



## Mentoring for sustainability

'Sustainable living... by transforming motives and behaviour' was one of three focus areas agreed to by many IofC national associations (including IofC Australia) at a Global Assembly in 2013.

That is expressed in all sorts of action in different situations. In Kenya's conflict-plagued Baringo County, IofC programs help farmers and graziers collaborate to manage and share their marginal lands. In nearby Burundi, women in Creators of Peace Circles learn how to cook cassava efficiently and build pit toilets. In 17 villages around Asia Plateau, the IofC centre in India, women and young people are not only introduced to IofC's approach of personal change but to employable skills and creating 'water boxes' to ensure clean spring water is shared.

In Australia, a project has started for Sustainable Impact Mentoring which on 1 April had its second of three workshops at Armagh in Melbourne. The program is designed 'to empower young leaders in the environment and sustainability fields who wish to create impact through innovative ideas and projects.'

Six participants, selected for the pilot program, reported progress on their projects:

- using semi-portable solar panels on unused land;
- launching an 'environmental hub' to link volunteers with new social enterprises and startups in order to assist these types of business get off the ground;
- holding an environmental art exhibition;
- producing a manual on how to inspire young people to live in an environmentally sustainable way;
- a Maori, who worked on restoring Christchurch's water systems after the earthquake, is developing a means of electronically mapping the underground sewerage system to make maintenance more sustainable;
- a hospitality worker, observing customers who ask for plastic bags, is working out how to promote bag re-use.

Each of them is linked with a mentor who assists them in the development of their projects. The volunteer mentors are Peter Baynard-Smith, CEO of Engineers Without Borders; Anil Bhatta, the founder of Clean Energy Solutions; Azain Raban, an environmental consultant (previously with World Vision); Dean Thompson, Manager, Food Security and Natural Resources at World Vision; Kevisato Sanyü, previously a community campaigner at The Wilderness Society; and Paul Ntoumos, IT consultant. Participants have monthly meetings with their mentor, in between the workshops.

The workshop, conducted by Athalia Zwartz and her assistant Kirsty Argento, followed the Human Centred Design approach, using three phases: inspiration, ideation and implementation. From the first workshop in February, participants set out to meet with those they were designing for. After getting feedback four of the six of the projects



Participants working through their project plans.  
 Credit: Gwendoline Azain

changed significantly – a process of making sure whatever they designed is meeting real needs and works with what is already existing in the field. During this process two participants reported 'light bulb moments' when new ideas were born out of obstacles they faced with their initial concepts.

This project began in October 2016 on the initiative of Gwendoline and Azain Raban who were inspired by the Caux Dialogue on Land and Security which they attended last year (see *Newsbriefs*, August 2016). They will be heading back to Caux for the Dialogue this year, 11-15 July.

The coordinator of the Caux Dialogue, Australian Bronwyn Lay, is based in Europe but is presently visiting Melbourne; so she came to brief participants on what is developing internationally from Caux.

In January Gwendoline took part in the Life Matters Workshop at Armagh (see *Newsbriefs*, February 2017), discovering how 'my dreams can be transformed into a concrete vision and what tools can be used to bring this vision to life.' She values the IofC approach of a personal journey and story-telling, using it in the Sustainability program for participants to focus on 'the insights they are gaining, and what they are learning on the way'.

A public forum event will be held in June where participants will present their projects and share reflections on the personal journeys of achieving them.

More information is on the project website: [www.impactmentoring.com.au](http://www.impactmentoring.com.au)

## Sydney University to Nepal... the circles keep growing

Shoshana Faire, one of Creators of Peace's International Coordinators, has just returned from Nepal where she trained '10 wonderful women' to facilitate Peace Circles. Most had done a Peace Circle in January 2016, while one had participated in a Circle which Shoshana ran on her first visit, six years ago.

Before leaving Sydney, on 4-5 March, Shoshana co-facilitated with Maria Moy another Peace Circle (the fifth) at the Department of Peace and Conflict Studies of Sydney University. 'Thank you for this experience,' wrote one post-grad student on her feedback sheet. 'I will be forever grateful for the place of safety you provided, a place to be vulnerable, and for your love. I am sorry if my story was a bit of a rant, but I must tell you it was quite cathartic.'

A sixth Peace Circle, scheduled at Sydney University on 22-23 April, already has a waiting list. These Circles are unique, being held in an academic institution but also since men take part.

One of them, Raphael Manirakiza, is a clinical psychologist, a part-time lecturer and researcher at Sydney University, working on trauma healing, transitional justice and peace-building in Burundi and with refugee communities in Australia.

Included in Raphael's report was this assessment:



Participants in the University of Sydney circle. Credit: Zoe Bedford

‘As a clinical psychologist, I know the importance of expressing feelings and emotions. Though the seminar was not therapy, it was a healing opportunity especially for me, a former prisoner, a torture and trauma survivor from a country where men are not allowed to cry!

‘There were two men in the Peace Circle, both of us from Burundi, a small country in Central Africa. Since 1966 till now there has been unrest (except between 1976-1987), with civil war and mass atrocities between the two main tribes, Hutu and Tutsi.

‘This Creators of Peace seminar was my first of this kind. The facilitation style is unique. The diversity of the group was also unique: 11 people from eight different backgrounds – Indonesia, USA, France, Burundi, Somalia, Pakistan, Brazil and Australia.

‘I have had many opportunities to tell my story but never for ten minutes! The powerful stories from other participants reminded me that everyone has got a story and that I am not alone.

‘What helped me most was realizing that instead of trying to fix the world, it is better to focus on what I can change and influence (versus what I cannot change/influence); and secondly, that forgiveness (without forgetting, which is necessary) helps both the offended and the offender.

‘Since then I made a resolution of letting go my resentments and forgiving always to have more inner peace.

‘As a member of IofC Australia, I am proud that Creators of Peace is contributing to individual capacity-building and professional development, hence developing social capital through well-being of responsible citizens and peaceful communities.’

## A compassionate Gold Coast

‘What an amazing week!’ emailed Lesley Bryant, at the end of March, from the Gold Coast. ‘It started with the Harmony Day Event on Tuesday (21st) and I’ve just finished a powerful three-day Participatory Community Leadership workshop run by the Anti-Discrimination Commission.’

The Harmony Day event at Griffith University's Gold Coast Campus was ‘wonderful,’ wrote Lesley. ‘Eleven high schools each sent four school leaders and a teacher. In mixed school groups they discussed what would a compassionate Gold Coast be like? Key concerns were homelessness, domestic violence, bullying, multicultural relations. Then in their

school groups they came up with a proposal on “How can our school be a more compassionate community?” Each will report their implementation to the Mayor after three months. Then key faith leaders from Gold Coast and GC Hospital (Muslim, Christian, Baha’i, Buddhist) signed The Charter for Compassion\*.’

*\*(Lesley has been promoting the idea of the Gold Coast becoming a ‘Compassionate City’ in preparation for hosting the 2018 Commonwealth Games. Her message continues):*

‘The three-day workshop in Brisbane was mainly with public servants – all keen to create a more inclusive, compassionate community.

In one section, six of us were given 20 minutes to tell our stories. I told of my involvement with the Chai Community and Multifaith Advisory and Action Group on the Gold Coast. After I had told my story and each listener had reflected their observations, the silent “witness” (there was one in each group) said that, even as I told of all the conflicts and terrible things that have happened, I modelled a compassionate attitude to all involved. I felt very honoured.’

## An Afghan family take an unexpected holiday

Martin Flanagan, in his 25 February column in 'The Age', narrated an incident on a Melbourne train:

'Helen Fuller, a grandmother of 10 and former primary school teacher, was sitting on a Metro train opposite a white woman about her age and a brown man in his mid-20s when she found herself listening in to their conversation,' wrote Flanagan. She overheard the young man telling 'how he and his family had arrived in Australia from Afghanistan. "He looked a very lovely boy," said Helen. "I could tell from his face."'

When the young man – Abuzar Mazoori, a part-time student and youth worker – said that he had not seen anything of Australia but Melbourne, Helen had what she calls 'an inspiration,' wrote Flanagan. "Sometimes I have these impulses to trust people." Leaning forward, she apologised for listening but said she had a holiday house in Rye and perhaps the young man and his family might like to go down and have a week's holiday there over Christmas.'

Abuzar is a graduate of the most recent IofC Life Matters Workshop where he shared this story. Helen and her husband Moss, on the other hand, had taught at an outback community in the Northern Territory and, on their way south through Tennant Creek, had unexpectedly been offered hospitality for a night by an Aboriginal man they had never met before – an experience they had never forgotten. It was that same spirit of generosity which prompted Helen to trust her instinct with Abuzar.

As Flanagan reports, 'Helen received "a fair bit of negativity" when she told others what she had done... She was supported, however, by her husband, Moss...

'In another part of Melbourne, Abuzar was encountering similar problems,' continued Flanagan. 'His brother laughed at him when he recounted the story. "How is this possible? How she trusts you? How you trust her?" Their mother was confronted by the idea of occupying another woman's home, particularly when that woman was a stranger...'

Helen invited Abuzar down to see the holiday house, gave him a key and said the house would be vacant from 24 December till New Year's Day. On the morning of the 24th, Abuzar 'negotiated' for several hours before he got his family's agreement to accept the offer. At four in the afternoon, the family of 10 drove down to Rye. As soon as they reached the holiday house, opened the front door and saw what a comfortable place it was, 'my father and especially my mother totally changed,' said Abuzar.

Helen had warned the neighbour that a family of Afghans might be using their holiday house over Christmas. The neighbour later told her she saw the parents watering the back garden. Helen said the place looked lovely when next they went there. Since then, she and Moss have been to Abuzar's home for a meal.

Flanagan quotes Helen's reflections on the fear and uncertainty 'in the Age of Trump' when people spread alarm about terrorist attacks that haven't actually happened: 'It's only by doing small things that we can reverse that trend.'

And Abuzar's conclusion: 'It doesn't matter who we are. Everyone is suffering from disconnecting now.'



Credit: Sokol Blazovski

## Staying on the ball

With the challenge of 'Staying on the ball' – in basketball and in life – 21 young men from different ethnic communities spent a weekend from Friday, 31 March, at a 'Basketball and Life Skills Camp' on Phillip Island, Victoria. It was the eighth such camp co-hosted by the MSF Basketball Academy and IofC Australia.

The purpose of the camp was to offer youth a chance 'to significantly improve their basketball ability and to equip them with ethical values and courage so they become confident in making positive lifestyle choices, especially in peer group situations'.

Besides coaching on 'ball handling and shooting', the weekend featured

life coaching on how to 'go for goals' and 'be a leader' in building a strong community spirit in their areas of influence.

The leadership team included nine graduates of IofC's Life Matters Workshops, each sharing their experiences of challenges and change. Dialogues with the teenagers were as

vigorous as the on-court rebounds, with several sharing about personal issues of dishonesty, drugs, family break-up and trouble with the law.

The camp was coordinated by Sokol Blazovski for MSF, and Rob Wood for IofC.

# 50th anniversary of a special calling

April 1967, 50 years ago, there was a 'call' that seized my life and set my feet on a path less travelled. 'I want you to be a different sort of doctor,' was what I heard. So I gave away my plans to study medicine and set off for India at the age of 21, to live with no fixed address and no regular income, no tertiary education, no formal career. Yet with a confidence in some Divine scheme of things which has evolved over the years into a relationship with an invitational God, also of no fixed address! A God most interested in how we become fully human through our care for each other and the world we inhabit.

This is not to advocate for the lack of formal study nor for irresponsible pursuits of utopian ideals. Yet perhaps cultural norms have become increasingly security and stability conscious, and the youthful imperative of the adventurous embrace of world-changing has diminished somewhat.

While I do now have a fixed address, and relish proximity to children, grandchildren and neighbours, my remaining years continue to be available to follow that inner voice of

wisdom wherever it might take me – across the world or into the heart of a friend down the street. The 'call' remains.

Fifty years ago I set out to care for sick and abused hearts and souls with an awareness that healing a sick and abused world starts in the lives of individuals. This has led me to be part of the global community of Initiatives of Change. The last 25 years has been with a particular passion for the work of Creators of Peace. In village homes and mansions across India

and countries of Africa; with students in Asia; with business and political activists in the USA – every encounter has held the potential for growth and amazing initiatives of reconciliation and community building.

I may not have always had the right diagnoses, nor prescribed the best medicines; but in the process of accompanying others I am the one who has found healing and life.

*By Jean Brown, Adelaide*

## Frank Buchman and the Germans

This book by Pierre Spoerri is a book of historical research, and a very detailed one at that. Although to some, history may seem only related to the past, it is in fact all about change. Historic knowledge allows us to understand how through adaptation, reform, reshaping and transformation an event of the past evolves into the present-day reality.

Frank Buchman (1878-1961), an American of Swiss-German descent, was the founder of the movement we know as the Initiatives of Change. About 100 years ago, when it formed in England, it was known as the Oxford Group. Buchman set down principles for moral and spiritual reform, believing that 'merely through human acts of goodwill you cannot alleviate human misery'. In 1920 following the devastating Great War, Europe was bathed in human misery, particularly Germany. Buchman devoted much of the next 30 years working in this country.

The book covers in great detail how the organisation's work progressed from the original strategy of holding 'house parties' to meetings with church leaders and then with top government officials, as 'the work of awakening, redirecting and caring for outsiders cannot be separated from renewal and reform within religion and Christianity.'

In May 1938 Buchman foresaw 'that the next great movement in the world will be a movement of moral and spiritual re-armament of all nations.' On 29 May in East London, Moral Re-Armament was officially launched as a world-wide program. So firmly did Buchman believe in the power of moral re-armament that he repeatedly attempted to meet Adolf Hitler, in the hope that a moral rebirth in the Nazi leadership could avert war. By 1936 he realised these attempts were futile.

Buchman returned to Germany in 1948. By 1950 Moral Re-Armament was established in Caux, Switzerland, where post-war conferences brought together hundreds of Germans, French, British, Scandinavians and other Europeans, helping to create a basis of relationships on which new international agreements and institutions could be built. These included the historic Schuman Plan, a first step in economic integration which led to the European

Community and later the European Union. Buchman was decorated by the French Government with the *Legion d'Honneur*, and by the German government with the *Crosses Verdienstkreuze*.

Buchman died in 1961 but to his last days he maintained close contact with his team in Germany. One of his last messages to them was: 'A new thinking is derived from a new mentality, and that grows as slow as an oak. Freedom is one of the major notions. Freedom to understand yourself and things around you, and to bring about the change.'

*Reviewed by Luda Kedova*

*A new edition of 'Frank Buchman and the Germans' by Pierre Spoerri, edited and translated by Peter Thwaites, has been printed in Australia. It is available at \$12.50, from IofC Publications, 226 Kooyong Road, Toorak, Vic 3142, Tel: 03 98221218, or from Peter Thwaites, 02 62784117, [prthwaites@gmail.com](mailto:prthwaites@gmail.com)*

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