



Indonesian youth and the spirit of reform

From 7-11 December 2011 Initiatives of Change Indonesia held a Youth Camp with the theme of 'global transformation through personal change'. Most of the 75 participants were university students.

"Following the reformation [in Indonesia] in 1999/2000 the spirit of reform has been slow but I am confident, following this camp, that the spirit of reformation lies within young people who will... become future leaders", wrote Miftahul Huda, one of the camp organisers.

www.iofc.org/indonesia-youth-camp-2011

*Huda also referred to the contribution of Australian Chinese delegate **Aris Huang**, whose family had left Indonesia after riots in Jakarta in 1998 in which many Chinese suffered. Aris has written this account for NEWSBRIEFS:*

The annual Youth Camp (YC) brings together Indonesians aged 18-35 years. It aims to instil moral standards of love, honesty, unselfishness, and forgiveness and to allow young change makers to network.

This eighth Camp was held in Panawuan village in Garut, about 5 hours drive from Jakarta. It was the first time that the delegates stayed with local host families rather than a villa retreat.

Nenden, who attended the Asia Pacific Youth Conference held in Phillip Island last July (see *August 2011 Newsbriefs*), helped secure the trust of the local villagers and the facilities required for YC. I was humbled by the amount she and other IofC Indonesia friends did for this YC to work, despite their modest resources. The organising committee did have reservations about the logistics, ranging from availability of hosts, physical distance from hosts' homes to meeting points, food costs,

as well as variations in facilities of each house. In the end, however, the homestay enhanced our experience as participants and enriched our knowledge of the lives of the locals, and of Indonesia. We were treated as members of the family and I heard many delegates speaking highly of their host families.

Chinese-Indonesians and Indonesians

It was also the first time that a Chinese-Indonesian was invited to speak about the relationship between Chinese-Indonesians and Indonesians. At first I had reservations about taking part in YC, but after months of deliberation, and fearing the worst, I finally decided to come with *Ibu* (term of respect for a senior woman) Barbara Lawler.

As an Indonesian-born Chinese, I spoke about and asked for forgiveness from the Indonesians for the mutual dislike, hatred, hostility, animosity and violence in the past between Indonesians and Chinese-Indonesians.

I was received with shocked faces and tears. It was an emotional moment with both the Indonesians and other Chinese-Indonesians who were present. After I spoke, several individuals approached me directly. Some asked me of my own experiences, some asked me about my vision for the future, and some shared their own stories. I did not have the time to attend fully to each. Luckily social media networks (like Facebook) do wonders when it comes to keeping in touch with friends.

At the suggestion of Syahrul Azmi (Malaysia), I held an open-space discussion with some participants about reconciliation plans between the Chinese-Indonesians and Indonesians. We agreed on three



Village children welcoming Youth Camp participants.

goals: to start with our individual friendship groups by sharing our personal stories; to try to educate the youth about what has happened and what is happening by social media; and to keep in contact in the next six months about our progress. It was much in line with the IofC's belief of change starting from oneself. I believe that the Islamic saying of 'Insha'Allah' (as God wills) would be appropriate in context of what we aim to achieve in the next few months.

It gives me hope

This 14-day trip was a personal highlight. I was privileged to get to know members of IofC Indonesia and YC participants. Usually when I go back to Indonesia I don't have much to look forward to besides meeting my relatives. Now I have too many people to keep in touch with! Lastly, it gives me great hope that Indonesian young people are so passionate in working towards positive social change.

I aim to visit Indonesia more often, to help not only the reconciliation movement between Chinese-Indonesians and Indonesians, but other people working for change in the country, as well as improving the relationship between Australia and Indonesia.

Aris Huang studies psychology at Monash University, Melbourne

'Making democracy real': international dialogue at Asia Plateau

A Dialogue at Asia Plateau, India (8-12 January 2012) on "Making Democracy Real" drew high-level participation from focal countries in the global quest for reconciliation and good governance.

Dr Riek Machar Teny, Vice President of the newly formed Republic of South Sudan, gave a keynote address. He and his wife Angelina Teny led a delegation of 20, including two senior advisers to the President and the chair of the Anti-Corruption Commission.

The audience representing some 35 countries heard his plea for help to heal the trauma of his country after 30 years of war. The Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) had gone through 'different splits' at different times and this, along with the war with Sudanese forces in the North, had left the country traumatised.

72% of the nation's population is under 30 years old: 'they know nothing, only violence.' Even in government and social institutions, 'a simmering violence' remains beneath the surface, breaking out in acts of brutality by the army and police.

National reconciliation, he said, was intertwined with the good governance which the country now needs. Bold steps were needed on a personal level.

The Vice President himself had apologised to those affected by an attack of troops under his command in Bor in 1991. The apology was 'important so we as one nation can live together'.

David Vincent from Melbourne is one of those in the South Sudanese diaspora who are working to help their newborn

country find peace and stability. David attended the Dialogue and writes:

I sat holding my breath anticipating what my Vice President would say, especially about communities' reconciliation in South Sudan. I had hoped to hear something on this from my government since the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005. This was a big moment and I knew his speech would definitely have to cover this topic.

Behind-the-scenes work

A lot of persistent behind-the-scenes work was done to enable a delegation from South Sudan to attend the dialogue. When we all lined up outside the foyer to welcome His Excellency I couldn't stop myself grinning just seeing him there, confirming his commitment to this process.

I was very determined to meet the Vice President to share with him a conviction I had six years ago after I attended the Life Matters Course in Melbourne. I've never given up while struggling as a refugee but I came close to giving up for the first time at Panchgani when I couldn't see any window of opportunity to have a word with him... But miraculously, after he was told I wanted to have a word with him, he invited me to have lunch with him.

For over thirty minutes we conversed and both agreed that our priority as the youngest, struggling nation is to be able to achieve the

process of national reconciliation, a journey of healing. He asked me if it was possible to come to Juba and continue this conversation. In normal circumstances in Juba I would never have got the chance to have an intimate discussion like this with him.

What a perfect timing, I thought.

After Dr Machar's speech two South Africans, Jeanette Fourie and Letlapa Mphahlele, shared profoundly their journey of healing - two individuals who bravely crossed the path of grief and decided to work together. I was deeply moved as were the rest of the participants. Dr Machar and some of the delegates from South Sudan went to meet and greet them after they spoke. We need them to visit South Sudan. They are truly the symbol of hope.

We must persuade the government to be serious about reconciliation especially when there is an ongoing tribal conflict. The 21 delegates who attended the dialogue left with one question in mind: "How can we lead our nation through this process?" As I write, I have received a word from the Vice President's office in Juba about the efforts being made to embark on a journey of healing. I remain hopeful that this time round something will come out as a result of this dialogue.

I would like to thank IofC Australia for its continuing support. Remember us in your prayers.

David Nyuol Vincent

The wounds of history

Dr Omnia Marzouk, President of Initiatives of Change International, spoke before Dr Riek Machar's keynote address. The following is an edited extract:

2011 will remain etched in my mind as a pivotal year for democracy. The two events that made my heart leap with joy were: the "Arab spring" and the birth of South Sudan.

My hope is that the West can develop a value-based foreign policy supporting what people on the ground want, not based on their own interests.

I am a British, Egyptian, Arab, practising Muslim, professional woman. I am passionate about the city that has been my home for the last 25 years. But... the backbone of Liverpool's prosperity was the slave trade.

I could not escape other, starker facts. Islam clearly and categorically forbids slavery. In our tradition, on the Day of Judgement the prophet himself will stand as plaintiff against the one: "who enslaves a free man, then sells him and eats his money". Yet, Arab Muslims had their own

slave trade and slave routes.

I can't change history. But for the wounded memories and legacy of this history that those of you from South Sudan, and other countries across Africa, still suffer from today - I can only stand here and offer my deepest, sincere apology.

As we move into 2012 I hope especially that the Arab world and South Sudanese will rise above the wounds of war as well as the wounds of the past.

Australians reaching out

Newsbriefs in this issue carries reports from Australians taking part in the work of Initiatives of Change internationally. With our increasingly multicultural citizenship it seems natural for this to be so.

Whether it is the new Armagh-based community, local teams around the country, the Creators of Peace circles or the active Human Security group operating from

Melbourne, Australian IofC is itself multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-faith. What binds it together are its basic human values, rooted in longstanding traditions and applied to modern conditions.

Liz Brumer, a pastoral care worker from Melbourne was among the Australians participating in the Democracy Dialogue in India and describes her experience:

The conference drew together individuals from 30 countries; many had heart-rending stories of pain, genocide and loss.

Yet people came for hope, and healing, and talked of ways to continue to build trust and concrete ways to make change. I witnessed “real” connection, and “real” exchange.

I have found a group of people who, like me, “truly deeply madly” ache for change, peace and reconciliation.

Burma on the verge

The Dialogue opened with a video message from Aung San Suu Kyi, Burma's eminent democracy leader and Nobel Laureate. Extracts follow:

One of the most frequent questions I am asked these days is how we will know that we have got to the point that people refer to as “no return” with regard to the process of democratisation... I think we will know when we get there - to the point that our people do not have to live in fear, and democratic practices become a matter of routine for them.

Burma is on the verge of a breakthrough; we have not yet made the breakthrough. It is very important that the international community, our friends all over the world, keep a very keen eye on events in Burma.

Democracy is to do with society; not just government... There is never an end to the road of democracy. It is in fact a march towards several doors at the same time.

Democratic responsibility

We in Burma have learnt that independence from a foreign power is not enough. We need to be independent from our own weaknesses. I would not like to blame only the military for what happened over the last few decades. It is something that happened to all our people and all of us have a responsibility in some way or other. Shaping our own destiny requires not only a sense of purpose but also a sense of responsibility and duty. When people think of democratisation in Burma they think of rights that they are going to get but

not the responsibilities they will have to assume.

So in this “Dialogue on Democracy” I would appreciate very much if you would concentrate as much on the responsibilities as on the rights.

How do we develop a sense of democratic responsibility? Where does it start? In the family? In the schools? In university? In the polls? There are so many different ways but I believe it starts in the family - from the family outwards into society.

We in Burma have looked at Gandhiji as a great leader who combined democratic principles with an unwavering belief in non-violence. He is the father of non-violent politics. Without him there would not have been other non-violent movements the world over. We have studied his teachings and realised how sensible he was. A combination of intelligence and imagination made him a visionary such as we had not seen before in the world.

Now it falls on you, his heirs - I am not just referring to the Gandhis but to all those who believe in democracy as his heirs - to help Burma follow the right path in the right way.

Maung Maung Thawng, from a leading Mon family in Burma, spoke after the video: “In Burma we are at the end of a tunnel. We are beginning to see light and hope it will continue to get stronger.”

The video can be seen on youtube via the IofC website.

The whole transcript can be read at www.iofc.org/sites/all/files/Aung%20San%20Suu%20Kyi%20transcript.pdf



Malaysian opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim and his wife Wan Azizah in Asia Plateau.

“The dictates of conscience”

Days after his acquittal in Kuala Lumpur ended a two year trial, the Malaysian opposition leader and former Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim addressed the Democracy Dialogue, remembering his first visit to Asia Plateau as a student leader 40 years ago. It had motivated him with “an appeal to conscience, moral fibre and to the heart, the spirit.”

Dato' Seri Anwar spoke of the shadow between ideal and actual democracy, citing the Arab Spring and the impact it had had in predominantly Muslim Malaysia, as well as the Occupy Wall Street movement challenging the apparent absence of moral values in the current capitalist model. He praised Mahatma Gandhi's concern for the weakest in society and repeatedly referred to the “dictates of conscience”.

The Armagh spiritual community

Since the end of 2011 a new community has started to come into operation at Armagh, the IofC Australia-Pacific Centre. Glennis Johnston, a Uniting Church minister with a background in running retreats and spiritual direction, has joined the community from Queensland with her husband Craig.

"The three words that encapsulate what we are on about are listening, integrity and transformation," Glennis writes.

"Each of them also link to the core message of Initiatives of Change: listening to God (and one another); integrity (moral values so that our outer and inner life are in line with one another) and transformation (people and situations can change)."

The following vision for Armagh was recently workshopped at a retreat with the other members of the household:

A COMMUNITY OF LISTENING, INTEGRITY, TRANSFORMATION

- » A community of spiritual practices that help us attend to the divine promptings within, such as times of quiet and inner listening both individually and communally.
- » A community of grace that values and is challenged by the call to justice, forgiveness and compassion.
- » A community where, in our daily interactions, we are slow to criticise, loath to judge, patient with one another; where we believe the best, hope and trust in the goodness of the Creator and honour all people.
- » A community that is entered into by those who are on a personal spiritual journey committed to spiritual disciplines and values, and who are open to sharing their journey with others in the community.
- » A community that demonstrates that a meaningful and engaged spiritual life is possible for lay people in the context of the demands of urban living.
- » A community of living relevant to the needs of the world, where personal change has the potential to lead to communal and global transformation.
- » A community where being closely interconnected, as an alternative to being isolated or disconnected, is an enriching experience.
- » A community that is transparently accountable for its own ethical practices in work, relationships and structures; where accountability and appropriate authority is respected.
- » A community that is open to challenge and transformation itself, always willing to learn and evolve as knowledge and inspiration lead us to new understandings.
- » A community that takes inspired action strengthened by teamwork.

A holiday in Lebanon

During the summer school holidays I went with my husband to Lebanon for a nice getaway and relaxation time and to catch up with family and friends.

While there, we met up with Lina Hamadi and Marie Shaftari, two lovely ladies who are very involved in creating peace between Christians and Muslims. Lina and Marie suggested that we do two full days Creators of Peace workshops. They organised one for a day in Beirut, with around 14 ladies from different religious groups.



A Beirut workshop.

At the beginning some women were reluctant to cooperate and said that in our Lebanese culture, we do not need to share stories or talk about issues that concern us, as we have a close relationship with our mums, dads, brothers and sisters. I was a bit concerned and said to myself that this workshop is not going to be successful at all. But it was! Every woman in the workshop was greatly involved and shared their stories. [As facilitator] I had to find ways to keep track of time and keep them quiet and carry on with the program. The day went very well and was a success.

Then, at the end of the day Fadia Abou Deeb who came all the way from a place called Zahle, asked me if we could have a workshop day in Zahle. So we arranged a day suitable for all and Marie, Lina and I went the following week together with another woman (Jacqueline) who

was keen to learn about CoP Circles. Jacqueline had previously worked in France and other parts of Europe, developing educational programs for schools in Lebanon. The workshop in Zahle was even more successful than Beirut, with over 25 ladies who were very involved and shared their points and stories. It was indeed a great experience for me. I met some wonderful women from all walks of life.

Now they are looking forward to my next visit to Lebanon and invited me to go and stay in Zahle for a few days with them. This visit to Lebanon was special and very rewarding. Even though I was very nervous and stressed, I would do it again any time! It feels so great being involved in peace making and making new friends!

Mariam Hijazi is a Sydney primary school teacher and community worker

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