



personal stories of the
men trained during the
2009-2010 ToT Cycle

Men and Women working as Partners for Gender-sensitive Active Nonviolence



A Collection of Stories from the Field

reflections of pioneering
women peacemakers on the
stories of the men





Men and Women working as Partners for Gender-sensitive Active Nonviolence

A Collection of Stories from the Field



This 2013 May 24 publication “Men and Women working as Partners for Gender-sensitive Active Nonviolence - A Collection of Stories from the Field” contains contributions by: Isabelle Geuskens, Samuel Darpolor, Anand Pawar, Valtimore Borjel Fenis, Kapil Kafle, Otim Tonny, Babar Bashir, Christian Ngendahimana, Rob Fairmichael, Ilot Muthaka Alphonse, Ruben Reyes Jiron, Ali Gohar, Alimou Diallo, Dola Nicholas Oluoch, Jasmin Galace, Ghida Anani, Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, Netsai Mushonga, Patricia Ackerman.

Editorial team: Isabelle Geuskens (WPP Executive Director); Sophie Schellens
(WPP Program Officer)

Language Editor: Iris Maher

Lay Out: Trees Vulto

Design logo: Annemarie Bron

Publication date: May 2013

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise), without the prior written permission of the author, written above each article. This publication was made possible through a grant from Cordaid.

Women Peacemakers Program (WPP)

Laan van Meerdervoort 70

2517 AN The Hague

The Netherlands

www.womenpeacemakersprogram.org



WPP's *vision* is of a world where women and men work together as allies to build communities where people co-exist peacefully through active nonviolence. Its *mission* is to support the empowerment of gender-sensitive women and men for the transformation of conflict through active nonviolence.

Table of contents

Introduction 4

Samuel's story – Samuel D. Darpolor, Liberia	7
Anand's Story – Anand Pawar, India	11
Valtimore's story – Valtimore Borjel Fenis, Philippines	17
Christian's Story – Christian Ngendahimana, Burundi	22
Tonny's story – Otim Tonny, Uganda	28
Babar's story – Babar Bashir, Pakistan	32
Alimou's story – Alimou Diallo, Ghana	37
Kapil's story – Kapil Kafle, Nepal	44
Rob's Story – Rob Fairmichael, Ireland	48
Ilot's Story – Ilot Muthaka Alphonse, DRC	53
Ruben's story – Ruben Reyes Jiron, Nicaragua	58
Ali's story – Ali Gohar, Pakistan	64
Dola's Story – Dola Nicholas Oluoch, Kenya	70

Integrating Masculinities into Gender-Sensitive Peacebuilding, Women's Perspectives 75

Patricia Ackerman, USA	76
Ghida Anani, Lebanon	78
Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, Fiji	79
Jasmin Galace, The Philippines	80
Netsai Mushonga, Zimbabwe	81

List of Abbreviations 82



Introduction

This May 24 publication, on the occasion of the International Women's Day for Peace and Disarmament, features a topic that might sound a bit familiar to some of you: As in 2010, it focuses on the topic of engaging men for gender-sensitive peacebuilding. That year, the Women Peacemakers Program (WPP) was just wrapping up its pioneering Training of Trainers (ToT) cycle on "Overcoming Violence: Exploring Masculinities, Violence, and Peace".

We started organizing that training cycle after having organized several ToTs for women peacemakers between 2002 and 2008. Though an evaluation of these ToT cycles had shown that these had positively impacted on women's work for peace – strengthening their confidence, knowledge, skills, and peace activism – it also pointed out that women activists continued to face lack of support for their peace and gender activism from the men within their organizations and communi-

ties. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 clearly was not on most men's radar, being perceived as predominantly a women's movement issue.

In response, the WPP decided to develop its 2009-2010 pilot ToT program for male activists, in an effort to increase the number of gender-sensitive male allies for the women's peace movement – men who could also act as powerful role models for the men in their communities.

I still remember those days back in 2009 and 2010; the WPP team sitting around the table and discussing the program on Skype with trainers Patricia Ackerman and Steven Botkin, brainstorming on how to holistically link the concepts of gender-sensitive active nonviolence and masculinities, and how to translate all this into a participatory and captivating curriculum, which would do justice to the diversity of contexts the trainees were working in.

We were very clear about one thing from the outset: We would be very critical about the new approach we were developing. The impact was uncertain, because we were pioneering a completely new model, and we considered it important to communicate very openly to our constituency about our observations and lessons learned along the way.

This was because we are first and foremost accountable to the women's movement. We therefore made sure that women were involved in all aspects of the training process, for example, by working with a female co-trainer and linking the male trainees to women allies in the field who supported and evaluated their work. It is also important to mention here that we were investing our modest 2009-2010 training budget to train a gender that is regarded by the women's movement as the one that is already benefiting most in society. During the training cycle, we therefore often discussed the aspect of accountability to the women's movement with our male trainees, including the aspect of what this implied in terms of using the

already-limited financial resources for gender work. In addition to our own publications, through which we made sure to share our reflections, experiences, and recommendations with the world, we also commissioned an external evaluation of our pilot ToT cycle. The first results were very promising, with the evaluation stating:

“The WPP’s promotion of the concepts of positive masculinities into peacebuilding provides an entry point to gain a different perspective of gender issues and an invaluable contribution to the realization of provisions under UNSC Resolution 1325.”

For this year's International Women's Day for Peace and Disarmament, we are bringing together 20 men and women activists who have been part of our masculinities journey since 2009. Almost three years down the line, we feel the time has come to once more critically assess the longer-term effects of our pilot. We do so for multiple reasons: To reflect and draw lessons on what worked and what didn't, and to feed this information into the development of a longer-term strategy. We also find



it important to share our insights with others, for times have changed since 2009: Increasingly, civil society is voicing the importance of working with men in order to achieve gender equality and some organizations have started to investigate what this would look like in terms of the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

This May 24 publication features the personal stories of some of the men trained during the 2009-2010 ToT cycle, complemented by the reflections of pioneering women peacemakers on these journeys of transformation. In their stories, the trainees share how the ToT experience impacted them on many levels – from the deeply personal to the family, community and work level. I can only agree with Patricia Ackerman’s statement regarding the personal being political: The men’s testimonies show that any social change starts with profound personal transformation.

There is still a long way to go before we see the day that women and men enjoy the same freedoms and rights on this planet. However, it all starts

with a few who dare to do things differently. After many decades of daring women, I feel encouraged to see daring men joining their ranks. I look forward to what’s to come next!

Wishing you inspired reading,

Isabelle Geuskens

WPP Executive Director

Samuel's story

by Samuel D. Darpolor – Liberia

Samuel Darkuleh Dapolor was born and raised in Liberia. For his higher education, he enrolled at the University of Liberia and obtained a BA degree in Sociology and Political Science. He's presently a candidate for a Master's degree in International Relations of the University of Liberia. Samuel has worked in areas such as teaching, counseling (HIV/AIDS and trauma), conflict mitigation, and advocacy. He currently works as a mentor/trainer in the Civil Society and Media Leadership Program, sponsored by the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) and funded by USAID. He also provides technical support to the Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET) program and serves as the capacity-building coordinator of WANEP Liberia.



My journey away from traditional masculinity began when I joined the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding in Liberia, where I worked with WIPNET, providing training in conflict resolution and leadership. I mostly worked with elderly women and young girls who had suffered abuses. It was difficult for me to hear their stories, because each time it was as if they were speaking directly to me as the perpetrator. The women often told me, "You men are wicked." There was I, thinking that

I was helping these women, meanwhile being confronted with their prejudices and feelings about men.

I shared my frustrations with my colleague Ms. Lindora H. Diawara. She advised me that I should place myself in the position of these women and girls, instead of seeing myself as "Samuel the man". This advice triggered my interest in gender issues, and I signed up to work on a gender-based violence project in the rural areas of Liberia. Within



this project, I was challenged to deal with specific ideas about the role of women, originating from our socialization processes and expressed by our culture and traditions.

The WPP's ToT on gender-sensitive active nonviolence transformed my work in promoting gender justice. It was my female ally, Ms. Diawara, who came across the WPP's Call for Applications and who immediately saw the opportunities for me. It would be my first formal training on gender. The training was an eye-opener for me; men from different backgrounds shared their experiences, assisted by two experienced facilitators, Patti and Steve. I could not wait to return to Liberia to promote gender justice and share my new ideas, knowledge, and skills provided by these two trainers. During the training I identified new strategies and planned how I was going to utilize my new skills and knowledge.

Immediately upon my return to Liberia, I met Ms. Diawara and shared with her how the training impacted my personal and professional life. We discussed the new strategies

which I thought would improve our work around gender. She was very supportive and allowed me to redesign our entire proposal on ending gender-based violence.

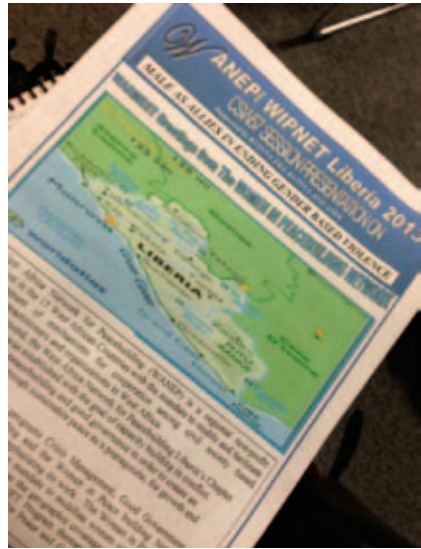
I gathered a group of professional colleagues to work together and create a network of gender-sensitive men. Prior to the establishment of the network, several of these men did not know how to cook, care for children, or clean, but by working with them, they started to take on some of these tasks at home.

I currently work with WIPNET and give training to men and women on ending gender-based violence. I introduced the concept of inter-generational gender dialogue into our gender-based violence project, which had substantial impact. Two groups emerged from this dialogue; one consisted of young men who decided to organize themselves to raise awareness on issues of gender-based violence and to advocate preventive measures. Elders and religious leaders came together in the second group to talk about the cultures and traditions that promote

gender-based violence, and how they can change these for the promotion of gender justice.

In addition to these two groups, I am also engaged with many other stakeholders, such as women's groups, community radio stations, student movements, and faith-based collectives, to raise awareness on the role of gender in development, peacebuilding, media, and religion. As a result, the number of my female allies has risen to 13. I really enjoy working with my female allies in conducting training sessions or raising gender awareness. These alliances help me to better understand the women's perspective on gender issues, both on the professional level and the personal level. I also am learning to work and deal with women from diverse backgrounds.

The WIPNET program used to focus only on women, training them in conflict mitigation and how to address gender-based violence. The ToT made us realize that there was also a need to work with men in ending gender-based violence. We introduced this concept via a dia-



WANE/WIPNET Liberia presentation at CSW57: "Male as allies in ending gender based violence" © Isabelle Geuskens

logue approach. The success of this strategy led to the implementation of a positive masculinities project in three communities in Liberia, which was supported by the Swedish NGO Kvinna Till Kvinna. The project shows results on multiple levels, from the home to the community. For example, women are sharing that they are more involved in decision-making processes at home, and that their husbands have also started to contribute to household work. In one



community, the men have organized themselves into a support group, in order to raise awareness on gender-based violence. Without the WPP training, the implementation of this project would have been much more difficult.

The biggest challenge I currently face is to balance my work on ending gender-based violence with my work to earn a living. How can I continue to respond to the many calls of my female allies to work on ending gender-based violence while also needing to focus on my official work? Another challenge is the distrust of women in men and their male colleagues, resulting in difficulties in identifying other men as allies.

I strongly believe that organizing cross-gender dialogues is an effective tool to get gender issues across. These dialogues provide men and women with the space to discuss the real issues and challenges related to gender, and to plan practical steps together on how to deal with these. Building alliances between men and women helps them to have a better understanding of each other's expe-

riences, and how to build a supportive relationship.

Anand's Story

by Anand Pawar – India

Anand Pawar is the Executive Director of SAMYAK, an NGO based in Pune, India. He is a male gender trainer and activist involved with women's and men's groups working towards gender equality and a violence-free society. He is also an active member of SANAM, a masculinities network in South Asia, and Forum to Engage Men (FEM), which works with men towards gender equality in India. The development of communication materials on gender, men, and masculinities is his specific area of interest. He is also involved in conceptualizing and contextualizing gender training with different groups, and plays a key role in engaging with other social justice movements to locate issues of men and masculinities within these movements. In addition, he is associated with various qualitative research initiatives exploring issues around gender, men, and masculinities in India.



It was a very conscious decision to apply for the 2009-2010 WPP ToT in 2009. I worked very hard to get into the training. I remember it was the last day before the application deadline, and I was frantically finishing my application form at the Delhi airport. I begged a person for his laptop with an Internet connection, and thankfully was able to send in my application at the last minute.

Before attending the ToT, I had already worked extensively on masculinities, particularly related to domestic violence and sexual health issues. I had already begun working with men in 1997, as part of a reproductive health project. I quickly noticed that the transformative element was lacking in my work. That is when I came across the field of masculinities and related studies. Through my own exploring and





Workshop in India for both men and women © Anand Pawar

research, I discovered that the link between masculinities, conflict, and violence was absent in most frameworks. Since Maharashtra, the state where I work with women's organizations and social justice movements, is one of the safest areas in India, armed conflict, militarization, and violence had never been part of our analysis. I had always wondered about spaces where masculinities, peace, and conflict could be connected and analyzed. When I read the WPP ToT announcement, I thought this was the time, place, and topic to expand my framework of analysis. I believed this training could provide me with new insights

into the connections between masculinities, violence, and war. This was the trigger for me to apply for the ToT.

First and foremost, the ToT had a huge impact on my personal knowledge and understanding of the role of masculinities within the context of violence, militarization, and war. The ToT materials were completely new for me. Not only did the ToT deepen my knowledge on these concepts, it also added the idea of intersectionality to my analysis. Altogether, the new concepts opened new doors for me and were definitely of added value to my own training sessions.

The second impact the ToT had on me relates to my role as a trainer. Although I had already been working on gender, masculinities, and sexual health issues, the ToT experience was completely different. The idea of a man and woman working together as trainers during the ToT was something new for me. I could see their interaction and cooperation right in front of me! The whole inclusive approach of active non-violence; the creation of a learning environment; the use of informal training materials; and the setting of the space – everything contributed to our learning process. To an outsider, the setting of the class must have looked quite messy, in the sense that we were sitting and even lying on the ground during many of the sessions. However, this actually contributed greatly to our learning process. I was so influenced by this that with my own follow-up training, I created the same training environment; one of the budget items of my ToT was buying pillows for trainees to sit on!

The ToT significantly changed my approach to training: It made me more humble. I remember that, in

my own previous training sessions, I was used to pushing my points and, at times, getting into arguments just for the sake of advancing my points and politics. After witnessing this training, I became more accommodative. The ToT trainers would also approach us outside the formal training sessions, during dinner or drinks, to chat informally about elements of the training that did not come across during the session itself. This was a very personal way of trying to “fix” a certain problematic training area. From this, I learned that transformative moments differ per person. It led me not to be too insistent when I thought it was right. I now try to talk to participants outside the official training sessions, when they might be more open to the content.

Of all the new techniques we learned during the ToT, the use of psychodrama techniques¹ stood out for me. To my amazement, this technique is

¹ Training techniques where real-life situations are simulated through role-play and dramatization to gain insights about personal thinking-patterns, attitudes, and assumptions.



very much accepted by male trainees. Over time, I have started playing with this technique, which is opening new windows of opportunity for me. If I look back at my notes of that time, they are all about the training techniques, exercises, reflections on the concepts, and new ideas. I generated over 40 new ideas for training sessions.

As a child in India, we are already taught extensively about nonviolence, through our school books, history lessons, public discussions, and in many other ways. This is connected to the role Gandhi played in our national history. As a result, India has many social justice movements which use nonviolence as a tool. Nonviolence as a concept therefore was not new to me, but theorizing it as active nonviolence was. When I returned to India from the ToT, and being part of many of these social justice programs, I introduced the concept of active nonviolence to these organizations, particularly raising questions about gender sensitivity. My agenda was to continuously raise issues of women's rights and participa-

tion, violence against women, and sexualities within the social justice movements. I started talking with many people about these issues, not only for organizational mainstreaming, but also addressing them at the personal level – just to bring the notion of gender awareness and equality home. It was a way for me to introduce a different approach to nonviolence.

To get my point across, we started screening the movies that I had received during the ToT. We started an annual Women, Peace and Democracy Film Festival, screening films from different parts of the world, from *Pray the Devil Back to Hell* to *The Stoning of Soraya*. With the majority of the audience coming from social justice movements, these movies became a way of sensitizing very active nonviolence actors to be gender-sensitive. It also created a new space for me to start a dialogue with them.

As a result of the ToT, I always include a session on gender-sensitive active nonviolence in my training sessions, and dedicate some time

to masculinities and militarization. I have dedicated quite some time to convincing the masculinities community what gender-sensitive active nonviolence is. They had always felt that it was a “Western” message of peace, relating it to the market and capitalism. I had to take away the skepticism surrounding the GSANV concept, and the skepticism around peace in general. The key was to reassure my connections that it is not just an empty phrase and that their politics of change are included in the GSANV concept and process. This is an ongoing effort, as all transformation processes take time.

Apart from the discussions on politics and concepts, I also try to find opportunities outside my training sessions to spread the message of gender-sensitive active nonviolence. An example is a year planner that I designed. This planner carries the “Call for Transformation” message, which was formulated by the 19 trainees during the 2009 ToT, illustrated with their pictures. This planner was circulated to more than 700 organizations across India as well as outside the country.

From 2010 onwards, I have trained about 3,000 people on GSANV, as part of the training sessions I give in India. Due to difficulties of measurement, I cannot provide more quantitative data on the impact level. I can however use my own indicators, looking for example at the number of people who come back for training, who inquire about the Women, Peace and Democracy Festival, who ask me for more information, who turn up for nonviolent actions, etc. Drawing from these indicators, I can see that training has a sustained influence on people. To keep it sustained, I use different methods, techniques, and resources to reinforce the ideas of GSANV. Even while attending training sessions abroad, I keep providing people with more information about what I learn and what I am doing, as many have a continuing interest in new materials. Keeping them engaged with the whole idea is an important element of creating change.

It remains a challenge to introduce the prefix “gender-sensitive” to social justice movements. Engendering social justice movements



in India is actually at the core of GSANV. But bringing this new concept to the organizations is not an easy task. I feel that the community of practitioners is highly politicized and very sharp and well informed in their analyses; thus, bringing a new idea or framework of analysis is a difficult task. Any new framework of analysis has to go through tests, questions, and constant review of whether it is valid. The community of masculinities in India is not yet totally convinced about the GSANV framework. Through constant active engagement, also within SANAM, I am trying to increase the appreciation for this new framework. I know that, if they finally accept it, engendering social justice movements will become a lot easier.

I believe that if people take active nonviolence to the personal level we can build a strong community to achieve change. In India, it is essential to bring active nonviolence to spaces threatened by violence and war. Making these connections will provide a range of new opportunities for peace in India.

Valtimore's story

by Valtimore Borjel Fenis – Philippines



Valtimore Borjel Fenis has been working for the Mindanao Peoples' Peace Movement for the last three years. He is a Political Science graduate and has been active with the Democratic Youth League at the Mindanao State University – Iligan Institute of Technology. Valtimore has also volunteered at the Urban Poor Unified Strength.

He was the Secretary General of the Alliance of Mindanao Youth for Peace (AKMK) from 2004 till 2010. He has been interested in politics of oppressed groups and the environment for a long time already.

I was introduced to the WPP through the Mindanao Peoples' Peace Movement in the Philippines (MPPM). When the WPP issued the ToT Call for Applications in 2009, MPPM thought that my participation would be of added value to the organization's peace work. Personally, I was also grappling with questions related to gender, specifically why only women should work on gender issues. So for me personally, as well as for my organization, the ToT contributed substantial momentum in terms of integrating the perspective of gender-sensitive active nonviolence into our work.

One of the biggest eye-openers for me during the ToT was a discussion on how men are always making decisions for women. It made me reflect on myself, and I recalled how I had once asked a female colleague from the youth movement to write a statement for International Women's Day. When I did not get a response immediately, I wrote a statement myself, trying to be helpful. But during the ToT, I became aware that women should speak for themselves, and that men should provide the space for them to do so. Apart from the insights on decision-making processes, the training also helped me



to work and interact with men on the issue of gender equality, including men that come from conservative and religious backgrounds. Equipped with the language of masculinities, I have become more confident in talking to them about the role of women in society.

The ToT materials were very useful, though it was a challenge at first to translate them into the local context. Together with my female ally, Amabella Carumba, I worked hard on “embedding” these materials, using our own local knowledge to really make them work in practice. This was actually in line with the message of the trainers during the ToT, who were always stressing that we had to observe the process surrounding every exercise, underlining that the process is key in realizing change. Though the WPP provided the tools, it was up to the activists to make them work in their daily work and life.

The ToT really supported us in conducting gender-sensitive peacebuilding activities within the community. The ToT gave me the tools to start

discussions on issues of gender equality with men, using the masculinities lens, and to keep the discussions going.

One of the first workshops I gave upon conclusion of the ToT was an all-men’s workshop at a youth camp, organized by the youth movement I was part of. Within the workshop we talked about gender socialization processes, including the pressures we face as young men to conform. As a result of these discussions, we created a group called “We Men against Gender Violence”. We also made a documentary during the camp, with statements by young women and men on gender. The documentary is still used in several of my training sessions and workshops.

As the communities of Mindanao are structured by tribes, I also started a process to involve tribe leaders in gender-sensitive peacebuilding. This was a difficult process, as it was the first time that these men got the opportunity to talk about their feelings and the participation of women in society in a very open way.

From my observations, I can see that the training I give does result in change. I still remember the wife of a participant approaching me one day, telling me, “My husband is behaving strangely because of the training; he is doing things he never did before!” It turned out he had started to take on household chores. It is my experience that raising men’s awareness of women’s burdens, and letting them be open about their feelings, has contributed to many changing their attitudes.

However, during each workshop that I organize, it is always a challenge to start convincing the men to reflect on their behavior and socialization. It is not easy to change men’s ideas about leadership and decision-making. In their minds, decision-making should be done by one leader, and most of the time they feel this leader should be a man. Transforming this kind of thinking requires a lot of creative convincing!

Besides activities with the community, I also started to introduce the concepts of positive masculinities and gender-sensitive peacebuilding

within my own organization. At the council meeting of the Mindanao Peace Movement in 2010, there were several activities as well as special spaces for women to come together and discuss the issue of gender within the context of peacebuilding. There was no such space for men, so I decided to organize a workshop to address this. I got many questions from the women on why I was organizing a special workshop for men. I could convince them of the necessity by pointing to the lack of men’s awareness of how stereotypical notions of masculinity cause a lot of violent behavior, and how men don’t know how to be an ally to women. With this understanding, the women finally encouraged me to go ahead, and were very happy with the initiative. It resulted in a great deal of sharing of experiences and views, which really helped in terms of increasing mutual understanding between the men and women who were present. This was also the starting point for many more training sessions and workshops within both the peace movement and the women’s movement.





Peace poster in the Philippines, with Valtimore © Valtimore Borjel Fenis

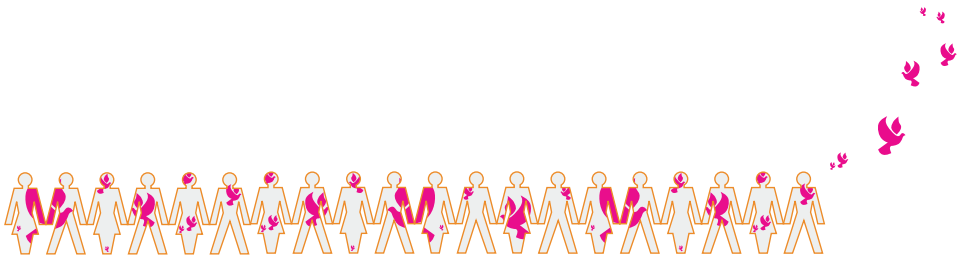
I can see that the men of the council are really interested in gender-sensitive peacebuilding with a positive masculinities perspective. At the latest council meeting, the Mindanao Peace Movement even adopted a resolution to integrate gender advocacy from a masculinities perspective within the peace movement.

So, where the Mindanao Tri-People Women Resource Center first approached the gender issue on an ad-hoc basis, they have now

developed a more programmatic approach since the ToT. They are also connected to other organizations, such as the Institute for Women Studies in Manila, so that efforts and activities are growing stronger and have a bigger outreach. The Mindanao Tri-People Resource Center eventually created a full-fledged program to raise awareness not only at council meetings, but also via workshops and training sessions throughout the year.

I gave the materials I received during the ToT to the Mindanao Tri-People Women's Resource Center so that they could be kept at a central place and the organization could use them as a resource. Over time, with the WPP materials as a starting point, we have collected more materials on these subjects, ranging from academic literature to publications by religious groups, specifically on the Philippine context. All this together now forms a solid documentation basis for the women's movement and other organizations that want to develop a holistic approach to gender-sensitive peacebuilding.

A long journey lies ahead of us, and I can say it was the WPP that provided the push for all these initiatives. I am happy that I am not the only man working on these issues, and with our strong group of men and women allies we are now working hard to make a lasting change.



Christian's Story

by Christian Ngendahimana – Burundi

Christian Ngendahimana began his professional career in 2002, as a Youth Coordinator for Search for Common Ground, stationed in northern Burundi. Later, in 2005, he was promoted to National Youth Program Coordinator for the whole of Burundi. In 2006, together with Ms. Seconde Nyanzobe, he established Fountain-ISOKO for Good Governance and Integrated Development to promote gender justice in Burundi. As the Executive Director of Fountain-ISOKO, he is involved in many national and international projects relating to gender equality advocacy and capacity-building. In addition, he is the Chair of the Burundi MenEngage Network (B-Men), of which Fountain-ISOKO hosts the national secretariat.



I started my professional career in July 2002, as a Youth Program Coordinator for Search for Common Ground in the northern region of Burundi. At the first program meeting, I realized that I was in a women's space; I was the only man among the eight female program managers. My colleagues welcomed me in their midst and told me that they would strengthen my capacity – not only as colleagues, but also as mothers, as I was the youngest of them all.

When it was my turn to coordinate the program meeting, I found it a challenge to sit and listen to some of the conflicts between my female colleagues. I was not concerned at all about these, disregarding them as merely women's issues.

In 2005, I got a promotion and was appointed as National Youth Program Coordinator at the headquarters of Search for Common Ground. This is where I first met Ms. Seconde Nyanzobe, the National Women's Program Coordinator. Once again,

the majority of my colleagues were women. Of the ten staff members, there were only two men. I got the nickname *le fille*, meaning “the girl”, but with the masculine article *le*. My other male colleague was called *le femme*, referring to “the woman”, but again with a masculine article. It was not easy for me and my male colleague to work in an environment where we were called girl and woman. I also had the idea that some of the women were excluding us from their projects, thinking that we were not capable enough to work on the issue of women’s political participation. I did not feel comfortable in this position, and I started to think that I would rather give up the job and remain a “man” than stay and be called a woman or girl.

I was dealing with this dilemma when the WPP’s Call for Applications for the 2009–2010 Pilot ToT Cycle came to my attention. After attending the first ToT training, I realized that my view of my work situation was heavily influenced by dominant notions of masculinity and femininity. I used to think that discussions on gender issues were a waste

of time. I wasn’t really aware that women’s rights violations were also human rights violations. Now that I have been trained, I stand for equal rights whenever and wherever I can.

The 2009–2010 ToT had a great impact on me at a personal, family, and community level. For example, in my family, sons and daughters are equally educated and, as a family, we often discuss gender issues. I consider it important to plan together as a family, so that my wife and I are equally involved in all decision-making processes. I find that applying the ToT material at home also helps me with my workshops. I can give my trainees concrete examples from my personal life to illustrate what transformation means. This model for a free and equal partnership between men and women inspires my community.

I have discovered that the key to fruitful cooperation between men and women lies in identifying shared needs and interests. As a male trainer, fruitful cooperation comes from taking into account the specific needs and expectations of my female





Project on increasing the community accountability on gender-based violence: "Men and Women as allies to fight against GBV" © Christian Ngendahimana

ally/co-trainer. Mutual respect is important in order to build an effective alliance between the two to act against gender injustice. Equality, mutual respect, and nonviolence are core values that I uphold in my relationship with my female allies, and which I consider crucial components for success.

For a long time, women have been standing alone in their struggle for a gender-just society. Because of this,

some women think that men cannot understand their issues or support their ideas for positive change. They think that only women can change gender injustice.

In my opinion, the model of women and men working together as allies to eradicate gender-based violence and create reciprocal respect has proven its efficiency in the journey towards a more just and peaceful society. From my own transforma-

tion, I also have learned that both women and men first have to be trained on gender sensitivity, femininities, and masculinities in order to be able to create strong alliances between them. It is important for both to realize that men and women have different needs and convictions, which can be uncovered and addressed through continuing dialogue.

At the national level, I am currently involved in (media) events and campaigns for gender justice. In 2006, Ms. Nyanzobe and I co-founded Fountain-ISOKO for Good Governance and Integrated Development. Ms. Nyanzobe and I were in charge of different programs. Since October 2010, Ms. Nyanzobe and I have shared an office, and we both learn a lot by working together. This has really helped me to further develop my listening capacities and empathy for women. I am very happy that she eventually has become my ally in gender-sensitive active nonviolence, and she has provided me with many opportunities to expand my knowledge on gender sensitivity.

Since attending the WPP's ToT, I have embarked on a continuing journey to share the knowledge and skills I have gained from the training. As the Executive Director of Fountain-ISOKO, I have implemented various projects relating to the ToT materials. In 2011, I was part of the project entitled: "Together for Transformation: Boys and men against gender-based violence". Many high-level stakeholders participated in this project, such as the minister responsible for human rights, gender, and national solidarity, the Governor of Bubanza, the Bishop of Bubanza, and justice and police authorities. Although the aim was to strengthen gender sensitivity in the community, we also made a big impact at the national decision-making level. As a result of the project, Honorable Pascal Nyabenda, President of the Human Rights and Justice Commission of the National Parliament, announced his commitment to gender-sensitive laws. In addition, the minister for Primary and Secondary Education took action in order to prevent gender-based violence in public and private schools, by integrating gender sensitivity into the school curricula.



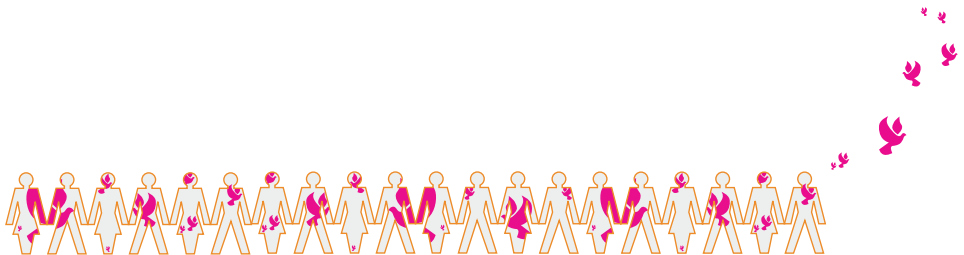
In 2012, I worked for a project focusing on victims of violence, giving them the opportunity to formulate and address their needs and expectations regarding Burundi's Truth and Reconciliation mechanisms. The project was called "Victimes à la une" and I used many of my active nonviolence skills to make this project a success. In the same year, 14 organizations established the Burundi MenEngage Network (B-MEN), supported by CARE International and the Ministry responsible for Gender and Human Rights. The General Assembly elected me as the chair of B-MEN, and Fountain-ISOKO was elected to host the secretariat of the network. This platform aims to implement gender-sensitive active nonviolence programs in order to build peace and prevent gender-based violence in Burundi and the Great Lakes Region.

In addition to supporting my capacity-building and advocacy work, the skills and knowledge gained from the ToT also helped me to improve my research skills. Hilde Walacker, a researcher from the Peace and Research Institute of Oslo, acknowl-

edged this in her research on women's empowerment in Burundi, stating, "I particularly owe great gratitude to the research team who helped me with the interviews and provided me with their views and local insights to guide me through the work: my research assistant Christian Ngendahimana from Fountain Isoko."

This year I am working on a project called "My Role". This project will allow Fountain-ISOKO to institutionalize the ISOKO for Boys and Men against Gender-based Violence program. Men and women from different backgrounds – from CSOs, the justice sector, the police sector, church clerics, local authorities, political parties, victims, and perpetrators – will be trained in gender-sensitive active nonviolence. The idea is to empower them to become social change actors in their local communities. This project will build upon the model of creating alliances between men and women to act against gender-based violence, from the local to national level.

We often get positive feedback on how we co-facilitate our workshops, which Ms. Nyanzobe and I always do together. Recently, participants of one of our gender-sensitive peace-building and masculinities workshops told us, “The way you interact and collaborate is expressing your mutual respect. This must be the pillar of the success of Fountain-ISO-KO’s projects in different communities,” adding, “We too must build gender-sensitive men and women groups, so that we can start to engage in cross-gender dialogue and positively influence our communities for gender justice and equality.”



Tonny's story

by Otim Tonny – Uganda



Otim Tonny currently works for the Uganda Kolping Society. Previously he worked with the TESO Women Peace Activists. He was one of the initiators of Women Integrated Initiative for Development (WIIDE), focused on addressing violence against women from a positive masculinity perspective. He holds a

Bachelor's degree in Social Sciences from Makerere University, Kampale, Uganda. In addition, he holds a certificate in Administrative Law.

Having grown up under the care of my mother, I witnessed how she became even more resilient in times of hardship. She supported the entire family. I always felt a woman had a supernatural gift and just needed the space and the right environment to facilitate and enhance her capabilities.

When I read the WPP's Call for Applications, I felt it was the right opportunity for me. The ToT was all about understanding the relevance and effectiveness of working as a male ally with women, in order to support women's significant role in community and nation-building. I applied,

as I wanted to gain knowledge and skills on how to transform men to be gender-sensitive, for them to be able to appreciate women as human beings that are entitled to enjoy their rights and respect. The ToT also helped me to deepen my own understanding of the role women play in peacebuilding, from the grassroots level to the international arena. This role is enormous, commendable, and indisputable.

After the ToT, I started with personal reflection. In order to be an effective advocate of positive masculinities and gender-sensitive nonviolence, the journey always begins with per-

sonal change, on an individual and family level. As such, I developed a culture of dialogue and tolerance with my spouse and other family members.

On an organizational level, the question was how to translate the ToT in an effective and relevant way within my own context. I contacted female colleagues and shared with them my feelings, learning, and experiences. Recognizing that we are living in a very strong patriarchal society where women experience great social, economic, and political deprivation, we developed the idea of establishing a women's organization called Women Integrated Initiative for Development (WIIDE) to respond to these challenges. Since May 2010, WIIDE has been registered as a local NGO, focusing on addressing violence against women through the promotion of positive masculinities. WIIDE is active in various domains, from promoting the rights of women (including reproductive and health rights and the right to education), to enabling men to identify and challenge structures and institutions that perpetrate gender injustice and

inequality in society. To support the latter, we have created a support group for men who are committed to change. WIIDE also tries to improve the welfare of women and girls through the establishment of income-generating activities (IGAs), the development of entrepreneurship skills, and the setting up of savings and credit schemes.

My work with the women of WIIDE is complementary. I assist during training sessions and with the planning processes. From the beginning, I have made sure that the structure of the organization has included both women and men in management positions, to encourage harmonized decision-making.

Furthermore, I have been using the church structure to mobilize and organize men and women to jointly engage in socio-economic development. For example, I have been able to organize a women's and men's group at the St. Mark Kamenya development group into a vibrant savings and credit association. Its members have been able to save 7 million Ugandan shillings, which



enables them to meet the education needs of their children, such as paying school fees, food and care facilities, and other obligations. This has increased the independence of the women, who no longer rely solely on their men to fend for the families. It leads to the sharing of responsibilities, which in turn helps to decrease the number of domestic violence cases.

In addition, I have organized workshops that focus on positive masculinities, encouraging and supporting men to speak out publicly against gender stereotyping and risky sexual behavior. One of my workshops on positive masculinities targeted both men and women as participants. The group was comprised of local council leaders, opinion-makers, and interested community members of the Kwooti Parish in the Kapchorwa District. The message hit home; I still remember one male participant stating, “I wish you had come earlier for this kind of training. We have been in total darkness, but today we have seen that women are assets and allies in social transformation.”

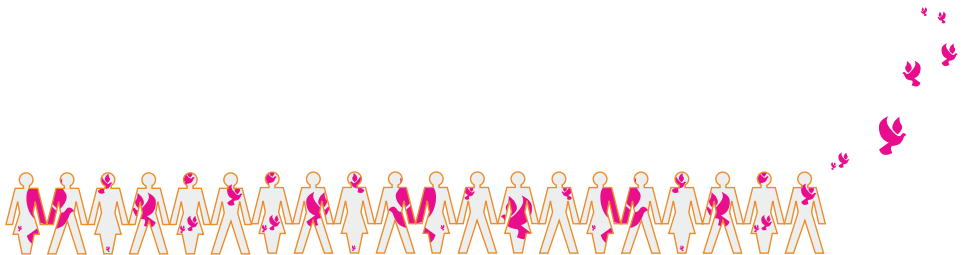
This mixed gender group has been able to replicate this training for the rest of the community through community dialogue meetings, theater, and music, which all focus on breaking hegemonic notions of masculinities. Their message of peaceful co-existence is very powerful and persuasive.

On the political scene, I have engaged with and encouraged local councils to include gender budgeting in their approach, so that the specific needs and interests of women are addressed and monitored.

Convincing men who live in a patriarchal society with rigid gender norms to give up power and privilege is very difficult. For a long time, men have misinterpreted the concept of gender justice, perceiving it as a way for women to absorb the power of men. Therefore, it is key to point out how traditional notions of masculinities and femininities hinder everyone – men and boys, women and girls – in realizing their full potential. Through much interaction with men, and carefully listening to the issues they talk about, I have discovered the

powerful role men can play as positive role models.

In terms of women's rights in Uganda, there is still a lot of work ahead of us. Strengthening the Ugandan constitution as a framework to provide for women's rights and, in particular, to fight against the discrimination that is permitted in matters of personal laws and customary law is crucial in this regard.



Babar's story

by Babar Bashir – Pakistan



Babar Bashir is a Sociology graduate from the University of the Punjab, Lahore, and has been working in the social sector in Pakistan since 2000. He has worked with various development organizations in different positions, ranging from mid-management to senior management. Currently he works as the Managing Director of Rozan, an Islamabad-based national NGO. His areas of interest and expertise include working with men and boys on the issues of violence against women and masculinities, human resource development, and project management. He has sound experience in developing training modules and conducting workshops (capacity building, sensitization, and ToTs) with teachers, doctors, local government representatives, development professionals, and local communities. For the last ten years, while working with Rozan, Babar has been conducting training sessions on emotional health, self growth, gender equality, masculinities and its relation with GBV, conflict resolution, and violence against women and children.

This is a common story about a 15-year-old boy in Pakistan. While sleeping in his bedroom, all of a sudden he hears shouting and crying from his parents' room. He rushes to the room and sees his father beating his mother. He is shocked by what he sees, unable to understand what is happening and how to intervene. It seems that his father got angry when

questioned by his mother about his extramarital relations. A couple of days later, his sisters are beaten because they are wearing tight trousers, associated with a Western style of dressing, which is considered a disgrace to the honor of the family. As time passes, the boy continues his studies. Due to the common idea that grade 10 is enough education

for girls, and the fact that there is no college close to the village, his sisters are forced to stop attending school. In the long run, the girls have to get married anyways, so there is no use investing in them...

But there is one boy who chooses a different path, as something inside pushes him to think and respond differently than most of the other boys. During his graduation, after another violent incident in the family, he stands his ground, communicating to his father that he will stop coming home if his father again uses violence against his mother. Because of the determination of the boy, the physical violence at his parents' home stops.

This is my story.

After completing my Master's degree, I started to work for a local NGO on an education project. Later, I shifted to another group, which worked on gender and violence issues. Here I learned about the socialization processes of men and women, and the role of power in relationships. But the basic question in my mind always remained unan-

swered: Why do men behave like this, get angry and often resort to violent behavior in order to resolve the issues and differences they face in their lives?

It was June 2009 when I received an email from one of my colleagues, with a Call for Applications for a ToT on gender-sensitive active non-violence (GSANV) and exploring masculinities. It was the second part of the title about masculinities that interested me most, as GSANV was a very new concept for me. My first response was: "What is this GSANV?"

I went to the website of the WPP and tried to understand the concept of gender-sensitive active nonviolence. One thing stood out: It is about addressing conflict and different forms of violence in a nonviolent way. This, along with exploring the notion of masculinities, inspired me to apply for the ToT. At the same time, I was concerned that the training would be too far removed from my socio-cultural reality, and that I would not be able to make the links





Group educational session: Group Educational session with young boys and men at Rawat, Islamabad, Feb. 2013 © Babar Bashir

between my own context and the ToT learning concepts.

I can still remember the first day of the ToT, starting on a cold morning in December 2009, in Egmond aan Zee, the Netherlands. Now, even four years down the road, the first sentence that struck me was “Non-violence is a way of life.” I would say that the biggest impact the ToT cycle had on me revolves around this sentence. A new journey in my life started and of course this journey has not been an easy one. It has involved a commitment to myself that I would not be violent in my pri-

vate and public life. This was something I already believed in for a long time, but the difference is that active nonviolence theory provided me with a concrete tool to put this belief into practice when action is required. My journey does not stop at being nonviolent in my private life; it goes beyond, and means coming out of my comfort zone, stepping onto the street, and raising my voice. This was an important lesson I learned back in 2009. From then onwards, the phrase “Active nonviolence is way of life” has been with me day in and day out.

There have been multiple events and incidences, both personally as within my work setting, where I could use the concept of active nonviolence. Within several civil society groups, I actively contributed to raising our voice against social injustices and violent killings of citizens. A recent example is a countrywide sit-in for three days and nights to protest the killings of a hundred people from a minority group in one of the provincial capitals. The sit-in showed solidarity with the families of victims. We sat until our demand for the

removal of the Chief Minister was granted. The whole event was very moving and my belief in gender-sensitive active nonviolence was further strengthened.

At the same time, one has to realize that the journey of being a gender-sensitive nonviolent man is not an easy one; it is a continuous struggle with myself and my surroundings. It goes beyond the balancing of my personal and professional life. It is not a 9-to-5 job. You cannot say that you cannot attend a demonstration just because it is the weekend. But this is what I have opted for; it has become my “way of life”.

GSANV is also linked to reconstructing my own masculinities. I recall the day when my sisters, mother, and male family members told me, while I was visiting my native village, “Lala (my nickname), please do not change your kids’ diapers when you are with us. We feel ashamed and embarrassed. It goes against the honor of a man in our family.” I responded, “How can I be a different person when I am in Islamabad, and then again be a different one

while here with you? I believe that my approach is going to be healthier for my family in the end.”

Now, years after that incident, most of my family members tell people that husbands should develop a similar relationship “as Babar has developed with his wife and fathers should also be more like him.”

I still recall the two commitments I made while writing a letter to my wife at the end of the first training in Egmond aan Zee. One was linked to being more expressive with her and the second was to communicate with my son in a style that makes him more comfortable talking to me. I am very happy that I really worked on these two commitments. Since the training, my wife has shared with her family and friends that “Babar has changed his age-old habits of being non-expressive.” It has helped us a lot to improve our relationship. And similarly, I feel my son is very comfortable now sharing his issues with me.

Some time ago, there was a heated discussion in my family, involving my



aunt. Her daughter, who is doing her Masters in Environmental Sciences, wanted to go abroad to pursue high-quality education. Her parents were concerned about the effects the study trip would have on her marriage prospects. I pointed out the importance of girls being educated and not being dependent on their husbands. I mentioned that this educational opportunity would enhance her economic empowerment, which ultimately would define their social status in the society. At the end of the discussion, her parents agreed and allowed her to go abroad for her higher education. One of the comments that the girl shared was, “I have never seen a man like you, who is so progressive about women and their rights.”

Reflecting on this discussion, I asked myself what the difference was between me and the two other men participating in the discussion. Their whole focus remained that the parents should be more worried about the marriage prospects of the girl. I realized that I have gone through a different process through the work I have done over the past years, which

makes me see things more from a feminist perspective.

From an organizational perspective, I would say that the ToT has supported me to more holistically relate my work on gender-based violence with active nonviolence and peacebuilding. Exploring masculinities, active nonviolence, and peacebuilding are now integrated into our next three years of program planning. I feel the work is very promising. For example, we organized sessions with a group consisting of 100 young men and boys in the periphery of Islamabad and, in our evaluation, we observed that the impact on their gender sensitivity and behavior has been very encouraging. Similarly, in order to deepen our work, we are expanding our research. We recently conducted a mapping study on understanding masculinities and men’s affirmative actions to address sexual violence, which has provided a good basis to take this work to the next level. I can only conclude that the knowledge I received from the ToT cycle has been very helpful for me, for my personal as well as my professional life.

Alimou's story

by Alimou Diallo – Ghana



Alimou Diallo is the Regional Coordinator of the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) and since 2007 has been in charge of the Institutional Development of WANEP National Networks. With more than 12 years of work experience with International NGOs, he is a renowned Peacebuilding Practitioner in West Africa and a Trainer in Conflict Management and Gender-Sensitive Active Nonviolence. Alimou is a member of the ECOWAS Election Observation Unit for West Africa and has supervised elections since 2006. As a mediator, he has facilitated mediation for various communal conflicts in his region. He has also led high-level policy advocacy in addressing political conflicts in West Africa, especially on election dispute management and gender-based violence. Alimou has a number of policy brief publications to his credit on peace, security, and gender. He is fluent in English and proficient in French and Arabic.

I was privileged to be among the 19 men from 17 different countries who attended the 2009-2010 WPP ToT on Exploring Masculinities, Violence and Peace, in the Netherlands and the Philippines respectively. As a result of the ToT, I have become a male ally for gender justice and equality. Since then, I have deliberately lived to epitomize the values of peace, love, and understanding in my personal, family, and professional life.

I went to the training session on masculinities with an open mind and willingness to learn. I now realize that it was the first step in my personal transformation. It increased my determination to learn with an unbiased mind and strengthened my ability to analyze and reflect on the past and present, pinpoint what is not right, and act with unwavering determination for positive change.





Group of trainees on the topic of Masculinities and GSANV from the Ghana Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs, the police and medical staff, Accra, Ghana © Alimou Diallo

Throughout the ToT cycle, I took keen interest in educating myself about masculinities. I learned that the societal constructions of masculinities are a major factor for male identification. I also understood that the processes of “construction” of masculine identities is wired very early into our upbringing as boys, which men then internalize as a “natural” process. The fact that, in my society, machismo is celebrated and rewarded, while women are restrained and disadvantaged, became more and more appalling to me. I further realized the cycle of

socialization of men and women has found resonance in societal institutions, such as schools, churches, mosques, and in the art and entertainment industries. Through the cross-cultural exchanges I had with the other male trainees, I understood that socially accepted expressions of masculinities vary from one culture to another, and individual manifestations of them are largely informed by a combination of personal experiences and social contexts.

In comparing the effects of gender-based violence coming from tradi-

tional types of masculinities, the evidence shows clearly that the bastion of male chauvinism and harsh patriarchy mostly affects women. Albeit, I learned how we men and boys also suffer physical, psychological, and emotional damage in the cycle of male dominance and violence. Male socialization processes often promote a machismo-type masculinity, where men oppress their real feelings and violent reactions are promoted. For example, in West Africa, as in many other parts of the world, a “real man” does not cry. Along the way, I have learned that crying is a necessary and natural healing process that reduces pain, anguish, and sorrow. The question then is: Why must men suppress their feelings and emotions all the time?

I remember vividly that during the training, one of my Asian fellow trainees cried when he reflected on his past. We were all moved and some trainees from the same region also cried. Yet though I felt like crying, I could not...This episode became a living testimony of how my socialization process has robbed me of being able to express sorrow through cry-

ing. Of the few moments I remember crying in my life, I recall that being able “to let go” was always a huge struggle. There is an African proverb which says, *“As for crying, it is only the beginning that is difficult.”* When my father passed away, I only cried when I saw my mom bitterly weeping. I needed connection and someone to lean on. My mother took me into her arms, which reminded me of my childhood. But instead of being a vulnerable child, I was now a vulnerable man.

This revelation was very important during the training. The hegemonic masculinities model of power, dominance, and privilege are socially constructed, taught, and imbibed, yet can be reconstructed. The natural capacities of men to love, show compassion, and understand cannot be destroyed. Men are capable of reclaiming their human attributes by reconnecting with other men; and women play an important role in supporting men in reclaiming and nurturing “positive” masculinities that challenge women’s suppression. My mom’s embrace is a testimony to this.



With the understanding that change is possible, I made a decision to work for positive masculinities and create change. The first step I took was to write to my wife to inform her of my reflections on my past, and to apologize for the violence I had committed to her. Though I never used physical violence, I had rarely listened to my wife when she spoke about her pain. She would ask me to discuss certain issues but there was never right a moment for me. It never occurred to me that this was creating a violent psychological atmosphere in my house. My transformation has improved our relationship, and we now jointly plan and implement every aspect of our lives together. Today, while I acknowledge that we are happier, healthier, and more comfortable, I worry less over certain things, given my wife's capacity to discern issues and to make the appropriate decisions for us. I consult with her now more often and rely on her judgment, which has never failed me.

We learned through the training that men could be part of the solution, not just part of the problem.

This served as a positive motivation and helped me to learn and change. I shared my insights on positive masculinities with my family members, which also changed them. One example of empowerment was when my wife fully supervised the construction of a family house, including overseeing the male family members. Although the initial reaction was stiff opposition from my elder brother, we remained resolute and gave our arguments for this decision. The outcome of the project convinced my family of the strength of women, especially my elder brother, who now lives in the house with all his family. One lesson I learned is that change is possible, especially when the people driving it have knowledge and understanding, are active, patient and have earned respect in their communities.

In my professional life, I have used the ToT materials to duplicate the training sessions for my colleagues and officially earned the titled "ally" from the women staff in WANEP. I have also conducted training on masculinities for the staff of WANEP-Ghana member organizations,

selected from regions in Ghana. In addition, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs in Ghana (MOWAC) sponsored a training session for the male directors of the Ministry, the staff of the Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit of the Ghana police service, and health professionals dealing with gender-based violence cases. In all these training sessions, I co-facilitated with my female ally and the Coordinator of the Africa Desk of the WPP. These activities focused on influencing policy in the various institutions, and to formalize men's and women's collaboration for gender equality.

Within WANEP, I led the review of the WANEP Gender Policy. We also adopted policies to encourage collaboration and partnership-building between men and women to reduce violence against women and promote gender equality. This resulted in the following statements within the gender policy:

- “WANEP will develop, promote and use creative ways of engaging men and boys (and not only women and girls) as women's

- allies and agents of change in the pursuit of gender equality”;
- “As a matter of principle, WANEP considers the different needs of men and women in the design, implementation, and evaluation of policies and programs;
- “Decision Making: Ensuring that the composition of the General Assembly, the Board of Directors and Management team at all times must have fair representation of men and women (with a minimum of 30% of each sex);
- “WANEP will work extensively with women and men in a manner that will promote gender equality.”

I am happy to report that, at management level, WANEP has achieved gender parity in 2012 and the standard set in the WANEP Gender Policy has always been met in activity implementation, Board composition, and General Assembly delegations. WANEP, with my modest contribution, has championed the course of gender equality in West Africa, and has developed relevant tools for the implementation of normative frameworks on gender equality in partnership with governments and regional



organizations, such as ECOWAS and the African Union.

Over the last couple of years, I have used the knowledge and insights gained at the ToT in various projects and events related to my work. One highlight was providing support to the development of the National Action Plan for the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 in Sierra Leone. I was honored to be in the front-page photograph as the only male ally among eight women. Another highlight was when I participated in a UN-powered mission in March 2010, to assess GBV cases in Guinea during the September 28, 2009 massacre of peaceful protesters by the security forces. According to the official UN report, 157 people were killed and over 100 women were publicly raped. The mission produced a report that documented victims' cases and carried out lobbying and advocacy campaigns to bring the perpetrators to justice. As an outcome of this mission in Guinea, I co-authored a position paper on a hybrid model using Human Rights

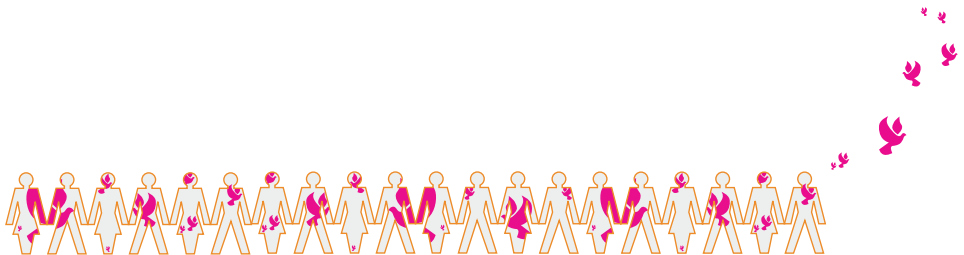
Instruments and Early Warning to prevent violence against women.¹

One of the challenges to achieving gender equality and gender-just peace is dealing with the structural forms of violence that have been embedded within our culture. My experience has thought me that in every society, culture is often used to justify violence and destruction. The pervasive nature of violence and gender-based discrimination is often exacerbated through differences embedded in religion, patriarchy, and culture, which are expressed through art, music, education, cinema, and the media. Unfortunately, these mediums continuously shape public perception and influence how we relate to another.

However, I strongly believe that the agenda for gender equality will be achieved if men stand as allies with women to challenge and transform notions of dominant masculinities

¹ http://www.fasngo.org/assets/UNSCR_1325_album/doc/UNSCR1325%20and%20Prevention%20Paper%20ofev%202011.pdf

across cultures and promote positive masculinities and social justice. As the theory and practice of engaging men continues to develop in order to achieve the goal of gender equality, we have to continue centralizing the needs, perspectives, voices, and leadership of women. To facilitate this, I believe that women should receive the same training as men in masculinities, male socialization, and strategies for engaging men as equals in cross-gender dialogue and strategic planning. I invite you to join me in the transforming of our communities to a safer place, where women will be able to lead peaceful and dignified lives.



Kapil's story

by Kapil Kafle – Nepal



Kapil Kafle (52) is a media specialist from Nepal. He has been working in this field since 1987. In addition, he had dedicated much of his time to advancing human rights in Nepal, focusing specifically on women's and children's rights. Currently he is the Executive Director of the Institute of Human Rights Communication Nepal (IHRICON), an organization established in 2000. Part of his job is giving training to social activists and media professionals. Kapil is the author of six books and hundreds of articles on women's and children's rights. Most of these articles have been published in local newspapers. Recently he completed his own research on the issue of women and sexuality in the Himalayan region of Nepal. He is also Editor-in-Chief for Enepalixhabar, an online news portal.

As a journalism student and social activist, I witnessed in the Nepalese context how religion, culture, tradition, and beliefs acted as sources of discrimination and violence against women. Although discrimination impacts on almost all aspects of society, women are certainly most affected by it.

I have written and published hundreds of articles in local newspapers, magazines, and online on women's

rights and the social, political, and cultural discrimination against them. I also have addressed these issues through fiction, for example in my stories and novels. Susam Chandika, one of my fictional creations, is fully dedicated to the issue of gender equality.

When the WPP organized its ToT on this theme in 2009, I grabbed this opportunity like a hungry man offered food. Gender sensitivity and

nonviolence were not alien terms for me, but the topic of masculinities was a substantial eye-opener.

Since the ToT, I have become very conscious of my attitude towards women, reflecting constantly on the way I interact with them. My efforts to use positive masculinity are an important element in this regard. It means changing the traditional reference of masculinity that I was taught throughout my childhood and adolescence. It is a long process, but it provides me many more opportunities in my personal and professional life. A very concrete example is that I got rid of my mustache, which is a very important symbol of masculinity in the South-Asian context. To me, my mustache started to feel like a negative and too traditional symbol of masculinity. I also gave up the tendency to create fear and threats in presenting myself as a boss.

As a result of the training given by the WPP, I started to explore the qualities of positive masculinities and what this means to me as a man working for gender equality. With the skills I have learned, I started work-

ing with women as allies, so that they would experience me as a male activist partner, rather than a man “helping” them – which would imply that as a man I still hold some form of authority over women. Instead of just donating support to women out of generosity, I have been trying my best to create an equal and respectful space.

I would like to elaborate on some examples in terms of what partnering with women as allies means to me in my work and personal life.

Neha Sharma (30), Mahalaxmi Dulal (28), Sanju Moktan (25), and Sarita Aryal (45) are the names of female columnists working for my newspaper and online news portal called *Nepal Samacharpatra* and *Enepalikhobar*. All four of them were very interested in writing feature and opinion articles for mass media. Unfortunately, they had bitter experiences of rejection from editors and publishers. When I became aware of this situation, I met with each of them to provide them with tips regarding information sources and expert contact details. I also



made sure to approach some of the resource people, requesting them to provide their time to the columnists when approached. After the columnists had written their articles, I provided them with basic feedback. As a result of this partnership, I got interesting articles for my newspaper and online news portal, and the columnists got their names published.

Currently, three of them are publishing their articles in several media outlets. According to the three women, they prefer to submit their articles to me as I recognize their efforts. Neha Sharma, a journalist working for an FM radio station as a newsreader, had been struggling for some time with her writing skills for feature and opinion articles. She told me recently, “I’m happy to work with you because I’m now getting creative feedback from you to improve myself.”

Ms. Aryal, now a regular columnist for several newspapers and online news portals published in the capital of Nepal, told me, “I’m producing literary articles and political critiques on a regular basis now. This was

made possible because of *Nepal Samacharpatra* and your support.”

I have also been integrating the concepts of gender sensitivity and positive masculinities into my work for the media. For example, I need three articles each day for the opinion page, and as editor I always make sure that at least one of these articles is written by a woman. I also prioritize articles related to gender equality, positive masculinities, and nonviolent activism. Similarly, I have built up a team of journalists who are knowledgeable on gender-sensitive active nonviolence and integrate it into their media work and daily lives as well.

In the area of research, I also find it important to work together with women. Recently, I decided to conduct research on the issue of sexuality and women’s sexual rights in the trans-Himalaya region,¹ which is the northern border area of the country. Due to its remoteness, it is quite an

¹ The research report can be found here: ihricon.org.np/userfiles/file/Sexuality.pdf

isolated region, meaning no research or information had been collected before. To make interaction with the local women in this remote area possible – especially on the sensitive topic of sexuality, which is considered as their private business – I asked two women to help me: Ms. Sharada Pokhrel, a journalist at a newspaper based in Kathmandu, and human rights activist Ms. Sharmila Gurung, a resident of Jomsom, the administrative headquarters of the Mustang District (the focus district for the research). Our partnership was based on respecting and honoring each other's contributions and expertise throughout the research period, which included making sure everyone received proper pay for the work, as well as recognition in the final research report. It was clear to me that as a male alone, I could never have done this research. Because of social and cultural taboos, it is simply too difficult for men to talk to women about sexual issues in the Nepalese context.

Furthermore, I try to encourage women around me to become part of public life. One of them is

my neighbor, Ms. Laxmi Maharjan Sharma (35), a housewife living in a suburb of Kathmandu. As a mother of two children, she was used to staying at home. As her neighbor, I came to know her as a very energetic and dedicated woman. I was supported by my wife to invite her to the assembly of the local women's group, and encouraged her to participate in the community association. She was happy to be invited and is now an executive member in the Siddhartha Mothers' Group. This group creates awareness of human rights, women's rights, and social security issues. The group also raises funds to support people in need. For the last four years, these women have been participating in rallies on the occasion of March 8, International Women's Day, and December 10, International Human Right's Day. I am with them during these rallies, as a male ally in the struggle for women's rights and social justice in Nepal.



Rob's Story

by Rob Fairmichael – Ireland

Rob Fairmichael is Coordinator of INNATE, the Irish Network for Nonviolent Action Training and Education: www.innatennonviolence.org. He is part-time Coordinator of the Community Faiths' Forum, an interfaith body in Northern Ireland focused on social and community issues, and an associate of Mediation Northern Ireland.

Born in 1953, and originally from Dublin and Offaly, he became involved in the peace movement and other issues in 1969, and has lived in Belfast since 1975. He is married to Carmel and they have four grown sons. Among other activities he is a bog wood carver.



Where is the beginning? What is the beginning? As a boy, a young male, learning from my mother or female teachers? Of course, at this stage I was not consciously aware of gender differences or wider matters.

But let's fast forward to me being a 15-year-old in a school in Northern Ireland, which had a British Army cadet force as part of the school establishment. On one weekend training at a British Army base in Ballymena, a non-commissioned officer was doing his best to charm us with the joys of army, and male, life. But

I saw and noted that those in detention in the guardhouse for (what was regarded as) misbehavior had to undergo brutal physical punishment. And I heard the soldier's story of being with a woman on a beach, having sex with her, and then saying he was going to get a taxi for them – but instead deliberately leaving and never coming back. I was meant to be awed and impressed, but I was horrified, even if “misogyny” was not in my vocabulary.

A year or so later, a British army training film on hand-to-hand com-

bat persuaded me of the necessity of nonviolence, and my career as a peace activist began, 43 years ago. In the period since, I have increasingly seen the relevance of gender to peacemaking and peacebuilding, both in Ireland and around the world. It is not just that I sought to be a different kind of man than the macho norms but that without dealing with issues of gender, peace of any meaningful kind is an impossibility. This is all an ongoing journey for me.

One of the exercises which impressed me most in the WPP ToT for men (2009-2010) was the one facilitated by a Dutch men's group where we, as aspiring gender-sensitive nonviolent activists, were asked to brainstorm on the "things we did for women" and "the things we did for ourselves" in being involved in the gender field. What we do for women is clearly a question of working for justice. But what we do for ourselves as men is about sharing burdens; it is about self-respect, positive identity, mental wellbeing, and better relationships with women, both in general and in our intimate relations.

What I got out of this exercise, most importantly, is the importance of "the carrot". There are some men who want to return to a mythical golden past, who resist any female gains, who seek "men to be men", who like the macho model of beer, "chicks", and occasional violence. They are the legion of the rearguard for macho masculinity. But most men, while some of the macho model may appeal to them or us in some ways, are not out and out misogynists. Changing norms and equality legislation have had an influence.

But to take them/us further, wielding a big stick to hit with is not going to be very effective. Giving such men a carrot to encourage moving in the right direction might just do the trick. And if enough men move, then even the misogynists will gradually have the rug pulled from under them. So since the WPP training I have been continually advocating "carrots", including a published response to a feature on men in the *New Internationalist* magazine.

When it comes to violence, gender is the elephant in the room. How can





Hanna's House workshop on "What men need to move beyond violence", Belfast August 2010 © Rob Fairmichael

people not see the significance that violence is very, very predominantly carried out by men – at personal, community, societal, and international levels. So in working for peace and nonviolence I try to work for gender awareness and a redefinition of masculinity. The latter is a massive task and one I am aware that I need to spend time on. Involved in a series of “gender and peace” discussions in Belfast recently, I was fascinated to hear a woman colleague talking about the need for men to “overcome their masculinity”, i.e. for men to become gender-sensitive they had to leave their “masculinity”

(obviously a negative construct in her eyes) behind. Whatever the concept or terminology used, I thought it was a fascinating summary of the fix that men find themselves in.

I was very fortunate to gain a place at the WPP ToT. As a rich-world applicant, I believe the magic words “Northern Ireland” (= conflict area) got me in, and I was privileged to be, arguably, the only European and Westerner at the course. Northern Ireland is still a “recovering” conflict area, and building a different masculine identity should be part of that recovery. In the WPP course I sought

a place to deepen my knowledge and therefore capacity and it did that. But with knowledge and exploration came confidence to tackle “anything” (I exaggerate) in the area of gender and peace, well, “anything” on masculinity and peace.

I was amazed recently when, in writing about a conference on gender and peace organized by Media-tion Northern Ireland, I concluded what was missing was a definition of “gendered peace” to pull it all together and, without needing to pause, came out with a definition (subsequently used by the organizers in their report). It was “Gendered peace is where people of all genders and sexual orientations are allowed and empowered to be themselves, interact with others like any citizen, and be free of violence and exploitative behavior either as perpetrators or victims.” You may or may not think that is the best definition, and it veers towards “gender” more than “peace”, but I did think as it came out of my brain that without the WPP training I could have sat there for hours and not come up with a defini-

tion. I might not even have thought of the need to frame the issue.

My peace activism is usually an unpaid activity and I work part-time to earn money; my wife and partner in life effectively subsidizes my peacemaking. As a busy peace activist with many projects needing work undertaken, where does gender fit in? I hope everywhere – in how I do things, relate to people, and see things through gendered lenses. Whenever opportunities arise for work on gender, violence, and nonviolence (input to workshops, participation in events) I try to pick them up. Sometimes it might only be a letter to a newspaper, or writing up an article or report; yet I find that everything draws on the learning and reflection from the WPP course.

One task I have yet to undertake is a vision project of what a gender-sensitive, peaceful Ireland would look like, and what would need to change to arrive there. In developing a series of posters on peace and nonviolence for INNATE, the nonviolence network in Ireland, three have a specific gender focus, including one which uses



a symbol I thought of while in Manila in the Philippines on the WPP course. This is a combination of the peace (nuclear disarmament), male and female symbols to form a “gender-sensitive active nonviolence” symbol.

There is a specifically feminist peacemaking body working on an all-Ireland basis, Hanna’s House, currently undergoing a period of assessment; I ran a workshop at one of their conferences on men and violence (again this was as a result of the WPP training).

There are no male equivalents to Hanna’s House, possibly for a number of reasons; men are, or tend to see themselves as, the top dog when it comes to the genders, and may also feel they have control of groups anyway. So there is no masculine body that can be worked with in Ireland in the peacemaking field – even if there are some sympathetic men dotted about the place.

Even in a relatively rich country like Ireland (both jurisdictions – Republic and Northern Ireland) there are so many issues that can be tack-

led around gender and peace that you could fall over with fear at the thought of what work needs to be done. I suppose I believe in serendipity and “going with the flow”, not in some haphazard way but in having a set of priorities and, as opportunities and time arise, getting going on what is possible at that time. I feel able to make “informed choices” on this, which benefit from my learning with the WPP.

As I approach 60 years old, I know the field of work I will continue to engage in, but not the specific projects, beyond the ones I am already involved in – and those will take ages to complete! What I do feel is that the knowledge about gender and peace that I have gained, most especially through the WPP training, will equip me to deal with challenges and demands in this area in the years ahead. The most specific challenge I see for me in relation to this is to build a different concept of masculinity, both personally and in society as a whole. I look forward to it.

Ilot's Story

by Ilot Muthaka Alphonse – DRC



Ilot Muthaka Alphonse was born and raised in Rutshuru, a village located in North Kivu, in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Ilot is the Executive Director of the Congo Men's Network, a non-profit organization dedicated to mobilizing, sensitizing, and engaging men and boys to cultivate positive masculinity. He has worked for a decade on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, youth empowerment, human rights and peacebuilding. He is currently completing graduate studies in Sociology at Cepromad University, Kinshasa.

I am the third child in my family, with an older brother and sister. Unfortunately my sister passed away when I was very young, after a short period of sickness. My brother was assassinated in 1997, during the first war of liberation.

My parents separated when I was very young. My father was polygamous and my Christian mother wouldn't continue living with my father. We were obliged to go and live with my mother's family. It was really exciting living together in a big family of about 30 people. Our grandmother

was happy to have us around and did her best to make sure everyone was happy. At that time my mum was a farmer, and we were able to sell the sugar cane we produced on the local market. This enabled my mother to pay for our school fees. We did not have much financial support from my father. He occasionally sent money, but often he would have problems at his job and was not able to pay the amount needed for our survival.

This situation did not please some of my uncles, and ultimately they managed to evict us from their place.





Gender sensitivity training in the Democratic Republic of Congo

© Ilot Alphonse Muthaka

I call it “their” place because they thought that, as men, they were the only heirs to the farms, compound, and valuables of our grandfather. This is a cultural assumption that is still present today. I personally witnessed some women being killed by their brothers, only because the women were claiming their right to inheritance in my village.

At that time, rape was not considered a crime. Many girls were victims

of sexual violence, and no one spoke out against these acts.

The education we received from elders was based on our gender; household tasks were also divided according to our gender. In general, much of the work was considered to be female duties. For instance, 80 percent of the work on the farm was done by women. Only boys were encouraged to go to school, while girls had to marry and serve their husbands. Many girls were not given

the opportunity to study. Even when they were given a chance, they were not able to go beyond secondary school. Only a few women could realize their dream to go to university and attain a job for educated women, such as teachers of primary schools, nurses, nuns, and accountants. My mum was one of these women; she became a teacher at a primary school.

Ethnic conflicts in the Masisi territory started in 1990, with different tribes fighting one another. As a neighboring region of Masisi, the conflict also affected Rutshuru, the region where we were living. From then on, we witnessed every kind of violence and war possible. The conflict escalated in 1994, due to the arrival of thousands of Rwandan refugees after the genocide. This tragedy increased the violence and armed conflicts in the region. Let me underline that, during this period, women and girls suffered the most. The conflict facilitated men to take advantage of women, leading to many women's rights violations.

In 1997, an uncontrolled soldier threw four grenades on my friends and me, killing four friends and seriously injuring three, including myself. The same day, the army killed my older brother in a fight with traditional chiefs. It all happened when I was about to finish secondary school, and led to three years of school absence. It was difficult for me to accept and understand what had happened. I had some ideas to revenge my brother's death, revenge being a part of our culture. The only person who advised me against revenge was my mother. My mother was already facilitating conflict mediation projects in our village and wanted her children to live the way she was teaching the community. For a long time the dilemma of vengeance or forgiveness lived within me, but eventually it was my mother's encouragement that led to the choice for forgiveness.

I made a definite and conscious choice to work for peacebuilding. I wanted to know whether I could cure some of the wounds resulting from violence which our own family had suffered for a long time.



For eight years I worked for three organizations at grassroots level on peacebuilding and conflict transformation. In 2008 I attended training in Nairobi, Kenya, on peacebuilding and organizational skills, organized by the UNOY Peacebuilders. After the workshop sessions we concluded that women and girls, as an important part of our society, are potential peacebuilders, similar to men. This idea encouraged me to include gender in my activities on peace. I introduced the concept of gender in the NGO I was working for, dealing with former combatants. With the inclusion of women, we were able to improve our activities and vision. It was the beginning of positive change and successes.

I attended several training sessions on gender and peacebuilding, but the most inspiring was the WPP ToT on masculinities, violence, and active nonviolence, which began with a training session in the Netherlands in 2009. This training was very useful for me because it stimulated self-transformation. The first thing I realized was that I was a violent man myself, pretending to work for

gender justice, yet still obeying the oppressive structures created during my childhood. Transformation takes time. I cannot say that I am a good man yet, but I am a man walking on the road of change.

After the training, I realized that many men and boys in my country are acting on oppressive cultural norms and behaviors. I decided to establish a national men's network that could help men and boys to examine their masculinities and break out of the patriarchal system. In early 2010, with some courageous men, we started the Congo Men's Network and were registered as a nonprofit association with its headquarters in Goma.

Working with women was a bit difficult for me before; I would always compare myself to them. This is the way I was educated. In school, boys who did not accept girls were considered to be the best of the class; boys who worked with girls had less appeal. The ideas we had about women were very biased.

In 2010, I prepared a workshop, together with a female co-facilitator, for civil society activists in Rutshuru, and took the time to analyze whether it would work. At the end of the workshop I found that men and women have equal competences and the training was a big success. Women and their organizations helped my male colleagues and me to grow in the work we were doing. We have tried to prove this to the community by creating alliances between men and women activists at the grassroots level. We now have established 60 peers and the first results are encouraging. For example, men and boys participating in our activities are publicly confessing that they have been displaying oppressive behavior towards women and girls and have expressed their commitment to change. Moreover, wives and daughters of these men have gained access to the family economy, and have a more active role in the decision-making processes and dialogues in the household.

With this new approach of men and women working together, we

have encountered opposition from other activists. They were, and still are, worried that this new approach would detract from their status with donors, and they tried to isolate the men and women who were working together. However, awareness is growing among men that they have to work alongside women. This also raises new challenges, such as fundraising and organizational expansion.

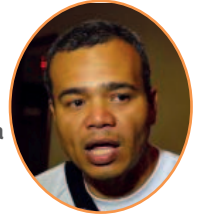
Being weak or strong ultimately does not depend on where you come from, but on your self-motivation to positively change a situation.



Ruben's story

by Ruben Reyes Jiron – Nicaragua

Ruben Reyes Jiron lives and works in Nicaragua. He has a BS in Psychology from Iowa State University (USA) and a Master's degree in Violence and Mental Health from the Universidad Centroamericana (UCA) in Nicaragua. In Puntos de Encuentro, he is a member of the Capacity Building and Networking Team (LIDERARTE) and he has a great deal of experience as trainer in a leadership training program for young people, involving dialogue across differences in gender, age, ethnicity, sexual identities, etc. He is also one of the founders of the Association of Men against Violence in Nicaragua, and has about 20 years of experience in gender work with men. As part of his work with Puntos de Encuentro, he is currently a member of the Coordinating Committee of the Masculinity Network, a coalition of more than 20 organizations working in the field of gender and masculinity in Nicaragua.



When I decided to participate in the WPP ToT on gender-sensitive non-violence and masculinities, I already was an engaged activist and practitioner in gender and masculinity work. Most of my work on masculinities focused on sexual and reproductive health and rights, domestic violence, and HIV/AIDS prevention. Issues such as peace and conflict transformation were not included within my approach to masculinities.

I wanted to explore this new area and learn more about the link between gender, masculinity, and peace work.

The link between masculinities and peace is relevant within the context of my country, Nicaragua. Not too many years ago, we were a society destroyed by a civil war. My teenage years took place within the context of this war. We had a revolutionary Sandinista government, which

came into power after overthrowing the Somoza regime and ending its 40-year dictatorship. Within the first year of the Sandinista government, many of the surviving soldiers of the former Somoza army and other right-wing political leaders organized themselves in a contra-revolutionary militia (the Contras). The Contras were politically and financially supported by the US government.

In order to fight the Contras, the Sandinista government drafted a law for mandatory military service, forcing men aged 18-25 to serve in the military for two years. Since we were in a state of war, serving in the military meant being willing to fight and to put yourself at risk. In order to make this law appealing to young men, the Sandinista government used traditional gender discourse in their strategy: “By joining the Sandinista Army and serving your country, you will become a real man.”

Even though I felt supportive of the Sandinista government at that time, I was not willing to fight in that war. Nonetheless, as a young man, I was legally obliged to become a soldier.

So I did join the army, but I asked to be trained as a military nurse instead of a soldier. Serving as a nurse in the army made me feel good. I thought that taking care of the wounded and ill soldiers was a very useful thing to do, though at the same time, I also felt “not man enough”, as I was not willing to risk my life in order to defend my country. I was afraid to fight. I felt ashamed of myself and carried this guilt with me for many years.

My experience shows one of the most visible ways masculinity is associated with violence and war in Nicaragua. In addition, Nicaragua has a strong culture of machismo and a well-established patriarchal system. Within the machismo culture, most men grow up believing that we are superior to women and that we deserve more. An important element is the normality of men using violence against their partners. National studies have shown that one out of every two women have been beaten by their partners at least once in their lifetime.





Youth camp "Building Alliances across Differences" © Ruben Reyes Jiron

Violence associated with masculinity is also related to the inability of men to express their feelings in a nonviolent manner. Within this machismo culture, men are taught that they should not cry or feel scared. A man should be as strong as a rock. Should he ever feel something, he can only feel anger and he should destroy whatever or whomever he's angry with. As you can imagine, in a country that has been through several wars and natural disasters, people have been through a lot of pain. If men can't express these feel-

ings of pain and sadness in a healthy manner, they might start to behave violently.

I have experienced the violence of men against women in my private life. At age 11, my father was physically violent to my mother. No doubt my father was a traditional, patriarchal, working-class man, but at the same time, he was also quite a sweet man. He was actually unable to hurt anybody at all. So, how could he do that to my mother? I was angry with my father for many years because

of this. This experience led me to think there was something wrong with regular guys like my father. As a result, one of the first things I decided was that violence and masculinity did not have to go together. I could learn other ways of living my life as a man.

During the Sandinista Revolution, men and women worked side by side in the struggle for social justice. Certain women became revolutionary leaders themselves and fought against the dictatorship. Many other women became activists in the social movements supporting the revolutionary government. Some of the men learned to work in partnership with them. Yet, most men continued to frame women within traditional home-related roles, demanding unconditional support from them.

Those of us who learned to relate to women as partners also learned to listen to them. They taught us that gender-based violence is a power issue embedded within the machismo culture. We realized that, in order to build an egalitarian and

peaceful society, we had to tackle our culture of machismo. As men, we needed to become allies with women in order to challenge this culture. This meant changing traditional gender relationships and roles and giving up our privileges, so that we can together create a space for alternative ways of being a man and a woman.

I am an active member of the coordinating body of the Masculinity Network for Gender Equality (REDMAS), which is an alliance of more than 20 organizations promoting men's and boys' involvement in challenging machismo and patriarchy. REDMAS is a network that includes both men and women working together. As REDMAS, we have organized several campaigns targeting boys and young men. Our first campaign's slogan was "Acting as a sexist man isn't cool" and our current campaign's slogan is "You are my father." It targets young fathers (under 30 years old) to help them become caring and supportive with their children.

With my participation in the WPP's ToT on gender-sensitive active nonvi-



olence, I wanted to learn more about peace work and to be better able to link it with my gender and masculinity work. The ToT was a constructive and engaging experience. Both the organizers and facilitators had prepared a very rich, interesting and fun program. With a participatory methodology, the facilitators conducted sessions on gender, feminism, masculinity, and active nonviolence. The facilitators were very good at helping the group to create a safe and caring space for everybody. They also provided a good role model for how men and women can work together as allies.

Together we learned that patriarchy is a universal system, and within this system men learn that they are supposed to be superior to women and entitled to privileges. The patriarchal way of behaving as men is also hurtful to men, because they are supposed to toughen up and to deny and repress any human feelings of vulnerability they might experience. We learned about the need to engage in dialogue and build alliances with women, so that we can

work together in the creation of a world of peace and equality.

Through the training I learned that some of the work that I was already doing was not only gender work, but also peace work. For instance, in several of the activities of Puntos de Encuentro, like a youth camp, we are helping young people to engage in dialogue and to build alliances across differences. This is a useful and constructive way of dealing with violence, discrimination, and conflict. We are currently also including conflict transformation and nonviolent communication exercises in our own training of trainers sessions.

Being part of such a diverse and international ToT setting was really inspiring and eye-opening to me. From my fellow ToT participants who live in Muslim communities and in Arab countries, I learned they had many problems with how Western societies are producing and reproducing stereotypes of Muslims and Arabs as savages and terrorists. I could relate to their feelings. As men from developing countries, we have the same experience with negative

stereotyping and discrimination by some people and institutions in the developed world. We also talked about the fact that men have manipulated religion to exercise and justify violence against women. However, religion can also provide a ground for men to learn to respect women and to promote a world of peace.

I know there is still a lot to be learned because active nonviolence has a long history as a tool in the struggle for peace and justice. As I continue to learn, there are great challenges ahead of me. Nicaragua's history is filled with fighting and violence, as well as authoritarian rule by those in power. Even now we are dealing with an authoritarian and oppressive government. Within this context, using violence in the struggle for peace and justice is always a temptation because we, the Nicaraguan people, have not learned much about active nonviolence. It is not part of our history. There is a lot of work to do here.

that they all continue to be engaged in social justice issues, and that some of them are constantly putting their lives at risk. Despite the risks, they are committed to active nonviolence and continue to include a gender and masculinity approach in their peace work. I feel inspired by my fellow gender-sensitive active nonviolent men. I just feel inspired by those guys.

What is most important for me is that I now feel connected to all those men that I met at the ToT. I know



Ali's story

by Ali Gohar – Pakistan



Ali Gohar is the founder of Just Peace Initiatives. For 13 years, he served as Additional Commissioner Social Welfare Cell for Afghan refugees – a project of UNHCR. He also worked as Campaign Officer with Oxfam GB on the issues of honor killing and violence against women in the province of Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa of Pakistan.

He has been involved in projects funded by the EU, Asia Foundation, and the Australian and British Embassy, respectively on victims of torture, dispute resolution, and community policing. Gohar has written four plays about drugs, HIV/AIDS awareness, domestic violence, restorative justice, and honor killing, and is also the author of three books. He holds a degree in International Relations from Quaid-E-Azam University, Pakistan, and completed his second Masters in Conflict Transformation from Eastern Mennonite University Harrisonburg, Virginia, USA, with a Fulbright Scholarship in 2002.

Born into a patriarchal society, where women cannot make decisions even relating to their own wellbeing, injustices tend to be a fact of life. Conscious of the position of women in my society, I always tried to improve the position of women in my personal environment where I could.

I had already obtained some experience in gender and peacebuilding prior to attending the WPP's ToT in

2009 and 2010. After completing my university education, I joined the UNHCR Department of Afghan Refugees. After four years, I was appointed Additional Commissioner. There I managed 150 social coordinators, men and women, who were trained on gender, masculinities, and peacebuilding by Save the Children Sweden. I also worked for three years as a campaign officer for the "We Can End Honour Kill-

ing” campaign of Oxfam GB. During my Fulbright Scholarship in 2001 at Eastern Mennonite University (USA), I received funding from the USIP (United States Institute of Peace) to do an 18-month research project on *jirgas*, an indigenous institution for peacebuilding in the Puktoon belt of Pakistan and Afghanistan. While dealing with *jirgas*, I became more aware of women’s issues in society. My research provided me with important insights on how to raise awareness on the issues of violence against women and honor killings in my community.

Due to my upbringing in a patriarchal society, I could fully relate to some of the subjects of the WPP ToT. I knew that the WPP had conducted training for women peace activists on gender-sensitive active nonviolence in the past, and I felt that the involvement of men was needed. Women cannot bring change alone; the positive involvement of men is also necessary. In male-dominated societies like ours, men can play a role in helping to create spaces for women to work freely in the community. This view motivated me to

respond to the call of the WPP ToT on masculinities.

Working for women’s rights and for women’s empowerment is not an easy job in the Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa province of Pakistan. This province is characterized by the activities of militants and subsequent military operations. The fact that I come from the same culture as the people I work with and know their social codes is very useful and essential for winning their trust. It also helps me to reach out to decision-makers and influence their decisions.

Soon after my return from the WPP ToT, I began to train my colleagues at Just Peace Initiatives (JPI). While looking at the training manual we received from the WPP, I discovered that some techniques and topics would be difficult to address in our culture and traditions. I therefore adapted the manual to make it more culturally appropriate, changing some parts of the original. The theme of my first training was “Masculinity, culturally appropriate gender and nonviolence”. I introduced the same themes to other departments





Ali Gohar training men and women in Pakistan © Ali Gohar

of the UN, International NGOs and the local NGO platform. Concrete examples are TGG (Thematic Gender Group of UN Women), EVAW (End Violence against Women), GBV-UNFPA, and the protection cluster groups of the UNHCR and UNICEF.

Several UN agencies and partners found it hard to increase the voice of women within the indigenous decision-making institutions of *jirgas*, as these were dominated by men. One way to solve this was the devel-

opment of separate focus group discussions for tribal men and women at the IDP camps. The men among the IDPs were hesitant to give space to women, but after consultations and reasoning they agreed to let us work with the women separately. The next challenge was to link the male and female groups. Using the ToT material, together with my cultural traditional knowledge, we decided to bring elderly women to connect the male and female elders. Elderly women are less bound to veil

themselves and, as such, can communicate more freely with men at home, in the street, at the bazaar or any other place. Such initiatives open doors for NGOs to work on gender equality and women's issues – if not directly, at least indirectly with stakeholders for resolving women's issues in their communities.

One of the direct ways I used my knowledge gained from the ToT was with the establishment of reconciliation (Muslahathi) committees at police stations. This was a major breakthrough, as it enabled us to resolve cases relating to women in a more effective and just manner. Women's and men's groups were trained separately on peacebuilding, conflict transformation, restorative justice, and masculinities. In less conservative areas, women directly engaged with men in the committees, while women in conservative areas were supported by female police staff. A couple of the resolved cases were published in the media for further inspiration for the community. People started to approach the committees instead of police stations and courts, as they were more

accessible. Especially women turned to the committees, as it would bring less shame and humiliation to them and their family compared to notifying the police and judiciary.

The personal stories of the women who approached the reconciliation committees show the importance of these committees, and the need for men and women to work together in the field of peace and security. There was a case of a woman who was brutally beaten and locked up for three days without any food. Relatives had asked for help from several local individuals, groups, and governmental institutions; however, due to the influence of the opposing party, nobody took action. The relatives then turned to the members of the reconciliation committee for help. I was consulted and informed the UN Women representative about the case. He moved it to the Provincial Chief of Women Protection to take action; this led to the woman being taken to the hospital. There, the doctor identified her as a victim of severe torture, which led to the registration of the case with the police and the arrest of the perpetrator.



Another story concerns a woman working at an international organization who was harassed by one of her male colleagues. The woman initiated legal action against him, but the case was dismissed by the court due to a lack of evidence. In response, the accused brought a case of defamation against the woman. The intervention of a reconciliation committee member prevented the case from escalating. The case was resolved within one day, after it had been stalled for over three months by the court. Another impact of the reconciliation committee relates to *khula*, which is the Islamic right of women to divorce their husbands. In our society it is considered shameful to even consider the possibility of *khula*. However, with the help of the reconciliation committee in Swat, comprised of community elders and police at the police station level, over 20 cases of *khula* were resolved. The women received a divorce, while keeping their honor in the eyes of the community. This was a unique result of the reconciliation committees' efforts and decisions, efforts that can also be accredited to the ToT materials.

Apart from my work with the community, I have also used the ToT materials to engage with the media. I have written three TV scripts, two of which were based on true stories within my personal environment: on issues related to women's health and right to care, domestic violence, and the challenges of introducing the restorative justice system to the indigenous community. Recently I wrote a non-fiction story about honor killing. It was called "The Sun Also Rises". Writing about this subject is quite unique in my community, as it is a very sensitive subject. It was based on actual events, when a man supported a woman accused of adultery just by rumor. She wanted to talk to the *jirga* to prove her innocence. However, the *jirga* usually does not allow women to speak. In the end, with the help of the man, she was able to get the death sentence dismissed. The story was aired twice, on March 1 and 8, 2013, on the occasion of International Women's Day. The play was also screened during the UN platform meeting, and UN representatives informed me they appreciated its contribution to awareness-raising

and capacity-building. I also shared it during a training session on gender, masculinity, and violence against women, where it was well received by the participants, who were moved to share their own personal stories of change after watching it.

share the message of gender equality with the rest of the world.

While engaging with NGOs and other community stakeholders and disseminating the ToT materials, I have noticed some interesting dynamics. The combination of contextual knowledge with the modern ToT materials plays a decisive role in changing behaviors, attitudes, and ways of thinking of men and boys. I personally have seen many changes in the participants' behavior. This impact encourages me to continue working within my local network on active nonviolence, gender, and masculinity and to look for further opportunities to strengthen my work. In order to expand the outreach of my work, I will need more funding, and continuing support from the WPP. I have many ideas for continuing my work, one of them being the translation of the drama I have written into English, in order to



Dola's Story

by Dola Nicholas Oluoch – Kenya



Dola Oluoch is currently the Programs Manager at Chemchemi Ya Ukweli, an active nonviolence movement in Kenya. Trained in project management, he has extensive consultative experience, including work with community groups/organizations and learning institutions. His current work focuses on training and facilitation in peace, with a special interest in active nonviolence as an alternative to violence.

Dola is also a potential Field Team Member with the Nonviolent Peaceforce, a non-partisan unarmed peacekeeping force composed of professionally trained civilians from around the world to carry out third party nonviolent intervention in conflict areas. Dola has completed several training courses and workshops focusing on peacebuilding, understanding conflict, mediation, and active nonviolence.

As a young boy, growing up in a village and later in the city slums of Nairobi, I was exposed to almost every type of violence, ranging from physical to psychological and even structural violence. This experience was the order of the day, and to such a high extent that passivity as well as counter-violence were readily accepted as common responses to violence, and even as ways of resolving community conflicts.

In other words, violence became a way of life for me.

This changed when I came into contact with Chemchemi Ya Ukweli. During their active nonviolence basic training program, and, a few weeks later, their ToT program, I was introduced to nonviolence as an alternative to violence. This was a new concept for me, but it was one that I loved immediately, and thus I decided to become a trainer.

Joining the organization as a volunteer and a trainer provided me with the opportunity to learn more about nonviolence from senior trainers. I became aware that there were alternatives to violence. In 2009, I came into contact with the WPP via a recommendation from people who knew me and the work I was doing with the Kenyan communities.

The WPP's ToT on gender-sensitive active nonviolence exposed me to new ways of looking at violence. Most importantly, it prompted me to begin paying attention to gender socialization. This included becoming aware of how women are victims of male-perpetrated violence, and how men are also slaves as a result of the male socialization process, falling victim to violence committed by other men. This was a great shift from the way I used to understand and explain violence to my trainees. Previously, I had looked at violence in a general way, but this has changed since the ToT. The training deeply appealed to my inner self and has changed me for the better.

Before the ToT, I never paid attention to simple gender issues, such as a gender balance. I never thought about working with women. The ToT introduced me to the idea of working with women as allies and it made me conscious of my attitude. I realized that in previous training I would have had a difficult time with women if discussions took on a religious or traditional angle. Because the groups would consist mostly of men, men would dominate discussions about these topics. I took part in this mess, but now I can now confidently say that since the ToT, I pay more attention to these matters and guide discussions more sensitively. I now deliberately seek to work with women as allies as well as help them in their work. The increased awareness of the challenges women face in their work and the role that men play in this regard have given me a push in the right direction.

Being the training coordinator and therefore in charge of mobilizing, planning and executing active non-violence training within the organization, I feel very committed to taking care of gender balance at the mobili-



zation level. It is important to have a balance of male and female trainers/facilitators in the team, which serves as an inspiring example and best practice to many.

Chemchemi Ya Ukweli doesn't have a gender desk, but the organization cooperates with many other organizations in the country, including gender-focused and women's organizations. As much as possible, I try to be part of and deliberately support their activities. At every opportunity, I share my position and key lessons learned from the ToT.

There are specific sessions in my training program where I personally handle the topic of "understanding violence", highlighting gender socialization processes. I use the "man in a box" exercise to elaborate how men are also, directly and indirectly, slaves and victims of violence. This is usually strengthened by the use of films in my training sessions, such

as the DVD *Tough Guise*.¹ I always try to bring this message home by linking it to the African context, which has very patriarchal societies.

With the support of the WPP and my organization, I successfully organized a training session for both young men and women from community-based organizations which mainly use theatre as their vehicle for change. I was able to share key lessons from the ToT with them. I also included members of staff within the organization of this training, so that they could also become co-trainers.

In addition, together with my female allies who are also beneficiaries of previous WPP ToTs, we successfully organized a training session on masculinities and active nonviolence. The training was organized through the Education and Empowerment Centre in Nairobi and supported by the WPP. It aimed to increase the understanding of masculinity

¹ *Tough Guise: Violence, Media & the Crisis in Masculinity* (1999). Directed by Sut Shally; written by Jason Katz and Jeremy Earp.

in relation to violence among male youth leaders and to strengthen the engagement of male allies for the promotion of a culture of peace and nonviolence in Nairobi. From the follow-up visits we learned that the training made a huge impact on the trainees. Most of the participants attested to a change of self-perception and attitude towards women. Many of them had learned different ways of expressing themselves (positive masculinities) and dealing with conflict in their homes, workplaces, and within the community.

I am continuously engaged with the people I train. A few days training is not enough to share all the material and achieve the projected change. People need constant engagement to help them internalize the concepts. By meeting young people in their own environment, I talk to them within their own context and use these opportunities to keep building their capacities to respond to community challenges. I can definitely say that a few of them are already sharing lessons with others in their groups and I am proud to see the confidence with which they

do this. Some keep in touch with me, seeking more information or asking questions.

The key feedback I have directly received from people who have known me for a long time, and from my two female allies, is that I have changed. My change is related to how I look at gender issues. It affects how I handle training sessions around the issue of gender. To me this is more important than anything else because my motto as a nonviolence practitioner has always been “My life, my message”. I want to be that motto. I now very much enjoy discussing and debating gender-related issues with my colleagues and friends. The whole experience has been, in two words, “very constructive”. Genuine and significant change can be seen in them too.

Moving forward, I feel it is important to share what has really worked for me: Sharing my position and thoughts at any available opportunity – either informally or in a training session or a workshop. This has become part of me, “my way of life”, whether it concerns defend-



ing women's rights, condemning or protesting against injustice towards one woman or a group of women, or encouraging men to be part of women's struggles. I am conscious of this at all times. The challenge is that it is never a popular position to take. As a result, some of us are never popular. But my strength lies in the fact that I know how to penetrate people's consciences, and supporting women in this way makes me a happy man.

Integrating Masculinities into Gender-Sensitive Peacebuilding

Women's Perspectives



Patricia Ackerman

Female Trainer of the ToT Cycle 2009-2010, Director of Women's Studies Program at the City College of New York – USA

After reading the reflections of the men, I am reminded that when the feminist principle “the personal is political” is embodied, it is truly transformative. Once we allow ourselves to “know” or are enlightened about where our personhood impacts and connects to the larger world, there is no going back. Suddenly everything becomes relevant: How one speaks, what one does, what one stops doing. This awareness relates to a way we begin to care.

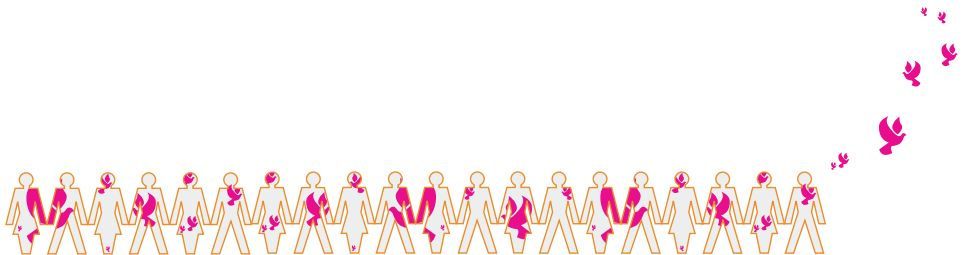
Gender justice permeates everything – our work for peace, sexualities, health, families, and reproductive choices. I sense this caring and accountability in the lives of the trainees of the ToT. These male allies/advocates support the transformation of women's lives as well as their own.

The promise of the gender-sensitive active nonviolence lens is that it calls on us to care and then makes it impossible to stop caring. It gives me hope in a world fraught by scarcity and violence. These gender-sensitive nonviolent men take their legacy seriously. They know the destruction inherent to violent notions of masculinity, and that it is up to men to transform the future together with women.



I would like to highlight the contributions of Babar Bashir and Anand Pawar. Reading the account of how Babar is putting his GSA NV skills into practice, politically and personally, reminds me of how open he was to transformation during the training cycle. From this report it appears his commitment continues. His promise of changing the culture of violence is not only as an ally, but as a change

agent. Regarding Anand, it is no surprise to me that he is breaking barriers and carrying the GSANV message forward so actively. His use of film, concepts such as intersectionality, psychodrama, and his embrace of the mixed gender co-leader model are all examples of his sophisticated analysis of GSANV. His thoughts on the complexities of introducing GSANV as a “new” concept to other social movements – including established sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) communities – is one to consider seriously as we are designing the next steps forward.



Ghida Anani

Founder & Director of ABAAD – Lebanon



These strong and influential case studies are proof that men can actively be engaged in ending violence against women. These stories reflect the experience of almost all men in our countries who were “socialized” to assume a traditional masculine gender role. The ToT conducted in 2009 by WPP has been shown to enable men to start reflecting on the notion of their masculinity and to learn that “nonviolence is a way of living”. In other words, the training was the first step in a larger process in which men and boys are meant to think, question, and analyze what men and women are taught about what they “should be”.

Moreover, the ToT has not only built the capacity of men and boys from different countries, but also has influenced male participants to lead by example. With the awareness and knowledge they have accumulated,

they have actually acted among their families and communities in a manner that defies gender discrimination in their societies. The ToT has triggered self-reflection and insights among male participants, which is one of the key steps in “what men can do to end violence against women”. Many of these case studies have shown that men and boys have taken time to reanalyze themselves.

In short, the curriculum and impact of the ToT conducted with men from around the world can be considered as an evidence-based tool to teach the world about “what men can do to end violence against women”. Similar to the WPP, this very question is the focus of ABAAD’s efforts and extensive experience to share, teach, and prevail in the MENA (Middle East and North African) region.

Sharon Bhagwan Rolls

Director FemLINKPACIFIC – Fiji

On the one hand, I feel that there remains a need for women to have their own space to feel safe and to be empowered through women’s networks such as the “1325” networks and spaces we facilitate as FemLINKPACIFIC. On the other hand, I agree with Samuel D. Darpolor from Liberia, that organizing cross-gender dialogues provides a space for men and women together to talk about how they can share in building and sustaining peaceful communities – from the home to the national level. In addition, it is also an effective tool for communicating gender equality.

Communication channels are critical, whether it is at home as a parent or within the community as an activist. It is important to provide the communication channels, such as community media and radio, to enable people to come together and discuss what Babar Bashir mentions: “Why do men behave like this?” This way we will be able to discuss and

share why there is a need to reconstruct masculinities. Such communication channels and discussions can help in promoting nonviolence in a manner that is accepted – not only by men, but also by mothers who perpetuate the stereotypes of men and who ask their sons to internalize the “real men don’t cry” approach to life. An open dialogue with the community can break through these cycles, giving men the chance to talk and share their feelings with their sister, their partner, and their communities.



Ruben Reyes Jiron raises the need to collectively dismantle the military structures that stimulate violence over diplomacy, dialogue, and mediation as a way to respond to conflict. When we can amplify our collective call for nonviolence and peaceful communities, I think we will be able to better address these specific issues.



Jasmin Galace

Executive Director of the Center for Peace Education at Miriam College, the Philippines, Co-chair IANSA – The Philippines



These essays deliver many messages of hope. They have validated my belief that education is an effective pathway to transformation. The WPP training on masculinities has obviously provided space for participants to look into themselves, within the context of the institutions, systems, and structures that have created aggressive attitudes and behaviors. It has also clearly deepened their understanding of masculinities and patriarchy, and their connections with violence. Through the training, the men discovered that women and men can work together as allies in

building a more gender-sensitive, nonviolent world. The men who wrote these essays have acknowledged the many challenges to the goal of transforming masculinities for peace and gender justice. They have shared that it is a continuous struggle within – as it means giving up male privileges – and with one’s surroundings. Despite these challenges, the men are currently translating this deepened understanding into effective action. These essays clearly express the activism of the participants to stand up against the forces that sustain violence, including gender injustice.

Netsai Mushonga

National Coordinator Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe, Trainer on Active Nonviolence – Zimbabwe

The WPP pioneered training in gender-sensitive active nonviolence in 2002. Originally the training was only for women. Over time, women requested that men specifically should be trained in awareness-raising on masculinities and gender-sensitive active nonviolence. Since then, the WPP has been working towards creating a worldwide movement of men working to end violence at all levels and seeking to transform dominant notions of masculinities. The testimonies by the men in this publication give witness to the tangible transformation among those who go through the training.

Masculinities have been linked to violence and domination throughout history. Due to specific socialization processes, men have always been encouraged, forced, and persuaded to be willing to use violence in their relationships with others. Society

portrays men as the defenders of the nation, and links this to the warped belief that this has to be done violently.



The WPP initiative is slowly transforming these behaviors in participants to support the nonviolent and peaceful management of conflicts, with deep respect for and appreciation of the contributions of the women in their lives. This project is ground-breaking and has the potential to literally change the world. I am reminded of the saying: “Never doubt that a few individuals can change the world.” The WPP has been doing that. Congratulations to all the men who have gone through this program and continue to sow the seeds of change and transformation among the men in their communities.



List of Abbreviations

ANV	Active Nonviolence
CSO	Civil Society Organization
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GSANV	Gender-Sensitive Active Nonviolence
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ToT	Training of Trainers
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNSCR 1325	United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325
VAW	Violence against Women
WANEP	West Africa Network for Peacebuilding
WIPNET	Women in Peacebuilding Network
WPP	Women Peacemakers Program





WOMEN PEACEMAKERS PROGRAM

