

Scared no longer in Cambodia

A year ago a group of Cambodians travelled to Vietnam for the first Cambodia-Vietnam dialogue. Then in July this year, 23 Vietnamese travelled to Cambodia for the second dialogue, in which 50 people took part. Pheng Sopheap and Kim Vuth report:

For some Vietnamese, it was hard to go. "My parents were so worried due to the terrible kidnapping in Siem Reap," said one, "and I was scared because I heard that Cambodians don't like the Vietnamese."

The dialogue opened in Phnom Penh with a welcome from Kim Vuth, President of Initiatives of Change Cambodia. "We can only face the future by understanding our past, and we can do that together," he said. "We are too young to be responsible for the past, but we are all responsible for the future." Later he told how his life had been changed by the Asia-Pacific Youth Conference in Malaysia in 2002.

We went by bus to Siem Reap, where we visited Angkor Wat, and had a time of silence together at the top – known as the 37th floor of heaven. Then on to Battambang where Bunkheng, an initiator

of Initiatives of Change in Cambodia, told how they had begun by putting their money together to rent a small place to meet, share life stories, and give free lessons in English and computers to poor people.

Each day of the dialogue there was time for quiet, for searching discussion on issues such as forgiveness, and for interaction with Cambodians such as Dr Ok Serei Sopheap, founder of the Peace Centre, and Buddhist and Christian leaders.

Many of the Vietnamese stayed with Cambodian families. "I asked my Mum if my Vietnamese friends could stay at our home," said one participant. "She didn't like the idea. Two days later, I asked her again and she was silent. That meant she agreed. I took two friends for the first day and my parents enjoyed them. A day later I took two more. My

Mum said, 'These people are so good.' This is the first time she has begun to love the Vietnamese."

On our return to Phnom Penh, we visited the Vietnamese community there, where we received an amazing welcome. Everyone listened as we told of our experiences. In the evening, we met Son Soubert, a member of the Constitutional Council of Cambodia. He runs two orphanages with over 200 children and we were welcomed by the children performing traditional dances. "Although we Cambodians have freedom, not everyone is justly treated," he told us. "We are old now. The future is yours, whether for war or reconciliation. We have done our small job. We cannot guide you, but we will walk alongside you to fulfil your dream."

Yong Kim Eng, President of the Khmer Youth Association, was the closing speaker, and left us with a challenge: "Peace will not happen until you make it happen every day."

And the Vietnamese who was scared to come? "I enjoyed every minute of the visit," he said.

Initiatives of Change Cambodia has now opened an office in Phnom Penh, which has been purchased through donations from people active in lofC's work in the region. The American Friends' Services Committee (Quakers), seeing the significance of their work, is paying to equip the office, funding four Cambodians to work full-time with lofC, and supporting lofC projects including the Dialogue.

Farmers dialogue in rural Australia

Phil Jefferys is the Australian representative for the Farmers' Dialogue, which is building farmer-to-farmer links across national boundaries with the aim of better meeting the need of all countries for food and clothing. Phil, a former wool grower from Broken Hill, has participated in Farmers' Dialogues in Thailand, India and Cambodia.

Last month he and his wife Margaret met farming families from sheep and grain farms around Wagga Wagga, in the rice growing areas at Deniliquin, in the broad acre farming country around Watchem, in the mixed stock and cropping country near Naracoorte, and on fruit farms around Tooleybuc.

In Wagga they also met Kay Hull,

National Party Member for the Riverina, who recently crossed the floor of Parliament to oppose the sale of Telstra – an issue of great concern to rural Australians.

The aim of the trip, Phil says, was to begin to establish a network of farmers in Australia who want to be part of a dialogue within Australia and with other countries in our region.

Warm welcome

He and Margaret found a warm welcome everywhere and plenty of interest. Thanks to the recent rain, some of the farms they visited are doing better than for years, though others are still in serious drought. Everywhere farmers are feeling

squeezed as costs rise and supermarket chains force down the price they receive for their produce. And the large subsidies which American and European governments pay their farmers adds to the problems.

But there was also a readiness to see that change is needed among Australian farmers too. In Wagga, over a barbecue at the home of Ron and Cynthia Lawler, a long-established grain farmer said that the major issues for rural Australia are "increasing greed and a loss of community loyalty."

Next month Phil will go to India to take part in a further Dialogue. He looks forward to a growing Australian contribution to overcoming the farming problems of the region. "The concerns of farmers are basically the same in all our countries, and we can learn a lot from each other," he says.

Defusing the humiliation bomb

The anti-terrorist laws being debated in Parliament may help safeguard us from terrorism, or they may prove counter-productive. But any strategy aimed at defeating terrorism must give high priority to building understanding, respect and trust between Muslim and non-Muslim Australians.

Initiatives of Change is much involved in this. Sydneysiders David and Jane Mills have been at the heart of an initiative which has brought together the city's Muslim and Christian leaders in a series of large-scale forums on "The values we have in common".

Now the idea is spreading and, as we go to press, the Brisbane Muslim School is hosting a "Symposium on Muslims, Christians and Jews – an open look at what brings us together". Speakers include Anglican Archbishop Phillip Aspinall, Catholic Bishop Brian Finnigan, Rabbi Uri Themal and Keysar Trad, Founder of the Islamic Friendship Association of Australia. Chris Cummins, Queensland's Minister for Multicultural Affairs, opens the symposium, and Councillor Campbell Newman, Lord Mayor of Brisbane, is also attending. The symposium is facilitated by ABC journalist Geraldine Doogue.

At an Initiatives of Change conference at Caux, Switzerland in August, Dr Aleya el Bindari-Hammad from Egypt, former Executive Director of the World Health Organisation, gave her insights on this challenge:

Humiliation is the "nuclear bomb of feelings", in the words of psychologist and peace activist, Evelin Gerda Lindner.

I am sure that everyone has experienced an episode, if not more than one, when they have felt deeply humiliated.

How do we react when we are treated unjustly, when we are pinned down, when we are shown, sometimes by force, that our will does not matter because someone else's might is stronger? Many people are trapped in humiliating situations, where their dignity and self-respect are continually violated. Some retreat and become closed-up, depressed and passive. Others convert their anger into an intense drive to change the situation. Still others are misled into thinking they can find a release in violent revenge.

We need to try to understand why people engage in acts that most of us consider immoral, inhuman and incomprehensible. I think it's because the perpetrators, correctly or not, perceive themselves to have been the victims of acts equally immoral, inhuman and incomprehensible.

When seen through the prism of humiliation, the phenomenon of female suicide bombers shouldn't surprise us. To varying degrees, girls grow up not only experiencing discrimination themselves, but seeing humiliation suffered by the women around them. For some there comes a time when the consciousness of inequality seeps in.

The goal of extremist leaders is to limit the choices that such a young

woman feels she has. Once she is convinced that she has no other choice, she can be led to participate in desperate acts. Some women see extremism as offering a sense of equality, where value is measured by the level of your passion, not your position in society.

So how do we help change people's psychology? Restoring dignity includes the provision of physical security and basic needs and rights. But none of this is enough until people's psychological needs are addressed. To start doing that, we have to reframe:

Who do we listen to?

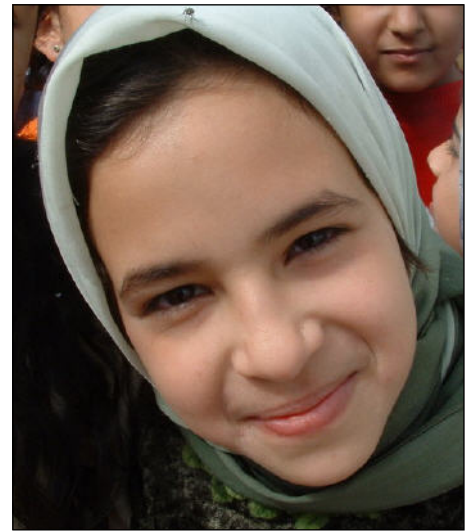
Do we only listen to the powerful, or are we also going to listen to communities, families, marginalized groups, and even groups who have been responsible for oppression and violence? Being listened to is one of the most fundamental ways of being accorded respect.

The religious discourse

In addition to inter-faith communication, we need more intra-faith dialogues within the Muslim world. Grievances and differences need to be heard and discussed; mainstream leaders need to explore how extremism has highjacked the discourse and how to reclaim it.

Being a Muslim today carries with it a high risk factor. I was in New York during 9/11 and saw the devastation, panic and horrendous suffering and pain. I felt terrible, like everybody else, but worse once I found out the identity of the terrorists. It was as if I had been personally responsible!

There's been a tendency to lump all



Iraqi girl living next to Al Daura Oil Refinery in Baghdad. The photo was taken before the recent Gulf War by Christiana Briggs who was part of the Human Shield Action and made available under the GNU Free Documentation Licence

Muslims together. But there are those for whom the pain cuts very deep. Like me, they want to cry out that Islam does not equal terrorism.

Some will express their hurt by playing out their faith more visibly through stricter attire and more austere behaviour. These external manifestations are not harmful and should not be looked upon with suspicion.

How young people see their future

Many suicide bombers come from relatively educated, middle-class backgrounds and are not direct victims of material desperation. But they suffer from a desperation no less painful – the conviction that they have been collectively and utterly humiliated.

Often an insult against one individual carries enough symbolic meaning to be taken as a collective insult. Take the example of the leaked pictures of Saddam Hussein in his underwear. He was a ruthless dictator. But when he was disrobed in front of the world, he wasn't the only one humiliated.

Unless young people are shown that they have a future of dignity and security and that they have access to decent jobs and can earn a respectful living, some will continue to think that they will find more respect as "martyrs" for their cause.

Our culture

The first key to reframing a culture of war into a culture of peace is to get them while they're young! Well designed programmes that teach non-violence and conflict resolution should be

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After the Orange Revolution

Peter and Rosemary Thwaites have just spent two weeks in Ukraine, invited by Anya Bondarenko from Crimea who worked with Initiatives of Change in Australia in 2003. They write:

It was inspiring for us to meet and work with many young Ukrainians in the Foundations for Freedom network of Initiatives of Change. Ukraine is known for last December's peaceful Orange Revolution, a national uprising against the unholy alliance of corruption and political power. Despite that brilliant success the task remains to transform a corrupt culture at every level, and to establish a rule of law through impartial courts.

We visited Crimea in the Russian-speaking East, Lviv in the far West, and Kiev, the capital and ancient heart of both Russia and Ukraine in the North. Some of those planning our program we had already met at Initiatives of Change conferences in Caux, Switzerland. As well as the young teams, we also met their parents and families, and senior academics running universities, colleges, charitable institutions and leadership



training organisations. On several occasions we were asked to present a workshop on “team building” to groups of students, and found this a good subject for discussion, linking individual character and initiative with the development of society. We found a sense of direction and hope for the future.

Ukraine spans the divide between West and East Europe. Its borders have moved over the centuries with the ebb and flow of surrounding empires. Today it is 14 years old as an independent State

and there is a widespread wish to forge a united Ukraine. On our last day we visited the strikingly beautiful Monastery of the Caves, founded nearly a thousand years ago in the first century of Kievan Christianity. It is a reminder of the deep spiritual roots that can feed the renewal of Ukraine, and of Russia.

Polish President welcomes Round Table

The Caux Round Table was founded in 1986 by Frederick Philips, former President of Philips Electronics, and Olivier Giscard d'Estaing, former Vice-Chairman of INSEAD, as a means of reducing escalating trade tensions. It takes its name from the Initiatives of Change conference centre in Caux, Switzerland, where the initiative was born. Maarten de Pous reports:

Lech Kaczynski, who has just been elected President of Poland, attended the opening dinner of the Caux Round Table Global Dialogue on October 20th in Warsaw. At that time he was Mayor of Warsaw, and had to leave early to take part in the final TV debate with his rival for the Presidency. The Australian Ambassador was among the diplomats who attended. The City of Warsaw and four City Corporations sponsored almost all aspects of this year's Global Dialogue, which took place in the beautifully restored Royal Castle, overlooking the

Vistula River. Speakers at the Dialogue included former President Lech Walesa.

Among the 60 participants from 12 countries in the two-day Dialogue were Lord Geoffrey Howe, former British Foreign Secretary, and Baroness Howe. In a message following the Dialogue Lord Howe praised the contrast between the “informal but thoughtful” and the “tightly drilled” approach of the Dialogue.

Ten Polish companies were represented. They heard Hiroshi Ishida and other Japanese describe the impressive outreach into Japanese



President-elect Kaczynski

industry of the Caux Round Table Principles for Business.

Next year's Global Dialogue will take place at Caux in July. The new Chairman of the Caux Round Table is Lord Daniel Brennan QC from London.

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implemented in as many schools as possible. We should also create more initiatives that promote good citizenship for adults. And, at every step along the way, women need to be there.

More of us should learn how to

pressure the media to uncover the culture of war. We should challenge the impression that war is inevitable and help unmask the highly organized business of the global exports of arms. The countries of the North often ask those of the South, “Why do you keep fighting?” The real

question is, “Why do you keep selling us arms?”

Both on the level of the individual, and on the level of society, feelings of anger, grief, and humiliation need to be addressed before they become bitterness and desire for revenge.

Cruise liners go biodegradable

"The best way to transform your organisation is to transform yourself."

This sentiment was at the heart of an address by Peter Vickers, Chairman of Vickers Oils, Leeds, at the Initiatives of Change centre in London last month. Vickers is the fifth generation to run his family firm, which started in 1828 and manufactures lubricants.

"Crisis is the most effective catalyst for change that I know," he said. When the British and European textile markets shrank in the late 1990s, the company lost a significant portion of its business. They responded first by trying to cope, then by positive planning. They accepted that "change was going to continue". The company's emphasis had been on textile lubricants. Now they decided to build up their marine lubricants.

For him personally, Vickers said, change meant having a long, hard look at his own values. He developed "a fresh statement of the values which matter in the company".

Vickers' vision for the company is

linked to sustainability. This, he said, includes long-term viability, relationships of trust and integrity, staff who enjoy working with the company, and products and processes which do not denude or damage the environment.

Sustainability

In the early 1990s, Vickers and a colleague had urged the company to develop a bio-degradable lubricant for the shipping industry. "At the time there was very little evidence that there would be a market for it. We had no idea what price people would pay and we did not know if it was technically feasible."

Development and testing took nine years – and the product was ready just as shipping customers began to ask for it. The company now has a world-lead in technology and sales, and counts most of the world's major cruise lines among its customers.

"The struggle for sustainability", says Vickers, "may well be the defining characteristic of industry in this century."

Neil Mence (edited)

Action for Armagh

Next year Armagh will have been the Australian Pacific Centre for MRA and Initiatives of Change for 50 years. A gift from the McKay Family in 1956, it has been a centre of growth, learning, healing, spiritual change, reconciliation and so much more.

Looking ahead to the future, a year-long "search for inspiration" on all aspects of Armagh will begin this month and continue until the 1st of November 2006. Coined "Action for Armagh", we hope to create an environment of free, unfettered brainstorming in which all ideas are welcome – simple, practical, crazy, beautiful, wonderful. Included in Newsbriefs is an insert with questions to help start the brainstorming. Responses can be sent by email to actionarmagh@gmail.com, or by post to Bek Dutton, 13 Churchill Ave, Glandore SA 5037. Please would you let all who have had contact with Armagh know about this, or anyone you think will have insights to contribute.

Clara Cheong

Book talk

The Legacy of Frank Buchman
an address by Ambassador A R K Mackenzie.

A timely reminder of Buchman's influence on the United Nations at its foundation in 1945. \$2 including postage.

Gordon Hannon, some Parson! - Some Man

by David Hannon

If you like reading about people who have really done things in their lives, this a book for you! Gordon Hannon was a young man of great energy and enthusiasm for life, who became a clergyman in the Church of Ireland. Rising to a position of influence within the church, he met MRA and his life goals and direction changed dramatically. The book is as much about MRA's influence in the history of Ireland as in Gordon.

Beautifully bound, it would make an excellent present.

\$30 including postage

African journalists train for reconciliation

For several years Initiatives of Change has been at work in the Great Lakes region of Africa – Rwanda, Burundi and the Congo – bringing together leaders of armed factions whose conflicts have caused millions of deaths. Bonaventure Nkeshimana has just visited Dar-Es-Salaam in Tanzania for a meeting with Agathon Rwasa, President of the FNL, a Burundi rebel group which is negotiating with the Burundi Government to conclude a cease-fire. He went on to Bujumbura, Burundi's capital, for meetings with the President of Burundi

and others.

Another of the team, Thomas Ntambu, has just run a seminar in Bujumbura for 15 journalists from Burundi, Rwanda and the Congo. Its theme was "A journalism of reconciliation and peace: inform better to reconcile better", and was conducted in cooperation with the Swiss Press Agency *Infosud*. This is a crucial need in the region, where the media has done much to inflame hatred.

Swiss government

In August, the Swiss Government paid for seven journalists from the Great Lakes to attend the Agenda for Reconciliation conference at the Initiatives of Change centre in Caux, during which they took part in a journalism course led by Thomas Ntambu, Michel Kipoke and Bonaventure Nkeshimana.

Michel Kipoké

Book talk continued...

All books available from Grosvenor Books, address below or ArmaghOffice@dodo.com.au, Tel (03) 9822 1218, or Joyce Fraser (02) 9559 2301