



## South Sudan conference in June

On Saturday 23 March updates were made to the Journey of Healing for National Reconciliation in South Sudan, including the rescheduling of the launch event.

During a meeting with the full Organizing Committee, led by Vice President Dr. Riek Machar and attended by Presidential Advisor Tor Deng and members of the Sudan Council of Churches and noted academics, those present discussed the current realities of the campaign and drew two conclusions:

» First, consultations over the past month with many non-government groups and actors – such as faith-based and traditional leaders, women and civil society – have unearthed intense controversy over the reconciliation process. This was, indeed, one of the aims of the initiative. But more time is clearly needed for all major stakeholders to buy into the process so that it is carried by a broad-based coalition and so that feedback from the States can be heard.

» Secondly, the austerity crisis in South Sudan, caused by conflict



*Meeting between South Sudan Government and international NGOs on upcoming national reconciliation campaigns (Sudan Tribune)*

with Khartoum resulting in loss of oil revenues for over 18 months, has put severe financing constraints on the project. Many other sources of funding are being approached, but more time is needed to ensure this support.

### Training will go ahead

For these and other reasons, the meeting rescheduled the start of the national reconciliation in two stages:  
» The training of the 200 Peace and

Reconciliation mobilizers will go ahead, beginning in the first week of April. The IofC facilitation team has already trained 10 South Sudanese facilitators and has six civil society organizations ready to give input into the programme. The team has prepared a design that will allow participants to internalize and experience reconciliation. After four weeks of training, the “mobilizers” will be immediately deployed in consultations in their own States and counties helping to create the groundswell before the launch.

» The launch event originally planned for 18 April will be held in Juba 1-4 June. The outreach campaign will now take place from mid-April through May, using workshops, meetings and consultations, top-down and bottom-up approaches.

See: [www.iofc.org/update-reconciliation-efforts-south-sudan](http://www.iofc.org/update-reconciliation-efforts-south-sudan)

*from Mike Brown in Juba*

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## IofC South Sudan officially registered

### It's been a long time coming.

South Sudan's General Joseph Lagu first attended an IofC (then MRA) conference in 1987. At that time he was Vice President of Sudan and was best known for founding Anyanya, South Sudan's first liberation movement. Now, as a respected Elder of the newly independent South Sudan, he has lived to see IofC registered in his beloved homeland.

In the meantime, many others have caught the vision: Tor Deng, George Justin Achor, James Reat, Deng Deng Akoon, Angelina Teny and the hard working Tongo James who has led a youth group from Juba on the IofC

journey for two years now.

When the official Registration Certificate was delivered to Madame Angelina Teny and Tongo James last Saturday, the jubilation in the room was palpable. For a nation wrestling with vast opportunities and complex challenges, the presence of a network of dedicated people who are committed to personal and social transformation will undoubtedly be a force for good.

### Constitution

IofC South Sudan includes some high profile members: the Vice President's wife, a Presidential

Adviser and an Undersecretary of the Republic. In a nation that is scrambling for positions of authority, it is a courageous move for the Constitution to state that “all members of the association have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other.”

*Kathryn Gor*

See: [www.iofc.org/iofc-officially-registered-south-sudan](http://www.iofc.org/iofc-officially-registered-south-sudan)

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## Tests and opportunities continued from Page 1

Two weeks after the training of 200 peace and reconciliation mobilisers was due to begin, the training team is still in the preparation phase after grappling with logistical challenges and other realities of operating here.

At the same time, the delay has been a blessing for the preparation of the content and for the training of the team of facilitators which brings together scattered IofC trainers, Workshop for Africa participants and local South Sudanese.

With the conference postponed until June, the training of the peace mobilisers takes on a new dimension

in the reconciliation process. There is an expectation that their work will be central to consultations preceding the conference.

### Place of personal transformation

The program preserves the integral place of personal transformation. A strategy is needed for the dialogue to reach the grassroots. The question of reconciliation provokes passionate debate, and the opportunity is there to coalesce that energy into a strong force over the months ahead.

The initiative is a test for all involved. Do we have a meaningful

contribution to make in terms of training? Are our ways of operating up to the organisational task of facilitating mobilization on such a scale? Many questions and opportunities for learning already, and no doubt more to come. In the meantime, preparations continue, in anticipation of the landing of 200 South Sudanese from all ten states and almost all the local counties.

*Rob Lancaster writes from South Sudan.*

## Surprises and sunrises at Asia Plateau

As our bus wound its way ever higher, navigating the hairpin bends along the narrow roads of India's Western Ghats, I had to consciously decide to "let go and let God". This was definitely a trip outside my comfort zone.

Arriving finally at Asia Plateau, the IofC centre high in the tablelands of Maharashtra, we gasped at this oasis of greenery, of gum trees and bright bougainvilleas.

It had been 35-40 years since Graeme and I had each separately made this same journey in our twenties. Now we were suddenly addressed respectfully as "uncle" and "aunty". New friends warmly remembered our son, David, a previous participant in the Asia Plateau Internship Program.

The current interns – this year from Afghanistan, Egypt, Fiji, Korea, the Camerons and India – taught me more about "letting go". After an initial life-story-sharing session, Graeme and I found ourselves creating an impromptu power-point course on spirituality and the dynamics of addiction - personal, national and global.

Yet it was the interns' warmth and openness to learn that touched me most. In sharing our life's journeys and mistakes, and listening to each other's often hard childhood beginnings, we were all enriched.

More memories stand out, like meeting an 81-year-old lady who arrived from UK on her third annual visit to look after flower arrangements at Asia Plateau. Last year her visit included paragliding off the plateau behind the centre!

A team of retired high-level civil servants arrived to co-host a Dialogue on Making Democracy Real. They are part of a group called IC Centre for Governance. These ex-bureaucrats meet every Thursday in Delhi with continuing outreach into the Indian democracy of 1.2 billion.

### Meaning and reality

Meeting Mr. Bo Bo Oo from Burma/Myanmar was a highlight. Recently released after twenty years in prison for his political beliefs, including six in solitary confinement, Bo Bo's story added meaning and



*Panel at the Dialogue on Democracy, I-r Graeme Cordiner, Myrna Lewis, Bo Bo Oo*

reality to our Democracy Dialogue discussions. He is now working with Aung San Suu Kyi.

We were amazed by the seven IofC conferences squeezed into our six weeks at Asia Plateau. These conferences are ongoing - for managers, trade unionists, municipal workers, police, army, civil servants, etc. Each time a new team arrives from around India to help facilitate. There are countless stories of men and women returning home to then run similar workshops in situ, impacting tens of thousands more with the values expressed in IofC. The cycle of change continues – as does the finance, as companies pay for the regular IofC training programs.

Sitting with the Interns on the edge of the plateau at sunrise on January 1st, I felt the promise of a new year of learning to "let go and let God" ...

*by Sallie Cordiner*

*For a full report of the 2013 Dialogue "Making Democracy Real", visit: [www.iofc.org/dialogue-democracy-report-conclusion](http://www.iofc.org/dialogue-democracy-report-conclusion)*

## Sydney fundraiser



*At a Sydney fundraiser for the IofC South Sudan initiative.*

*From left: Flavia Abdurahman, Rothay and Outama Abhay, Shoshana Faire, Patrick Dako, Benjamin Wani, Patricia Garcia. Australians have so far donated over \$50,000. Photo: Alan Bassal.*

## Gandhis in Australia

Rajmohan Gandhi, past president of IofC International, and his wife Usha visited Australia in March. In Canberra Prof Gandhi gave three lectures as part of the ANU Research School of Asia and the Pacific's Distinguished Visitor program. The Gandhis were received at the Indian High Commission and had a meeting at Parliament with former Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd. They stayed at Armagh, the IofC centre, in Melbourne for several days and visited Bendigo where Prof Gandhi delivered Latrobe University's annual Sir John Quick Memorial Lecture. Sarah Mayor Cox, a lecturer at the University, writes:

After months of planning we were thrilled to be able to welcome Rajmohan and Usha Gandhi to Bendigo.

In the afternoon Rajmohan worked with two dozen student leaders from the senior schools. He was introduced by Chris Mayor, old friend and colleague, then talked of his experiences of finding a purpose for his life, as influenced by his grandfather's beliefs. In true Rajmohan style his gentle and self-



Photo: Professor Rajmohan Gandhi

deprecating wit won the hearts of the audience. It was humbling for these students to hear him tell them that he felt Australia was in good hands with young leaders such as these coming through.

### Bad press unwarranted

The students worked in mixed groups discussing the challenges they faced as leaders. Each table group had a number of quotes from Mahatma Gandhi to get the discussion started. They then shared a summary of their discussions and Rajmohan was able

to respond to their comments. The summaries were moving, challenging and extremely insightful, and a really good reminder that the bad press young people get is largely unwarranted.

The Sir John Quick Memorial Lecture that evening in Bendigo's magnificent Capital Performing Arts Centre saw about 300 people arrive to hear Rajmohan not only talk of his grandfather and his own life but then "be in conversation" on stage with four of the students who had attended the workshop. Again the students were poised, thoughtful and very natural on stage as they shared what they had learnt working with Rajmohan that afternoon. Two former politicians commented that it was the best Sir John Quick lecture they had attended.

Rajmohan graciously signed books and talked to people until we finally whisked him and Usha home to Chris and Janet Mayor's for a good rest.

*Sarah Mayor Cox lectures in Education, specialising in children's literature.*

## Creators of Peace making waves on the Sunshine Coast...

Seven women gathered for a Creators of Peace lunch on the Sunshine Coast including Minna Palsio, visiting from Finland. It was a chance for us to share our connections over some years with IofC.

Minna has often worked in Caux, including helping to run the Caux Interns programme. It was especially exciting to hear about her thesis on Creators of Peace which is being translated into English. She will base on the Sunshine Coast for some months.

There is a plan to have a Creators of Peace Circle on the Sunshine Coast in September.

*Lesley Bryant*

## ... and in Sydney

Following the Creators of Peace Annual Celebration in the Auburn Centre for Community last year (attended by 86 women), CoP has started regular "get-togethers" there on the fourth Saturday of each month. As they complete a Circle new graduates can join in.

There is a topic for each meeting. Recently participants explored "Apology & forgiveness is a personal journey". The women want to "replenish and renew themselves and each other".

The Centre is in the heart of Auburn, one of the most multicultural communities in Australia. Thus the cycle of CoP Circles around the Auburn area will continue with Peace Circle graduates having a "home" - to enable us to reconnect with CoP colleagues every fourth Saturday.

Among the aims are :

- » To share feedback about "How I am creating peace"

- » To keep in touch and continue the journey
  - » To bring friends to experience what Creators of Peace is about
  - » To work on connecting CoP to schools
  - » To have a Peace Circle book club, to share books by inspiring people
- All sorts of community building plans emerge. Recently, some from this group worked on the IofC/CoP information stand at the Africulture Festival.

*The Hills Shire Times*, a weekly paper with a readership of 77,000, reported in January that over 40 CoP circles had taken place in Sydney in the last nine years with the aim "to initiate change". They interviewed Zohra Aly, a local resident who has been responsible for organising several Circles in the Hills.

*Trish McDonald-Harrison and Fatma Isir*



64 Barnsbury Grove, Bardwell Park NSW

## Looking to the future - grateful for the past

As the house belonging to IofC in Sydney, 64 Barnsbury Grove, goes on the market after 25 years of being a family home, a guesthouse, an office, a meeting place and planning centre for many initiatives, my thoughts go to the lady who made it all possible in the first place.

Nan Hall, a headmistress and an artist, had bought a home in the seaside suburb of Cremorne for her retirement. "It was derelict," she told me, "and I organised the renovation and outside decking. I have never enjoyed anything more than creating that home."

Four years later, Peter and Rosemary Thwaites, expecting their first child, came to live in Sydney to work with Initiatives of Change. Nan made the costly and extraordinary decision to move to a retirement village to make her home available to them. David and I later occupied the home for two and a half years.

In 1988 it seemed to be right to sell this house in order to buy something bigger for the work. The proceeds of the sale not only bought 64 Barnsbury Grove, a four-bedroom home on the South side of Sydney, but also put a large sum towards the renovations for the other IofC Sydney property in Mosman (since sold). When David and I brought Nan, well into her nineties, to see the new Bardwell Park home she had made possible, she was delighted and wrote

in our Visitors Book "Home is where the heart is."

### Muslim/Christian dialogues

Through the ensuing years, and together with a lively wider Sydney team, this home has seen the launch of a series of teenage camps through the 90s, four international conferences at Collaroy Plateau, major Muslim/Christian dialogues across Sydney, the building of links with Solomon Islands Winds of Change in their work for reconciliation, peace and good governance, Creators of Peace circles - including the only Sydney men's circle, youth training and more besides.

Sydney is an exciting city in which to bring IofC ideas to bear on community building, youth training, interfaith work, and meeting and supporting outstanding individuals who are shaping the direction of this nation. Though this home will no longer be available, there is a network of people committed to quiet times, to moving out of their comfort zones to build bridges with those who are different from them, and being ready to start with themselves to model the changes needed in our society.

I am grateful for this home, for Nan's extraordinary sacrifice, for all those we have had the privilege of working alongside, and for a sense of divine leading now and into the future.

*Jane Mills*

## Book Talk

Former Prime Minister **Malcolm Fraser, AC, CH** will launch *The Promise of Diversity* by John Williams and John Bond at Armagh on 16 April. The book tells the story of Professor Jerzy Zubrzycki, often called the father of Australian multiculturalism. It is published by Grosvenor Books Australia. **[\$18.00 incl. p&p]**

Time: Tuesday, 16 April 2013, 6pm

Place: Armagh, 226 Kooyong Road, Toorak

*Also available from Grosvenor Books, Armagh:*

*The Power of Silence* by **Graham Turner**

In the modern world we are assaulted on all sides by noise; but silence can change your life. Graham Turner explores the power found in silence through interviewing monastics, religious leaders, composers, actors, psychotherapists, prisoners and peace workers about their experiences.

Ranging from Christian contemplation in the Egyptian desert to Vipassana meditation in India, from the shared silence of Quaker meetings in Oxford to the profound stillness of the Alps, this is a powerful book about a great gap in human awareness.

**[\$30.00 incl. p&p]**

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*The Boy who Wouldn't Die* by **David Nguol Vincent** and **Carol Nader**

At the age of six David began the journey which eventually led to Australia. He and his father walked barefoot across war-ravaged southern Sudan desperately searching for safety, food and water, surviving the Sahara Desert, crossing into Ethiopia. David was taken in and trained as a child soldier, surviving the next 17 years in refugee camps struggling against starvation, air bombings and people determined to kill him.

In 2004 he was offered a humanitarian visa and resettled in Australia. Slowly he went about the process of making a new life; one where David is determined to improve the plight of his people both in Australia and in Sudan.

**[\$30.00 incl. p&p]**

### Clarification:

I wrote in the last *Newsbriefs* that I had found "freedom of heart through forgiving the Nazis for the holocaust." That forgiveness can only apply to myself and my own situation. It was not meant to apply to the many millions of others who suffered from the evils of Nazism and continue to suffer. I am not forgetting and not condoning.

*Liz Brumer*

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