



Initiatives of Change

APYC update:

Preparations are well-advanced for the 17th Asia Pacific Youth Conference, taking place 18-24 July, at Phillip Island, Victoria.

Pressure is on for space with 130 expected at the conference, 90 from Australia and 230 applications for the 40 places from 13 countries overseas.

Funding support has come from AusAID for participants from Fiji,

Solomon Islands, Thailand, Laos, Pakistan. Also from the Victorian Multicultural Commission, Rotary and other groups. But hopefuls from Indonesia, East Timor and Cambodia are still needing funds.

The conference aims to develop visionary, humble leadership, create trust through dialogue and respond to needs across the region.

A summary report will come in the next NEWSBRIEFS.

Beyond 'survival' to learning and giving

Why would two young professionals in steady well-paying jobs in South Korean quit just after getting married?

For 11 years, Na Min-Hui, a librarian, had been involved in *Initiatives of Change* in South Korea and overseas, including taking part in an *Action for Life* programme in 2003. She had helped organize an Asia Pacific Youth Conference (APYC) in Korea in 2008. But her husband to be, Kim Young Tae, resisted her wish to do voluntary work with "First Step of Change", the national IofC body in Korea. As the wedding drew close, paying for an apartment, buying a car and clearing a bank loan loomed large. Young Tae worked more than 14 hours a day, like other young engineers. "It was just survival," he says. "Life was so stressful," says Min Hui. "We just wanted to be with people who serve."

Then an appendicitis operation developed complications for Min Hui. For some days, her life hung in the balance. "I prayed to God for her strength, that I love her and, if she survives, we would do what she wanted," said Young Tae.

They went to India for their honeymoon. And returned 14 months ago, having quit both jobs, to join the Interns programme at Asia Plateau, the IofC Centre. And then participated in Action for Life (AfL), which brought them to the Pacific and Australia. Now they are support team for the coming APYC.

"It was not easy to leave many things behind, but we decided to be fully available to learn and to give," said Min Hui at the end of AfL in April. "On the journey my husband and I had time to talk over our calling and vision for our lives. It has prepared me for my role in

the IofC team in Korea."

And for Young Tae: "This journey taught me who I am and where I need to change. I am naturally a joyful person, but also at times, a person controlled by negative thoughts like anger, jealousy, self-doubt, fear and greed. I needed to change these thoughts and to take action based on this new direction, because without action nothing changes. So my 'action for life' will continue for the rest of my life."

He talks with an engineer's precision. He sees three areas of life: himself, relationships, and work. The IofC moral principles and practice of "quiet time" helped in his own life and in relationships. But were not attempted at work. So in Australia, he has begun

considering how it can be applied at his workplace when he returns. "I cannot live without the internet," he grins. Now equally essential will be the inner direction of quiet times. In India he had a vigorous disagreement with someone. But stopping to think over the issues during a three minute silence time resolved it. "It was the first time I saw how helpful quiet times could be," he says. "But at my work in the company, people just talk and get angry." Applying quiet times there will be a challenge.

He will look for a different job, not demanding such long hours. But will still have to work hard supporting Min-Hui, who plans to devote five years full-time to IofC when they return to Korea, right after the APYC.



Kim Young.Tae and Na Min Hui from South Korea

In this issue we honour three friends of Australia who died during May:

A peacemaker with the courage to forgive

In March this year Solomon Islander Susan Kukiti led a group of women on a six hour canoe trip to the Weathercoast for a three day Creators of Peace Circle. Along with some locals, the visitors were from IofC's *Action for Life* programme plus Australian Liz Weeks. Some participants had walked four hours through the mountains to join the Circle. Some had suffered violence in the civil war and the perpetrators still live in freedom, even in the same village. Throughout the Circle, Susan repeated her conviction that "peace starts within, peace comes from the heart."

Last month Susan died of a combination of diabetes, pneumonia and malaria.

Daughter of a Paramount Chief from the remote Weathercoast region of Guadalcanal, she became an Evangelical



Solomon Islander Susan Kukiti

Church pastor. Her courage knew no bounds, whether visiting a notorious warlord in his mountain hideout, or preaching while being threatened by

militants.

She came to the first IofC conference in the Solomon Islands in 2004. In one session Susan suddenly stood and told everyone: "At the beginning of the tensions, my brother was beheaded and his body was thrown in the marketplace. He was an innocent man." The leader of the meeting invited the Malaitans present to join him in a heartfelt apology and prayer. About a dozen did so. It was a defining moment for all.

Susan became a special part of the emerging IofC "Winds of Change" team. In workshops with ex-militants and victims of the violence, she always spoke on forgiveness. She was an eager facilitator of *Creators of Peace Circles* as a healing tool for her country.

- Jane Mills, Sydney

A down-to-earth carer and human rights campaigner

My dear friend, Ibu Lily Munir, passed away from cancer last week in Jakarta in her 60th year.

An accomplished Indonesian woman, distantly related to the former President Wahid, she was listed as one of the top 500 Muslims in the world. Her father, an enlightened judge, not only ensured equal education for his six daughters and sons, but became the children's caregiver so that his wife could complete her education.

Lily was instrumental in introducing the first anti-domestic violence legislation in Indonesia. She was the only Muslim on the Monitoring Commission for the Afghan Elections in 2004. In recent years, she founded the Centre for Pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) and Democracy Studies, promoting democracy and human rights among grassroots communities. And she joined the SAVE movement, Sisters Against Violent Extremism.

I first met her in 2005 when I stayed with Lily in Jakarta. One of her three daughters, Pinky (who did a *Life Matters* Course in Melbourne) was responsible for my programme. We had a wonderful time, moving step by step according to our "quiet time" thoughts. We met the Board of Nahdlatul Ulama,

one of whom came to the IofC international conference in Brisbane with human rights commissioner Habib Chirzin. Lily and I engaged in fascinating philosophical discussions. I was impressed by her understanding of the world and down-to-earth care.

In 2006, Lily spoke at the Asia Pacific Youth Conference in Indonesia on "Islam and Peace" which the young people loved.

“ Lily, our hearts and spirits give thanks for your life and all you gave so generously to the world. ”

In 2008, I was at the International Youth Forum in Bandung and was having difficulty contacting Lily. One morning at breakfast I said in exasperation that I wished she would just turn up. That's exactly what she did! She shared with me some deep family concerns. A week after I left, her husband died.



Lily Munir reconciled with Filomena dos Reis from Timor Leste at the Sydney Creators of Peace conference in 2009

In 2009, Lily came to the *Creators of Peace* Conference in Sydney. One evening she felt safe enough to share with everyone the most painful episodes in her life. She began to find healing. She told the Indonesian Consul-General in Sydney the amazing reconciliation she had with East Timorese at the conference.

Lily's home was always full of people. She became a mentor and spiritual mother to the young Indonesian *IofC* team who would gather in her home for quiet times.

Lily, our hearts and spirits give thanks for your life and all you gave so generously to the world. You will be so missed. I feel so privileged to have known you.

- Barbara Lawler, Sydney



Wholehearted service to the world

James Hore-Ruthven, who died in Devon aged 75, first came to Australia in 1957 with his family when they were the original hosts of "Armagh", after it opened as an Asia Pacific Centre for MRA/ IofC.

Much of the beautiful furniture in the home was the gift of the Hore-Ruthven family. His father, Colonel Malise Hore-Ruthven was C.O. of the Black Watch Regiment; and his uncle, Lord Gowrie, was Governor General of Australia during World War II. Recounting his hunting in Northern Ireland, Col. Hore-Ruthven

used to say that you had to take stone fences at a full gallop: "You threw your heart over the wall and then followed it!" James went at life in the same wholehearted spirit.

In 1971 James returned to Australia with his wife, Dron, with the MRA musical, *Anything to Declare*, as part of a four-year tour of 31 countries. Their time here was climaxed by an invitation from a Bougainville MP, Paul Lapun, to

his island and to PNG. The Australian government provided a charter plane to fly them there.

In 1991 James visited China with an IofC delegation invited by the Chinese Association for International Understanding (CAFIU). For years after, he made regular visits, inviting and welcoming CAFIU representatives to the Caux conferences.

- Jim Coulter, Melbourne

South Sudan workshop supported by Australians

In March, just 24 hours after their arrival in Juba, South Sudan, a small team from the Action for Life programme found themselves in a three-hour dinner with Vice-President Dr Riek Marchar Teny and his wife, Angelina Teny, discussing how to address the trauma wrought by 30 years of war in this soon-to-be independent country.

Jean Brown, from Adelaide, had been in Sudan four years ago, and ran two Creators of Peace workshops. Returning with her husband, Mike, they were warmly received by these women, like Angelina, who are now in senior positions in the country.

The *AfL* team also went to support David Vincent, one of the Sudanese "lost boys" now living in Melbourne

who returned to Sudan to lead a Youth Summit on peacemaking; and Tongo James, who had been an intern at Asia Plateau, the *IofC* Centre in India. With generous support from Australians through IofC in Melbourne, Tongo set up a three-day workshop on "Reconciliation, peace and community building". Among the 14 young participants were two ex-child soldiers,



Two young participants of the Juba workshop

forced to carry arms from the age of 10, who had seen the slaughter of most of their friends. The session on "forgiveness" was intense and real, and they were riveted by the film *The Imam and the Pastor*. The Browns return to visit South Sudan in August.

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We thank you for your support; and at the same time would value any feedback and/or any suggestions of articles you would like to see included in this newsletter.

Best Wishes, The Editors

Towards a different Pacific solution

Why Australia needs a dialogue on 'human security' with its Pacific neighbours

Mosese Waqa, a Fijian, is married to an Australian and lives in Melbourne with their two daughters. He helped establish the secretariat of the **Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict - Pacific** and has worked on many civil society projects in the region.

Neighbourhood signifies community. Building a resilient and peaceful Pacific neighbourhood depends on how well we support each other in our response to challenges. Challenges do not change us, but reveal the stuff we're made of. What we are prepared to change within us as a result of current challenges is what makes the difference.

Australia needs to ask hard questions regarding our effectiveness as a Pacific neighbour.

The Australian-led Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) is hailed as Australia's most successful intervention overseas - better than Timor Leste, Afghanistan and Iraq. If we are that successful, why don't we have an exit strategy? Next door in Bougainville, what lessons can we draw from that successful Pacific story in conflict resolution and peace building which countries like Sudan might learn?

Fiji was hailed as the "Australian Developing Economy" in the 1970's. Today, five years after the 2006 coup, we are in a diplomatic stalemate and still can't work out an effective way to engage our Fijian neighbour. With four coups in less than three decades, why hasn't Fiji descended into chaos, bloodshed and anarchy?

Insensitive to our shared history

Nauru to Australians is a synonym to the word "refugee" and the ghastly term "Pacific Solution". Why is it, that we are so ignorant and insensitive to our shared history with Nauru? In 1992 the International Court of Justice launched a case known as "Certain Phosphate Lands in Nauru" over Australia's, Britain's and New Zealand's lack of duty of care (the first of its kind under international law).

This year Papua New Guinea's economic growth rate can surpass China's. PNG's rich resources have attracted a new "resource rush" from the

leading mining corporations in the world, including from Australia. But how will this be different? After billions of Australian aid given to PNG, how can we deny the fact that our aid effectiveness is highly questionable, and our relations with the biggest recipient of our aid are no better than in the past?

In 1991 Australia launched the South Pacific Sea Level and Climate Monitoring Project in response to concerns raised by its Pacific neighbours over the potential impacts of global warming on climate and sea levels in the region. But the Australian public and media seem unaware that the sea level data being collected will not yield a useful estimation of the long-term trends until about 2050. By then Nauru, Kiribati and Tuvalu will be uninhabitable.

Australia's economy, which used to track the US, now follows closely the fortunes of China. Our Pacific neighbours are currently experiencing unprecedented high levels of Chinese "generosity" in development assistance. There's no such thing as a free lunch. From the so-called "failed state" viewpoints of the Solomon Islands, Fiji or PNG, how does China's "world success story" of authoritarian governance with centrally planned economy measure up against Australian, New Zealand and American democracy? How do we demonstrate effectively to the Pacific that democracy really matters in an Asia-Pacific century? Has our rhetoric on democracy and rule of law met the substance of our living example?



Mosese Waqa speaks on the urgency of the situation in the Pacific at a national lofC gathering last month.

Have we been good neighbours?

This is not about grandstanding. We are all in the same boat. It's time for honest and urgent conversations with our Pacific neighbours. Our very human security is at stake because everything is at stake.

We cannot change trends quickly. We cannot suddenly create whole new political systems, or deal with the crisis in values within one generation. We can, however, listen. We can come together with open minds and hearts to face the worst grievances and deal with them. To make any consistent progress requires us to rethink our collective approach to security and stability, and to work with our Pacific neighbours to consider what can be credibly accomplished in ways that actually serve people.

In this day and age of traditional diplomacy overkill, a people-centred diplomacy grounded in people-to-people dialogue is urgently needed to ensure that our best foreign investment outcome is the love and respect of our neighbours. *Initiatives of Change*, with its legacy of caring involvement with people and communities in the region, is uniquely positioned to help host that dialogue.