



AfL Encounters

Initiatives of Change

News from Action for Life

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Volume 4 Issue 47

November 2009

Spotlight on the Pacific

This month our spotlight will be set on Australia and the Solomon Islands. Led by faith, two African ladies, Joanita Nabbanja (AfL4, Uganda) and Ann Njeri Ndiangui (AfL4, Kenya) chose to serve in Australia as their Stepping Stone Project (SSP) after Action for Life 4 (AfL4); while Nigel Heywood (AfL1, 2, 3&4, Australia) decided to go to the Solomon Islands with David Mills (IofC Full Time Volunteer, Australia) for the huge reconciliation work there.

Prelude and Variations

Right from the beginning, Joanita and Ann Njeri were a bit doubtful and fearful whether people from this prosperous continent would be interested in these two young African ladies who are dreaming of making this world a better place. However, the fear was blown away immediately after they arrived at the immigration desk, where they were warmly welcomed and greeted by the immigration officer with a big smile on his face.

After this good start, from the mid July until the end of September, Joanita and Ann Njeri kept busy taking part in many different programs, invited by the local IofC team. They shared their AfL4 experiences with local people, made 9 school presentations, facilitated a two day Peace Circle Workshop for 10 women, spoke in the World Vision Organization Australia over lunch hour, where more than 50 people came out of



their expectation.

Ann Njeri Ndiangui (AfL4, Kenya): "I was always afraid that I would hear some shouts from the back of the hall during our presentations. But after most of our speeches, the students would come to shake my hand, telling me that 'I just wanted to say thank you for your talk. I was very inspired. I feel very motivate.'"

Creating a Culture of Peace

One of the most important events during these 3 months for Joanita and Ann Njeri was to help with the 5th Creators of Peace International Conference, which took place from 29th September to 4th October in Sydney. 235 women from 23 countries around the world came together, to share and learn how women can create peace in all levels of the society.

One highlight from the conference was when a women's advocate, Filomena Dos Reis, from East Timor shared about the disappearance of her husband during the conflict in her country. After she had spoken, a young lady from Indonesia stood up and apologized.

Another highlight was when a lady from Afghanistan, Mahboba Rawi, who currently stays in Australia, shared about the sufferings of the Afghans during the occupation of the Russian. Again a young Russian woman took



the opportunity to apologize to Mahboba for the actions of her country.

Deborah Sullivan (AfLA, Australia): “There was a great feeling of connectedness because the women felt that there was an atmosphere of trust and respect. This led to many women being able to talk about very traumatic experiences in depth with each other. I saw that sharing these experiences in a safe, non judgmental and gossip free environment led to great healing and understanding no matter what our background is.”

Joanita Nabbanja (AfLA, Uganda): “I worked with a team of women who are dedicated and willing to sacrifice for the conference. Most of them had full time jobs, but they still spend time preparing this Conference for almost 18 months. No wonder this is one of the best conferences that I have ever attended. I believe it was all because of the commitments of these women. This taught me that if I am to achieve a certain goal in my life, I should be focused, determined, dedicated and willing to go for an extra mile.”

Making Difference in the Solomon Islands

At the age of 33, after 8 years of working with IofC, Nigel Heywood this time followed David Mills to the Solomon Islands looking for something different. He wanted to see what was developing in the Pacific and what does it mean to make a difference on the ground.

David Mills has been going to the Solomon Islands for several years and has built a remarkable network including politicians,



pastors, and ex-militants, etc. They together delivered a reconciliation workshop with ex-militants and villagers. It turned out that these soldiers of the jungle responded to the two skinny white guys pretty well and it was just a small step towards peace in a troubled paradise.

Nigel Heywood (AfL1, 2, 3&4, Australia): “I saw the way Dave worked with friends in one to one and group meetings. He kept encouraging and helping the team clarify their direction all the time. I met with Matthew Wale, Minister for Education, and heard his vision for education, for the country, and for the Pacific. He and Dave talked in the nights about how Matthew had risked his life during the tensions and the ways to move the Solomon Islands forward. One night, Matthew said, ‘We can have electoral reforms and clean election campaigns, but it comes to nothing without good leaders.’ It struck home to me, this is the work we are doing, building and becoming the leaders who will work from the ground up and the top down. And this is exactly what David and Matthew have been doing! Two men are walking the same path, one at the top in politics and one at the grass roots. They move in faith and they move in a string of people, like a net stretching across the country. What they have done could fade away tomorrow or it could change the direction of the country. And I asked myself, ‘how much am I willing to be involved?’”

Take the AfL Journey Online

Action for Life 4 ended on 9 May 2009. News from alumni will be printed monthly. Please check www.afl.iofc.org for program updates. We appreciate your ongoing support.

