



## *South African Newsletter*

*Jan/Feb 2012*

### **Initiatives of Change**

#### ***Dialogue on Democracy***

At a recent Initiatives of Change (IofC) international Dialogue on Making Democracy Work at Asia Plateau, India, participants responded from 32 countries. They ranged from Ministers and MPs to Egypt's Tahrir Square revolutionaries, from American academics to Indian social activists, from a Rwandan peace-builder to a Japanese aid-worker.



***Rajmohan Gandhi welcomes South Sudan Vice President Dr Riek Machar Teny and members of the South Sudan delegation. (Photo: Niharikaa Vazirani)***

The Dialogue opened with the video address of **Aung San Suu Kyi**, the Burmese opposition politician who was incarcerated for over 15 years until her release in 2011. She sounded the hopeful note that Burma is 'on the verge of a breakthrough.' But, she continued, 'we need to be independent from our own weaknesses, which allowed the decades of military regime to rule. Shaping our own destiny requires not only a sense of purpose but also a sense of responsibility. 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? At the family? In the schools? In university? In the polls? There are so many different ways of starting it but I believe that it starts in the family. From the family, outwards into society we should understand what democracy entails not just in the matter of rights but also in terms of responsibilities.' Her request for 'our friends from all over the world' to maintain an 'intense interest' on developments at this critical time was warmly received.

***Excerpts from article by Mike Brown***

*For more information visit [www.makingdemocracywork.org](http://www.makingdemocracywork.org)*

South Africans, **Ginn Fourie** and **Letlapa Mphahlele** were invited to speak and give their powerful example of reconciliation. Ginn's daughter, Lyndi was killed in an armed attack during the apartheid era, and Letlapa Mphahlele who, as an officer of the military wing of the Pan Africanist Congress, had ordered the attack. Though Mphahlele has not on principle apologised for violence in a 'situation of war', his actions have matched Fourie's wholehearted forgiveness.

What they shared was very well received and several invitations to use their experience in other countries have come.



***Ginn Fourie and Letlapa Mphahlele***

While at the conference Ginny-Pheladi, as she is affectionately called, was grateful for the opportunity to spend some time thinking about her country. Below are extracts from what she wrote:

"Democracy is a possibility when citizens are included in the economic and social well-being of a country. Until all are able to participate in the economy in meaningful ways and are acknowledged for their contribution and given recognition for their humanity, democracy is a name only. Honesty, integrity and justice are benchmarks of Democracy. When these are not seen to be present, the electorate lose respect for politicians and tend to become lawless themselves.

"In SA it was not only the oppressed non white people who suffered under apartheid, but we discover to our chagrin that as whites we also lost our voice and courage to resist oppression.

"I think fear plays a major role in leadership of any kind, when power is tenuous, and (when) there are stiff competitors a show of power is made by having the biggest and the best, which is very counter-productive. The poor/dispossessed watch with envy the luxury vehicles and pomp which the wealthy and leadership flaunt - whilst they struggle to find food and basic shelter.

“Eventually anger and frustration boils over and violence against the injustice of poverty (when there is enough for all) breaks out. ... I deeply long for (a) fair and free world where the greatest good for the greatest number of people is the standard. Where there is no scramble for the basics of life and all have an opportunity to live with abundance and compassion as a daily reality, where greed and corruption are a thing of the past.”

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## Grassroots visionary

**Wesley Magengene**, a retired headmaster from the Walaza Junior Secondary School, Sterkspruit, is passionate about uplifting a very rural, under-developed community in this area of the Eastern Cape, not far from the Lesotho border.

IofC teams have worked with Wesley since 2006 visiting schools, communities, HIV AIDS projects, prison inmates, business leaders etc.

When asked what motivates him Wesley responded, “A power that can't be described.” He is deeply concerned about the learners who pass their final high school year and then what? “What can we do with the matriculants roaming around?” he wrestles.

Apart from helping 60 of these young people to receive training in adult literacy in 35 schools, Wesley has dreamt for many years of starting a computer school in order to empower and give skills to both pupils and parents.

Working with Wesley to find the finance for this project has had its challenges. However, Wesley describes that “the power from above made us win.”



**Wesley Magengene(front) with Sibusiso Gobinduku, Computer Trainer(middle) and Meryl Horn (left)**  
(Photo: Pieter Horn)

Through a chance encounter with a New Zealander whose grandfather had been a church minister in the Sterkspruit area, the wheels were set in motion for this man to raise finances for the computer school. Then through IofC Board Member Reg Barry, Wesley was

put in touch with Rommel Roberts, Director of the Hilltop Empowerment Centre who provided 42 reconditioned computers for the establishment of the Walaza Computer School in 2011.



**A proud moment for graduates and the community**

Last month, on January 27<sup>th</sup>, the graduation of the first group of 39 computer students who qualified in the use of word-processing, spreadsheets and the preparation of Powerpoint presentations, took place. Pieter Horn and Leon Marincowitz attended and spoke at the ceremony, representing IofC.

Guest speaker for the occasion summed up Wesley's philosophy saying that we need to 'move away from being moaners and groaners to being movers and shakers. Never wait for your ship to come in, swim to it. You can't discover new oceans until you lose sight of land. If you don't control your attitude, it will control you.'

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## Youths for peace; together making it happen

This was the theme for the second Eastern African Youth Conference (EAYC) which began on February 8<sup>th</sup> in Kampala, Uganda.



**Delegates engaging**

The forum brought together about 60 young adults to

explore practical ways to respond to conflict and violence in the East African region. It featured speakers with a great wealth of knowledge and experience in peace initiatives within Africa, from Kenya, Sudan and Uganda. During the week, participants brainstormed and shared on issues including:

- ✦ the role of civil society as well as accountability and values as part of good governance, peace and security challenges in Africa
- ✦ the role of non-violence in conflict transformation
- ✦ youths as a pillar to building sustainable peace.

After five days of deliberations, the EAYC ended with a call to the delegates present to be ambassadors of peace wherever they go. Speaking at the closing



*Prime Minister of Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom, Rev Fr Bonny Kyaligonza, addressing guests*

ceremony, the Prime Minister of Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom, reiterated the value of brotherhood and sisterhood. ‘We want Africa to rise and shine and that Africa is none other than you and me,’ he asserted.

The next forum will be held in Rwanda, February 18–24, 2013. The vision bearers of EAYC hope that it would be held on a rotational basis in all the nine Eastern Africa countries.

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## **Team Building Workshop**

**Jackie Euvrard** writes: “We invited Shoshana Faire from Sydney, Australia to help us rediscover the importance of teamwork, fellowship and friendship - to blow away cobwebs where we might have got stuck not knowing how to move forward as a team. To also look at any concerns, underlying issues and solutions.

“Shoshana is an accomplished author, facilitator and mediator by profession. She has known IofC for a number of years and wanted to offer her services to assist wherever she could.



*Shoshana Faire, giving training in teamwork (Photo: Jackie Euvrard)*

“Thirteen of us met over two days (Feb 9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup>). Shoshana led us through a series of team building exercises. It was exciting when we initially drew up a 'time line' of when IofC started in South Africa in the 1920's until the present day. It showed up the obvious turning points, good and difficult, also the vision of IofC during different periods. This proved to be very informative for the younger generation present and a reminder for those of us who have been part of some of it. As someone said, 'the flame never went out no matter the difficulties through the years.' **Portia Mosia** said, 'The time gave me a chance to know more about IofC, its values, but also what will be my contribution in making the difference presently.'

“Honest conversation proved an important aspect of the process of going forward. We had a chance to spend time with individuals to clear any shadows that may have caused wrong assumptions. **Vilma Maritz** commented, 'It helped participants get to know and appreciate one another better. I came away feeling positive and equipped to improve relationships in general.’’ **Cleo Mohlaodi** summed up the workshop saying, 'it built a new foundation for three generations to work together toward the common goal that we are all lead in by God.'



*l-r: Bukiwe Maseko, Leon Marincowitz, Shoshana Faire, Sam Mxolisi Pono, Nombulelo Khanyile (Photo: Jackie Euvrard)*

We were offered tools and formulas in trust building,

how to approach each other if there was an issue that needed to be raised, etc. Another participant, **Snowy Mohlala** evaluated the workshop this way, 'I was empowered (to) approach things in a different way, (and) think for other people's feelings. It has changed my attitude so much that I do not interfere in other's business unless asked. I meditate regularly every morning. I realize that it gives me peace, calm. My mind is not disturbed as much as before. I now care more (for) my team members.'

It was also extremely useful and a lot of fun when we discovered our individual styles of behaviour, our 'weaknesses and strengths'. There was a new understanding of how each of us approached work and life. One person remarked afterwards, 'This exercise says a lot - how not to have a critical spirit, but have compassion for the other person.'

"At the end of the two days we drew up a list of 'Operating Principles' which will be a useful practice for each of us in our teamwork ahead.

"It was decided that we would schedule another weekend to look further at some issues we were unable to complete.

"Personally, I believe the workshop with Shoshana was like a 'breath of fresh air'. It has helped kick start our team into wanting to move forward. It is a beginning and ongoing process. It will require each of us to give our best."

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## **Cameroon**

The Cameroon Association for Moral Re-Armament/Initiatives of Change (CAMRA/IC), in collaboration with the African Co-ordination Group (ACG) of IofC International, is pleased to announce that an All Africa Moral Re-Armament Conference will take place in Yaounde, Cameroon, from May 7-11, 2012 on the theme: 'Governance, Leadership and Corruption in Africa - what hope for the Continent's youth?'

Should you be interested in attending this conference, please be in touch with Adalbert Otou-Nguini at <adotou@hotmail.com>

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## **In Memory**

**Inge Thelemann-Grutz** passed away peacefully on December 30<sup>th</sup>, 2011 in Deutsches Altersheim where she lived and was cared for.



During a memorial service for Inge, there was a chance for friends to share memories of Inge. What was evident when people spoke was Inge's deep care for people. She was well read and initiated a German reading group in the home. Inge took initiatives to bring people together and was known for always sharing her experiences, her vast knowledge and spiritual walk with everyone, especially the staff. She was also in the process of writing a book on Africa. A friend from the Franciscan community, where Inge was very active, offered to type all Inge had written even though it was incomplete.

Jackie Euvrard shared messages from some of her Initiatives of Change friends. Inge had a big part in helping the IofC programme Foundation for Freedom (F4F) in Eastern Europe. A message from F4F expressed their sincere gratitude for the role Inge played through her financial support, care and commitment. Inge had a deep passion for this part of the world having grown up in Berlin and having served as a nurse in Russia during World War 11. She made regular donations to F4F from 2005 enabling 60 young people from Ukraine, Russia, Moldova, Latvia, Armenia, Serbia and Romania to take part in conferences in Caux and participate in the Intern programme. Angela Starovoytova, F4F chairperson, said, "It is something very special for us even to imagine that there was someone, who was not right next to us, who strongly believed in what we were doing, trying to bring freedom and value-based democracy to our part of the world. "

It was expressed by the pastor that Inge had found reconciliation through her touch with Initiatives of Change. We thank God for all He was able to restore in her life. IofC South Africa says good bye to Inge, a great warrior of God where her generosity and care knew no bounds.

*By Jackie Euvrard*

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