

The Time is Now

IFOR Youth Newsletter

Women Peacemakers Program - International Orientation 2008



Foreward

For the last six weeks, we have been at the IFOR / WPP office, going through an International Orientation in peace work. It has been a busy time, but we have enjoyed every bit of it! Our interaction with the staff at the Secretariat, the conferences, the visits to various organizations etc have made such a lasting impression on us. Aside from the formal work, we also had the opportunity to do some sight seeing around the Netherlands and in the process we even visited a cheese farm where we learnt how to make cheese! We would therefore like to share with you our experiences, views and reflections.

Channsitha Mark and Irene Kyazze
International Orientation 2008



Irene and Sitha

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Would You Harbor Me?



Illustration: Yaakov Guterman

Would you harbor me? Would I harbor you?
Would you harbor me? Would I harbor you?

Would you harbor a Christian, a Muslim, A Jew,
A heretic, convict or spy?
Would you harbor a run-away woman or child,
A poet, a prophet, a king?
Would you harbor an exile or a refugee,
A person living with AIDS?
Would you harbor a Tubman, a Garret, a Truth,
A fugitive or a slave?
Would you harbor a Haitian, Korean, or Czech,
A lesbian or a gay?...

Would you harbor me? Would I harbor you?
Would you harbor me? Would I harbor you?

Words and Music by Ysaye M. Barnwell



Different continents, one journey

By Irene Kyazze



Irene working at IFOR/WPP secretariat

I began my journey as a peace maker five years ago and since then, I have participated in various peace building activities. However, all these were within the African context, which meant that my exposure to peace work remained imbalanced. To provide me with the much needed balance was IFOR / WPP that offered me the opportunity to participate in an International Orientation Program in the Netherlands for six weeks. I therefore consider my participation in the program, as an extension of my peace journey.

When I arrived at the IFOR office, the staff was very welcoming and I immediately knew that my stay was going to be a worthwhile experience. One of the things that I appreciated about IFOR / WPP, was that Sitha and I were always involved in all the office activities i.e. staff meetings, celebrations, etc, which is not usually the case for interns in other organizations. In addition, the staff was available for us when we needed information from them, and always listened attentively when we presented ourselves and the work that we do.

A broadened Perspective

During my stay, I was able to interact with youth from Europe, sharing experiences with them. My first interaction was during a youth debate that I attended, where the youth were urging each other to be drivers for change in their countries. After the debate I felt geared towards spearheading change in Uganda. In addition, I visited some youth organizations like United Network of Young Peace builders (UNOY) and Choice, which exposed me to the challenges faced by the youth in the Netherlands. Thereafter, I was able to compare their challenges with those faced by young people in Uganda: in Uganda, the focus of youth programs is on HIV/AIDS, unemployment, poverty, etc, as opposed to the Netherlands, where youth programs focus on sexual and reproductive rights, alcohol abuse, etc.

Further on during my peace journey, I had the opportunity to attend the IFOR / WPP May 24th Seminar, where WPP celebrated its 10th anniversary, as well as marked the International Women's Day for Peace and Disarmament. The seminar discussed the impact of financial investments in women's peace activism on the establishment of sustainable peace, and availed me with knowledge on the strategies that women peacemakers around the world have used to get recognized at the "negotiation table". I was inspired by this knowledge and felt that young people too, can use similar strategies to gain recognition as peace builders. At the seminar, the presence of a "fund market", where several donor organizations distributed information about their activities and funding possibilities to peacemakers, also greatly impressed me.

I was also privileged to attend the International Peace Conference in Paris (Salon de Paix) that brought together international peace actors. At the conference, I interacted with peace activists from all over the world and got to know more about their activities. One of the things that impressed me about the conference was that children were given a space, and a number of activities were organized specifically for them. This is important, because it draws them towards getting more involved in peace building. I also had the opportunity to present the work that I do to an audience during a workshop, which built my confidence as a young peace builder and increased my passion to continue working for peace. My peace journey continued when I visited the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague. Although I had read a lot about the court, the fact that I was there personally and even attended a session for the special court of Sierra Leone that is handling the case of former Liberian President Charles Taylor, was a privilege to me. In addition, I also toured the Peace Palace that houses the International Court of Justice and the Permanent Court of Arbitration.

Before the International Orientation, the knowledge that I had on peace work in Asia was limited, but through my constant interaction with Sitha, I got to know more about the work that she does in Cambodia, the challenges she faces, and how she has been able to overcome them, as a young peace maker. Through our interaction, I was also able to share my own experiences with her and through this, we learnt a lot from each other.

The Journey Continues

The International Orientation has enabled me to deepen my knowledge on active non-violence as a cornerstone in building a culture of peace. In addition, I have gained knowledge on gender mainstreaming in peace activities. At the IFOR Secretariat, I have observed how international peace work is carried out, and have appreciated the diligence and enthusiasm that all the IFOR / WPP staff put into their work. The fact that Sitha and I participated in making decisions for the activities that we would participate in, meant that we were valued, and this motivated us to do our best.

Although my peace journey at the WPP International Orientation may have come to an end, this does not mean that the work is done. It means that my horizon has been expanded. When I return to Africa, I will continue my journey as a peace maker, but this time, more energized and equipped with an enriched perspective on how peace work is conducted across continents. □



Experiencing International Orientation with IFOR/WPP

By Channsitha Mark

Six weeks in the Netherlands with IFOR/WPP flies. I remembered my first day at the office in Alkmaar; everyone welcoming me and Irene Kyazze warmly, which made us feel relaxed and comfortable.

Sharing rooms and working together with Irene for six weeks, I have learned so much about the conflict situation in Uganda and her experience of working for peace with the AMANI Forum. Aside from our work experiences, we also shared fun and our personal life journey, learning and encouraging one another. We really enjoyed our time together.

Before coming for the International Orientation, I saw the Netherlands as an open society, thinking women and youth did not face any challenges, since the Dutch women's movement has been quite strong. However, I could notice from my meetings with different Dutch NGOs that although Dutch people are living in a more stable and open society than Cambodia, women and youth are continuing to struggle. They are facing many challenges in advocating for their rights, similar to Cambodia, although the issues addressed are contextualized of course.

During my six weeks, I have spent one week in a consultation organized by IFOR/WPP on measuring empowerment. For this, the WPP brought together women from different countries, who have participated in the WPP Training of Trainers (ToT) program. The ToT activity began in 2002, and since then has trained forty women activists as trainers on gender and active nonviolence. The consultation was organized in order to assess the impact of the training on their lives and their work. It was a great opportunity for me to meet with strong, active, and committed women working for peace and conflict resolution in their respective countries. As a young woman, I was so encouraged, because the week was a platform where we as women came together, shared our experiences and stories, discussed our challenges, and encouraged one another to continue struggling for our rights, peace, and social justice in our communities.



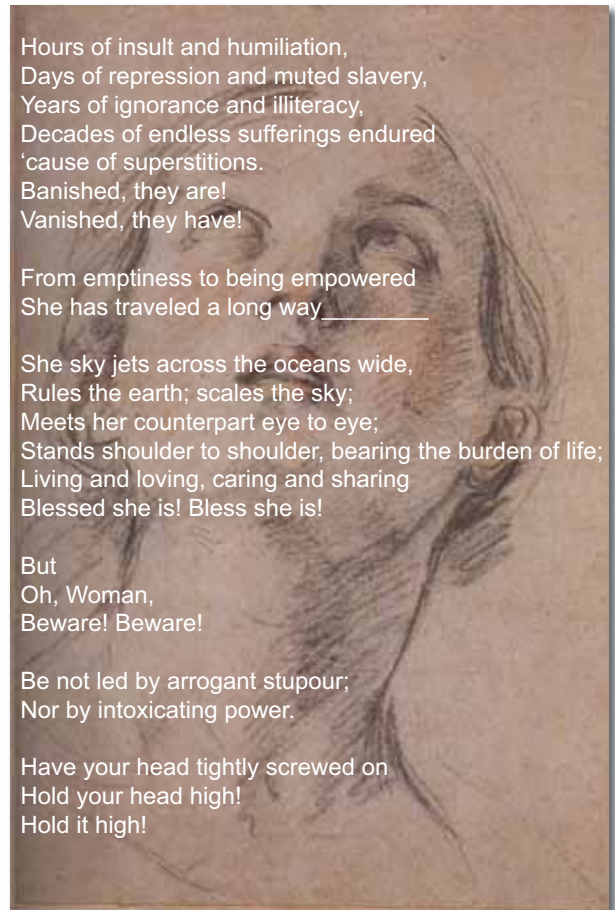
Sitha and Irene in Hilversum for the media session with Former WPP Education Officer, Janne Poort-van Eeden and Harry Meter

A session on working with the media - including the production of a short film with Janne Poort-van Eeden and Harry Meter - was really fun and worthwhile, for me, media is so powerful in communicating our messages to our target audience. Therefore, as peacemakers, understanding and

knowing how to use media effectively is crucial, as it helps us to deliver our peace and positive messages to a larger community.

Additionally, one impression that changed my personal views is related to the fact that Dutch people use bikes as a means of transportation. People move around by bike, even with a nice suit on to go to work. In Cambodia, people using bikes are seen as poor: He/she cannot afford a motorbike or car. Being in The Netherlands completely changed my perception and image of people using bikes, making me think that in general, people should be free to make their own choices, and should not be pressured or labeled according to their outfit.

Overall, I am so grateful for the opportunity offered by IFOR/WPP to come and experience the International Secretariat in the Netherlands; to be part of one of the oldest movements for nonviolence and reconciliation around the world. I have learned so much - not only about the wonderful work of IFOR/WPP and other Dutch-based organizations, but also about the culture and way of life in Dutch society. The experiences and sharing I had help me to be more energized and strategized as a young woman working for peacebuilding and conflict transformation, in order to continue working for peace and social justice in my own society. □



Hours of insult and humiliation,
Days of repression and muted slavery,
Years of ignorance and illiteracy,
Decades of endless sufferings endured
'cause of superstitions.
Banished, they are!
Vanished, they have!

From emptiness to being empowered
She has traveled a long way _____

She sky jets across the oceans wide,
Rules the earth; scales the sky;
Meets her counterpart eye to eye;
Stands shoulder to shoulder, bearing the burden of life;
Living and loving, caring and sharing
Blessed she is! Bless she is!

But
Oh, Woman,
Beware! Beware!

Be not led by arrogant stupour;
Nor by intoxicating power.

Have your head tightly screwed on
Hold your head high!
Hold it high!

by Rama Muthukrishnan - India
Drawing: Guido Reni





Cambodian Youth marching against Domestic Violence and Drug Use

On May 8th 2008, the Institute of Social Studies (ISS) based in The Hague, The Netherlands, brought together young activists and professionals, who wanted to share ideas and experiences on the role that youth can play in development and change in their own countries.

During the discussion, the challenges of engaging youth in social and political change were raised. Promise Mkwanzazi, spokesman of the Global Zimbabwe Diaspora Forum, said that "In Zimbabwe, the youth are in a very precarious situation. The government has used the youth as 'fodder' and is indoctrinating them with party ideology, in order to send them out to intimidate people." The big question is what intervention strategies should be taken to mitigate the situation, and make it conducive for the youth to play a substantial role in bringing about positive change in the country.

Ineke van Kessel, author and editor of the book "Vanguard or Vandals; politics and conflict in Africa," talked on the role of youth in social movements in Africa. She mentioned that through her research on social movements, she has realized that social movements in the past, such as the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa, had succeeded in holding people together due to a common cause. However, these days social movements are more individualistic, and lack a vision.

Through meeting with different organizations working with young people and youth activists in the Netherlands, I learned that also in Europe there are challenges in terms of engaging youth in social and political change, linked to the fact that there are so many opportunities and possibilities for young people in society.

However, there are still young people drawn to social change work, such as Geert Luteijn and Wendy Bos from Our Future Network, who explained that their organization,

which is being facilitated by IKV-Pax Christi, stimulates dialogue between youth from Serbia, Kosovo, and The Netherlands.

The Network encourages them to participate more in their societies, and has contributed to creating consciousness and attitude change amongst Serbian and Albanian youth.

Organizations like YouAct, Choice, and the United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY) all work for creating change; changing attitudes towards reproductive and sexual rights, democracy, and peace, thereby providing space for youths to learn from each other and to voice their concerns. They also provide capacity building for youth; raise awareness on issues concerning them; and engage them in campaigning and advocacy for their rights.

In Cambodia, the struggles of civil war through different regimes spanning over three decades - some of which intentionally set out to dismantle and destroy traditional Cambodian society and culture - has devastated Cambodian individuals, families, and communities. Many Cambodians face difficulties in terms of dealing with anger and conflict in a productive and transforming way. This inability to transform conflict into constructive outcomes continues to inhibit the development of a just society in Cambodia. Since the genocidal regime - which killed over two million people - Cambodia has suffered eleven years of foreign communist occupation and civil war; political occupation by the United Nations; violent democratic elections; numerous coup attempts; and finally, ongoing reconstruction of Cambodian society in the midst of serious communal violence.

As the wartime causes of trauma recede, the social patterns of destructive conflict and violent power abuse are becoming embedded in the psyche and culture of younger generations of Cambodians. Although Cambodian youth and children cannot understand the depth of suffering and trauma experienced by their parents' generation,



they have experienced under their parents, teachers, and neighbors the corresponding patterns of control by threat and violence. The rise of gangs, prevalence of domestic violence, and gender-based violence are indicative of the simmering frustrations in many communities.

Cambodian Youth Peace Initiative

In 2004, World Vision Cambodia developed a curriculum called "Peace Road for Children" in a response to the social concerns and gender-based violence affecting Cambodian communities. The curriculum targeted children and youth, teaching them about peaceful and productive responses to conflict, injustice, violence, and diversity.

The main topics in the curriculum are:

- ✿ Exploring Who We Are
- ✿ Diversity
- ✿ Gender Equality
- ✿ Having Fun Without Hurting Anyone
- ✿ Healthy Relationship and
- ✿ Peacebuilding

The curriculum uses a range of teaching styles designed to reach participants with different learning styles, for example, participants investigate issues through speaking, writing, playing, drawing, discussing, acting, imagining, and more. The sessions encourage self-evaluation and self-expression as a springboard to effect behavioral change. There are also sessions on HIV/AIDS, drugs, alcohol, rape, pornography, and sexual harassment, which are the hot issues that young Cambodians encounter in their everyday life.

Through the participation in the program, youth have changed their attitudes and behavior, and have become very active in their communities, for example by organizing campaigns addressing domestic violence and drug use. Youth are advocating the importance of education; sharing their personal resources to help community members and their peers; and actively contribute to community development work.

On March 1, 2006, the youth coordinated a march against domestic violence and drug use. The children drew pictures, and raised some funds from NGOs, government officials and local authorities to support their activities. The program ran smoothly with over 150 children participating. The children distributed leaflets to the community members, in order to raise awareness on the consequences of domestic violence and drug use. This event was remarkable for the community, since it was the first time that children and youth had organized such an initiative.

Today, these youth are continuing their peace and development initiatives within the community; and over time have become more confident and active. They are now participating in village development meetings, and some of them have been invited to serve as committee members in the district youth department.

This shows that youth are important actors for change, as they have the energy to mobilize and speak for their vision; however, they need education, support, and space in order to provide their contributions towards positive social and political change. The support, capacity building, mentoring, and encouragement from adults and institutions are crucial to keep youth motivated to work for peace and social development in their countries. □

Empowered to Empower!

by Irene Kyazze

We gathered, we listened, we learned, and we shared. Some had met before, and others hadn't. But we had some things in common; we were women and we were peacemakers. We came from all over the world and from all walks of life, to the Netherlands, under the auspices of the Women Peacemakers Program of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation. For three days (20th – 22nd May 2008), we attended a consultative meeting which focused on impact measurement in relation to women's peace activism. Our facilitator was an experienced researcher, Lisette Caubergs, working with Atol, a Belgian consultancy organization that has developed a tool to measure empowerment.



WPP ToT participants at the consultative meeting

I felt so privileged to be part of this consultation as a youth working for peace, because I knew that there would be so much for me to learn. The consultation was offset by an engaging exercise in which we were told to introduce ourselves to the others by explaining what our names meant. This was an effective way of "breaking the ice" and enabling us to get to know each other better. By the end of the short exercise, we were calling each other by name! The next exercise was to make triangular presentations in which we told others more about ourselves, what measuring empowerment meant to us, as well as what measuring empowerment meant to our organizations. From this exercise, I felt more energized to continue working for peace. The exercise not only presented an excellent opportunity for me to present myself and my work to the others, but it also enabled me to get a clear picture of what they were doing.

Later on we were informed that although empowerment processes are not so predictable, we can establish indicators. Four major aspects to look out for when measuring empowerment are: the assets, the knowledge, the will, and the capacity people have. Furthermore, we learnt how to apply the empowerment tool at the different stages of a project, which are: baseline level, program input, program results, and program impact. Throughout the consultation, these four aspects guided us, as we learned how to measure empowerment even in our own work situations and countries. To enable us to practically apply the empowerment tool, the facilitator regularly divided us into groups, in which we, among other things, critically analyzed peace organizations within our own countries and developed result and impact indicators for them. Through the above exercises, we were able to strengthen our understanding of impact measurement and apply it to peace work, as well as produce a guideline for impact measurement, to be shared with others.

By the end of the consultation, I felt empowered as a young peacemaker, to apply the knowledge on impact measurement that I had just acquired, to my peace work in Uganda. Indeed, the consultation had empowered me to empower others! □



More Money for Young Peace Builders!

by Irene Kyazze

“Young people should be at the forefront of global change and innovation. Empowered, they can be key agents for development and peace. If, however, they are left on society’s margins, all of us will be impoverished. Let us ensure that all young people have every opportunity to participate fully in the lives of their societies.” Kofi Annan, Former Secretary General of the United Nations.

I agree with Kofi Annan, that since young people are the future generation, they need to be empowered in order for them to get involved in the world’s peace building initiatives. This is not yet the case in most countries however, especially in Africa where I come from. Over there, some of the people believe that the youth do not know very much and should leave conflict resolution and peace building to their elders, who have lived longer and therefore know much more about the world! I do know however, that there are many young people who are active in peace making and who would like to make a more visible contribution in resolving the conflicts within their countries. They are however, limited by lack of funds to do this.

As I was pondering over this, I had the opportunity to attend a seminar that was organized by the Women Peacemakers Program (WPP) of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, in cooperation with other peace and women’s organizations on “Money for Women Peace Makers.” The seminar was held on May 24th 2008 at the Theatre Concordia at the Hague, bringing together over one hundred peacemakers, both men and women, who not only commemorated the International Women’s day for Peace and Disarmament, but also celebrated 10 years of WPP’s existence. The peace activists discussed the impact of financial investments in women’s peace activism on the establishment of sustainable peace and justice. The focus of the seminar was on the costs of war, the benefits of peace, as well as funding and fundraising. Some of the guest speakers included; Ms. Isabelle Geuskens, (Program Manager WPP), Malalai Joya, (former member of the Afghan Parliament), Asha Elmi Haji (founder Sixth Clan Initiative, Somalia) and Elisabeth Porter (expert on peace and conflict from Australia).

I listened attentively as speaker after speaker made the case for the need for women’s participation in peace processes, and the need to channel more funds to support their initiatives. Elisabeth Porter commented that since women have a deep understanding of the atrocities of war as they are major victims, they are more inclined to create conditions for peace. This was reiterated by Dorothy Attema, WPP Regional Development Officer, who stated that women should be involved in peacebuilding because they are not afraid to address the root causes of the problems. Men often fall back into diplomacy, focusing more on issues of power.

Fundraising and Marketing

I was shocked to hear from one of the speakers that 30% of women’s organizations operated on a budget of only 20,000 US Dollars per year! These meager funds meant that women have to engage in ad hoc projects, which makes it difficult to make a substantial impact. As the discussions progressed, it was evident that far more money was spent on military interventions than on peace initiatives! By this time, I was wondering what youth peacemakers should do to

attract more finances for their projects. My question was answered during one of the workshops, where participants were taught how to fundraise locally and internationally. During this session, Marjan Sax from the Donor Academy empowered participants with skills on how to present themselves, their organizations, and their work to donors briefly but effectively. In a similar workshop, Mama Cash, a women’s fund based in the Netherlands, provided participants with tips and tricks on how women’s organizations can fundraise effectively. One of the tips was to research for organizations that fund programs that fit within the vision, themes, and criteria of the organization. The fundraising tips equipped the participants, many of whom were women peacemakers, with the skills to better solicit for funds for their peace activities.

In one of the workshops that I attended, we were urged to market our peace initiatives, by highlighting our successes. In the same session, we were encouraged to use the media to promote our initiatives and to make our organizations visible, which too would make it easier for us to solicit for funds from donors.

By the end of the seminar, as participants had made their case for the need for more money for women’s peace initiatives, I was thinking to myself that little money has been invested in peace initiatives for the youth and yet they too need to be empowered to increase their effectiveness in peace building! I also felt that if young people could use some of the strategies that women have used to get recognition at the negotiating table e.g. capacity building and coalition building, then they too will be listened to and will find their space at the negotiating table. I therefore feel that more money needs to be invested in young people’s peace initiatives as well, because they have a lot to contribute and the future depends on them. □



Irene and Sitha



3rd International Salon for Peace Initiative: Where are the young people?

By Chann Sitha Mark

From 30 May to 1 June, 2008, the 3rd International Salon for Peace Initiative (Salon de Paix) took place in Paris. The conference was organized by the French Coalition for the Decade in collaboration with the International Coalition for the Decade, in the framework of the "International Decade for the Promotion of a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for children of the World (2001-2010)".

When I arrived at the Cité des Sciences on the first day of the conference, I was impressed with the organization of the conference, as there were hundreds of people working for peace and nonviolence present. There were a lot of booths and exhibitions by peace organizations and movements presenting their activities through posters, photos, art, and crafts.



Cristina, WPP Gender Officer, Sitha and Irene at the 3rd International Salon for Peace Initiative

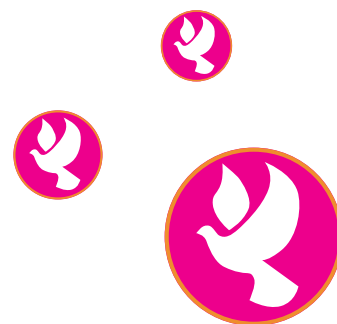
The conference consisted of panels, participative workshops, roundtables, workshops, and films, allowing peace actors from all over the world to meet and share experiences, activities, convictions, dreams, and difficulties they encounter.

The International Fellowship of Reconciliation's Women Peacemakers Program was invited to conduct a workshop on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, which calls for the full and equal participation of women in all peace and security initiatives, as well as stresses the need to take into account a gender perspective during peacekeeping and reconstruction activities. The implementation of the Resolution, as well as challenges encountered when doing so, were discussed during the workshop.

The conference provided a platform for peace activists to meet and encourage each other in the struggle for peace and justice. However, one thing that I observed during the conference, especially during the workshops, was that youth was hardly present during, even though the conference took place over the weekend. It made me wonder: "Where are the young people? Why are they hardly participating in this conference? Does this situation reflect that young people in Europe have little interest, or is it that they have a lot of opportunities and hence other priorities - having so many choices in this society? How can the wonderful work and experiences from the peace movement be passed on effectively to the next European generation? How it can be sustained?"

In Cambodia, if a conference like this would be organized, youth would form the majority of the participants. Because they do not have a lot of opportunities to access such knowledge, experiences, and networking, they would see it as an opportunity to learn and connect with others. Because of three decades of civil war, Cambodia faces a great challenge in terms of human resources in rebuilding and restoring the country. Many educated people have been killed during the genocide regime. Young people therefore are the core and the heart of Cambodia, active in forming groups, and willing to work for change and development.

According to my experience of working with children and youth in Cambodia, one effective way to reach and mobilize youth is through the use of peer education approaches, because youth tends to listen more to peers and friends than to adults. Therefore it is important to encourage platforms for young peacebuilders, so they can get together and share their experiences, and find encouragement. Also, forums facilitating skills and experience sharing between the older and younger generations need to be ensured, so both can work together across generation barriers for sustainable peace. □



Peace Work in Uganda

by Irene Kyazze



Irene at the Peace Palace, in The Hague

Since 2003, I have been working as the Coordinator for the Uganda Chapter of the AMANI Forum. My work is to organize and assist in the implementation of the Chapter's peace building and conflict resolution activities, and ensure that proper follow up is done.

The objective of the Forum is to promote peace and the peaceful resolution of conflicts in the Great Lakes Region. The Forum's activities are based on building the capacities of Parliamentarians to effectively engage in targeted peace interventions nationally and regionally by: Training them in conflict transformation and Parliamentary Practice; conducting fact finding missions to conflict affected areas; and conducting exchange visits and Inter-Parliamentary Dialogues.

During my work with the AMANI Forum, I have traveled with Ugandan Parliamentarians on fact finding missions to conflict-affected areas, and attended trainings on conflict transformation. This has built my capacity in peace building and has enabled me to make a contribution to peace work in Uganda.

Uganda has had a turbulent political history, filled with coup d'etats as a means of changing governments. During the coups, thousands of people were sent to prison and thousands more were killed. Uganda's leadership in the past was also tyrannical, which caused serious disruptions and eventual break down of the economy. In 1986, the National Resistance Movement Government took over power. They endeavored to rebuild the country, and currently there is a trend towards democracy. Although the country is experiencing relative peace, there are still some internal conflicts that exist. These include the Lords Resistance Army (LRA) rebellion in the Northern region; the cattle rustling in Karamoja; as well as land conflicts within the entire country.

The Impact of Conflict on the Youth

It is within the above context that the Forum has endeavoured to involve Ugandan Parliamentarians in resolving the internal conflicts of the country. In 2006, I was privileged to attend one of the fact finding missions in Northern Uganda, where the LRA rebel group has been waging war and committing atrocities against civilians. The local people who had been living in internally displaced people's (IDP) camps for a long time were trying to resettle back into their homes. The AMANI Forum had gone there to monitor their resettlement process. During this mission I observed the effects that the conflict has had on the communities, and particularly the youth. Many of the young girls in northern Uganda reported that they had been abducted by the rebels and others raped, while many were engaging in early marriages. Some of the young boys were ex-combatants, having been forced to become child soldiers, while others were getting more involved in alcohol abuse due to the high rate of unemployment in the camps.

Although the AMANI Forum does not directly work with youth, traveling to conflict areas with the Forum has enabled me to observe the untold suffering that conflict has caused on the youth in Uganda. I now feel that the youth should be an integral part of any conflict resolution or peace building initiatives, because during any conflict, youth are always at the forefront and on either side; i.e. sometimes they are abducted and forced to be soldiers, while they may also suffer the brunt of the wars, when the societal structures collapse due to conflict. The good news is that conflict resolution has now been made part of the school curriculum, and so young people in Uganda can acquire the appropriate knowledge, skills, and attitude to contribute positively to the maintenance of peace in the country. □



My Journey in Peacebuilding

By Channitha Mark

In June 2003, I had an opportunity to work with Southeast Asia Conflict Studies Network (SEACSN) as a workshop coordinator. I was coordinating SEACSN regional workshops which brought peace activists from Southeast Asia together to discuss conflict situations in the region, and approaches in terms of addressing them. The workshops and consultations inspired me, and I became interested in becoming part of this journey to contribute to peace and social change in Cambodia.

Later that year, I had an opportunity to work for a peacebuilding project with World Vision Cambodia (WVC), for a period of four years. As a humanitarian and development organization, WVC's peacebuilding initiative focused mainly on conflict-sensitive programming through the mainstreaming of "Do No Harm/Local Capacity for Peace" into its programs, and the development of a peace education curriculum for children, while other initiatives on staff and interfaith peacebuilding are well taken care.

I participated in a Do No Harm/Local Capacity for Peace (LCP) Training of Trainers (ToT), and after that conducted two ToTs for WVC and the WV Sri Lanka Tsunami Response team. I have also been involved in LCP assessments in Cambodia, and have conducted LCP introduction trainings to WVC staff and partner NGOs. In addition, I have been involved in mainstreaming LCP into programming and project cycle processes to ensure that program implementation is conflict-sensitive. I have also been taking part in the development of a peace education curriculum for children, and started an interfaith peacebuilding initiative amongst young people in Cambodia.



Sitha in Brussels on the way from Paris

Since October 2007, I continue working for peacebuilding and conflict transformation as a program coordinator with Action Asia. Action Asia is an Asian network of individuals and organizations committed to conflict transformation through the sharing of skills, knowledge, experiences, and resources. The network was inspired by Responding to Conflict (RTC), a British-based organization which over the past ten years has annually hosted a "Working with Conflict" course. My program with Action Asia focuses on strengthening the existing structures for peace inside our program areas, through building the capacity for peace; analysis and strategy development; networking; and supporting communication.

My journey into peacebuilding and conflict transformation is a privilege. It allows me to process my personal transformation, walking side by side with many other peacebuilders around the world in bringing about change, social justice, and sustainable peace. □

Transformation Begins with Self Consciousness

By Channitha Mark

In many societies injustice, inequality, structural, and cultural violence against women have been embedded deeply into daily life and practices. This sometimes makes us think and feel that it is normal, and that this is the way the world operates. So for a person to realize that violence or discrimination exists in his/her country and its institutions, and to stand up for one's rights, is not an easy decision. Because decision means challenging the systems, and the people who benefit from it.



Irene and Bertram Flesch, Kerke en Vrede Intern

On Wednesday, May 7th 2008, during my first week on the International Orientation Program at the International Fellowship of Reconciliation's (IFOR) Women Peacemakers Program (WPP), Irene Kyazze, my counterpart from Uganda, and I had a meeting with Isabelle Geuskens, the WPP program manager. She shared with us the reason why WPP existed, and had become successful over the past ten years. The WPP was born out of the concern of a woman standing up during the 1992 IFOR Council. She mentioned how women were active in IFOR's peacebuilding and reconciliation work on the ground, yet in terms of being present at decision-making moments, were largely left out. As a consequence, the Women Peacemakers Program was established, to support women peacemakers in IFOR, in order to build their capacity and strengthen their peacebuilding efforts on national and international level.

When I attended the WPP Training of Trainers Consultation on measuring women's empowerment later that month, the participants started the meeting with an exercise, in which they told their names and the meaning behind it. I noticed from the sharing that several of the women had changed their names over time, because of their names revealing their ethnicity or clan identity, or because of the violence that they had experienced because of it. They wanted to be called differently, in order to start a new chapter in their lives, the new name reflecting who they are and what they believe in.

These stories were powerful, because the women had made a political decision in order to start a new chapter in their lives, their decisions in turn having a big impact on the lives of other women they are working with. It encourages and inspires me as a young woman, as I learn from their experiences: They choose to challenge and struggle as a way out, rather than becoming the victim. Women's self-understanding and consciousness are important to recognize and realize that any form of violence against women is not acceptable, that women are human beings who deserve to be treated equally and justly in their communities, societies, and the whole world. Women have to speak out for their own rights, and have to voice their concerns in order to be heard by the world. □



Peace: Take a Step

By Channsitha Mark



Photo by Sitha in Egmond Aan Zee

When one is looking at nature, it is so diverse. There are trees with different shapes, used for different purposes. You can find different types of flowers, producing different smells. Even water is different; there is sea water and river water, with different tastes. And there are so many different animals, birds, insects, and so on.

What about human beings? Yes, human beings are also diverse: There are men and women, boys and girls, old and young, black and white, yellow and dark, short and tall, physically challenged people – living in different places all over the world, holding different cultures, religions, values, and beliefs.

However, if one looks at the world, there are so many conflicts, so much violence, prejudice, and discrimination going on because of our differences. The question that I struggle with is: “Does one realize that we are living in a diverse world?”

I think everyone must have noticed.

So, why does difference most of the times lead to violence?

Although being born in Cambodia, a Buddhist country, I do not know much about Buddhism because our religious values have been so destroyed by the civil wars that Cambodia faced over the past three decades. In 1988, when I was six years old, I converted to the Christian faith because my mother is a Christian. Through her faith in God, she could survive during the Khmer Rouge regime. Becoming a Christian, I attended Service every Sunday, studied the Bible, and listened to the Sunday school teacher and pastor. Through this, I have learned a lot about Christian core values and beliefs, which I much appreciated.

However, the challenge that I have encountered is that I began to see myself isolated from others, especially my friends, because of our religious differences. I have been taught to be fearful of other religions, and that my religion is the only truth.

So I did not see and appreciate the diversity that I was living in; my eyes remained closed. I often found myself “clicking” with people who were like me, and I have tried to convince others to be like me, believing that heaven and peace can only become reality when everyone is Christian.

One day, in class, a classmate asked me: “Are you a Christian?” I responded happily: “Yes, I am”, after which she began to ask me about my church, my denomination, and my pastor. After our conversation, I realized that I am not part of her group, even though I am a Christian, because I am

not a member of her Church and denomination. This experience made me realize that even amongst Christians there are so many groups and denominations, and exclusion practices, because of these differences.

From this experience, and through my participation in critical feminist theology with the Asian Women’s Resource Centre for Culture and Theology, my eyes and mind began to open. I had begun to read the Bible critically from my own perspective and experiences as a woman and a Cambodian. What does the Bible mean to me as a woman and Christian in Cambodia? When the Bible talks about love, what does it mean to me? I began to analyze situations and practices, what people said and how they acted, and how people are treated differently and violently because of their sex, color, race, and class - even if they are in the same religion. And I questioned myself: How can I practice and exercise my faith for peace, justice, and liberation, rather than for violence, hatred, and discrimination and oppression?

The experience I had with my classmate and the trainings I have gone through constantly remind me that I am living in diversity. I cannot tell anyone to be like me, it is impossible and wrong to do so, because everyone is unique and valuable. And because of our uniqueness, we need unity rather than uniformity. The world is bigger than myself, my community, my religion, so I need to ask myself how I can live with the people around me in a respectful and harmonious way, even if we are different. Through my peace work with World Vision Cambodia, my journey in interfaith peacebuilding began. I decided to take a step forward by relating with people from different faith traditions. I visited the mosque and the Buddhist temple, places which I considered as an evil place and had so much fear of when I first became a Christian. I have learned so much from my Muslim and Buddhist friends when they talked about themselves and their religions. Through the visits, relationships, and engagements I had, the stereotypes within me have been reduced.

However, it was not an easy decision to take, because my community suspected that I might no longer be a pure Christian, and that soon I will be one “amongst them”, my Christian faith being fake. At the same time, my friends with different faiths did not trust me either, as they were afraid that I might have a hidden agenda in relating with them. It took years for me to build trust and confidence between myself and my friends from other faiths.

The experiences I have had have been really rich, which leads me to believe that peace can only prevail when every person has a space in this world, filled with love, respect, dignity, and value - regardless who the person is. Peace is possible if one takes the risk to step outside of one’s comfort zone, by reaching out and learning from others, constantly engaging and working with them. Especially reaching out to those people whom we do not like, or have a negative image about, so that we can understand them better, enabling us to engage in dialogue, and start appreciating our uniqueness, and celebrate our differences. □

“Between individuals as between nations,
respect for each other brings peace”

Mexico



Apply for an Internship with IFOR's Women Peacemakers Program NOW!



The objectives of the International Orientation are:

- ✦ to facilitate skills sharing between peace activists from different regions, concentrating on women and youth, by supporting international participation in trainings, and finding and supporting temporary placements in peace projects and offices for periods of up to six weeks.
- ✦ to provide specific orientation to help program participants further their thinking and familiarity with critical international issues in conflict resolution, development, human rights and gender awareness.

Responsibilities of the Intern:

[01] Participants will have previously researched the situation of peace and relevant NGOs, including the IFOR member, in their country. They will make presentations on their findings to the IFOR international secretariat staff and to other interested parties.

[02] Participants will write an article in English on their findings and on their experiences during the International Orientation for possible publication in IFOR/WPP publications.

[03] Participants may design their own program in cooperation with another IFOR branch, group or affiliate. For example, a participant may offer to work on a training program or in the office of an IFOR branch, group or affiliate in another country during their orientation. In such cases, the WPP will pay for the participants' international travel costs, including visa costs. The host branch will be responsible for the costs of food, local travel and housing.

[04] Participants will engage in all evaluations of the International Orientation.

[05] Participants must purchase beforehand and pay for medical/health insurance, for coverage during the period of their international orientation.

[06] During their visit to the IFOR international secretariat, participants may also develop proposals for activities they wish to carry out after their return home. If feasible, the WPP will organize possible visits to funders during their stay, to whom proposals may be presented.

[07] Participants may participate in peace-related workshops, trainings or conferences that coincide with their visit to the international secretariat in the Netherlands.

[08] Participants will be expected to engage in the daily work of the international secretariat's staff. They may be asked to carry out assigned tasks from International Secretariat staff. Such tasks may include routine work such as photocopying, stuffing envelopes, etc.

[09] Another task will be compiling a Youth Newsletter (like the one you are reading now), including information about activities in the IFOR branches, groups and affiliates like youth peace camps, internships, trainings and other opportunities for youth. The Newsletter will be laid out and distributed among IFOR branches and other contacts.

Please fill out the form and return it to:

IFOR, WPP, Spoorstraat 38,
1815 BK Alkmaar, the Netherlands
Or email Cristina Reyna:
c.reyna@ifor.org

Name:
Date of birth:
Name on your passport:
Passport number:
Nationality:
Issued on (day/month/year):
Issued at:
Expires on (day/month/year):
Organization:
Address:
Country:
Telephone:
Fax:
Email:

Give the best time and way (email or telephone) to reach you:

Dates (months) you would be available for participation in the International Orientation:

Which months will it be impossible for you to participate?

Why are you interested in participating in the International Orientation?

What is your involvement in peace work?

What is your organization's involvement in peace work?

What do you hope to gain by participating in the International Orientation program?

How will you spread what you have learned during the International Orientation with others?

Have you ever participated in any similar activities before? If yes, when and where?

Are you a member of an IFOR branch, group or affiliate? If so, which one?

NOTE: Members of an IFOR branch, group or affiliate must include with this application a recommendation letter from their branch or group.





The Time is Now! was produced by **Irene Kyazze** (Uganda) and **Channitha Mark** (Cambodia) in the framework of the Women Peacemaker Program (WPP) International Orientation as a forum for youth across the globe.

The 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 and IFOR branches in your country please visit: www.ifor.org

