



## Initiatives of Change

## South African Newsletter

March/April 2017

### Cameroon consultation

Nombulelo Khanyile reports:

“In March, the CICM Centre in Mvolye, Yaoundé was a hive of activity, hosting participants who had come to take part in the Creators of Peace Circles and the Francophone Initiatives of Change training, as well as the Africa Coordination Group (ACG) consultation. Seventeen participants from sixteen different African countries took part in the consultation.



*Participants in the IofC training*

“Kofi Bassaw Quartey from Ghana, a Harambee Leadership Training alumnus, was instrumental in guiding the conversations that took place. At the end of the consultation it became very clear that there were three programmes that needed to be given impetus in Africa, namely, the training of trainers/facilitators in articulating the DNA of IofC in the language that would be accessible in the 21st century.

“The second programme is Creators of Peace Circles, and this is starting to make inroads in Francophone Africa. Some participants felt that Creators of Peace Circles should also aim to target men as well as politicians. The third programme is the Farmers' Dialogue, as food insecurity is becoming a threat in some countries in Africa.

“The election of four new members of the ACG was conducted by the nominations committee and four new members joined existing members Steve Kimaru (Kenya), and Roy Ncube (Zimbabwe).

The new members are:

Rev Dr Francis Acquah (Ghana)

Marc Bukuru (Burundi)

Victoria Kumukyaya (Uganda)

Vincent de Paul (Cameroon)

“During reflection time on the last day, I remembered what I shared at the ACG consultation in Ethiopia in

2014, having served on the ACG for seven years.

‘When we commit to being members of the ACG, we are in essence responding to a call to serve. It then becomes imperative to have a passion to help shape a generation that would one day be the pride of Africa. If we also dare to avail ourselves, and become obedient to the small voice that speaks in every heart, we could be used, not only to bring about healing to our countries, but also to bring about peace and prosperity.’”

**Talia Smith**, writes: “During my time in Cameroon, the team hosted 40 guests from around the world. One highlight for me was spending time with a group of passionate, intelligent and determined peacemakers from Central and East Africa who are not daunted by the grave challenges they face in delivering peace-building activities in their countries, some that are in



*Women from Creators of Peace Francophone African teams*

war. They are led by their spirits and hearts to overcome the challenges and to engage women as creators of peace. ‘My capital is my values,’ a lady from Burundi stated in one of the many powerful discussions.”

Newly elected member of the ACG, **Rev Dr Francis Acquah**, writes: Members who gathered at the consultation deliberated on a number of vital issues concerning the growth of IofC Africa, and also, sought to seek for God’s guidance and strength in pursuing the vision and mission of the organisation, particularly, in Africa.

In summary, the following were some of the highlights of the consultation:

**Morning Reflections** This vital component of IofC’s spiritual heritage became one of the focal points in this consultation. A strong call was made to members for the need to build on this foundation and seek, on a daily

basis, the Divine Essence of our lives, without which every best effort and intention of ours are bound to end in futility.

### **Living Differently (LD)**

Presentations and discussions on LD challenged members to take a deep inward self-examination so as to be conscious of prejudices and biases, which sometimes drive us to judge and condemn others.

### **Strategic Priority Direction**

On strategic priority direction, the consultation reviewed some of the core programmes and projects that the ACG had worked on through workshops and consultations for the past years in order to equip teams in various countries for effective work. Members were challenged to identify priority areas and to be committed to working on them to effect a change.

### **Implications and Lessons for IofC Africa**

Personal stories shared through reflections reminded and inspired members on the following: IofC is a way of life and a journey with the Ultimate Reality and with one another. Although we talk about change that is rooted in the core absolute values of the group, members are not perfect, no matter the growth and maturity attained. It is a process. God has not finished with us yet; we are not finished products.

**Assaad Chaftari from Lebanon**, former leader of a so-called Christian militia, responsible for many atrocities in his country's civil war, attended the training session leading up to the ACG consultation. Since the 15-year civil war in his country, he has publicly repented for his evil acts and is now working with former fighters from all sides to educate the young Lebanese in the arts of reconciliation.

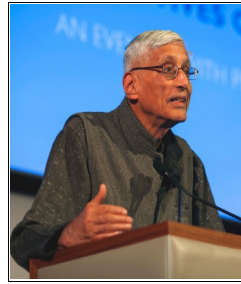
Commenting on the Cameroon training session he said of the participants, "All of them were so eager to change things and hearts in their countries and their continent. All of us felt we were there to learn from each other - a melting pot of experiences about IofC beliefs, values and practices and the tools we could use to spread the words of Change."

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### ***Rajmohan Gandhi speaks in London***

**Rajmohan Gandhi**, biographer and visiting professor at the Indian Institute of Technology, Gandhinagar, and at Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan, gave a speech of honest reflection on the challenges facing peace and reconciliation at a public talk jointly hosted by Initiatives of Change, Faiths Forum for London, the Next Century Foundation and the Guerrand-Hermès Foundation for Peace.

The lecture, which took place on 20<sup>th</sup> April, was entitled *Our World at a Crossroads: Perspectives on the Way Forward*. Professor Gandhi, grandson of Mahatma



Gandhi, was speaking at London's Institution of Engineering and Technology to a spellbound audience who heard his messages on the futility of war, the importance of reconciliation and challenges to minority rights, including in today's India.

Open and humble about his grandfather's legacy and contradictions, Professor Gandhi's message is that while we all have opinions of others, so many of us lack knowledge of others; and this underlies the ever-present danger of treating any group of people as uniquely worse.

He praised those in Britain who were ready to accept responsibility for colonialism's excesses and injustices but challenged today's youth to carry forward their ancestors' revolutionary attitude that human beings are equal in value.



He said: "Liberty and equality have always been under attack and are under attack today. They are attacked in the name of nation, or religion, or culture, or security. But they will survive. They will endure because the human soul will always want liberty and equality.

"Hatred kills us. It does not kill the enemy," he said, inviting the audience to consider how they could appropriate non-violent protest to effect change in their own communities.

He concluded, "Listening, seeing ourselves in the Other, and the Other in us, and, with God's grace, forgiving. If there are better ways for building a better tomorrow, I would like to be told what they are."

To read more go to <http://uk.iofc.org/rajmohan-gandhi-speaks-world-crossroads-london>

*Excerpts from report by George Dabby  
Photos by Jonty Herman*



## ***Peace Circles in Zimbabwe***

**Report compiled by Talia Smith, UK, who accompanied the Creators of Peace team on the ground in February this year.**

Zimbabwe's 2013 constitution identifies gender equality as one of the nation's core policies. Yet in reality, much work needs to be done to bring the laws on women's rights in line with the new Constitution. Furthermore, women don't know about these laws which means they do not report violence and they don't have the opportunity to get justice.

One of the activities of the IofC Creators of Peace programme is called Creators of Peace Circles which are small, localized community gatherings of women who work through material designed to deepen their understanding of each other and their peace creating capabilities. Individual healing is one outcome of the Peace Circles but also, as importantly, the programme is designed to inspire women to look at how they live and to be effective agents for change in their families and communities, using their healing as liberation to go beyond themselves, to tackle the injustices and hurts around them.



*Adelaide Mhunduru, left, Angie Katito right, with participants*

In 2012 two women, Angie Katito and Adelaide Mhunduru, developed a calling to take CoP to their home country Zimbabwe after going to a CoP conference in Caux, IofC international conference centre in Switzerland. In 2013 the first Peace Circle (PC) was held in Gweru, their home town and hub of IofC activities. Their conviction is now leading hundreds of women and men too, through Peace Circles, making ripples through the province.

'Family disharmony that comes from the current economic situation, is the most common issue we find women are dealing with,' stated Adelaide. With Zimbabwe's unemployment at over 90%, many men are without a job so there is pressure on women to make ends meet. 'From the Peace Circles manual, our Circles tend to focus on two of the topics - 'forgiveness' and 'what destroys peace', as there are many financial challenges in communities which bring poverty, and this is one factor that destroys peace,' Angie explained.

Another issue that makes CoP extremely relevant and needed in Zimbabwe is the tribal conflict. The past war caused conflict between the two ethnic groups (Shona

and Ndebele). 'There is a lot of bitterness in Zimbabwe due to the different ethnic groups,' commented Adelaide. Gweru is in the Midlands province of Zimbabwe so it therefore comprises a population from both tribes. 'In nearly every Peace Circle we run there are members from both tribes that for years have been in conflict,' stated Angie, as she explained how the PCs help build bridges, and sometimes friendships, between women of the opposing tribes.

During the last PC, one woman commented, 'After participating in a PC, I was encouraged to apologise to someone in the village (who was in the room). He accepted and now our renewed friendship has affected the rest of our community. There is now a clear difference in our behaviours,' talking of an issue that was largely due to tribal divisions.

Angie and Adelaide have hopeful plans for the future of CoP in Zimbabwe. Their wish is to train more women to deliver further Peace Circles. They have had a meeting with the city of Gweru councillor's wives, hoping to reach the councillors and bring change to the city that way.

## ***Zimbabwe youth conference builds teamwork***



Initiatives of Change (IofC)/Moral Re-Armament (MRA) Zimbabwe recently held a national youth conference in Gweru from 1-5 February with the aim to mobilize and empower young people, and 'move from a group to a team.' Young people came together to learn more deeply about Initiatives of Change, to build their skills, and to strengthen friendships with the intention of working together for a just, peaceful and sustainable Zimbabwe. The conference was created and delivered by youth for youth.

*Talia Smith*

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## ***First Peace Circle in Ethiopia***

On the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> of February, seven enthusiastic women participated for the first ever Creators of Peace (CoP) Circle in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The highlight of the CoP weekend was holding the training in Amharic (the national language of Ethiopia). At the end of the two-days experience, a team was created where the participants agreed first and foremost to care for each other and develop together an avenue to give back to



their community in their diverse walks of their lives.

Azeb Germai of IofC Ethiopia took the facilitation training at Caux, Switzerland in 2008. Azeb said that she always yearned for a Peace Circle to happen in Ethiopia ever since she took the training.

Committed members have now drawn up their action plan and commitment to work together and link up to their regional and international counterparts.

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### *In Memory*



**Peter Hannon** died peacefully in England on 21 March, surrounded by those he loved.

We think back with gratitude to Peter and Fiona, with two young daughters, Catherine and Veronica, moving out of their known way in

Northern Ireland and coming to live for 14 years in South Africa in an unknown situation, and at a time when Apartheid was still very much in place. Peter and Fiona used their experiences from Northern Ireland to help build bridges between the peoples of this Rainbow Nation.

Peter served for 21 years on the MRA/IofC Council in South Africa for which we are very grateful.

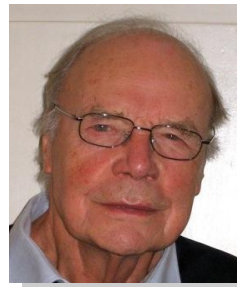
In the foreword to Peter's book 'Whose Side Is God On?', Ken Clarke, the Rector of St Patrick's in Coleraine where Peter and Fiona lived and attended church, wrote: "One of those behind-the-scenes people in Northern Ireland is Peter Hannon. With sincere faith, immense courage and insuppressible hope, he has given himself to listening and understanding. He has planted seeds of peace where others have been reluctant to walk."

At the funeral Peter Everington, a long-standing friend of the family gave a tribute. He began by reading a message from former South African Ambassador to Washington, Franklin Sonn : "Peter's passing is to me akin to the loss of an elder brother . Indeed that is exactly what he had been to me personally. In the worst

years of Apartheid when I was often called upon to lead protest marches hooked in with Archbishop Tutu, ending in prison cells, Peter and Fiona would be at my home supporting Joan (my wife). His wise counsel and loving efforts enabled me to remain focused and to resist bitterness. In calmer times Peter often patiently listened to my outbursts against the oppression of Apartheid and Colonialism. He convinced me that the higher ground of moral leadership and reconciliation was my calling. I owe so much to the noble clear moral and personal guidance and support of Peter Hannon. May his soul rest in peace and may God bless Fiona."

A message of condolence to Fiona and the family came from South Sudanese, General Joseph Lagu recalling his visit to Northern Ireland: "Peter has been an ardent friend and advocate for the people of Africa and particularly working tirelessly over many years to bring Peace to South Africa in the Apartheid years. Africa has lost one of its greatest allies."

We thank God for Peter's life and his commitment to following God's leading and for the care from him, Fiona and the family for South Africa over so many years.



**Pierre Spoerri** died on February 23, at the age of 91.

Born in 1926, he studied at the universities of Geneva and Zurich.

Pierre gave up his place studying medicine to start working on a full-time basis with MRA in 1946.

He travelled extensively through Asia, the Middle East and Africa, writing, reporting for European newspapers and working with Moral Re-Armament/Initiatives of Change. Later, he settled down for 20 years in Bonn with his German wife Fulvia. He joined the Caux Foundation's council where he served from 1965 to 2006. He also served for many years on the MRA/IofC South African Council of Management.

Remaining active in his retirement in his native Zurich he was a faithful participant in the Friends of Caux yearly assembly and the donors day in Caux.

We give thanks for Pierre's life and for his commitment to following the still small voice of God in his heart, and for all that it led to.