



Tutu launches Truth and Reconciliation Commission in the Solomon Islands

RAMSI Participating Police Force Media Unit



Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu at the Winds of Change conference

Ex-militants and victims of the Solomon Islands' recent tensions were among the 300 participants at a three-day regional conference, 'Reconciliation – the way forward', convened by Winds of Change (the local name for Initiatives of Change), 29 April – 1 May. One man even paddled a canoe for seven hours to come. The tensions of 1998 – 2003 led to many deaths and over 20,000 displaced. The conference was held at the request of the SI government to coincide with the official launch of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission attended by Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu from South Africa, who also spoke at the conference.

IofC helped bring a number of overseas speakers to share their experiences. Niketu Iralu, convener of the Naga churches' committee for healing and reconciliation in Nagaland, India, told of the reconciliation work in his village after years of infighting between different militant factions. 'Hurts and wounds that are not transformed are always transferred,' he said.

Former Kenyan newspaper editor, Bedan Mbugua, who was orphaned during his country's struggle for independence, told how he was later arrested for challenging a corrupt Presidential election result. He went to prison for six months and found that he grew stronger as he stood for the truth. 'Faith is the basis of courage,' he said.

Archbishop Tutu recounted experiences from the South African TRC, telling how perpetrators and victims had found release. 'It was a spiritual thing', he said. Later, Andrew Fioga, a founder and former commander of one of the SI militia forces, explained how he had been moved to take up arms in revenge for the murder of his father. Since then he had been on a spiritual journey and was 'now a changed man and ready to forgive'. He concluded, 'Since I and others started the war, I will also start the healing process.' A week later, the first of a series of workshops took place bringing together 30 former combatants and victims of the conflict, organized by IofC with funding from the Ministry of Reconciliation.

Faith leaders join forces to launch new book on forgiveness

Jewish, Muslim and Christian leaders helped launch a new book, by IofC author, Michael Henderson, at the St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace, London, on 13 May. The centre, a former church that had been bombed by the IRA, aims to 'build bridges in divisions caused by conflict where people can meet as equals'. Welcoming people to the centre, its director, Simon Keyes, said that Henderson had had 'a huge influence on the development of our work' and that his earlier book, *Forgiveness—breaking the chain of hate*, 'was one of the foundation texts of our work here'.

Henderson said that one of his aims in writing his new book, *No Enemy to Conquer – forgiveness in an unforgiving world*, was 'to further an appreciation of our brothers and sisters of the Muslim faith'.

Hosting the launch event, Dr Musharraf Hussain al-Azhari, Co-Chair of the Christian Muslim Forum, emphasized

that in the Qur'an one of the most common names of God is 'the forgiver'. The strength of Henderson's book, he said, lay in its '25 moving and heart-rending stories' as well as the contributions from academics and personalities such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Britain's Chief Rabbi, Sir Jonathan Sacks. A leading Jewish theologian, Rabbi Dr Jonathan Magonet, Vice-President of the UK Movement for Reform Judaism, said that Henderson's book also 'covers much of the ground of a Jewish perspective on forgiveness'.



Michael Smith

Michael Henderson talks with Imam Musharraf Hussain al-Azhari

News in Brief

Evangelical Christians and Muslims expand dialogue

Over the last five years IofC's Hope in the Cities (HIC) programme in the USA has been convening dialogues between evangelical Christians and Muslims – groups often characterized as being highly polarized. Their most recent dialogue took place on 16 May at the HIC office in Richmond, Virginia, on the question: 'How do extremists who follow theologies that promote loving, caring and serving others, use their faith traditions to justify exclusion and hate, based on political, theological or cultural differences?'

The group, four Christians and four Muslims, intentionally chose a subject that would compel them to engage deeply while modelling the civil and respectful manner that has developed over the years. One observer noted that it was the first time he had ever experienced such a deep dialogue between Christians and Muslims on this subject without rancour. Another said that it was remarkable that participants could speak so firmly, with such passion but without giving up any convictions, and yet still model civility and care without 'making nice'.

Imam and Pastor film in Egypt

As President Barack Obama was making his historic speech on US relations with the Muslim world in Cairo, Imam Muhammad Ashafa and Pastor James Wuye were in Egypt launching the Arabic version of the award-winning documentary *The Imam and the Pastor*. The film, made by IofC's FLTfilms, tells how these two former militia leaders and sworn enemies reconciled and now work for peace. Their Egyptian tour, 27 May – 5 June, included meetings and screenings at the historic Bibliotheca Alexandrina, Cairo University, the American University of Cairo and the Saqiat El Sawy youth cultural centre. Major media coverage included stories in most of the main daily newspapers and a live TV interview on a popular prime-time talk-show.

Nigerian teachers learn trust building

IofC Nigeria held a one-day workshop for 40 teachers on 'integrity and trust building in a multi-faith setting' in Lagos on 29 May. It was the second of a series of 'teachers' dialogues' which aim to foster a network



Teachers' dialogue in Nigeria

of teachers sharing similar values. The teachers were introduced to the basic ideas of IofC, such as listening to the 'inner voice' for connection, correction and direction, followed by a discussion on the relevance of the values of absolute purity, honesty, unselfishness and love in contemporary society. 'Teachers are custodians of tomorrow's leaders', says Obas Ukoko, one of the facilitators. He hopes that the dialogues 'will be a regular programme through which moral values can be infused into the school system'.

Transforming lives in Brazil

'Youth transforming lives', a new programme of IofC-Brazil, was launched in Rio de Janeiro on 9 May. The first group of 11 young participants included several already working for change in their local communities. Through 'honest conversations' about the links between personal and social change and the basic tools of IofC, the group aims to equip themselves to expand their vision and reinforce their values. One participant said, 'the expectation is that there will be enough sharing of ideas, experiences and personal growth to help us choose the best for ourselves and for the world.'

Indian rural camp

A two-day camp for 20 children from an orphanage and 50 children from local villages took place at Grampari, the IofC rural and ecology centre at Panchgani, India. The programme offered a chance for the orphans to interact with other village children, and to share their thoughts and fears in a safe environment. Activities included art workshops, group discussions, a magic show, times of inner reflection and a cultural programme. Realizing that each person can make a difference in the world, many made decisions to act differently. The camp ended with the lighting of a lamp symbolizing hope for the future.

CALENDAR

CAUX, SWITZERLAND
International Conferences
see www.caux.ch/2009

9-15 July
Learning to Live in a Multicultural World
and
Leading Change for a Sustainable World

17-22 July
Caux Forum for Human Security

24-29 July
Trust and Integrity in the Global Economy – a people-focused approach to globalization

9-15 August
Tools for Change – learning to be peacemakers

KAOHSIUNG CITY, TAIWAN
1-8 August
15th Asia-Pacific Youth Conference
Challenge, choice and change

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA
30 September – 4 October
Creators of Peace, international conference

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
17 October – 30 November
Harambee Training Programme

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Emmanuel Aliba Kiiza

PEOPLE BUILDING TRUST

Tradition and new beginnings

At 34, Emmanuel Aliba Kiiza became the youngest ever Prime Minister of Eastern Africa's oldest kingdom.

Mike Lowe meets him in Australia.

The first thing that strikes you about Emmanuel Aliba Kiiza is the broad good-humoured smile and the infectious laugh. Perhaps it is the laugh of someone who counts his blessings, for despite humble beginnings he became, at 34 years old, the youngest ever Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bunyoro-Kitara in Uganda.

We meet in Melbourne, where Kiiza is participating in the Life Matters course, run by Initiatives of Change, Australia. He joins a diverse group of 18 other participants, mostly in their 20s, who live in community for nine days learning from each other and from a variety of experienced 'change-makers' in the city. Questions are asked which encourage deep inner reflection about one's own values and how well they are lived. Connections are made between the inner journey and the needs of the world. Safe spaces are created in which participants share their unique life-stories.

His education nearly ended at age nine when his struggling mother could not afford to pay school fees

And so we learn that Kiiza never knew his father, who was killed before he was born. One of eight brothers and five sisters, Kiiza was the brightest in his class. But his education nearly ended at age nine when his struggling mother could not afford to pay school fees. Fortunately, a kindly teacher offered to pay them

himself. When this teacher was transferred to another village Kiiza followed him, walking five miles to and from school every day. He continued to excel, but secondary school posed new financial challenges and as a result his first term was spent at home.

This time it was a Catholic priest, Fr Deogratias Zziwa, who offered to pay for his education. With Fr Zziwa's encouragement, Kiiza also began to study for the priesthood before realizing that his vocation lay elsewhere – in education. With financial help from his bishop, he went on to complete masters and post-graduate degrees in education from Makerere University, Uganda.

For the next two years Kiiza found employment teaching professional studies to teachers in Namasagali University in Eastern Uganda. To this day, he says, he is happiest in a lecture theatre in front of a class. He rose to become head of the distance education programme, as well as head of the School of Education. With a wife and steady income, it must have been a wrench to leave this when his bishop asked him to return to his homeland, to help His Majesty King Agutamba Solomon Gafabusa Iguru the First set up the new Bunyoro University for Development.

With a tradition stretching back over 4,000 years, Bunyoro-Kitara is the oldest kingdom in Eastern Africa. At its height it controlled almost the entire region between Lake Victoria, Lake Edward, and Lake Albert. One of four kingdoms which make up present-day Uganda, Bunyoro-Kitara paid dearly for its resistance to colonialism. From 1890–1899 the British conducted



a scorched-earth campaign which left as much as 75% of the population either dead or living outside the kingdom. The king was captured and exiled to Seychelles and traditional Bunyoro lands were given to neighbouring, rival kingdoms. In the subsequent development of colonial Uganda, Bunyoro-Kitara was punished, while its rival kingdom, Buganda, (which had sided with the British) was favoured.

'When the bishop asked, I could not refuse,' says Kiiza, 'even though the job was unpaid.' However his efforts did not go unnoticed. A year later the King asked him to serve as Speaker of the 150-member Council of the Kingdom. A year after that, to his great surprise, he was appointed Prime Minister. After nine days of prayer, contemplation and consultation, he accepted, and was sworn in as 11th Prime Minister of the Kingdom on 2 December 2006.

'Some of those who went with us were Kony's enemies whom he had sworn to kill'

In office, Kiiza threw himself into the preservation of Bunyoro-Kitara's rich cultural heritage, in order to give its people a sense of belonging and pride. In 1967 Ugandan President Milton Obote abolished the kingdoms – perhaps fearing a rival source of authority. They were only restored in 1994. Kiiza has helped revive the traditional clan system; the Palace and two Royal Tombs have been restored; and the nine-day coronation anniversary, held each year in the Capital, Hoima, is now the largest cultural event in Uganda. He also persuaded the Ugandan Government to recognize the Omukama Kabalega (the Bunyoro King who fought the British) as a Hero of Uganda. This was marked in a ceremony on 9 June 2009 when President Yoweri Museveni laid a wreath on Kabalega's tomb outside Hoima and a three-gun salute was sounded.

He is no less passionate about education, helping raise money through the Kabalega Education Fund to offer scholarships to bright students from poor families.

In 2006, while serving as Speaker, Kiiza found himself asked to represent the King in talks with Joseph Kony, head of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). 'Because of kinship links between Kony's chiefdom and Bunyoro-Kitara, Kony asked the King to help,' he explains, 'so the King sent me'.

He went with some trepidation, knowing the LRA's reputation for brutality and its use of child-soldiers in the 20-year conflict with the Ugandan Army. With other mediators he walked, unarmed, for several days deep into LRA territory, not knowing if they would survive. 'Some of those who went with us were Kony's enemies whom he had sworn to kill. But when the King speaks I have to obey. There is no way to refuse!' Kiiza carried a message from the King that Kony should 'turn his gun upside down' and join peace talks with the Ugandan Government. Fortunately the delegation was received well. Kony did agree to a cease-fire and peace negotiations started. Kiiza went several more times to

meet Kony before negotiations broke down and the tragic conflict resumed.

The colonial legacy of 'divide and rule' has left its mark all over Africa in terms of enduring tribal and regional conflicts. 'In Uganda we are trying to unite all the cultural institutions to live together,' says Kiiza. In November last year he called the first ever meeting of all cultural leaders, kings, chiefs, paramount chiefs, 'to reconcile among ourselves'. He was pleased that 'all of them came and the King of Buganda sent the head prince!'

During the Life Matters course, and after visits to IofC conferences in Caux, Switzerland, Kiiza was particularly struck by discussions on forgiveness and its role in overcoming the wounds of the past. He returned home with a conviction that the bitterness which still remains from the time of colonial oppression is holding the Bunyoro people back. He is convinced that unconditional forgiveness is possible and that only this will heal the wounded memories. It is a controversial issue. Many blame (with justification) what the British did for continued poverty and illiteracy in the kingdom.

No longer Prime Minister, Kiiza is undeterred. In May, Bunyoro-Kitara hosted an inter-cultural dialogue with the European Union. Kiiza was invited by the Resident District Commissioner (representing the President of Uganda) to write her speech for the occasion, which called for a new relationship based on forgiveness. Weeks later he helped defuse the anger of Bunyoro who were dispossessed of lands during the colonial period, by advising the President, through the Inspector General of Police, to meet the aggrieved people and engage in dialogue. As a result a planned demonstration was called off.

In conversations with university students one girl observed that, 'the one who has buried their mother does not remain sleeping in the graveyard, weeping. However much one loves the mother, one must let go and learn new skills of living without the mother!' The Bunyoro, she said, 'buried their dear ones also but remained in the graveyard, weeping up till today.'

Kiiza is encouraged. 'Even Rome started with the first brick,' he says. 'It was small but it grew into a big city.'



Kiiza with Life Matters course participants