



## South-East Asian ‘Life Matters’

*In April Cheryl and Rob Wood (Melbourne) went to Cambodia to help with the first “Life Matters” program to be held in South-East Asia. On the way home they visited Jakarta. They write:*

Cambodia is a country of contrasts - generous hospitality and care side-by-side with high levels of corruption and injustice, extraordinary displays of wealth alongside heart-wrenching poverty.

The Life Matters program in the port city of Sihanoukville had 38 participants from seven countries. Most of the 16 facilitators were half our age or younger. Planning had been via skype and we only had a few hours after everyone arrived for final preparations. Amazingly, it all came together.

With temperatures rising to 35 degrees and more, it was good that the first session - inner reflection and sharing - was held at 7am in the coolest part of the day!

The last session, when participants have the opportunity to share some of their life story, was held on one of the local beaches under the stars.

For the final presentation we

travelled five hours by bus from Sihanoukville to the capital, Phnom Penh. During this evening a young Cambodian apologised to his brother in the audience, then left the stage and embraced him.

### ‘Reflection to find my next step’

A week later we met with thirteen of the Cambodians. A young businessman, Sophat Yun, spoke about his decision, after attending the Life Matters course in Australia, to resign from his job because his boss dishonestly refused to register his company. He had no other employment prospects, but the thought then came to him to establish his own business. He now manages eleven companies selling organic agricultural products.

Others responded by telling about decisions they had taken to change themselves. One said, “I grew up at the Life Matters course. I still have times



*With friends outside the IofC centre in Phnom Penh*

when I don’t know what to do but now I’ve a tool I can use - a time of quiet reflection - to find my next step.”

### Tackling pollution

The group have decided to tackle the increasing problem of pollution in Phnom Penh. Twice a month they will work to clean up the rubbish in a popular part of town in order to encourage others to join them. One said to us, “We’ve decided we want to do more and talk less.”

We spent ten days in Jakarta. Many of the Indonesian IofC team are alumni of Life Matters in Melbourne. Some are now university lecturers and teachers in government or Islamic boarding schools while others have influential jobs in the banking system and the taxation department, where they are aiming to live lives of integrity.

Besides university and school speaking engagements Rob had a phone conversation with Abdul Mukti, current Secretary General of Muhammadiyah, (the second largest religious organisation in the country) who was a speaker at the Melbourne IofC conference in 2007.

## Neighbours

“Australia as a neighbour” was the theme of a national Initiatives of Change conference in 2007. It is a central theme of IofC work in Australia.

This issue of *Newsbriefs* includes reports about Creators of Peace in East Timor, about a reconciliation and development partnership in post-war Sri Lanka, and about the first South-East Asian “Life Matters” course held in Cambodia.

April *Newsbriefs* reported on a facilitation training course attended by women from across Solomon Islands. Now the first Creators of Peace Circle has been held in Niukoloula village, East Guadalcanal.

(See: <http://www.iofc.org/first-niukoloula-creators-of-peace-circle>)

IofC Australia has launched a human security initiative at the Asia-Pacific regional level with an emphasis on trust-building. The initiative is coordinated by Fijian-Australian Mosese Waqa (see pg 4).

Finally, we remember a respected worker for trust and healed relationships, Australian Aboriginal leader Ningali Cullen (Audrey Kinnear).

# Sri Lanka – Human Development and Reconciliation

*Following the launch of the Human Security initiative at the IofC centre in Melbourne in February, Daya Bhagwandas spent two weeks in North-West Sri Lanka. She reports:*

In Caux in 2008 Ambassador Mohamed Sahnoun told the conference on *Trust and Integrity in the Global Economy* (TIGE): “You are dealing with the root cause of conflict. Reconciliation without human development will fail.”

In 2011, Jeremy Liyanage, Director of “Diaspora Lanka” was part of the TIGE team. Decades of work with IofC have been invested into Sri Lanka since the 1950s. Was a new pathway emerging to work in Sri Lanka after a 30-year war? Could human development and reconciliation work be combined, as Ambassador Sahnoun pointed out?

We invited Jeremy to the Human Security meeting in Melbourne in February. We explored a joint initiative in Sri Lanka. I joined him there for two weeks in May.

## 22 kilometres from India

The district of Mannar is in the north-western part of the island, jutting into the tip of south India which is about 22 km by boat in shallow waters.

The majority of the people I met in the area had fled to India or to other locations during the 30-year war. Most had lost somebody in the family – a son, a husband or a loved one. Healing wounded memories and giving people a vision for a collective future is an important part of

rebuilding this community.

The underlying objective of Jeremy’s work has been to bring empowerment, development and reconciliation through action.

In the two weeks I was there we had meetings, discussions and workshops each day with the Urban Council, various individuals, youth entrepreneurs, a young adults’ Peace Brigade, returned IDPs (internally displaced persons), war widows, village development agencies, the District Secretary, different religious and ethnic communities and the Minister for Reconciliation.

We were a team of four from Australia, three Singhalese/Burghers and me, a Tamil, working together in a predominantly Tamil/Muslim area.

It was wonderful to be in a place where I could speak my language and also help to interpret.

We made inroads into understanding the divide between Tamil and Muslim communities as a result of the forced Muslim displacement by the Tamil Tigers in 1990. Through focus groups we became aware of current issues like contested land titles and alleged political favoritism which threaten to undermine fragile alliances.

In every meeting we highlighted trust, integrity and values. We were not there to dole out funds but to empower people to be self-starters.

One example of this empowerment was the setting up of an IT Platform business by 28-year-old Kamal Raj and his team of war-affected young people – a “Diaspora Lanka” project to

computerize Mannar. I landed in this remote place, opened my computer and was immediately on skype to my husband in Australia and my brother in Malaysia. How amazing was that! Kamal Raj is one of two leaders from the Mannar project who will be attending the TIGE, Caux, along with Jeremy in July 2012.

There were opportunities to have personal conversations with people,



*Departure point of ferries to India*

to hear their stories of anguish, displacement and loss. I had to marvel at their capacity for forgiveness and ability to move on, put the past behind and take on the future.

Sessions for parents and teachers gave me the chance to contribute my professional skills to help with the neurological blocks in children’s and young people’s development.

I also managed to make a 24-hour visit to my roots and village in Jaffna. It was moving to be there and sobering to see the conditions of life. Every member of my family from the village has been displaced and all are now in various parts of the world. I took a 10-hour overnight bus ride from Jaffna Town to Colombo to make my return trip home.

## ‘Our people aren’t victims any more’

*John Bond sent this appreciation of Ningali Cullen (Audrey Kinnear) who died last month.*

Ningali Cullen fought for justice. But she put healing first and, by so doing, demonstrated an effective way to challenge injustice.

At the age of four, Ningali was taken from her home on the Maralinga lands to a Lutheran mission. Until she was an adult, she had little contact with her family. By then she had trained as a nurse, and

was working on the trans-Australian Rail health clinic.

Not long after she had reconnected with her mother, tragedy struck. Her mother visited Ningali’s sister in Port Pirie. They were waiting outside a roadhouse when staff called police to get rid of them. The police took Ningali’s sister into custody, ignoring her anguish at leaving her mother alone in a strange place. When Ningali arrived back from the train clinic, she was told her mother had disappeared.

Her mother was never seen again.

### A million people

Despite the deep hurt, Ningali devoted herself to healing, first in nursing, then in drug and alcohol rehabilitation. When the *Bringing Them Home* report was published, she threw herself into the struggle to implement the recommendations. The 1998 Sorry Day campaign enlisted nearly a million people. That year she visited Caux, the IofC conference

# Timor-Leste, Indonesia, Australia

**Barbara Lawler visited Timor-Leste just after the presidential election to work with a Creators of Peace group. The country has just celebrated its tenth anniversary of Independence. Barbara writes:**

In 2010 the first Creators of Peace (CoP) workshop took place at the National University of Timor-Leste (see Newsbriefs, October 2010).

The following year three from that workshop took part in the Asia Pacific Youth Conference (APYC) at Phillip Island. Now a team is developing in the University who meet to share their concerns, ideas and inspiration from their Quiet Times.

This year Dewi Rini Anggraeni (Anggie) from Indonesia and I returned to Dili for a follow-up workshop (28-29 April).

## Touching the heart

After presentations of the ten “gathering points” for Creators of Peace Circles, including the practice of Quiet Times, we heard some courageous and deep story-sharing. The trauma of Timor-Leste is still very evident and impacting on nearly every family. One student had decided to reconcile with her father who had been a collaborator with the Indonesians during the occupation. After attending last year’s APYC she had gone to Indonesia to stay with him and his new family and initiated a discussion in which she expressed her forgiveness. She said “I feel so free!”



*The Creators of Peace group in Timor-Leste*

A participant commented: “CoP is important for us because it isn’t just thought and action but touches the hearts of people through the story-sharing.” Another said: “We need not just to analyse the cause and effect of conflict, but we also need to heal our trauma. CoP workshop gives us healing of our hearts.” An action plan includes holding more workshops in other locations.

It was a privilege to work with this capable, highly motivated group of young women. Their advisor Filomena dos Reis, a national women’s leader and a trained counsellor, told Anggie and me of a play she had written about the women who had been raped by Indonesian soldiers, focusing on one woman who sought an abortion unsuccessfully. It featured the voice of the child saying, “Mother, I will always love you however you think of me - and I do understand you.” In one audience it brought about a reconciliation between one such child and her mother. Filomena, whose husband went missing in the Indonesian occupation and has never

been found, shared with us a project she is currently developing to support the widows of Indonesian soldiers killed in Timor-Leste.

Referring to the UN’s withdrawal by the end of this year, the Director of the University’s Peace and Conflict Studies Centre told us that Timor-Leste is coming to a time of further negotiations with Indonesia and Australia - and he thought negotiating with Indonesia would be easier than negotiating with Australia. During the negotiations over the oil and gas in the Timor Sea there were reports that Australia had earlier “cheated” Timor-Leste through some fancy footwork over the maritime boundaries. Then there are shadows about responsibility for the initial Indonesian occupation.

I was left with the question in my mind and heart, “Do we Australians have the historical truth, the whole-hearted passion and vision we need to build the bridges of trust and friendship in our country and with our regional neighbours?”

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centre in Switzerland. “Since National Sorry Day I’ve become aware that our people aren’t victims any more,” she said there. “We need to help realise the wonderful resources we have in us as a people.”

A month later, she urged a national gathering of the Stolen Generations to seize the moment to heal the wounds caused by the separation policies. There was a warm response, and in 1999 the Journey of Healing was launched across Australia, with Malcolm Fraser and Lowitja O’Donoghue as patrons. When the Sorry Day Committee’s co-chair,

Carol Kendall, became too ill to continue, Ningali was elected in her place.

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians responded to the Journey of Healing with its invitation to all to help heal the wounds of the Stolen Generations. In the absence of Government leadership, many of the *Bringing Them Home* recommendations were implemented by community groups. This stirred consciences among members of the governing parties, and gradually attitudes changed. When Labor was elected to Government in 2007 and Kevin Rudd

invited the Opposition to join him in an apology to the Stolen Generations, the Opposition agreed.

Much has resulted from that unanimous Parliamentary apology.

*The Age* concluded its obituary: “Kevin Rudd’s apology, and the wholehearted response of the Australian community, owes much to Ningali Cullen’s inclusive approach and commitment to healing.”

*John Bond was Secretary of the National Sorry Day Committee 1998-2006*

## Ten principles of activism for transformative change

In a talk at Armagh on 30 April Mosese Waqa, IofC Human Security Coordinator, suggested the following:

- 1. Know yourself.** Our identity frames our engagement with the world. With the art of knowing oneself comes the art of listening.
- 2. Convince yourself that your cause/passion is really necessary.** Answer key questions first. Is the cause legitimate? Do we really need to pursue it? If you can't convince yourself, forget about convincing others.
- 3. Research an issue before diving into a cause.** Dig deep. Get to the facts. What's happening in your community? With that information, you can justify the cause.
- 4. If you don't like hard work, don't get involved.** There is no short cut

- to achieving one's vision. It's mostly perspiration aided by inspiration.
- 5. Maintain a sense of perspective.** Overstating the cause can be damaging. Absence of perspective can lead to narrow-mindedness. A sense of priorities is vital.
  - 6. Reflect your broader ideals in all you do – keep your vision alive..** Create within you a space for an evolving reality by engaging in reflection on what you're doing.
  - 7. Be positive... we are not against, but for a cause.** Transformational change is about sustained positive energies that come together, with the outcome bigger than the sum of the parts.
  - 8. Keep your firepower for the real enemy – we do not battle against flesh and blood...** Everyone is looking

for their own angles, making sense of things. Identify key relationships and key people, beginning with those closest to you.

**9. Involve those affected by the problem.** When advocating on behalf of others, they know best about the problem. They live with it and can give the cause a sense of urgency and legitimacy.

**10. Have faith, hope and love... never let anyone tell you that you don't matter.** We each have our own place to find in life – that gives us a sense of who we are and faith in where we are going.

The new IofC Australia Human Security website can be found at: <http://humansecuritytrustbuilding.wordpress.com/>

## Creators of Peace in Sydney... moving forward!

Creators of Peace's 25th Anniversary will be in 2016.

Inspired by this, seven of the 31 Sydney facilitators have undertaken to serve as a Coordinating Action Team. They plan to harness CoP women's individual skills and weave a network – empowering Sydney women to create changes for the better in their lives and community.

Practical ideas and visions emerged at their meeting in May, including the hope for CoP Circles in schools and Indigenous communities, creating a CoP Register and ideas for pathways after a Circle.

In four months four CoP Circles will have commenced. The annual reunion is being planned. We have an Expression of Interest in Creators of Peace flyer with email address: [peacecircles.sydney@gmail.com](mailto:peacecircles.sydney@gmail.com) to use for information on CoP Circles.

Trish Harrison

## 'Hope for the future'...

23 people aged from 12 to 80 crowded into our home in Yowie Bay to hear newly married couple, Keith and Rachel Mills, share experiences from their year with IofC in India, Caux and Brazil. Triona expressed it for all: "It gives me great hope for the future".

After the presentation the group enthusiastically discussed ways IofC could develop its work in multicultural Sydney. What existing programmes could be applied further? What past ideas could be reintroduced? What were some of the pressing needs in Sydney? Geographical "hubs", could overcome the tyranny of distance in this city, with mentoring and "platform" programs where like-minded people gather to find positive ways of handling many problems facing the city.

Tanya summed up the afternoon: "I came home so peaceful and hopeful knowing that there are so many other people (young and old) who have the same ideals and passion as me to create peace in the world. We're so fortunate to have the practical structure of IofC to help drive us."

Kenneth Harrison

## Book Talk

Graham Turner's new book *Catching up with Gandhi* is a refreshing read about a well-known public figure.

The author has written it to interest the younger generation, and has enlisted Rajmohan and Ela in following their grandfather's historical footsteps. Whether it be in South Africa, Britain or his own beloved India they uncover the lessons the Mahatma learnt and the convictions he developed along the way.

We are taken on the fascinating journey, candid in places, of a man who not only led his country to freedom but is still lighting up the world with his life and ideas.

Cost: \$20 inc. postage.

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*The Imam & The Pastor* and *An African Answer* are now offered in a two-DVD set. *An African Answer* includes two bonus features: *Two years later* revisits the scene of the conflict in Kenya and *Inside the process* explores the methodology depicted in the film.

Cost: \$30 (inc p&p)

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All available from Grosvenor Books, 226 Kooyong Road, Toorak VIC 3142, Tel 03 9822 1218. Email: [grosvenor.books@au.iofc.org](mailto:grosvenor.books@au.iofc.org)

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**AND:** Still available from Armagh, free of charge: An exciting colour report of the 17th Asia Pacific Youth Conference, 18-24 July 2011, Phillip Island, Victoria. 135 people came, 18 nations were represented.

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