



Initiatives of Change

'Life Matters' course in multicultural Sydney

NSW Police community liaison officers Rosemary Kariuki and Assefa Bekele, with Kuranda Seyit (Forum on Australia's Islamic Relations) enthusiastically arranged a weekend version of the **Life Matters** course in Sydney 17-19 September. (This was the second time such a course has taken place.) They received funding to cover all expenses. Two Sydney couples gave practical and logistical support. The course was delivered by a faculty of five to a multicultural group of young adults at the Granville Community Centre.



Some of the participants and faculty

Two faculty members write:

David MacLaurin:

Identity, meaning for our lives, leadership, community building, conflict resolution... these are some of the world changing principles with which a group of 21 brave souls in Sydney sought to grapple one fine weekend in September. Present were talented local community leaders, several of whom came from Sydney's growing African community.

The participants and facilitators were all in agreement that Sydney was an amazing place, but we all face daily challenges, some deeply personal in nature, but many brought about by living in such a dynamic, multi-faceted and materialistic city.

The course is a forum to discuss how to address these personal and community concerns.

It was a whirlwind of workshops and

ideas that were of great value to explore, both for the participants and the facilitators alike. Perhaps the relationships forged and the friendships made were the most valuable component of all.

Mary Bagaric:

In a nutshell, some of my key observations are

- the richness of the multi-cultural and multi-religious background of participants;
- the strength of character people revealed when they shared their stories ... and awareness of being in the presence of true "survivors", with their dignity, humanity and courage through it all;
- the effervescent enthusiasm and contagious laughter from fun exercises, spilling over into the whole three days;
- "Aha" moments, with take home stick-on-the fridge action items, such as the "I" statements (from the Conflict Resolution workshop);
- generosity of all the organisers, from

the insights shared on "leadership", to a local couple's dedication in serving delicious food all weekend.

Other quotes from the weekend:

"I feel good because I have learned so many ideas about how to live in society and to build up community. I have a lot of stress and the course gave me inner peace because there were people here not only from Africa but from different backgrounds."

"Valuable reminders were - 'change starts with me'; 'listening is not waiting to talk.'"

"I learned: 'if I want to go fast, go alone, but if I want to go far, go together'".

"I learned to be responsible as a leader. Honesty plays a big part in leadership, also perseverance and respect for others. This workshop brings peace in my life; it strengthens my heart."

Basketball Camp

The 6th Basketball and Life-skills camp was held on Phillip Island on 9-11 July. 42 from 10 different communities attended, ranging in age from 14 to 27 years.

The Department of Human Services Refugee Minor Program, The Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre in Thornbury and the Victorian Arabic Social Services (VASS) all sent people to the camp and covered their costs. The Vietnamese Women's Welfare Association offered three scholarships and VASS made a further donation towards the general expenses of the weekend.

More than \$2500 was raised through sponsorship from a bike and run-athon held beforehand. There has been a community service grant of \$2000 from the National Australia Bank.

Youth who had been part of previous camps came back to help.

Read the full (illustrated) report at:
<http://www.au.iofc.org/node/50162>

'Life Still Matters'

Course for mature aged participants, 19 - 22 November 2010

The nine-day **Life Matters** Course for young adults will run 4-13 February 2011.

Both courses take place at 226 Kooyong Road, Toorak, Vic 3142.

Information and Application forms from Viv or Fiona, 03 98221218

Australians abroad

Shoshana Faire writes of her first visit to Caux, and an amazing discovery:

When I set out for Caux in August this year I hoped to connect with like-minded people from different countries and backgrounds, learn something and maybe even have a meaningful experience. My purpose was to find new paths where I can make a contribution to peace and conflict resolution.

What I hadn't expected was to find a part of my own family history right there

- at Caux. I discovered this was the very place to which my father's parents had been taken as refugees in 1944 when they were saved from the Bergen Belsen concentration camp.

The horror of war and racism and its impact on my family became very real and personal to me. I found myself unravelling my grandparents' story of cruelty and suffering and survival, and at the same time exploring the threads of

IofC and experiencing an atmosphere of deep love, caring and acceptance that oozes throughout the Caux Conference Centre. To be there and connect with so many beautiful caring and committed people, and for people to show interest in my history, was an unexpected healing experience.

My hopes for a meaningful experience were met on many levels!

Rob Lancaster is travelling in Europe and writes from Ukraine:

Deborah Sullivan writes of a visit to Jakarta and East Timor in June:

At the last IofC Australia National Gathering, Barbara Lawler was staying at my place. In passing, I mentioned that I was thinking of going to Bali to catch up with friends who were holidaying there, and how I would love to visit an Indonesian who had been with me on Action for Life 4, and the women who were part of the Indonesian delegation at the 2009 Creators of Peace conference in Sydney. Barbara to my surprise was thinking of going to Indonesia at the same time.

In Jakarta (19-24 June) Barbara and I were guests at Dr Lily Munir's home. This is no usual home. The upstairs is a centre for the local children to learn the Qur'an. Approximately 100 children, starting at 5.30am, come to pray, sing and study scripture. Hearing this throughout the day was the start of getting my prejudices and fears smashed. What a wonderful introduction to the Muslim Community. I was impressed by their dedication to prayer and learning, openness, friendliness and sense of peace.

The Jakarta IofC team practise living harmoniously as a community in a crowded, intense city. Creators of Peace Circles are being held by women in country areas as well as the city. The

men of Indonesian IofC encourage and support the women in this.

Barbara and I had come to help facilitate a Creators of Peace workshop. We had breakfast with Devi Molik Kowani, the right hand woman to the Minister of Women's Empowerment.

We gave a presentation with Indonesian IofC friends at Uhamka University, Jakarta, where we met the Vice Principal, and another at International College.

In East Timor (Timor-Leste), a CoP circle at the National University's Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies was facilitated by Elsa Pinto from Timor-Leste (a delegate at the CoP Sydney conference), Anggie from Indonesia, and Barbara and myself from Australia.

There was a meeting with the director of the Centre. I have a new appreciation of the effects of the Creators of Peace Circle process in a country that has experienced the trauma of occupation (over 100,000 Timorese went missing). Plans are being considered to have Peace Circles on the border area of Indonesian Timor and Timor-Leste.

So, a thought about going to Bali with my friends turned into a fascinating and incredible adventure.

It is six months since Valentin Bondarenko and Sergey Tretetskiy launched full-tilt into the project to build a community house in Baranivka, Ukraine, as a base for Foundations for Freedom (F4F) projects and activities.

Already a spirit of community is developing, as people from the F4F network pass through, whether to offer a hand with the huge work that remains, or to distract the workers from the work. Either way, it is bringing people together and there is concrete progress towards the completion of the first stage of building.

The international visitors included recently Ian and Karin Parsons (Australia), who have offered strong fundraising (and moral) support from the early stages of the project, and Erik and Cristina Cojocar-Parsons, their son and daughter-in-law. Their visit provided the opportunity for story-sharing, exploring the concept of the community house, and hearing of the developing Caux Call to Action from Erik.

The project is not without risks, but work moves forward in faith that the funds and the people will continue to come.

Full story with pictures at <http://www.iofc.org/node/50962>

Alexander Birnberg has just spent several months in Romania helping run a Club for Young Leaders:

In the depths of winter in a corner of Romania, a small group of people gathered together to celebrate the very first meeting of the Club for Young Leaders, Baia Mare. The initiator of the programme, Diana Damsa, had an audacious vision: to help the young people of her town gain the skills and confidence to become the change that is

needed in Romania, to be leaders with integrity.

A Foundations for Freedom Visiting Course took the participants through the basic ideas of IofC. The group bonded and the twice weekly meetings became more than just training but a joyful reunion with friends. Time flies when you are having fun, and September saw

the closing ceremony of this first CYL.

Reflecting back, one participant wrote that the Visiting Course "created the group we see today." The other event which made a considerable impact was the Gandhi Voyage visit to Baia Mare. Five alumni have expressed keenness to help with the running of the next CYL.

Full story and pictures at: <http://www.iofc.org/node/50617>

Comment

Initiatives of Change - International*

One of the significant events of the 2010 conference season in Caux was the adoption on 24 July of a new, unified international leadership structure for Initiatives of Change.

The new structure formally brings together the spiritual with the legal/administrative leadership of the movement. These had previously been represented respectively by the (informal) Global Consultations selecting an International Council, and the (formal) International Association.

The duality sprang from a traditional understanding that IofC is essentially a spiritual work, and that any organisation or administrative structures must be seen to serve that work rather than control it. Now it is hoped that that understanding can be maintained, but that a more integrated, dynamic and transparent leadership will be achieved with fewer opportunities to work at cross-purposes.

Under the new arrangement, the International Council, selected under new criteria, has merged with and replaced the Executive Committee of the International Association, becoming in effect the new Executive of the Association. This new International Council came into operation on 1 October.

Membership of the International Association has been broadened to include certain other programs and groups alongside the various national IofC Associations. Still, it may now also become more normal for IofC people around the world to contribute to international combined decision-making through their national organisations. This may encourage more cohesive national operations too.

The simplified leadership structure will also be more intelligible to the ordinary outside observer.

Global character

Beyond that, we can perhaps hope that it will reinforce the global character of Initiatives of Change. The movement has had a global perspective since its earliest days when Frank Buchman was telling college students to "think in continents".

The change comes at a time when there is an increased collaboration between international IofC based at Caux and other institutions that are working to bring humanity together and tackle its enormous common problems: war and violence, oppression and corruption, poverty and ignorance. The institutions may be government agencies, other benevolent non-government bodies, or the United Nations organisation. There is a long history of interaction between UN

and other international agencies based at one end of Lake Geneva, and Caux at the other.

That interaction reached a new level recently with Cornelio Sommaruga, former head of the Red Cross, taking on IofC's international presidency for several years. He was succeeded by Mohamed Sahnoun who conceived and continues to chair the Caux Forum for Human Security as a means of bringing the Caux spirit together with the experience and dedication of his former colleagues in UN humanitarian peace-building efforts.

In earlier periods there were prominent philosophers and theologians (BH Streeter, Gabriel Marcel) who discovered IofC and were able to interpret it in the light of their own profound insights. Now we have seen IofC drawing on the leadership of people who have come to it from long experience in international humanitarian work.

These things are also evidence of an increasing readiness in IofC to work with like-minded committed people, without fearing that this will dilute or confuse its own special spiritual focus. With experience comes the insight that all people and movements are unique, and all have important things in common.

A special load of responsibility for the global work will fall on the new International Council as IofC's international executive body. It will need the prayers and thoughtful support and wise initiatives of all who share the perspective that there are spiritual answers to human weaknesses and to material needs.

This re-assertion of the international identity of IofC comes at a time of two conflicting developments: a critical period in human history when IofC could find itself equipped to be a builder of vital collaboration between continents and cultures, and a critical moment in IofC's own history when falling numbers of committed and available workers appear to threaten its own continuation.

People of conscience

The concept of Human Security, which represents the UN goal of a decent life for every person on the planet, is also at the heart of deliberations in IofC's own goal-setting. It builds on the idea that the task of the international community concerns people, not just states and power

structures - an idea that was powerfully advanced by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.

Now scientific forecasts of a climate crisis caused by the economic activities of a surging world population give a new urgency to the phrase of human security.

The call of this year's Caux Forum for Human Security for a "global coalition of people of conscience" points to one essential response.

Just as the UN recognises that its business is to care for people as well as states, IofC has a tradition of pointing out that the ultimate answer to problems of human behaviour lies also in the heart and will of millions of individuals. The individual is also the global.

The task IofC pursues, of affirming and educating the moral conscience in a setting where people of all religious backgrounds work together, is crucial.

Who will perform this role in coming generations, and how will they go about it? The question intrigues me. The answer will probably be unexpected.

* *"Initiatives of Change - International" is the official name of the IofC International Association. You can read a recent update on the Association at: <http://www.iofc.org/node/50882>*

- Peter Thwaites

Punching beyond our weight

Like Australia, IofC needs to learn to "punch beyond its weight".

That's where a sense of strategy can come in. One of Frank Buchman's strengths was that he worked with a clear sense of individuals he was meant to engage - people with the capacity to make a positive difference through their change.

As I've thought about that, I realise one of the things that has sometimes prevented me being a free and clear channel that God can use is a sense of inferiority I have with some people.

Sometimes I feel intellectually insufficient for the job and think: "Who am I to engage this person?" However, I know I just need to claim faith and trust God to lead me. I also give thanks that we as a team can care together for others who share a passion for global transformation.

We need "confidence in God's confidence in us".

- Rob Wood

Initiatives to protect Planet Earth

At a Global Consultation of the IofC network in 2008 we resolved to clean up our own act by reducing our environmental footprint in our personal lives, in our centres and in our travel.

But decades before this, many in IofC were already deeply engaged in care of the environment. For instance:

- The documentary film "Promise of the Veld" tells about a South African farmer who, back in the 1950s, tested the idea of listening for God's guidance, and pioneered soil conservation in arid farming areas.

- In the design of a new Asian IofC Centre in India in 1967, great care was given to conservation – rainwater harvesting in huge underground tanks, waste water recycling, solar water heating, and 80,000 trees planted. In 2008 IofC India also launched a Rural Ecological Centre, training village people in micro-credit and sustainable development.

- In the 1990s at Caux, scientists and theologians met each year for a series of dialogues on "The Preservation of Creation".

- The Caux centre has an energy saving program that has cut power consumption by 20% per bed-night in the last 6 years.

- In Kenya, the Farmers' Dialogue includes farmers who have mass tree planting programs.

- Four years ago John Freebury started hosting an Environmental email loop between many in IofC's network. John now lives in a rural community in Colombia, creating clean water and alternative energy systems for villages.

- Last year at the Caux Forum for Human Security, "The Environmental and Economic Workgroup" was formed. It sent an IofC team to Copenhagen. A special section of the IofC website was set up. You can find it at:

www.iofc.org/climate-change

- This year, the Caux Forum for Human Security agreed to work for a Call to Action – to mobilise people and

networks, policymakers and academics, around global challenges including Climate Change and Resource Depletion.

John Freebury suggests that the moral principles at the heart of IofC provide a framework for examining individual and societal values and behaviour. And that huge amounts of what we call "wasted time" could become a source of spiritual resilience, for strengthening "an ecology within". Rather than giving in to the market drives of our selfish human nature, we could use silence and meditation to develop our common humanity.

- Mike Brown

This is an edited extract from a talk given at Caux, 5 August 2010.

Find the whole talk at:

<http://www.caux.iofc.org/en/2010-speeches>

Supporting young Afghans

At the Creators of Peace Conference in Sydney in 2009, Mahboba Rawi OAM from Afghanistan and Sydney expressed a vision to send young Afghans of different tribal groups, who had been educated at her schools, to the IofC Centre in India for training in leadership and peace-making. A refugee herself, she started the charity 'Mahboba's Promise' in response to the suffering faced by her people over the last three decades. It has built schools, an orphanage and medical clinics for women and children in Afghanistan. **Caroline Edwards** from WA writes:

After meeting Mahboba at the conference I vowed to support her work.

On 3 September, a fundraiser was held at a Perth church for two young men from Kabul, picked by Mahboba, to do a three-month internship at Asia Plateau, India this year.

Speakers included Fawzia Frahmand, a friend of Mahboba from Afghanistan, along with film of Mahboba's work (as featured in the ABC's 7.30 Report) and

of Asia Plateau. A flavour of India was created in the foyer, using tea-lights and napery. We had a bookstall, sold yummy home-made goodies and set up a cafe-style supper room where everyone mingled. One guest remarked afterwards "I felt really fed - and I'm not just talking about the supper!"

The support of the Church community with advertising and supper service and their donation of the venue

free of charge enabled us to raise over \$1,400 (above and beyond our target!).

Several other imaginative events to collect funds for this project were held across Australia. Jane Mills, the coordinator, says that the target was reached, emails flew back and forth between Sydney and Kabul, visas were granted, tickets bought and the two interns have arrived in Asia Plateau. (Ed).

Book Talk

With its eye-catching and clever cover, Jim Ross has published *My Memories* - his memoirs of 95 years.

From his early days in India through his school days in a boarding school in the foothills of the Himalayas on to migrating to New Zealand and settling in Australia after some years at sea, Jim gives a personal view of the history of the last century.

Seeing *The Forgotten Factor*, an IofC play, in the 1940s changes both his family life and the role he plays as a trade unionist at International Harvester in Geelong. The thread of faith and quiet times is pivotal as is his love for his life-long partner Enid.

"I was on the edge of my chair,"
- a reader wrote.

\$25 +P&P. Obtainable from:

**Lyn Pattison, 12 Flinders Crescent,
Hackham, SA 5163.**

Tel.08 83265429

This issue of Newsbriefs edited by Peter and Rosemary Thwaites. Contributions, news and comments welcome. Next deadline: Monday 29 November 2010, to **The Editor, NEWSBRIEFS, 226 Kooyong Road, Toorak VIC 3142** Fax and Phone: (03) 9822 6871 E-mail: mike.lowe@iofc.org - New subscriptions and address changes: **NEWSBRIEFS, 226 Kooyong Road, Toorak, VIC 3142**

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