

A Generation of Courage Youth's Nonviolent Activism

Action Pack 2012





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*Without peace, development is impossible, and without women,
neither peace nor development can take place.*

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Introduction

Every year, the Women Peacemakers Program (WPP) celebrates the *International Women's Day for Peace and Disarmament*, May 24, with a publication: the "May 24 Pack".

2012 has proved to be an exciting year of transition for the WPP, with the WPP growing from being a program of IFOR into an independent organization in its own right. The busy months caused by this transition meant the publication of the annual May 24 Pack had to be postponed by a few months.

As we approach the 12th anniversary of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (USNCR 1325), the WPP is very happy to present you with its 2012 May 24 Pack, which focuses on the topic "A Generation of Courage: Youth Nonviolent Activism".

The role of young people in starting and leading nonviolent uprisings has received a lot of attention in recent months, sparked by the Arab Spring and the Occupy movements. As history has shown many times before, the energy of young women and men is crucial for creating the spark that can ignite a vibrant movement for change. It is the WPP's experience that all over the world, the youth has the ambition and is already working to make a difference. These young women and men not only question the world around them, but they are also creative in formulating new and daring responses. They do so using their own language and strategies, so as to reach out to and mobilize as many people as possible.

This publication aims to pay tribute to the courage and drive of young activists, who are fighting all over the world for the cause of gender justice and sustainable peace. It highlights the important role of young women and men in effecting nonviolent social and political change, and gives attention to the new strategies and tools they are using in their activism.

This May 24 Pack – comprising a collection of articles by and interviews with activists and activist organizations – provides several examples of the important role the youth is playing in effecting nonviolent social change. It investigates why young people are so often the drivers of social change movements, what drives them to stand up and make a difference, and how activist movements should make sure that the issues they advocate are still generating interest and commitment among the younger generations.

Several of the articles focus on new tools used by (young) activists in their nonviolent organizing: What role do the social media play in nonviolent activism, and what does this add to existing nonviolent organizing tools and strategies? And, what are the (gender-specific) risks attached to using social media for nonviolence?

This Pack also includes two articles that focus on the importance of integrating peace education within formal education. In contrast to the social acceptance of "war education" – with the military quite actively and creatively targeting young people and schools in its search for recruits – peace education still struggles to receive the recognition it deserves. Lastly, the Pack provides a list of practical recommendations and a list of relevant organizations in relation to this topic.

Wishing you inspired reading!

Isabelle Geuskens

WPP Director



Change Is Possible!

by Jose de Vries

“I always wanted to help people, to alleviate suffering. If there was an opportunity to do so, I always joined. I always wondered: How can I help people? When I’m not involved in activism, I just don’t feel happy and satisfied. I know that it’s often challenging, especially in terms of being able to sustain my family, but this is my life: this is who I am.” – Youth activist from Mindanao, the Philippines

Activism is often presented as age-neutral. Often however, an important proportion of those involved in social change movements is made up of young people. The WPP spoke to a number of youth activists from various places in the world – all under 31 years of age – to explore their motivations for being involved in activism, the obstacles they face, and their ways of overcoming those.

One of the activists the WPP spoke to is Onin Desierto from Mindanao in the Philippines. He recently joined the Mindanao People’s Peace Movement¹ (MPPM) and has been involved for many years with the Alyansa ng Kabataang Mindanao para sa Kapayapaan (AKMK – the Alliance of Mindanao Youth for Peace). AKMK believes the youth have to take an active role in helping to bring about the empowerment of all people in Mindanao, addressing the cultural prejudices of the different groups in Mindanao, working for sustainable peace, and focusing on protecting natural resources for sustainable development.²

Onin recalls how he had left his activist work to take up a job in the corporate sector for a while. However, he soon found himself going back to activism, as the corporate experience made him realize the depth of his commitment to human-rights work. He explains: *“I had a good job. I was able to travel, meet different ‘important’ people, go to nice*



Iulia Socea (© Iulia Socea)

restaurants and bars, but I just realized that it wasn’t me. I wasn’t happy, so I left.”

This strong drive to contribute to changing the world was also expressed by Iulia Socea, a junior trainer at the Peace Action Training and Research Institute of Romania (PATRIR),³ and a Communication Officer at 5Colours/1World,⁴ an intercultural organization that focuses on youth empowerment, active media training and digital activist film production. She explains:

1 For more information, please visit: <http://www.tripeople.org>

2 For more information, please visit: <http://akmkforum.weebly.com/index.html>

3 For more information, please visit: <http://patrir.ro/>

4 For more information, please visit: <http://www.5colours1world.org/>

“There’s something about the field that is very attractive to me, because I see a lot of potential for doing something that has a positive impact. I look around me, I see things going wrong, and I want to do something about it. I want to raise awareness on these issues. I know you can’t change other people’s behavior, but you can raise questions that will make people reflect. That can help to change the world, even if only to a very small extent. As a trainer, I address questions related to social issues, conflict transformation, discrimination and gender. I am aware that change doesn’t happen overnight. It takes time, as inequalities, prejudices and conflicts in general are deeply rooted. Nonetheless, my main motivation for doing this kind of work is the belief that change really is possible – as Gandhi and so many others have proven! – even if it takes a lot of time and perseverance.”



Ricardo Fabilena (©Ricardo Fabilena)

Others explained how an experience in their personal lives moved them into the direction of activism. Ghida Anani, founder of ABAAD (Dimensions) Resource Center for Gender Equality⁵ covering the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Public Health at the Lebanese American University, co-founder and Program Coordinator at KAFA (Enough) Violence & Exploitation,⁶ and a gender-based violence consultant, recalls how a colleague inspired her to get involved:

“I was working at that time as a medical and social worker at the Lebanese Council to Resist Violence against Women (LECORVAW). My colleague gave a seminar on sexual abuse and gender equality at my university before my graduation. It was very inspirational, and that’s when I said to myself: I want to be like her and work on these topics.”

Owen Murozvi, Peacebuilding and Conflict-transformation Officer at the Zimbabwe Council of Churches,⁷ describes how a very personal encounter with domestic violence made him become involved as an activist: *“My sister has been in an abusive marriage. Now I feel I want to change men in terms of their ways of treating women, their loved ones, and I want to create a better world, also for our beloved daughters.”*

Ricardo Fabilena, an activist from the Feminist Group of Leon, in Nicaragua, was deeply touched by the gender

inequalities he saw around him, which made him decide to get involved. He explains:

“I have been involved with social movements since the age of 15. Since then I have been interested in issues dealing with human rights, the rights of children and young people, and sexual and reproductive rights. I learned about gender issues when I was 17 years old. It touched me deeply, because I identified with it. During that time, the political context criminalized womanhood, and in particular abortion, which made me question my role as a man in this society, in which there were clearly differences between women and men. What has always motivated me is a strong belief in justice.”

Challenges and Strategies

All of the activists spoke of their deep commitment that proved to be crucial for dealing with the many challenges they face. Of course the “general challenges” of activism (including opposition from the authorities and ridicule from society) are always going to be there. However, the people we spoke with also mentioned age-specific and gender-specific challenges. As Lulia says: *“The main challenge I face as a trainer is when I’m training people who are much older than I am. I notice that I don’t have much credibility as a young female trainer.”* She handles it by engaging the participants, going into dialogue with them, inviting them to share their own experiences, and listening with an open attitude, while facilitating and steering the exchange. She notices that this usually helps to build understanding and credibility, and concludes: *“People don’t want a young person telling them what they should or shouldn’t be doing. I*

5 For more information, please visit: www.abaadmena.org/

6 For more information, please visit: www.kafa.org.lb/

7 For more information, please visit: www.zcc.co.zw/



am just steering the dialogue in a direction to ensure important social issues are being addressed.”

Ghida also spoke about some of the challenges related to being a woman activist. She notices how men in her region (MENA) openly state that people “*should stay away from strong women*”. As a pioneering gender activist who addresses sensitive issues in her society, Ghida is said to be “*one of those women to stay away from*”. She deals with it by “*just being me, and being persistent in my mission. Sometimes I feel supported; sometimes I face competition and I am seen as a threat. But I persist in my work.*”

Ricardo addresses his internal struggle as a young male gender activist:

“I constantly question what my role should be in these struggles as a man. I don’t mean the level of commitment, but rather the degree of prominence and action that I can take as a gender-sensitive man. I believe that I have to be in conjunction with empowered women who are actors of social transformation of gender inequalities. How can I be involved in that space and to what extent? These are some questions that come to my head from my self-identification as a feminist ally.”

He deals with this challenge by sharing his experiences, and seeking out those of others:

“One of the initiatives I have taken is to share experiences with other young people and adults who have participated in this type of activism. I recently developed the initiative to conduct academic research on the participation of young men in groups of women, approached from the identity those men assume and the identity their fellow activists recognize. I think this will help me to understand things better.”

Owen explains the challenges he faces as a young male activist advocating for gender equality within church structures:

“I feel a lack of support and appreciation for the work I am doing; people think it’s a wasted effort. On the one hand, this has to do with my age, on the other also with a general resistance to change within the church structures. Because I’m younger, the church doesn’t take my words seriously enough. Also, the issue of advocating the equal representation of women in leadership positions is seen as non-Christian. Also, many of my friends don’t understand my work. They are more concerned with making a living

– bread and butter issues – and don’t consider this work important.”

Bread and butter issues were also mentioned by Onin from Mindanao. He explains: “*I have a wife and son. I need to sustain my family, and sometimes it’s difficult to make a living as an activist. The global economic crisis has affected many NGOs. When I was alone, it didn’t matter that much. But now, I need to take care of them; we need to survive. They need food.*”

Spaces of Support

Several of those who were interviewed addressed the importance of feeling supported. Every activist needs to feel supported to some extent in order to sustain in his or her efforts. Some found support in their direct environment, among their friends. As Ricardo says: “*With all the challenges I face, I still have a particular advantage, which is that many of my friends are activists in gender and social issues. We empathize with each other’s work, which serves as motivation and mutual support.*” Others found support through a mentor-mentee relationship. Iulia explained how, in her work as a Junior Trainer within Patrir, she gets support from older activists within the organization. Within the training system, there is a sharing of experiences and knowledge, which allows her to learn and grow.

Some of the others built up their own “youth-support system” within their activist movement. As a 31-year-old activist, Onin Desierto from Mindanao considers himself to be part of the “older generation” of the youth and thinks it is important to help the “younger youth” express their ideas. When he was working at the AKMK, he decided to step back a bit at one stage in order to create space for them. He made sure he remained constantly available for support and advice, finding it important “*to build their confidence by creating a space where they can learn, get experience and develop their talents. I learned many things from experience, and they should do that as well. When I was there, they relied on me. Now, they express their own creative ideas and feel empowered.*”

That’s what it seemed to be about for many: having the space – whether one demands it, receives it from others or creates it for oneself – to voice and share one’s ideas and talents and to be appreciated as the changemaker that one can be. It is about having the space to be heard and feel empowered, and to empower others along the way to a better and more peaceful world.

Child Soldiers

Learning from Kony

by *Helen Kearney*

The issue of child soldiers is back on the global agenda, thanks to two major recent developments. In March, Thomas Lubanga became the first person to be convicted by the International Criminal Court. He was found guilty of forcibly recruiting child soldiers to his Union of Congolese Patriots, known as 'the army of children'. The second, most visible development, was the massive popularity growth of web-based film KONY2012. It aims to raise awareness of the activities of Joseph Kony, the Ugandan warlord who leads the Lord's Resistance Army, calling for the US military to intervene to bring him to justice. Kony and the LRA are known for their brutality and use of child soldiers. Invisible Children's initiative went viral to become an Internet phenomenon. It amassed over 30 million views in 48 hours, at a rate of up to 1 million per hour, mostly in North America, Europe, Asia and Latin America.

It has been hard to miss. In March #STOPKONY became the number one hashtag worldwide. Perhaps you, like me, were one of more than 112 million viewers who went onto YouTube or Vimeo to watch the 29-minute film. Did you see it on Facebook? Do you follow Rihanna on Twitter (14.9 million fans), or Justin Bieber (18.4 million), receiving their tweets #STOPKONY or #KONY2012? Or Jay-Z, Bill Gates, Bono, J.K.Rowling, Oprah or Angelina Jolie? Perhaps you bought an 'Action Kit', wore a bracelet, put up a poster or signed up to give \$3 a week. The message is simple and the cash transaction is easy. Donate: you've 'made a difference': you can stop thinking. Indeed, we are actively encouraged us to abandon our capacity for critical thought. The voice over tells us 'we are not studying history, we are shaping it'.

The outpouring of care and energy shown by so many young people springs from a sincere motivation to take action to confront injustice in the world. It demonstrates that we are not as selfish and apathetic as we are constantly being told. But the KONY2012 campaign is really dangerous. The idea that mass social media movements can leverage public opinion to call for foreign military intervention is terrifying.

Scheduled screenings in Northern Uganda had to be abandoned when angry viewers began to shout and throw rocks at the screen. The factual inaccuracies, the overt warmongering and the disregard for the real trauma and suffering of the LRA's victims. The staggering narcissism and the commercialisation. The slick graphics, simplistic and often infantile soundbites and the one-sided story. And the portrayal of 'Africans' as helpless children in need of rescuing by young and idealistic Westerners.

According to YouTube statistics, KONY2012 was most popular with girls aged 13-17, boys aged 13-17 and young men aged 18-24. Children and young people were also the driving force behind the film's viral exposure. Young adults aged 18-30 were twice as likely to view the film as older adults.

While many have questioned KONY2012's simplistic paradigm, its success in raising awareness among 'normally apathetic' Western youth has been almost universally praised. However, the film presents US military intervention as the only solution. KONY2012 is attempting to recruit children and young people to their belligerent campaign, trying to persuade 13-17 yr olds that military force is the answer and that US violence will heal the world. This is morally repugnant. Ugandan civilians will have to pay the ultimate price so that some naïve Westerners can feel good about themselves.

Then comes the question: 'What can we do?' Moved by the suffering in the world, many young people feel called to act. First, we can educate ourselves. We can study child rights. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in the world. Everyone is onboard, except for the USA and Somalia (and Somalia plan to ratify). It obliges all states to ensure that people under 15 yrs don't become soldiers (Art. 38). An Optional Protocol extends this, specifying that no one under 18 can be recruited compulsorily and that no under 18s can take a direct part in hostilities. The African Charter on the Rights and the Welfare the Child is stronger: no



one under 18 can be recruited by a State, under any circumstances. Under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, the use of child soldiers under 15 is a 'war crime'. This is how Lubanga was convicted.

So international law is one tool we can work with. We also need to understand the social, political, historical and cultural contexts of the issues in question. Some child soldiers in the world are coerced, but many volunteer to fight. Why is this? And what about child soldiers in our own countries?

As for direct action, instead of asking how Western governments can intervene to solve Africa's conflicts, we might ask how our own governments are causing and prolonging those conflicts. Do we challenge the militarisation of Africa in the name of the 'Global War on Terror' and efforts to control oil resources? As consumers, do we make choices that contribute to water and other natural resource shortages, potentially (but never inevitably) fueling conflict?



The reaction to KONY2012 shows the world how much children and young people care. When our energy and commitment is combined with our ability to think for ourselves and critically examine what we are told, we can be a powerful movement for peace.

» Published first by War Resisters International in *The Broken Rifle*, May 2012, No. 92



Graffiti in Antwerp demonstrating the impact of the Kony film
(© Isabelle Geuskens)

Voices from the Field

Young Activists and Social Media

by *Isabelle Geuskens and Merle Gosewinkel*

Asia: The Facebook Generation in Kashmir

Both old and complex, the Kashmir conflict is turning the region into a nuclear flashpoint between India and Pakistan, with both states claiming the right to the territory. The WPP spoke with a young woman activist on how young people are using social media to address the situation in Kashmir.

She shared how the militarization of Kashmir, combined with structural injustice, has resulted in a lot of frustrated young people. As a result, she says, “some got involved in the various militant groups that are operating in the area, leading to a spiral of violence. Over the years, thousands of people have disappeared or have been forcefully displaced, raped, assaulted, molested or killed.”

The past three years has seen the emergence of a new generation of Kashmiri youth, however – one that has grown up in the cyber age. This generation is learning from what is happening in the rest of the world and – inspired by the Arab Spring – has become even more active on social networking sites. The young woman activist explains: “A generation of educated, Twitter- and Facebook-versed young people is using social media to exercise the freedom of speech and to let the world know what is happening to them. They are demanding a political solution to the Kashmir conflict and the abolition of the many controversial and draconian laws imposed upon its people. This has proved especially useful during curfew, when only state-run news channels are allowed to operate, leading to biased reporting and almost zero coverage of human-rights violations.”

Through social networking sites, and especially through YouTube, young people upload videos of human-rights violations, sending their messages across the world. Facebook is also used for disseminating information, campaigning and generating solidarity, as well as organizing nonviolent protests. According to the young woman activist: “This approach generated attention, with international media like the BBC and Al Jazeera reporting on the situ-

ation in Kashmir. Even national media started to report – though still in a biased manner. On the other hand, local media still face severe control; several local news channels were banned and local journalists have been threatened – some even were beaten to death...”

She emphasizes that social media have also served to empower women activists, especially young women: “Though Kashmiri women have always been involved in activism, their agency for a long time went unacknowledged and ignored. With many of the peace-and-justice movements being male-dominated, women were mostly portrayed as victims of the conflict. Social media provided women with a new space to voice their views and concerns, resulting in an increase in the number of young women and girls getting involved in online activism during the past three years.”

Still, online activism is not without risk in Kashmir. The activist recalls that “though Facebook and other social networking sites helped the youth to channel their anger and frustration in a constructive and nonviolent manner, this did not go unnoticed by the authorities. The Cyber Cell of Kashmir Police raided many places after closely monitoring Facebook and other social networking sites during the last three years. Many young activists were arrested at the behest of Public Safety, and some are still in jail for their activism. Ironically, the technology that supported Kashmiris in communicating their activism has also become a tool through which the authorities disseminate their propaganda and try to reach and influence the youth.”

Middle East: The Role of New Media in Egypt's Revolution

To call the Egyptian Revolution of 2011 a “Facebook Revolution” might be going a step too far, and would mean attributing to a communication tool such as Facebook an agency that it does not have. Revolutions are driven by brave people, not by communicative devices. But it is safe to say that the possibilities for spreading the word online and the opportunities for mobilizing and communicating





Salam Tarek (© Salam Tarek)



Albert Gomes-Mugumya
(© Albert Gomes-Mugumya)

via Facebook did support the democratic movement in Egypt. The main actor in the revolution was a new digital generation that was used to communicating, meeting, discussing and organizing online. These young people do not see themselves as passive receivers of information, but are assuming an active role in producing, shaping, and spreading news themselves. That is something they have grown up with.

The WPP talked with Salam Tarek, a young Egyptian political and women's rights activist who was one of the thousands of young people who took to the streets of Cairo in 2011 and finally succeeded in ousting former Egyptian president, Hosni Mubarak. Salam is an expert on new media and activism and is using social media and video for his advocacy work during Egypt's period of transition. His involvement with the revolutionary movement started when he witnessed the state violence and torture around him. That was what made him decide to share those images online, so as to raise awareness in his own country and abroad. He began to post his materials on online platforms such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter to reach as many people as possible in hopes of inspiring other people to share their experiences, too. Salam also documented the murder of Khaled Said, a young Egyptian who was arrested and beaten to death by the Egyptian police forces, and whose death triggered the Facebook group "We are all Khaled Said", which contributed to growing unrest and anger among the young Egyptian population in the weeks leading up to the revolution.

Salam says that in response to his online activities, he has received many threats from former regime officials, and the threats continue even now, but he emphasizes that this will never stop him from speaking the truth and revealing injustices – even if this would mean paying the

ultimate price. He believes that the violence used by the former regime had to be stopped by any means: "I felt it was important to enlighten the public on the illegality of this violence, so I did. I hope that the Arab Spring will finally transition into peaceful democratic countries in our region, and that its example will spread online so young people can learn from it."

Africa: New Media in Uganda – Curse or Blessing?

Albert Gomes-Mugumya, a nonviolent activist working against corruption and for good governance in Uganda, shared his thoughts on the use of social media in activism in his country in an interview with the WPP. As for his personal use of social media as an activist, he says he mainly uses Facebook for his advocacy work "to argue for a cause, to reunite with old friends and fellow activists, and as a tool to spread information and news or to organize events". He has also uses Facebook to monitor election results and court cases, and he even created a Facebook group called *Citizens Action Group (CAG)*, a non-partisan, nonviolent action group that aims to ensure "that Uganda's Parliamentarian excesses are curtailed", as he phrased it. Facebook is regularly used as a tool to mobilize people in Uganda. For example, one Facebook group successfully pressured one of Uganda's TV stations to ban a program that was creating ethnic disharmony.

Albert also remembers how the leader of Uganda's biggest opposition party was brutally assaulted by the police during peaceful walk-to-work protests against rising fuel prices. The police attack was filmed by a journalist and broadcasted widely via TV and YouTube. Supporters and sympathizers of the opposition party managed to track down one of the attacking policemen via Facebook, revealing his identity and setting up a Facebook group condemning his action. In no time, the group had 5,000

members, making him one of the most vilified Ugandans. As a result, his home and that of his mother were attacked and in the end he had to go into hiding since he feared for his life. This case is an example of how easily the Internet – and Facebook in particular – can be used to track down a person or to collect information about one’s opponents so as to use this against him or her. Albert confirms that the government uses social media platforms to monitor activists who are seen as anti-government or controversial. In several cases, Ugandan activists have been threatened by security agents or arrested as a preventive measure when they had called for a protest. Using social media for its own ends, the government can easily track and target activists, since the anonymity of the Internet often conceals the identity of the person one is communicating with and makes it unclear as to who is an ally and who an opponent. “Any information you share can be used against you, or may reach far beyond the group it was meant for,” Albert cautions. He shared another example from Uganda, where tweets are being published in newspapers without the authors’ consent. This means that short messages, meant for a specific group, can suddenly be read by everyone. Asked for recommendations from his side, he emphasizes the need for better privacy protection in relation to social media.



Social Media

Supportive, But Not Enough

by Jose de Vries

The growth and the popularity of social media throughout 2011 and 2012 have shown no signs of slowing down. Globally, Facebook still dominates, with 955 million active monthly users worldwide, nearly 60% of which log in on a daily basis, while 543 million users access Facebook through mobile devices.¹ In 2011, Twitter hit 100 million active users. Over the past years, much has been written on how social media are influencing the nature of activism. Many have described the wave of demonstrations and protests occurring in the Arab world, starting in late 2010, as “Facebook Revolutions”. How many social media users are there in the Arab world?

The number of people using Facebook in the Arab world has approximately tripled in the last two years (June 2010 – June 2012), increasing from 16 million to 45 million users. Young people between the ages of 15 and 29 continue to make up around 70% of Facebook users in the Arab region. Egypt still accounts for about a quarter of the total number of Facebook users in that region, having added more new users in the past year than any other Arab country: over 1.6 million between January and June 2012.² The estimated number of active Twitter users in the Arab region at the end of June 2012 was 2,099,706.³

The top five globally trending Twitter topics in 2011 included the resignation of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak (no. 1) and the killing of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi (no. 5).⁴

A study has shown that at regional level, most men and women in the Arab world primarily use social media to access information and connect with people. Sixty percent of the respondents indicated also using social media to contribute to civic and political activities.⁵

High-risk and Low-risk Activism

In his article “Small Change: Why the revolution will not be tweeted,”⁶ Malcolm Gladwell addresses the supposed reinvention of social activism by social media. Referring to the civil-rights movement, which he classifies as “high-risk activism”, he argues that this kind of activism challenges the status quo, deeply attacks rooted problems, and is strategic activism, mounted with precision and discipline. According to Gladwell, the success of the civil-rights movement was related to its hierarchical structure. He quotes from A. D. Morris’ study *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*: “Each group was task-oriented and coordinated its activities through authority structures. Individuals were held accountable for their assigned duties, and important conflicts were resolved by the minister, who usually exercised ultimate authority over the congregation.”

Gladwell maintains that overall, high-risk activism requires a core of dedicated and trained activists ready to “turn the ‘fever’ into action” – committed supporters of the goals and values of the action, with strong relationships holding the group together. He argues that social-media activism fosters “feel-good activism” rather than actual

1 <http://newsroom.fb.com/content/default.aspx?NewsAreaId=22>. Data provided is up to June 2012.

2 Arab Social Media Report data on Facebook: <http://www.ArabSocialMediaReport.com/Facebook/LineChart.aspx?PriMenuID=18&CatID=24@mnu=Cat>.

3 Arab Social Media Report data on Twitter: <http://www.ArabSocialMediaReport.com/Twitter/LineChart.aspx?PriMenuID=18&CatID=25@mnu=Cat>

4 <http://yearinreview.twitter.com/en/hottopics.html>

5 Arab Social Media Report: The Role of Social Media in Arab Women’s Empowerment. Downloadable via: <http://www.arabsocialmediareport.com/UserManagement/PDF/ASMR%20Report%203.pdf>

6 http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2010/10/04/101004fa_fact_gladwell

change.⁷ Campaigns disseminated via social-media tools don't ask participants to take personal or financial risks, or to personally confront socially entrenched norms and practices and could therefore be described as "low-risk activism". Gladwell argues that social media are effective tools for building networks, which are built around loose relationships. Social media organizing "favors the weak-tie connections that give us access to information over the strong-tie connections that help us persevere in the face of danger." As he sees it: "Because networks don't have a centralized leadership structure and clear lines of authority, they have real difficulty reaching consensus and setting goals. [...] The drawbacks of networks scarcely matter if the network isn't interested in systemic change – if it just wants to frighten or humiliate or make a splash – or if it doesn't need to think strategically. [...] Boycotts and sit-ins and nonviolent confrontations – which were the weapons of choice for the civil-rights movement – are high-risk strategies."

Playing by New Rules

Gladwell tries to refute the role of social media to support his central thesis that "'high-risk' social activism requires deep roots and strong ties". While that is an important argument, it is not the complete picture. Social activism depends on both strong ties *and* weak ones. As Jessica Lipnack argues, not all of the thousands of people who were present at Tahrir Square had strong ties. While smaller plots have strong links, between and among the groups are weak ties – and the occasional strong ones. "The whole thing hangs together – and people keep turning out – because of these loose and strong connections. That's a movement."⁸ Or as sociology professor Zeynep Tufekci phrases it: "Large pools of weaker ties are crucial to being able to build robust networks of stronger ties."⁹ And that's where the value of Internet and social media can lie.

7 The argument that social media activism requires less commitment from the participant existed before Gladwell defined it. The "slacktivist" – a term formed out of the words slacker and activist, is referring to people who support a cause by performing simple measures are not truly engaged or devoted to making a change.

8 "Does The New Yorker Need Gladwell?" by Jessica Lipnack. Downloadable from: <http://endlessknots.netage.com/endlessknots/2011/02/does-the-new-yorker-need-gladwell.html>

9 "What Gladwell Gets Wrong: The Real Problem is Scale Mismatch (Plus, Weak and Strong Ties are Complementary and Supportive)" <http://technosociology.org/?p=178>

Social media tools such as Twitter and Facebook can never cause revolutions to happen. "High-risk" activism – visibly being on the streets in large numbers – remains crucial to challenge deeply rooted inequalities. However, social media and the Internet itself can be supportive tools for this kind of activism. Their specific value lies in connecting people – from various parts of the world, all with their own experiences, knowledge and context – in relatively simple and easy ways. It facilitates an exchange of knowledge and strategies and plays a role in "getting the word out", generating (moral) support, helping organizers to plan protests and inspiring other activists to organize similar actions. As Clay Shirky puts it, digital networks "do not allow otherwise uncommitted groups to take effective political action. They do, however, allow committed groups to play by new rules."¹⁰ Hence, the role of social media should not be completely flattened out as Gladwell does, nor should it be defined as "not interesting", as he does in his article "Does Egypt need Twitter?"¹¹

The Other Side of Social Media

However, while the importance of social media tools has to be acknowledged, these have to be considered critically as well. As Morozov has pointed out, increased technology also brings increased surveillance capacity, and authoritarian governments are effectively using the Internet to suppress free speech and disseminate cutting-edge propaganda.¹² The risks that activists run have changed due to the use of social media. A downside of organizing and communicating over the Internet is that one never knows with whom one is actually communicating, unless (s)he knows the other person in real life. The other person could in fact be a member of the secret police, for instance. Activists in authoritarian regimes deal with this on a daily basis, and some have come up with their own strategies to overcome this. As an activist from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region shared with the WPP: "We sometimes used social media to deceive the authorities. For example, we announced over Facebook that a demonstration would happen at a certain place and time, since we knew our Facebook accounts and groups were being monitored. We then notified each other by word of mouth that we had moved the time and location of the demon-

10 <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/67325/malcolm-gladwell-and-clay-shirky/from-innovation-to-revolution>

11 <http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/newsdesk/2011/02/does-egypt-need-twitter.html>

12 Evgeny Morozov. *The Net Delusion: The Dark Side of Internet Freedom*



stration – which allowed us to turn up in large numbers somewhere else, leaving the authorities unprepared.”

The physical risks that online activists such as bloggers run for their online activities cannot be underestimated either. In the Arab region, as well as elsewhere in the world, bloggers have been arrested, jailed and assaulted for their online activism. Examples include Maikel Nabil or Mona el-Tahawey¹³ in Egypt,¹⁴ Hossein Ronaghi Maleki in Iran,¹⁵ Sofian Shurabi in Tunisia,¹⁶ Ahmad Abu Khair¹⁷ in Syria, Jamal Abu Rihan from Palestine,¹⁸ Tarek Mameri¹⁹ in Algeria and Nabeel Rajab from Bahrain²⁰ to mention just a few.

In Conclusion

Overall, the positive role that social media plays in activism through enhanced, networked communication cannot be ignored. The tripling of the number of Facebook users in the Arab world in combination with the fact that many users have indicated using social media to contribute to civic and political activities indicates its importance in relation to the “Arab Spring” and to activism in general. However, truly challenging deeply rooted inequalities will require more than just “good communication”. Social media tools can be supportive, but they can never cause revolutions to happen. The spirit, strength and perseverance of people united in strategic visible action remains crucial.

Activism – in whatever shape it takes – will always come with risks. The more activists organize over social media, the more equipped and “creative” those with a stake in maintaining the status quo will become in monitoring, suppressing and undermining this form of activism. This dynamic reality necessitates a continual and critical analysis by activists of developments in social media, together with an investment in strategies to diminish the risks as much as possible.

13 http://www.huffingtonpost.com/courtney-c-radsch/revolution-women_b_1235603.html

14 <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/04/2011411135325204241.html>

15 <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2012/06/07/jailed-iranian-blogger-begins-dry-hunger-strike/>

16 <http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=53746>

17 <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/technology/2011/02/ahmad-abu-khair-syria-blogger-jailed-social-media-middle-east.html>

18 <http://www.jpost.com/MiddleEast/Article.aspx?id=270600>

19 http://www.yourmiddleeast.com/news/algerian-blogger-goes-to-jail_7731

20 <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/08/201281612159346276.html>



“Everyone Has the Power to Make a Difference”

by Isabelle Geuskens

Gregory Kennedy-Salemi and Stuart Jolley are the driving force behind Peace Comics and Peace Is The Way Films, which made its debut this summer with the comic book and film *The Secret of the Five Powers*. Greg and Stu are currently working on a graphic novel, which will be released in early 2013. Inspired by their creative take on peace activism, the WPP interviewed Greg, who spoke passionately about the importance of involving the youth in peacebuilding and the need for peace movements to get on board the social-media train and other digital developments to make sure they are reaching out to the younger generations.

WPP: How did you become involved in peace activism?

Greg: My social activism stems from my mother and grandmother. My grandmother knew Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. personally and used to cook for him when he came to Chicago. My grandparents and mother strongly subscribed to his idea of nonviolent social change; they saw it as the only way forward for people. My activist seeds were planted back then.

During my youth, I volunteered for the Jane Adams Hull House, working with the homeless as a volunteer cook. This experience really taught me a lot: it made me realize I wanted to make a difference. At one stage I joined the board of the organization, but soon realized this did not make me happy because at that level, politics started kicking in.

As I was becoming a young man, I became influenced by the American dream of ‘leading the good life’. This led me to take on a high-end IT job, which meant making good money, having a nice house, a car... Yet, though I had ‘made it’, all this somehow did not feel very satisfying. Especially when I started to realize that the road ahead only involved making more money.

So I decided to try a different road, and went back to university, where I took peace classes. My time at DePaul

University introduced me to the work of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FoR USA) and their book *Peace is the Way: Writings on Nonviolence* by Walter Wink. I started reading about A.J. Muste, Dorothy Day, Alfred Hassler, Thich Nhat Hanh, and all these other people I had never learned about in high school. From then on, my whole outlook on life changed. My classes confronted me with the history of the United States, and all that has been done and is still being done in the name of freedom and democracy – acts that do not at all reflect those values.

The classes also opened my eyes to the power of the teacher who can engage students, and through that is watering the seeds of compassion and open minds. I really began to value teachers and educators who work with the knowledge of the students and who teach in a Socratic and participatory manner, instead of top-down.

One of my professors always said to us: ‘It doesn’t matter what you do, just realize that you do not want to be the person complaining about the world and not doing anything. Either you do something; or you shut up. Whatever you choose to do is okay, as long as your conversation is in line with your action.’

This made me reflect: Am I going to continue being the corporate guy, or will I choose a completely different path? At the same time, the company I was working for went through a big financial crisis. The stock price crashed. Overnight, people – including the staff – were losing lots of money. Many colleagues moved on to a new company and the division I worked for was disbanded. I realized I did not want to move on to another computer company. Deep down I knew I didn’t want to be part of this world anymore, so I decided to take time out to find out what I was going to do next. I was in my mid-thirties, my relationship with my ex-wife had just ended, and all my friends had high-flying careers. Meanwhile I was thinking about becoming an activist – many thought I was crazy!





Gregory Kennedy-Salemi (©Gregory Kennedy-Salemi)

WPP: So you were sure of what you no longer wanted and you had begun to realize what really mattered to you. How did you arrive at doing what you really wanted to do?

On behalf of DePaul University, I ended up going to Geneva to attend a two-week UN conference on indigenous populations. I got to meet so many interesting people from different parts of the world, including a lot of young people. I also ran into someone who connected me to the Austrian Fellowship of Reconciliation (FoR Austria) and ended up sending my CV to them, which landed me a volunteer position.

This meant I was suddenly able to meet with all those people I had read about at university – people like Hildegard Goss-Mayr, Adolfo Perez Esquivel, Mairead Maguire... FoR Austria also gave me a lot of freedom to design and develop my own ideas. I started working as an IT volunteer and soon started working with young people. This really was an empowering experience.

For me, all this was a sign that I had chosen the right direction. It also reminded me of an important lesson from my mother: ‘Always seek out the people who are inspiring and

who do positive things. If you seek them out, they will seek you out!’

WPP: After stepping out of the corporate world, what was your first impression of the peace movement?

Working for FoR Austria, I also learned about the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, IFOR¹. Knowing the history of the civil-rights movement – which for a substantial part was a student movement – I was really surprised when I discovered that IFOR did not have a youth department back then. I noticed that the average age of its members was quite high – while the history of nonviolent activism shows the crucial contributions being made by young people.

I wondered what was going on. IFOR has such an incredibly rich history, and great peace work has been done, but somehow the organization was struggling to convey this to the younger generations. Looking through my IT spectacles at the IFOR website during that period, I found it outdated, which I realized was off-putting to the younger generations. A simple thing like a website will impact how your organization is perceived – people can literally be turned off in a few seconds.

I was running my nonviolence workshops for young people in Austria at the time, and I decided to use that opportunity to ask my trainees for input on what peace movements should do to engage young people. Social media was not yet big at that time, though YouTube was. The young people in my workshops pointed out that in order to reach young people, good videos and an attractive website are crucial. I noticed these young people really cared – they had this hunger to do something, to have a more meaningful learning experience and to be more empowered. So I started to develop and integrate media in my nonviolence trainings.

WPP: What were some of the challenges that you met along the way?

My biggest challenge was that I met an old guard within the peace movement that was rather resistant to change and new technology. I tried to convince them by explaining that you would need to upgrade your digital image and your communication strategy if you wanted to reach a broader audience. And that this aspect would only become

¹ IFOR is the umbrella organization of which FoR Austria is a member. IFOR currently has currently 70 member organizations worldwide.

more important in the future. I think some of the older activists were unwilling because the new techniques made them feel uncomfortable – they were unfamiliar with them and did not see their value: ‘Things were always done in a certain way, so why change that?’ Though I want to stress here that I also met older activists who were very supportive towards what I was doing.

Of course there are risks with new IT tools – but it is important to realize that in the end, everything is just a tool – e.g. a hammer can be used to build houses but also to knock someone’s head in... If IT is used responsibly, it can be a powerful tool to engage young people in nonviolent social change. In this regard, it is interesting to consider how Thich Nhat Hanh looks at technology: he sees it as a *dharma* tool and finds it important to empower his young monastics to use it.

Also at the roots of resistance to change, is ego. A fear of the unknown combined with ego often results in an unwillingness to be open to new ideas, which in the end can undermine the sustainability of activism and the entire organization. I have seen this in many activist organizations, with its leadership structures often predominantly filled by men – in many cases: older men. These structures are often similar to what I have witnessed in corporate America. For me, such structures contradict the core values and message of activism, which is equality – including gender equality. This really needs to change. You need a diverse leadership that is not afraid to be challenged.

WPP: Can you share a bit more on your educational projects with young people?

I work together with Stuart Jolley, who had worked with the BBC before and has a lot of media experience. Together we further experimented with the idea of integrating media in nonviolence workshops. We tested our workshops for one year, telling our students that we were trying out something new and not sure whether it would work. We consistently asked them for feedback and recommendations for improvement. And they loved it! Never before were they involved in an education program in such a participatory manner. During these trainings, we covered social justice, gender equality and environmental issues, as well as filming and editing skills. This meant that the students could create their own messages, which really engaged them – resulting in at least 150 young people producing their own films!

It is important to mention here that we learned during this project that our students watch an average of 40 online



Stuart Jolley (©Stuart Jolley)



videos a week. So working through film is really the way to reach and engage young people. Look at the Kony film – though the film did not reflect the actual situation very well, it did show the power of a good video. It proves that social media is crucial for reaching the younger generations, and that as a peace movement we need to reach, support and encourage our young people also through these media.

Later the teachers approached us and mentioned they had noticed the changes in their students. They also shared how hard it was for them to do something similar within the current education system, which does not provide much room for this kind of learning.

As a result of our media work, other organizations started approaching us, such as the Jane Goodall Institute. Working with Jane, we learned a lot about her youth program ‘Roots and Shoots’, which really is mind-blowing! During the 1990s, the Jane Goodall Institute in Africa did not have a youth program. They were primarily an animal-protection organization. One day a group of teenagers went to Jane’s house in Dar el Salaam and asked her whether she could start up a youth program. She listened to their ideas and told them she would support them and provide her

guidance, though they would have to be the ones to carry it out. Although the Board initially objected to the plans – they didn't feel this was part of the organization's mandate – Jane stood her ground and made sure the youth program was established. Now 'Roots and Shoots' consists of 130,000 young people in over 120 countries. We have met several of them, and they are amazing – they design and run their own projects, with sustainability built into each initiative. This is really an inspiring example of what the youth is able to do when given the trust and the space!

WPP: You also use very creative methods to engage young people – can you tell a bit more about your recent project, the comic book and film?

One of the projects we are currently working on is a comic book and an animated film on the peace work of Thich Nhat Hanh, Sister Chan Khong, and Alfred Hassler during the Vietnam War. We got inspired to make this comic book when Alfred's daughter Laura showed us a comic book made about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Montgomery Bus Boycott by FoR USA during the 1950s. Her father was the driving force behind this initiative, as he wanted to make sure that the story behind Dr. King's nonviolent activism would be accessible for a broader audience. This comic book is still very relevant today, as it was recently translated into Arabic and disseminated by young students during the nonviolent protests in Egypt. This really shows the power of a simple idea!

A more elaborate graphic novel will be ready for publishing in mid-2013, and the film will soon be screened at different film festivals. Through all these initiatives, we want to inspire as many people as possible, spreading the message that everyone has the power to make a difference!

Links

- www.peaceisthewayfilms.com

The Secret of the 5 Powers. Comic-book: 48 pages in full color (currently available in English only); volume-discount pricing and digital download are available. Graphic novel: 128 pages in full color (to be released in early 2013). 20% of all proceeds from the sales of comic books, graphic novels, ebooks, organic cotton film t-shirts and future DVDs will be divided evenly and donated to:

- 1) The Plum Village Community (<https://www.plumvillage.org>) and
- 2) Musicians Without Borders (<https://www.musicianswithoutborders.org/nl>).

- www.rootsandshoots.org

The Roots & Shoots program of the Jane Goodall Institute is about making positive change happen – for people, for animals and for the environment. With tens of thousands of young people in more than 120 countries, the Roots & Shoots network connects young people of all ages who share a desire to create a better world. Young people identify problems in their communities and take action. Through service projects, youth-led campaigns and an interactive website, Roots & Shoots members are making a difference across the globe.



Countering the Militarisation of Youth

A new area of work for War Resisters' International

by *Andreas Speck*

In Europe, and to some degree on a global level, there are presently two trends which both contribute to an increase in the militarisation of youth. The first trend is the end (or, more exactly, the suspension) of conscription in most European countries since the 1990s. In 2011, Germany, one of the last major military and economic powers in Europe which still maintained conscription, suspended conscription. The second trend is one of an increasing “normalisation of war”. Since the war in the Balkans, but even more so since 9/11 and the announcement of the “war on terror”, the political use of military force has increased – war is no longer seen as a failure of politics, but as one of the tools of politics. This led to a radical restructuring of military forces, oriented towards mobility and military intervention. But it also brought with it new justifications for the use of military force: first “humanitarian intervention” (Yugoslavia, Somalia), then the “war on terror” (Afghanistan, Iraq) and the “responsibility to protect” (Libya). Both trends reinforce each other, and one outcome is the increased militarisation of youth from an early age on.

War Resisters' International's “*Right to Refuse to Kill*” programme focuses on military recruitment, conscientious objection to military service, and resistance by military personnel (be it conscientious objection, desertion, or going AWOL). It is therefore important that we respond to shifts in military recruitment – away from conscription and towards “voluntary” recruitment – and address the challenges this poses for an antimilitarist movement. Paradoxically, the end of forced recruitment through conscription leads, in some respects, to **increased** militarisation, as the military has to recruit personnel and has to justify its present and future wars. The militarisation of society – and especially of youth – is one prerequisite for military recruitment and war. Consequently, War Resisters' International is now broadening the scope of its work on the *Right to Refuse to Kill* to include work against the militarisation of youth, and our international study conference in Darmstadt, Germany, from 8-10 June 2012 will be an important milestone in developing this work.

The end of conscription?

The end of conscription has long been one of the objectives of War Resisters' International and other antimilitarist organisations, and rightly so. Shortly after WRI was founded, it launched a campaign and a manifesto against conscription in 1926. Now, almost 90 years later, few countries in Europe maintain conscription. After even Sweden (on 1 January 2011) and Germany (on 1 July 2011) suspended conscription, it is mainly some Scandinavian and Eastern European (former Soviet Union) countries, plus Austria, Switzerland, and Greece that still hang on to compulsory military service. But even in these countries there is a move towards professional military units based on “volunteers” for the more “serious” tasks: military interventions abroad.

So, have we won then? Yes and no. Yes, because it has become increasingly difficult for governments and the military to justify conscription. In many countries that abolished conscription, public opinion had turned against it long before it was abolished. However, this was rarely based on antimilitarism, but rather on the infringement on personal freedom caused by conscription, and an unwillingness to *personally* be part of the military, rather than opposition to military action in itself. In fact, in most countries, it was the military that pushed for an end to conscription as part of a drive to professionalise the military. Conscription was seen rather as a burden than as an advantage, for a lean, mobile, and professional military, ready to engage in military operations all over the globe.

With the end of conscription, the Armed Forces face the challenge of recruitment. The presence of the Armed Forces in the public sphere – through advertising on TV, public billboards, magazines and newspapers, but also through use of public space for military parades and ceremonies – and especially the presence of Armed Forces in educational institutions – schools, colleges and universities – is crucial for the military to create a culture and environment favourable to recruitment.



The WRI conference in Darmstadt (© WRI)



The normalisation of war

Before the end of the Cold War, war was commonly seen as a failure of politics. However, this has changed in the last two decades. The wars that accompanied the breakup of Yugoslavia have been used to justify military intervention as “humanitarian interventions”. Following the genocide in Rwanda, the concept of the “*responsibility to protect*”¹ was developed, which amounts to little more than a thinly disguised justification for war.

In parallel, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), originally set up with the alleged purpose to defend the “democratic West” against the Soviet Bloc, refocused its attention to military operations “out-of-area”, which meant outside of the territory of the NATO member states. NATO’s intervention in the wars in Yugoslavia – from Bosnia to the war against Serbia and “peacekeeping” in Kosovo – was the first step of the transformation of NATO. With the European Union following suit – and later taking over NATO’s role in Bosnia – EU member states that were officially “non-aligned” (such as Ireland, Sweden, Finland, among others) were also dragged (or joined happily) into this militarisation.

The “war on terror” provided the backdrop for the next step in the normalisation of war. For the first time in history, NATO invoked article 5 of its treaty – a situation of collective defence – following the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Today, NATO maintains military activity in a variety of places: among others in **Afghanistan** since 2003 with presently about 129,000 soldiers under NATO’s command, in **Kosovo** since 1999 with today about 5,500 soldiers, in the **Mediterranean sea** since October 2001 as part of *Operation Active Endeavour*.² The NATO-led bombing of **Libya** last year “to protect civilians” was a new “highlight” in this normalisation of war.

While this development might not seem very dramatic from a US, British, or French perspective – countries that are somewhat used to conduct military interventions globally (in the case of France and Britain, with a focus on former or present colonies) – it has meant a very dramatic change for most European countries, which have not been involved in combat operations since the end of World War II. Today, all EU member states with the exception of Cyprus are involved in the war in Afghanistan, and many are involved in other “robust peacekeeping” operations, such as in Lebanon, Congo, Bosnia, etc.

Militarisation

The normalisation of war would not have been possible without massive militarisation of civilian society and space, especially in those countries not normally used to seeing “their boys” (and it’s still mostly boys) killing and being killed abroad. The objectives of this process are two-fold: creating acceptance for war within society (supporting “our boys”), and creating a climate favourable to recruitment, with the aim to recruit sufficient numbers of soldiers to maintain the capability for military operations.

Militarisation of schools

For example, the UK Ministry of Defence youth policy states: “The MOD is engaged in curricular activities as a further way to reach out to Youth in support of the overall MOD Youth Policy. In particular it offers unique and subtle ways of enhancing understanding of the Armed Forces within wider society, particularly of the values, culture, traditions and ethos which are essential to maintaining military effectiveness. More directly, it offers opportunities to raise public awareness and empathy with the Armed Forces and finally, it is a further, powerful tool for facilitating recruitment especially if the skills developed through curricular activities have a direct bearing on military requirements.” (emphasis added)³ This is also very clearly stated in the “Armed Forces Overarching Personnel Strategy”: “We will need, in particular, to increase efforts to explain the role and requirement for the Services to society as a whole and to sow the seeds for our future growth by establishing our links with parents, teachers, community leaders and other ‘gatekeepers’. We will want to consider our approach to schools, AFCOs (Armed Forces Career Offices) and public military events to enhance our recruiting outcomes.”⁴

It is therefore no surprise that in February 2007, the head of army recruitment strategy, Colonel David Allfrey, told The New Statesman: “Our new model is about raising awareness, and that takes a ten-year span. It starts with a seven-year-old boy seeing a parachutist at an air show and thinking, ‘That looks great.’ From then on the army is trying to build interest by drip, drip, drip.”

This is echoed in the approach of the German Bundeswehr. As Michael Schulze von Glaßer writes in *The Broken Rifle* No 88: “If young people can’t be convinced to take up arms themselves, then at least they should be convinced of the need for military interventions: the military leadership and the government want to turn the Bundeswehr into an actor operating globally, and aim long-term for the creation of stable political support within the population. Therefore, they focus their agitation on (still easily persuadable) young

people – tomorrow’s voters. And (former) Defence Minister Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg (CSU) knows where to find the young people: ‘the school is the right place to reach young people.’”

Instrumentalisation of veterans and Armed Forces Day

The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have not been popular, and counter-measures had to be taken to shore up support for “our boys”. In Britain, these came partly in the form of a newly introduced “Armed Forces Day”, which began as “Veterans Day” in 2006, and is celebrated as “Armed Forces Day” since 2009, “to raise awareness and appreciation for those on active duty”, or, as the Ministry of Defence writes in a press release, “it allows the nation to show their support for the men and women who make up the Armed Forces community, from serving troops to Service families, veterans and cadets”.⁵

Remembrance (or Armistice) Day – originally introduced to remember the victims of World War I – is also increasingly turned into a propaganda event for war. In November 2010, several UK veterans wrote in an open letter: “A day that should be about peace and remembrance is turned into a month-long drum roll of support for current wars. This year’s campaign has been launched with showbiz hype. The true horror and futility of war is forgotten and ignored. The public are being urged to wear a poppy in support of “our Heroes”. There is nothing heroic about being blown up in a vehicle. There is nothing heroic about being shot in an ambush and there is nothing heroic about fighting in an unnecessary conflict.”⁶

These are only two examples where and how militarisation works. However, militarisation is a process that encompasses all aspects of our lives, and is difficult to avoid.

Countering the Militarisation of Youth

Luckily, this militarisation is not unchallenged. When War Resisters’ International initially discussed how to respond to the challenge of changes in military recruitment, we were encouraged by the long and inspiring history of counter-recruitment work in the USA. However, it quickly became clear that recruitment itself is only the tip of the iceberg – it is only the potential end result of the ongoing ‘drip, drip, drip’ that Colonel David Allfrey referred to. Militarisation does not only lead to an environment favourable to recruitment, it is also needed to prepare and maintain the public support of the “home front” for war and the military. Countering this militarisation is therefore not only part of counter-recruitment work, but is the core of antimilitarism.



There are many inspiring examples of work to counter the militarisation of youth. Several schools in Germany have now declared themselves “military free”, denying the Bundeswehr access to the schools and not participating in events organised by the military. In the US, limiting recruiter access to high schools and universities has been one of the main “battlegrounds” between the military and the counter-recruitment movement.

But schools and universities are only one example. Queers are countering the military’s outreach and recruitment attempts within the queer community, for example through participation in gay pride events, and NGOs are fighting the recruitment of under eighteens through lobbying at different levels.

The role of War Resisters’ International as an international pacifist and antimilitarist network is mainly to foster debate, to facilitate the exchange of experiences, and to strengthen the networking of antimilitarists globally working against the militarisation of youth. The international study conference in Darmstadt in June is hopefully an inspiring first step.



»» Published first by War Resisters International in *The Broken Rifle*, May 2012, No. 92

Notes

- 1 The Responsibility to Protect. Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, International Development Research Centre, Ottawa, 2001, <http://responsibilitytoprotect.org/ICISS%20Report.pdf>, accessed 23 May 2012
- 2 NATO: NATO operations and missions, Last updated: 29-Apr-2012 16:09, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_52060.htm?, accessed 23 May 2012
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Heaven on Earth

by Merle Gosewinkel

Activism and social change is very often driven by the energy of younger generations who question the existing systems and hold different ideas about how society should be.

In those cases in which social change has taken place, in which dictators were overthrown and democratic forces came into power – what happened to the young activists who were demonstrating on the streets? How did they experience the process of rebuilding their society? Could they still play a part in the new order after the crowds had left the streets and squares they had filled?

For this article, the WPP interviewed Raul Socrates ('Soc') Banzuela from the Philippines. Soc has worked for peace and justice in his country for almost three decades. After the fall of the Marcos regime in 1986, he has remained active in the democratic developments of his country, serving as the national coordinator of Pambansang Kilusan ng mga Samahang Magsasaka (PAKISAMA), a national confederation of farmers, fishers, and rural women committed to implementing sustainable agrarian reform and rural development. He is also the president of Action for Peace and Justice (AKKAPKA), a nonviolent movement founded in 1984.

In his interview with the WPP, he reflects on his own experiences of becoming involved in the political developments in the Philippines as a young activist, and he also talks about the current developments in the peace and activist movement – both in the Philippines and abroad.

Background

Soc starts by sharing some background on the People Power Revolution.

"In the Philippines in 1983, Ninoy Aquino, the main democratic opposition leader and potential successor of President Marcos, was killed upon returning home from exile in the United States. This event was an important milestone, with thousands of people visiting the church

*where the wake for Ninoy Aquino was held. His funeral march drew two million people onto the streets of Manila, developing into a series of mass demonstrations in the Philippines. After more than 20 years of dictatorship, this marked the beginning of the **People Power Movement**. It took three more years of struggle before finally Marcos was ousted in 1986."*

One of the activists during those times was Soc himself, then a young man of 22 years. When asked why he became active in the People Power Movement as a young man, Soc explains that a combination of different factors led to his involvement in the political fight for freedom. One important reason for his involvement was the dictatorship itself, with Marcos' authoritarian system leading to the suppression of basic freedoms of expression, serious human-rights violations including extrajudicial killings, widespread misery due to unjust agrarian relations, and massive corruption in his country.

At the time, Soc was involved in a conscientization program within his Jesuit University, which included academic discussions and extracurricular involvement in sociopolitical issues. Before becoming active in the People Power Movement, he had already been involved in several organizations working on social-justice issues. One was *Youth for the Advancement of Faith and Justice* (YAFJ), a student organization dedicated to social change. Another was an underground political party – the Partido Demokratiko-Sosyalita ng Pilipinas (PDSP) – which organized the first indoor rallies and public march of Catholic students in Metro Manila to expose the ills of Marcos' dictatorship. Soc continues:

*"After the revolution in 1986, the dictator and his close circle were removed from their positions, but it was still a long time before the Philippines successfully established democratic structures. In 2001, the second nonviolent revolution, which the people called **People Power 2**, ousted the corrupt administration of Joseph Estrada, the first elected president after the Marcos dictatorship. After this*



22nd Anniversary of People Power, call for the nonviolent ouster of the corrupt GMA Administration. Two days after, the President (Arroyo) declared a State of Emergency. © Raul Socrates Banzuela)



second revolution, several major nonviolent mass actions continued to influence the Philippines' rebuilding of social and political society. Those included the victory of the Sumilao farmers, a group of landless farmers who won their land back during a case against the state by means of a nonviolent struggle that took 20 years, and the 2010 electoral victory of People Power, which ended the corrupt nine-year Arroyo presidency."

Soc tells of how all this became possible because the idea of nonviolent *people power* had been firmly planted in 1986. That historic moment continued to inspire people, and especially the young: all those events involved the widespread participation of young people. The youth had already played an important role during the 1986 People Power Movement by challenging the repressive Marcos regime and giving a collective voice to the people on the ground through various acts of defiance, such as organizing and mobilizing students, farmers, laborers, and urban poor groups around their respective needs and problems under the dictatorial system.

The combination of these struggles and catalytic events such as the assassination of Ninoy Aquino in 1983 and the elections in 1984 and 1985 eventually led to the 1986 People Power Revolution. The uprising of the people was strengthened through the use of active nonviolence dur-

ing the struggle, which IFOR had introduced in 1984 as a systematic method to end dictatorship and state violence. As Soc recalls, it was not so much the church and the opposition leaders who called for People Power, but rather the youth who largely filled the streets.

Very often in uprisings that take place around the world, when the days of revolution are over and the old regime has been removed, the people who were on the streets – often the young generation – will simply vanish from the scene. The new system, built on their contributions, rarely rewards young people with an important role in the new political structures. When asked about the situation following the People Power Revolution in the Philippines, Soc answers: "The People Power Revolution in 1986 was a historic moment that changed the course of the country and set the tone for how both individual citizens and the government should conduct themselves in the succeeding years. Some of the youth who went on the streets did indeed shift careers and joined the new government or civil society." He says that some of his old companions are now in top positions, adding that "the overwhelming majority continued with their life and work, but would always cherish those days in the streets that stopped the tanks and ended two-decades of Marcos' rule."

Soc is still in contact with some of his fellow activists from the time of the People Power Revolution, the people with whom he had formed the nonviolent movement Action for Peace and Justice (AKKAPKA) in 1984. Until now, AKKAPKA continues to provide training courses on active nonviolence. Some of the AKKAPKA board members are friends from back then, with whom he still meets monthly. At a recent public event, Soc met some friends he knew from the revolutionary days whom he had not seen for a long time. He said he enjoyed looking back at the time when they were all still young, idealistic, pure, and had the privilege of choosing to offer their life for their motherland, for social justice, for what they believed in.

The New Generation of Activists

With an eye to current revolutionary movements, Soc points out that the contexts in which young people find themselves today are very different from the way things were when the Philippine youth were mobilizing against Marcos. “Looking at Philippine society today, the youth has more space for activism and at least a certain degree of guaranteed freedoms of expression through the media. They also stand to benefit from the rise of a strong civil society sector as well as the fact that some of the former activists are now in government.”

Considering the freer political context and the influence of the success of the nonviolent activism of the People Power Revolution, there are perhaps very few circles that would even consider the option of armed struggle in the Philippines these days. Surely in the Philippine context and perhaps even internationally when looking at the Arab Spring, Soc believes that more and more young activists have been learning about active nonviolence (ANV) as an effective strategy to fight injustice. He also points out that a lot of the information on ANV that is available today was unavailable during the time of the People Power Revolution, adding: “The way young activists organize themselves today through texting, Facebook, Twitter, email, and even cell phones for the purpose of campaigning was simply not available to me and my fellow young activists.”

Another difference that Soc sees with 30 years ago, is that back then, probably due to the “cold war”, the campaigns were much more “ideologically laden”. In contrast, many of the alliances and campaigns of today are formed in a more practical way, largely based on the agreement of engaging in a nonviolent form of struggle.

Nevertheless, several of the social-justice issues from the past remain pressing problems in the Philippines today.

Land issues are far from being resolved, for example. “In that sense, the struggle is still the same,” he concludes, “though the activism itself has become more sensitive towards issues such as gender, ethnicity and age during the last 20 years. He sees that – aided with new technology and equipped with more information and confidence – nonviolent campaigns are becoming more successful than before.

In terms of gender, Soc shared that gender sensitivity only became recognized as an issue in the Philippines in the early 1990s. And though he sees a gradual improvement in how the peace movement has taken on the issue of gender over the last two decades, he admits it remains a big challenge to most activist organizations, including his own. During the People Power Revolution, gender was not discussed or consciously taken into consideration, he says. But on further reflection, he adds that two prominent female figures had unleashed their liberating feminine qualities on the struggle: Cory Aquino – the wife of Ninoy Aquino – and Mother Mary.

Soc is convinced that democracy could not have been won had an icon completely opposite to the dominant and imposing personality of the Marcos dictatorship not risen to the occasion. By speaking to the crowds softly but firmly about the truth of the country’s state, and by strongly advocating for nonviolence, Cory Aquino – the wife of the slain opposition leader – won the hearts and minds of millions of people. She became the rallying figure of the Filipino people against the dictatorship, drawing millions – both women and men – to the streets to end the dictatorship. She eventually became country’s president and ushered in its transition to democracy.

Mother Mary was an important source of spiritual energy, giving courage to hundreds of thousands of Catholics, with rosaries in their hands, to face the tanks and soldiers of the Marcos regime. As Soc puts it, “400 years of Catholic Christianity unleashed its liberating force during that historic four-day revolution. The EDSA Shrine bears witness to this today, with its towering statue of Mother Mary highlighting Manila’s EDSA Highway – the road that millions of people filled during the peaceful marches to freedom.” The shrine continues to remind people every day of that moment when the people in the Philippines tasted what Soc describes as “heaven on earth: the economy of sharing, the politics of solidarity and justice, the culture of pluralism and respect of diversity, and the theology of liberation.”



ICTs

A double-edged sword for Women Human Rights Defenders

by Susan Tolmay

Understanding the inherent contradictions in using information and communication technologies (ICTs) to promote and protect women's rights is an important starting point for women human rights defenders (WHRDs) who face risks of violence and intimidation on a daily basis because of who they are and the work they do.

AWID spoke to Jennifer Radloff, Senior project coordinator at Association for Progressive Communications Women's Networking Support Programme (APC WNSP)

November 25 is International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women marking the start of the *16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence*, which runs through to December 10, Human Rights Day. As we commemorate the date of the brutal assassination of the three Mirabal sisters, political activists in the Dominican Republic, on orders of Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo – and we are reminded of the risks that many WHRDs face daily – we should consider the new forms of violence and harassment that WHRDs face through the use of ICTs, the opportunities they represent and the human rights implications.

Internet rights as human rights

In his *May 2011 report*, Frank La Rue, UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, stated that, "Indeed, the Internet has become a key means by which individuals can exercise their right to freedom of opinion and expression, as guaranteed by article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights".¹ And recently Sweden proposed that the Human Rights Council establish an expert panel on Internet and human rights. These developments are major step forward and give credence to the critical importance of the Internet as a space that enables citizens to enjoy their human rights.

ICTs have become an indispensable part of our daily lives as we work and connect through social networking such

as Facebook and Twitter; use mobile phones to talk and send SMS's (short message service). According to Jennifer Radloff, "The ubiquity of ICTs and how WHRDs use the tools means that boundaries between the online and offline world are often blurred as we use ICTs so frequently and intuitively".

But she also points out that "WHRDs are not a homogenous group and access, comfort, age, geographic location, familiarity, trust, language, resources, (dis) ability all play a part in potentially excluding those WHRDs without easy access to ICTs. In order not to unconsciously disrupt and tear the threads and experiences that bind us, we should acknowledge the limits of ICTs, as well as the built-in power dynamics. But, for our work to be effective, we need to take control of the technologies and deploy them creatively and infuse our technology practice with feminist principles in order to enhance and deepen our movement building."

WHRDs at risk

Margaret Sekaggya, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders submitted her *third report to the UN Human Rights Council*, which focused on the situation of women human rights defenders and those working on women's rights or gender issues. According to the report, women defenders are more at risk of suffering certain forms of violence and other violations than their male counterparts. "This is often due to the fact that women defenders are perceived as challenging accepted socio-cultural norms, traditions, perceptions and stereotypes about femininity, sexual orientation, and the role and status of women in society".

The Special Rapporteur's report explicitly mentions ICT as a means to convey threats of violence, but it also considers ICT-mediated violence as violations in themselves: "Threats and death threats – which may be delivered in person, by telephone, in printed pamphlets or mock obituaries and electronically via text message or e-mail – can be seen as representative of risks, but also as violations

in themselves which may significantly harm the psychological integrity of the defender, as well as possibly pre-empting an attack. These threats are directed not only at the defenders themselves but also their family members, as well as female family members of male human rights defenders.”

Using ICTs for advocacy

The opportunities and uses of ICTs for defending women’s rights are indisputable. The proliferation of social networking sites, YouTube, blogs and other information sharing spaces provide WHRDs with accessible, cost effective tools to document abuses, build evidence, raise awareness, publicise and mobilize support around women’s rights issues and the risks that women activists face.

Increasingly, mobile phones are being used to send out urgent actions and alerts and smart phones, with capacities for photographing and videoing are increasingly being used to broadcast events in real time, evidenced in the various popular uprisings and social movements that have been taking place across the globe this year. And the potential for immediate responses to life threatening situations is hugely advantageous.

Using social networking tools and email means that WHRDs are able to reach out to millions of people quickly and urgent calls to action and online petitions can effectively apply pressure on governments, large corporations and international human rights bodies. They not only amplify the voice of WHRDs and raise awareness around urgent issues and promote action, but also provide an opportunity for WHRDs to be connected with and supported by other WHRDs in different places.² The ability to stay anonymous is another advantage of using ICTs as it means that WHRDs are able to minimize risks of threats, intimidation and violence, although this is not always possible.

But there is a downside

It is becoming increasingly evident that WHRDs using ICTs for their activism and advocacy are facing challenges in both their personal and public spaces. According to Radloff, “Violence against women online is a real and frightening reality.... there are countless cases of women bloggers being threatened with violence for expressing their opinions online.” In countries with repressive governments the risks are even greater for WHRDs.

The widespread use of ICTs to defend human and women’s rights is cause for concern for repressive govern-

ments who are complicit in routinely violating these rights. Attempts by authorities to constrain WHRDs from using ICTs to their full potential take a range of forms, including interference with Internet services, use of legal restrictions, email surveillance and monitoring, computer confiscation, virus and spyware attacks as well as harassment, intimidation and reprisals. These deliberate and routine infringements on WHRDs’ online security and privacy³ affect their rights to freedom of expression and association, amongst others. The extent of these violations varies across regions.⁴

According to Radloff, “When we get online, we do so with all of our human rights intact. But these rights are often ignored or threatened and transgressed by repressive states and conservative groups... The tools that we use to communicate, share and create change with are the same tools that the state and anti-progressive forces can use to track, trace and target us. ICT tools are not neutral and were created for purposes and by people with specific agendas that are not necessarily progressive. Just as ICT tools are not neutral, the spaces we create online are embedded in the gender-power relationships that prevail offline.”

Unequal power relations and access to ICTs mean that WHRDs may not be as confident or tech savvy as they should be in order to protect themselves from some of the dangers of online activism. This has direct security implications for WHRDs who are targeted by States and fundamentalist groups, who block and filter their content. According to Radloff, “In some countries filters are loaded onto public access computers which means content which could be life-saving and life-changing are being blocked and filtered. e.g. content on safe sex, shelters for abused women and access to safe abortion. Impersonation through hacking into email or Facebook accounts means that issues of maintaining online and offline trust is breached.”

Laws governing the Internet are negotiated at various levels and in different forums and increasingly Internet rights are being discussed in spaces such as the United Nations and the Human Rights Commission. Each year the multi-stakeholder platform, the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) meets to discuss how the Internet is governed. This year APC and its allies suggested that human rights be the theme for the 2012 IGF.

It is also important that WHRDs ensure that Internet rights and women’s human rights are included in spaces



such as the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and that we lobby for this at CEDAW and Beijing Platform review processes.

Take back the Tech securely!

According to Radloff, “Women’s human rights to freedom of expression and freedom of association are constantly being affected by changes in technology and we must understand how these changes are experienced in light of sexuality, class, geographic location, race, and other axes of marginalization. WHRDs must be able to respond to these changes and continue to build their capacity to find new ways to participate in and shape these changes.”⁵

It is important for WHRDs to understand the technology and the environmental context in which they are working, and that security is impermanent. This means that it is crucial to stay up to date with changing contexts, surveillance techniques and policy responses. We need to be aware of security and change our behavior to correspond with security concerns. WHRDs need to understand online privacy and security issues and learn how to defend themselves and to be safe online, see below for some tools on how to ensure safety online⁶ and get involved in the *Take Back the Tech Campaign* as a way of learning more about ICTs and activism.

Notes

- 1 He says in relation to freedom of expression online “Any restriction must be established by law and be in accordance with international standards; must pursue legitimate grounds for restriction as set out in article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; and be proven to be necessary and proportionate,” stressed La Rue. “Expression such as child pornography, incitement to genocide, advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence and incitement to terrorism are all prohibited under international law.”
- 2 For some examples of how WHRDs are using ICTs go to <http://www.apc.org/en/node/11239/>
- 3 APC explanation of security and privacy – ‘Online security and privacy includes issues such as protecting data, protecting identity (the right to communicate free of the threat of surveillance and interception) and protecting against computer viruses. As media workers and human rights organisations around the world make increasing use of online technologies, there is a corresponding increase in the need for skills, knowledge, and tools to ensure that the use of technology is both effective and secure. This need is especially acute in the case of groups operating under repressive political conditions or in situations of conflict, where the challenge is to gather, protect and disseminate information effectively in a way, which minimises risk to activists.

The APC Internet Rights Charter states that people communicating on the internet must have the right to use tools which encode messages to ensure secure, private and anonymous communication.’

<http://www.genderit.org/glossary/term/876>

- 4 http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/hrlc/documents/student_conference2010/taraolearyhumanrightsdefendersandnewtechnologies.pdf
- 5 As one participant said at a workshop Connect Your Rights – Secure online communications training for women human rights defenders hosted by APC WNSP in partnership with Violence is not our culture (VNC) and WHRD International Coalition (workshops have been held in Asia, Africa and LAC) in response to a question whether an online community of WHRDs sharing tools and strategies around being secure online would be a good idea: “every country has their specific context surrounding online security but the fact is that all of us are at risk of being identified, and our information is vulnerable to being cracked. Online community will help us to share our situation and try to make it better with secure habits in using the Internet. We can also use it to help spread awareness of secure online activism”.
- 6 **Be safe online** – Get to know technology and find out how you can take steps to make your online experience a safer one. This link provides some tips and ideas on how you can protect your privacy while browsing and communicating online. <http://www.takebackthetech.net/be-safe>

Protecting personal data on your computer –

<http://www.takebackthetech.net/be-safe/privacy>

Password protect your computer Download a reliable anti-virus software Install a firewall on your computer Use proxies to anonymously surf the web

Web browsing – <http://www.takebackthetech.net/be-safe/browsing>

When you are looking for information over the Internet and browsing websites, information about your activity is also collected and stored. Clear your cache Clear your browsing history Clear your download history Use https everywhere (for Firefox) which encrypts your communications with a number of major websites

Emails and web mails – <http://www.takebackthetech.net/be-safe/emails>

Don’t open attachments from sources you do not trust Run an anti-virus before opening attachments Chose a secure email client such as Mozilla Thunderbird Encrypt your emails uses PGP (Pretty Good Privacy)

Online Chat – <http://www.takebackthetech.net/be-safe/online-chat>

There are a lot of ways that you can communicate “securely” using Internet Messenger services. The most common IM services are Yahoo, AIM, Google Chat and Skype. Most of them have their own clients (i.e. Yahoo Messenger).

Mobile Phones – <http://www.takebackthetech.net/be-safe/mobile-phones>

Mobile phones, especially now that even basic handsets incorporate camera and recording capabilities, are excellent tools for documenting violence and harassers. Consider password protecting your phone. Have an alternative SIM card if you feel you are being monitored by anyone. Phones are easily lost or stolen, don't keep intimate photos on your phone.

Security in a box This toolkit is designed primarily to address the growing needs of advocates in the global South, particularly human rights defenders, but the software and strategies in this toolkit are relevant to digital security in general. It has something to offer anyone who works with sensitive information. This may include vulnerable minorities, independent journalists or 'whistle-blowers', in addition to advocates working on a range of issues, from environmental justice to anti-corruption – <http://www.tacticaltech.org/securityinabox>

Digital Security and Privacy for Human Rights Defenders – This book is an introduction to the ever growing and complex world of electronic security. It raises levels of knowledge and awareness about computers and the Internet, and warns of different risks faced in the digital environment and how to deal with them. The book is written for human rights defenders, and therefore it also looks at the ways of preventing the erosion of universally guaranteed freedoms. Alongside elements of theory, it offers possible solutions to some security issues for computers and the Internet.

<https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/eseaman/>

"Strategie Online Activism: A Toolkit" was designed for and by women activists but can be used by everyone. Key chapters include: strategising and planning your online activism; creating your campaign's identity; social networking and security on the Internet. The guide provides practical and accessible step-by-step advice, while keeping a political and feminist eye. It was developed by Violence is Not our Culture (VNC) campaign and APC's women's programme (APC WNSP) – <http://www.vnc-campaigns.org/toolkit>

Danger and Opportunity – ICTs and women human rights defenders

<http://www.genderit.org/newsletter/danger-and-opportunity-icts-and-womens-human-rights-defenders>

Policy Advocacy Get involved in local, national and international policy advocacy initiatives that lobby legislators to ensure the Internet is regulated in ways that as a WHRD do not compromise our right to freedom of expression, association and assembly. Find out more about gender and ICT policy advocacy – A start is www.genderit.org

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From Local to Global and Back Again

Graffiti Revolution

by *Isabelle Geuskens*

The WPP met with Netherlands-based graffiti artist Ronald Duikersloot, the initiator behind *Graffiti Revolution*, a Facebook platform as a message of support to the people standing up for their rights in the Middle East and North Africa.

WPP: Could you tell me a bit more about your project Graffiti Revolution? How did it all start?

Ronald: “It all started around the beginning of the Arab Spring, in late 2010. I felt that I, too, needed to do something, through my art. I had already been doing graffiti as a kid, and I later on went to study graphic design. Six years ago, I started my company, Spray-Art, through which I make murals for companies, festivals, and cultural-exchange projects. I had just returned from one of my trips through South America when the Arab Spring started. In South America I had seen a lot of street art with strong messages – much more so than over here in Western Europe. I reflected on what I could do. Through my travels I had built up an international network of graffiti activists based in Eastern Europe, France, Argentina, Chile, Spain. I realized this network could be a resource for an international graffiti campaign in support of what was going on. My original idea was to have graffiti artists from different cities in the world using the same symbol – the fist – as a sign of solidarity and power of the people. This symbol was turned into a stencil so that people could use it everywhere, as well as make stickers and prints of it.

“The idea behind this was that one strong symbol popping up in cities worldwide was more likely to be picked up by media. So starting with the graffiti crews on the ground, the message of solidarity could then spread and reach a broader audience in the end. Guerilla actions generate effect when they are recorded and picked up by others – then it can create a viral.”

Were all of the artists in your network politically active or interested in politics?

“Not really. Though some of the artists in the network were already involved in making political work, many were not. However, there was clearly a desire, shared by all, to do something meaningful.

“One big challenge that came up during the project was that the symbol wasn’t really being picked up; people were using their own revolutionary expressions. So then I decided to drop the original concept and instead to go with the flow. This resulted in the Facebook platform *Graffiti Revolution*, where people can post their graffiti art about the Arab Spring. It shows a collection of murals made by activists in different parts of the world, mainly from Eastern Europe, Russia, South America and North Africa. It is powerful to generate discussion through art and images – images really are stronger than words – since people can grasp what you are trying to say across different languages. From graffiti on the walls via pictures on Facebook and blogs, the offline activism could turn into online activism.

“However, I still find it important to make statements in my direct community. For example, some of my graffiti art about the Arab Spring was shown in a Catholic Church in the city center of Haarlem. The choice of this location – showing images of the Arab Spring in a Western Catholic Church – provoked some strong opinions and discussion. Quite a number of churchgoers were upset, though there were also many who loved it. In any case, it managed to achieve its goal: to bring the Arab Spring closer to people’s realities over here.

“I am often disturbed by mainstream media, which is quite one-sided in its portrayals of what is going on in the world. People get numb; they get tired hearing on the news that another ten people died in Syria. So I am always thinking about ways to bring it closer to home, so that people over here can ‘feel’ what is going on.”



Graffiti artists during a workshop on political spray art (© Ronald Duikersloot)



Where does this come from, this urge to do what you do and shake people up?

“I sometimes ask myself why I have this urge to make statements all the time. Often my work contains such clear statements that it simply doesn’t sell – though galleries like it. Somehow I just always end up making art that is all about confronting and evoking reactions. But in the end, that is what street art is about: it’s literally in your face, it forces you to think when you see it, it does not shy away from confrontation. And I want to do something: I want to create awareness. So for me this provides the perfect medium. I guess it is just who I am. I want to make a difference. It is not always easy; at times I can feel a bit misunderstood because of it. But in the end, I really cannot complain – at least I can live in freedom and safety while doing this.”

What do you find most challenging?

“A big challenge these days is trying to mobilize people. That was also something I noticed with my own project. Part of the reason is that there are already so many projects. Also, those people who you manage to reach are often the people who are already open-minded. They don’t need to be convinced anymore... I think it’s important to try to reach a broader audience, which is why I want to have my work on the streets and in public spaces as

much as possible – outside of art galleries. Apathy can be a problem in Western society, but I have to say that overall I rarely get cynical responses. Instead I mainly get complete support or complete resistance towards what I do. Another challenge is that although we might solve a situation over here, things may suddenly go wrong over there. And that’s because there is something fundamentally wrong with our entire system. And this is a much harder problem to crack!”

Is there art that you refuse to be featured on Graffiti Revolution?

“Basically, for myself there are few ‘no-go’ topics, but that is me personally, and in the end the project is larger than me. For example, there are also images on Graffiti Revolution that were put up by pro-Mubarak supporters. Why people decide to put this up – whether they do it because they are afraid, or whether they truly stand for it – I do not know, but what it does, is generate discussion. And that is what it’s about – that there is freedom and space for critical discussion.”

Are there also women graffiti artists involved? And do gender issues come up – for example do people spray about issues related to gender injustice?

“Unfortunately right now there are only a few women spray artists active on Graffiti Revolution. Women seem to choose different means to express themselves in their activism. Also, gender issues don’t really feature. But I think it is just a matter of time before women will also get on board. So much is moving right now in these societies. I think it’s important for women to raise their voices so that the people can see them speaking as leaders for their country.”

And what’s next?

“For the longer term, it would be wonderful to have a documentary maker record the Graffiti Revolution project, as the story behind it will really come to life when people can see it visualized. I would also like to work more on location – bringing together graffiti artists or even just local kids from different places and engaging with them in a joint project. Recently, there was an annual graffiti event in the Netherlands. They adopted the Graffiti Revolution project, with more than 40 people making murals about the Arab Spring. We made pictures of them and mailed them to the Middle East, so that people over there can see we are following what’s going on and trying to find a way to provide support from here.

“In any case, I don’t really see myself working full-time behind a desk. But it’s also not in my character to go out on the barricades – I guess it’s just not in my nature to be a leader, although some people might disagree with that. For me, it is important that I can continue contributing my part through my creativity. Who knows where it will lead? One thing is for sure: Let’s fight this struggle!”

➤➤ For more information about Graffiti Revolution, go to:
Facebook/GraffitiRevolution



Political spray art (© Ronald Duikersloot)



Graffiti revolution banner
(© Ronald Duikersloot)



Youth in International Policy

by Lise Paaskesen

Though the United Nations (UN) Division for Social Policy and Development¹ defines youth as the period between the ages of 15 and 24, the UN Security Council lacks a specific definition of that word. The Security Council only defines the age group up to 18 as children. It is interesting that none of the UN entities define adulthood as pertaining to a specific age group.

The role that youth can play in the development of society was officially recognized for the first time in the UN General Assembly on December 7, 1965. The resulting Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples reads:²

“Convinced furthermore that the education of the young and exchanges of young people and of ideas in a spirit of peace, mutual respect and understanding between peoples can help to improve international relations and to strengthen peace and security”

Since 1970, the UN Youth Delegates Program has been operating with the aim to increase youth participation on the international policy level by:³

- enhancing awareness of the global situation of youth and increasing recognition of their rights and aspirations
- promoting national youth policies, programs and coordinating mechanisms as integral parts of social and

economic development, in cooperation with both governmental and non-governmental organizations

- strengthening the participation of youth in decision-making processes at all levels in order to increase their contribution to national development and international cooperation
- facilitating the coordination of the UN system’s youth-related activities by leading the Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development.

The Youth Delegates Program aims to promote and increase young people’s participation at the international level. A young person is elected in each of the participating countries with the support of the national government. The elected youth are given a voice in UN General Assemblies. Youth Delegates also encourage other young people to become involved in national decision-making processes by organizing national events, adjacent to the international meetings of the UN.

In 1985, the UN celebrated the first International Year of Youth revolving around the theme of “Participation, Development and Peace”. Ten years later, in 1995, the UN General Assembly adopted the World Programme of Action for Youth, which set a policy framework and guidelines for national action and international support with the aim of improving the situation of young people worldwide.

On December 17, 1999, following recommendations made during the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth in 1998, the UN General Assembly declared August 12 as International Youth Day. This day advocates listening to youth, engaging in action for youth and working towards increasing the visibility of young people on the global level. Each year, International Youth Day is assigned a particular theme, which is meant to inspire young people and lead them to action. The most recent (2012) theme of the International Youth Day – “Build a Better World: Partnering with Youth” – called for young people as well as other stakeholders to engage in partnerships with and for youth to build a better future.

¹ The Division for Social Policy and Development (DSPD) is part of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) of the UN Secretariat. The Division seeks to strengthen international cooperation for social development, particularly in the areas of poverty eradication, productive employment and decent work and the social inclusion of older persons, youth, family, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, persons in situations of conflict and other groups or persons marginalized from society and development.

² World Report on Youth 2007, p. xxxv

³ UN Youth Delegate Guide, p. vii

The second International Year of Youth was celebrated recently, between August 12, 2010 and August 12, 2011. The theme for this second edition was “Dialogue and Mutual Understanding” and aimed to promote the ideals of peace, respect for human rights and solidarity across generations, cultures, religions and civilizations.⁴ One of the major highlights of this recent International Year of Youth was a UN High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly, entitled “Youth: Dialogue and Mutual Understanding”, which took place July 25 and 26, 2011.

This High-Level Meeting focused on three main areas, loosely comprising the need to create awareness, to mobilize and engage young people, youth-led organizations and national governments, and to connect youth in order to empower them as agents for social inclusion and peace. One important outcome of the meeting was to reaffirm the need to protect young people from all forms of violence, including gender-based violence. Another outcome was the recognition of the need to empower women in all aspects of youth development, recognizing the vulnerability of female youth and the important roles of male youth in ensuring gender equality. A call was made for the increased participation of youth and youth-led organizations in the formulation of strategies and policies. As a follow-up to the meeting, a call for a Special Adviser on Youth to the UN Secretary-General was also issued. Nominees were presented by youth organizations and were reviewed by the Inter-agency Network on Youth Development of the UN. The decision on who will be appointed as Special Adviser on Youth is still pending. It is expected that this person will be under the age of 30. Her or his main task will be to reach out to young people worldwide.

UN Security Council Resolutions on Youth

Though the UN sees youth as enthusiastic and potential contributors for positive social change, a UN Security Council Resolution on youth has yet to be passed. However, the UN did pass various UN Security Council Resolutions on children, as well as the Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).⁵

In September 1990, a World Summit for Children⁶ was held at the UN headquarters, which gathered the largest number of world leaders in history. One of the points of

the Action Plan, which was an outcome of the Summit, was to increase efforts towards the protection of children in armed conflict. Various UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR), which legally protect all young people up to the age of 18, have been passed in relation to ensuring the protection of children in armed conflict. For example, UNSCR 1261 (1999) was the first Security Council Resolution to condemn the targeting of children (till the age of 18) in times of conflict, including the recruitment and use of child soldiers. The Security Council Resolution calls upon all parties in armed conflict to undertake measures, to minimize harm and to take special measures to protect children from all kinds of gender-based violence in times of armed conflict.

However, the UN Security Council fails to recognize youth as a distinct population group or age cohort – one that differs from children and adults – as well as their specific roles and experiences of conflict. Avaaz,⁷ an organization that aims to empower people all over the world to take action on pressing needs, has called for a UN Security Council Resolution on youth. Avaaz states: “New tools are needed to promote the active participation of youth in all aspects of life and to ensure prospects for peaceful and democratic social change,”⁸ The article referred to suggests that increasing discontent among youth are not only problems for social development, but may also trigger unrest. “If no hope of a better future is within sight, facilitating sustainable and peaceful social change becomes near impossible.”

Young people are active during conflicts. Indeed, they are often the ones fighting wars. But they are also often active as activists for social change and peace: asking critical questions, initiating conflict prevention, resolution and reconciliation processes, and as such contributing to future peace in society. Their experiences and views are different from those of children and adults. Youth is a very sensitive period in the human development process. Its is the period in life when decisions are made that will largely shape the person’s future – it is all about finding one’s way and getting the most favorable conditions for the future. It is a time when boundaries are tested and pushed as young people seek to create their own social roles and identities

4 IYY guide, p. 3

5 For more information, please see <http://www.unicef.org/crc/>, as accessed on August 7, 2012.

6 <http://www.unicef.org/wsc/>, as accessed on August 8, 2012.

7 <http://www.avaaz.org/nl/>

8 UN Security Council to adopt a resolution on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS)

and confirm them within social structures.⁹ Such periods of social formation are a time that could allow for great social changes. Young people carry exceptional potential for certain kinds of activism, driven by the unique way they see the world and interact with it.

A UN Security Council Resolution on Youth should therefore also acknowledge the strengths, the energy and the ability of youth to be involved in peacebuilding. Moreover, it should incorporate a gender perspective in order to enhance everyone's possibilities for positive social change and gender equality. In this regard, UNSCR 1325 can serve as a source of inspiration, since besides recognizing women's experiences and vulnerabilities during war, it also underlines the role of women in peacemaking and the importance of including women in all peacebuilding processes.

UNSCR 1325 nevertheless fails to differentiate, referring as it does to women, female youth, and girls as a homogenous group. This would suggest that all women, female youth and girls share similar experiences, views, vulnerabilities and degrees of resilience.¹⁰ However, female youth encounter specific challenges during times of armed conflict. They are a particularly vulnerable population group during war (e.g. abduction, rape) – a group that is often forgotten and remains marginalized within peacebuilding processes. As both conflict and gender relations are built on power, and gender roles are exacerbated in times of conflict, female youth often lose out: losing access to education¹¹ and not enjoying equal access to safekeeping of their rights.¹² Action in support of women's rights often focuses on women who have passed the youth stage,¹³ neglecting female youth who are no longer children, but may not yet be considered adults.

Male youth are often regarded as a potential threat to peace and security as they are thought to easily turn to violence when frustrated. In patriarchal societies, where male youth is expected to marry and make a living for his family, a lack of opportunities and a bleak outlook for the future may have disastrous consequences, especially during times when male youth are trying to find their way in society, defining their identities. It might lead to young men becoming active participants of armed conflict by joining the forces involved in that conflict. This may encourage a sense of hyper masculinity, which may lead to increased competition between young males. Those young men who decide not to join are likely to experience severe pressure as well as repercussions, which may range from becoming targets for murder or forced soldiering to having to go into hiding, along with a diminished future outlook.

With young men and women having different experiences of war – and potential for building peace – any UN Security Council Resolution on Youth passed in the future will need to take these realities into account.

➤ UNDESA-DSPD Focal Point on Youth
Social Integration Branch
Division for Social Policy and Development
Department of Economic and Social Affairs
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United Nations
New York, NY 10017, USA



9 <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/34603243277691DF492570C300278C95-world%20youth%20report%202005.pdf>, as accessed on 26-06-2012. P.150

10 Jackie Kirk and Suzanne Taylor: *UN Security Council Resolution 1325*, as accessed via <http://www.bvsde.paho.org/bvsacd/cd64/06.pdf> on August 8, 2012

11 Gender Toolkit: A Manual for Youth Peace Workers (UNOY) <http://www.unoy.org/unoy/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/01/Gender-toolkit.pdf>, as accessed on July 24, 2012.

12 <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/34603243277691DF492570C300278C95-world%20youth%20report%202005.pdf>, as accessed on 26-06-2012. P.149

13 <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/34603243277691DF492570C300278C95-world%20youth%20report%202005.pdf>, as accessed on 26-06-2012. p. 145


Creating a Culture of Peace in Europe

Experiences from the EURED Project (2000-2006)

by *Janne Poort-van Eeden*

A Culture of Peace in Europe

EURED (Education for Europe as Peace Education) is the result of the cooperation of an international group of scholars, educators, teacher trainers and peace activists in an effort to contribute to a culture of peace in Europe. The occasion for their cooperation was UNESCO's proclamation of 2000 as the *Year for the Culture of Peace and Nonviolence*, and the United Nations' declaration of the years 2001–2010 as the *UN Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World*.¹



The EURED project was initiated in 1999 by Werner Wintersteiner as a contribution to the upcoming UN Decade, inspired by Gandhi's words: "You must be the change you wish to see in the world." This ambitious project aimed at mainstreaming peace education in all areas of school education through the provision of teacher training about peace education. It involved an in-service teacher-training course made up of a set of seminars and activities for the same group of participants. The European dimension was reflected in all elements of the course, including the composition of the group, the choice of trainers and experts, the choice of working languages, and the content and topics covered. In terms of participants, the course was made available to a broad group of teachers and teacher trainers representing all different subjects and school levels, as well as to teachers active in the field of informal education.²

The project started by setting up a working group of teachers and peace activists from all over Europe. A professor from Israel took part in the first meeting in order to integrate a perspective from outside Europe. In November 2001, after several meetings of the working group, a three-day congress was organized. This brought together

a larger number of educators from all over Europe to discuss the concept of European peace education and to comment on the first outlines of the curriculum, as well as to come up with ideas for implementing the program in the European educational field. The congress gave teachers from all over the continent an opportunity to share their experiences in peace education, to learn from each other, and to cooperate in educating for peace. A few well-known peace educators from outside Europe were also invited to provide an outsider's perspective.

During the congress, speakers and participants discussed how, if Europe aimed to be a "force for peace", a "culture of peace" would need to be developed, in which early peace education would have to play an important role. The congress participants concluded that the working group should first conduct a study on earlier peace-education projects carried out in Europe, on which the EURED project could then build further.

This research was published in 2003.³ It revealed that the first peace-education programs in Europe were already being applied as early as the beginning of the 19th century by educational reformers – mainly philosophers, teachers and clergyman – who wanted to promote "friendly relations in the community of different peoples". In the early 20th century, with the beginning of World War I and the rise of militarism, peace educators became stigmatized, attacked for their anti-militaristic and non-patriotic attitudes, and prosecuted for subversion. After the two world wars, peace education in Europe received a new impetus at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of 1970s in the context of peace research, a new scientific discipline that focused on integrating education, research and activism.⁴

1 The EURED Teacher Training Programme: Design for a European Peace Education course. Klagenfurt, Austria, 2002.

2 The EURED Teacher Training Programme: Design for a European Peace Education course. Klagenfurt, Austria, 2002, p.6.

3 Peace Education in Europe: Visions and Experiences (Waxman/Münster/New York/München/Berlin 2003).

4 Werner Wintersteiner, The EURED Teacher Training Programme: Design for a European Peace Education Course. Klagenfurt, Austria, 2002 p.14.

As a next step of the project, an elaborate curriculum was developed for a Europe-wide in-service teacher training on Peace Education. However, once the curriculum had been finalized, the available financial support from the European Union and the Austrian government had been exhausted. Several attempts were made to find additional funding to work on the implementation of the course, but its concept proved so new that it fell outside many of the existing funding frameworks.

The working group members decided not to give up on their search for funds and continued to develop the program as if all was funded. This commitment finally paid off, resulting in UNESCO supported the next phase of the EURED project. This phase consisted of the *UNESCO/EURED course on Human Rights and Peace Education in Europe*, which included five seminars spread over a two-year period, additional practical assignments, and networking via Internet. The methodology consisted of participatory and peer-to-peer learning. Seminars were paid for by the participants, with several of them being sponsored by UNESCO in their respective home countries.

The first two seminars focused on basic peace and human rights education. During the last three seminars, participants had to specialize in one aspect of peace education, ranging from conflict resolution to peaceful co-existence, gender education, and human rights education.

From the beginning of the UNESCO/EURED course, Europe was not just the setting but also the “method”, as reflected in the careful choice of venues for the seminars in different parts of Europe. Local history was used as an educational tool during the course to show how Europe as a continent had experienced many different conflicts in the past, some of which had been resolved while others had continued to the present day. During the seminars, participants also met with organizations working on peace and reconciliation in the particular city in which the seminar was taking place.

“This is the end of the beginning” was an often-repeated statement during the fifth and last seminar in the EURED course, serving to illustrate the participants’ determination to continue with the implementation of the Peace Education project in their professional and personal lives. All of the participants felt that their intensive work during and in between the seminars had brought them new knowledge and skills that had deeply influenced their teaching and attitudes towards peace and community building.




The main teachers of the EURED course: Mireia Uranga Arakistain, Werner Wintersteiner, Betty Reardon, and Diane Hendrick

Unfortunately, that first course was also the last course of the EURED project. The lack of further financial resources made it impossible to carry out additional training courses. Though there have been many efforts to make the EURED course an officially recognized – and subsidized – education tool in Europe, those have not been successful so far.



Peace Education in the Philippines

by Merle Gosewinkel and Jasmin Nario-Galace



The Philippines is one of the few countries in the world that have worked on institutionalizing peace education in basic and teacher education during the last two decades. After the impeachment of Marcos and the end of his dictatorial regime in 1986, the new constitution called for mainstreaming peace education in the basic formal and non-formal education curriculum to build a culture of peace in the country. A variety of civil society initiatives emerged during the early 1990s to support the peace processes in the country. In addition, a number of academic institutions started various forms of peace education: from raising consciousness and concern, through public forums and research and publications, to conducting peace-focused courses and programs and even establishing Peace Centers at schools. The objectives of these initiatives in the Philippines ranged from increasing people's understanding of peace-related problems, including their causes and the various alternatives, to expressly cultivating peace values and encouraging certain types of peaceable behavior or action.¹

From the government's side, efforts were made to make peace education a national concern, through the establishment of a Peace Commission (now called the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process [OPAPP]) including a Peace Education Unit. The task of the OPAPP's Peace Education Unit is to promote a culture of peace in every community through peace-education programs and activities in partnership with other government agencies and civil society groups. In 2008, the Department of Education, the Commission on Higher Education and the OPAPP approved the Presidential Order for the *Institutionalization of Peace Education in Basic Education and Teacher Education*, making peace education part of the public school curriculum as well as that for teacher education.

Additionally, the Department of Education announced that in the future instructional materials would also be developed and disseminated as additional tools to be used.

Peace education in the Philippines is now generally recognized to have a two-fold responsibility. First, it seeks to contribute to a better awareness and understanding of the root causes of conflict and violence at the global, national, community, and interpersonal levels. At the same time, peace education cultivates values and attitudes that encourage all to engage in personal and social action toward a more just, compassionate, and nonviolent society. In the Philippines, peace education has long been identified as an essential means of creating a climate that respects and promotes the principles of tolerance, justice, human rights, and citizen participation, all of which, in turn, will increase the chances of a durable peace.²

Miriam College, in Quezon City, has been one of the pioneers in the development of peace education in the Philippines. The college has included peace education in its curriculum since the early 1980s and – after gradually expanding the range of courses and studies including peace education – established the Center for Peace Education (CPE) in 1997. The objectives of the CPE are to institutionalize and strengthen the peace education at Miriam College and to help promote a culture of peace in society at large by sharing Miriam College's inspiration, knowledge and experience with other groups and educational institutions. Together with the Mindanao Peace Education Forum (MinPEF), Miriam College also initiated one of the major networks related to peace education in the Philippines: the Peace Education Network (PEN).

1 Learning Experiences Study on Civil-Society Peace Building in the Philippines Vol. 4. Peace Education Initiatives in Metro Manila by Loreta Castro, Jasmin Nario-Galace and Kristine Lesaca: 2005, 1.

2 Learning Experiences Study on Civil-Society Peace Building in the Philippines Vol. 4. Peace Education Initiatives in Metro Manila by Loreta Castro, Jasmin Nario-Galace and Kristine Lesaca: 2005, 2.

In 2005, PEN was involved in a study on peace education in Manila that showed that peace education changes the attitudes of the students towards resolving conflict in a positive manner. A significant proportion of the students additionally reported positive changes in their overall attitudes and the maintenance of an already peace-oriented attitude on the issue of war and armed conflict after having taken a peace-focused course.³ The study also pointed out the challenges that academic institutions face in incorporating peace education into their curriculum, such as a lack of funding, which means that continuous efforts have to be made to find financial support for every project that is developed. Some institutions also pointed out the limited reach of peace education; after all, it is confined to those students who are following the peace-focused courses.

Building Bridges of Understanding and Peace: The Twinning Project between Two Philippine High Schools

In 2004, the Center for Peace Education (CPE) at Miriam College (MC) initiated a twinning project between Miriam College high school (MCHS) and Rajah Muda High School (RMHS), a public school attended by Muslims located in Pikit, Cotabato, a conflict area in Central Mindanao. The aim of the project was to foster understanding and communication among students from different ethnic groups and religions.

“When I was in grade seven we were given the chance to have pen pals from Rajah Muda High School in Mindanao. I was given Norma Sanday as my pen pal...[and she] would often tell me stories about [the war in Mindanao]. I always wanted to meet Norma personally... Then the day came when we were given two days to meet our pen pals. The friendship that we have through our letters grew even stronger when we met. I will never forget what a wonderful experience [that] was.”

These are the words of Therese Villanueva, who has since graduated from Miriam College High School, and who had taken part in the twinning project. With “Building Bridges of Understanding and Peace” as its theme, the project aims to support participants in gaining a better understanding of each other’s culture and challenging the

stereotypes and prejudices that currently exist between Muslims and Christians.

The project was initiated by the Center for Peace Education in 2004 with the help of the Balay Rehabilitation Center. Since then, letters have been exchanged between students of the two schools and pen friendships have developed. The activity generated mixed feelings from the students. Lean Camille Lumabas, a former student of Miriam College Grade School (MCGS), describes how she felt when she received her first letter from RMHS:

“I was so happy and excited...when I received the letter. According to my penfriend, they had a small school. She needed to walk one and a half kilometers to go to school. Despite poverty, she wanted to finish school and be successful, so she tried to endure the difficulty of walking to and from school each day. That made me both happy and sad.”

The exchange of letters provided students at Miriam College with a more personalized opportunity to recognize the situation their pen pals in war-torn Mindanao were living in. Janine Alcantara, formerly of MCGS, describes the difficulties her pen pal had: *“I felt their suffering...whenever there was war. Their schooling was disrupted, as they had to evacuate. She said she wanted peace in their community and wanted to finish her studies.”* Norhata Malik, a former student of RMHS vividly recalls what war means: *“...Gunshots are heard like rain. The people...do not know where to go. They are cramped in evacuation centers... with children sleeping on mats, thirsty and hungry, hoping that people of goodwill would come to help.”*

Armed conflict and displacement have disrupted people’s lives in Pikit, Cotabato, and other areas of Mindanao for more than 40 years now. The armed conflict between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front has caused much destruction and suffering to both combatants and non-combatants. Both groups are currently engaged in peace talks trying to find a just and lasting solution to this problem.

Miriam College is accompanying this peace process with a “people-to-people peace process” through this twinning project. Historical circumstances have created prejudices between Christian and Muslim believers in the country. Although the causes of the armed conflict are really political and economic in nature, some have used religious differences to exacerbate the conflict. Generations of young people have been receiving negative messages about the

³ Learning Experiences Study on Civil-Society Peace Building in the Philippines Vol. 4. Peace Education Initiatives in Metro Manila by Loreta Castro, Jasmin Nario-Galace and Kristine Lesaca: 2005, 57.





The participants of the Twinning Project (© Miriam College Philippines)



other side, and this cycle has largely been perpetuated by fear of and ignorance about the other side. The twinning project is doing its share in reducing these biases. Former RMHS student Norhata Malik expresses her growing recognition that neither the difference in religion, nor the physical distance, are impediments to the building of a culture of peace: *“Even if our beliefs are different, my pen friend and I grew closer to each other. I no longer feel resentful. I think the project helps in creating understanding between Muslims and Christians...”*

The twinning project has gone beyond an exchange of letters. On April 5, 2005, the students involved in the project published the first joint newsletter, which featured reflective essays, poetry and drawings contributed by students from both schools. Their contributions showed how they appreciated the experience of writing to each other, developing friendships, and understanding the need for justice, cooperation, solidarity, and mutual respect and acceptance, despite differences. The name of the newsletter is *Pag-asa*, a word that means “hope”.

A high point of the project came in November 2005 when the pen pals were given a chance to meet each other personally in a workshop on youth peacebuilding. The initial face-to-face meetings were supported by CORDAID. In recent years, annual face-to-face meetings were supported by the Australian Embassy through the Strength-

ening Grassroots Interfaith Dialogue and Understanding (SGIDU) program. These workshops were viewed as a step further to promote intercultural understanding. In the words of Constancia De Dios, formerly of MCHS: *“The workshop was of great help. It broadened my knowledge and understanding of our Muslim sisters and brothers.”* The face-to-face meetings were followed by another milestone: the formation of peace clubs in the respective schools, which initiate peace-related activities and celebrations, such as the Mindanao Week of Peace.

The society in the Philippines has a long list of divides, including the gaps between differing cultures, religions and ethnicities. But these are gaps that can be narrowed. Miriam College, through the Center for Peace Education, has embarked on one simple, yet meaningful project to address this gap, and with positive results.

How the U.S. collects data on potential recruits

by Pat Elder

The US military maintains an Orwellian database containing intimate details on 30 million youth between the ages of 16 and 25, providing local recruiters with personal information to use in a psychological campaign to lure youth within their designated regions. Before meeting, recruiters know what's in Johnny's head, if Johnny has a girlfriend, and what *she* thinks of his decision regarding enlistment. We'll examine how they do it.

A federal law passed in 2002 under the Bush Administration provides military recruiters the names, addresses, and phone numbers of all American high school students, provided that parents and students are given the opportunity to "opt out" of the lists being forwarded to recruiters. To this day, the opt-out portion of the law remains relatively unknown and unenforced.

That law provides the military with current data on about 7 million high school juniors and seniors every year. This data forms the cornerstone of the Pentagon's massive "Joint Advertising Market Research Studies" (JAMRS) database. It encompasses: full name, date of birth, gender, address, city, state, zip code, e-mail address, ethnicity, telephone number, high school name, graduation date, grade point average, education level, college intent, military interest, field of study, current college attending, ASVAB Test date, and Armed Forces Qualifying Test Category Score.

The JAMRS database is also populated by data from the Selective Service System, which requires 18 year-old men to register for a potential military draft. Selective Service has the names and addresses of 15 million men 18 to 25 years old. Add to that total the data from the departments of motor vehicles from most states. Some states require young males to register with Selective Service to have their driver's licenses renewed in the year they turn 18. Both state and federal job training and college funding opportunities and federal employment are linked by law to proof of draft registration.

JAMRS also includes records from several formidable commercial sources. The database has information on 5 million

college students purchased from corporate entities like Student Marketing Group and American Student List.

Pertinent data is delivered to the laptops of local recruiters which are loaded with the PrizmNE Segmentation System, a software program purchased from the Nielson Company, whose clients include BMW, AOL, and Starbucks. PrizmNE is a cutting-edge commercial marketing system that combines "demographic, consumer behavior, and geographic data pertaining to individual prospects." This information is merged by recruiters with personal information from social media sites like Twitter and Facebook and the result is staggering. Before first contact, recruiters know Johnny reads wrestling magazines, weighs 150, can bench press 230, drives a ten year-old Chevy truck, loves Pink Floyd's "Dark Side of the Moon," and enjoys fly fishing.

It matters. Recruiting is a psychological game. Imagine the first phone call. "Dude, hold on; the Staff Sergeant always cranks up Pink Floyd; sorry for the noise...He's tryin' to tell me it's time to go out fly fishin'..."

The Army sure must be cool. Advantage: Recruiter.

The data described above paints a virtual portrait of a potential recruit, but leaves out the future soldier's cognitive abilities. The Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) Career Exploration Program provides this crucial element, something the Pentagon can't purchase or find on line. The ASVAB is the military's entrance exam that is given to fresh recruits to determine their aptitude for various military occupations. The test is also used as a recruiting tool in 12,000 high schools across the country. The 3 hour test is used by recruiters to gain sensitive, personal information on more than 660,000 high school students across the country each year. Students typically are given the test at school without parental knowledge or consent. The ASVAB is used to pre-qualify leads in the high schools and the scores are good for enlistment purposes for two years. Now recruiters know if a teenager can factor polynomials or decipher different types of fuel injection systems.

Websites

The Department of Defense has several recruiting websites that collect information. Typically, the military hides its true recruiting intentions. For instance, you'd have to dig pretty deep on the www.asvabprogram.com site to find out what the acronym stands for. The website never explains that the primary purpose of the ASVAB is to produce leads for recruiters.

www.myfuture.com, a sophisticated DoD site that provides rather biased career, education and military options for youth, never reveals its tie-in to recruiting. Its affiliation with the military is buried. Users are required to register to use the site and their information is used for recruiting purposes.

Each of the branches, reserves, and Guard units has their own websites that collect data. Most have a presence on Facebook, You Tube, and Twitter. Recruiters spend countless hours trolling these sources.



www.todaysmilitary.com is an obvious military site that collects information on users. The Army sponsors www.BoostUp.org, a high school dropout prevention campaign with a presence on social media sites. For the post-dropout set, Job Corps serves approximately 60,000 youth annually at Job Corps Centers throughout the country. These youth are seriously courted by the military and most are required to take the ASVAB test. Over 100,000 teens have graduated from the National Guard's Youth Challenge Program, another military recruiting program that pursues dropouts.

For high achieving students, the Army sponsors www.ecybermission.com, a web-based engineering and mathematics competition for the 10-14 year-old set where teams compete for awards. The website recruits ambassadors and cyber guides for various competitions who must complete a lengthy application. Also for the high achievers, March 2 Success, www.March2Success.com is an Army site that provides standardized test-taking tips for high school students. High school counselors routinely encourage college-bound students to use the free service that catalogues student use for recruiting purposes. Personal information finds its way to recruiters.

www.armystrongstories.com is an Army recruiting website program ostensibly dedicated to telling the Army story. Although soldiers are invited to share their "unfiltered perspective" on life in the military, submissions that do not comply with content guidelines are not posted. Army life is great.

There are more than a half a million results for "US Army" just on *My Space*, another favorite hangout for recruiters.

Google and Yahoo forums also provide fertile recruiting grounds. Recruiters "lurk" in these virtual settings, often posing as potential recruits with questions designed to lure responses. "What kind of job could I get with a really low ASVAB score?" is a favorite.

America's Army 3, rated "Teen Blood Violence," www.americasarmy.com is the official U.S. Army video game that competes with violent commercial offerings. The game has become one of the Army's most effective recruiting tools. Recruiters skulk in this corner of cyberspace and trade comments about the utility of say, M106 smoke grenades. Users as young as 13 agree to allow information entered to "being stored in a database." Marketing research indicates this is a more effective recruiting tool than all other Army advertisements combined, but the same experts caution that virtual reality could also help muddle the reality of war.

Recruiters collect a mountain of information during frequent, popular displays of military hardware. They methodically gather leads during air shows and parades and they seldom miss career fairs, particularly those at the local high school. The military also owns several dozen "adventure vans," 18-wheel tractor trailers that criss-cross the country and visit high schools. High school kids love getting out of Algebra class to squeeze off rounds from simulated M-16 rifles. All the while, recruiters are collecting data on index cards and PC's that are fed to the JAMRS database and neighborhood recruiters.

Finally, the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) is the military's most valuable recruiting program in the schools. Children as young as thirteen are groomed to be officers. Their personal information is meticulously gathered and preserved. There are JROTC units at more than 3,200 high schools across the country, where students perform military drills and participate in marksmanship programs.

The notion of a voluntary American military force is laughable. To find soldiers, the U.S. has developed a massive military recruitment surveillance complex and few realize it.

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Peace Activism 2.0

by Isabelle Geuskens



The WPP spoke with Guido de Graaf Bierbrauwer, Senior Program Officer for the South Caucasus and Policy Advisor for States in Transition at IKV Pax Christi (in the Netherlands), about the importance of engaging with young activists in peace work.

Guido described how IKV Pax Christi uses two approaches to reach out to young people: by actively targeting a young Dutch audience in the organization's awareness-raising activities, and by supporting young activists in conflict zones.

He explained: "In terms of the first group [i.e. Dutch youth], we organize different events and activities to involve them in our peace work. For example, we organize an annual event called '*Nacht van de Vrede*' (Night of Peace), which we always try to make as hip and accessible as possible, using film, debate, art and music to engage with the youth on issues such as conflict, peacebuilding and activism. In addition, we organize an initiative called 'Checkpoint Cinema', during which a Dutch celebrity is invited to speak about a movie that depicts a conflict situation. This event is especially well attended by students."

IKV Pax Christi is also one of the founding partners of MasterPeace, a global peace initiative (see also www.masterpeace.org), and several of our partners in the field have started country-based MasterPeace clubs. Guido continues: "We also organize theme nights – our so-called Caucasus Cafés, as well as Balkan and Africa evenings – to which we invite our Dutch network contacts who are also active in those regions. These are well attended, with between 40 and 200 people per night, including lots of young people. For us, this approach works quite well, also for the recruitment of volunteers and interns. I'd have to say that we have quite a lot of young people working at IKV Pax Christi."

Guido tells of how some of his older colleagues are of the opinion that peace activism used to be better in the Netherlands back in their day – that there used to be more peace committees, more church involvement, and more

street protests. He does not share this opinion, as he sees a lot of young people who care about the world around them, though their engagement might be more on an individual level, with less of a collective basis.

IKV Pax Christi also works with the youth in conflict areas. "We are working a lot with young activists, especially in the Caucasus, the Middle East and North Africa. Most of them are working in informally organized groups," Guido explains. "A long time ago, when IKV Pax Christi first started working in the South Caucasus for example, our partners were also 'young' organizations. Many of them have since become institutionalized: they are now well-known activist organizations with an established position in society." This creates a different kind of energy, he feels. "The younger activists have real drive, lots of energy, and are often very creative. They mobilize through Facebook, for example, they organize flash mobs, they use animation in their activism, and they go out into the streets. The older activists more often turn to writing press releases and long analyses of the political situation. As their work and position are already known by society, it is often more challenging for them to still surprise people."

Guido observes that many of the younger groups are driven by inspiring individuals who manage to achieve a lot with little funding. "For an organization like ours," he says, "working with such pioneering individuals is key, as they are the people who can mobilize others and manage to do a lot with little means."

Recently, IKV Pax Christi started to work on a project called "Peace Activism 2.0", with 2.0 referring to new times bringing forth new forms of activism. Guido explains: "I want to stress here that activists are still making use of the well-known nonviolent techniques (such as the 198 ANV methods described by Gene Sharp), but in new ways. With the emergence of new communication tools and better infrastructure (enabling people to travel faster), a lot has changed compared to the old days. With our project 'Peace Activism 2.0', we gather information about these





Guido de Graaf Bierbrauwer (© Johannes Ode)

new forms of activism and discuss them with our partners. We also bring the older and newer activist generations together to exchange strategies. We hope to eventually develop a manual from all this input.”

“Investing in new strategies is important,” Guido continues, referring specifically to his recent experiences in Armenia, where the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has become such a big taboo that civil society no longer wants to discuss it. “Before you can achieve anything, there needs to be a shift in the general public’s mind-set. In the past, peace organizations invested a lot in dialogue sessions between civil society representatives from Azerbaijan and Armenia, though this mainly impacted the inner circle of activists. At IKV Pax Christi, we feel we need to invest in different approaches, such as reaching out to the wider population. And we need to do this now, for once the situation gets out of hand, it becomes very difficult to reach a peaceful solution through nonviolent ways.” Discussing the current struggles of his Syrian partners in that regard, he says: “In Syria, violence is proclaimed by many as the only way to solve the situation. This definitely has a gender dimension to it – it is closely linked to a culture of

machismo where being a real man is defined as killing for your country.”

He is worried about the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh, noticing that tension is growing there every day. He is especially worried as he does not see a strong activist response to the deteriorating situation: “I am astonished that, during this key moment, there is no clear counter-strategy from the older generation of activists – most just stick to producing analyses of what is going on there. This bothered me so much that I decided to write about this in my blog, questioning the way some of these activists are handling the situation. It is so important that they make themselves heard and represent a different voice in society!” He noticed that many of the younger activists shared his views, agreeing that more risks should be taken. For him, it confirmed that much of the revolutionary activism does indeed come from the younger generation of activists. “They dare to be harder, more confrontational, very direct, rather than going immediately for nuance and dialogue,” he concludes. “As a result, they manage to come up with strong campaigns that convey a very clear message.”

He believes that activists always need to keep in mind that the general public is not easily convinced by a very complex story. “Look at the Kony video,” he explains. “There might be a lot one could say about the content of that video, but it did manage to get millions of people to know about the issue. As an activist, you should therefore always invest first in creating basic awareness, in order to get the public ready to listen to the more complex story.” He therefore believes that both the “more complex” and the “lighter” forms of activism need each other, as they can complement and strengthen each other.

When asked about his views on the security risks linked to the use of social media, Guido is very clear: “Social media is used by many of the activists we work with. For some, Facebook and Twitter are really the only means they use to express themselves. Often they know very well how to handle any security risks – much better than we do! Some of them have even told me that they actually wanted their online activism to be noticed by the authorities, so that they would realize that people are watching and questioning them. Also, Facebook is often used as a tool to mobilize a lot of people at once, so it really becomes a challenge for the authorities to arrest all those people. Another important aspect of social-media activism is that it often generates international solidarity, which also helps to expose and increase pressure on regimes.”

With an eye to the speed of technological developments these days, Guido does acknowledge a need for further capacity building. “Any activism is only as strong as the weakest link,” he points out, “which is often the human beings themselves. So if you are sloppy with your laptop, you make it very easy for others to retrieve sensitive information about your activism – and your friends’ activism!” He underlines that it is important for activists to be aware that the authorities are also using social media for their own propaganda purposes. He shares an example of how the KGB is spreading rumors among the population that SMS-texting is very safe – while it is not. As another example, he relates how some of his activist partners recently found their Gmail conversation on an Ossetian website – the first part of the conversation had actually taken place, the rest was made up to blacken their reputation.

Guido’s conclusion: “Nothing is really safe, but it also never was. During World War II, when people were printing underground newspapers, they also faced risks. In the end, I don’t believe there are such big differences between the generations of activists. The older generation just got older; I am sure that if you would put them in a time capsule, they would match very well with the younger activists! Everything always goes in waves; decades ago, young activists were also revolting against the way the older generations of activists were doing things. The older generations also started out being brave and daring, but over the years they often acquire a position in their respective societies; they might have a family and more responsibilities; they often have less energy; and they also simply know and reflect more. They might just have too much to lose to still be very radical. Younger activists are in that sense more ‘naive’ and hence more creative and outspoken.” In the end, he warns, one shouldn’t generalize: “I still meet older activists who manage to keep going with such an enormous drive and creativity. They just amaze me!”



“Zahra Bahrami betrayed by chat-room conversations”

by *Sharzad News*

Dutch-Iranian citizen Zahra Bahrami was arrested in Iran in 2010 and executed the following January on charges of drug-smuggling and endangering national security. Family and friends say she took part in an anti-regime demonstration in Tehran on Ashura, a day of religious mourning, and was arrested by security forces later the same day. Bahrami’s lawyer Nasrin Sotoodeh was also arrested and is still in prison.

 *Sharzad News:* Dutch-Iranian citizen Zahra Bahrami was arrested in Iran in 2010 and executed the following January on charges of drug-smuggling and endangering national security. Family and friends say she took part in an anti-regime demonstration in Tehran on Ashura, a day of religious mourning, and was arrested by security forces later the same day. Bahrami’s lawyer Nasrin Sotoodeh was also arrested and is still in prison.

Zahra Bahrami’s private conversations with friends and family were compromised by her use of social media such as *Paltalk* and *Baylux*, leading eventually to her arrest and execution. Two internet users in Germany and Iran have now revealed themselves to have been friends of hers, and in the last months before she returned to Iran, they had been communicating with her through social media sites. Their statements about Zahra’s confidential contacts and personal life conform to reports that have appeared in the Dutch media.

The two people – whose identities *Sharzad News* is withholding for security reasons – shared information with online friends in a *Paltalk* forum used by 120 others. *Paltalk*, a social media network through which people can communicate with one another verbally and visually through chat-rooms, has been used extensively by Iranians since 2000. During its early years the network was used mainly by opposition and dissident groups, but in recent times pro-regime users have inundated the network in an organised way, and now even hold conferences and religious ceremonies on it.

One of two says he was interviewed about Bahrami by the English-language department of the Dutch international broadcaster Radio Netherlands. The 55-year-old, who lives in Iran, had been a close friend of Zahra since their teenage years, and also knows her family well. The two met on several occasions after her return to the country. After her arrest he himself was picked up by the security forces, but later released. During interrogation the security forces mentioned subjects he had talked about with Bahrami via the *Paltalk* and *Baylux* chat-rooms.

Iranians who use *Paltalk* say *Baylux* is run by an Iranian based in Canada. According to an experienced user of *Paltalk* known to *Sharzad News*, the software used by *Baylux* means the identity of its users can be tracked. Most users of this network have little understanding of computer technology or internet theft.

➤ This article was published first on *Sharzad News*, August 29, 2012

Europe

Youth Making a Difference in Today's World

by *Lise Paaskesen and Carlyn van der Mark*

In Europe, a growing number of young university graduates with a desire to make a difference are finding it harder to put that desire into practice. With governments cutting budgets everywhere, the economic crisis has also started to affect NGOs. As a result, many NGOs have to operate on smaller budgets. One consequence of this is that NGOs are reducing staffing levels, which in turn affects young graduates who want to work in the field of human rights, peacebuilding, and international cooperation. Though many young people in Europe dream of having a “meaningful” job, it is becoming more and more difficult to find one. Many find themselves torn between bread-and-butter issues and their desire to make a difference.

This article – inspired in part by the authors’ personal situation – is based on the feedback given by a small pool of young people who shared their views and experiences in relation to this dilemma.¹

Youth Unemployment on the Rise

Youth unemployment is on the rise on a global scale. An International Labour Organization (ILO) report, entitled “Global Employment Trends for Youth: 2011 Update”, states that one in eight young people (between the ages of 15 and 24) will be unemployed in 2012. Global youth unemployment spiked in 2009 with the largest annual increase since the late 1980s. The global youth unemployment rate rose higher than the adult unemployment rate, which confirms the idea that the youth are more vulnerable to economic shocks than adults. The ILO report further states that youth employment has been affected the most in so-called developed economies, including the European Union (EU). Youth unemployment in the EU

increased the most in the period 2008 and 2010. The EU is also the only region that has seen a steady increase in youth unemployment rates. The average time spent out of employment is also becoming longer, and due to the unusual and relatively high youth unemployment rates and prolonged periods of youth unemployment, the ILO calls today’s young people the “lost generation”.²

Getting a Degree Is No Longer Enough

With unemployment rising, many young people feel they need to obtain a university degree to be able to get a job, with an increasing number of young people even going for multiple degrees so as to increase their chances. One participant of the youth forum worried: “More and more of my friends are doing a PhD, which makes me feel like I also need to do a PhD... What will happen if I find I cannot compete in the labor market just because I do not have three, four or more degrees?”

Getting an education also costs money, however, and the costs of education are increasing. Many students take on loans to be able to pay for their education, which means part of their future income will go into paying off those debts. On top of that, scholarships have become harder to come by, since the current economic crisis is also affecting the funding bodies.³

Having a degree – or degrees – is no guarantee that one will find the job one is looking for. Upon entering the job market, many graduates quickly become disillusioned. Many experience the process of searching for a job as long and difficult. Most NGO positions require at least a few years’ professional experience, which most graduates do not have. With many experienced NGO staff having lost their jobs due to funding cuts, the resulting competition makes finding a job even harder. Hence, young people are looking for other ways to gain the necessary professional

¹ Input was generated by means of a survey and during a youth forum discussion. The participating young people were of British, French, Belgian, Dutch, Danish, Spanish and Russian nationality.

² ILO report: Global Employment Trends for Youth: 2011 update.
³ Professional and Career Development Loans: What’s the Deal?

experience, for example by taking on volunteer or internship positions.

Several young people indicated they felt a pressure to start doing volunteer work already during their studies to gain relevant work experience in order to be able to compete with other young people for an internship position. One participant of the youth forum said: “I am volunteering with an NGO, but I know I have to do an internship as well. I will not get a job otherwise.”

All indicated they thought an internship would be crucial to gain the necessary professional experience, and that it would be very hard to get a job without having done at least one internship. From the feedback received, it seems that the process of finding an internship is becoming more and more time consuming and competitive as well, to the point that it often resembles applying for a paid job. One participant shared: “I applied for the Young Professionals Program at the UN. I did not get it; 16,500 people had applied for the same position!”



Through internships, NGOs can keep some of their work going, though with less staff costs involved. Internships also require an investment in the intern, however, and for smaller NGOs that can be a real challenge these days. One participant shared: “I contacted an NGO to offer them my services, and they told me they did not have the capacity to support an intern at the office. This just shows how difficult it is for NGOs at the moment.”

Young people often apply for multiple internships at the same time to increase their chances of getting one, even if the NGOs concerned focus on topics that are different from what the applicants really want to do. In the event an internship is finally offered, participants of the youth forum felt they would have no choice but to accept it.

One participant shared: “I must compete with peers who do internships at well-known NGOs. I am doing an internship with a small NGO and I feel I am supporting the work in meaningful ways. My friends who are interning with well-known NGOs mostly make coffee and print documents.” While the well-known NGO may not always offer the most exciting internships, those are nevertheless the internships that many young people are aiming for since those tend to carry the most weight on their CV and will increase their chances of finding a job.

Though internships and volunteer positions offer valuable spaces for young people to gain much-needed pro-

fessional experience, they can also prove to be expensive. One participant shared that she had invested a lot of money to be able to do an internship, but till now there has been little return. Another participant of the youth forum disagreed, stating: “Internships are a good way of gaining necessary experience, so there is really little point in complaining,” though he acknowledged that the fact that there is often little or no financial compensation involved, can be challenging. One participant, who was about to graduate, mentioned: “I will stay enrolled at my university. That way I still qualify for a student loan.” Another added: “It is frustrating to have completed your studies and to know that instead of gaining an income, you will only fall deeper into debt. This is part of the price you pay for doing an internship.”

One participant of the youth forum shared: “I know I am lucky, as I was hired by the organization I was interning with.” However, this still does not guarantee a job for the long-term. She continued: “Since I started I have always had temporary contracts. The one I am on now is due to end soon and upon renewal would automatically turn into a permanent contract according to Dutch law, which the NGO cannot afford. I do not know what I will do next.” So even though some young people may find themselves lucky to land a job, this does not automatically guarantee long-term job security. An uncertain future makes most NGOs careful these days in terms of entering into long-term employment commitments.

The feedback provided during the forum and by means of the survey suggests that many young people are worried that they will not be given a chance to transform their desire to make a difference into practice. Several of the respondents indicated that they had become discouraged by the lack of opportunities in the NGO sector, feeling caught between bread-and-butter issues and a strong desire to do meaningful work. Some had decided to drop out altogether.

However, not everyone was convinced that having a paid job with an NGO was the only way to contribute to a better world. Several felt that volunteering is always a means to fulfill one’s desire to make a difference, and one participant shared how her volunteering work is making her feel that she is doing something meaningful, next to her studies and paid job. “Working in an NGO is not the only way to make a difference,” another participant added. “It is true that NGOs may be more likely to build alternatives to the current economic and political system than private or public companies, but that is also being limited these

days because of the cuts in government funding.” Another survey respondent suggested that the “only real limits to activism are the ones you set yourself.”

It is interesting to note that when the youth forum discussed activism, several of those present stated they would not call themselves activists. When probed to define the words “activist” and “activism”, answers ranged from “people who are willing to give up their time for a particular cause” to “activists are selfless, valuing things in life besides materialism” to “activism happens when you are engaged in making a change, and you live and breathe that change.” One young male respondent said he considered himself to be an activist, explaining: “An activist is somebody who is interested in the way political and economic relations are managed and how fair those relations are for the people. When relations are unfair, the activist may organize and coordinate with other people who share similar thoughts.” He added in conclusion: “This allows for the construction of alternatives and the creation of pressure towards the political and economic establishments.”

Though the feedback received suggests that young people are increasingly struggling to find the meaningful job they are looking for, most of the respondents were not going to give up easily. Whether by volunteering or interning, they remained determined to make a difference in the world. Or, as one respondent pointed out: “The only limits to doing what you want to do are the ones you set for yourself.”



Challenges For Young Women Human Rights Defenders In Pakistan

by Katherine Ronderos

Gulalai Ismail, a 25-year-old woman human rights defender (WHRD) and Chairperson of *Aware Girls*,¹ has been working from an early age to improve conditions for young women in Pakistan. She is also participating in the Asia regional WPP Training of Trainers Cycle.

Gulalai shares with AWID her experiences as a young WHRD living in a context of oppression and discrimination in the name of culture and religion.

AWID: When did you become an activist and what motivated you?

Gulalai Ismail (GI): I started when I was in 6th or 7th grade at school, first by writing about children's issues and later about youth and women's matters. After school, I started an organization for young women only. Why? Because in our province of Peshawar in Pakistan, on the Afghanistan border, women from early age internalize the oppression and discrimination that is promoted and accepted in the name of culture, for example, a woman who suffers violence but doesn't say anything is considered a role model. While some women have accepted this discrimination, we have started to challenge it and to raise awareness about women's rights and the importance of new leaderships. My motivation to fight for women's rights didn't begin from just one incident alone, but rather because of the way culture is used to oppress women. There was a *strong women's movement in the past*, which was great for our learning and growth, but there was no space for young women in the decision-making space; we were only seen as *beneficiaries*. The source of my inspiration is young women from rural areas, who are open and willing to learn and to change our society.

¹ *Aware Girls* is a young women-led organisation working for women's empowerment, gender equality, and peace in Pakistan. Its work is based to strengthen the leadership capacity of young women enabling them to act as agents of social transformation in their communities.

AWID: Do you consider yourself a WHRD and feminist?

GI: Yes, I am a feminist and I consider myself a young WHRD because women's rights are human rights. I believe in our autonomy and that our bodies should not be controlled by men in the name of culture and religion. We are citizens entitled to enjoy equal rights.

AWID: What are the main challenges for young WHRDs broadly?

GI: I see six main challenges, the first of which is defamation. When young women work on women's rights in Pakistan, especially feminists, they experience character assassination by opponents of our work. We are automatically considered atheists, impressed by the western world, who want to westernize the society (which is understood as corrupting the values of the Muslim Pakistani society). Young women activists are seen as women who don't have any values or ethics, a recent example of this, are the false accusations I faced in an *online propaganda campaign*, where I was wrongly accused of being an atheist, working to corrode the Islamic values of Pakistani society.

Second is recognition – people don't believe in young women. As an organization of young WHRDs, *Aware Girls* faces the lack of recognition for our work. It has taken us time to politically participate and make our voice heard at the policy and decision-making level. But policy decision-makers do not take us seriously; they think we don't know about legislation and how it works, and that we are just playing a game. In general, authorities do not recognize our commitment and responsibility to the work we do. Whenever we attend lobbying meetings, we face discrimination.

Aware Girls is a girls-only organization; the staff members and board of trustees are all young women. We face a lot of harassment from the government and the media because they believe they have the freedom to exploit and harass young women, which is a popular way of thinking in Pakistan. On International Women's Day (IWD), the Dis-

trict Coordinator of Peshawar refused to participate in our event unless we offered him security and protection from possible riots, but we insisted that this was the responsibility of the State, not of women's organizations. He also refused to grant us the permission to hold public activities to celebrate IWD, arguing that it was a vulgarity and that young women should not be promoting "western ideals". We complained to the media about this and finally, with their help in putting pressure, permission to celebrate IWD was granted. As citizens, we have the right to defend and promote women's rights and mobilize publicly to express our ideas and make our voice heard. Interestingly, although local government has been supporting programmes for the elimination of violence against women and girls, in practice, they do not realise that with their actions, such as the one I just explained, they contribute to the harassment of young women.

We also have to deal with sexual harassment from different people. We have developed our own tactics, for example we never give our mobile phone numbers to anybody. Although the media has supported us on specific occasions, we have also experienced harassment from journalists. Sexual harassment of women in public spaces is commonly accepted; behaviour and thinking that has been the result of discriminatory stereotyping in public education. In Pakistan, women are killed in the name of honour, violence against women is still considered a private and personal matter, and women's bodies are controlled by men in the name of religion, and the media plays a big role in perpetuating this.

A big concern is security – due to extreme religious fundamentalism, it is very difficult to advocate for women's rights. In my province, the religious leader prohibited women from working for non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This violates our right to work and our freedom to choose where to work. People perceive young women as ignorant, that we don't have any knowledge about the legal system, or how to defend ourselves, which increases the risks we face because people feel free to abuse or attack us. The security of our organization is also a concern because our office was located in a very conservative neighbourhood, where we were constantly harassed and felt very insecure working in those circumstances, and finally we had to move offices to a different part of the city.

Finally, it is difficult for an organization of young women to access funding. Donors make a lot of requests for evidence of our work and they prefer to support long-term established organizations due to their reputation and



Gulalai Ismail during the WPP Training 2012 (© WPP)

history. On one occasion, when we were shortlisted for a funding application, we noticed that we had to make an extra effort to strongly defend ourselves to prove that young women were able to do the work. Donors normally ask many questions, but for us, questions related to the capability of young women to do the work, talk to and influence policy and decision-makers, were very persistent.

AWID: What are the main dangers in your work? Are there any differences because you are young?

GI: Peshawar used to be very progressive city, but now, there is a lot of kidnapping for ransom. In my city no one is secure anymore. But as a young WHRD, I recognize I also face particular risks related to my beliefs and work. Aware Girls works on very sensitive issues such as safe abortion, which is not legal except under certain medical conditions when the life of the pregnant woman is in danger. I am well aware that my work challenges the Taliban's power, and that brings dangers too. There are huge political issues involved in the radicalization of the region



where I live, but I believe that grassroots communities can challenge the culture of extremist intolerance, a crucial part of the search for peace.

AWID: What are your recommendations to support the work of young WHRDs?

GI: People should recognize and acknowledge our work. Our voices need to be heard at the government and civil society levels. In addition, women's and mixed organizations should consider partnering with young WHRDs and their organizations.

The international community should invest in youth leadership. In Pakistan, we have challenged the laws and the dictatorship, but now we see a growth in preference for male-only leadership positions. Donors are not sensitive to leadership, in particular to women and young people. It is very important to invest in women's and youth leadership as women's leadership is at risk and decreasing. In October this year, we will be at the UN in New York, advocating for the adoption of the *UN Security Council Resolution on Youth and Peace*. We hope to have international support for this.

Finally, governments should protect and guarantee the rights of young WHRDs to work and defend their rights. If a religious leader says that women should not work for NGOs, the State should respond against that, and protect our right to work as well as provide security for us to do our work.

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Suggestions for Actions and Solidarity in 2012

by Merle Gosewinkel

Share, listen, discuss and learn: Getting to know needs, struggles and strategies!

- Organize a meeting with the youth from your community to engage them in a dialogue about the challenges they face due to the fact that by decision-makers often fail to take them seriously as partners for change. Discuss those challenges. Showcase positive examples from other countries of how young people constructively deal with the challenges they face.
- Talk with girls and boys from your community and listen to the challenges they face in terms of shaping their identity. How do they feel about societal expectations regarding “proper” behavior for girls and boys, women and men? How do they deal with it? Talk with teachers, young people and those who are working on youth issues about ways you can support them in creating a safe and empowering environment for all.
- Invite young people from different sides of a conflict to come together. Make sure to create a safe space where they can get to know each other. Ask them what kind of challenges they experience and how they deal with those. Explore the similarities and differences between the challenges they face.
- Invite young people in your community to come together in order to explore ways to reduce tensions within the community or neighborhood and to work together for peacebuilding and gender justice.
- Ask the young people in your community how they are participating on various decision-making levels (local, regional, even national level). Ask them what support they need to facilitate their meaningful participation.
- Invite a male and/or female speaker(s) from a youth organization working on the eradication of violence and/or gender injustice to come to your community to talk about their work. Explore how your community can contribute to their work.
- Invite young activists to discuss the struggles and challenges they face in their activism and their daily lives. Reflect with them on concrete strategies for support, and brainstorm on new ways of overcoming those chal-

lenges, using different tools, including art and/or social media.

- Do follow-up sessions with young people who have been included in your various campaigns and programs. Listen to their experiences and reflect on how you could improve your work from the perspective of the youth. How could you make your programs and campaigns more attractive to young people?
- Build alliances with youth forums and organizations. Engage them in your work and keep them informed on the developments of your work, asking for their input to ensure that your work will also speak to and include the younger generation.

Educate and encourage others: Work together!

- Educate young people on UNSCR nos. 1261, 1325, 1820, 1888, 1889 and 1960. Distribute copies of the Resolutions during meetings and events. Organize meetings or workshops to “translate” the Resolutions into language that is understandable for young people. Discuss with them the importance of the meaningful inclusion of (young) women in peacebuilding processes and raise awareness on the benefits of that for the society as a whole.
- Encourage young men and women in your community to speak out on their refusal to use violent, dominant behavior and perpetuate gender inequalities between women and men. Encourage them to discuss those topics with their peers and to work together on the eradication of violence and injustice in your community. Encourage them to speak out in support of peace, women’s rights and gender justice.
- Encourage your school and community libraries to display (e.g. on May 24) resources about topics such as (young) female leaders and youth activism.
- Make a special effort to reach out to young women and men. Talk for example with Scouts/Guides or other youth groups about the gender roles in their societies and how violence and war affects young men and women differently.

- Share resources, books, magazines, (online) articles and videos on creative types of (youth) activism, in your community and/or via online discussion forums.
- Translate and reprint articles from this “May 24 Pack” (please credit the Pack and don’t forget to send us a copy!) to educate others about the issues.
- Encourage activist groups to include the youth in their events and to increase their support for young activists who are working for gender equality and peace in the world.
- Develop materials (e.g. flyers, stickers, postcards) with young people who are working on issues like gender justice and peace, and distribute those to people in the streets.
- Educate yourself and the groups you belong to about militarization of the youth, especially the military recruitment of girls and boys, and its link with the use of violence in communities and societies. Educate yourself and others on the continuum of violence – in public and private spheres – to gain an understanding of that link. Order the leaflet *Make Our Schools Military-Free Zones* from the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) at: www.afsc.org. Find other organizations working on demilitarization, e.g. War Resisters International and New Profile, via the directory in this Pack or via the Internet.

Organize something!

- Gather young people from your community. For example, organize a protest march against violence against women with a special focus on the problems faced by young women in your area or region.
- Organize workshops with young people where you invite young activists to share their experiences using social media and art for activism.
- Discuss and analyze with youth organizations how organizations working on gender justice and peace-building can attract young activists
- Encourage others to reflect by organizing an essay or poetry contest. Try to inform a wider audience by posting the contributions online, disseminating them via social media, sending a press release to your local newspaper, or asking a local TV or radio station to broadcast something about the contest.
- Organize a festive celebration for the youth on important dates such as March 8 (International Women’s Day), May 24 (International Women’s Day for Peace and Disarmament), August 12 (International Day of Youth), September 21 (International Peace Day), October 2 (International Day of Nonviolence) or during the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence (November 25 – December 10). For more information on the latter, please visit: <http://16dayscwg.rutgers.edu/>.
- Hold a fundraising event to support a local youth organization working for peace, women’s rights and/or gender justice.
- Organize a public panel, a demonstration, a festival or a film viewing to highlight the role of youth within peace activism and social change.
- Discuss with young women and men activists the work they are doing together and individually. Invite young women leaders to talk about how important the participation of women is in decision-making, or invite youth leaders from different groups to speak about the role that young people can play in stopping violence.
- Issue a statement or press release or write a letter to the editor of your favorite newspaper or magazine to mark May 24, International Women’s Day for Peace and Disarmament. Call for more attention to what young men and women are doing for peace.
- Issue a press release rating your legislators on their efforts to implement UNSCR nos. 1261, 1325, 1820, 1888 and 1889, and 1960.

Make use of interactive media and communication!

- Register for online discussion forums, e.g. on young people and their impact on social change or on new/social media as a tool for nonviolent activism. Find them for instance via Google, Facebook, Twitter or Yahoo Groups.
- Start a group or cause on Facebook to raise awareness on the issues in your community. Always remind the members in your group or cause to consider issues of confidentiality and security when being or becoming part of Facebook. Remember: information posted online, remains online.
- Create your own online discussion, social networking forum or support group, for instance via www.ning.com to give young peace activists a means to share their stories and exchange best practices on their work. Do not forget to include clear rules on proper engagement on your forum.
- Use Twitter to share important issues that play a role in your community. Again, remind people of confidentiality issues.
- Twin your group or network with a youth group elsewhere in the world. Exchange information via email, Facebook or Skype to learn more about what young people are doing for peace/gender justice in their countries. Inform your networks/media on their work.
- Develop songs, exhibitions or a theatre play to visualize the issues you are working on. Make a short film about



youth activism for peacebuilding and/or gender justice. Pay attention to what young women and men activists are doing (as individual groups as well as together) on these issues and share it via YouTube or Vimeo.




2012 International Directory of Organizations

INTERNATIONAL

Women Peacemakers Program

Laan van Meerdervoort 70
2517 AN The Hague, The Netherlands
Email: Isabelle@womenpeacemakersprogram.org,
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website is currently being updated

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Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC)

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Web: <http://www.ikvpaxchristi.nl>

International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA)

Archway Resource Centre
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International Peace Bureau

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International Women's Tribune Centre

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Web: <http://www.iwtc.org/>

Global Network of Women Peacebuilders

% WEDO
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New Tactics in Human Rights Project

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NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security

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War Resisters' International Women's Working Group

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Web: www.wri-irg.org/wwghome.htm

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)

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Tel: +41 22 919 70 80, Fax: +41 22 919 70 81
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Web: www.wilpfinternational.org
(Contact WILPF for a complete list of national sections)

Women Living under Muslim Law Africa & Middle East Coordination Office

Groupe de Recherche sur les Femmes et les Lois au Senegal (GREFELS)
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Shirkat Gah Women's Resource Centre
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E-mail: sgah@sgah.org.pk
Website: www.shirkatgah.org

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Afghan Women's Network

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Jalalabad office:

First Street, Jada Ali Khail
Jalalabad, Afghanistan

Herat office:

Jada Mokhabarat, Near to Mansor Pharmacy
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Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan

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Shan Women's Action Network

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Women's League of Burma

Email: wlb@womenofburma.org
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Voice of Women for Peace

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CHAD

Union des Femmes pour la Paix

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necesita habilitar el Javascript de su navegador para
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Web: <http://organizacionfemeninapopular.blogspot.com/>

Ruta Pacifica

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Violence Against Women in War-Network, Japan

ADD: poste restante, Bunkyo-Kasuga P.O.
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Email: wmp@peacewomen.or.kr
Web: www.peacewomen.or.kr/english

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Women's Association for Environmental Safety and Nuclear Peace

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ABAAD-Resource Center for Gender Equality

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JavaScript dient ingeschakeld te zijn om het te bekijken.

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WO=MEN, Dutch Gender Platform

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PALESTINE

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Pastine
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Soldiers' Mothers of St. Petersburg

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Women's Movement for Peace

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Save Somali Women and Children

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African Women's Anti-War Coalition

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SPAIN

Dones X Dones

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Red Mujeres de Negro (Women in Black)

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Women in Black UK

c/o Maypole Fund
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Women in Black Research on Feminist Antimilitarism

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