie Mbanzendoré is a MWPN official and chair of Burundi

Women for Peace and Development (BWPD). BWPD began at a ground breaking meeting of Burundi women refugees from throughout Europe, held in the Netherlands. Last year Mbanzendore led a delegation of BWPD women back to Burundi on a study tour that would take the group throughout the country. They met and listened to Parliamentarians, businesswomen, widows, educators and villagers. They enjoyed a dinner held in their honor by Burundi's First Lady and traveled to rural areas that few people living in Burundi ever see.

Women Want Peace

The welcome back was heart warming and very positive, Mbanzendore said. Women are organizing as never before—the delegation met with almost a hundred different women's groups, from small income generating collectives to professional associations. Women reported that their most important needs included security, and support in providing for their families. While eager to take part in peacebuilding initiatives, women said they needed training in order to do so.

Mbanzendore has since returned to Burundi for the BWPD-sponsored training on "Peace Edification Starting from the Base", for 10 rural women in Kirundo province. BWPD is planning on more workshops in order to support more women in the peace process.

Women and Peace in the Moluccans

Farida Pattisahusiwa, co-founder of the group Women for Peace in the Moluccans (WPM) and a member of the MWPN coordinating team, then spoke on a WPM

study tour to the Moluccan Islands, in Indonesia. Poverty and marginalization have resulted in violence between Muslim and Christian communities on the islands. Pattisahusiwa and the nine other delegation Muslim and Christian members visited four refugee camps on Ambon and noted many similarities among the refugees, both Muslim and Christian. The lack of toilets and clean water increased many refugees' frustration and longing to return home. In Waihaong camp, some 500 Muslim refugees had access to only two working toilets, while Christian refugees in another camp had only two functioning water faucets. Women from both communities did feel they have a role in the peace process, and wanted training and micro credit. Trauma counseling was identified as a major priority.

In addition to the camps, delegation members also met with local government officials, religious leaders, and local nongovernmental organizations. The issues of violence against women (in particular the very sensitive issue of rapes by Indonesian soldiers), and how Dutch development aid was used, were raised by WPM. Pattisahusiwa was impressed with the willingness of local *imams* (Muslim religious leaders) to address violence against women.

She also noted the determination by villagers to work for peace. Lack of resources and indifference by government officials have not stopped some villagers from organizing their own peace initiatives. Villagers in the Christian town of Siri Sori Sarané have joined with villagers of the Muslim town of Siri Sori Salam in a reconciliation program, beginning with rebuilding a destroyed church together. Other villages explicitly voiced their desire to return to the traditional peaceful coexistence, or *orang basudara* (usually translated as *brotherhood*).

Peace at Home and Abroad

Supported by NOVIB (Oxfam Netherlands), MWPN wants to develop effective multi-faith and multicultural networks for peace. With training supplied by the Women Peacemakers Program and the Dutch Expert Center on Nonviolence (NEAG), migrant women have committed themselves to building just peace both in their countries of origin and in the Netherlands itself. Projects in Burundi, the Moluccan Islands, and in Somalia and the Philippines will continue. Next year the MWPN hopes to launch its own training of trainers program. The bridging and linking continue.

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Burundian Women for Peace and Development (BWPD), Zaagmolenkade 167, 3035 KD Rotterdam, the Netherlands. Tel/Fax : + 31 10 848 69 24.

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New WPP Staff

The WPP is pleased to welcome Dorothy Attema to its staff. Dorothy began work in September as the WPP Regional Development Officer. A Kenyan who recently moved to the Netherlands, she has worked for over 15 years throughout Africa, including southern Sudan and Somalia, for groups such as World Vision and more recently for the independent consulting firm PRECISE.

As WPP Regional Development Officer Dorothy will be responsible for strengthening the capacity building of WPP partners in Africa and Asia, and developing WPP desks in these two regions. "I believe in Africa and in women," she says. "I've always looked at Asia as a place Africa can learn from in terms of development, and I believe Asia can learn from Africa. This opportunity is a real blessing." Dorothy brings a wealth of experience in gender and development issues, and sees her new job as "an opportunity to really learn and to be enriched."

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News

IFOR Women Nominated for Nobel Peace Prize

Early this year 1000 women from over 150 countries were jointly nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. The nomination is the result of a two-year long project by the Swiss group, Association 1000 Women for the Nobel Peace Prize 2005, with the support of the Swiss Minister for Foreign Affairs. The nominees represent innumerable women worldwide who struggle for peace and justice.

The Women Peacemakers Program (WPP) congratulates the nine nominees from the International Fellowship of Reconciliation: WPP Program Officer Shelley Anderson (Netherlands); peace researcher Dr. Elise Boulding (USA); researcher and trainer Dr. Diana Francis (UK); activist theologian Kathy Galloway (UK); IFOR Honorary President Hildegard Goss-Mayr (Austria); activist and nonviolence trainer Netsai Mushonga (Zimbabwe); anti-violence organizer Beena Sebastian (India); indigenous rights activist Stella Tamang (Nepal); and Austrian Peace Service organizer Marion Thuswald (Austria).

A book and traveling exhibit on the 1000 women will appear in autumn. Research on the women's work will provide feedback to civil societies, international organizations and policy makers. For more information see www.1000peacewomen.org, or contact swisspeace, Sonnenbergstrasse 17, CH-3000 Bern 7, Switzerland.

Internship Opportunity

The WPP's annual internship is an opportunity for young women activists to learn more about international peace work. Every year two young women are chosen to work for one month at the IFOR international secretariat in the Netherlands. The deadline for applying for next year's internship is 1 November 2005. Application forms are available from the WPP website or by writing WPP Education Officer Janne Poort-van Eeden at j.vaneeden@ifor.org.

Correction

The WPP is accepting proposals for nonviolence trainings and can also help provide training materials and referrals to possible trainers. The deadline for receiving grant applications is 1 November 2005, not 16 December as reported in the previous newsletter. Application forms are available by writing to the WPP Education Officer Janne Poort-van Eeden at j.vaneeden@ifor.org.

Radio for Change

The Rural Media and Women's Leadership project, funded by the United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM), began in August in the Solomon Islands. Two pioneering women's media initiatives are spearheading the effort to produce a women's radio campaign to educate the public about the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and gender equality in general. Vois Blong Meri (Voice of Women) in the Solomon Islands and femLINKPACIFIC, in Fiji, will also work together to strengthen women's leadership roles across all sectors of society.

"This is an opportunity to advocate the full implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, which is an important global commitment to support women's participation in decision making positions as an important peace building strategy," says Sharon Bhagwan Rolls of femLINKPACIFIC. Contact: femLINKPACIFIC, Suva, Fiji. Tel: +679 3316290. Email: femlinkpac@connect.com.fj

Iraq Update

Iraqi women led many demonstrations in Baghdad throughout July and August, protesting against sections of the draft of a proposed new constitution which would undermine women's rights. "We want human rights for everybody" read one banner during a demonstration organized by the Iraqi Women's Network and the Women's Leadership Institute. Women are particularly concerned about the Chapter on Duties and Rights, which would make religious law the main source of legislation. Another article requires court cases dealing with personal status issues (marriage, divorce, inheritance, etc.) to be judged according to the law practiced by the parties' sect or religion. There is fear that such proposals may abolish Iraq's 1959 Personal Status Law, which applied uniformly to all Iraqi Muslims and which was considered the Middle East's most progressive family law. An international letter writing campaign supporting the women's protest was initiated by Women Living Under Muslim Law (WLUML). Contact: WLUML, wluml@wluml.org, web: www.wluml.org. The Iraqi Women's Network: iraqiwomenet@yahoo.com. The Women's Leadership Institute: wliiraq@yahoo.com

Opposition to US War Effort

Cindy Sheehan, co-founder of the anti-war group Gold Star Families for Peace (composed of families of US soldiers killed in Iraq) began a highly publicized protest in August outside US President Bush's ranch in Texas, where the president was on holiday. She says that Bush is responsible for her son's death

and is demanding a meeting with him and the immediate withdrawal of US troops from Iraq.

Opposition to the war is shared by many groups, including the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). The AFSC-organized exhibit Eyes Wide Open is touring the US, portraying the human cost of the war via a field of empty shoes and a wall of remembrance with the names of 11,000 Iraqis killed in the war (of an estimated 100,000 civilian deaths). There is a pair of empty boots for each of the almost 2,000 US soldiers who have died; a multimedia display on the history, cost and consequences of the war; and a curriculum guide on the war for classroom use. The AFSC website contains many further resources and regular updates on the war. AFSC's Women's Program's "No Women, No Peace" project is compiling a resource on women and the Iraq war, with information on women's situation in Iraq, organizing strategies, resources and a list of organizations working on relevant issues. Contact: AFSC, Women's Program, 1501 Cherry St., Philadelphia, PA 19102 USA. Tel. +1 215 241 7160; fax + 1 215 241 7177. Web: www.afsc.org

Palestinian and Israeli Women for Peace

35 Palestinian, Israeli and international women activists have established a global commission to ensure women's full participation in formal and informal Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations. The International Women's Commission (IWC) was established after a 26-28 July meeting in Turkey. The group will work for a two-state solution and a peaceful resolution of the conflict, based on a charter of principles adopted at the meeting in Istanbul. The IWC, which is expected to be formally launched in September, will promote the inclusion of a diverse range of women's perspectives in all peace negotiations in order to ensure a just and sustainable peace.

Peace Wheels

Follow the Women is an international group of women concerned about peace in the Middle East. Last year the women organized a bicycle ride across the region in order to raise awareness of how conflict affects women and children, and to raise funds for a counseling center. Between 15-25 September this year some 300 women, from 30 countries, biked through Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Palestine for peace in the Middle East. Contact: www.followthewomen.com



Resources

Just Married is an award-winning documentary on the human cost of Israel's new Law of Citizenship, which does not allow Palestinians marrying Israeli citizens to enter or live in Israel. The 71-minute film, directed by Ayelet Bechar, looks at the impact the law has on two women. One woman decides to leave the country in

order to live with her husband, while the other becomes an illegal alien in Israel.
Email: ayeletb@hotmail.com

“Our bodies...their battleground”: *Gender Based Violence During Conflict* is a CD Rom which uses the cases of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Liberia to examine mass rape in war. Includes a film, references and reports for further analysis. Available in English, Swahili and French. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Integrated Regional information Network, PO Box 30218, Nairobi, Kenya. Email: irinfilms@irunnews.org Web: www.irinnews.org

Two important new books from Oxfam include *The Impact of Guns on Women's Lives* (68 pages, GBP 7.50/USD 12), which looks at gun-related violence against women, women's role in gun use and anti-gun violence campaigns being spearheaded by women, both during peace time and during and after wars. *Gender, Peacebuilding and Reconstruction* (96 pages, GBP 9.95/USD 16.50) is a collection of articles on women's roles in conflict prevention and in post-conflict reconstruction, focusing on grassroots women's work to confront marginalization and inequitable government structures. Oxfam, BEBC Distribution, PO Box 1496, Parkstone, Poole, Dorset BH12 3YD, UK. Email: Oxfam@bebc.co.uk

Two new books from the Commonwealth Secretariat look at gender and poverty issues: *Gender and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)*, edited by Caroline Sweetman (112 pages, GBP 9.95/ USD 16.50) looks at the MDGs from a gender perspective and how strategies used by women's movements can be used to address poverty. *Gender Mainstreaming in Poverty Eradication and the MDGs: a handbook for policy makers and stakeholders* by Naila Kabeer (86 pages, GBP 12.99) looks at gender equality and economic growth and how gender equality is essential for long-term, sustainable development. Commonwealth Secretariat Gender books, Marlborough House, Pall Mall, London SW1Y 5HX, UK. Email: d.bingham@commonwealth.int

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Calendar

October 10-15: Training course on Gender and Militarism, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. Romanian Peace Institute, Tel/fax: +40 264 420298. Email: gender@transcend.org Web: www.transcend.org

October 31-November 4: Peacebuilding, Conflict Transformation and Post-War Rebuilding, Reconciliation and Resolution, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. Romanian Peace Institute, Tel/fax: +40 264 420298. Email: training@transcend.org Web: www.transcend.org

November 7-11: Designing Peacebuilding Interventions and Conflict Transformation Programs, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. Romanian Peace Institute, Tel/fax: +40 264 420298. Email: dpi@transcend.org Web: www.transcend.org

November 25-December 10: annual 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence. This year's theme: For the Health of Women, For the Health of the World: No More Violence. For more information and action kit contact Center for Women's Global Leadership, Rutgers, State University of New Jersey, 160 Ryders Lane, New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8555, USA. Tel. +1 732 932 8782; fax +1 732 932 1180. Email: cwgl@iqc.org. Web: www.cwgl.rutgers.edu

December 1-10: Human Rights in Development training course, Fairview Conference Centre, Nairobi, Kenya. Dignity International, email: applications@dignityinternational.org. Web: www.dignityinternational.org

December 27-30: International Nonviolence Conference: Celebrating Palestinian Nonviolence Movements, Bethlehem University, Bethlehem, Palestine. For a promotional video about Palestinian nonviolence and the conference see www.holylandtrust.org/video/nvc.mpg
Email: yeshua@nonviolenceinternational.net Web: www.celebratingnv.org

January 5-7,2006: international conference (with South Asian focus) Sixty Years After Second World War: Lessons for Peace Building, organized by Jaipur Peace Foundation and Asia Pacific Peace Research Association, Jaipur, India. Contact: Naresh Dadhich at ndadhich@datainfosys.net or dadhich_naresh@yahoo.co.in

June 29-July 3, 2006: International Peace Research Association conference, Calgary, Canada. Email: SGIPRA@soc.kuleuven.ac.be. Tel. +32 (0)16 32 32 41. Web: soc.kuleuven.be/pol/ipra/calgary_main.html