



Network of journalists for peace and reconciliation is born in Côte d'Ivoire

A workshop for 25 journalists on 'the media's contribution to clean and hate-free elections' took place in Côte d'Ivoire, 1–7 March, organized by Initiatives of Change and the press agency, Info Sud. Côte d'Ivoire has suffered political violence in recent years. The journalists, drawn from both public and private media, discussed the role journalists have played in conflict situations including Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone and Liberia. All too often the media has contributed to the conflicts and allowed itself to be politically manipulated.

By the end of the workshop the journalists had formed a network to encourage collaboration, consultation, vigilance, alertness, and to raise consciousness in other journalists. It will meet every two weeks and will attempt to gather all journalists dealing with political information. The ambassadors of Switzerland and Germany, whose countries had financed the programme, presented certificates at the closing ceremony on 7 March.



DANIELLE MAILLEFER

Assana Sangaré MP, initiator of the programme, interviewed on Téléjournal national television in Côte d'Ivoire

Indian bureaucrats work at vision of ethical governance

A quiet movement for ethical governance is gathering momentum in the state of Karnataka, centre of India's IT industry. It began in 2006, when two officers from the elite Indian Administrative Service (IAS) attended one of the Ethics in Public Governance programmes conducted annually at Asia Plateau, the IofC centre south of Mumbai. Both were fired by the content and spirit of the programme.

One, on returning to Bangalore, launched a series of three-day IofC workshops, each for 35 municipal officers, conducted by the Centre for Ethical Leadership, an initiative of IofC India.

The other, a young IAS officer who had been posted to the Department of Personnel and Administrative Reforms with a brief to find training to improve governance, set out to convince his senior officers that IofC's approach of 'change starting with oneself' was what they were looking for. As a result two senior officers – one an Additional Chief Secretary – came last November to Asia Plateau for an international conference of corporate leaders and bureaucrats, on building 'Trust and integrity in the global economy'.

With a vision that Karnataka could lead India in ethical governance, they began mapping out an ambitious plan to use IofC-based training to reach a 'critical mass' among the 4,000 officers in the State Secretariat. Their aim is not only to increase efficiency, but to provide governance with a responsive 'human face'. In December the first group of 33 senior officers was despatched to Asia Plateau from departments such as Education, Public Works, Finance and Agriculture. Then in March, 18 middle level officers – those who interface with the public – went through a similar training in Bangalore. The young IAS officer, who originally promoted this initiative, attended the feedback session, which only fired his zeal

to systematically promote this training at these two levels throughout the State Secretariat.

Meanwhile, 15 executives from BESCO, Bangalore's electricity supply agency, are currently in Asia Plateau for a Heart of Effective Leadership programme, with further groups sanctioned in the next months and courses for junior officers in Bangalore.



ROB LANCASTER

Senior bureaucrats from the Indian Administrative Service at Asia Plateau

News in Brief

Kenyans who care

In response to the ethnic violence that has rocked their nation, a group of young Kenyans associated with IofC has launched a programme to empower schoolchildren to break the chain of tribal hate and to embrace other cultures and traditions. Called Kenya I Care, the programme uses personal story sharing, skits and songs to communicate the basic ideas of IofC. 'Corruption and tribalism are the two big issues raised as a major concern of students in five schools (so far),' writes facilitator Ann Njeri. 'If many students live the commitments they have made, Kenya might be on its way to a generation free of corruption, hate and moral decay.'

Education for peace

Over 500 French schoolchildren took part in a competition organized by IofC France as part of its Education for Peace project. The children had to imagine a conflict scenario and tell the story of its peaceful resolution in pictorial form. The scenarios received included disputes relating to religion, physical and social differences, racism, sport or disputes between friends. The winning entries will be exhibited as part of the Salon for Peace initiatives in Paris at the end of May.

Nigerian journey of reconciliation

Imam Muhammad Ashafa and Pastor James Wuye from Nigeria continued their journey of reconciliation with a week in French-speaking Switzerland, to launch the French-language version of their film, *The Imam and the Pastor*. Major articles in the large circulation *Tribune de Genève* and *24Heures* brought many to the premiere on 24 April at the University of Geneva. The two former antagonists were interviewed three times on radio, and received at the United Nations, the World Council of Churches and the L'Arzillier 'house of dialogue' for interfaith encounter in Lausanne.

Earlier in April they were in Washington, DC, for workshops at the US Agency for International Development, focusing on religious actors engaged in peace building. An IofC-hosted reception brought a diverse audience together to hear their story which showed, said a priest in charge of the Office of Interreligious Affairs at the US Catholic Bishops Conference, 'that entire communities can be moved to change by spiritual means'.

Meeting of the Americas

ISMARVILLAVICENCIO



Indigenous people from the Pataxó tribe (Porto Seguro, Brazil) opened the Meeting of the Americas

Honest conversations, times of quiet reflection and sharing, particularly from people engaged in social work and NGOs, were a highlight of the 13th 'Meeting of the Americas', convened by IofC. The meeting took place 8-16 March in Petropolis, Brazil, with representatives from Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, United States, Uruguay and Europe. Signs of fresh teamwork across the continent characterized the meeting, with proposals for a common action plan, training of teams and focus on families. The vision was one of hope and reconciliation.

New IofC Association in Argentina

On 4 March in the magnificent Salon San Martín of Buenos Aires City Hall, the new Argentine Initiatives of Change Association was formally inaugurated in the presence of Dr Oscar Moscariello, President of the Progressive Democratic Party, the major party in the city council. 'It is important in today's world to promote the creation of civil organizations aimed at encouraging and protecting universal values,' said Moscariello.

Business ethics in St Petersburg

Paul Gundersen, a Finnish businessman with long experience of applying the ideas of IofC in professional life, and two colleagues, were invited to speak at a three-day seminar on 'Ethics in business – illusion or source of strength' at St Petersburg University. The seminar was the idea of Dr Vadim Perov, Director of the Ethics Department of the Faculty of Philosophy and Political Science, after he attended the 'Servant community – values, responsibility and leadership' conference at the IofC centre in Caux, Switzerland. As he explained to Gundersen, although their academic courses in ethics were very thorough, they lacked experience of applying ethics in contemporary business life.

CALENDAR

QUEBEC, CANADA

23-25 May

Towards a Community of Communities: From solitudes to partnership

PARIS, FRANCE

30 May -1 June

International Salon for Peace Initiatives

DERBYSHIRE, UK

14-15 June

Conversations on Trust Building

INDONESIA

23-30 June

International Youth Forum: Action on Millennium Development Goals towards a peaceful world

CAUX, SWITZERLAND

International conferences:

3-9 July

Global Servant-Leadership

11-16 July

Trust and Integrity in the Global Economy

18-23 July

Addressing the Root Causes of Human Insecurity

25 July-1 August

Tools for Change

3-10 August

Renewal Arts: Can artists mend a broken world?

12-17 August

Developing Cultural Dialogue

www.caux.ch/2008

KOREA

9-16 August

14th Asia Pacific Youth Conference

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Young Cambodians and Vietnamese talk out their issues on top of Bakheng mountain.

PEOPLE BUILDING TRUST

From prejudices to a shared vision

Vietnam and Cambodia have a history of conflict over centuries.

Peter Heyes recounts what some young people are doing to make it stop with their generation

In July 2004, on the site of Wat Rajabo, an 18th Century Buddhist pagoda in the Cambodian city of Siem Riep, 230 young Asians were crammed into a hall. Among them were 17 Vietnamese. Welcoming them to the opening session of the 11th Asia Pacific Youth Conference (APYC) convened by Initiatives of Change, a young Khmer woman admitted that she found it difficult to love those from her powerful and larger neighbour.

Some Vietnamese were hurt and angry and decided to return home. 'Why should we stay in a place where we are not wanted?' said one.

'We did not need to use polite words'

Two years previously, at an APYC in Malaysia, a senior Vietnamese from Britain – whose experience of living in Cambodia as a child had sensitized her to their feelings – graciously apologized to the young Cambodians present for what her nation had done in Cambodia following the downfall of the Pol Pot regime. Her gesture deeply moved the Cambodians present. 'I never thought that the Vietnamese would understand the pain and suffering I felt as a Cambodian,' said one of them. He and his friends had returned home wanting to see a change in relationships between the two countries. It was one of the reasons they had organized the APYC in

Cambodia. They were not about to let it fail.

They convinced the Vietnamese participants to stay. Night after night, after the day's conference programme, they talked about the things that divided them. Carvings on the famous Angkor Thom ruins, which they toured, depicted wars and invasions between their countries, dating back to the 12th Century. The Vietnam-Cambodian war, which led to the ousting of Pol Pot in 1979, occupation by Vietnamese troops and continuing territorial disputes, is still living history for many.

By the final session of the APYC a week later, the girl who had revealed her distrust was standing next to her new Vietnamese friend, each wearing a broad smile and the traditional costume of the other's country. On the bus back to Phnom Penh, the youth of both countries sat together, singing each other's songs and enjoying each other's company.

Emails flew back and forth between the new friends and soon they realized that the informal dialogue they had started needed more time. Within months they had organized the first Cambodia-Vietnam Dialogue (CVD) in Vietnam. On a mountainside in the resort of Dalat, the 22 participants spent time reflecting, sharing what matters to young people, irrespective of nationality. People realized they had the same needs, problems and dreams. They began to see each other as human beings, not as Cambodians or Vietnamese.

None of the Cambodians had ever travelled to Vietnam. They were taken to underground tunnels preserved since the 'American war', toured Ho



Chi Minh City and had dialogues with university students. Home stays helped to make them feel special. Vietnamese parents spoke of their distrust. But the young Cambodians warmed them, giving a different picture of their people. Attitudes long held slowly started to melt away.

The Vietnamese took their Cambodian guests to Kampuchea Krom – a part of Vietnam which used to belong to Cambodia – meeting the Khmer-speaking community and joining in their traditional festival. For Cambodians who still feel pain at the loss of this land, this was a significant and emotional visit.

‘We did not need to use polite words,’ wrote one Vietnamese. ‘Perhaps some people still think of the past and negative aspects of Vietnam-Cambodia relations but... of course a better future for us is ahead.’

Another said they needed to look beyond just friendship to ‘the relationship between our two countries. We should build it up... through exchange visits, training activities, welcoming each other’s ideas. If we have spirit and money we can make it happen.’

Well, yes, for struggling students and young people just starting work, money is always an issue. Fortunately, as well as support from the Initiatives of Change network, a number of international NGOs saw their potential. The American Friends Service Committee in Cambodia supported that first dialogue in 2004, and have continued since, also giving training and facilitation as the inexperienced teams have set their objectives and programmes. More recently, training and support has come from the International Centre for Conciliation, Church World Service, German Development Service, Maryknoll and the Mennonite Central Committee.

‘By discussing our prejudices openly we gradually came to understand each other’

The process naturally led to a further Cambodia-Vietnam Dialogue, CVD2, this time in Cambodia. The Vietnamese came, knowing that many Cambodians resented their nation. Some applicants in Vietnam had not been allowed to join because of parents’ fears for their safety. Yet again, home stays helped to break down barriers. Besides sharing their lives, concerns and relationships, they listened to respected Cambodians from civil society and development agencies speaking about peace-building. ‘Open Space’ sessions allowed participants to discuss their mutual histories without feeling they had to prove anything to each other.

CVD3 returned to Vietnam in 2007. The 45 participants were asked to list what they ‘knew’ about each other as a people. Two Cambodian assumptions about Vietnamese were that they were ‘loud and eat dog meat’. On the other hand, the Vietnamese felt Cambodians were ‘lazy, and that law and order in their country was terrible’. Each side was given the chance to respond. ‘By discussing our prejudices



Some of this year’s CVD4 at the Royal Palace in Phnom Penh

openly we gradually came to understand each other,’ wrote one Vietnamese. ‘We realized that a lack of communication and of sharing of resources leads to negative cycles, to lack of trust. When we have a shared vision we make relationships better. There is more trust. We can be more open-minded.’

‘Listening within oneself and beyond’ was at the heart of the process in the latest CVD4, taking place over 10 days in Cambodia. The programme included producing historical time-lines, learning to cook each other’s food, practising non-violent communication, creating skits. At the opening session, His Excellency Son Soubert (member of Cambodia’s Constitutional Council) challenged the 50 participants to have the courage to face the facts of past history, but then to create their own history and not to depend on what was passed on to them.

‘Before I came here I heard rumours about the Cambodian people and I feared for my safety,’ said one Vietnamese. ‘I’ve come to realize that the people are great, and I know I have to do something to heal and break the rumours against each other.’ And then, referring to the core process in these IofC programmes of inner reflection in silence, he continued: ‘I like the quiet time because it creates a time for me to look back into my life and my heart. It creates a time for me to tell myself I can do more.’

Many have found themselves ‘doing more’ as a result of these dialogues – and not just in their attitudes to each other. Teams have formed to cook food for street people and for poor patients at hospitals. Others have adopted rural schools and villages, raising money to take books to distribute to poor students, taking their philosophy and values into village schools. Clean-up campaigns have been organized around pagodas, always involving time for discussion on attitudes and responsibilities.

Such a dialogue may not impact the hard political and economic realities which still scar relations in the region. Yet a new generation are preparing themselves to bring a different reality in the future. As one participant at the last CVD said: ‘All our past problems will be lessons for the young generation to learn in order not to make the same mistakes.’

Or as another said, ‘We came as strangers, but now see how close we are.’