

# THE TIME IS NOW!

## IFOR YOUTH NEWSLETTER

2004



### WPP EMPOWERS YOUNG WOMEN!!

The International Orientation Program is one way in which the Women Peacemaker Program (WPP) empowers young women to be leaders in the peace movement. In July, I spent three weeks at the IFOR secretariat in Holland with another intern, Thess Venturina. During the daytime we learned about IFOR, and we visited other groups around the country to learn about the human rights and peace movements in Europe. Most evenings, I wandered through cobblestone alleys and past sunlit canals, pondering all that I had been privileged to learn during the day.



Holland is famous for its tulips

While here, I was interested in the role of youth in social change movements. In my own country, the United States, youth were an essential part of the civil rights movement. Now, as a member of the Youth Task Force for FOR-USA, I am helping to ensure that youth leadership is still integrated in all of the work. As a teacher, I am learning to make my classes a place where my students' experiences are valued and seen as the starting point for each lesson.

One day, I went to visit the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam with Thess and Bobet, a WPP Trainer from the Phillipines. We saw the "secret annex" where Anne was in hiding for two years. I was touched by Anne's confidence and idealism. She wrote in her journal, "I want to be useful or bring enjoyment to all people. And therefore I am so grateful to God for giving me this gift of writing, of expressing all that is in me!" One reason Anne Frank has touched so many people is that she believed in herself. Losing a young person who believes she can make the world a better place is the utmost tragedy.

An opportunity I had looked forward to was the trip to The Hague, where we visited the International Court of Justice. I had no idea it was located in a "Peace Palace!" The palace was a huge building decorated with gifts from all over the world. I recognized one of the grand halls as the spot where the security barrier in Israel was denounced; I had seen it on the news only 2 days before.

We also learned about the International Criminal Court. Created by the UN Rome Statute in 1998 and enstated in 2002, the court will try individuals accused of war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity. Both sexual violence towards women and the use of child soldiers will be tried as war crimes. This is a great step for International Law.

I am so grateful that I had the opportunity to participate in the International Orientation. It was a chance to learn more about WPP, IFOR, and the Youth Programs in some of the Branches, Groups, and Affiliates. I gained more understanding about gender and conflict theory, the European Union, International Law, and current areas of conflict in the world. Perhaps the most valuable lessons were those gained from conversations with the committed staff of IFOR.

One of the main responsibilities that Thess and I had was to produce this newsletter. Here, you'll learn about young people in IFOR branches who are making the world a better place. I hope that all young people who read this find opportunities to be inspired, informed, and involved. I hope that you, like me, find a home in IFOR. We are the ones who can carry the work of IFOR into the future!

-Amy Beckhusen

### YOUTH DOING WHAT MATTERS MOST

Nazia Y. Izuddin is a young woman from India who participated in last year's International Orientation at the IFOR International Secretariat. Using the skills, knowledge, and inspiration she gained here, she organized and facilitated "Integrity Camp 2004." Twenty-five young people between the ages of 17-23 came from India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Holland to interact and discuss issues such as active non-violence, conflict resolution, culture, and religion. The event took place from February 10-15, 2004 in Mussorie, India, and was sponsored by the South Asia Youth Forum for Peace and Reconciliation with support from the IFOR Women Peacemakers Program. Nazia and Payal Randhawa were facilitators.

As a young activist, Nazia found that young people face discrimination and don't get enough support or trust from organizations. She said, "I feel that to discredit good will and work just on the basis of age is not fair, because at the end of the day it's not the age, but what you have done that really matters." She also said that, "what is important is to have conviction, will power and patience and of course there are people and organizations who will still recognize the work that you do and will accept you and help you. IFOR is a great example" she added.

## BREAKING WALLS... TO LIGHT UP

I am a dentist working at a health and social center in an urban poor area in Tondo, Manila in the Philippines. The center is ran by the Canossian sisters and provides quality affordable medical and dental services for our patients. Many women in the community are active members of the local co-operative who produces cheap herbal medicines for sale and use by the patients at the center.

One day in May 2002, my sister in charge approached me and asked me to attend a seminar workshop on Active Non-Violence organized by AKKAPKA (Action for Peace and Justice), an IFOR group in the Philippines. With obedience, I joined with four others from my community, where I listened to speaker's talks about human dignity, absolute respect of life, healing and restorative justice, compassion for others and yes, love for enemy.

At the workshop, a 17-year old boy caught my attention. He seemed shy and hardly participated in the sessions. So I befriended him and asked him his name, where he lives, and what organization he belongs to. To my surprise he told me that he was an ex-convict and had been in jail for four years! I remember clearly I asked him, "do you know our difference?" he answered "yes, you went to school, I didn't. You, have a good job and earn money and I don't." I told him, "yes, there's a big difference in us, you have paid your sins already and me, not yet! If we both die today, you might go to heaven and me? I don't know! Actually we're both human trying to live, in this very violent world! Don't you think?" and I saw him smiling and with confidence he was now talking to me, telling me his story. A wall had been broken.

Towards the end, I asked what AKKAPKA expected us to do after the seminar. They said just to try to live out nonviolence or 'Alay Dangal' which literally translates as "offer dignity" as a way of life. Wow!... they asked nothing from me and here I was asking myself what can I do!!... But you know I see myself as one little candle in a very huge dark room that can do nothing, not even light a small part of that room. Yes, an abnormal feeling trying to understand and discover what's really happening here! Here in my heart. The overflowing of love that comes from the example of Jesus Christ, trying to know Him and love Him more. The application of what I always hunger for... to know and love Him deeply.... **servng!**... through spreading this kind of learning! THE ACTIVE NON-VIOLENCE WAY!!

I caught myself seeing some other lights... and I'm happy to be a part of the International Orientation with Women Peacemakers Program and that I have learned, that I'm not alone! I mean, we are not alone lighting lights... for **PEACE!!** I know there are a lot of us.... So, show off and let's work together! To light up this **WORLD!!**

- Thess S. Venturina



A walk for peace and meaningful election

## YOUTHS JOIN PRAYER-PILGRIMAGE FOR PEACEFUL AND MEANINGFUL ELECTIONS IN THE PHILIPPINES

About 250 youths from various communities in Metro Manila and nearby provinces joined a prayer-pilgrimage for peaceful, clean and meaningful May 2004 elections in the Philippines. The pilgrimage on 23-24 April 2004 was organized by AKSYON PARA SA KAPAYAPAAN AT KATARUNGAN (AKKAPKA), an IFOR group in the Philippines. The 50-km prayer trek began with a simple ceremony at the EDSA Shrine (Manila) at 8 pm and ended with the celebration of the Holy Mass at the Church of Our Lady of Good Voyage in Antipolo (Rizal) at 5 am the next day. One youth group — the Catalyst — presented an interpretative dance depicting their search of a leader and the future of the AKKAPKA's core group reflected on and prepared a set of criteria to guide voters (4 C's – character, competence, commitment and chance to win), which was distributed during the pilgrimage. Earlier, the Catholic Bishops of the Philippines (CBCP) called on the faithful to work, pray and take pains and sacrifices for the May 2004 elections.

-Bobet Corral



Interpretative dance by the a youth group



U.S. Facilitators: David Rosen, Kavitha Rao, Alejandra Tobar Alatriz and Maritza Valenzuela

US-FOR

## US-FOR MOVES TO A NEW BEAT

Here in the US, FOR's youth program is growing and evolving by leaps and bounds! Over the last ten years the USFOR's youth program— known as the Peacemaker Training Institute (PTI)—has trained hundreds of young people across the country. Now those of us who have benefited from the program are shaping it into a new form—the form that will allow it to more effectively reach youth in the US that are looking for alternatives to violence, war, and splintered movement organizing. In February the new Youth Task Force convened and created a structure for the program that incorporates all of the aspects of USFOR's current youth work: popular education, campus work, youth coalitions, internships, connections with other FOR programs, image and style (such as publicity and outreach), and research and development.

We are also exploring new ways of collaborating with other organizations. Last year we began a partnership with New York-based artists collective Movement in Motion and visited six states on the Drop Beats Not Bombs: The Power of Nonviolence Tour. The tour brought political hip-hop performances and workshops on nonviolence, creative organizing, and the prison-military industrial complex to campuses and community organizations. Using art as a tool for empowerment, awareness, and social change was a great success (and a great time—another important aspect of organizing). More tours are planned for the coming year, and we are also looking to collaborate with other politically active artists in the US. The first Peace College was convened in Salem, Massachusetts in April, bringing together an intergenerational group of activists for a dialogue on peace and justice organizing. And, of course, the program's basic and advanced trainings continue to grow. Currently two basic trainings are held each year, one in Pennsylvania in the winter and one in Texas in the summer. International applicants are welcomed and there is one program scholarship available per training for an international participant (would not include travel costs). Plans are in the works for more annual basic trainings, advanced trainings for trainers, anti-racist organizing trainings, a youth interfaith gathering, and intergenerational trainings focused on criminal justice and other issues.

An underlying theme of our workshops and trainings is "responsibility, not blame," and the USFOR's youth work is

giving organizing tools to young people who realize their responsibility to do something to address the violence of their government and society, as well as their responsibility as a part of that society, and emphasizing the importance of the principle of creativity within nonviolence.

-Maritza Valenzuela  
US-FOR

## IFOR-GERMANY BRANCH

IFOR Germany conducts a summer youth camp every year. This year's camp will be held from July 24 to Aug. 8, 2004, and the theme is "EU expansion: What is our common identity as Europeans?" Its goal is to provide the participants from East and West Europe with experiences that will prepare them to return home and promote the development of a European identity. The camp will include visits to cultural events such as an open-air concert, museums, a historical city tour, and a boat trip on the canals and rivers of Berlin.

The WPP is sponsoring Natalia Zabelina to attend the youth camp this summer. She is a nineteen year-old young woman from Moscow and an activist in the human rights organization Doverie (Trust). For more information about the Germany IFOR branch go to [www.versoehnungsbund.de/index](http://www.versoehnungsbund.de/index)

### My Journey to Peace

Admiring the environment,  
I asked myself  
Was it perfect?  
Or worn by some drawbacks?  
Found every sorts of physical existences,  
Wealth assets, war and violence.  
The three things I do miss  
i.e., Love, kindness and peace.  
My journey to peace started then  
for I wanted to make the surroundings complete  
My mother shouted  
not to take the risk.  
My father exclaimed  
that the journey wouldn't be easy.  
But I do remember  
"No gain without pain"  
"No sweets without sweat"  
But I questioned?  
Can gold be obtained  
Without being melted?  
Diamonds without  
Cutting rough edges?  
Keeping my eyes on a distant star  
even if seemed much too far.  
step by step, day by day,  
I commenced my journey.  
enemies, they attacked and encountered me  
enemies, they dragged and draggled me  
peace, she was waiting for rescue  
peace, she was lying deadly  
My heart was not beating  
but of course functioning  
I wasn't respiring  
but was still alive.  
finally, I succeed to save her  
but failed to save myself.  
I gave peace and prosperity to Nepal's mother  
but left pain and tears to my own.

Eti Shrestha, IFOR group in Nepal

## NIGERIAN YOUTH SPEAK UP!

Mobilizing the youth of an entire country is easy, at least Nnenna K. Ukoha makes it seem that way! Ms. Ukoha is the National Executive President of the "All Nigeria United Nations Students and Youth Association." I met her at the Women Peacemaker Program's Training of Trainers in July, 2004.

For the past year, Ms. Ukoha has been building a network of Nigerian youth using the internet. Through speaking with young people, she learned that they are concerned about unemployment and disempowerment. They would like to be politically active, and Ms. Ukoha is educating them about how to make their voices heard.

In response to youth's desire for dialogue, Nnenna and her co-worker set up an online chat for three weeks, using a dynamic internet site called "Taking It Global." If you have access to internet, "Taking It Global" is one of the best tools available right now for Youth Organizing. The site is a place where youth from around the world convene to chat, post events, and network with other groups.

The Nigeria chat, which took place over three weeks in March, 2004, addressed the following topics:

- Unemployment
- Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution
- Millennium Development Goals from the UN
- Rights of Nigerian Women and Children
- HIV-AIDS

The organizers posted summaries, statistics, and laws related to each issue, and about 500 people participated in the online exchange.

Based on the feedback and insights gained from the dialogue, Nnenna and her co-workers decided to create a space where people could come together and continue the dialogue. After a year of fundraising and organizing, the first annual "All Nigerian Youth (ANY) Conference" will be held August 10-14 in Abuja, Nigeria. Co-sponsored by the "All Nigeria United Nations Student and Youth Association," the Regional Youth Forums," and the "Positive Impact Network," the conference goals are to network and train youth in leadership skills, civic education, and project development. They hope to unite youth across tribal lines, and most importantly, they will create a document, which will be delivered to the president of Nigeria. Next year, they hope to have a regional event.

Meeting Nnenna K. Ukoha in person is an unforgettable experience. It is clear that she is involved in effective work, using models that we should all repeat.

(To learn more, go to [www.any-conference.com](http://www.any-conference.com).)

### A WISHED-FOR SONG

You're song,  
a wished-for song.

Go through the ear to the center  
where sky is, where wind  
where silent knowing.

Put seeds and cover them.  
Blades will sprout  
where you do your work.

-RUMI

## PALESTINIAN AND CYPRIOT YOUTH CROSS BOUNDARIES

The summer camp I would like to talk to you about is one made up of friendship, struggle for freedom, and understanding. The unity between 'people' culminated with the tears of sadness displayed on the last day, and promises of future visits and eternal contact gave hope to all. Middle East Non-violence and Democracy (MEND) was able to facilitate this summer camp, and through the generosity of the FORD Foundation, MEND was able to transform the lives of 55 participants by allowing them to explore the possibilities presented when two cultures fuse.

A youth group consisting of Palestinian boys and girls (age 13-17), selected from three Palestinian regions (Jerusalem, Ramallah and Tulkarem) traveled to Cyprus for a 10 day summer camp where they were brought together with 15 (Greek) Cypriot boys and girls of the same age group. The children were selected by EDON, the largest youth organization in Cyprus, who also deserve much credit in facilitating the whole camp.

The camp location was perfect. It belongs to the Cypriot labor party and was designed to facilitate 300 children at once. The surroundings allowed children to get entwined with nature, being a few steps from the sea, and having a great swimming pool, allowing them to cool off from the humid summer weather.

Many problems had been anticipated at the beginning, especially with the difficulty of some children to communicate. Fortunately, as soon as the children met and got to know each other through various activities, this problem dissipated, and children were very interested in learning and being with each other.

Enhancing communication was achieved in many ways, both during the workshops and by the children's own initiatives. All the workshops focused on tying the children socially, culturally, artistically and intellectually. Many discussions that took place revolved around the similarities between the children, and their right to express themselves freely. 4 Palestinian youth participated in two local radio programs, where they introduced themselves and described some aspects of daily life in Palestine. Many callers contacted the radio station (AstraRadio) to contribute their support and affirm unity with the Palestinian people.

We were welcomed by attending a concert to celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of EDON, This was the first concert any of the youth had ever been to. It was a beautiful event to open the boundaries between two peoples, allowing them to blend with the crowds and their Cypriot partners. The leaders organized an open-day to commemorate the completion of the summer camp, in which there was participation of both youth groups in the Cypriot and Palestinian traditional dance. Exchanging contact information and using their T-shirts as message boards from the whole group ended the evening. Tears continue to fall to this day.

- Samer Tarazi



*Advocating Peace : facilitator of CRY-Uganda, Mr. Rwankangi Ronald discussing peace on All Karamoja FM Studios, the Chairperson LCV Moroto, Mr. Achia Terence (last left) and Kara-Teso youth listens on before they took their turns to speak out.*

## UGANDAN YOUTH PUT NONVIOLENCE ON THE RADIO

In the past few months, Ugandan youth have been using the radio to advocate for nonviolent conflict resolution. Located in the Karamoja-Teso region, they are operating out of a newly established radio station and internet center called "VSAT Tele-Center." This is one of many projects that developed out of the "Moroto Multicultural Youth Peace Camp," an event that was planned by the IFOR Uganda Branch in September, 2003.

The branch is called Jamii Ya Kupatanisha (JYAK), which means Fellowship of Reconciliation in Swahili. They have recognized that youth are essential to the peace process in their country. Perhaps this is because they see how many youth have been recruited for the cause of violence. In Northern and Eastern Uganda, an armed insurgency called the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), has wreaked havoc for 18 years. Their armed rebellion against the government has displaced over 1.6 million Ugandans, half of whom are children. According to the UN, "The most disturbing aspect of this humanitarian crisis is the fact that this is a war fought by children on children - minors make up almost 90% of the LRA's soldiers. Some recruits are as young as eight and are inducted through raids on villages."

In the Teso-Karamoja region, LRA incursions have heightened the tensions that already exist between the Karimojong and Iteso ethnic groups. In response, Jamii Ya Kupatanisha (JYAK), the Uganda FOR Branch, has partnered with other groups to develop strategies for youth intervention.

The first peace camp attracted 150 youth from the region. Since then, JYAK has teamed with CRY Uganda (Conflict Resolution with Youth), the German Embassy in Kampala, and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (a German political organization that helped establish the VSAT Tele-Center). In December 2003, they sponsored a follow-up workshop, where 25 youth leaders received additional conflict resolution training.

Now, JYAK is clearly gaining momentum as they prepare for their second youth camp, which will take place for three weeks beginning in July 2004. The theme of this camp is solidarity with internally displaced persons, and it will be held in the eastern province of Soroti. Thirty youth, including

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) will gain skills for conflict management. Activities are as varied and creative as to include visits to IDP camps, theatre performances designed to enhance cultural appreciation between the different groups and a "Football for Peace" tournament.

Afterwards, they plan document the event and the problems in the region. They hope to travel to Denmark and other countries to meet with other youth groups. For more information about this dynamic group, or to provide support, email Rosemary Nassaka at [nassaroz@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:nassaroz@yahoo.co.uk)

*-Amy Beckhusen*

Source: Workshop reports by Joseph Agula and Rosemary Nassaka <http://www.un.org/events/tenstories>

## FACTS ABOUT CHILD SOLDIERS

Today, as many as 300,000 children under the age of 18 serve in government forces or armed rebel groups. Some are as young as eight years old.

The participation of child soldiers has been reported in 33 on-going or recent armed conflicts in almost every region of the world.

Child soldiers are used by armed opposition forces, although many are used by government armies.

Both girls and boys are used as child soldiers. In case studies in El Salvador, Ethiopia, and Uganda, almost a third of the child soldiers were reported to be girls. Girls may be raped, or in some cases, given to military commanders as "wives."

Few peace treaties recognize the existence of child soldiers, or make provisions for their rehabilitation and reintegration into society. Many former child soldiers do not have access to the educational programs, vocational training, family reunification, or even food and shelter that they need to successfully rejoin civilian society. As a result, many end up on the street, become involved in crime, or are drawn back into armed conflict.

*-from Human Rights Watch*



There are many ways of addressing conflict What methods are most effective, and which do you use?

Take this great quiz online at:  
<http://peace.mennolink.org/resources/conflictyouth/quiz.html>

## LINKS WE LIKE

(for those who are not connected to the net, you may contact IFOR, see contacts below )

**Idealist** [www.idealist.org/kt](http://www.idealist.org/kt). Here you'll find a collection of organizations that will provide you with a solid introduction to the world of youth leadership and community involvement.

**Youth Action Net** [www.youthactionnet.org](http://www.youthactionnet.org). Connecting Youth to Create Change, including an action kit to develop organizing skills.

**Taking It Global** [www.takingitglobal.org](http://www.takingitglobal.org). Network with youth activists from around the world. Find global events.

**Peace Pals** [www.worldpeace.org/peacepals.html](http://www.worldpeace.org/peacepals.html) encourages kids from 5-15 to become peacemakers through creative arts and letter-writing to youth in other countries.  
26 Benton Road, Wassaic, NY 12592 USA

**Chat the Planet** [www.chattheplanet.com](http://www.chattheplanet.com). Young people from around the world dialogue through television and the internet.

**Youth At The UN** [www.un.org/youth](http://www.un.org/youth) Learn more and influence global youth policy.  
13th Floor, 2 UN Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA.

**Theatre of the Oppressed Laboratory, New York**  
[www.toplab.org/](http://www.toplab.org/) (with links to info. and global resources):  
tools for political theatre.  
122 West 27 Street 10 floor, New York

**Pax Christi Youth Forum** [www.paxchristi.net/work/html/nv\\_overview.php?issue\\_id=19&](http://www.paxchristi.net/work/html/nv_overview.php?issue_id=19&)  
draws on faith to advocate peace. supports exchange programs and publishes a newsletter.

**Human Rights Watch** [www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org) Get information about global human rights, learn about the campaign to stop use of child soldiers.  
Rue Van Campenhout 15,1000 Brussels, Belgium

**Stolen Childhoods** [www.stolenchildhoods.org](http://www.stolenchildhoods.org) A documentary about child labor.  
18 State Road P.O. Box 4219 Vineyard Haven, MA 02568

**African Youth Parliament** [www.ayparliament.org](http://www.ayparliament.org) A network of young African peacebuilders with an emphasis on gender equality.  
No. 5 Menelik Court Flats  
Menelik Road, Off Ngong Road Hurlingham  
P.O Box 67365, City Square Nairobi, Kenya

The Women Peacemaker Program can help women in **IFOR** branches, groups and affiliates **visit other IFOR branches, groups and affiliates** in order to exchange experiences. In addition, support is offered to women peacemakers **all over the world** to attend a conference that is important for their work, or to follow a university course to improve their knowledge, or to participate in a peace camp, etc. (NOTE: This option is **not** limited for IFOR members).

The costs of international travel, food, accommodation costs, insurance and visa for such exchanges can be covered by the WPP. Contact WPP for more information.

## OPPORTUNITIES IN IFOR BRANCHES, GROUPS, AND AFFILIATES

**The Amazonian Initiative Movement** in Guinea and Sierra Leone raises awareness about Female Genital Mutilation and educates girls and women about peace and human rights. They would like to create an internship-exchange with a young person from the US-FOR. For more information, contact Rugiatu Turay at [aims12001@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:aims12001@yahoo.co.uk)

**Women in Black** from Belgrade would like to send a young person to another IFOR Branch, Group, or Affiliate, as well as host someone from another IFOR organization. For more information, contact [stasazen@eunet.yu](mailto:stasazen@eunet.yu)

## INTERNSHIPS

**UN** [www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/youthrep.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/youthrep.htm) Be a youth representative for the UN.

**FOR-USA** [www.forusa.org/programs/internships/internships.html](http://www.forusa.org/programs/internships/internships.html) 11 month Internships at FOR-USA. Mentorship, housing, living stipend, and health benefits provided.

## VOLUNTEER

**Peace Brigades International** [www.peacebrigades.org](http://www.peacebrigades.org) maintains teams of International Observers in areas of conflict.

**International Volunteers for Peace** [www.ivp.org.au/](http://www.ivp.org.au/)

## CONFERENCE

**The Non-Violent Peace Force** is organizing a leadership youth conference from June 21-25, 2005 in Minnesota, USA. The conference will help youth learn about third-party non-violent strategic action. For more information please visit [www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org](http://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org)  
Rue Van Elewyck 35, 1050 Bruxelles, Belgium

The Time is Now! is produced by Thess Venturina and Amy Beckhusen in the framework of the Women Peacemaker Program (WPP) International Orientation as a forum for youth across the globe. Women Peacemakers Program is an initiative of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR). Since 1919 IFOR has pioneered spiritually based active non-violence. For more information about this newsletter, to apply for the International Orientation Program, or for more information about the WPP or IFOR branch in your country, please contact the IFOR International Secretariat at:



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Sincere gratitude for all the responses we have received.  
With your encouragement this newsletter has become a possibility.