Dear Creators of Peace friends and colleagues,

Creators of Peace Circles (CoPC’s) bring a ray of hope and of sanity in a world in which genuine Peace seems to be a rare commodity and where far too many women are struggling for bare existence, respect and security. The demand for facilitators training from post conflict women’s groups is rising. It is also felt in cities far and wide. The CoP Circle manual is being translated into new languages, Kirundi (the language spoken in Burundi), Arabic, etc... It is a sign that it is relevant and timely. In a few days, in Caux, the CoP’s General Assembly will renew your committee and the team of country and international coordinators. It shall also discuss the new Governance model we suggest to enhance our outreach and efficiency.

This will, we trust, bring fresh initiatives and new strengths to encourage every woman to discover her true peace creating potential. As I step down as President, I am proud and grateful for the advances spearheaded worldwide by the inspired team of “CoP midwives” with whom I have been privileged to serve and I wish them and the new team Salaam, Shalom, Pace, Peace.

At the July 2013 AGM CoP elected a new team of international coordinators, and paid tribute to the previous team with unmatched recognition. It would be unwise to establish an exhaustive list of accomplishments to their credit. It is thanks to them that our network is currently working in more than 40 countries from different continents. Thanks to the support of our flagship IoFC, CoP has become a much appreciated extension of our worldwide network.

Most of the newly elected team of international coordinators are novices to a global network such as CoP, but each one is grateful for the opportunity to capitalize on the expertise and strong experience of our predecessors.

During my mandate I have the privilege to preside over preparations for the 25th Anniversary of CoP in 2016. It will be an honour to both celebrate and acknowledge the Creators of Peace initiative which was launched in Caux / Switzerland in 1991 by the Honourable Anna Abdullah Msekwa of Tanzania.

My hope is that anyone who is a member of our association, individually or collectively, will set a target to celebrate the gift of CoP, and continue to plant their seeds of peace, and be candles of light and halos of flames of hope, contributing their light.

To read Daphrose’ message in her first language, French, see Page 2 >>>>>

A new ‘Governance Model’ for Creators of Peace

Reflecting on a CoP guiding principle: “every person has a part to play and something to contribute”, the retiring International Committee of Creators of Peace have designed a new governance model whereby nine International Coordinators will administer a specific Portfolio to serve the world network. And each Coordinator will have a Portfolio Working Team working alongside with them.

Thanks to a shared passion and inner calling to create peace the world over, the retiring Committee have overseen the global CoP network engender peace at a whole new level.

Our sincere thanks goes to the retiring International Committee who have served us over the past three to five year term. They are:

Executive Committee: President: Christiane Garin Al-Azhari (Switzerland); Treasurer: Monica McIntosh (Barbados/UK); Secretary: Trish McDonald-Harrison (Australia); International Association Liaison: Jean Brown (Australia)

International Coordinators: Christina De Angelis (Australia); Didacienne Mukahabeshimana (Rawanda); Amina Dikedi-Ajakaye (Nigeria/UK); Tehmina Siganoria (India); Vijayalakshmi Subrahmanyan (India); Joanne Nabbanja (Uganda); Njeri Kimanthi (Kenya); Kate Monkhouse (UK)

Regional Coordinators: East Africa: Dorothy Tong; Southern and Central Africa: Jackie Euvard/Angie Katito; UK and Western Europe: Su Riddell; South America: Helena Salazar (Von Armin); North America: Kathy Aquilina

Country Coordinators: Malaysia: Regina Morris.

At the CoP General Assembly (AGM) in Caux, Switzerland on 9 July 2013, nine International Coordinators from around the globe, were elected, answering a calling to serve CoP for a 3 year term of office. They are:

President: Daphrose Ntarataze (Burundi/Switzerland);
Secretary: Pari Sanyu (Australia/Nagaland);
Treasurer: Kate Monkhouse (UK);
National Teams Liaisons: Jean Brown (Australia) and Portia Mosia (South Africa);
Programs: Shoshana Faire (Australia);
Communications: Iman Al Ghafari (Syria);
People Care: Trish McDonald-Harrison (Australia);
Fundingraising: Tanya Fox (Australia).

A further twenty-one women from fifteen countries have volunteered to support each Coordinator as their Portfolio Working Team.

A Message from the new CoP President elect:

Daphrose Ntarataze Barampama - Burundi/Switzerland

“This morning, I saw Peace represented by two images: A Plant, and a Burning Candle. What a noble ambition to engage in the way of peace making! Whether through our actions or attitudes, we plant seeds of peace in ourselves first, and patiently we try to maintain them to grow and flourish to produce fruit that contain many other seeds which, in turn, will be planted ...and so the cycle of Peace or the cycle of life continues.

The light that radiates from my inside, warms and illuminates the nuclear core that is my family or immediate circle. Each of my relatives takes this light, internalizes it and begins to illuminate his own surroundings, and so on. The light of my inner candle, thus from this core, multiplies to infinity. It grows and eventually reaches wider horizons. This halo grows more and more, and the light extends further than I can imagine.

To the Inaugural Meeting of the 2013-2016 International Coordinators was held Friday 27 August 2013. There was a great sense of excitement as we linked up for our first Skype Meeting. Thanks to the miracles of technology, it resulted in a very productive meeting.

Our shared sense of spirit, and mutual calling to advance the work of CoP saw no barriers in our age, language and country time differences, not even by Iman in war torn Syria! A collaborative connection has now been forged and we’re all poised ready to embark on our vision for our individual Portfolios, feeling greatly encouraged and supported by our President Daphrose and Secretary Pari.

Dr Christiane Garin Al-Azhari - Creators of Peace (retiring) International President

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**Mot de la présidente** by Daphrose Ntarataze Barampama - Présidente d'Artisans de Paix

La paix, ce matin, s’est présentée à moi sous forme de deux images : une plante et une bougie allumée. Quelle noble ambition que celle de vouloir être des artisans de paix! Que ce soit par nos actes et nos attitudes, planter des graines de la paix en soi-même d’abord. Les entretenir pour qu’elles poussent, s’épanouissent, fleurissent, produisent des fruits qui contiennent de nombreuses autres graines. Qui à leur tour seront plantées ... Et le cycle de la paix, le cycle de la vie continue.

La lumière qui part de mon intérieur rayonne, réchauffe et illumine le noyau nucléaire qui est ma famille ou mon entourage immédiat. Chacun de mes proches se sait de cette lumière, l’intériorise et se met à illuminer son entourage, et ainsi de suite. La lumière de ma bougie intérieure, qui part donc de ce noyau se démultiplie à l’infini. Elle s’agrandit et finit par atteindre des horizons plus larges. Son halo s’agrandit de plus en plus et la lumière d’étendre plus loin que je ne me l’imagine.

Le 9 juillet de cette année 2013, notre Association s’est dotée d’une nouvelle équipe de coordinatrices internationales. Avec une reconnaissance inégalée, nous tenons à rendre hommage à l’équipe précédente. Il serait hasardeux d’établir une liste exhaustive des réalisations à son actif. Si notre réseau est actuellement à l’œuvre dans plus de 40 pays des divers continents, donc actuellement le plus répandu des membres affiliés à Initiatives et Changement international, c’est grâce à elle. Si notre programme-phare des Cercles d’Artisans de paix est apprécié et appelé à une extension de plus en plus sollicitée, c’est grâce à elle. La nouvelle équipe de coordinatrices internationales, même si elle comprend trois membres de l’équipe sortante, est consciencieuse du fait que la plupart de ses membres sont novices dans la direction d’un réseau mondial comme le nôtre. Elle a la chance de pouvoir capitaliser l’expertise et l’expérience confirmées de ses prédécesseurs. Elle leur en sait déjà gré.

En 2016, la fin du mandat de l’équipe que j’ai l’insigne honneur de préside coïncidera avec le 25ème anniversaire de « Femmes artisans de paix ». Vous savez bien que cette initiative a été lancée à Caux/Suisse, en 1991, par l’honorable Anna Abdallah Msekwa de Tanzanie. Mon souhait serait que toute personne qui se reconnaît comme Artisans de paix au sein de notre Association, individuellement ou collectivement, se fixe un objectif à atteindre d’ici là. Notre cadeau commun d’anniversaire sera composé de graines plantées, de fleurs ou de fruits récoltés, de bougies allumées et de l’étendue des halos en découlant.

CoP presents to an Initiatives of Change Sydney gathering

On Sunday 4th August, 30 people were treated to an inspirational afternoon at Shoshana Faire & Alan Bassil’s home in Mosman at an IofC gathering for an update on the work of Creators of Peace. Many new, as well as long time Creators of Peace came along. Long time IofCer Joyce Fraser briefly explained the background of Initiatives of Change for the benefit of those new to the work of IofC. Nith Chittassy took us on a journey of his life story and how his wife Ramphay introduced him to IofC and how it has had a profoundly positive influence on theirs and their extended family’s lives.

Shoshana treated us to an inspiring pictorial account of her visit to Kenya to Facilitate at the Creators of Peace Circle Reunion “Enhancing Women’s capacity in Peace Building”.

She pointed out that Kenya CoP have facilitated the largest number of peace circles in any one country and that the 58 attendees who came to the Reunion from far and wide is a testament to their belief that Creators of Peace Circles is a way to peace for their peoples.

They graciously expressed their gratitude in a beautifully hand decorated card thanking Shoshana, IofC International and CoP Sydney for their financial support towards the conference.

Trish McDonald-Harrison, the retiring CoP International Secretary, shared her delight at having seen considerable growth of CoP in Sydney during her term of office, and also reported on how the new CoP governance model will operate globally. Trish had just returned from the CoP AGM in Caux Geneva where 30 CoP women from around the globe came together to take part in the elections, and shared their thinking to take Creators of Peace to the next level. We’re very proud that Australia is well represented on the new International Committee Elect.

Trish then introduced the new incoming International Secretary, Pari Sanyu who travelled from Melbourne so Trish could hand over the International Secretary portfolio. Pari chose to come this particular weekend to attend this IofC gathering. Pari said that she sees it as an honour to try and fill the very big shoes of her predecessor, Trish. And how inspired she is that Sydney CoP has led the way since their first Peace Circle in 2004. She reflected on how Creators of Peace enables women across the world to connect at the deepest level of heart and spirit.

This gathering has set a new precedence of collaboration between IofC and CoP in Sydney.

**Regular Feature Article:**

“On reflection of my CoP Journey”

Joyce Fraser - Sydney, Australia

**Initiatives of Change Volunteer, and Creators of Peace Facilitator**

My journey started as a chance encounter in Britain in the early ‘60’s that led me to the work of Initiatives of Change (IofC) where I then worked without a salary for 11 years.

Over the years my involvement has taken me to Ethiopia, India and finally to Australia. Then in 2004, I was asked to co-facilitate a Creators of Peace Circle (CoPC). My co-facilitator found Creators of Peace (CoP) on the internet and was profoundly interested, although she didn’t know anything about IofC.

That CoP Circle was held at her workplace in the L’Arche Centre. We had a fascinating diverse group of about 8 women who would not ordinarily have met each other. We were amazed at the freedom of spirit which came from their story telling in an atmospheric of trust. An Aboriginal woman was able to tell her story for the first time.

I have now run several CoP Circles. I’ve taken part in Facilitation Training courses; helped coordinate various CoP Reunions and a Creators of Peace conference. These experiences have been the best team effort in which I have been involved.

I am currently co-facilitating a CoP Circle with a friend in Auburn which is a rich multicultural part of Sydney, Australia.

**Why am I involved?**

Creators of Peace gives the opportunity for people to adopt a practical plan to make a peaceful difference to the world based on personal change. In Sydney, Creators of Peace are collaborating with Initiatives of Change in activities which will increase our effectiveness. My wish is to see men take on the CoP program their way - this would broaden the dynamic and involvement.

**“Let There Be Peace on Earth, and Let It Begin with Me”**
On 24 November 2012, Vice President Dr Riek Machar Teny announced that ‘the leadership of the 15-month old nation would organize a first-ever peace and national reconciliation conference to try and heal the mental wounds that have visibly divided some of the communities over the years.’

Requests for international help to implement his vision was made by Dr Machar and other South Sudanese attending the initiatives of Change (IoC) conferences in India and Switzerland last year. In response, last August the Global Assembly of IoC International endorsed a ‘framework proposal’, drafted by South Sudanese and Africans present, to make this a Common Action for the IoC network during 2013 and were formally invited to partner in the project. A detailed 56 page proposal was formulated, funding was sought, and in February 2013 a team from around the globe arrived in South Sudan to participate in a non-government National Council for Healing and Reconciliation.

By late March, the Organizing Committee had been expanded with representatives from the Sudan Council of Churches, civil society and non-government intellectuals.

An important IoC initiative helping in the Healing and Reconciliation process is Women’s Creators of Peace Circles.

The first CoPC in South Sudan ran in Juba over three days in March. It was co-facilitated by Joy Mbaabu from Kenya, Director of Amani Communities Africa, and Jean Brown, an International Coordinator of Creators of Peace from Australia. The very interactive, wide-ranging conversation and the very deep and painful sharing gave lie to those who said the women of South Sudan would find it hard to open up, too traumatized to share. As one woman said ‘I have carried a heavy burden for the past years ...last night I slept well after a long time and woke up feeling very happy.

The President of the Jonglei Women’s Association came straight from a five day women’s peace conference in her State. They issued a statement at the end saying, among other things that, ‘they would leave their homes and refrain from child bearing if men in their communities continued to seek violent solutions to ongoing conflicts in the troubled region – rather than peaceful solutions.’

Another of the participants was the President of the National South Sudan General Women’s Association. In partnership with Creators of Peace she is looking at a possible women’s forum to be held later in April to explore the understanding of and direction for the national reconciliation movement proposed by the government in partnership with Initiatives of Change.

“Forgiveness frees you, and afterwards you will be able to blossom like trees in springtime. The fruits of forgiveness are like the grapes in autumn”.

Reflecting on the weekend another woman wrote in her email: “During the weekend I decided to start forgiving myself.”

Having had a very positive experience in the Circle, the women have committed to gather on a monthly basis to discuss their vision for South-Sudan, and their role living in the Diaspora and contributing towards that vision. With a renewed sense of trust the women left the Initiatives of Change Centre at the end of the weekend with a new sense of hope, saying ‘The future of South-Sudan is like a flower, the darkest days are over.’

""We are thinking of church women’s fellowships. They meet every Wednesday and CoP Circles would get them to know each other much better – we can always add some scriptures and prayers.”

“I talked to my stepmother who has a stall in the market. She is keen for us to start CoP Circles in the market place. There is a small room we could use and the women selling produce come from all over the country including Uganda and Kenya – it would be ideal”.

“Well I want to try them in my local neighbourhood where the indigenous tribe are a bit exclusive and the new comers are marginalised”.

This was the planning buzz amongst the new CoP Circle facilitators in Juba. Freshly trained and coming from two CoP Circles run in March and May, many were single mothers, or unemployed graduates. The CoP ‘mother’ of the team is Regina Kapa, Programme Manager of the new IoC South Sudan office.

The healing, love and motivation each one experienced through the Circles, and then the training, resonated profoundly with the needs of a country being challenged in every way.

By Jean Brown
'Searching for Common Ground' comes to Nepal

by Susanne Rix

In April 2013 a group of influential Nepali women joined seven senior American women guests of Search for Common Ground (SFCG) to a CoP Circle in Nepal. SFCG is dedicated to changing the way people deal with conflict and as part of their 10 day "journey of peace" in Nepal, they invited the Nepali women to join them for the Circle.

Serena Rix-Tripathee facilitated the program and from the start, the CoP process worked its magic, immediately breaking down barriers. Faces softened, smiles warmed the space and the women became as one. For the Nepali women in particular, going so deep was a very new experience. Tears are not usually shed by women here - but they were this week. Personal shifts occurred overnight.

By the end of the second day, there was a buzz of excitement about taking the next steps. "Imagine what could be the result of a small shift in thought or actions of women in influential and political positions around the world."

Comments at the end included:
- "Most outstanding experience of my life"
- "We felt so connected by our stories and common humanity."
- "Deeply healing"  "We are all transformed"

For the Nepali women in particular, they understood that we need to find practical ways to support these women in their day to day lives. The suffering they've endured has haunted by the memories of trauma from their war struck nations.

I recognised that we need to find practical ways to support these women in their day to day lives. The suffering they've endured calls for deep respect and willingness to simply sit together with them in silence, suspend any action and rest in compassion.

Support to South Sudan from Mosman NSW

On Sunday 10 March two CoP women, Shoshana Faire and Patricia Garcia, held an afternoon to raise awareness and funds to contribute to the IofC initiative The Healing and Reconciliation process in South Sudan. 30 people came to learn about what is happening in South Sudan. They heard the personal experiences of Patrick Dako and Benjamin Wani, both South Sudanese who are now living in Sydney, and Patricia Garcia who returned from Sudan late last year after a challenging year in Darfur heading Norwegian Church Aid's humanitarian operations.

The Creators of Peace Manual now in Swedish

by Valerie Tikkanen

We’re so pleased to announce that the Creators of Peace Manual has been translated into Swedish. This was done by a lady who hadn’t yet taken part in a CoP Circle. It was so interesting to hear her exclamations and comments as she read each Gathering Point and how positively they affected her.

Five women from Malmö, Gothenberg and Stockholm recently took part in a CoP Circle over a weekend. We created an atmosphere of trust to share deeply and to look at personal problems and the needs in our cities. It’s amazing how every CoP Circle is so different as it’s created by the experiences of those taking part.

We are now working on having CoP Circles in different cities in the autumn.

Two cultures come together in Geneva

by Maya Fiaux

A group of four Burundian and four Swiss/Italian women attended a CoP Circle in Geneva in March and April, 2013 over two Saturdays and one Sunday. One person came from Thurgau, another from Belgium and the other six were from the regions of Morges, Nyon and Geneva.

This was not only a meeting of two cultures coming together, but above all the meeting of women who wished to be peacemakers. We followed a well structured programme designed by Daphrose Barampama, which posed questions about creating peace and emphasised the connection with IofC.

Our time together was often interspersed by personal interactive reflections; and listening to each other’s life stories. We dealt with issues such as: What is Peace?; Qualities of a Peace Maker; Inner Peace; Listening to others; Inner Listening; and The Power of Forgiveness.

We all returned home rich and happy, and with the firm decision to put into practice what we experienced through our time together.

The desire to meet again and to continue these exchanges led us to already set a new date to continue together on this path.

Creators of Peace comes to a troubled neighborhood of Denmark

by Birte Finken

In February 2013, a CoP Circle started in the troubled neighbourhood of Nørrebro, Blågaards Plads. Two enthusiastic Somali women drew the group together, inviting 9 women who agreed to meet on Saturday afternoons. A broad variety of African women filled the space of my Chinese friend’s flat: from Somalia, Kenya, the Ivory-Coast as well as South-Sudan.

The peace we sought in our hearts and homes was challenged by common concerns for our safety and the safety of our families on the streets of our town. Also, many of the woman are haunted by the memories of trauma from their war struck nations in Africa.

I was deeply touched by the stories of these women, and I was grateful that even with their huge cultural differences, they gave the Circle a chance.

I recognised that we need to find practical ways to support these women in their day to day lives. The suffering they've endured calls for deep respect and willingness to simply sit together with them in silence, suspend any action and rest in compassion.

More CoP plans underway in the UK

by Su Riddell

In May some of us met for a CoP facilitator’s planning session, aimed at refreshing our vision and developing new directions. We took time for reflection; did an exercise to map out areas of outreach and community involvement that we already undertake; and identified and discussed issues we see in our communities and globally which are our priorities. By the end of 24 hours we were re-inspired with plans for next steps for CoP UK and as a team.

What kind of things are we involved in already? Too many to list - about 90 activities were recorded. There was a wide range with some themes emerging - fostering refugee boys or working with refugee services, offering educational support to the Sudanese community or hospitality to indigenous group students. Environmental campaigns from low-carbon living to making Oxford a ‘tar-free’ city. Keeping ourselves fit, with meditation, salsa, or walking.

What will we do next? Keep going; keep in touch with one another; create CoP Circles in at least three cities; establish guidelines for partnerships with other organisations; hold meals and events to promote Creators of Peace; keep in touch with past participants; join activities of IofC; and celebrate being women …if you want something done, ask a busy woman!!
CREATORS OF PEACE IN MALAYSIA CONTINUES TO STRENGTHEN

By Regina Morris

On April 29 2013 we were treated to a delightful and magical evening with Creators of Peace facilitator Shoshana Faire from Sydney, Australia who came to refresh our experience of a CoP Circle. Fifteen women gathered in Tia and Haridas’ home and in 3 hours, the discussions and sharing went pretty deep on the topics of Inner Listening and Forgiveness.

The following is a post-event sharing from one of the women, Akim:

“The world is challenging women day by day. There are so many matters to deal with and so many things to juggle at the same time. Between being strong yet gentle, adapting with changes and holding on to tradition and values, only a woman can do this. The term "superwoman" is a term for all women out there. I was honoured to be invited. It was the platform that I have been searching for, for quite some time. It was a Circle of strong-willed women who continue strengthening themselves and others. I am proud yet humble to say I am part of them now.”

We shared about Inner Listening and Forgiveness facilitated by Shoshana. The circle comprised women who have attended a CoP Circle and also new members.

It provided a good balance between experienced input from the wise and openness to explore. Shoshana was very sharp yet tender with the issues discussed.

As we shared our experiences and concerns, the group was very dedicated and supportive. It made us feel like it was a safe and comfortable environment.

The bond created from such a session was just magical. It was a bond between one woman to another. “It can never be described, only felt. I believe all women need this support and energy around them. They say change starts from home and we believe in that.”

A CoPeace Facilitator’s point of view

2013 has seen me transition from being a participant of a CoP Circle, to finally becoming a Facilitator, of two very different CoP Circles in Sydney:

Weekend CoP Circle:

This was held at my home over two full consecutive days. My co-facilitator Trish McDonald-Harrison and I met beforehand to decide how the gathering points were to be divided over the 16 hours; who to cover each topic; and how. Being my first attempt at facilitation, I was both excited and anxious. However, Trish had run many a circle, and her experience and calm presence gave me confidence. A weekend format is intensive but participants bond over shared meals which can be a breath of fresh air to ventilate their life and allow them to move forward with a new perspective on life. For busy women, the 2 day format may prove easier to commit to, rather than short periods over several weeks.

For a novice like myself, a weekend it is definitely intensive so it’s important to be well prepared in program material, exercises, DVD’s, photocopied handouts and setting-up of the meeting room. Cooperative planning between the facilitators is crucial, as is good time-keeping and the ability to be flexible, and clear time management of the participants is crucial.

Being a host and co-facilitator simultaneously worked well for me on one level, because I didn’t need to travel. On the other hand, it can add stress to the facilitator to have to organise mealtimes, serving and clearing-up, even though participants do help out.

CoP Circle over 4 Sessions:

Shoshana Faire and I co-facilitated in a friend’s home who also participated in the circle.

I noticed the freedom of just arriving to the Circle, and being able to take time out with my co-facilitator to discuss the progress and next steps when needed. Each weekly gathering included a lively 45 minute lunch session.

I was more prepared this second time round, but I still gleaned lots of know-how from Shoshana who is a facilitator by occupation. We varied the exercises used from my first time, thus expanding my “toolkit”.

As the group bonded we found we needed to relax the time and group management, as they assumed a more informal air. The upside of this format was that the ladies built up close relationships over the weeks, and the Circle easily became a highlight of everyone’s week. As a facilitator, meeting once a week was also more relaxing.

All this was a world away from the first CoP Circle I attended 6 years ago that ran over 6 sessions which was a very gentle introduction to this exciting new world for me. I was instantly hooked.

My transition from being a participant to becoming a Facilitator has been an enriching and rewarding experience I’d recommend to anyone considering taking the next step to becoming a Creators of Peace Facilitator.

by Zohra Aly - Sydney Australia
Kenya: “Enhancing Women’s capacity in Peace Building” by Shoshana Faire

AnnNjeri (who was 7 and a half months pregnant at the time), together with her small team of helpers, pulled together a Creators of Peace Reunion in Kenya.

Women arrived bringing great excitement, anticipation and tales of their journeys getting to the St Mary’s Pastoral Centre conference centre in Nakuru.

Many had experienced what I would call ‘challenging’ forms of transport - back of bikes, crowded buses, along very bumpy dusty roads. I know that for a fact as the only road to the centre has many large potholes and plenty of dust.

The Reunion unfolded over 3 days with 57 Kenyan women, and 2 men who helped with logistics and filming, and me (‘little whitey’ as my husband pointed me out in the photo above). The women came from a variety of areas and a cross section of tribal backgrounds. Some were from Internal Displaced Person Camps. Most had experienced a CoP Circle.

The reunion opened with both a Muslim and a Christian prayer and the national anthem. The program included an active exercise of getting to meet everyone; a historical time line of CoP Kenya; opening addresses by Joy Mbaabu (Director of Amani Communities, Africa) and myself; family groups that meet several times; early morning reflection sessions; a planning session; a session on conflict transformation; and most significantly several sessions of story sharing.

The women queued up for a chance to share their stories - which had themes of forgiveness, transformation and empowerment. Some were overwhelmingly sad, many inspiring, and all told with great spirit and dignity. I found I was holding myself together as I was confronted by horrendous suffering, and overwhelmed by the spirit of survival and the will to be a messenger of peace. Much of this is whispered into my ear by Esther who is kindly and skillfully interpreting for me when needed.

Over the days there was much connection, love, laughter and tears. And of course there was a very energetic evening of African dance.

The Reunion was followed by a 3 day Facilitation Training run by Joy Mbaabu and myself with 14 women participants and one man - AnnNjeri’s husband who was also filming. They shared their fears and desires, delved into the qualities of a CoP facilitator, creating safety, facilitating story sharing and reflection sessions the deeper purpose of each of the gathering points. They were each tasked to prepare and facilitate a section of the CoP Circle program. The women of Kenya are such an inspiration.

What I loved most is the way they can laugh at themselves when their attempts to facilitate are clumsy or off the mark. They are so keen to learn.

In the middle of the training we were delighted by an unplanned visit by the Imam and the Pastor who reminded us that there will be no peace in the country or in the world ‘till there is peace in the home and within, and that women are the first teachers of how to be this.

I had the feeling that the women left from their time in Nakuru touched, renewed, and inspired. Their hearts opened, they have connected with themselves and others. Many shared over the days how Creators of Peace has already impacted and changed them and those around them. I can only hope and trust that as a result of this reunion there will be many more impacts to come.

And for me there were more delicious experiences to come before I left Kenya. A visit to Nakuru National Park where we spotted many birds and animals including “The Lion King” and Lake Bogoria where we saw the flamingos.

I spent my last night in Nairobi together with AnnNjeri and Mbinyo for dinner joined by Jean and Mike Brown who had just arrived from South Sudan.

I acknowledge IofC Australia, CoP Sydney, the Friends of Africa fund, Silvia Zuber fund, and IofC Kenya for their generous financial support of these two events.

A participant’s view of a CoP Circle by Emilia Bresciani

In my active life where energy often runs low, my weekend at the CoP Circle in Mosman, Sydney was truly energising. More than the delicious food, the wonderful costumes some women wore, what touched me deeply were the heart stories shared by my peace sisters. Each of us spoke from spaces in the heart that had surpassed conflict. Many of us had fought internal battles and overcome emotional storms; many of us had surrendered our resistance in exchange for courage; many had learned to forgive.

The fact that some came from Mexico, South Sudan, Peru, South Africa, Germany, U.K. and those born here came from Yugoslav, Hungarian and Italian/Spanish backgrounds and that we were also part of Australia’s great Diversity, gave us the strength to accept how privileged we were to live here. As we bonded, and we listened to each other, we realised we had one thing in common: Our humanity.

I already work for peace in what I do, but despite my preparation and readiness to deal with conflict the weekend enriched me further. In reviewing my responses to conflict, whether at home, at work or on the streets, I discovered some hidden frailties and was able to explore ways to bring myself to balance.

The links made will remain with me forever. The web formed as we passed a ball of wool across to each other represented our connection. It was a miniature reflection of the divine matrix that unites humanity. The flavour of each other’s culture wasn’t only in the food or the rhythm of conversation, but in our desire to create peace. I was reminded that cultures were multilayered, that some concepts I took for granted didn’t exist, or if they did, they wore a different costume. I took with me great friendships and genuine acceptance that global diversity and personal growth are the true ingredients of the peace experience.
In March 2013, 9 participants of a CoP Circle contemplated “Where to from here?” and requested ongoing monthly meetings to share feedback on ‘how I’m creating peace’ continue on the CoP journey, and to bring friends to get a taste of what CoP is about. Now there’s a regular monthly gathering on the 4th Saturday of each month in Auburn a community of 124 different cultures. Each month new women join in, a different Gathering Point is discussed, and community building plans emerge.

A CoP Information Evening in Canberra, ACT by Cynthia Lawler

In late May Shoshana Faire met with 12 women in Canberra. They represented a range of age groups, professions and nationalities - from Australia, Asia and Africa. Shoshana had just returned from Kenya two days before, yet any hint of jet lag was soon dispelled by her vivacious and captivating stories of her travels. She outlined the basic structure of a CoPeace Circle, and the training required to be a facilitator, and answered many questions. Even at this occasion some ‘matters of the heart’ surfaced and discussion occurred around these, demonstrating in microcosm what can happen in a CoP circle. Two women who had driven three hours from Wagga Wagga talked about the evening all the way home while being mindful of large kangaroos on the road.

Auburn, Sydney: Small dynamic group plan to put peace into action by Ida Mackay & Joyce Fraser

In June 2013, a small group of 5 ladies attended a CoP Circle in Auburn located 15 kilometres west of Sydney. The group reflected the diversity of Auburn, with only one Australian born woman in the group. The others were born in India, Nepal, Uruguay and UK and all enjoy full lives in Australia. This mix led to very interesting discussions as we worked through the Gathering Points. Our hostess, a Jewish lady, was very moved & inspired by the Muslim lady and welcomed her to say her prayers in her home. We all enjoyed each other’s company and have planned to put peace into action by having discussions with community leaders about organising CoP Circles and workshops to bring women from diverse backgrounds together.

Auburn, Sydney: Monthly CoP Gatherings by Fatma Isir & Trish McDonald-Harrison

In May our group from 2006 had another reunion, we meet a couple of times a year and catch up at our favourite surfside café at South Curl Curl. We all enjoyed each other’s company and have planned to put peace into action by having discussions with community leaders about organising CoP Circles and workshops to bring women from diverse backgrounds together.

An Information Evening in Maroubra by Tanya Fox

It had been 12 months since a CoP Circle was run in the eastern suburbs of Sydney. My friend Hilary was keen to facilitate her first CoP Circle since doing Facilitation Training in September, so we both decided to co-facilitate a Creators of Peace Information Evening in Maroubra. The local shopping centre very kindly offered us the use of their community meeting room which was suitable for a public event and conveniently situated on public transport.

We designed flyers with an inviting headline written in five languages entitled initiate peace in the family, your community and the wider world. Nine women attended (one drove 30 kilometres to be there). They were all instantly engaged and asked if we would start a CoP Circle the very next week. Except for the lady from far away, they have all commenced a 6 weekly sessions CoP Circle. Watch this space for our report in the next edition.

A CoP Catch-up Luncheon on the Sunshine Coast, Queensland by Lesley Bryant

Seven of us gathered for a ‘Creators of Peace’ Luncheon at Le Jardin’s, Flaxton on the Sunshine Coast. We were residents from Sunshine Coast, Gold Coast, Brisbane, and two overseas visitors from Saskatchewan, Canada. We shared stories of our connections with IofC - Lorraine for nearly 50 years, Minna in Finland and Caux about 20 years, and Lesley about 10 years, and spoke about a passion for peace that we all share.

It was really great to hear about the thesis that Minna has written about Creators of Peace which is currently being translated from Finnish into English. We plan to have a CoP Circle on the Sunshine Coast in September.

Annual Reunion of lasting CoP friendships in Curl Curl, Sydney by Sandra Blamey

Two women who had driven three hours from Wagga Wagga talked about the evening all the way home while being mindful of large trucks and kangaroos on the road.

DONATIONS ARE NEEDED

Creators of Peace is a voluntary not-for-profit international program depending entirely on the passion and commitment of our dedicated CoP volunteers.

However we need ongoing funds to:
- Respond to requests from regions of post conflict for CoP Circles, and Facilitation Training.
- Help subsidize our volunteer international Facilitators who travel across the world to co-facilitate CoP Circles and conduct Facilitation Training
- Enable some staffing to provide essential services to develop our worldwide network.
- Have capacity to reimburse expenses laid out by volunteers for printing, photocopying, catering supplies, etc.

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Stay connected to our growing global network

Keep sending in your reports, photos, stories and future plans for the next edition of the Global Connections newsletter.

Submit articles of no more than 200 words to: threepillars@ozemail.com.au

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