



IofC sets its global priorities

As Newsbriefs goes to press, the 10-member International Council of Initiatives of Change – coming from Nigeria, Egypt, India, UK/ Palestine, Taiwan, Mexico, USA, Canada, Sweden and Australia -- is in Melbourne, for one of its twice-annual meetings. On Sunday 14 October, they will have a public ‘Dialogue on building trust’ also in Armagh, the Australia Pacific centre in Melbourne.

The President of IofC International, Dr Omnia Marzouk, and its Executive Vice-President, Edward Peters, came ahead of the meetings to join a National Gathering of some 70 Australians and three New Zealanders, also in Armagh.

The Council meets at a significant moment for IofC International, following the adoption of a Framework for Common Action which, after eight months of consultation involving 350 people, was agreed to at the Global Assembly in Caux, Switzerland, in August. Five Australians were among the 103 participating.

The Assembly also selected three ‘Common Actions’ as priorities for IofC International, choosing from a range of major initiatives that have developed. The Melbourne meeting were briefed on these initiatives:

» **A new model of governance in India:** Through a hook-up to Mumbai with Vivek Asrani, a trustee of IofC India, the Gathering were given a glimpse of the burgeoning work based around Asia Plateau, the IofC centre in Panchgani, western India. The coming month’s programme, for instance, includes training for the chaplains of the Indian Army, 120 students from a top MBA institute, shop-floor workers and middle management, and the first batch of 100 senior officers of Mumbai Municipality covering 22 million people (training in ethical leadership which will extend to 5000 officers and ultimately, all 120,000 staff). With nearly 100,000 going through such IofC programmes each year, IofC India needs help to boost its

volunteer capacity. Asrani asked for help from Australians with facilitation skills, for youth to join their intern programme, and for participants at next February’s ‘Making Democracy Real’ dialogue (see www.makingdemocracyreal.org). Five at the National Gathering accepted on the spot to go.

» **National reconciliation and good governance in South Sudan:**

Returning last month from their third visit to this newly-independent country, Jean and Mike Brown outlined plans in response to the repeated requests on these two priorities from senior people in government and public life. In Juba last month, a meeting of 41 MPs and officials which was chaired by the Vice President, Dr Riek Machar, adopted a proposal from the Global Assembly for an intensive two-week conference and campaign in Juba. Detailed plans are already underway. One of the diaspora in Melbourne, Nyok Gor, and his wife, Kathryn, described joining the IofC team in Juba and their commitment to peace-building at the grassroots (See their story on pages 3,4).

» **Restoring Lives, Land and Peace:**

The loss of earth’s productive land (equivalent to three Switzerlands each year) is a major threat to food security. Technical solutions are widely available and often inexpensive. But 80% of the world’s conflicts are in these areas of degraded land. IofC has a specific contribution to make in trust-building in some situations. IofC Vice President, Edward Peters, outlined this initiative. A core team is already working in partnership

with Luc Gnacadja, Executive Secretary of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, planning multiple forums (including at Caux), building a network and field work starting from existing programmes in Kenya and India. Kevin Rudd affirmed the ‘specificity’ of IofC engagement on this issue, when speaking at Caux on the Rio+ summit.



Omnia Marzouk and Edward Peters with Paul Ntoumos (left) and Peter Thwaites in Melbourne

Edward Peters also mapped out for those at the Melbourne weekend the development of IofC’s governance since the bold initiatives led by Frank Buchman and Peter Howard. Following their deaths in the Sixties, the organic movement of MRA went through a period of adjustment and fragmentation, developing through local initiatives and informal networks. Barely 20 years ago, a series of ‘global consultations’ set out to rebuild a collective leadership; and in 1998 the International Council was formed, followed in 2001 by the change of name (from MRA) and formation of an International Association in 2002, now representing 43 countries. The last three years have seen significant development with the restructuring

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of one elected leadership body with designated portfolios (the International Council), adoption of an agreed statement of aims and message (2011), and now the strategic Framework of Common Action adopted at the Global Assembly. See www.iofc.org/framework-final-version

The Framework affirms the Vision of 'a just, peaceful and sustainable world to which everyone, responding to the call of conscience, makes their unique

contribution'. It defines focal themes for collective action:

- » Peace and social cohesion by building trust and reconciliation across divides;
- » Good governance at every level by developing a leadership culture based on moral integrity, compassion and selfless service;
- » Economic justice and environmental sustainability by inspiring transformation of motives and behaviour.

IofC Australia will continue to review its programs and priorities against this Framework. But already, the emerging and established initiatives reported at the National Gathering resonates with much of it: ranging from peace-building and governance in Sri Lanka to reconciliation around the history of trade in South Sea Islanders, from Creators of Peace Circles to an Indigenous/ non-indigenous dialogue at Monash University.

Saying 'yes' to where you fear to live

The daughter of an Egyptian diplomat, Omnia Marzouk was born in Spain, raised in Egypt, studied in Australia and now lives in UK. As she told the National Gathering, 'Standing here is something very special. Australia is where my spiritual journey started in 1974'. As a schoolgirl in Canberra she first attended a conference of what was then MRA, and began 'trying to close my integrity gap'. At the National Gathering in Melbourne, she shared some of her own journey.

When was asked to consider serving as President of IofC International, her first reactions were anything but positive. She was daunted by the fact that her three predecessors were all men with illustrious careers in international diplomacy and leadership. In her professional work -- as pediatrician in a large emergency department and as associate medical director of a hospital in UK -- she was experienced in leadership and management roles. But, as she told the National Gathering in Melbourne, leading an international network was just 'not my character type'.

In quiet she reflected on three questions. 'Are you willing to serve despite your limitations?' The answer

was a simple yes. 'Do you really believe God can work through an ordinary person to bring change?' Yes, she affirmed: that is what this work of IofC is all about. 'Do you really believe that we are more than the sum of our parts?' Again, yes, that is why she had agreed to serve on the International Council of IofC: passionately believing in the search to recapture 'our mission and focus' in bringing change and healing in world situations, 'not arrogantly but in partnership with others'; to re-find 'the audacity to do something beyond our personal capacities... for which we need each other'.

So she made her own leap of faith and audacity to step out of her comfort zone and 'was utterly at peace.'

In 11 months she has visited IofC teams and associations in 11 countries, besides her full time medical work and a deluge of communications to guide IofC through a critical time of transition. 'It has been exhilarating, daunting and challenging, but something has changed: instead of asking "why?" I now ask "why not?"'

Among the challenges is her own area of the world: the Middle East. And she is seeking a way to bring together an

Arabic-speaking consultation of those in the region 'to examine our mission and goals'.

Another passion is to make IofC 'a learning organization... like a ship, repairing it as we move forward'. As trust-builders in the world, 'we are flawed but still have this capacity to bring healing and transformation. Part of the process of wholeness as a organization is finding a realistic view of our frailties.' Towards this, at the Global Assembly Omnia spoke at the culmination of 'a powerful 24-hour journey to learn from IofC's past', acknowledging both the, 'extraordinary heights of selflessness' and also the times of 'division, dysfunction and distortion' within this movement (see www.iofc.org/acknowledgment).

In all this, Omnia stays rooted in her own spiritual tradition as a Muslim. In Melbourne she led a reflection using sayings of the Sufi poet Rumi, such as 'As you start to walk out on the way, the way appears.' And 'Run from what's comfortable. Live where you fear to live.' And, describing working through some conflicts with colleagues: 'If you are irritated by every rub, how will you be polished?'

Who pays for all this?

With a combined budget for the next six months of some \$800,000 for just the three 'Common Actions' -- and potentially far more as they develop -- these objectives are challenging the resources and thinking of the IofC network. Through the National Gathering, IofC Australia voted to support these Actions and will need to find ways to help fund involvement in them -- for Australians participating in

India or South Sudan, for example.

This comes at a challenging time when the downturn in global markets has turned earlier surpluses on invested funds into a deficit of A\$174,000 during 2011-12. In addition, as a letter to its national network in July spelt out, IofC Australia's Council of Management faces costs of \$186,000 for urgent repair and maintenance of its Armagh centre,

which has started already with removal of asbestos from its loft space.

IofC Treasurer Jonathan Lancaster quoted the saying that 'If it's God's will, then it's God's bill!' We are certainly facing a situation requiring faith, prayer and generosity. For more details, to comment, or to offer help, please phone Jonathan on (03) 9822 1218 or write treasurer@au.iofc.org

A 'best ever' annual gathering in Sydney

Zohra Aly reported to local media in Sydney on the Creators of Peace annual meet held in Sydney on 30 September:

The invitation in six languages welcomed women from around Sydney to 'contribute to creating a culture of peace' when the Sydney Creators of Peace community held their annual celebration at the Auburn Centre for Community. The incredibly diverse turnout of 86 women, was, according to one veteran



Women enjoying a Creators of Peace Circle 'taster'. Credit: Shoshana Faire

of these reunions, 'the best gathering I've attended'.

The programme centred on the purpose of Creators of Peace, (www.iofc.creatorsofpeace.org) and also looked at the world-wide impact their programmes are having. The women also participated in workshops, exploring the themes: 'What creates peace, and what destroys it?' and 'The qualities of a peace-maker'.

Nearly half of those attending the celebration on Sunday were new to Creators of Peace. They listened to the personal experiences of past participants of Peace Circles held in Sydney, and gained insights into how lives had changed for the better as a result. One lady spoke of how she overcame conflicts at work. A refugee from Somalia spoke of her wonder that 'in Australia, everyone speaks of peace and how we can create it; because where I come from, we always spoke of war and how we were going to fight it.'

'Like a whole new family'



Credit: Jonathan Lancaster

Tanya Fox is one of the several Creators of Peace facilitators running Circles in Sydney. She writes of her first visit to Caux this year:

From that fateful day when I met Trish McDonald (Secretary of Creators of Peace), life has never been the same since. That encounter brought me to Caux and IofC. I was overwhelmed to be part of such a large gathering of people whose prime purpose was to explore being change-makers – like having a whole new family supporting me to do good work.

At Caux I learned some truly valuable skills: to be better equipped to play a role in making a positive difference to the lives of others – in my own family, my personal relationships and workplace and, through the 'connecting communities' workshop, in bridging divides between fractured communities. The Caux experience has greatly enriched my life, helped me realise my calling, and reinforced my commitment to Creators of Peace.

Rudd on forgiving and forgetting

In August, on the 21st birthday of *Eureka Street* an online magazine focusing on public affairs, arts and theology, human rights lawyer Fr Frank Brennan SJ hosted 'a discerning conversation with Kevin Rudd' on the theme 'Things that matter'.

At one point Brennan asked Rudd, 'In public life a conflict of ideas always tells us something about what it means to forgive and forget.' After some comments about forgetting, Rudd referred to his recent visit to the *Initiatives of Change* conference centre at Caux in Switzerland (see *Newsbriefs Aug 2012*).

'Their ethos,' he said referring to IofC, 'for 60 years has been (that) political change comes through social change, social change through personal change beginning with yourself and realizing that, frankly, you may have done a few wrong things yourself— and then seeking

your brother's or sister's forgiveness...

'The example they gave me was quite profound,' said Rudd, telling the story of the Germans and French who met in Caux after the Second World War and how the apology of Irene Laure paved the way for much healing and reconciliation. He mentioned the trust-building meetings of (former French Foreign Minister Robert) Schuman and (German Chancellor Konrad) Adenauer, and the start of the European community.

'I can't claim any such moral heights,' Rudd continued, 'but you know something, it is absolutely necessary to do it. It is confronting

but unless you do it, you are no use any more.' He then went on to explain why he needed to apologize to Aboriginal Australia.

See the complete interview at: www.eurekastreet.com.au/article.aspx?aeid=32775

In October, before their meetings with the International Council, Omnia Marzouk and Edward Peters had an hour with Kevin Rudd in Canberra, reflecting on his recent visit to Caux and discussing IofC's future strategies.

Coming home after 26 years

It was Spring 1986 – just three years after my father was killed by the Khartoum regime. I was only eight years old. As my shallow memory recalls, it was night time and I had been playing with my friends when my home town, Malakal, came under attack. I was told to run, so I did. But I kept saying to the soldiers from the Sudan People's Liberation Army that I needed to go back home and find my Mum, my brothers and sister.



Nyok and Kathryn arriving 'home' in Bor, South Sudan

'You will find your family where we are going,' I was told.

'But where are we going?' I said, very confused and scared.

'You will see,' came the unsatisfying reply.

After six long weeks of walking we reached Pinyadu, a makeshift refugee camp in Ethiopia. I still hadn't seen my family and it was many years before I did. For the next five years I assumed a temporary family amongst boys from all over Southern Sudan. We schooled together and were trained by the Army. But then international politics shifted and we were no longer welcome in Ethiopia. We had to flee within 24 hours, swimming across a river to escape the soldiers chasing us. Many didn't make it. I will never forget that day.

So began the next part of my long journey across Eastern Africa on foot. To cut a long, long story short, we walked from place to place for four years – regardless of international borders – in the

struggle to find safety, food and shelter. I was required to fight sometimes: not what I had ever imagined for my childhood.

Finally I was reunited with my mother and siblings in northern Kenya, at the world's largest refugee camp, Kakuma. I lived and studied there for seven years, very grateful to be supported with a scholarship to gain my Kenyan Certificate of Secondary Education. When I had finished, I was offered the opportunity to live in Australia.

I was excited to utilise the education opportunities in Australia, and eventually to bring my mother and siblings over as well. In Melbourne I became involved with the network of *Initiatives of Change*. Here I also met my wife, Kathryn, whom I married last year. Australian-born, she was very happy to journey alongside me on this first trip back to South Sudan since my childhood. It came at such an important time: when South Sudan had just gained its independence in July 2011.

Kathryn and I had planned our trip to coincide with visit of an IofC team to South Sudan in September. As we boarded in Nairobi, we were pleased to connect with Mike and Jean Brown with African colleagues Nombulelo Khanyile, Amina Dikedi and Steve Kimaru, and to fly with them to Juba, the capital. This team, representing IofC International, came in response to the request of the Government of South Sudan for IofC to contribute to the healing and reconciliation process so desperately needed. Over 50 years the wounds from Africa's longest running civil war run deep – between individuals, ethnic groups, families, religious groups and political factions.

The day after we landed in Juba, we met with 41 South Sudanese who have connected with IofC to consider a proposal drafted at the Global assembly in Caux, Switzerland. For me, it was a great opportunity to greet some senior government officials whom I had previously got to know during the Human Security Forum I attended in Caux, during July. And I was particularly pleased to meet with a number of young people who have formed an 'IofC taskforce' in South Sudan.

The meeting was chaired by the Vice President, Dr. Riek Machar Teny, with Presidential Advisors General Joseph Lagu and Tor Deng Mawien alongside him at the table. Madame Angelina Teny, wife of the Vice President, suggested the meeting be run in 'a Caux format' – so everyone was given a chance to introduce her/ himself and to speak. After several hours, the Vice President moved that the proposal for a national campaign for reconciliation and good governance, starting next April, be adopted. It is a challenging agenda for IofC and all of us.

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At dinner afterwards, Kathryn and I were not far from where Dr Riek and other leaders were seated with Mike Brown. Mike asked me to join them and describe some

asked us to stay with her and the family. I was so grateful, as staying in a hotel was not my idea of visiting family. And Kathryn also got to know them. We sat under the stars in the evenings feeling the warm breeze before we retired to sleep in

benefitted so greatly from having a scholarship to access education. And I believe that this is one essential ingredient to bring about equity, peace and wellbeing to South Sudan's future generations. We don't know how else to contribute



My cousin Nyandeng's 'classroom' – students still need to bring their own chair

reconciliation work I have been doing with others of the diaspora in Australia – for instance how, after my cousin was killed in tribal conflicts in South Sudan last January, I had set out in Melbourne to establish a relationship of trust with a man of the opposing tribe, who had also lost relatives. It was a great moment. I did not expect to sit at a table with the Vice President! I was humbled, challenged and confronted by this man who, during the war, was responsible for a terrible massacre in Bor, my father's village, in which my grandmother was killed. I'm still not sure how to reconcile those mixed emotions.

This pivotal meeting formed the basis for many more encounters during our stay in South Sudan. We managed to join the IofC team for a variety of follow-up meetings, getting to know people and plan future programmes. Kathryn and I were even invited to move to South Sudan more permanently to contribute towards this work! (We need to consider this request a little more, to decide how we can best contribute because there are just so many needs.)

After two nights in a hotel in Juba, I was very keen to meet with my mother's sister, Nyantuol Kong. She

our sturdy thatched hut. This was the real Africa!

Travelling north by small plane for 30 minutes, we also managed to visit some of my father's relatives in Bor. Due to the wet weather, Bor was quite flooded. It was quite a new experience to wade through the flood waters to get to my family's home, especially for Kathryn. Such times with my family really touched us – both in Juba and Bor. My family live simply, often struggling to make ends meet financially. Health care and education are difficult to access. But it was inspiring to feel so warmly welcomed and so well fed.

Since Kathryn and I have been back in Australia we have been pondering how best to support my family members and others like them. With so many needs, hundreds of programmes and organisations are already doing great work. IofC's reconciliation work is meeting a huge need and we are keen to support this as we feel peace is needed at all levels of society in South Sudan.

We are also particularly keen to develop a programme for ourselves and other Australians to contribute to education costs for South Sudanese children who would otherwise miss out. I myself have



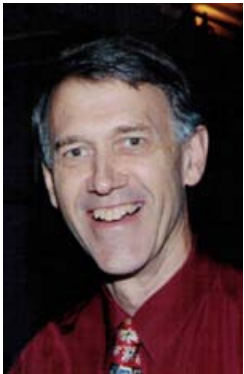
Nyok walking in water to visit relatives in Bor

just now, but we are on the journey with this new nation because it is my home.

I long for South Sudan to recover from a long history of war and rebuild a lasting peace. I personally believe that the people of South Sudan at all levels need to find peace within themselves. Having friends alongside them on this journey of healing and reconciliation is one way to bring that peace.

'A force for good in a troubled world'

In 1987 Dave Mills took Tony Abbott – now Opposition leader, then a journalist with *The Bulletin* – to Broken Hill, for one of a series of meetings hosted by the mayor to bring 'consultation, not confrontation' after a crippling strike in the mines. Abbott, in his two page story, described David and the team from MRA (now Initiatives of Change) who facilitated the meetings with their belief that 'only at the deeper level of the human spirit is lasting change effected'.



A couple of decades later, Dave invited Abbott – by then a Government Minister – to a community forum in suburban Sydney, soon after the 2006 Cronulla riots. Sharing the platform was the Mufti of Australia, Sheikh Taj Din Al

Hilaly, and Cardinal Edward Cassidy. The Christian/ Muslim dialogues Dave and his colleagues organized gave rise to a string of interfaith groups, still bridge-building across Sydney.

In August, hearing of David Mills' death after a two and a half year struggle with myeloma, Abbott described him as 'one of those fragrant individuals who tried as hard as he humanly could to understand others and to be a force for good in a troubled world'.

On the other side of politics, Kim Beazley (now Australia's Ambassador in Washington) remembers facing David's 'horrendously' fast bowling during a cricket match 40 years ago in India, where both of them had gone as students to volunteer service with MRA. 'David was an athletic, good-looking Australian (who) loved his country and loved people. He was also a citizen of the world,' wrote Beazley. 'His commitment was to the idea that everyone he met should experience the full potential God's grace could instil in them.'

On a cold windy night in Sydney, 2002, Dave followed that inner impulse to go for a Christmas Bowl fundraiser to hear a speaker from the Solomon Islands, still then emerging from bloody ethnic tensions. The speaker, Matthew Wale, is now an Opposition MP in Honiara. 'The first

thing that struck me was that here was a very authentic man, passionate in his love for Christ... filled with a great compassion for humanity,' said Wale, who flew to speak at Dave's funeral on 8 September. During their 10-year friendship Matthew Wale and David, with his wife Jane, set up two major reconciliation conferences in Honiara, the second of which coincided with the launch of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission with Archbishop Desmond Tutu from South Africa. 'It is not an overstatement to say that Dave has had a disproportionate impact on the reconciliation process in the Solomon Islands,' Wale summed up.

Just weeks before he died, drained by months of treatment, Dave emailed his IofC colleagues urging them to work towards 'getting our parliamentary leaders in Australia to find a regional bi-partisan approach to the asylum-seekers... one of the great human tragedies of our time.' Like with the 1967 Referendum for Aboriginal citizenship-rights and repealing the White Australia Policy, couldn't we help 'take the political heat out of it and produce clear, compassionate thinking'?

Of course, David wasn't just concerned with the big issues, the movers and shakers. 'My Dad, hey, what a fantastic bloke,' said his younger son, Antony, at the funeral. 'No matter how busy he was, Dad would always have time for me and Keith. When I was at a crossroads or facing a challenge, all it took was a chat with Dad and whatever problem I was having seemed manageable.' Keith told how, when the family gathered around his bed for the last Communion, someone managed to blurt out, 'We will miss you, David.' And David, with a final one-liner, replied, 'I'm going to miss me too!'

As Keith commented: 'Even though his health had left him, his sense of humour and his courageous spirit were alive and well.'

Among the 270 who crammed an overflowing church just down the road from where Jane and David lived were many of the musicians David had coached over years. Danielle Morley, producer of *Bless These Seeds*, a CD of David's songs, spoke on behalf of Bardwell Park singers: 'David taught me a lot about music, but he taught me much more about God... he was the most Jesus-like person I have ever known.'

At the front of the church were his cricket bat, tennis racket and 12-string guitar. 'The strings of my old guitar have travelled long, have travelled far,' was one of David's many compositions. His songs described the rich diversity of people, places and causes he served: from 'the Rock at the heart of this land' to 'village shacks' in Ethiopia, from racially-divided Richmond, Virginia, to working-class Liverpool in the UK; and many more.

One of his songs asks: 'In the years that lie ahead in time, when we have gone our way, what will future generations say of us today?' Will we be remembered for fast cars and tall buildings, he asked? 'Or could our children say of us what mattered most of all:

"They knew how to serve and share... they just lived the way they wanted the world to live, not demanding to get what they could, but only to give.

And the millions flocked to their door, wanting to know, wanting to learn, wanting to buy, but it was free.'

Dave Mills' life, freely given, still speaks to us.

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