



Overcoming Violence
The Ecumenical Decade
2001–2010





Overcoming Violence: The Ecumenical Decade 2001–2010

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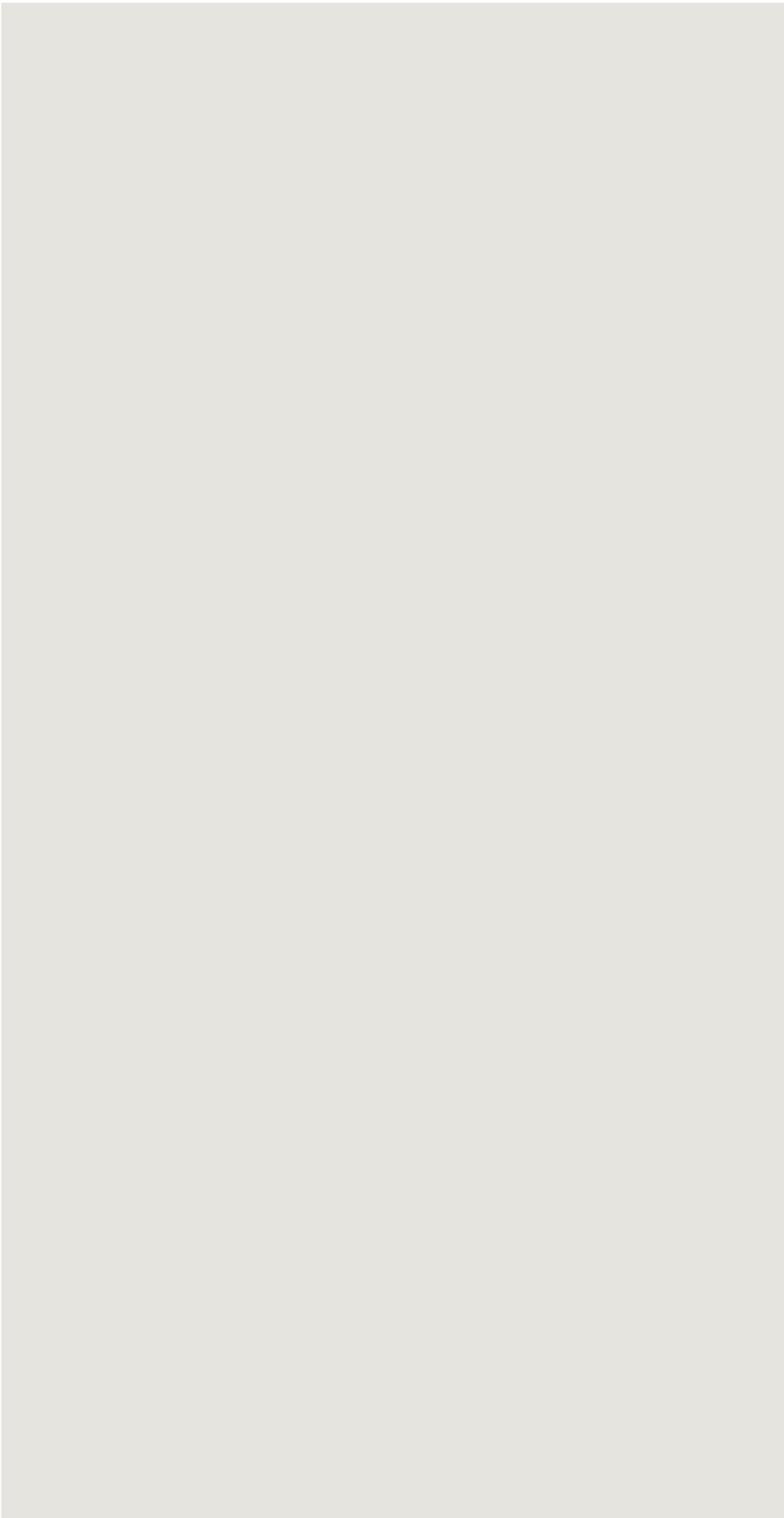
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Foreword

As people of faith we are invited to look to the future with hope, and to look to the past with gratitude. This report of the Decade to Overcome Violence is a story of hope and of gratitude. It tells of the struggle for peace with justice of churches and communities across the wide fellowship that is the World Council of Churches. It recalls women who stop a war in Papua New Guinea, 100,000 roses to say no to violence in Switzerland, and Muslims and Christians waging peace against Liberia's civil war. It speaks of "Living Letters", of young ambassadors of peace, and of lessons learned about peace at every level of the church. The report also explains how people did what WCC governing bodies had asked of the Decade, namely, to move peace-building from the periphery to the centre of church life and witness. Thanks be to God for the work reported here.

The completion of the Decade to Overcome Violence is a threshold of hope. The International Ecumenical Peace Convocation in 2011 builds on the legacy of the DOV, inviting Christians and all who seek peace to join in the journey toward Just Peace. The WCC Assembly in 2013 has as its theme, "God of Life, Lead Us to Justice and Peace".

The Decade and these milestone events present an historic opportunity for the World Council of Churches and a vision to share with others. The Bible calls for Christians to be one and to be people who pursue peace. We have an opening in time to bring these two calls into a new and common ecumenical endeavour. The peace challenge to churches today may well be to serve and witness together across borders and boundaries, living out as one the rich heritage of faith in the work of peace.

The ecumenical Decade to Overcome Violence has brought churches to seek reconciliation and peace. There is much reason for gratitude in these pages and good cause for hope as well.

Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit
General Secretary
World Council of Churches



INTRODUCTION

By Fernando Enns

“Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.” Romans 12:21¹

Today I received an e-mail from a pastor in Nigeria, reporting on the ongoing violent situation between Muslims and Christians in Jos. The shocking photo he sends me, showing dead, burned bodies, will appear in my dreams tonight I am sure.

Some weeks ago, a former student from Egypt described his strong feeling of anger after the killing of Coptic Orthodox Christians in Alexandria. When is it the time to become a martyr, he asks himself. It reminds me very much of the reflections of a friend who sent pictures every day during the War on Gaza, horrible pictures that no media would publicize.

What do I do with the letters from Zimbabwe that describe the ever more violent face of poverty in this country? With reports from friends in Rio de Janeiro that describe the violent actions of police in the *favelas* (shantytowns)? Will they be held accountable before a court?

Sisters from our churches in the Democratic Republic of Congo repeatedly tell us about the ongoing mass sexual abuses.

A politician in the US is shot without warning.

And in my country, Germany? Two youth just stabbed another person nearly to death with their knives because he refused to hand out 50 cents! Our government is about to prolong the military mission in Afghanistan, “for our safety” they say. “Mission not accomplished,” one could conclude at the end of an ecumenical “Decade to Overcome Violence”!

This is the time when we – the churches of the ecumenical community – look back, remember and evaluate self-critically. None of us was so naïve as to believe that we would overcome violence within ten years. But most of us – at least the delegates at the Eighth Assembly of the WCC in Harare/Zimbabwe in 1998 – felt the strong calling to face violence in all its different forms, in different contexts. This was a prophetic step, reading the signs of the times carefully and committing



More than 1000 women gathered for the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women Festival in Harare from 27-30 November 1998, held just before the Eighth Assembly of the WCC Hearing on Violence against Women. © WCC

ourselves as churches to try to live up to the biblical challenge: “Be not overcome of evil...” (Rom 12:21).

Paul’s point was not to say: “You will overcome all evil”! His demand was based on the faith that in Christ, the reign of God has come to Earth. In Jesus’ life, death and resurrection, the powers of evil are overcome even if they are still present. They won’t have the last word. As churches, believers and followers of that Gospel message, we are freed to live “the good” against all “evil” by the transforming grace of God. We do not believe any longer that there is a redemptive power in violence since we know that a different reality that will be accomplished in the Eschaton – not by our efforts, but by the completing love of God, all of creation. This eschatological vision empowers us to follow that call to become “ambassadors of reconciliation” (2 Cor 5) – and the past Decade has been a tool in our hands to try to live up to it.

In Harare, it was not simply the Holy Spirit that came upon the delegates – although I truly believe that the Holy Spirit was present when we assembled and tried to identify the shape of that calling for the future programmatic work of the WCC. We had been greatly inspired by the previous Decade of “Churches in Solidarity with Women” (which had left the massive presence of ongoing violence against women as a continued challenge to the churches) as well as by the WCC’s “Peace to the City” campaign, which allowed most of us to see what churches – together with others – can in fact do to overcome violence in a concrete situations! We were encouraged by the fascinating examples of people in seven cities around the world who proved what it really meant to become ambassadors of reconciliation once congregations decided to get involved in the violent context in which they found themselves. Since violence is such a basic but destructive human experience, it seemed obvious that the ecumenical community would need to focus on it in order to strengthen those who take up the challenge, to learn from each other, to walk in solidarity and to heal wherever it is possible. Isn’t this the ecumenical task *par excellence*?

It was the task of the WCC’s Central Committee to define more precisely what the goals of such a programmatic approach could be: “In order to move peace-building from the periphery to the centre of the life and witness of the church

and to build stronger alliances and understanding among churches, networks, and movements which are working toward a culture of peace”, we dedicated ourselves to

- “addressing holistically the wide varieties of violence, both direct and structural, in homes, communities, and in international arenas and learning from the local and regional analyses of violence and ways to overcome violence;
- challenging the churches to overcome the spirit, logic, and practice of violence; to relinquish any theological justification of violence; and to affirm anew the spirituality of reconciliation and active nonviolence;
- creating a new understanding of security in terms of cooperation and community instead of in terms of domination and competition;
- learning from the spirituality of other faiths to and their resources for peace-building, working with communities of other faiths in the pursuit of peace and challenging the churches to reflect on the misuse of religious and ethnic identities in pluralistic societies;
- challenging the growing militarization of our world, especially the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.”²

In light of these goals, it was obvious from the start that this Decade would need to follow a self-critical approach, given the compliance of churches in violence as well as their traditional ways of legitimizing it. At the same time, we wanted to draw on the rich theological, liturgical and practical resources of the church traditions in peace-building and healing as well as their critical potential towards the powers of violence. The

WCC could not do much more than offer the “ecumenical space” to follow these goals together; provide a forum to meet, discuss, reflect and develop together how churches in their respective communities and contexts are and become credible ambassadors of reconciliation; allow ourselves to be challenged and questioned as individual churches and also as an ecumenical family all together. Regional and local councils of churches have provided spaces for that as well. In the end, it is the churches themselves who have to answer the question: which goals have we achieved? It is not so much about converting the other, but rather a question of allowing oneself to be part of that *metanoia*.

I remember the fascinating launches of the Decade: in Indonesia, we started with a huge event, bringing together Muslims and Christians and during which, for the first time, Christians were invited to the big mosque in Malang, East Java. I remember a rich event organized in Tanzania just a few weeks after 9/11, 2001, where the country’s president came to commit himself and invite everyone to join this new Decade to Overcome Violence. I remember the beautiful international launch at the (now opened!) Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, where we realised that the power of active nonviolence can in fact change the whole world, against all expectations. I also remember a lot of small communities that I was privileged to visit on behalf of the WCC in South Korea, Ghana or Fiji: breath-taking examples of people getting involved in the hard work of peace-building and overcoming violence. To realize what it meant for them to feel supported by the many prayers of the whole ecumenical community, to be acknowledged by foreign representatives who wanted to listen and learn, was to see the beauty of ecumenism. And to get engaged in my own context, feeling encouraged by the commitment of the ecumenical family, studying with students, exploring practical steps within the church, reaching out to other institutions and persons with whom I had never worked before, only to realise how much they were also trying to overcome violence – on the basis of their resources.

The annual International Day of Prayer for Peace will probably continue to remind us all about this Decade. We have learned so much – about ourselves and others, about the ugliness of violence and the beauty of reconciliation. And we

have discovered how the unity of the church – in reconciled diversity – is itself a credible sign of peace. This Decade may have come to an end, but for us it is just a start: on the grounds of all that gathered experience and knowledge, we are called to develop a coherent ecumenical theology of peace with justice and care for creation. Only that fresh commitment of the churches within the ecumenical community would prove that the DOV was not about some activism of yet another NGO, but about a confessing family of churches who truly believe – against all evil – in the power of overcoming evil by doing good. ■

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Dancers from a Viva Rio youth group present a performance on the Programme to Overcome Violence at the December 1998 Eighth Assembly of the WCC in Harare, Zimbabwe. © WCC

“Overcoming Violence” 1994–1998: From Programme to Decade

An Overview

Justice and peace have been ecumenical concerns for more than 100 years. The WCC has spoken out for and intervened in the interests of justice and peace continuously since its foundation in 1948. One of the most comprehensive statements on the subject was issued by the Vancouver Assembly of the WCC in 1983. It declared: “Peace is not just the absence of war. Peace cannot be built on foundations of injustice. Peace requires a new international order based on justice for and within all nations and respect for the God-given humanity and dignity of every person. Peace is, as the prophet Isaiah has taught us, the effect of righteousness.”¹

Responding to growing threats to survival, the same assembly at Vancouver initiated a conciliar process for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation. In the light of the new assessments after the end of the Cold War, lack of progress towards an international order of peace with justice and in the face of new wars and failing states, the WCC Central Committee in Johannesburg (1994) established a Programme to Overcome Violence (POV). A brief chronological account of this programme and of its related Peace to the City campaign follows.



Clearly, there is a need to confront and overcome the “spirit, logic and practice of war” and to develop new theological approaches, consonant with the teachings of Christ, which start not with war and move to peace, but with the need for justice.

— Overcoming the spirit, logic and practice of war: background document for the WCC Central Committee, Johannesburg, January 1994

POV and the Peace to the City Campaign²

The “Peace to the City” (PTTC) Campaign was adopted by the WCC Central Committee in September 1996 as a global initiative within the Programme to Overcome Violence (POV). It was launched on 31 August 1997 in Johannesburg, South Africa and culminated in December 1998 at the WCC’s Eighth Assembly in Harare, Zimbabwe.

The peace-building campaign concentrated on seven cities around the world where both destructive and constructive forces were at play. The seven symbolic cities – Belfast, Northern Ireland; Boston, USA; Colombo, Sri Lanka; Durban, South Africa; Kingston, Jamaica; Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; and Suva, Fiji formed a network doing creative work in peace-building. Rather than seeking to resolve long-standing debates about nonviolence or trying to determine the relative justice of particular wars or specific issues of violence, the Peace to the City campaign focused on building or strengthening “Jubilee Communities” of justice. The goals were to make these visible, recognize the value of their approaches and methodologies, stimulate sharing and networking and give others hope and stimulus to attempt something similar in their own contexts. The original seven cities were later joined by peace-building initiatives in Colombia, Sierra Leone, Palestine and Germany.

The early campaign process was very intensive and highlighted different peace-building efforts around the world. It developed new partnerships and strategies as well as a set of new priorities based on concrete needs. The WCC served as a “switchboard” connecting the communities and a “spotlight” identifying more and more grassroots partners and initiatives. Most important, the campaign demonstrated an emerging new people’s movement, working towards social transforma-

tion and shaping a culture of peace for the 21st century.

The PTTC communication strategy was designed to develop a dynamic, global peace network that could provide space to explore ideas and share resources. It included a Website and Email list-server, individual city homepages all connected to each other, a newsletter giving updates about each city’s peace-building efforts and experiences and informative articles about other initiatives, upcoming events and resources. Campaign materials like T-shirts, stickers, posters and a song were also developed. In addition, the campaign developed resources for study and action. These included:

- *A Peace to the Cities: Stories of Hope* video series with locally produced segments as well as a 26-minute compilation describing the campaign as a whole and each city’s imaginative efforts to build bridges between and reconcile communities in conflict.
- A guide to assist groups in using the series for discussion and action.
- A companion book called *Peace in Troubled Cities: Creative Models of Building Community Amidst Urban Violence* recounting stories of creative community whose author Daphne Sabanes Plou accompanied the campaign process and personally traveled to each of the cities.
- A book for the WCC Risk Book series called *Overcoming Violence: A Challenge to the Churches in All Places* by Bishop Margot Kaessman of Hanover, exploring the opportunities and difficulties linked with the vocation of nonviolence.
- A collection of essays on the biblical and theological

PROGRAMME TO OVERCOME VIOLENCE

1994

South African Methodist Bishop Stanley Mogoba, imprisoned for his opposition to apartheid, told delegates to the WCC Central Committee meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa in January 1994 that the WCC's Programme to Combat Racism had been a vital element in ending apartheid. Now, he said, there should be a new programme – to combat violence.

The Central Committee responded to this call. It established a Programme to Overcome Violence

“with the purpose of challenging and transforming the global culture of violence in the direction of a culture of just peace”. This was a new step and, at the same time, a manifestation of the WCC's and the churches' ongoing witness for peace. (See “Earlier WCC statements on violence and nonviolence” on p. 16.)

In June of that year, participants involved in peace-building and reconciliation work from 41 countries attended a June consultation in Corrymeela, Northern Ireland on “Building a Culture of Peace: the Churches' Contribution”. The consultation made a first attempt to design the new programme. The WCC's role, it suggested, was “to listen, identify, challenge, stimulate, link and

help sustain local, regional and national church initiatives.”

“Living with our differences”, a pilot workshop on active nonviolence organized by the POV, was held at the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey, Switzerland in August. The Board of the Churches Commission for International Affairs (CCIA) meeting in Kitwe, Zambia developed basic working principles and assumptions for the programme; a directory of church-related peace groups was published in late 1994.

1995

The Programme to Overcome Violence (POV) was introduced to member churches, ecumenical

background for peace-making, with practical examples from local and global settings on “Transforming Violence: Linking Local and Global Peacemaking” from the Historic Peace Churches and the Fellowship of Reconciliation of North America.

- Study processes on Microdisarmament (Small Arms – Big Impact: A Challenge to the Churches) in cooperation with Saferworld and Viva Rio and on the Theological Perspectives on Violence and Nonviolence, which was done in cooperation with WCC Unit on Faith and Order.

All these materials were important tools for the sharing, storytelling and cross-level alliance-building that lay at the heart of Peace to the City, and remained vital elements to the PTTC Network that emerged after the Eighth Assembly. They were also to be resources for the soon-to-be-born Decade to Overcome Violence.

In an effort to discern how their experiences in the PTTC campaign might be applied in the context of the new Decade to Overcome Violence and to help give shape to the Decade, local PTTC coordinators and the POV Reference Committee gathered in Stuttgart, Germany for a “Dreaming the Decade” meeting in June 1999. They proposed a framework for the Decade that, among things, encouraged the continuation of work and methodologies pioneered by PTTC initiatives and networks.

While the DOV eventually developed along different lines, the PTTC network continued to function for some time within the DOV and around a “Seven-point peace plan”. New cities – Beit Sahour and Bethlehem in Palestine, Braunschweig

in Germany, Freetown in Sierra Leone, Nagpur in India, Tuzla in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Yaoundé in Cameroon – joined the network.

Unfortunately, the WCC DOV Office was unable to take on the coordination of the network. But it agreed to host network partners at the DOV mid-term celebrations in Porto Alegre, where it endorsed their recommendation to continue. Many of the PTTC seven-plus cities are still doing imaginative and creative peace-building work today and connecting with each other. The activities of PTTC partner Viva Rio, for example, are featured in the “DOV Stories and Examples of ‘Good Practice’” section of this report. ■

More Information:

Peace to the City Web page: <http://bit.ly/dZMrgJ>.



The [Peace to the City] campaign is designed to make visible the efforts of those often unknown groups of women and men who dare to be peace-makers in the midst of a culture of violence. They live among us in our troubled cities, like Belfast and Boston, Rio and Colombo, Suva, Durban and Kingston. They live and work among street children and urban gangs. They seek to mediate between ethnic groups, and protect minorities. They monitor police actions and help to improve run-down neighborhoods.

— Christmas Message 1997 by Rev. Dr Konrad Raiser, WCC general secretary

The POV can only succeed to the degree that member churches give it priority in their own work.

— Recommendations of the WCC Central Committee, Geneva, September 1995

organizations, groups and movements. Responses to a POV brochure and questionnaire on church and church-related work relating to violence helped identify needs and suggest appropriate projects. The Central Committee said that the POV should focus on “building a culture of peace through practical means to overcome violence at different levels of society and encouraging the churches to play a leading role in using nonviolent means such as prevention, mediation, intervention and education to overcome violence in their particular contexts.”

The invitation to WCC member churches to share their positions on peace with justice and to address violence in their own contexts led to many encounters and meetings that explored how the

churches could contribute to the POV. For example, a Churches Peace Forum consultation on the POV and its Annual General Meeting, both held in the UK in June, considered how pacifist member churches and organizations could respond to the POV. POV staff also met with Quaker Peace & Service, Church & Peace, FOR-Britain and the Council of Churches in Britain & Ireland (CCBI).

Other examples:

■ An August theological seminar on “Multicultural society and racism in the age of a new world order” and focusing on the POV was organized at the Bossey Ecumenical Institute by the Missionsakademie in Hamburg and the University of Hamburg.

“Looking Back”

by *Salpy Eskidjian*

My best memories of directing the WCC’s Programme to Overcome Violence (POV) from 1995 until its transformation into the DOV are the amazing people I met and worked with. As a team of enthusiastic, hard-working staff and advisors, we became the best of friends. We had a mission to shape this programme and make it relevant. We were blessed with a leadership that backed us up. Without them, neither the programme nor the Peace to the City Campaign would have had the success it had.

With the POV in just four years we produced what seemed like seven years of work in time for the next WCC assembly. Those were dynamic times full of pressure and stress, but the good memories definitely outweigh the bad ones. At the end, there were many examples that showed what we often said: “peace is not only possible but also practical”.

Creativity, ingenuity and solidarity combined with faith, friendship and fun made the POV a success. The WCC leadership and the International Affairs team provided the solid and safe space where an innovative way of working was accepted and celebrated in spite of the challenges and internal obstacles. I remember our first meeting in Rio de Janeiro where an enthusiastic Rubem Cesar Fernandes told us about the campaign that gave birth to Viva Rio and its amazing work in the favelas; the fear we felt when we heard gun-shooting around us while experiencing first-hand their work to reduce violence and fight poverty.

Fear, hope and inspiration gave birth to the Peace to the City Campaign which, in its turn, initiated the Decade to Overcome Violence. New networks and programmes like that on micro-disarmament developed, even though some of the



Former coordinator of the WCC Programme to Overcome Violence and the Peace to the City Network, Salpy Eskidjian. © WCC

most relevant ones were to be sacrificed later. WCC became a founding member of the International Action Network on Small Arms and Light Weapons – today the main international network against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

Travelling the seven seas in one year to identify seven partners in seven cities was a memorable experience in itself for me. Applying experiences of community policing from Boston, USA to Rio de Janeiro and Sierra Leone with the cooperation of military police and gang leaders was the best reward one could ask for. The list of positive impacts and changes the PTTC brought about as a result of “cross-fertilization” goes on. We learned, we communicated, we changed.

The grassroots partners taught us that “congregations must move out of the four walls of their sanctuaries. Transforming means turning apathy into activism – practising foot theology by placing their feet where their theologies lie.” We went out of our “walls” and were open to making new alliances, to learn from the grassroots and bring their voices to the corridors of power and decision-making to shape the wider oikoumene.

“We should do it, we must do it, we can do it,” said Rev. Jeffrey Brown when we launched the campaign in Johannesburg. The beat and strength of the PTTC – from South Africa to Kingston, from Boston to Belfast, from Rio de Janeiro to Fiji, from Colombo to Harare – gave the churches a space of ten more years to “do it”.

■ An October consultation on “Conscientious Objection and Peace Service” was held in Minsk, Belarus. At this consultation, organized by the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and the German Protestant Association for the Care of Conscientious Objectors, participants from Protestant, Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches formulated a common statement for the churches’ lobby work with the UN, OSCE, Council of Europe, etc.

■ Also in October, an international ecumenical planning meeting on comprehensive security convened by the Christian Council of Sweden developed a programme to assist churches to contribute to comprehensive security through conflict prevention and reconciliation.

■ And in another interesting initiative, two youth training seminars on nonviolent methods of conflict resolution were organized in both 1995 and 1996 by the WCC Youth Team in Lebanon and South Africa, respectively; the seminars produced a training manual.

1996

Peace-makers participating in an international consultation in Rio de Janeiro in April recommended that the POV move from a general to a more concentrated focus in the period leading up to the 1998 Assembly. In response, the WCC Central Committee adopted a “Peace to the City” (PTTC)

global campaign in September 1996, the aim being to highlight creative models of reconciliation and community-rebuilding in seven cities around the world to stimulate sharing, networking and an expansion of peace-building efforts.

Amongst the numerous encounters in 1996 to promote and monitor churches’ contributions to the POV, the Annual General Meeting of the Churches Peace Forum in the UK in June produced a list of “14 Ways Forward” and the Forum volunteered to act as the coordinator for the British churches’ response to POV; POV staff attended UNESCO’s international NGO conference and met with its Culture of Peace programme director; together with the Bossey Ecumenical Institute, POV staff

Our worst disappointment was when the committee drafting the programmatic recommendations for the WCC’s Ninth Assembly in 1998 rejected our call to establish a Decade to Overcome Violence parallel to the UN International Decade for Peace, thus failing to live up to the expectations of so many people around the world living in the midst of violence. I will never forget running into the main Assembly hall and telling a delegate who supported our work that he had to take the risk of calling for the decade from the floor. As staff and grassroots partners watching the deliberations on screens outside, we couldn’t stop crying and hugging each other when our friend Rev. Fernando Enns stood up and challenged the Assembly delegates to adopt the Decade and continue the work of the POV.

Peace to the City managed to show the churches that overcoming violence was not confined to a WCC programme and gave them a new opportunity to turn a programme into a churches’ decade. Ten years were not enough to end violence in the world, but they did a lot in different parts of the world to ensure that peace-building becomes central to the churches’ mission. The Decade inspired many to contribute to making the world a safer, fairer and better place for all. New initiatives and campaigns developed, like the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI). It was unfortunate that due to internal restructuring, financial cuts and staff changes, successful and much-needed networks and programmes were also cut from the WCC’s work during the ten years. Sad but true.

The legacy of the POV and Peace to the City is not only the Decade to Overcome Violence. The real legacy will be if

the WCC continues to encourage and support churches and civil society grassroots initiatives to overcome violence beyond the Decade. ■

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developed the 1996-1997 Graduate School curriculum, "On Being Agents of God's Peace", on Christian approaches to peace-making.

1997

A POV reference group and staff identified partners and projects in seven cities – Durban, Rio de Janeiro, Belfast, Boston, Colombo, Kingston and Suva – and visited them. Communication strategies to expand the campaign beyond the geographical boundaries of the cities included use of the Internet (Website, list-server), monthly bulletins and a quarterly newsletter and work on a PTTC book and a series of eight videos. Local campaign coordinators met with

the POV Reference Group in Johannesburg in August.

During the year, POV staff met with the Historic Peace Churches/Fellowship of Reconciliation Consultative Committee in North America in May to explore their participation in POV and the PTTC campaign; organized a PTTC hearing, coordinated exhibit space and participated in a hearing on peace services at the Second European Ecumenical Assembly in Graz, Austria in June with the Grazer Büro für Frieden & Entwicklung; in December, a hearing on the PTTC campaign held at a WCC US Conference meeting in Chicago focused on the experience of the National Ten Point Leadership Foundation in Boston.

1998

Kingston, Jamaica, the seventh city, joined the PTTC in March, followed by two "extra" cities, Bethlehem and Tuzla, Bosnia-Herzegovina. In February, POV staff provided an ecumenical perspective on small arms disarmament efforts at an informal consultation organized by the government-supported Norwegian Initiative on Small Arms Transfers (NISAT) in Oslo. With the WCC Faith and Order Commission, POV sponsored an April consultation in Boston, USA to provide theological perspectives on violence and nonviolence and to plan a study process to engage WCC member churches.

Earlier WCC statements on violence and nonviolence

1948 First Assembly, Amsterdam

Serious doubts were expressed about the applicability of the just war criteria still used as a guide by churches of several traditions. The Assembly affirmed that "War as a method settling disputes is incompatible with the teaching and example of our Lord Jesus Christ. The part which war plays in our present international life is a sin against God and a degradation of man."

An Assembly report on "The Church and the International Disorder" referred to the discovery of atomic and other new weapons and said that "In these circumstances the tradition of a just war, requiring a just cause and the use of just means, is now challenged. [...] (The) inescapable question arises – can war now be an act of justice?"

1968 Fourth Assembly, Uppsala

A "Martin Luther King Resolution" directed the Central Committee "to explore means by which the World Council could promote studies on nonviolent methods of achieving social change." This resolution was implemented, partly in response to the WCC consultation which led to the formation of the Programme to Combat Racism (PCR).

1975 Fifth Assembly, Nairobi

The Nairobi Assembly adopted a guideline on "The need to exercise a ministry of peace and reconciliation and to explore further the significance of nonviolent action for social change and the struggle against militarism."

1979 Central Committee, Jamaica

The Central Committee meeting in 1979 encouraged "further exploration and continuing implementation of the report on 'Violence and nonviolence and the struggle for Social Justice', paying serious attention to the rights of conscientious objectors and the need to promote peaceful resolution of conflicts."

1983 Sixth Assembly, Vancouver

The churches were called to "emphasize their willingness to live without the protection of armaments". In a statement on Peace and Justice, it affirmed that "... Christians should give witness to their unwillingness to participate in any conflict involving weapons of mass destruction or indiscriminate effect." And it instructed the WCC to "engage the churches in a conciliar process of mutual commitment (covenant) to justice, peace and the integrity of all creation (JPCI)".

1990 World Convocation on JPIC, Seoul

Participants in the JPIC Convocation endorsed an appeal "to reject the spirit, logic and practice of deterrence based on weapons of mass destruction", and called for the development "of a culture of active nonviolence which is life-producing and is not a withdrawal from situations of violence and oppression but is a way to work for justice and liberation."

1992 Central Committee, Geneva

Following a debate on the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, the Central Committee agreed "that active nonviolent action be affirmed as a clear emphasis in programmes and projects related to conflict resolution".

A May meeting of international experts in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil developed a policy and plan of action for WCC engagement in micro-disarmament.

And in response to calls coming from many people involved in the PTTC campaign, a July POV reference committee meeting in Cyprus resolved to “encourage the Assembly to call for the years 2000-2010 as an Ecumenical Decade for a Culture of Peace”.

Thus it was that in December 1998 at the WCC Assembly in Harare/Zimbabwe, a WCC Central Committee member speaking from the floor requested the establishment of a Decade to Overcome Violence to continue the work already done through the POV and the PTTC campaign. In

so doing, Dr Fernando Enns, a German Mennonite Church pastor and professor of systematic theology and ecumenical studies then at Heidelberg University, was giving voice to a recommendation that had come all the way up from the grassroots. In response, the Assembly decided to establish the Decade to overcome Violence 2001-2010.

“The POV has succeeded in providing means by which churches and Christians who have not reached full ecumenical agreement can together take concrete steps to challenge and transform the global culture of violence in the direction of a universal culture of just peace. [...] However [...] the theological discussion on the hard issues related to violence and nonviolence remains unavoidable.”

— “Theological perspectives on violence and nonviolence: A study process.” Report of a WCC consultation held in the framework of the Programme to Overcome Violence. Boston, USA, March 1998

There is a need to bring together the work on gender and racism, human rights and transformation of conflict in ways that engage the churches in initiatives for reconciliation that build on repentance, truth, justice, reparation and forgiveness.

The Council should work strategically with the churches on these issues to create a culture of nonviolence, linking and interacting with other international partners and organizations, and examining and developing appropriate approaches to conflict transformation and just peacemaking in the new globalized context.

Therefore, the WCC proclaims the period 2001-2010 as an Ecumenical Decade to Overcome Violence.

— Excerpt from Together on the Way – Official Report of the Eighth Assembly of the WCC, Harare, December 1998



Candles form the DOV logo at Berlin's Brandenburg gate during the international launch of the Decade.
© WCC/Andreas Schölzer

An Overview of International Actions and Projects



Although the Decade to Overcome Violence: Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace 2001-2010 (DOV) built on previous efforts such as the Ecumenical Decade in Solidarity with Women and the Programme to Overcome Violence and its Peace to the City campaign (see “Overcoming Violence 1994-1998: From Programme to Decade” section on p. 11), it was intended as a new kind of effort, set in the context of the WCC as a “fellowship of churches” which support and challenge each other.

Instead of suggesting a common plan of action from Geneva, the WCC’s role was seen in terms of facilitating exchanges, highlighting experiences and inspiring renewed commitment through the promotion of theological and ethical reflections. The real driving force of the DOV was to be provided by the *churches* at regional, national and local levels. The Decade must have local impact to be fully relevant and achieve meaningful results.

This took time. First invited to join in the Decade in 1999, the churches needed time to identify the issues they faced as well as the efforts, opportunities and resources they could contribute, to develop their own programmes and communicate them to the wider fellowship through the WCC. Decade initiatives grew slowly but steadily within the churches.

Guided by a Reference Group composed of church leaders, theologians, academics, communicators and peace activists, a small staff team in Geneva carried out the work of networking, coordinating, monitoring, motivating, interpreting, information-sharing, visiting and liaising with churches and church-related organizations and groups around the world interested in joining or already involved in the Decade as well as

with the various WCC programmes and desks. As the initiator and facilitator of the Decade, the WCC itself also undertook a number of actions and activities during the years from 2001 to 2010 designed to give further momentum and depth to the DOV. These included:

- 2001: An international Decade launch at the WCC Central Committee meeting in Berlin in February and launches at different times and places elsewhere in relation to relevant events at regional and national levels.
- 2002: Initiating and initially coordinating the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI).
- Beginning in 2002: Coordinating an Annual Focus intended to highlight a different region each year. The Annual Foci served to express solidarity with churches in particular regions, celebrate the peace and reconciliation work they were doing, broaden understanding globally of their situations and propose possible areas for advocacy.
- Beginning in 2002: Inviting theological institutions and ecumenical organizations to reflect on specific Decade themes, particularly from the perspectives of the victims of and those involved in situations of violence. This theological study process made available work already done on peace by churches and academics and examined the churches' central texts, including those of the Roman Catholic Church and the ecumenical movement.
- 2002 & 2007: Publishing and distributing two editions of a study guide, *Why Violence? Why Not Peace?* These were translated into over 15 languages and widely distributed as well as made available on the DOV Website.
- Beginning in 2004: Initiating and promoting an annual International Day of Prayer for Peace (IDPP) on 21 September in relation to the the International Day of Peace declared by the UN General Assembly.
- Designing and implementing campaigns on violence against women including the Tamar Campaign (2005), Lenten resources for overcoming violence against women (2010) and *From Hegemony to Partnership-A Church Manual on Men as Partners: Promoting Positive Masculinities* (2010); a study on world military expenditures in relation to spending on education and health (2004); a Conscientious Objection study; and a programme on "Impunity, Truth, Justice and Reconciliation" (ITJR) (2001).
- Beginning in 2007: Sponsoring visits by Living Letters – small ecumenical teams – to over 25 countries in all regions to listen, learn, share approaches and challenges in overcoming violence and peace-making and pray together for peace in the community and in the world.
- Beginning in 2007: In preparation for the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC) scheduled for May 2011, organizing a series of expert consultations and a consultative process to draft an "Ecumenical Declaration on Just Peace"; and working to prepare the spiritual life of the IEPC.

Two major WCC events – the International Mission Conference in Athens, Greece in 2005 and the Ninth Assembly of the WCC in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 2006 – devoted consider-



During the international launch of the Decade to Overcome Violence in Berlin, the moderator of the DOV Reference group Dr Janice Love delivers a message from the February 2001 Central Committee meeting in Potsdam. © WCC/Andreas Schölzer

Launching the Decade

able attention and provided important input to the DOV.

These activities, actions and events are briefly described in this chapter.

Over the Decade, a number of effective communication tools were developed in Geneva. The aim was to promote and highlight local, national and regional DOV initiatives, share information and resources and provide ample space for input from the churches and their related networks. An interactive Website was developed as a central networking tool. Open to all and available in English, French, German and Spanish, it allowed individuals and organizations to add or search for stories, news, events and resources. A “shared resources” section offered resources sent to the DOV office by people from all over the world. The “WCC resources” section contained documents, photos, worship/prayers, Bible studies, presentations, study guides and books, magazines, leaflets, logos, posters and banners and videos produced by the WCC. ■

In order to maximize Decade visibility and unite churches’ efforts to overcome violence, ambitious plans were made for simultaneous launches at international, regional, national and local levels. But the timing that worked best at the international level – the WCC Central Committee meeting in Potsdam in February 2001 – was not the best in some national and regional contexts. Instead, launches were scheduled when the timing made most sense for the planners. This approach helped to maintain momentum at the start of the Decade and provided opportunities to relate the launches to events that sought practical ways to build peace on the ground.

Several national and regional campaigns like those in Indonesia, Denmark and Colombia were actually launched in advance of the international event; in Indonesia, for example, the Decade was launched within the framework of a seminar organized by the Communion of Churches in Indonesia and the Nahdatul Ulama, one of the largest Muslim organizations in the country. The seminar was sponsored by both organizations along with the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) and took place in Malang, East Java in November 2000 (see reference to this launch by Rev. Dr Fernando Enns in his introduction to this report on p. 7).

At the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI) launch during the CLAI assembly in Barranquilla, Colombia in January 2001, delegates listened attentively to what children were telling them... for more than two hours! The children’s contributions – stories, songs and poems – to the debate on overcoming violence were in many ways more telling than long speeches by adults.

The global Decade launch took place in Berlin, Germany

“Living Letters” Visits

Sri Lanka 2007

The 4-14 August 2007 visit of a WCC Living Letters team to the troubled Indian Ocean island was the first DOV mission of its kind. It was hosted by the country's National Council of Churches. Living Letters from Kenya, South Korea, USA, India and Ethiopia travelled over the entire restive north and east and met with church leaders, social activists, representatives of political parties and civil rights groups, Buddhist leaders and two ministers of the national government. They learned about the human rights situation, the churches' efforts to bring about peace and reconciliation and the expectations of religious and civil society actors vis-

à-vis the international community.

Religion and ethnicity were cited as factors in the conflict, but many felt that political instability and leadership failures were the core problems. The minority status of Christians in Sri Lanka limited the churches' capacity to exert influence for justice and peace. The churches were divided along ethnic lines and often unable to speak as one despite cooperation among different church groups. Although the constitution recognized freedom of religion in principle this was not the case in practice.

The team brought home with them the Sri Lankan churches' plea to help raise the country's situation to the forefront of international debate. And to call on churches all over the world to pray

on 4 February 2001. It included a televised worship at the Kaiser Wilhelm Gedächtniskirche, a public meeting at the Berlin House of World Cultures which brought together over a thousand people, a three-hour Peace Festival and a march by over 600 people in snow and subzero temperatures to Berlin's historic Brandenburg Gate. Marchers carried small votive candles inside red, green or yellow cups – the DOV colours. In front of the famous gate, they placed their glowing candles in the shape of the red, green and yellow DOV logo.

Nobel Laureate Jose Ramos Horta from East Timor, Ms Rita Sussmuth, former president of the German Bundestag, WCC Central Committee moderator HH Aram I and general secretary Rev. Dr Konrad Raiser addressed the gathering. Raiser paid homage to martyred peace-makers, and concluded with a passage from Hebrews, “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a crowd of witnesses... let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.” (Heb. 12:1-2)

Listening to the words of a distraught mother who shared her experiences of violence during a DOV regional ecumenical forum held in Kampala, Uganda in March 2001, participants realized that it was no longer viable to discuss violence unless ideas, suggestions and resolutions were put into action. “Whilst we are talking and debating, people are dying every day. It is high time for us to put words into action!” said Dr Peter Kanyandgo, vice-chancellor of the Catholic University of Uganda.

Organized by the Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes and the Horn of Africa (FEC-CLAHA), a 2001 ecumenical forum in Uganda concluded by

launching the DOV in the region.

Planning concrete actions to be undertaken, churches in the region agreed to

- focus on the plight of the Sudanese and the devastating war that had displaced the people in Southern Sudan;
- organize a solidarity visit to the Democratic Republic of Congo;
- facilitate the reintegration of street children into their communities of origin; and
- address the critical issue of land resources in the different countries.

Decade launches in West and Southern Africa as well as an All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) launch followed. Accra, Ghana was the venue for the West Africa launch in May 2001 under the auspices of the regional church organization, the Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in West Africa (FECCIWA).

The All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) Decade launch was organized during its general committee meeting in Nairobi, Kenya in October 2001. “Violence has greatly encroached on families and communities in our mother Africa,” AACC president Prof. Kwesi Dickson observed. World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) head Modetse Mfashwanayo stressed that the launch would be “a futile exercise without an effective way to monitor its progress”. He also pointed out that the elimination of poverty, ignorance and disease would be a major focus for the DOV on the African continent.¹

for a country that was once known as the pearl of the Indian Ocean.

USA 2007

In the first two days of a 15-23 September 2007 visit to the US, Living Letters team members from South Africa, Lebanon, Pakistan and Brazil met in New York with members of the Salam Arabic Lutheran Church, a multicultural church in Brooklyn that ministers to immigrants from the Middle East; worshipped at the Abyssinian Baptist Church, an historic church serving the African American community in Harlem and were guests at the third annual Peace Festival of the Fellowship of



Members of the 2007 "Living Letters" delegation to the US commemorate the International Day of Peace by building a cairn during an ecumenical service at the UN Church Centre. © WCC/Jerry Hames

Reconciliation, an interfaith organization with programmes and educational projects that support domestic and international nonviolent alternatives to conflict.

Also on the Living Letters' agenda were visits with an Amish Mennonite community in Pennsylvania where five young schoolgirls had been killed in a random act of violence; inner-city ministries in Philadelphia where communities were confronting drive-by street shootings; the UN headquarters in New York on September 21 for an ecumenical event to mark the International Day of Prayer for Peace; and New Orleans, which was struggling with domestic and street violence in the wake of Hurricane Katrina two years before.

Also in October 2001, more than 100 participants from around the world and local communities attended a DOV festival in Moshi Tanzania on the theme *Ondoa Ukatili: Cultivating a Culture of Peace with Justice*.

The theme chosen for Asia Sunday in 2001 (May 27) was "Cultivating the Culture of Peace, Overcoming Violence". The liturgy prepared for the Asian churches by the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) adapted some of the resources from the Berlin launch's worship service to the Asian context.

The DOV launch in the Pacific featured recorded messages from other regions, music from the global launch in Berlin, power-point presentations, a musical drama based on the story of the Prodigal Son and live interviews with participants from different parts of the Pacific on their experiences of economic, domestic, armed violence and violence in the church. This regional launch was orchestrated during the September 2002 Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC) Assembly in Raratonga, Cook Islands. WCC president Bishop Jabez Bryce read the DOV appeal and led the assembly in a call to confession and a declaration of forgiveness. After which PCC moderator Ms Fuiva Kaavaliku of Tonga launched the DOV, praying: "May God's Holy Spirit be with us as we confront the forces of darkness, the manifestations of violence and as we are determined to overcome violence."

Following a Lenten fast from violence, members and friends of the US Conference of the WCC came to the Conference's annual meeting in Nashville, Tennessee in April 2001 to launch the DOV in the US. More of a retreat than a meeting, the DOV emphasis offered both US Conference board members and peace-making participants more time for prayer,

meditation, liturgies, homilies, music and silence than was customary at US Conference annual meetings. There were, however, formal presentations as well: for example, a young woman from one of the Christian Peacemaker Teams in Palestine (CPT) described the skills and strength that on-site observation, documentation and accompaniment require and challenged participants to consider joining such efforts.

Among several national launches in Europe, the Federation of Evangelical Churches in Italy (FCEI) organized a 24 May 2001 Ascension worship service in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Rome to open the Decade. And in the German city of Braunschweig – a *Peace to the City Network* partner – a DOV launch was programmed for 19 May 2001. ■

The team left the United States enriched and encouraged by the signs of hope and community commitment they witnessed among US Christians struggling with issues of gun control, war and a culture of violence.

Kenya 2008

Early in 2008, churches in Kenya were struggling to work for peace and reconciliation amidst a wave of post-electoral violence along ethnic lines which killed more than 700 people and obliged some 250,000 people to flee their homes.

At this particularly challenging time, a Living Letters visit hosted by the National Council of

Churches in Kenya expressed the solidarity of churches worldwide with the Kenyan churches.

It was clear that the latter had been influenced by the hate and division sown during the election campaigns. "We regret that as church leaders we were unable to effectively confront issues because we were partisan. Our efforts to forestall the current crisis were not effective because we as the membership of the NCK did not speak with one voice," a February 2008 NCK statement admitted.¹⁸

After this recognition of their complicity, prayers, dialogues and other church efforts helped to promote negotiation and progress in resolving the conflict. The churches also responded by providing

shelter, food, clothing and other relief items. The NCKK called political leaders to end the crisis by dialogue and the public to exercise forgiveness and shun revenge. An interreligious forum promoted mediation among leaders and called for peaceful co-existence among all Kenyans.

After five days of intense and moving encounters that included a meeting with Kenyan vice-president Kalonzo Musyoka, the seven Living Letters team members returned home to report to their churches and, in some cases, to their governments about the needs on the ground in terms of financial support, humanitarian aid, and long-term capacity-building.

The Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel

The Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) was set up in response to a call by the local churches of Jerusalem to a WCC-led ecumenical delegation which visited Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) in June 2001. The WCC Executive Committee recommended in September 2001 that an accompaniment programme be developed that would include an international ecumenical presence and work closely with the local churches.

The EAPPI was launched in August 2002 as part of the WCC Ecumenical Campaign to End the Illegal Occupation of Palestine: Support a Just Peace in the Middle East (see DOV Annual Focus 2002 in "Annual Foci" section on p. 62). The

WCC International Relations team was responsible for designing and establishing EAPPI and the Ecumenical Campaign.

To date, EAPPI has brought over 700 internationals to the West Bank and East Jerusalem to experience three months of life under occupation. Ecumenical Accompaniers (EAs) come on a voluntary basis to provide protective presence to vulnerable communities, monitor and report human rights abuses and support Palestinians and Israelis working together for peace. When they return home, EAs campaign for a just and peaceful resolution to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict through an end to the occupation, respect for international law and implementation of UN resolutions.

Since 2002, participants from over 40 churches and church bodies and more than 20 countries have taken part in EAPPI. They are recruited and selected by the sending church or church-related organizations in their home countries, where they receive an orientation followed by training in Jerusalem prior to their placement.

The EAPPI programme is coordinated and managed by WCC staff in Geneva and Jerusalem. Staff works with a group of national coordinators in 15 countries, most of whom are employed by ecumenical organizations. Regular coordination meetings and evaluations have taken place over the Decade. The office in Jerusalem is staffed by a local programme coordinator, a field officer, a team facilitator, a communications officer and an advocacy officer.

The EAPPI's mission is to accompany Palestinians and Israelis in their nonviolent actions and to carry out concerted advocacy efforts to end the occupation and bring a just and peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.



An Ecumenical Accompanier escorts a boy prevented from returning home through Bab Al Baladya square in Hebron in August 2010. © EAPPI/Jeppe Schilder



Living Letters team visit to Kenya, 30 January to 3 February 2008. Burned-down houses and looted shops are a common sight in the Rift Valley. The collapse of tourism and exports is the economic face of the crisis. © WCC/Juan Michel



Living Letters visit to Ambon, Indonesia, July 12, 2008. Wim Tutuiha (second from left), who lost several members of his family during the 1999-2004 interreligious conflict in Ambon, in conversation with members of the WCC Living Letters team. © WCC

Indonesia 2008

Over the previous decades, Indonesia had suffered repeated outbreaks of ethnic and religious conflict, the integration of internally displaced people as well as of refugees from outside its borders. Just a few days after a Living Letters team ended its 17-24 July 2008 visit to communities in Ambon, West Papua, Central Sulawesi and West Timor, Muslims reportedly stormed a Protestant school in Jakarta, and thousands of Christians took to the streets in the Indonesian province of Papua to protest against the introduction of *sharia*.

These incidents illustrated the continuing challenge of extremism in the world's most



An Ecumenical Accompanier at work during a September 2010 attack by Israeli settlers. © EAPPI/Oliver Wnuck

Over the Decade and under the heading of accompaniment and solidarity, EAs participated in the daily life and work of Palestinian and Israeli civil society, churches and Christian communities. For example, they took part in the annual olive harvest, met and learned from the experiences of Israeli activists, participated in peaceful joint Palestinian/Israeli demonstrations, visited church schools and homes, accompanied church leaders and members and regularly attended church services in Jerusalem, Nablus and Bethlehem.

To date, EAs have been visibly present in vulnerable communities, locations or events, e.g., near Israeli settlements and the separation wall, schools and homes, fields and orchards. They accompany farmers cut off from regular access to their fields by the separation wall, travel with health teams crossing military checkpoints and with ambulances in their emergency rounds to West Bank clinics. They monitor areas where there is a curfew or settler violence to ensure that children can travel safely to and from school, monitor the conduct of Israeli sol-

diers and settlers (e.g., at checkpoints and during demonstrations and other military actions) and contact relevant organizations and authorities when interventions are needed.

Under the heading of advocacy, EAs have actively listened and given voice to local people's experiences and daily suffering under the occupation and written or spoken about these experiences in their reports and public speaking engagements. They have engaged with the media locally, nationally and internationally and have done advocacy and awareness-building work on their return to their home countries by reporting, for example, on violations of human rights and international humanitarian law that they witnessed and used them to inform governments and intergovernmental bodies and press them to take action.

A Website with news, fact sheets, eyewitness reports by EAs, photos and videos, relevant policy documents, a blog, an e-news service, an online newsletter and quarterly magazine and links to related church, international, Israeli and Palestinian organizations are all part of the battery of EAPPI communication strategies and channels. ■

More information:

EAPPI Website: <http://www.eappi.org/>

populous Muslim-dominated nation. The Living Letters team was told that churches were still being destroyed or forced to close and that a total of 966 churches had been burned or closed down since 1945.

For both Christian and Muslim leaders, education was one possible antidote to extremism. "Through educational exchange, we are moulding agents of reconciliation and harmony," Rev. Dr Margaretha Hendriks-Ririmasse, a chairperson of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI), told the team.

The Living Letters shared experiences from their own churches in Australia, USA, Germany, Korea and Sudan and learned about Indonesian Christians'

peace-building projects like a "Young Ambassadors for Peace (YAP)" programme in strife-torn Ambon in which YAPers from Christian and Muslim communities attended peace-building workshops during which they built or renewed trust among themselves. (See description of the YAP programme in "DOV Stories and Examples of 'Good Practice'" section on p. 86.)

Germany 2008

A Living Letters team from Burundi, Brazil, Greece and the US visiting Germany from 27 June to 4 July found many community projects involving youth and volunteers in issues related to peace.

For example, in Dresden an ecumenical centre was helping young children to observe how life in local rivers was changing and how ecosystems support life. The children asked restaurants and shops about the food being sold and learned to bake their own bread.

In Frankfurt, a "Respect Campaign" in schools and parishes promoted respect for all, regardless of gender, race, age or other differences. In Cologne, a playground built for Jewish, Muslim and Christian children was part of a campaign of the Armenian Church called "Do you know who I am?" In Hanover, a project was using personal testimonies about violence, role plays, multimedia and other interactive activities to teach churches, schools and

Study Guides

"How do you break the cycle of violence?" Part of the answer, suggested a DOV study guide drafted in 2001 by DOV communicator Diana Mavunduse and WCC Education staff member Simon Oxley, is "The same way you break the cycle of ignorance: educate people."

As well as changing individual behaviour, overcoming violence involves "overcoming the systemic inequalities that lead to violence in the first place," the guide noted. And suggested that "By understanding why violence has been created, we will then know what to do and what not to do in order to decrease the level of violence in ourselves and in the world, to create and foster understanding, reconciliation and forgiveness."

The concise study guide focused on the four themes of the Decade. Entitled *Why Violence? Why Not Peace?*, the English version was distributed world-wide in 2002, with German French and Spanish versions following in 2003. By the end of 2004, well over 50,000 copies in eight languages had been distributed. By end-2005, the number of languages had increased to 14 and new translations were being arranged at local, national or regional levels. Both this fact and continued demand indicated that study and reflection were happening not only at the higher levels of church leadership but on the local grassroots level as well.

A second, longer study guide was published in 2009 to help individuals, groups and churches reflect

on the themes of the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC) in 2011 as well as take action in their own contexts to promote reconciliation and peace. This 34-page guide was translated into French, Spanish, German and Japanese.

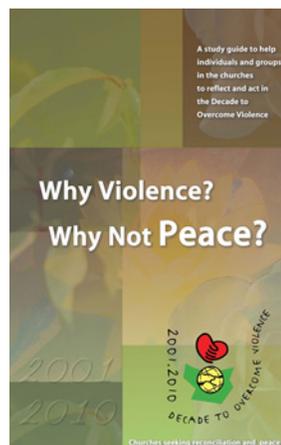
The 2009 version of the guide, entitled *Telling the Truth about Ourselves and our World*, contained a basic introduction to the DOV; four sections of material for reflection under the headings:

- Is violence inevitable?
- How do we use power?
- How do we act justly?
- What kind of identity?

as well as information about further resources; and prayers. Each section was accompanied by exercises to help people enter the topic from their own experience; material to stimulate conversation around the topic and suggestions for Bible study.

The second IEPC study guide acknowledged that telling the truth "is not easy and can be painful." The guide suggested that it meant

- identifying the difference between things as they are and how they should be;
- recognizing our need for repentance;
- offering and accepting forgiveness;
- drawing on the personal and faith resources we have been given; and
- acting for change.



community organizations nonviolent approaches based on moral, ethical and biblical concepts.

The Association of Churches and Missions in South Western Germany had a peace-building programme linking Germany, India and Africa teaching young people skills in transforming conflicts and assisting them to conduct training in nonviolence in their communities.

The team learned from the German churches' experience in teaching nonviolent conflict resolution to youth, in interfaith and intercultural dialogue as well as in remembering the victims of war and persecution and their work on reconciliation. The visitors brought along prayers, greetings and encouragements from their own churches.



During an October-November 2008 Living Letters team visit to Uganda, a team member with girls studying at the Catholic school in Gulu. © WCC/Semegnish Asfaw

Theological Study and Reflection

This guide dealt with the main themes of the IEPC: peace in the community; peace with the earth; peace in the marketplace; and peace among peoples. Each section provided an opportunity to relate the theme to one's own experience and context; further reflection on the theme in the global context; thinking of one's own vision of peace; and a commitment to action. ■

More Information:

Both study guides were made available on the DOV Website: <http://bit.ly/fb2Nu6>

One of the specific objectives of the Decade was to strengthen theological and ethical foundations for discerning and building a culture of peace.

Meeting in Geneva in June 2002 and again in January 2003, a small representative group of theologians with some representatives of the WCC's Faith and Order Commission developed a study document entitled "Nurturing Peace, Overcoming Violence: In the way of Christ for the sake of the world".

Affirmed by the Faith and Order Standing Commission in June 2003, this document proposed five challenges:

- Affirming human dignity, rights of peoples and the integrity of creation
- Interrogating and redefining power
- Realising mutuality and interdependence in a world of diverse identities
- Repentance for complicity in violence and apathy in resistance
- Walking in the way of peace, justice and reconciliation.

With a time-bound plan for the years leading up to the WCC's Ninth Assembly in 2006, this document was shared with theological institutions and ecumenical organizations, inviting them to study and reflect on these themes in order to motivate and strengthen responses from churches.

With the last two above-mentioned challenges providing their underlying motivation, the WCC Faith and Order team facilitated discussion on the three other challenges.

The theme of "Interrogating and redefining power"

Uganda 2008

An eight-member Living Letters team visited Uganda from 27 October to 2 November 2008 to express solidarity with churches in a country returning to relative stability after decades of military dictatorship and civil war. The team learned about peace-building initiatives and shared experiences from their own churches in Australia, Jordan, Thailand, Kenya and Liberia.

Team members saw examples of churches and other religious groups engaged in counseling, peace-building and reconciliation: the Anglican Church of Uganda in dialogue with rebels of the Lord's Resistance Army; Christian and Muslim

leaders in the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative working to find a peaceful solution to the conflict in northern Uganda.

The Living Letters found many challenges on their visits to internally displaced persons. People needing infrastructure, psychosocial and spiritual support to be able to return home. Displaced people living with HIV/AIDS and needing testing, counseling and anti-retroviral drugs. People traumatized by conflict needing counseling and social support networks. Churches lacking the means to help armed groups settle down after abandoning the warriors' life. Religious leaders and NGOs needing effective advocates to engage the government for cooperation and assistance...

"It is an enormous task: we have one million people to resettle and to help them recover from the social and psychological effects of the war. For that, we need to strengthen the capacities of communities to take care of each other," said Canon Grace Kaiso, executive secretary of the Uganda Joint Christian Council.

Liberia and Sierra Leone 2008

An estimated 200,000 people in Liberia and 50,000 people in neighbouring Sierra Leone were killed during a dozen years of civil wars that ended in 2003. After seven years of peace, the Living Letters



Joséphine Murebwayire, a widow who lost all her six children during the 1994 genocide, gives her firsthand testimony to a conference on Lasting Peace in Africa in Kigali, Rwanda, April 2004. © WCC

brought 27 theologians, biblical scholars, and social and political scientists from many parts of the world to Crêt-Bérard, Puidoux, Switzerland in December 2003 to analyze the complexity of power today and identify relevant theological challenges for further exploration.

The consultation discussed a rationale for a new ecumenical discourse on power and examined biblical and theological models of power. Group work focused on "the power of interpretation", "the shared nature of power", "religion, culture and power" and "models of power".

The consultation was seen as a beginning of an ongoing process of reflection; an aide memoire on the conversation summarized its nature, content, scope and limitations.

A second international consultation on the same topic took place in Chiang Mai, Thailand in February 2004. Co-sponsored by the WCC with the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) and the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), the consultation explored the distinctive perspectives on power

of younger theologians, theological educators and social activists from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America and the Pacific. The 27 participants brought with them their specific contextual and experiential perspectives as well as their distinct tools of analysis to interrogate and redefine power.

Presentations on a theology of peace were made at the July-August 2004 meeting of the Faith and Order Plenary Commission in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

A consultation on "Affirming human dignity, rights of peoples and the integrity of creation" took place in Kigali, Rwanda in December 2004. Before the consultation, participants – 25 theologians, human rights activists and social scientists from Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Philippines, South Korea, Brazil, Uruguay, Tonga, Finland, Germany, Russia, UK, Canada and the USA – visited a village where over 5,000 women, men and children had been massacred in a small village chapel in 1994. The consultation was facilitated by interaction with local realities, church and community leaders and peace activists in Kigali.

Synthesized in an aide memoire, the discussions focused on detrimental and nurturing notions of the other; responding to the challenges posed by economic globalization, environmental degradation, militarization, the spirit and logic of violence and the state and non-state actors in the dynamics of violence; responding to the challenges of healing and reconciliation; responding to the challenges of the vulnerability and culpability of churches in situations of violence; and of the need to reclaim the centrality of the vocation of peace and reconciliation in the life of the churches.

On the topic of "Realizing mutuality and interdependence

November 2008 visit to both countries was an eye-opener for those involved. It was also a rare opportunity for the churches to share their past experiences, show how they were coping with their lives and their journey toward a more peaceful existence.

For the Living Letters team, the war seemed to have reminded the churches of their divine call to unity. Due to church efforts, a unique relationship had been established with the state: churches were close enough to cooperate with the government in reconciliation and peace-building but far enough to criticize where they saw a lack of integrity or accountability. When the Living Letters team met the president of Sierra Leone, Ernest Bai Koroma

praised the churches for bringing positive changes to the country.

The four-person team from Ghana, USA, Pakistan and Kenya encountered youth and women's groups and theology students. Women in both countries were specific about what they would like to see in their societies including business training and empowerment programmes, forums addressing domestic violence, legal prosecution of the perpetrators of sexual and domestic violence and global solidarity in prayer for women especially in Africa.

The team's encounters with people engaged in peace work on the ground included a visit to a facility in Kenema where children who had lived

in the streets after the war were supported by the Council of Churches in Sierra Leone.

Nicaragua 2008

Paying a November 2008 pastoral visit to Nicaragua, WCC general secretary Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia joined a small team visiting the country within the Living Letters framework. The team attended events in Managua, Puerto Cabezas and Granada. These included a theological forum on ecumenism and overcoming violence in Central America and ecumenical celebrations and meetings with church leaders, ecumenical organizations and representatives of civil society and government.

in a world of diverse identities," participants in an April 2005 consultation in Oslo, Norway organized in partnership with the Church of Norway and Norwegian Church Aid looked at power and authority in the Bible and said that "Power, understood as authority in the biblical usage, means one that is always to be shared."

Consultation participants – 20 theologians and peace activists from Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Philippines, D. R. Congo, Nigeria, Middle East, Eastern Europe – considered the "myth of invulnerability" entertained by "the dominant and powerful," and declared that "to be human is to be vulnerable" and that "Expression of solidarity in vulnerability is what makes one strong, makes every person loveable and diminishes all illusions of invincibility."

On the theme of unity and diversity, the Oslo consultation noted that "Division is the result of the refusal of diversity," and affirmed that "The diversity of the church, arising essentially out of specific geographical contexts and cultures, does not negate the notion of one universal church, the one body of Christ. The reality of that diversity is not antithetical but constitutive to its unity".²

And on trauma and healing, participants suggested that "The church needs to recognize and speak the truth about the potential of trauma. It must learn to avoid theological escapism and theological rhetoric. The church must also avoid perverting the theology of the cross to justify and sustain the misuse of power, e.g., in relation to domestic violence."³ A synthesis of these reflections was published in the WCC RISK book series.

At the WCC Ninth Assembly in Porto Alegre in February 2006, two well-attended *Mutirão* sessions on "Power" were



One of many discussion groups at the Faith and Order Plenary Commission meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from 28 July - 6 August 2004. © WCC/Manuel López

facilitated by the core group that monitored the theological study process.

Exploring responses in faith to institutionally and structurally embedded cruelty was the purpose of a theological consultation on "Cruelty – the ugly face of violence" in Crêt-Bérard, Puidoux, Switzerland in December 2006. Organized by the WCC and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), the gathering focused on cultures and traditions as well as social, economic and political structures that are themselves cruel and create an ethos that "enables" people to become cruel. Twelve case studies from different contexts and perspectives provided the basis for a debate on racism, casteism, patriarchy, xenophobia, terrorism and counter-terrorism, torture of prisoners, genocide, rape and sex trafficking and occupation. Some papers from this consultation were published by the WCC in book form in 2008. (See More Information, below.)

This theological study and reflection process ended at Porto Alegre, following the Ninth Assembly's decision to pursue



During WCC general secretary Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia's November 2008 visit to Nicaragua, he preached in the Central Lutheran Church in Managua. Members of the congregation followed the service from the street as the church was full. © WCC/Peter Williams

The visit took place amidst growing tensions and sporadic violence at the approach of municipal elections seen as a virtual referendum on the ruling Sandinista party. The ecumenical delegation heard concerns from Nicaraguan church leaders and representatives of ecumenical organizations about the need for peace and reconciliation.

Preaching at ecumenical services in the capital city Managua and in Puerto Cabezas, Kobia stressed the Nicaraguan churches' ministry of reconciliation in the face of a history marked by centuries of "violence and wounds" – from Spanish colonial rule to the "so-called 'low-intensity conflict' during the 1980's" through the Somoza dictatorship and the struggle for liberation.

South Africa 2008

The role the country's churches and their national council had played in overcoming the violence of the apartheid ideology and system were what made the November 2008 Living Letters visit to South Africa especially significant. Since the country's first free and democratic elections in 1994, the churches had continued to work for peace, justice and reconciliation.

Visiting the provinces of Gauteng and Kwazulu Natal, the ecumenical visitors from Canada, Jamaica, Palestine, Switzerland and Zambia met with church leaders and communities working on justice and peace like the organization "Love in

"firmer alliances and effective links with churches, networks and movements" and to move towards the IEPC with the harvest of actions for peace.

The study drove home the importance of wrestling with four major challenges for peace and for churches' attitudes towards violence and peace. These were:

- the denial or affirmation of human dignity;
- the way power is understood and exercised;
- the need for and risk of actions for justice; and
- the problems and blessing of diverse identities.

In all, the study upheld the need for churches' actions for peace to be distinctly grounded in their faith and hope in God's righteousness. ■

More Information:

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Thailand, Theological Concerns Desk, Christian Conference of Asia & All Africa Conference of Churches. <http://bit.ly/eoB8vd>

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Nurturing Peace: Theological Reflections on Overcoming Violence. Ed. Deenabandhu Manchala, Geneva, WCC RISK series, 2006.

Cruelty – the ugly face of violence, consultation, Crêt-Bérard, Puidoux, Switzerland, December 2006. WCC / Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). <http://bit.ly/eoSGnm>

Cruelty and Christian Witness : Confronting Violence at its Ugliness. Eds. Deenabandhu Manchala, Drea Fröchtling and Michael Trice, Geneva, WCC, 2011.

Action” in Mabopane, Pretoria – a centre reaching out to people “discarded” by society and providing education to street children and prisoners. The visit was hosted and organized by the South African Council of Churches.

Pakistan 2008

Human rights, religious freedom and interreligious dialogue were on the agenda of the November-December 2008 Living Letters team visit to Pakistan. The team discussed how churches could help ease political and religious tensions with representatives from churches, the Muslim community, civil society organizations and government officials.

Based in Lahore, the team travelled to Rawalpindi to visit the Christian Study Center and to Islamabad where they met colleagues of Church World Service and the Islamic University of Islamabad. They also visited a *madrassa*, an extremely poor Christian community of brick-kiln-makers.

In attempting to understand the multi-faceted problems facing the church of Pakistan, the team detected a steady shrinkage of “democratic space, making it even harder for NGOs, civil society organizations, religious communities and people’s movements to press for the strengthening of human rights in the legal system, for the just enforcement of laws, popular political engagement and religious

freedom.”

The Living Letters urged closer cooperation on human rights between Pakistan’s churches and between them and secular organizations. As well as monitoring law enforcement by state authorities in accordance with international guidelines, they recommended that churches acknowledge people’s *own* efforts to protect their basic human dignity and organize them in movements in order to maximize their power.

They committed the WCC to continued accompaniment of Pakistan via a new interreligious initiative on Accompanying Churches in Situations of Conflict.

Visser ‘t Hooft Memorial Consultations

The Foundation for Ecumenical Leadership was created in honour of the co-founder and first general secretary of the WCC, Dr W. A. Visser ‘t Hooft. In 1993, the Foundation began a series of consultations on key contemporary issues in cooperation with the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey.

Two such consultations were held within the framework of the Decade and of WCC and Bossey work on interreligious relations and dialogue. The first of these (the fifth in the consultation series) took place in June 2002 and examined the theme of “Violence and peace: an interfaith exploration into the heart of religion”.

Participants – Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and Christians from Europe, Asia, Africa, the Middle East, North and South America – considered case studies from Indonesia, Sudan and the Middle East, and discussed the DOV’s four thematic foci. They agreed that the elimination of violence is a challenge to all religions, and resolved to network, share information, be involved in awareness-raising activities and engage in acts of solidarity. They also committed themselves to organize and mobilize for events such as interfaith fasting for peace, nonviolence days, and acts of celebration for life.

The second memorial consultation within the DOV framework (and the sixth in the consultation series) took place in June 2004 in Bossey under the theme “Religion, power and violence”; the 36 participants represented Buddhist, Hindu, Christian, Muslim, Jewish and Indigenous spiritual traditions who had decided to join efforts in interreligious peace-building.

The consultation explored the interrelationship between religion, power and violence and identified models, resources and networks for interreligious peace-building. It addressed the



Dr W.A. Visser 't Hooft was the first general secretary of the WCC. © WCC

need to confront the misuse of religions to fuel conflicts, and to encourage the practice of religion and spirituality to help bring about lasting peace, justice and human dignity. It was prepared by an interfaith workshop group which met in Bossey in 2003.

During their week of study, community-building for dialogue and networking, participants shared their experiences of actual conflict situations and concrete ways of working for peace, listened to different perspectives on power and religion and explored how to work together in the common quest for lasting peace.

They paid particular attention to globalization, power and justice and how to deal with past experiences of violence and conflict, and called on the WCC to network with other world religious bodies and participate in joint social actions.

Based on this consultation a video *Religion, Power and Violence* was produced by the WCC Interreligious Relations and Dialogue and Ecumenical Formation offices for use as an educational tool. ■



Living Letters team members chatting with inhabitants of a village just outside Lahore in eastern Pakistan where some 400 Christians live. The team visited Pakistan in November-December 2008. © WCC/Henrik Hansson

Colombia 2008

Colombia had experienced conflict between the army, two groups of left-wing rebels and right-wing paramilitaries since the 1960s. Drug-related crime had added to a situation that the UN had described as one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. During the decades-long conflict, tens of thousands of Colombians had been killed while some three million had been forced from their homes.

"Enough is enough! The Colombian people want and deserve peace." With this message, a Living Letters team began their journey home after visiting this South American country in early December 2008.

The visit to Colombian churches, ecumenical

organizations and civil society movements included the capital Bogotá, the city of Barranquilla in the north and locations in western and north-western regions that had suffered badly from armed violence and forced displacement of people.

On 10 December, the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the team took part in a march in Barranquilla demanding justice for the "forgotten" victims of paramilitary and state violence.

Based on the evidence they gathered, team members evoked a contradiction between the government's portrayal of itself as democratic and its authoritarian character and criticized the "Plan Colombia" through which the US was channeling

Women in Church and Society

During the Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women (1988-1998), violence against women emerged as a major global reality of deep concern to Christian women everywhere. It was also during this decade that the Pauline concept of Living Letters' visits (II Corinthians 3:2-3) became an important aspect of DOV's expression of ecumenical solidarity in contexts of suffering. When the WCC Eighth Assembly in Harare in 1998 decided to establish the Decade to Overcome Violence 2001-2010, it also acknowledged that gender violence is a sin and encouraged churches, networks and movements to work against all manifestations of this scourge.

Even before the official launching of the DOV in February 2001, a project on overcoming violence against women was established under DOV auspices with two part-time consultants working out of Edinburgh, Scotland. At the other end of the Decade (2009-2010), the WCC programme on Women in Church and Society undertook two innovative projects within the framework of the Decade. One was an online Lenten study series called "From Cries of Anguish to Stories of Hope". The other was a back-to-back regional consultative process of "Reclaiming women's spiritualities of resilience, healing and wholeness" (with women) and "Men and positive masculinities for partnership" (with men). This process used three strategies:

- "Movers for gender just peace": a team of advocates and facilitators for gender just peace;
- "Eminent Midwives for gender just peace": international organizations working on issues of gender justice that link advocacy and policy making (Ecumenical Women and the UN Commission on the Status of Women); and

- a 10 minute documentary on *What it Takes to be a man to be used in the process as a facilitating tool*.

It was from these two processes that the church gender training manual entitled *Created in God's Image-From Hegemony to Partnership: Church Manual on Men as Partners-Promoting Positive Masculinities* was co-published in 2010 with the World Communion of Reformed Churches).

In the meantime, the Tamar Campaign was launched in Africa in 2005 by the WCC Ecumenical Theological Education (ETE) programme in partnership with St Paul's University in Kenya and the Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa (FEC-CLAHA).

These projects are summarized below.

Networking and Resources for Churches on Overcoming Violence against Women

In the autumn of 2000, the WCC Women in Church and Society Programme set up a project to develop a dedicated network of theological research and education; build a comprehensive and accessible resource collection of materials for education, training, reflection and practical initiatives; provide principles, guidelines and models for strategies, projects and policies to be implemented by churches and other relevant organizations; develop a high profile for overcoming violence against women; and cooperate with secular, social and NGO agencies, especially at the international level.

An August 2001 consultation organized with Christian World Communions in Dundee, Scotland shared stories of



Some 60 people met the Living Letters team during their December 2008 visit to the "Las Camelias" humanitarian zone in Curvaradó, Chocó, Colombia. © GospelNoticias./ William Delgado Gil

"large sums of money for the purchase of arms in the guise of humanitarian aid."

Among practical examples of peaceful resistance to violence highlighted by the team was the establishment of peasant communities in "humanitarian zones" where they were finding refuge from armed violence and claiming their rights to land from which they had been expelled by violence to make way for major economic projects.

"The visit of this group [...] has given us spiritual energy and encouraged us to persevere as a church committed to the life of those suffering from forced displacement," said Rev. Gloria Ulloa, executive secretary of the Coastal Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church of Colombia.

Haiti 2008

Living letters from France, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Lebanon, Canada and Cuba visited Haiti in November 2008. They met with diverse people and organizations ranging from a small rural Baptist community to the prime minister and visited local communities in the capital and the south.

They learned of failure to protect the natural environment and that the most fatal kind of violence in Haiti was extreme poverty, and food insecurity the most serious insecurity – a heritage of decades of irresponsible policies that had ruined the country's economy and of failure to protect the natural environment.

To overcome violence, it was therefore essential



Launching the "On the Wings of a Dove" campaign at the Ecumenical Centre, 25 November 2004. © WCC

concerns and models of good practice as well as resources for education, training, worship and theology. Together, participants drafted ten "Dundee Principles" to guide prayer, study and action to overcome violence against women and committed themselves to follow up in their respective communions.

Autumn 2005 saw the publication of *Streams of Grace*, a 90-page dossier of examples of good practice in relation to overcoming violence against women from churches of diverse traditions around the world. *On Being Church: African Women's Voices and Visions*, and *Women's Voices and Visions of the Church: Reflections from North America* were also published in 2005 while *Women's Voices and Visions of the Church: Reflections of Orthodox Women* was published in 2006 (see References section on p. 139).

Churches, groups and individuals were resourced to observe a *16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence* international campaign. This campaign had been inspiring imaginative action by grassroots organizations and women's networks since 1991. In 2004 and 2005, churches around the world were invited to participate in the *16 days* via a special campaign called "On the Wings of a Dove".

A pre-existing WCC collection of documents related to overcoming violence against women was added to, and all 1600+ materials catalogued electronically. The catalogued collection was transferred to the WCC library in Geneva in April 2006.

The project maintained a contact list of over 300 individuals involved in the issue of violence against women. Fewer than 50 were part of networking groups and most depended on the project for keeping in touch.

The project consultants led workshops and/or spoke at a Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) Assembly, a CTBI DOV seminar, an EFECW Forum in Celakovice (Czech Republic), a June 2003 conference on Family Violence in Beirut, organized by the Middle East Council of Churches and the Lebanese Council to Resist Violence Against Women and the WCC Ninth Assembly in Porto Alegre, Brazil in addition to other British, Irish and several Scottish meetings.

The Tamar Campaign: Breaking the Chains of Silence

Don't my brother, do not force me. Such a thing should not be done in Israel! Don't do this wicked thing." 2 Samuel 13:12

On 25 February 2005, thirty trees were planted on the grounds of St Paul's University in Limuru, Kenya and about

to strengthen the state of law and to enable political, administrative, economic and social institutions to work for the common interest by providing public services worthy of the name for everyone, starting with the poorest.

The Living Letters were particularly struck by the contrast between the “disgraceful” living conditions of most Haitians and their dignity in adversity, evident in the work of civil society associations and the faith convictions of Christian organizations. “There are many people in Haiti who refuse to give up, as shown by the many creative initiatives we saw or heard about” – in education, health, promotion of human rights, civic education, rehabilitation and protection of the environment,

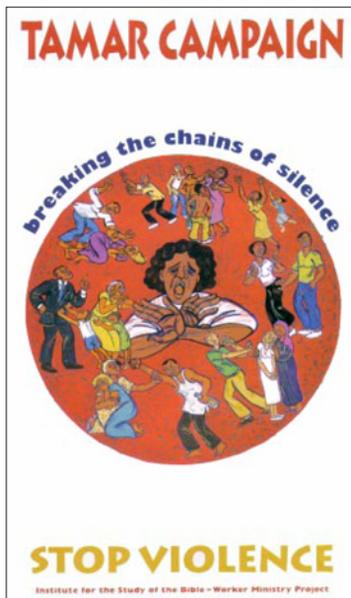


An international ecumenical “Living Letters” team visited Haiti in November 2008. Known as tap-tapa, Haiti’s buses are often painted with religious slogans. © WCC/Manuel Quintero

development projects in rural areas and community organizations in the shantytowns and more.

The churches had provided emergency aid for hurricane victims. In response to domestic violence, some churches had launched programmes to strengthen and develop female leadership. Churches had built accommodation for the homeless, promoted conflict resolution and mediation techniques in the community and put pressure on government to implement laws which reflect Gospel values.

Theological reflection on violence by the Haiti Protestant Federation (HPF) had identified the need for a radical change in values and emphasized the role churches could play through preaching and liturgical life as well as in their strong presence in



Uganda is one of the many countries in which EHAIA is active. This township in Kampala is home to about 40,000 people, many of them suffering from HIV/AIDS. April 2004. © WCC

200 people from churches, NGOs and government attended a dinner in Nairobi. These two events marked the launching of the Tamar Campaign in Africa⁴ under the auspices of the WCC Ecumenical Theological Education (ETE) programme in partnership with St Paul’s University and the Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa (FECCLAHA) in the context of a Focus on Africa (Journey of Hope) mandated by the Eighth Assembly of the WCC in Harare, Zimbabwe in December 1998.

The launch took place during a one-week workshop sponsored by WCC/ETE for women and men from 20 sub-Saharan African countries, among them theological educators and administrators of theological institutions, pastors and human rights activists. The participants were introduced to Contextual Bible Study (CBS), a community-based interactive study

of the Bible that has become a practical pedagogical tool for addressing all kinds of violence and social injustices but especially sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in any context and particularly in the HIV and AIDS context.

The primary purpose of the workshop, the Tamar campaign and the CBS methodology was to ensure that theological institutions engaged in ministerial formation take steps to mainstream issues such as overcoming violence. A second aim was to provide an ecumenical response to HIV and AIDS and promote economic justice and the empowerment of women, youth and children.

Since the 2005 launch and given the rising incidence of rape, incest and other attacks on women and children in conflict and post-conflict areas, the Ujamaa Centre, St Paul’s and FECCLAHA have promoted the use of CBS methodology in

the country's education system.

The Living Letters agreed, however, that all these initiatives required support from a functioning state. On their return, they recommended that the WCC increase financial support and accompaniment in solidarity to the churches and Haitian partners engaged in the fight against poverty and for democracy. Such support, they said, should also help combat the stigmatization of which Haiti is a victim on the international stage.

Israel and Palestine 2009

The acquisition of land by one people at the expense of another and recurrent wars had marked

Israel, Palestine and the wider region in the 60 years since the creation of the state of Israel in 1948.

The Living Letters team which visited Israel and Palestine in March 2009 witnessed the restrictions of movement of people in their own territory. They saw the diminishing presence of Christians in a place where they had lived for 2000 years. They understood the consequences of inaction by the international community on the basic questions of peace with justice for Palestinians and Israelis.

The team met with local church leaders, church-related organizations, the Israeli Committee against House Demolitions, staff of the Jerusalem Centre for Jewish Christian Relations and Rabbis for Human Rights.

They visited the Jerusalem Inter-Church Centre (JIC) – an initiative of the churches in Jerusalem with the Middle East Council of Churches and the WCC. They toured a demolition site in East Jerusalem, a community project in a West Bank Christian village, a refugee camp and the separation wall. In Bethlehem, they visited the university, The Holy Family hospital, the Bible College and a checkpoint. In Hebron, they joined three Ecumenical Accompaniers from the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI). (See description of EAPPI in “An Overview of International Actions and Projects” section on p. 24.)

The team saw that churches in the area were very active on the issues facing Palestinians,

theological colleges and churches throughout the region. In collaboration with WCC/ETE, they had published a manual for facilitators of contextual Bible studies methodology in 2007.

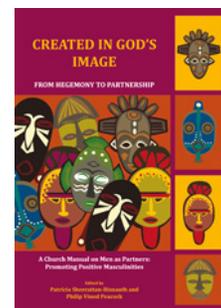
Staff of another WCC-initiated programme, the Ecumenical HIV and AIDS Initiative in Africa (EHAIA), and Women in Church and Society have also intensified the use of CBS methodology in training sessions for leaders addressing sexual and gender-based violence and HIV and for the empowerment of women, youth and children. The methodology has provoked many men to question their models of masculinity and their sexual behaviour in a search for transformative (positive or redemptive) masculinities.⁵ The methodology has also served to advance theological discourse on gender equality and justice in theological institutions and churches.

Together with EHAIA, several WCC ecumenical partners such as Christian Aid, Bread for the World, Norwegian Church Aid, the Mission and Development department of the Protestant Churches in Netherlands and the Young Women Christian Association in Tanzania are using CBS methodology and have helped to launch the Tamar Campaign in other African countries. Many senior church leaders are welcoming the use of CBS methodology because it offers safe space to address violence and HIV transmission and facilitates life-transforming encounters and processes.

Men and Positive Masculinity for Partnership

What it takes to be a man: Bongani's story is the title of a film made in South Africa in 2009 by Chedza Media. It was commissioned by the WCC Women in Church and Society Pro-

The WCC and the World Communion of Reformed Churches co-published this training manual of resources for use by churches, seminaries and civil society groups to promote new images of positive masculinity.



gramme as part of their campaign on “Men and Positive Masculinity for Partnership” within the framework of the WCC Decade to Overcome Violence.

The WCC and the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) also co-published a training manual of resources for use by churches, seminaries and civil society groups to promote new images of positive masculinity.

What makes a man? Who is a real man? Bongani – the man in the documentary – is a favourite uncle to his sisters’ children but it is not clear if he is allowed to see his own children. Being raised in apartheid South Africa, Bongani unfortunately became a replica-product of his violent society. The abusive sociopolitical system, violent peer socialization and accepted gender disparities made him into a violent, abusive male chauvinist. He beat up his wife but was “devastated” when she left. Eventually, he was able to embark on a process of deconstruction. In this video, Bongani’s journey of mending into positive masculinity for partnership is still going on.

After watching it, one viewer commented: “The narrator asks why society does not reflect the “values” of the church. Perhaps this is the wrong question – perhaps society is reflecting the values of the church. (...) The church needs to make a stand on this issue because all people, both men and women are created in the image of God. The message needs to be urgent and honest. Being a Christian is not compatible with any form of violence. If these were the values that every Christian lived out, then the fact that 80% of South Africans are Christian would be relevant.”⁶

Co-edited by Philip Vinod Peacock, a theologian and



Living Letters team members, a staff member from the Jerusalem Interchurch Centre, a member of the refugee camp staff and a participant in the WCC's Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel survey Aida Refugee Camp, near Bethlehem. © WCC

particularly health, housing and education. They were impressed by the courage of Israeli peace and advocacy groups who were resisting the settlements and demolition of Palestinian homes, challenging Zionism, and engaging their government. They came away proud of the efforts of the JIC and of the EAPPI, and particularly of the ecumenical companions who, on behalf of churches all over the world, work in difficult and sometimes dangerous conditions standing in solidarity with the people of Palestine.

Democratic Republic of Congo 2009

In July 2009, the DRC was still recovering from conflicts that claimed millions of lives and paralyzed much of the country from 1998 onwards. Despite a peace deal and the formation of a transitional government in 2003, violent attacks in the eastern parts of the country continued. Churches in the DRC were working to alleviate the humanitarian crisis, promote a peaceful resolution to the conflict and advocate for an end to human rights violations. Churches were the biggest providers of health and education services in the DRC.

A Living Letters team headed by WCC general

deacon with the Church of North India, and Patricia Sheeratan-Bisnauth, responsible for the Justice and Partnership Programme at the WCRC, the manual provides tools for workshops with men at the community level. It aims to strengthen men's role in ending gender-based violence. It provides an inclusive approach for men to participate in transforming the gender relations that produce male domination and violence.

"The idea is for men to recognize that patterns of male violence against women result from negative images of masculinity – images of men as warriors and gods," Peacock says. "We want them to see that there are other images for men that see strength in partnership with women rather than dominance over them. We need to look to biblical teachings which present those alternate images of partnership between men and women."⁷

In an effort to stem the rising tide of violence against women even within the church – in parishes and in church members' homes – WCC is collaborating with the WCRC and other faith-based organizations to develop a worldwide network of men's groups which challenge conventional images of masculinity that promote the ideal man as strong, dominant and in charge. Partners in the initiative also include the World YWCA, Lutheran World Federation (LWF), World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) and the World Alliance of YMCAs.

Lenten Resources for Overcoming Violence against Women

Running from 17 February to 4 April 2010, an online DOV Lenten study focused on the global struggle to end violence against women. The study, called "From Cries of Anguish to

Stories of Hope," was designed and produced by the WCC Women in Church and Society and Health and Healing programmes in collaboration with the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) and the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)

While originally intended for the six weeks of Lent 2010 leading up to Holy Week, the resources can also be adapted for use at any time of year.

Starting with a video and including discussion questions, a Bible Study, prayers and personal reflections from people affected and other resources, each week's study focuses on a different part of the world and a different form of violence against women. A "seeking help" Web page points to other sites that offer generic support and advice to those dealing with violence or its aftermath.

The first study looks at India and oppressed Dalit women. The Bible study gives a new spin on the story of Moses' birth. *Now We Are Fearless* (2004) was made by a team of five New Zealanders and focuses on the work of the Women's Development Resource Centre in Tamil Nadu, South India. Using a community development approach, the WDRC works with Dalit and Tribal women to break down caste barriers and the practice of indentured labour. The film is a testimony to the liberation and solidarity which can come from working together.

The second week turns to the Democratic Republic of Congo. *Fighting the Silence* (2007) is a 53-minute documentary by Dutch film-makers Ilse and Femke van Velzen. The film highlights the horror of widespread rape in the DRC; the film-makers give the victims of sexual violence the opportunity to tell their stories, and the men who abandoned them

secretary Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia split into five groups which visited communities and projects in the east, Bas-Congo in the west and the central Kasai province.

In the eastern DRC, the group was told about the depredations of local armed groups, international armies, national armed groups and foreign armies. They heard that there had been over 500,000 cases of rape as a "weapon of war" over the preceding decade. Since 2003, the Church of Christ in Congo (ECC), a union of 62 Protestant denominations, had assisted 23,000 traumatized women through its Centre for Medical and Psycho-Social Assistance (CAMPS).

Violence was also rising in the Bas Congo

province, fuelled by tension over high unemployment, weak economic conditions and changing population dynamics as displaced people moved to the comparatively prosperous province. While in the past refugees came from neighbouring Angola, they were now coming from the eastern part of the DRC. In the province of Kasai Oriental diamond mining had left a complex legacy.

Coming together in the capital Kinshasa from 12-14 July, the team visited communities in the area, met with theologians and Kimbanguist church leaders and attended an All-Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) women's conference under the theme "Transformative leadership for peace, healing and reconciliation".

At the workshop, EEC representatives said that the Living Letters visit was crucial for them: the WCC had helped other countries so it could help the DRC. Noting that leaders of armed groups were based in western countries, they asked the WCC to help lobby the international community to put pressure on these leaders to end the fighting and on countries that purchased minerals from the rebels to stop.

Angola and Mozambique 2009

"Almost every family has been affected one way or another by the long decades of war," the pastor in

to describe their motives. The film shows the consequences of sexual violence and the first, faltering steps towards a remedy. The dignified and understated presentation allows the viewer to absorb the narrative and cope with the subject matter. The accompanying Bible study looks at a story about rape in the Book of Judges.

The next week journeys to Colombia in South America and discovers displaced peoples celebrating and recovering. The Bible study looks at Psalm 91 as a source of empowerment and sustenance. *Claiming the Right to Health and Life in a Region of Death* focuses on life for young people in the most heavily militarized area of Colombia. The film was made as part of a United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) multimedia exhibit, "Ending Violence against Women" that aimed to address violence against women in its many forms.

In the fourth study, the international problem of human trafficking is addressed through a news report on "Svetlana's" story. The Bible study explores the Book of Ruth through the lens of trafficked women. "Svetlana's journey, like hundreds of others, began in Central Asia where she was duped by the promise of a legitimate job in Dubai. Instead her identity was stolen and she was passed from one gang to another. She ended up being held against her will and servicing men for up to 12 hours a day."

The fifth study goes to South Africa and looks at masculinity and what it takes to be a man. The Bible study explores the ideal image of "man" versus our fallen reality. This film was made in 2009 by Chedza Media in South Africa. It was commissioned by the WCC Women in Church and Society Programme and the Department of Communication as part of

their campaign on Men and Positive Masculinity for Partnership.

Finally, the sixth study explores a problem that affects every society: domestic violence. This study uses four short videos from different countries to raise awareness about domestic violence and ways to bring an end to it.

- The first, *CutMovie.co.uk*, directed by Joe Wright and produced by Women's Aid - the UK's domestic abuse charity, explores the Bible text (John 8:1-11) of a woman caught in adultery as the complex intersection of morality and the private sphere.
- Entitled *It's not OK!* the second video is one of the first television advertisements aired on New Zealand television in 2007 as part of a national campaign for action against family violence.
- The third, *Stop domestic violence against women*, is a Council of Europe TV spot in a campaign to criminalize domestic violence, ensure support for victims and foster new attitudes.
- And the fourth, *Bell Bajao* is a media campaign started in 2008 by Breakthrough to raise awareness on how everyday people can interrupt and prevent domestic violence.⁸ ■

More Information:

See the Women in Church and Society page on the WCC Website: <http://bit.ly/ei6xNu>, and links to pages on: *Streams of Grace*, WCC 2005. <http://bit.ly/f9Mras> *Contextual Bible Study Manual on Gender-Based Violence*, Fred Nyabera and Taryn Montgomery eds. Nairobi:

charge of women's work at the Council of Christian Churches in Angola told a Living Letters team visiting the country in July. In this context she said, women paid the highest price: "They live with former combatants now demobilized or with relatives who have suffered amputations or other injuries, and in many cases they live under the poverty line."

In the capital, Luanda, such women typically leave home at 3 a.m. to look for saleable goods and often walk through the whole city, sometimes pregnant or carrying little children, she explained. "When they reach home at about 10 p.m., they might have earned 200 *kwanzas* (less than 3 US dollars), but if sales were not good, there may not be anything for dinner."

The team also heard that domestic violence and rape cases had been on the rise. "The causes of this increase are complex," a church leader told them. "The war has left a heritage of misery as well as an impact on the culture and domestic violence is one of its outcomes." Women in a YWCA literacy class testified to the empowering role of education. A young mother of five told the Living Letters about the difference that being able to read had made in her life. "A husband shows a different kind of respect if you are able to read," she said. "And you do not have to take it anymore from anyone who lies to you," another young woman added.

After Angola, the team paid a solidarity visit to Mozambique. In a rural area north-west of Maputo,

they witnessed an intervention of "Transforming Guns into Hoes," a programme run by the Christian Council of Mozambique (CCM). Known as TAE, the programme had been working since 1995, three years after the signature of a peace agreement that ended a 17-year-long civil war. TAE staff was collecting weapons from communities in exchange for non-monetary goods: working tools, sewing machines, bicycles and the occasional tractor. The programme was funded by development and cooperation agencies from abroad, like Diakonia (Sweden) and the Ehime Global Network (Japan).

Impunity, Truth, Justice and Reconciliation

FECCLAHA 2007. (The manual has been translated to French, Amharic, Kiswahili, Portuguese and Malagasy).

<http://bit.ly/gNWf1I>

"On the wings of a dove" campaign. <http://bit.ly/eSSN61>

FECCLAHA Website. <http://bit.ly/gwUJcw>

What it takes to be a man: Bongani's story. DOV Website.

<http://bit.ly/fxUfbx>

Created in God's Image: From Hegemony to Partnership. A

Church Manual on Men as Partners: Promoting Positive Masculinities. Eds. Patricia Sheerattan-Bisnauth and Philip Vinod Peacock. WCRC/WCC, Geneva, Switzerland, November 2010 ISBN 978-2-9700686-7-9.

<http://bit.ly/gXrCsc>

Lenten resources on the DOV Website. <http://bit.ly/guwGO3>

Since the beginning of the Decade to Overcome Violence, the programme on Impunity, Truth, Justice and Reconciliation (ITJR) was conceived as a contribution of the churches to post-conflict situation strategies, exploring various ways to deal with the past. The programme aimed at deepening awareness of the need for truth and reconciliation in rebuilding societies. It sought to provide member churches, ecumenical organizations, Christians and the international community at large with advice and support on overcoming impunity and on peace and reconciliation processes promoting profound post-conflict healing and social reconciliation, including Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRCs).

Granting impunity to those who have committed grave crimes against humanity and the failure to seek and admit the truth about these crimes have often been at the root of conflicts. Denial of these crimes and/or unwillingness or inability to prosecute the perpetrators have created a culture of impunity which has reinforced injustice and violence. Churches have increasingly seen the need to understand these dynamics better in order that they may become true agents of peace, justice and reconciliation – as a new edition of Geneviève Jacques' book *Beyond Impunity* points out in reference to the commitment of churches and church leaders in South Africa and Guatemala. (See More Information, below.)

Special attention has been devoted to deepening the work on Restorative Justice, which refers to all those methodologies that through a victim- and community-centered process and dialogue try to restore wounded communities and societies. A booklet entitled *Restorative Justice. Selected Readings* and an article on "Overcoming violence and Pursuing Justice. An in-

Bolivia and Uruguay 2009

Bolivia and Uruguay suffered military juntas like certain other Latin American countries. A Living Letters team visiting both countries in July noted that since the 1990s, despite democratization, the effects of those dark days were still being felt.

The team identified several areas that needed to be addressed. These included:

- deep-rooted violence against women, violence against indigenous people (the team conducted several meetings with a range of Christian denominations committed to uphold the rights of indigenous people);

- violence against children and youth (the team visited an ecumenical centre for orphans, school drop-outs and rebellious youth, a Methodist center for disabled children, and Lutheran and Catholic ministries for orphans and families who cannot afford basic needs);

- political violence (with the still unresolved cases of crimes committed by past military and dictatorial regimes); and

- poverty.

The Living Letters expressed their gratitude to the churches and peoples of Bolivia and Uruguay for sharing their pains, struggles and hopes. They strongly recommended that political violence in South America be discussed at the convocation in



Living Letters at the Defensoría de la Niñez y Adolescencia, a local organization promoting children's and young people's rights in El Alto, Bolivia. © WCC



Left: Bertand Ramcharan, Acting High Commissioner on Human Rights, speaks at the WCC International Affairs and Advocacy Week at the UN, 2003. © Richard Lord
Right: The International Criminal Court in The Hague, Netherlands. © flickr/Haagse Arc



roduction to Restorative Justice Procedures” were published to improve the outreach of the programme.

Through the ITJR programme, the WCC contributed to the establishment of the International Criminal Court (ICC) as a means to overcome impunity and deter further gross human rights violations. In 2005, a WCC Central Committee statement welcomed and endorsed the establishment of the ICC. The WCC’s work at the ICC especially stressed the need to enhance victims’ participation in the procedures as well as its reconciliatory role. The WCC was one of the co-founders of the Faith and Ethics Network for the International Criminal Court, and contributed to the establishment and work of the Centre for Justice and Reconciliation in The Hague, which published relevant materials on justice and reconciliation in relation to the ICC.

Participation in public hearings, support to national churches and interfaith councils following reconciliation processes, seminars and workshops organized with faith leaders were part of the activities undertaken to strengthen Sierra Leo-

nean and the Peruvian TRCs between 2001 and 2005.⁹

Besides lobbying at the ICC Assemblies of State Parties and joining efforts of the Faith and Ethics Network for the ICC, the advocacy component of the programme focused on the processes at the UN level, participating in discussions and commenting on the drafts of the “Best practices to combat impunity,”¹⁰ lobbying for the adoption and ratification of the “Convention on enforced disappearance,”¹¹ and for the approval of the “Principles on the right to remedy and reparations of victims of gross human rights violations”.¹² ■

More Information:

Beyond Impunity by Geneviève Jacques, WCC, Geneva, 2004.
“Overcoming violence and Pursuing Justice. An introduction to Restorative Justice Procedures”, *The Ecumenical Review*, April 2003

The International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (Disappearances Convention) 23 December 2010. Office of the UN High Commission for Human Rights (OHCHR). <http://bit.ly/bURQ9Y>

The Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law, UN General Assembly resolution 60/147 of 16 December 2005. <http://bit.ly/icmZhZ>

Kingston, Jamaica in order to give a voice to the voiceless or to those who were silenced in the past.

Honduras 2009

Visiting Honduras in August, a Living Letters team stressed the need for "Christian voices to be heard [...] in defense of human rights and in support of humanitarian actions" since violence had intensified since a June 2009 coup that had replaced the elected president with an interim government.

In a "Message to the churches of Honduras, Latin America, the Caribbean and the world," the team called for an end to "repression, arrests, forced disappearances and violence directed against

the population and especially against women."

According to the Living Letters, the Honduran people "do not accept the imposition of a de facto government". The team therefore called for "the re-establishment of the constitutional order as soon as possible," and stated that "the return of President [Manuel] Zelaya" would open the way to hold "free and legal elections [...] within the framework of the constitution."

It called on the churches "not to resign themselves to accept the present situation" as well as "to accompany all people who suffer and to practice solidarity with those in greatest need."



September 2009 Living Letters team visit to India. A man greets the team at one of a handful of remaining relief camps for victims of communal violence in 2008 in Kandhamal, Orissa. © WCC/Karen Burke

International Day of Prayer for Peace

Within the DOV framework, the WCC first called on its member churches to pray for peace in 2004. The initiative linked to the International Day of Peace declared by the UN General Assembly; meeting with WCC general secretary Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia on 17 May 2004, UN secretary-general Kofi Annan warmly welcomed the idea.

For 21 September 2004, Kobia invited member churches to arrange for 24-hour observances and also possibly to include prayers for peace in their services on the Sunday before or after that day. On 20 September, more than a dozen well-known Christian leaders and peace-makers from all over the world affirmed churches' and faith communities' work for peace and justice in a series of two-minute video messages made available on the DOV Website.

Other ideas for action for the International Day of Prayer for Peace (IDPP) would surface in succeeding years. Congregations were encouraged, for example, to:

- organize a time of prayer and reflection on peace in their community, workplace, school or home;
- share information about the Day of Prayer with others;
- prepare a 24-hour prayer vigil for peace with other faith communities around the world;
- arrange a meeting with representatives of other church and religious communities to discuss how faith groups could build a culture of peace;
- join a growing network of Christians contributing to an Ecumenical Declaration on Just Peace;
- collect special offerings to support peace initiatives in their community or abroad.

IDPP themes and prayers over the following years related to the DOV Annual Focus on different regions (see "Annual Foci" section on p. 61). The Day was widely publicized and liturgical resources were offered in four languages. The connection to the UN-promoted International Day of Peace was maintained through participation in the International Day of Peace Vigil.

By the end of 2007, DOV Office staff could report that the DOV Website had recorded well over 40,000 visits per month in July, August and September of that year, and that the IDPP brochure in English had been downloaded at least 4000 times. The same brochure was also posted on denominational or partner Websites and downloaded from there.

In 2007, DOV staff asked churches what they had been doing to observe the Day. Responses mentioned peace prayers in churches, interreligious services including vigils, seminars and artistic events. ■

More Information:

See DOV Website page on the IDPP: <http://bit.ly/cnXtCo>

India 2009

A team of church representatives from Europe, Latin America, Africa and Asia paid a solidarity visit to India in September 2009. The focus was on the Indian churches' witness to peace with justice in a context of mass poverty, social exclusion and violence against women, Dalits and Christians. The team spent time in New Delhi and travelled to the South Eastern states of Orissa and Andhra Pradesh where they met with church leaders, peace activists, and representatives of interfaith peace initiatives and Dalit movements.

Entering the worlds of Dalits, tribals and women, the team became more aware of the

reality of violence against these groups. As well as physical violence, they witnessed the violence of exclusion; being confined to certain types of jobs; discrimination in the educational system. "Since the disappearance of the apartheid system in South Africa, it is only in India that we find it in such a systematic way," they observed.

The team also heard about violent attacks against Christians in the Kandhamal district of Orissa in August 2008 – attacks that were carefully planned and organized with the probable connivance of the state government. The team stressed the importance of interfaith dialogue and relationships and testified that it had seen good examples of such initiatives.

Recommending that "the Indian Church should own our Dalit brothers and sisters," and that the churches should reflect on their relationships with the tribal and Hindu peoples in their shared communities, the Living Letters team also drew theological lessons from their visit.

Nigeria 2010

After a four-day visit to Nigeria in May, members of a Living Letters team underlined the urgent need to strengthen the security of Nigeria's most volatile regions and recommended that "the religious communities jointly appeal to the government and the security agencies to be even-handed in their

Mission and Violence – Building a Culture of Peace

On May 12, 2005, the morning plenary of the Athens Conference on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) introduced participants to the ambivalent relationship between mission and violence.

Organized as a mid-term event of the DOV the plenary, chaired by German Mennonite Church pastor and professor of systematic theology and ecumenical studies at Hamburg University Fernando Enns, highlighted past and present links between Christian witness and ideological or physical oppression as well as experiences in overcoming the influence and use of violence in mission.

At the start of the CWME Conference, WCC general secretary Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia emphasized peace and nonviolence as Gospel imperatives. This reflection was pursued in the DOV plenary through a stage performance by young delegates and stewards, testimonies, dialogues and theological reflections.

"For us in Columbia...violence (the sword) has been a constant companion to mission (the cross)," Alix Lozano, a member of the Mennonite Church in Colombia, suggested. Lozano could not share this message herself because of visa regulations. She was given a voice by Janet Plenert from Canada. How then to understand mission in a context of violence? By "aligning ourselves with the intention of God who always takes the side of the poor, the needy, the persecuted, the marginalized," Lozano said.¹³ Churches were to become shelters, refuges for victims of violence and so, places free of the presence of armed groups.

Lozano's message was reinforced by the testimony of Viola Raheb from Palestine. In his concluding reflections, Tinyiko Maluleke from South Africa highlighted how attitudes to



During the May 2005 Athens Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, liturgical symbols of violence are brought to the altar by young people from various regions. © WCC

violence relate to interpretations of Bible texts and images of God. A moving prayer time concluded the morning, which had been prepared in common by staff and advisory groups of the DOV and of CWME.

The DOV plenary resonated well with the programme and spiritual life of the CWME conference. Chosen in 2001 as a contribution to the DOV, the conference theme had a double edge: the main prayer "Come, Holy Spirit, heal and reconcile" confessed human beings' dependence on God as the One bringing peace and giving hope. The sub-theme, "Called in Christ to be Reconciling and Healing Communities," pointed to the task of Christians to multiply spaces where people can experience signs of God's peace and where God's challenge to violence is shared.

Since 2001, parallel studies on healing and reconciliation had enabled renewed approaches to the richness of biblical, Christian and cultural traditions for building peace. The CWME conference itself was planned to enable participants to experience something of a healing and reconciling community. Much personal sharing took place in home groups. Sharp



A teenage boy showing the Living Letters team the scars of wounds he received during the tragic events of March 2010 near Jos in Nigeria's Central Plateau State. © WCC

quest to bring peace to the Central Plateau and neighbouring states”.

During their visit, the Living Letters witnessed the lack of trust among various ethnic groups and the authorities' inability to ensure security and protection to people in conflict-affected regions. They gathered to pray around a mass grave near Jos in the Central Plateau State where some 323 locals had been murdered the year before; most members of the team were unable to hide their grief as they met with men, women and children who had lost loved ones.

The team also visited the Centre for Peace Advancement in Nigeria (CEPAN), an interfaith group based in Jos, and were received at the

headquarters of the Church of Christ in Nigeria (COCIN). Addressing the COCIN's 74th General Council, the vice-president of the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) Bishop Dr Robert Aboagye-Mensah from Ghana said Christians should work for peace and reconciliation even when they had been offended.

In a meeting with the governor of the Plateau State, Jonah David Jang told the Living Letters team that his government had begun to take proactive steps to promote peace by setting up the Nigeria Interreligious Council (NIREC) to help stem the tide of communal violence in the country.

During a meeting with NIREC members, the team heard that “the grassroots don't have

DOV at the Ninth Assembly: A Call to Recommitment

issues raised during plenaries were deepened in workshops around concrete case studies. The overall holistic approach indicated how successful alternatives to violence depend on complex processes of reconciliation, healing of memories, social and economic justice, availability of safe spaces, openness to multicultural approaches and renewed perspectives on mission in a multi-religious world. It also became clear that issues of healing and reconciliation touch all levels of life from very personal suffering to the threat of death for Pacific islands.

The year-long study processes building up to the Athens conference were documented in two papers. “Mission as ministry of reconciliation” and “The Healing Mission of the Church” give guidance for a Christian witness that is both faithful to the Gospel and respectful of people and creation. As such, they are an essential building block for a less violent Christian church. ■

More Information:

Jacques Matthey (ed.): *Come, Holy Spirit, Heal and Reconcile! Report of the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, Athens, Greece, May 2005*. Geneva, WCC, 2008.

Website of the 2005 World Mission Conference, Athens.

<http://cwme.wcc-coe.org/>

“Mission as Ministry of Reconciliation” in *You are the Light of the World: Statements on Mission by the World Council of Churches 1980-2005*, ISBN 2-8254-1435-2, WCC, Geneva, 2005, pp. 90-126. <http://bit.ly/f1PjSq>

The Healing Mission of the Church, Preparatory Paper N° 11, CWME World Conference, Athens 2005. <http://bit.ly/hl7GVp>

The WCC's Ninth Assembly in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 2006 marked the beginning of the second half of the Decade to Overcome Violence. A powerful Assembly plenary session used multimedia, music, speakers, story-telling and liturgical dance to illustrate examples of overcoming violence around the world, especially as it affects children and youth. Up to 2000 people, including two Nobel Prize-winners, took part in a candle-lit march for peace through downtown Porto Alegre organized by local churches.

The Ninth Assembly issued a “Call to Recommitment” to overcoming violence which stated: “The respect for human dignity, the concern for the well-being of the neighbours and the active promotion of the common good are imperatives of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Therefore, human rights are a basic element in preventing violence at all levels, individual, interpersonal and collective and especially violence against women and children. This must include the effort to build and develop the rule of law everywhere. We shall further pursue the understanding of ‘restorative’ or ‘transformative’ justice with the aim of establishing viable and just relationships in communities.”¹⁴

The Assembly further pledged: “To relinquish any theological and ethical justification of violence calls for discernment that draws its strength from a spirituality and discipleship of active nonviolence. We have committed ourselves to a profound common ethical-theological reflection and advocacy for nonviolent conflict prevention, civilian conflict management and peace consolidation. The praxis of nonviolence must be rooted in a spirituality that acknowledges one's own vulnerability; that encourages and empowers the powerless to be able to face up to those who misuse power; that trusts the active

problems living together but the imams and pastors leading them sometimes send wrong signals by the kind of messages they preach,” and that the government had sometimes used the perpetrators of violence for their political agendas. The Council had nevertheless been instrumental in creating a multi-sector alliance on issues of development, they heard.

Pacific 2010

In late May, a four-person Living Letters team visited the tiny Fijian island of Viwa to explore how violence against nature through CO2 emissions, land misuse, pollution and other development and

lifestyle issues were impacting the world’s climate. The team also met with church and government leaders in Suva.

In Viwa, villagers shared their growing concerns about how the shifting global climate and rising sea levels from melting polar ice packs were affecting their small community. The change was more than coastal erosion: agricultural seasons had also been affected.

In the South Pacific region surrounding Fiji, climate change was seen as more than a matter of erosion and rising sea levels. Increasingly the problem for government and church leaders would be the impact on people, particularly those who would have to be resettled.

The church was moving forward with initiatives such as reforestation to prevent erosion during heavy rains or the building of seawalls. National leaders within the Pacific Island Forum (PIF) comprising representatives of nearly every national government in the region had only recently seemed ready to address the issue of resettlement and relocation.

The Living Letters team discussed the possibility of developing “climate change-competent churches” (like the “AIDS-competent churches” being developed throughout Africa) with church and government leaders.



Participants from a local interreligious dialogue group participate in a March for Peace through the streets of downtown Porto Alegre during the WCC’s February 2006 Ninth Assembly in Brazil. © WCC/Igor Sperotto

presence of the power of God in human conflicts and therefore is able to transcend the seeming lack of alternatives in situations of violence.”¹⁵

The Assembly asked the WCC Central Committee “to consider a study process engaging all member churches and ecumenical organizations in order to develop an extensive ecumenical declaration on peace, firmly rooted in an articulated theology. This should deal with topics such as just peace, the Responsibility to Protect, the role and the legal status of non-state combatants, the conflict of values (for example, territorial integrity and human rights). It should be adopted at the conclusion of the Decade to Overcome Violence.”¹⁶

The Ninth Assembly Programme Guidelines Committee endorsed the continuation of regional foci and of mutual international visits as well as of increased sharing of successful examples. It also recommended that the end of the Decade be marked by an International Ecumenical Peace Convocation.

Looking back on what had been accomplished so far, an Assembly background document on the Decade Mid-Term observed that

- Although many congregations, initiatives and Christian peace services have begun to develop various grassroots projects to address the different forms of violence, it is necessary to identify persons in the churches who will accept the responsibility for coordination, networking, advice and improvement of such efforts and for stimulating the sharing of experiences.
- Much critical attention has been focused on analyzing different experiences of violence. Yet since individual violence constitutes eighty percent of the world’s casualties, emphasis during the second half of the Decade should be placed more deliberately on the search for concrete and realistic ways of overcoming the spirit, logic and practice of violence.
- Traditional approaches based on the notion of national security and its defense by military means are tending to supplant the insight that security for people should be the main objective. The search for an “Alternative Globalization Addressing Peoples and Earth” has therefore to be understood as a decisive contribution to the continuation of the Decade.
- Those engaged in the struggle against the spirit, logic and practice of violence ought to begin with a critical reassessment of their *own* contribution to the emergence of a culture of violence and to strengthen the spiritual resources that could help to transform the destructive energy of violence into a constructive force of promoting life.
- In the context of truth commissions, the Decade should strengthen the readiness of the churches “to live in the truth”, even where this places them in opposition to the prevailing political power interests.

Australia 2010

At the invitation of the National Council of Churches of Australia and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical Commission, a Living Letters team visited the indigenous peoples of Australia in September 2010.

Bringing with them their own experiences as indigenous and marginalized peoples, the Living Letters visited communities in Darwin and across the Northern Territory, future Anglican leaders and students at Nungalinga College.

At the end of its visit, team members issued expressed their deep appreciation for "the generosity people have shown us by inviting

us into their homes and lives". A statement on what they had seen and heard referred to the Northern Territory Emergency Response, initiated ostensibly to address child abuse: "We have heard the Intervention has taken control of the lives of Aboriginal Peoples through such measures as compulsory income management and compulsory acquisition of leases over Aboriginal land," the statement said.

Evoking people's confusion and despair at these extreme measures, the team regretted that without negotiation or proper consultation, the Labour government had used armed force to continue the Intervention. "People continue to be forced from their homelands and outstations. People are being

treated like criminals without just cause."

"The Government and the media continue to paint a picture of Aboriginal dysfunction and yet refuse to look in the mirror at the devastating effect that their own cultural practices have on Aboriginal communities," the statement noted.

Rejoicing that "The oldest living, surviving culture in the world has not been crushed" and that "the will of the people to stand up for their rights has heartened us and inspired us to action," the team expressed the hope that "the time and stories that was generously shared with us will produce positive outcomes and that their voices will not go unheeded."

"Living Letters" Visits

- The churches should be prepared more than has so far been the case to affirm publicly the concerns and the goals of nonviolent projects and themselves engage in actions which serve these concerns and goals. ■

More Information:

WCC recommits itself to overcoming violence, Assembly press release. <http://bit.ly/fPeTvg>

Marching for peace and justice, Assembly press release. <http://bit.ly/fjoe52>

Report of the Programme Guidelines Committee. Ninth Assembly, Porto Alegre, Brazil, February 2006. <http://bit.ly/dZWBS8>

Call to Recommitment. Mid-Term of the Decade to Overcome Violence 2001-2010: Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace. WCC Ninth Assembly, Porto Alegre, Brazil, February 2006. <http://bit.ly/hHSDPG>

Mid-Term of the Decade to Overcome Violence 2001-2010: Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace. Background document, WCC Ninth Assembly, Porto Alegre, Brazil, February 2006. <http://bit.ly/gZpABv>

"A Living Letters team is successful when those they visit can affirm 'We are not alone' and when team members feel they have received much from those who they have visited."

— Rev. Hansulrich Gerber¹⁷

"You show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts." 2 Corinthians 3:3, RSV

One of the most interesting features of the Ecumenical Decade that preceded the DOV, that of Churches in Solidarity with Women (1988-1998), was the "Living Letters" experience. "Living Letters" was the name given to teams of people who during the second half of that Decade made solidarity visits to churches and communities across the membership of the WCC as an expression of their concern and commitment. In visit after visit, these teams found that the life and dignity of women were affected by cultures of violence in society and that a "culture of silence" in the church prevented women from telling the full story of the violence they experienced.

Thus, when the WCC in 2007 started sending ecumenical teams of four-six men and women to countries experiencing violence or with recent histories of endemic violence, it was building on the experience of the previous ecumenical decade; the Living Letters became an important legacy from one decade to the next.

The DOV Living Letters visits began during the second half of the Decade and as part of the lead-up to the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation. The Living Letters lis-



Maria Chavez Quispe presents the pastor of the Uniting Church at Galiwink'u with a WCC candle. The community talked with the Living Letters team about the impact of the 2007 "Northern Territory Emergency Response", locally known as the "Intervention".
© WCC/Gabrielle Russell-Mundine

The Right of Conscientious Objection to Military Service

tened, learned, prayed together with their hosts for peace in the community and in the world and shared approaches and challenges in overcoming violence and making peace.

Living Letters teams visited 17 countries from 2007 to 2010. (During that period there were also eight ecumenical delegations sent out because of crises or emergencies affecting member churches.) The visits brought encouragement to places that had seen much despair and were able to give and receive hope in various ways. They offered churches opportunities to deepen contacts among themselves. Via media reports, more people became informed about church peace-making ministries and some were willing to become part of these efforts. In the case of the Israel-Palestine trip for example, people contacted the WCC wanting to know how they could help or support peace projects in Israel-Palestine.

Did the visits last long enough to understand the scope of the problems and challenges facing the people visited? What follow-up work was done by the ecumenical community and by those visited? These are questions to consider after the Decade and in view of future ecumenical peace projects of a similar nature. As a person who visited in Uruguay told the team: "Though the Decade is coming to an end, it does not mean that violence has been overcome."

Brief accounts of each of the Living Letters visits are provided in the top bar entitled "Living Letters Visits" above (pages 22–45). ■

God of peace and justice,

who creates us with a conscience and ability to make decisions and declares, "Blessed are the peacemakers".

Uphold those people and their families who, in using these gifts have committed their lives to peace and justice by refusing to engage in military service.

Help us to find ways of supporting their witness in prayer and action

and commit ourselves again to work for a world where violence has no place.

— Prayer offered by the WCC Central Committee as a resource to enable the churches' engagement with the issue of conscientious objection.¹⁹

In 2006, an analytical report by the UN High Commissioner of Human Rights revealed serious shortfalls in many countries in recognizing and exercising the right to conscientious objection to military service and found that conscientious objectors are often subject to penalization, discrimination and imprisonment.

Following the UN report and in response to a request from the WCC Central Committee in 2006, a WCC study on "The right of conscientious objection to military service" looked at the serious problems faced by conscientious objectors around the world as well as to actions taken by churches and church-related organizations to support them.

A study document on conscientious objection was presented to the 2009 meeting of the Central Committee. It traced the discussion of and action on conscientious objection in the WCC and the ecumenical movement. The WCC had

Myanmar 2010

A team of Living Letters from Europe, Canada and Asia paid a Living Letters solidarity visit to churches, ecumenical organizations and civil society movements in Myanmar from 28 October to 3 November 2010.

The focus of the seven-day long visit was the Myanmar churches' witness to just peace in a context of a military dictatorship as well as political unrest and repeated outbreaks of conflict that the country has faced over the past decades.



Members of the Living Letters team visiting Myanmar from 28 October - 3 November 2010 prayed in the Anglican Holy Cross Church in Yangon. © WCC/Ani Ghazaryan

Philippines 2010

In a 21 December 2010 letter, the WCC general secretary thanked the Philippines president for the release of 43 community health workers imprisoned since 6 February in Morong on suspicion of being associated with the New People's Army movement.

On Friday 3 December, a Living Letters team had discussed the human rights situation with state justice secretary Leila de Lima, engaged in arguing for the release of the "Morong 43". Several members of the team later met with defendants, family members and other supporters in the case.

The team's agenda included encounters with victims of human right violations or their relatives,

submitted a *Statement on the Question of Conscientious Objection to Military Service* to the UN in 1973. The ecumenical movement through a Conciliar Process for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation leading up to the 1990, Seoul, Korea Convocation on JPIC had reaffirmed the right to conscientious objection. Several churches and related organizations, primarily in Europe and North America, had taken public positions on the issue or undertaken action in favor of conscientious objectors.

The 2009 study then examined approaches to conscientious objection according to the UN analytical report which recognizes conscientious objection as a human right. Noting that the practice in many countries does not comply with international standards, it suggested that there might be a need for conscientious objection even when there is no conscription: in the case, for example, of selective objection to specific duties, or of a soldier who becomes a conscientious objector.

Some specific examples were given of how churches deal with the question of the right of conscientious objection. The study also noted that in some countries where there is a right to conscientious objection to military service, some Christians had become sensitive to the use of their tax money for supporting war and had faced government action against them because of their conscientious objection to paying for war.

Finally, the study concluded that the WCC should call on churches to support conscientious objection to military service because:

- Churches have a role to play in advocating compliance with universal human rights and international law.

- Moreover, in a context where conscription may have declined but wars or armed conflicts take mostly civilian lives and do not comply with UN resolutions or international law, conscientious objection may constitute a moral obligation.
- How can churches call war immoral or illegal without also encouraging their members to object to active duty and without helping them work through the issues and consequences involved? ■

More Information:

DOV Website page on the Right of Objection to Military Service: <http://bit.ly/2y3JPa>

The Right of Conscientious Objection to Military Service. A study prepared for the WCC Central Committee. DOV Office, Geneva, June 2009.. <http://bit.ly/hY993y>

receiving first-hand information on the state of human rights and making recommendations for the international ecumenical community to support the active defense of human rights and civil liberties in the Philippines.

De Lima confirmed that most extra-judicial killings committed in 2010 had never been properly addressed and said she intended to form a special commission to investigate such killings.

Meanwhile, farmers of the Hacienda Luisita community in the central plains of Luzon received other members of the Living Letters team. The farmers had been demanding rights to land owned and controlled by a powerful family which had continued to ignore orders from the government to

distribute land to the farmers.

In addition to their struggle for a decent livelihood, the farmers shared their concern about the heavy military presence in the area. They were under constant surveillance, harassed, oppressed and interrogated by militiamen recruited by the military.

The NCCP, which hosted the three-day visit, had been one of the key ecumenical organizations advocating for human rights in the Philippines where extra-judicial killings, attempted killings, forced disappearances, abduction and other forms of human rights violations were still a big threat.



Members of the Living Letters team visiting the Philippines in December 2010 at a "Morong43" protest demonstration. The Morong 43 had been detained since February following their arrest during a workshop sponsored by an alliance of health workers in Morong, Rizal province. © WCC

World Military Expenditures Versus Spending on Education and Health

"Challenging the *growing militarization* of our world, especially the proliferation of small arms and light weapons," was one of the central goals of the Decade.²⁰ In an effort to pursue that goal, the WCC DOV Office in 2004 undertook a study on world military expenditures in relation to spending on education and health. Research revealed that government military spending was depriving many societies of funding for basic social services and development.

The study findings were published in *World Military Expenditures, a compilation of data and facts related to military spending, education and health* and made available on the DOV Website in complete and summary versions. A September 2005 meeting of the WCC Executive Committee called on churches to "exercise their unique potential [...] to curb demand for small arms and light weapons, especially by changing public attitudes, shaping community values and becoming a public voice against gun violence."²¹

According to this compilation report,

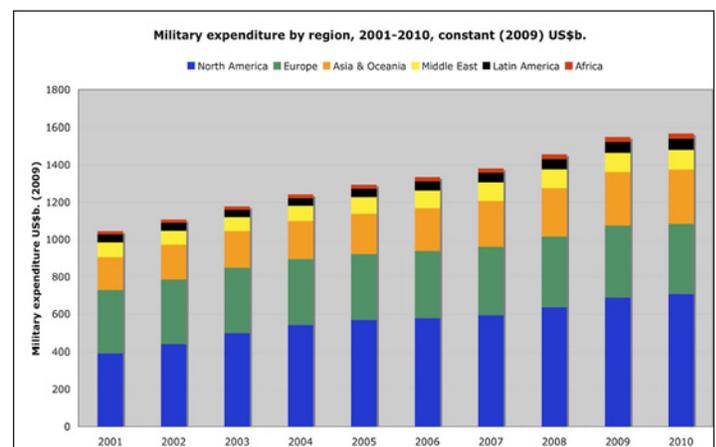
"In 2004, world military expenditures reached \$1 trillion – an average of \$162 per person. The United States accounted for nearly half, 47%, of the total. There was a reduction in military spending at the end of the Cold War and until 1998. Since then, there has been an increasing trend; from 2002 to 2004 there was an annual average increase of about 6% in real terms (adjusted for inflation)."

"The recent increase is undoing the progress made after the Cold War – the world military expenditures in 2004 were only 6% lower in real terms than at the peak of the Cold

War. The biggest factor in the subsequent upward trend has been spending in the United States. Particularly, there has been a rapid increase since 2002 due mainly to the military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. The United States is the foremost contributor of global military expenditures – the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute estimated the percentage in 2004 as 47% with 455.3 billion US dollars, far and away more than the amount spent by the next largest spender, the UK, at 47.4 billion."

On military spending in the developing world, the report noted that

"While the amount of military spending in developing countries is small by comparison to global spending, it often



© Sipri Yearbook 2011

More Information

about Living Letters visits:

DOV Website: <http://bit.ly/hj7rWh>. This page provides links to accounts of all the Living Letters visits over the Decade.

occupies budget space desperately needed for development and social service. Research sponsored by UNICEF indicates that government spending on basic social services – primary education, basic health and access to safe water – have a particularly big impact on children in poor countries. However, most developing countries spend only 12 to 14 percent of the national budgets on these services. The World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers summary reports that in 1999, on average developing countries spent 14.5% of central government expenditures on the military. In South Asia, the average percentage of military spending as a percentage of central government expenditures was 16.1%, and in Southern Africa it was 17.1%.”

“The need for basic social services in developing countries is brutally clear:

- *Nearly nine million children die each year in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia of easily preventable diseases.*
- *In South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, pregnancy and childbirth cause the deaths of nearly 500,000 mothers each year.*
- *In the developing world, one third of children do not complete four years of school.*
- *Half of the children in South Asia are undernourished.*
- *Half of the world’s population lack access to adequate sanitation.*

“Another issue highly related to world military expenditures is foreign aid. Aid, normally from wealthy countries to develop-

ing countries, comes in various forms – humanitarian, development, military, etc. While international aid is substantial, by many standards wealthy countries give relatively modestly, and much aid is heavily tied to the foreign policy objectives of the donor country rather than to the needs of the recipient country.

“Some things to consider about aid to developing countries:

- *Almost all developed countries have consistently failed to meet the UN goal of 0.7% GDP.*
- *Reality of Aid, an international non-governmental initiative focused on aid related lobbying and analysis, estimates that one quarter of what the USA, UK, France, Germany, and Japan spend annually on arms would be enough funding for aid to do its part in meeting the Millennium Development Goal of halving poverty by 2015.*
- *According to UNICEF, as of 2000 the world could have met basic human needs for everyone on earth if \$70 to \$80 billion – 10% of the world’s military spending – were redirected towards that purpose.” ■*

More Information:

World Military Expenditures, a compilation of data and facts related to military spending, education and health. WCCI/DOV coordination office, Geneva, Switzerland, 2005. <http://bit.ly/f33yvm>

Summary report: <http://bit.ly/hUVX3f>

SIPRI Military Spending Database. <http://bit.ly/bCZeGG>

Preparing for the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation

The WCC's Ninth Assembly in February 2006 decided that "the conclusion of the DOV [should] be marked by an International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC)". Scheduled to take place in Kingston, Jamaica from 17 through 25 May 2011, the IEPC will bring together a wide spectrum of people witnessing to the peace of God as a gift and responsibility of the entire human family. It seeks to strengthen the church's position on peace, provide opportunities for networking and deepening common commitment to the processes of reconciliation and just peace.

The WCC Assembly also called for "a process of wide consultation to be undertaken toward developing an ecumenical declaration on 'just peace'". The consultative process leading up to the IEPC was to allow for broad participation with many entry points and cover a wide spectrum of thematic and methodological approaches.

Another aspect of preparing for the IEPC was an effort to envisage and plan for the spiritual life of the Convocation.

Expert Consultations 2007-2010²²

To provide input to the IEPC and add substance to the Ecumenical Declaration on Just Peace, a wide-ranging series of "expert consultations" was launched in 2007. Two of these were organized by IEPC staff with other WCC programmes and seven were held jointly with ecumenical partners outside the WCC. 16 other consultations were organized independently by various WCC programmes. A late 2010 report²³ on the consultations considered their approach, content and learnings in relation to the four major IEPC themes, namely,



Mural at the Kingston university campus where the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation will take place in May 2011. © WCC

- Peace in the Community,
- Peace with the Earth,
- Peace in the Market Place, and
- Peace among the Peoples.

Our brief account (below) thus groups the expert consultations according to these IEPC themes.

Peace in the Community

Relationships within the community – between women and men, adults and children, the "able-bodied" and people living with disabilities, between different religious communities, within communities torn apart by conflicts – were discussed at the following consultations:

Three consultations – in Volos, Greece (May 2007), Dublin, Ireland (October 2007) and Bossey, Switzerland (August

2009) – focused on “Just Peace and the Healing of Memories”. These consultations agreed that healing of memories involves witnessing and retelling the story and that for healing to be complete and for people to be emotionally and spiritually healed, they need to understand what happened. The consultations highlighted truth and justice as central elements on the road to reconciliation and warned that granting amnesty often yields unsatisfactory results.

A September 2008 consultation in Blantyre, Malawi on “Just Peace and Transformative Masculinities” noted that local traditions continue to shape discriminating behaviour towards women in spite of the globalization that is challenging traditional forms of masculinity. The consultation envisaged possible partnerships between women and men on gender-related issues and suggested that “It is essential to re-socialize men in transformative and gender-sensitive masculinities in order for them to better cope with the rapidly changing global context.”

Also in September 2008, a consultation on “Women as Peace-makers through Religion” in Goteborg, Sweden focused on dialogue and cooperation between Christian and Muslim women. In Leros, Greece, a September 2009 inter-Orthodox consultation on “Just Peace and Interreligious Dialogue” noted that churches must critically assess their own behaviour in situations of interreligious conflict. “A critical assessment of their present and past performances could free them from multiple ideologies – nationalistic, political, racial, etc. – that religious leaders sometimes evoke for the purpose of advancing their own goals and interests,” the Leros consultation suggested.

“How do we assess those who engaged in violent actions in their pursuit of justice and peace and consequently suffered

torture and death? How do we deal with those who have suffered without the support of their Christian community or its leaders? How do we approach those who have suffered torment and death at the hands of other Christian communities including our own?” A symposium on “A cloud of witnesses: Opportunities for ecumenical commemoration” held at the Monastery of Bose, Italy in late 2008 reflected on these questions and concluded that “Every time we commemorate the lives of holy men and women who have witnessed to the faith, we are confronted with our own failures and therefore called to repentance and to a deeper conversion to Christ and to one another in Christ.”

“Violence in entertainment (films, games) and news media can seem unavoidable, powerful, irresistible and fascinating. The common reaction [...] is often either passive acceptance or fearful withdrawal and this has serious implications for how the world is perceived and how communities act in the face of real suffering.” A June 2010 consultation in Boston, USA on “Violence in media and entertainment: Challenges and opportunities” suggested that “Churches can play a major role in encouraging communities and individuals to act as a pressure group to hold the media to a higher standard [...], offer space for reflective dialogue and constructive criticism [...] or use new Internet-based technology to suggest alternative perspectives on important current issues and therefore contribute to media productions that can help to build peace. [...] Church leaders can shape critical media awareness by [...] helping to determine whether military, nationalistic, colonialist, ethnocentric, sexist, racist, uncritically capitalistic, or other agenda are being promoted.”²⁴

A November 2009 consultation in Geneva on “Peaceful Living for Children and Young People” provided a platform for young leaders working with children to share experiences and dialogue on issues related to child rights and interfaith cooperation. And a June 2008 consultation in Bukavu, DRC on “Just Peace and People Living with Disabilities” focused on discrimination against people with disabilities and particularly on sexual violence against women with disabilities in the Great Lakes region.

Peace With the Earth

A September 2008 consultation on “Just Peace and the Wholeness of Creation” in Geneva, Switzerland emphasized the links between social and ecological forms of domination. Considering the environmental crisis, it suggested that “The destruction of the earth’s life communities requires an understanding of ecological sin, as well as of ecological repentance. *Metanoia* is an opportunity to reconcile ourselves with God’s creation. As Christians, we need to encourage and adopt an ascetic practice of living within limits, as opposed to living with greed that binds the consumer and crushes the lives of others.”

An April 2009 meeting in Nadi, Fiji on “Just Peace and the Resettlement of Climate-Displaced People” stressed climate change as a matter of justice. Climate change, it argued, “is being aggravated primarily by (...) the prevailing economic strategy of promoting endless growth and production of goods, and the high consumption lifestyles of the richer industrialized nations and wealthy elites throughout the world.” Further, “Those who are – and will be – increasingly affected are the impoverished and vulnerable communities of the

Global South, due to their dependence on natural resources and limited means to adapt to change.” The meeting affirmed the right of victims to know the truth about climate change, to prosecute guilty parties and to reparation through restitution, compensation and rehabilitation.

Peace in the Marketplace

Three regional encounters – a November 2007 African regional gathering in Tanzania, an October 2008 South/Central America-Caribbean gathering in Guatemala and a November 2009 Asia-Pacific regional gathering in Thailand – provided input for the International Declaration on Just Peace and the IEPC. They were part of an ongoing series of annual regional encounters on “Poverty, Wealth and Ecology” (PWE) aimed at deepening the WCC’s “Alternative Globalization Addressing People and Earth (AGAPE) process”. The three encounters thus linked the AGAPE process to the DOV (see Without Economic Justice, Violence Erupts and Peace Diminishes in “DOV Themes and Issues” section on p. 118).

The following points emerged from all three encounters:

- Churches should develop guidelines for Christians on a “wealth/greed line” that could guide them to avoid excessive use of resources and think of limits to what the planet can offer.
- “The neo-liberal system of wealth creation and accumulation has generated tremendous social and ecological debts, i.e., debts owed to Mother Earth (...) due to the destruction of ecosystems caused by oil, gas, mining and timber companies, etc. that exploit natural resources to

sustain a model that endangers local communities and the planet as a whole. The international financial institutions also bear great responsibility because they finance this extraction of resources while paying little attention to its social and environmental consequences.”

- “The problem of hunger in the world is due not to a lack of food but rather to the fact that millions of human beings cannot buy it. Increases in the price of food result from the increasingly monopolistic concentration of the world agricultural-food industry. The search for non-fossil fuels has led to the increasing use of wheat, soya and corn for the production of agro-fuels, which increases their price and reduces the population’s access to grains for consumption. At the same time, transnational companies are trying to control the other element that is essential to the cycle of life: water.”
- “The origin of the global financial crisis lies in the usury and endless accumulation that are in the very nature of capitalism.

Peace Among the Peoples

Under this heading, topics such as the “Responsibility to Protect”, Orthodox peace ethics, the semantic implications and current relevance of “The People of God” in the Bible and in Tradition and just peace in relation to human rights, security and nuclear disarmament were the focus of the following consultations:

Participants in a November 2007 consultation in Arnoldshain, Germany discussed Christians’ international responsibility to protect people facing large-scale imminent peril and



H.B. Patriarch Daniel of the Romanian Orthodox Church (left) with participants of the 29 June to 3 July 2009 expert consultation on “Peace Ethics in Orthodoxy” at the Patriarchal Palace in Bucharest, Romania. © WCC

mass atrocities. Their deliberations mainly dealt with the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), and particularly with the use of force for humanitarian purposes in extreme and extraordinary cases when certain thresholds and criteria have been met.

The discussion pointed to a shift of paradigm from right to responsibility in the understanding of sovereignty, from politics based in the nation state to those based in the international community and from an understanding of the church as a national body to the ecumenical community as the “household of God”.

Instead of assuming that *military* force might be used in extraordinary circumstances, the consultation said that the “force” used should be more a matter of *just policing*, the goal being “to impose and to secure the rule of law and protect the vulnerable people, rather than to defeat and annihilate the enemy.”²⁵

A July 2009 consultation in Bucharest, Romania on “Just Peace and Orthodox Peace Ethics” acknowledged that

although no branch of Orthodox Christianity has an explicit just war theory, several churches have in practice accepted wars of national defense as tragic necessities in a fallen world. In certain instances, some Orthodox Christian churches have been so closely identified with national identity that their church leaders have blessed wars and weapons of wars.

The September 2009 Leros Pre-IEPC Inter-Orthodox consultation (see above) said that “Churches ought to develop just peace-making practices that move their ethical discourse from theories (...) to preventive actions that contribute to the building up of a culture of peace.” It also noted that Orthodox ascetical tradition insists that “violence and war begin primarily in people’s hearts with pride, rancour, hatred and desire for revenge, before it is translated into armaments, open violence and deliberate destruction. Thus, peace starts with the formation of consciousness, with the conversion of hearts”.²⁶

A September 2008 international theological conference on “The Promised Land”²⁷ held in Bern, Switzerland addressed biblical and theological issues directly connected to the Israel-Palestine conflict. Participants were asked to reflect on topics such as God’s promises, Abraham’s paradigm, the church and Israel and the “people of God”. The conference called for critical examination of controversial notions of the Bible that “nurture” the conflict and justify dispossession, oppression, exclusion and landlessness.

A May 2010 international colloquium in Balamand, Lebanon took the discussion on the semantic implications and current relevance of “The People of God in Bible and Tradition” one step further. It showed that “people of God” should be understood as an ongoing process of becoming faithful to

God’s call – “a messianic metaphor guided by the Spirit of God towards His Kingdom, which is not a historical reality but an eschatological one”. Contemporary Christian guilt over anti-Semitism, the colloquium suggested, has produced a regressive theology of a land that represents God as dwelling in a geographical location and favouring a particular people. Such theology justifies the human rights abuses of the State of Israel and tends to create a barrier to faithful actions by Christians to oppose this injustice.

A May 2008 consultation at the Bossey Ecumenical Institute in Geneva, Switzerland on “Human Rights and Human Dignity” and the September 2009 Leros, Greece Pre-IEPC Inter-Orthodox consultation (see above) agreed that a multidisciplinary, multi-religious and multicultural exercise is required to define the framework of human rights. In the Christian world, the Orthodox critique of human rights tradition focuses on the tradition’s tendency to legitimize self-centeredness and self-gratification, which then contribute to social fragmentation. Noting that the Orthodox emphasis on communal life is an important corrective to western individualism and social fragmentation, Leros suggested that “Orthodox theologians must also be critical of oppressive communal structures of dominance”. Recognizing the importance of international law as the basis of peace, the Roman Catholic Church understands human rights to go beyond the rights of the individual to include the rights of people. In the Protestant church family, equality is the key concept that unifies civil, political and social rights. Luther suggested that the different members of the body have different functions, but do not differ in worth.

An international peace symposium held in Seoul, Korea in

April 2008 on “Peace and Human Security: Global Insecurity and Overcoming Violence” judged that the concept of human security had been misused by economically dominant powers and governments. The “war on terror” led by the USA was in fact raising the level of insecurity for all. Rather than achieving security for some by violent actions, the primary goal as Christians is rather to strive to overcome violence and insecurity for all, starting with the weakest in society.

A December 2009 conference in Hwacheon, South Korea on “Nuclear Weapons, North East Asia and Beyond” pointed out that “despite the media’s current focus on North Korea’s nuclear programme,” both the US and the Soviet Union had been instrumental in the nuclearization of the Korean peninsula; that the Pacific had been used as a test site by nuclear nations for several decades; that Israel had been a nuclear weapon state for a long time, “thus giving the impression that America’s ‘friends’ can have nuclear weapons, unlike its ‘enemies’”. Seeing nuclearism as “the most extreme form of a culture of militarism that has been fortified by an ideology of power and hyper-masculinity,” the conference declared that “In a world of endemic hunger, disease, poverty, over-consumption, pollution and climate change, enormous allocations of financial resources to the world’s deadliest weapon system is unconscionable.”

More Information:

The Expert Consultations page on the DOV Website at <http://bit.ly/h66goi> was the main source of the information provided in the above summaries.

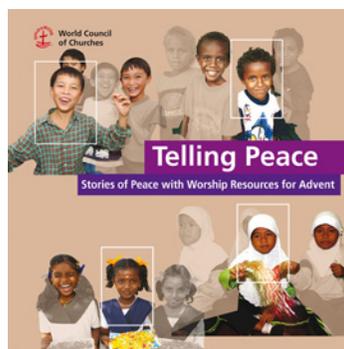
Spiritual Life Working Group

A WCC working group was set up to imagine and prepare the spiritual life of the May 2011 International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (EPC). The Spiritual Life Working Group (SLWG) first met in Baar, Switzerland from 3-6 December 2007, then in Saydnaya, Syria from 1-7 December 2008 and again in Hildesheim, Germany from 8-14 August 2009.

At its first meeting, the SLWG discussed understandings of the meaning of “spiritual life” in relation to the goals and methodologies for the IEPC. It saw spiritual life as a movement comprising prayer, celebration, suffering, joy, loving, obeying, self-control, serving the community, seeking justice, building peace, acting humbly ...

Participants looked at biblical traditions in relation to violence, including the concern that these traditions had sometimes been misused to seek peace through war. They brainstormed on how to help make the event as creative and inviting as possible by

- sharing stories in community, to be brought together in the evening;
- morning, midday, afternoon and evening liturgical moments;
- public solidarity actions with those who are oppressed, deprived, silenced;
- use of symbols, e.g., the rainbow;
- use of songs and music;
- use of stories, photos, films, documentaries, the Internet;
- building and dismantling things together, e.g., tents;
- choice and use of biblical texts.



The group proposed an outline for a collection of Advent resources to include biblical texts, stories of encouragement and community action, liturgical texts and music. Following up on these plans, a July 2008 workshop at the Evangelical Theological Seminary (SET) in Matanzas in Matanzas, Cuba prepared resources for the *Imagine Peace* booklet.

Imagine Peace contains suggestions for services on the four Sundays in Advent, but the texts and songs can also be used in other contexts. The Bible meditations invite readers to reflect on biblical aspects of peace and overcoming violence; the songs from Latin America express the IEPC motto, “Glory to God and Peace on Earth”.

Telling Peace: Stories of Peace with Worship Resources for Advent was a second collection of liturgical resources for the four Sundays of Advent from different regions of the world prepared in the IEPC framework. The resources, including four complete worship orders, liturgical texts and songs were prepared by liturgists and musicians from different Asian regions. The songs express the IEPC motto “Glory to God and Peace on Earth”.

A third publication “Singing Peace”, an IEPC songbook, is also being produced in preparation for the Convocation.

The second SLWG meeting in Syria in December 2008 envisaged the IEPC’s spiritual life as “a dramatic arc moving throughout the week”.²⁸ Starting with a Peace on Earth Day

(in lamentation mode), the IEPC would move through a Peoples’ Day (focusing on peace to people); a Market Day (on economic injustice and domestic violence); an Earth Day (on the natural world); a Caribbean Day (on the local context); a Dreamers’ Day (in a visionary mode) and culminate in a “Glory to God” Feast Day (commitment and sending out).

The group suggested a daily prayer cycle with:

- a morning prayer “to sow seeds of doubt, to try and find just answers, to question peace in its many manifestations and to weed out those elements which prevent life flourishing in all its fullness”;
- a midday time of anticipating peace where participants would stand in solidarity with all those who long for peace by demonstrating that they do not stand alone; and
- an evening prayer “to gather in the fruits of our questioning and searching, our doubts and our anticipation, celebrate the signs of the justice in the world, the places where peace has come and offer these to God.”

The group considered how to obtain songs from different parts of the world, and publish resources under Creative Commons licenses. It recommended that the IEPC materials, meals, accommodation and relationships to the local community conform to environmental and economic justice standards.

Building on the work of the two previous meetings, the third 8-14 August 2009 SLWG meeting in Hildesheim, Germany developed plans for the IEPC opening prayer and for morning, midday and evening prayers in relation to the daily

sub-themes. It offered suggestions to the local planning group for the Caribbean Peace Day (Sunday).

Ideas for the sending prayer at the close of IEPC centred on the potential symbolism of a beach setting. The resurrection story of John 21 took place on a beach, and Kingston's Port Royal beach could not only provide a live backdrop for the prayer but act both as a metaphor and an actual experience, the meeting said.

A place of arrival and departure that evokes fishing, launching out into the deep, feeding, making fishers of peace... Port Royal "links us to the historical locations of the Gospel stories; it connects us to the stories of Simon-Peter and Andrew's fishers lives, to the calling of the disciples, to the boy who brought bread and fishes. The setting allows Jesus' way of nonviolence and his great commissioning of fishers of peace to be made tangible."²⁹

The meeting identified forthcoming SLWG tasks and responsibilities and drafted a tentative schedule for prayers, Bible studies and texts, worship services and symbolic activities to cover the seven-day convocation.

Towards an Ecumenical Declaration on Just Peace

The WCC Ninth Assembly in February 2006 in Porto Alegre, Brazil (see account of DOV at the Ninth Assembly on p. 42) recommended consideration of "a study process engaging all member churches and ecumenical organizations in order to develop an extensive ecumenical declaration on peace, firmly rooted in an articulated theology. (...) [to] be adopted at the conclusion of the Decade to overcome Violence."³⁰

In December 2006, the DOV Reference Group resolved

to engage church and NGO representatives in a series of expert consultations designed to explore the declaration's thematic areas (see report on Expert Consultations on p. 49). It decided to ask WCC member churches to involve *their* members, especially youth, in answering the question "If *we* were to write an Ecumenical Peace Declaration, what would *we* want to put into it?" Theological faculties and seminaries would also be invited to help draft the Declaration. In this connection, the Reference Group welcomed plans to send team visits to the member churches and underlined the need to establish contacts among everyone involved and interested in the Decade via the DOV Website.

The WCC Executive Committee in March 2007 approved plans for some 50 ecumenical "Living Letters" teams to visit churches facing situations of violence (see report on Living Letters Visits on p. 44) as well as to hold a series of expert consultations in partnership with research institutes, action groups, artists and church-based peace organizations already at work in this area. (See Expert Consultations on p. 49.)

An effort would also be made to engage with representatives of other faiths in order "not only to overcome widespread and growing prejudice and mistrust, but also to struggle against recent trends that turn political conflicts into religious confrontations," said then-IEPC coordinator Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz.³¹

The Declaration would lay no claim to being an ecumenical consensus statement but, rather, would be an act of public witness to the reality of peace, and an affirmation of enduring hope in a world torn apart by violence. Without claiming to speak for everyone, it would attempt to speak to "everyone who cares to listen".

A drafting group met twice in 2008 to conceptualize and write an initial statement which was sent to churches and ecumenical partners at the end of the year.

Even before that in October 2007, a consultation co-sponsored by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Mennonite World Conference had submitted a joint contribution to the Ecumenical Declaration. Their statement affirmed that “nonviolence is normative for Christians,” but acknowledged a range of Christian attitudes from just war to active nonviolence and pacifism. It suggested serious study of positions on conscientious objection, selective conscientious objection, “the responsibility to protect” and “just policing” as an alternative to just war.³²

The *Initial Statement Towards an Ecumenical Declaration on Just Peace* begins with a meditative introduction on the IEPC theme of “Glory to God and Peace on Earth”. The theme comes from the passage in Luke’s Gospel that tells how shepherds heard first about the birth of a saviour. Why this motto? The introduction explains that while “It is often said that religions are accomplices to the violence that plagues our world (...) we in the World Council of Churches are convinced that the God who speaks to us through this baby lying in a manger is the foundation of everything we can say and do about overcoming violence and promoting peace in and with the earth.”³³

A preamble on “Witness to Peace in a Violent World” lists major historical events since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and suggests that “What makes this a critical time is the *inter-connectedness* and *convergence* of all these deadly threats. The experiences and learnings of the Decade to Overcome Violence and the growing awareness of the critical convergence of

destabilizing forces to our world have brought the churches to a new place as they consider how to carry out the ministry given to them by Christ to be servants and ambassadors of God’s peace and reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18-20).”³⁴

Chapter 1 considers key biblical concepts of peace and such topics as “peace in relation to the *oikos* or Household of God”, “the God of peace revealed as the Holy Trinity”, “human beings as earthlings in God’s image”, “violence and the reality of trespassing” and concludes with a single question to readers: “Can you agree with this account of the Biblical sources, the Trinitarian conclusions and the reflections on human sin and the nature of violence?”³⁵

The second chapter³⁶ looks at the nature and mission of the Church, the vocation and ministry of the churches, the Church as sacrament and prophetic sign of peace, churches as instruments of peace-building and spiritual practices of peace. Readers are asked whether and how their churches engage in peace education, are working to care for creation or have been involved in other peace-building ministries.

The third chapter³⁷ reviews Christian peace thinking and peace practices including Christian peace traditions and “just institutions in a just order”. It asks readers how these approaches correspond to traditions and thought forms in their churches and which elements they might wish to add.

After a careful review of the wide range of responses to the initial statement, a second drafting group was formed to develop a more concise statement on just peace and a more extensive resource document on the topic for use in member churches. Both were to be ready for the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation of 2011.

The second drafting group held two meetings during the final year of the DOV. The meetings were hosted by churches in countries that have experienced decades of struggle for peace, in Colombia and in Lebanon. Based on feedback concerning both the initial statement and its working draft of a more concise statement, the group ultimately recommended a shift from issuing a “declaration” to a issuing a document that is pastoral and invitational in nature.

This invitation, or call, would be addressed not only to the worldwide Christian community, but also to “all who seek peace according to their own religious traditions and commitments”. Its tone would be part of its message and purpose, namely, seeking to open a process of further exploration that invites and challenges churches to respond together. Also, a formal “declaration” should reflect a broad ecumenical consensus, ideally supported by the authority of a WCC assembly. Churches from all regions were represented on the drafting group. However, despite considerable effort, voices of the global south were less heard in the process of consultation on both statements, which had largely and of necessity been carried out in written form.

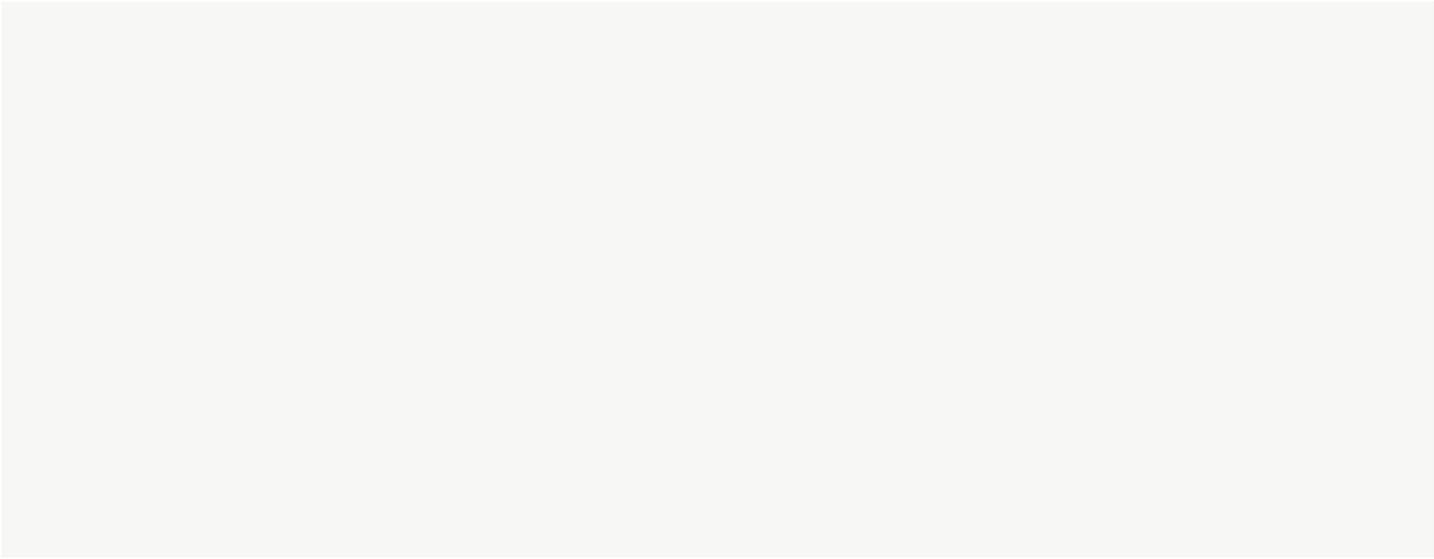
“An Ecumenical Call to Just Peace,” the resulting document, was received by the WCC Central Committee in early 2011, endorsed as an invitation, and commended to the churches for study, reflection, collaboration and common action. The intent was for this “Call” to go out in the lead-up to the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation. Together with impulses coming from the IEPC the Call would also stimulate further discussion and exchanges in the churches with a view to building a new ecumenical consensus on justice

and peace to be proclaimed by the WCC Assembly in Busan, Korea, in 2013.

The concept of “just peace” in the Call is understood as a contemporary rendering of the biblical notion of shalom which embraces justice and peace, as well as the well-being of creation. It challenges an understanding of peace that focuses primarily on the absence of conflict, especially violent and armed conflict, and on the maintenance of order without addressing the root causes of social and political conflicts, which are often related to structural injustice, discrimination and violation of human rights.

The Call speaks of the “way of just peace” which requires “both movement towards the goal and commitment to the journey”. It addresses just peace as praxis, both in terms of meeting the pastoral and spiritual challenges of the journey and regarding critical challenges for action to be faced on the way. It outlines of “an ethic and practice of peace that includes forgiveness and love of enemies, active non-violence and respect for others, gentleness and mercy” and to apply that ethic to the tasks of transforming conflicts, of seeking discernment regarding the use of armed force, of defending human rights and human dignity and of caring for creation.

Rather than ending with a list of recommendations, the “Ecumenical Call to Just Peace” offers brief descriptions of key global challenges to peace in the early 21st century and identifies main directions for a faithful “journey” toward peace. The four thematic foci of the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation, it says, help to suggest ways in which Christians and churches can render a credible common witness for peace with justice. The four themes are “Peace in the Community”,



“Peace with the Earth”, “Peace in the Marketplace” and “Peace among the Peoples”.

A resource document to accompany the Call was also developed for the IEPC and beyond. This “Just Peace Companion” includes expanded treatments of topics in the Call and makes extensive use of the “Initial Statement Towards an Ecumenical Declaration on Just Peace”. It is available in electronic form on the DOV website, with scope to include additional material reflecting discussions and debates at the IEPC. ■

More Information:

DOV Website page on Declaration on Just Peace:
<http://bit.ly/hFHjfU>



Sudan was chosen as the second DOV Annual Focus in 2003. The crowd outside the Sudanese Church of Christ on the outskirts of Khartoum included many internally displaced persons from the Nuba mountains. (June-July 2004)
© Bread for the World/Kirsten Schwanke-Adiang

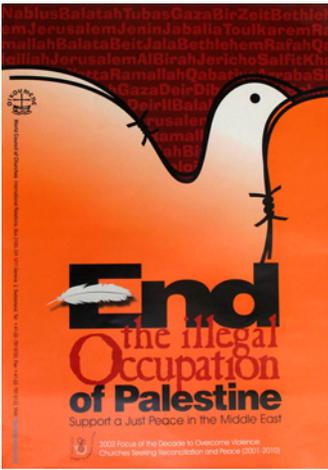
Annual Foci



Inaugurated in 2002, an effort to focus on a different region each year proved to be an important means of maintaining the momentum of the Decade. The Annual Focus expressed solidarity with and celebrated churches' efforts for peace and justice each in their own place, helped broaden global understanding of the specificities of particular regional and national contexts and, where possible, proposed appropriate areas for advocacy.

Reflecting on what the annual foci contributed to the Decade, DOV Reference Group member Tale Hungnes from Norway comments:

One way to make the vision more operational has been the geographically-based annual foci. [...] They gave the opportunity for contextual decision-making on what problems are most important in a particular area. But more practically, they gave us guidance on whom to contact and where to travel, and some wonderful launch arrangements all over the world.¹



The 2002 “Ecumenical Campaign to End the Illegal Occupation of Palestine: Support a Just Peace in the Middle East” was the first DOV Annual Focus.

2002 Ecumenical Campaign to End the Illegal Occupation of Palestine: Support a Just Peace in the Middle East

“We care for the security of both peoples just as we care for the security of every human being. But the way the present Israeli government is dealing with the situation makes neither for security nor for a just peace. We believe that Israeli security is dependent on Palestinian freedom and justice. To the Palestinian people we urge an end of every kind of violent response. We believe that the way of peace is the way of negotiation.” — Heads of churches in Jerusalem to all the people of the Holy Land, Jerusalem, 9 March 2002.

In February 2001, the WCC Central Committee called for greater efforts to attain a comprehensive peace based on justice and security for all peoples in Palestine and Israel. It also recommended the creation of an accompaniment programme that would include an international ecumenical presence, build on the experiences of Christian Peacemaker Teams and be closely linked to the local churches. A WCC delegation visited the Holy Land in June 2001 and in August, a consultation of churches and ecumenical partners from the region and beyond reflected on what could be done.

As a result, the WCC launched an “Ecumenical campaign to End the Illegal Occupation of Palestine: Support a Just Peace in the Middle East” in 2002 within the DOV framework. As the first DOV Annual Focus, the campaign was an effort to mobilize WCC member churches and ecumenical partners and coordinate efforts to address the root causes of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

At the same time and in what was to become the campaign’s main thrust and concrete realization, an Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) was

created. The WCC International Relations team was responsible both for designing, preparing and setting up the EAPPI and for leading the campaign. (See Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel in “An Overview of International Actions and Projects” section on p. 24.)

The churches of Jerusalem were invited to share their prayers and messages for peace with the ecumenical fellowship to launch the campaign, and WCC member churches were similarly invited to use these prayers in their worship services starting January 1 to Easter Sunday “to mark the beginning of the year 2002 and our collective efforts to end the violence of the illegal occupation of Palestine.”

The ecumenical campaign raised awareness within the churches of the history of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the issues at stake and sought coordinated international advocacy alongside the local churches and peace and human-rights organizations.

Christians were called to lobby government officials for policies which would encourage both an immediate, total withdrawal of Israel from the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza and an end to all violent attacks against the civilian population in Israel and in the Palestinian territories. Nonviolent resistance was also encouraged. The programme promoted several specific measures including a boycott of all products from illegal Jewish settlements and a strict arms embargo of the state of Israel. ■



A house with a shop in the Jaborona internally displaced persons' camp outside Khartoum, Sudan. (June-July 2004) © Bread for the World/Kirsten Schwanke-Adiang

2003 Sudan: Healing and Reconciliation

*“The churches themselves are saying that, despite the divisions, they are going to work together for peace. [...] We also want the parties involved to end the conflict in a nonviolent way instead of fighting. No party can win this war, since it has lasted such a long time.”*² — Enock Tombe, secretary general of the Sudan Council of Churches.

*“May the grace of God almighty be upon the peace negotiators, so that as they discuss peace, they should put humanity first before anything else.”*³ — Rev Dr Haruun L. Ruun, executive secretary, New Sudan Council of Churches.

Suffering from one of the world's longest and most destructive civil wars – that had caused over two million deaths and over four million displaced people – Sudan was chosen for the Annual Focus in 2003. The theme of healing and reconciliation was chosen in an effort to build on peace-making experience gained elsewhere in Africa.

Unfortunately, these hopes were largely frustrated because a hoped-for mid-2003 peace agreement did not materialize. Nevertheless, connections to the churches involved in Sudan were strengthened and churches around the world learned about the healing and reconciliation ministries of Sudan's churches. The focus gave voice to the churches and people in Sudan working to bring about not only an end to the fighting but healing to people's physical and emotional wounds.

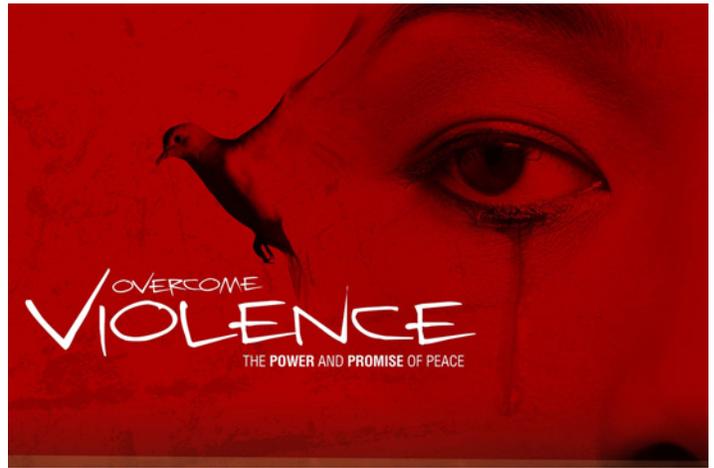
Although they represent only a small minority of the population, the churches in Sudan had long been active players in the search for peace. The Sudan Council of Churches (SCC) and the New Sudan Council of Churches (NSCC) worked

together with ecumenical partners in the Sudan Ecumenical Forum (SEF) set up in the early 1990s under WCC auspices to provide opportunities for dialogue between Sudanese church representatives and their external friends and partners. In 1996, they issued a joint paper called “Together we remain in action for peace”.

A Sudan Focal Point set up in the mid-nineties and working on behalf of ecumenical partners in Europe, the US and Canada was another ecumenical instrument for promoting peace and international solidarity through information, analysis and advocacy.

Having held annual meetings in the Geneva area for some years, the SEF met in London in March 2002 and in Johannesburg in February 2003.

In many ways the DOV focus on Sudan highlighted the tragedy of violent conflicts in different countries in Africa and sought to address their complex roots in order to bring real healing and lasting reconciliation. ■



Marking the 2004 DOV Annual Focus on the US, a focus statement and poster explored the theological dimensions of "The Power and Promise of Peace".

2004 US: The Power and Promise of Peace

Power is not to be wielded over and against others, but rather channeled toward the realization of the peaceful realm of God. It is through peace that people are liberated and empowered to build just and vibrant communities. — Theological Reflections: Focus Statement for the Annual Focus of 2004, USA, "The Power and Promise of Peace."⁴

Organized around a theme that emphasized the centrality of peace as energy and vision, the 2004 Annual Focus was coordinated by a national DOV Committee and the WCC US Office and launched at a stirring worship service commemorating the life and ministry of the Rev. Dr Martin Luther King, Jr. at the Interchurch Center in New York City on 12 January.

A US Focus statement explored the theological dimensions of "The Power and Promise of Peace" and called the US churches to work together towards peace. It recalled that Americans have built "a culture deeply stained with violence, yet also [...] a rich history of nonviolent movements," and evoked the enormous global influence – economic, political, cultural and military – of the US and the fact that US churches "have played important roles both in buttressing the status quo and in promoting social change"⁵.

In order to promote actions towards justice and nonviolence in churches and denominations throughout the country in 2004, the DOV Committee identified national programmes already scheduled by the churches. These included such annual denominational events as observance of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (January), the annual gathering of the Baptist Peace Fellowship under the theme "The Stones Will Cry Out" (July), a Presbyterian Church consultation on "From Personal

to International Power for Peace-making," and a Church of the Brethren seminar on "Widening the Circle: Peace-making in the Midst of Diversity – Organizing for Peace" (November).

In addition to national events, local congregations offered hundreds of other contributions through sermons, services, retreats and programmes. Trainings in nonviolence sponsored by denominations and denominational peace fellowships as well as by ecumenical and interfaith organizations proliferated all over the country.

The US churches found many other creative ways of promoting peace and justice in 2004. The Church of the Brethren, for example, created a DOV network of over one thousand churches which agreed to use specially prepared peace-making materials and the Presbyterian Church USA enabled young adults to travel to Guatemala as part of a "Violence of Globalization" study seminar. On the eve of Pentecost 2004, leaders of five US churches sent pastoral letters to their churches that were read on the WCC website by member churches everywhere.

While coordinating the calendar of church peace events, the DOV Committee itself undertook a number of activities. It compiled and distributed theological reflection resources and statements. It participated in the International Day of Prayer for Peace (IDPP) in conjunction with the UN International Day of Peace. Aware that some US churches had been inviting their congregations to participate in a Lenten Fast from Violence since 2002, it prepared a series of Lenten reflections for each week of the fast to be used in 2005 (see Lenten Fast from Violence, USA report in "DOV Stories and Examples of 'Good Practice'" section on p. 100).

With the WCC US Office, the Committee also provided opportunities for young adults to draw connections between ecumenism and peace-making through internships, a scholars' programme and the WCC stewards' programme.

To identify, honour and thank local individuals and organizations involved in peace-making initiatives and motivate others to engage in such ministries, the Committee created the "Blessed are the Peacemakers" Awards. The annual meeting and conference of the WCC US Conference in Atlanta in October 2004 provided the opportunity for recognition of ten such outstanding local peacemakers and the awards ceremony took place in the Ebenezer Baptist Church, home to Martin Luther King, Jr., "where so many believers had gathered to gain strength for the struggle for civil rights".

Before the annual meeting and conference, a spiritual retreat meditated on images, presented in a booklet produced by the US Orthodox churches, of brave women and men of faith who urged nonviolence over past centuries. At the annual meeting, attention was drawn to the US churches' responsibility for peace and justice through a series of workshops and worship services and participants were moved by the message of solidarity and the challenges brought by eight "living letters" from partner churches around the world.

During 2004, the Committee also forged new partnerships with those working to overcome violence in the international sphere. In March for example, an Ecumenical Conference for Women Leaders in the Churches and Delegates to the UN Commission on the Status of Women introduced UN Resolution 1365, which calls for the full participation of women in international peace-making processes. Increasingly victims of

civil strife and war, women are rarely invited to the negotiating tables or to share in postwar rebuilding efforts at the national level. A widely distributed report on women and peace-making published by women's organizations, including US and Canadian churches, was one outcome of this conference.

Another example of collaboration in the field of international advocacy (and noting the importance "for members of this committee to study those principles in the year that prisoner abuse at Abu Graib in Iraq shocked peoples everywhere and caused outrage among millions of Americans"), the Committee observed Human Rights Day and reiterated US commitments to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by approving and distributing a Statement on Human Rights to ecumenical and interfaith organizations across the country.

[Canadian churches reached out to their own society with a DOV open letter thanking God for the courage of those who have "witnessed to truth, justice and peace in a time when fear, insecurity and manipulate patriotism have paralyzed so many". They joined US churches in deploring discrimination against Arab and Muslim citizens and in repentance for the violence done to America's indigenous peoples. The Canadian churches expressed hope that "together we can break through barriers of isolation and form bonds of unshakeable unity in justice and peace, so that as you make witness for the world God wants and has promised, you will know that you are not alone." 6] ■

2005 Asia: Building Communities of Peace for All

*“Why does CCA speak of communities rather than community? What is the inclusive community that we aspire to in Asia? I think it would never be a single or uniform community, or with any one dominant group swallowing or embracing all other groups. Rather, it would be a community of distinct communities whose diverse races, colours, cultures, languages and religions would be valued and celebrated as part of the wellspring of our cultural heritages and spiritual resources.”*⁷ — Hope S. Antone, CCA executive secretary for Faith, Mission and Unity and coordinator of the DOV Focus on Asia.

One dimension of violence often experienced in Asia is natural disasters and ecological devastation. For many churches in Asia, 2005 began with the aftermath of the 26 December 2004 tsunami. A January consultation in Sri Lanka on the “Ecumenical ministry in the post-tsunami situation” urged churches and civil society groups to empower local communities to implement and monitor reconstruction efforts. Participants said relief and reconstruction work should draw on the spiritualities of different religious communities rather than being used for conversion purposes.

The DOV Focus on Asia was formally launched at the 31 March to 6 April 12th General Assembly of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The Assembly theme, “Building Communities of Peace for All”, reflected the challenge to Asian churches to participate in building just peace communities for all regardless of ethnicity, religion, culture or ideology and for the whole creation. By committing themselves to this goal, Asian churches acknowledged the need to confess their participation in violence through their silence

or complicity. They also affirmed that while violence had been prevalent and deeply rooted in the region, ongoing efforts to address it (whether or not under the DOV banner) should be celebrated.

In May, an International Conference in Gyonggido, Korea on “Peace for Life” discussed ways of establishing peace for life in Northeast Asia. Specific recommendations included peaceful exchange and cooperation between South and North Korea, starting with economic cooperation programmes and the creation of civil peace forces within and among Northeast Asian countries.

In July, a WCC/CCA ecumenical pastoral delegation visited the Philippines at the invitation of the National Council of Churches to express solidarity with the victims and families of human rights violations including clergy, human rights workers, peasant farmers and peace activists. The delegation met with key government officials to express concern and make recommendations on the deteriorating human rights situation. Building communities of peace for all truly involves confronting those in power and making them accountable to the people.

In August, an interreligious conference in Cipayung, Indonesia brought participants from some Asian countries involved in peace initiatives together to reflect on the role of religion in overcoming violence without violence. Representing Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communities, participants condemned the misuse of religion for personal or political ends and vowed to challenge threats to peace and justice by those who use violence to attain their goals.

In November, the violence inflicted upon stateless and un-



The 2005 DOV Annual Focus on Asia mural project was commissioned by the Christian Conference of Asia from young Filipino visual artists Lei Garcia and Ugatlahi.

documented children was addressed in a Southeast Asian gathering of organizations and groups from Malaysia, Philippines, Indonesia and Singapore who called for government intervention to ensure protection and human rights for these children.

Also in November, a DOV consultation jointly organized by WCC and CCA in Leilem, Indonesia was an in-gathering of stories and experiences from Asian churches. The latter committed themselves to promote life-enhancing politics, just social formations, economic programmes to address needs and aspirations of people and the earth, a culture of dialogue and tolerance and harmonious religious coexistence and solidarity among people of faith.

A major 2004 event that brought churches and civil society groups from Asia and beyond together to confront structures of economic violence was the December 2005 anti-World Trade Organization (WTO) campaign in Hong Kong. The Asian churches' joint campaign actions showed that they were fully aware that a lot of violence in Asia is rooted in poverty and economic injustice and that overcoming it requires a struggle for genuine economic justice. The overwhelming turnout of all kinds of groups – NGOs, farmers, church organizations, etc. – demonstrated that as a minority in Asia, churches must work closely with civil society and other faith groups to oppose the powerful economic structures coming to our region from the rich and strong countries of the world. ■



2006 Latin America: And We Still Work for Peace

All this work on the theme of violence was neither innocuous nor innocent. We touched nerves, structures, sensitivities, institutional interests (...) It wasn't easy. Nevertheless, the demand for participation and proposals from different church, ecumenical, interreligious and civil society circles has been growing. — Rev. Nilton Giese, general secretary of the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI).⁸

In welcoming the challenge of a DOV Annual Focus on their region, CLAI member churches agreed to emphasize the themes of violence against women and intra-family violence, children and young people and to work on peace education.

Posters, flyers, stickers, a video on domestic violence, a video/workshop on HIV/AIDs and a manual designed to help ordinary people understand conflicts and how to resolve them peaceably were all part of a major CLAI campaign within the 2006 DOV Annual Focus framework.

The *Home – a Haven of Peace* campaign aimed at affirming and reinforcing the home as a place of peaceful coexistence. Campaign materials, available in hard copy and digital format, were picked up and widely used not only by CLAI members but also by other churches across the region including the Roman Catholic Church in Costa Rica and provincial authorities in Ecuador; they were distributed at national consultations organized by CLAI in the lead-up to the WCC's Ninth Assembly in Brazil in February 2006.

Other DOV-related and CLAI-supported meetings and activities in 2006 included:

- Four training workshops for conflict mediators in Costa Rica, Mexico, Honduras and Bolivia.
- A September consultation in Nicaragua on “Peace in the City”. At the consultation, over 45 representatives from Central American churches attempted to determine what their churches should be doing about delinquency, community organization, small arms, domestic violence and marginalized groups like prostitutes and street children, elderly and handicapped people.
- Workshops for and run by young church leaders, some of them ex-gang members, in Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua. The workshops analyzed the roots of juvenile delinquency, gang warfare and violence and the attitude of police forces in their region, and discussed strategies for reinsertion in society and working life that included evangelization for peace. In collaboration with the Nicaraguan government's Youth Secretariat, members of CLAI's youth organization organized a “Peace in the City” artistic festival on 22 September 2006.
- A May-December 2006 series of encounters with children from several poor Buenos Aires neighborhoods that focused on discovering one's own identity, adopting the principle of “unity in diversity” and conflict resolution.
- DVDs, books, presentations, articles, posters and Bible studies on domestic violence produced by CLAI's Women's and Gender Pastoral Ministries Office around the central theme “Peace starts at home”. The office organized and/or participated in over 25 workshops, consultations and conferences on this theme throughout the year across the continent and overseas. Sub-themes included struc-

tural violence and the feminization of poverty, feminization of HIV/AIDS, domestic and intra-family violence, women in politics, women and power, trafficking of women, gender violence in preaching, language, pastoral ministry and interpretation of the Bible.

- Staff of CLAI Women's and Gender Pastoral Ministries office made presentations on overcoming violence at several interreligious conferences such as a World Conference of Religions for Peace consultation in Japan and an international symposium on the Shoah and structural/religious violence.

Many more events organized with and for women and focusing on violence against women took place in November 2006 to coincide with the "NO to Violence Against Women" Day (25 November).

An "Educate for Peace" (Educar para la Paz) teaching kit was prepared during the year by CLAI and careful plans made for its distribution; it was presented to the Fifth CLAI general assembly in Buenos Aires in February 2007. (See description of the kit in "DOV Stories and Examples of 'Good Practice'" section on p. 81.)

In collaboration with the Latin American Theological Fraternity a theological consultation on peace and violence was organized in Peru in November.

And still within the DOV ambit, the Superior Evangelical Institute of Theological Studies (ISEDET) in Argentina ran a seminar on "Gender Violence in Sermons, Language and Biblical Interpretation," and another on "Gender Violence in Ethics and Pastoral Practice." ■



Detail of the 2007 DOV Annual Focus on Europe banner.



A cultural event during the 3rd European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu, Romania, September 2007. © CCEE-CEC/Ag. Siciliani

2007 Europe: Make Me an Instrument of Your Peace

The 2007 DOV focus in Europe was launched during a February ecumenical encounter in Wittenberg, Germany to prepare for the 3rd European Ecumenical Assembly later that year. Orthodox, Anglican and Protestant church representatives participating in the encounter identified nine key issues for action by European churches during 2007: human trafficking, youth, migration, militarization, domestic and interpersonal violence, human security, the environment, violence in the church and a theology of just peace. A steering committee of young adults chose the prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi, “Make me an instrument of your peace”, as the Annual Focus theme for the year and for a celebration of common commitment to overcome violence in Europe.

The Annual Focus was intended to communicate the DOV, make efforts in overcoming violence visible, raise awareness on issues around violence and mobilize churches to engage in this process over the long term. While the Focus on Europe did indeed contribute to an increased level of visibility and activity, little happened on either the all-European level or in Eastern Europe.

An effort by DOV Reference Group member Tale Hunnges from Norway to explain why is revealing:

In my region, the Nordic countries of Europe, the enthusiasm for the DOV was great in the beginning. The churches in Norway, at least in their head offices in Oslo, were ready to make use of this project. For example, the work against domestic violence was strengthened as a direct response to the DOV initiative. However, the enthusiasm faded over the Decade when uncertainty grew around what the project was all

about and what role our church could play in it. We do lots of peace work anyway, and are not sure about what the DOV has added to that.

There were some highlights however. Churches in Germany, Switzerland and Scandinavia were particularly active. (See account of the German churches’ Decade work in “DOV Stories and Examples of ‘Good Practice’” section of this report on p. 91.) The German *Kirchentag* in Cologne devoted an entire day of its June programme to the topic of overcoming violence. A meeting in Germany focused on the Responsibility to Protect. Swiss church initiatives addressed domestic violence, street violence and racism. (See 100,000 Roses Say No to Violence in “DOV Stories and ‘Good Practice’” section on p. 97, and The Responsibility to Protect in “DOV Themes and Issues” section on p. 114.)

While the Scandinavian churches continued their ongoing work against violence, this was not directly related to the Decade or to the Annual Focus on Europe. For example, Changemaker, the Norwegian Church Aid youth movement, strengthened its work on small arms that year.

In May, fifty Orthodox, Catholic, Anglican and Protestant Christians from Europe and the US met in Greece for a discussion on “Forgiveness, Peace and Reconciliation.” The conference was organized by the Volos Academy for Theological Studies in collaboration with the Boston Theological Institute and the WCC. The event was a contribution of the Church of Greece to the DOV. A panel of speakers from Cyprus, Serbia, Russia and the Middle East discussed Orthodoxy in situations of conflict; an important and difficult issue addressed was the



Opening gathering at the 3rd European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu, Romania. © CCEE-CEC/Ag. Siciliani

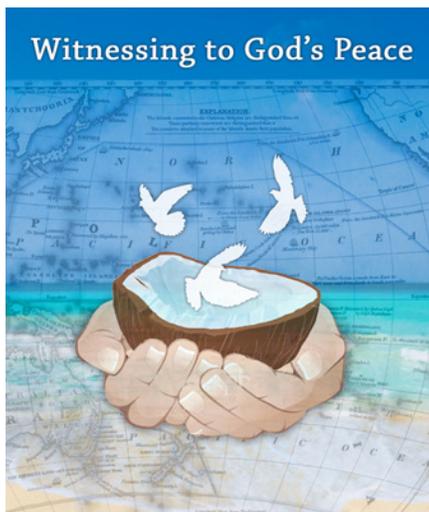


A welcome prayer at the 3rd European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu, Romania. © CCEE-CEC/Ag. Siciliani.

relationship of church and state, a matter of passionate debate in Greece as it is in many other countries.

The bloody conflict in Northern Ireland, the crimes committed under the apartheid regime in South Africa and communist rule in eastern Germany, mass killings perpetrated by the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia or by the Guatemalan military during a 35-year-long civil war and the diverse cases of these nations and their struggles to cope with the legacies of massive human rights violations were at the heart of a 2007 ecumenical consultation “Healing of Memories – Reconciling Communities” in Dublin, Ireland, co-organized by the WCC and the Irish School of Ecumenics. (See account of the 2007 consultations in Greece and in Ireland in Preparing for the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation in “An Overview of International Actions and Projects” section on p. 49.)

The DOV call to peace-making and to peaceful living also found expression at the 3rd European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu, Romania in September, a gathering sponsored by the Conference of European Churches and the Council of European Bishops’ Conferences. ■



2008 Pacific: Witnessing to God's Peace

*Atua, allow us to drink from the tanoa of Your peace
Right the course of our canoes to the currents of violence, hatred,
war, abuse
Give us peace of being at rest, so that peace prevails over any wind
that gusts through our islands
Tattoo in our hearts Your righteousness and purity
Through all cultures and walks of life, we pray as instruments of
Peace and as the people of Pasifika.⁹*

The DOV theme for the Pacific was “Witnessing to the peace of God”. Launched at the Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC) Assembly in late 2007, the 2008 Annual Focus highlighted the challenges that climate change poses to the peoples and churches of Oceania. The DOV reference Group met in Fiji as part of the Annual Focus and the region developed material for the 2008 International Day of Prayer for Peace.

While no special initiatives were undertaken in the Pacific during 2008, certain areas of the ongoing programmatic work of the PCC and WCC member churches with a direct bearing on overcoming violence in the Pacific were pursued. This applied in particular to efforts to obtain compensation for nuclear test site workers (French Polynesia), support truth and reconciliation commissions (Solomon Islands and New Caledonia) and work on climate change.

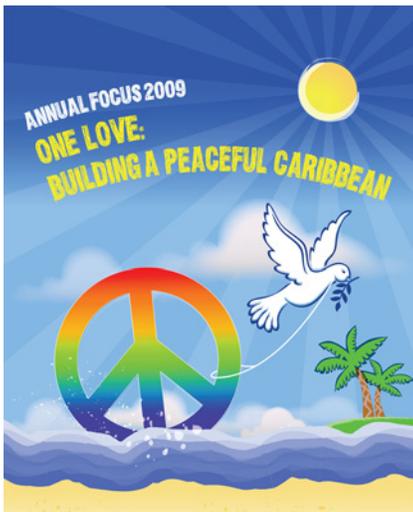
Founded in 2001, the aim of the *Moruroa e tatou* association is to defend and assist the victims of air and underground nuclear tests carried out by the French government in French Polynesia between 1964 and 1996. In its effort to obtain the rights to pensions, indemnities and health care for former test site workers, *Moruroa e tatou* constituted 222 case files on

“cancers deserving reparation payments”.

In April 2009, an industrial relations tribunal in Papeete, Tahiti judged eight workers’ rights to indemnities. Five had already died from radiation-related illnesses but were represented by their widows. The case was supported by the Protestant Maohi Church and its president Oscar Temaru who had worked on Moruroa. The disappointing verdict announced on June 26 awarded some compensation for the children of one family, but legislation not updated in 30 years did not specify the illnesses that the workers had developed.¹⁰

In November 2008, the French government had announced that it would introduce legislation to compensate people affected by radiation at France’s nuclear test sites. *Moruroa e Tatou* noted, however, that “The draft law covers workers and military personnel who staffed the test sites, but not the local indigenous communities on islands near Moruroa who received radioactive fallout. As well, the law makes no provision for ongoing clean-up of contamination at the test sites.”¹¹

In relation to the environment and climate change, the PCC’s 9th General Assembly in 2007 lifted up the need for “Deeper awareness and appreciation of the responsibility to be good stewards of God’s creation among member churches and NCCs through prophetic advocacy, and policy changes on environmental issues including climate change, fisheries, forestry, mining and nuclear testing issues.”¹² Since then and within the framework of its Climate Change and Resettlement Programme, the PCC has engaged with the churches in intensive advocacy, education and accompaniment on these issues. ■



2009 Caribbean: One Love – Building a Peaceful Caribbean

*Keep your church free, that it may be the channel
through which justice and peace,
integrity and wholeness,
harmony and goodwill
may flow to the dispossessed and the desperate,
that your Kingdom may come in all its fulfillment
of life and health and peace,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

— Prayer from Jamaica. Source unknown.
Sent by Rev. John Carden

“We want to convey the message that the Caribbean is not just sun, sand and sea,” participants at a launch of the Annual Focus in the region stated.

The launch took place in Panama City at an 11-14 November 2009 gathering of representatives from churches and regional as well as international ecumenical organizations. Four countries – Haiti, Granada, Surinam and Cuba – were identified as requiring special attention within the region..

The gathering brought together some 30 participants from national councils of churches and the Conference of Caribbean Churches (CCC). It was hosted by the Ecumenical Committee of Panama.

The DOV’s Caribbean focus aimed at strengthening and resourcing churches and movements working for peace in the region and deepening the churches’ understanding of the violence involved in issues such as migration, human trafficking, food security, HIV and AIDS, drugs abuse and trafficking, amongst others.

The focus was developed by churches in the Caribbean

under CCC leadership and in cooperation with the WCC. The theme “One Love - Building a Peaceful Caribbean” embraced stories, actions and symbols from the regional context that dealt with thanksgiving, confession, forgiveness, reconciliation and healing as well as injustice and violence.

The theme was shared among the churches through events, prayers, posters and postcards. The Jamaica Council of Churches and the Jamaica Violence Prevention Alliance joined the CCC, national councils of churches and the WCC in sponsoring a regional seminar on the impact of violence, theological implications and strategies for violence prevention especially by churches (see account of the Jamaica VPA in “DOV Stories and Examples of ‘Good Practice’” section on p. 82). The gathering also worked on regional issues, participation and contributions for the May 2011 International Ecumenical Peace Convocation in Kingston.

Resources were collected within the region for the annual International Day of Prayer for Peace and used in Sunday services and special events around the world including one at the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva.

The Caribbean will host the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation marking the culmination of the Decade to Overcome Violence. It will take place in Kingston, Jamaica in May 2011. ■

2010 Africa: Work and Pray in Hope for Peace

There was – and still is – much violence in Africa: civil conflicts, civil wars, injustice and utmost poverty. [Yet] those privileged to visit the continent may get other impressions: Africa is the cradle of humanity, the cradle of salaam, and not the most violent continent. One can also learn from Africa. — Fernando Enns.¹³

The focus for the final year of the DOV – Africa – was launched in Addis Ababa by representatives of the All-Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), the African Union (AU), Ethiopian churches, the WCC Youth Commission ECHOS and the DOV Reference Group at its January 2010 meeting with the IEPC Planning Committee. Panels and presentations modeled the goals for the year: to highlight churches, related groups and ministries working for peace in Africa and raise awareness of that in other regions of the world.

The AACC coordinated and monitored many activities related to DOV during the year. Its own ongoing peace-building work includes accompanying church councils in electoral processes (Rwanda, Burundi, Ethiopia, Sudan, South Africa, Mozambique and Ivory Coast); solidarity, fact-finding and advocacy missions to Chad (Darfur), Kenya, Madagascar, Northern Uganda, Somalia, Sudan and Zimbabwe; coordinating a Great Lakes Ecumenical Forum (GLEF); facilitating training for peace mediators; and encouraging interreligious dialogue in the Horn of Africa.

In 2010, special attention was paid to Sudan. In March, the AACC opened a desk at its Nairobi headquarters to monitor implementation of Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and the January 2011 referendum designed to allow the people of Southern Sudan to exercise their right to

self-determination. In Juba in March, the Sudanese churches stressed the importance of full implementation of CPA provisions for a peaceful, fair and free referendum; meeting during the year with state and diplomatic leaders – including the presidents of Kenya and South Sudan, the former president of South Africa, the US special envoy to Sudan and the secretary general of the Arab League – AACC representatives shared the Sudanese churches' message with them.

During the year, the DOV newsletter, WCC and AACC Websites and the annual International Day of Prayer for Peace (IDPP) all helped to highlight churches and related groups and ministries working for peace on the continent and raise ecumenical awareness and understanding about Africa's work.

A number of interesting peace projects in Africa were highlighted on the IDPP on 21 September 2010. One was a "Peace Village" project in Uganda which supports the process of healing in communities marked by conflict, trauma and pain. Ecumenical groups of youth, women and community leaders from different part of the country were coming to peace camps at selected villages and participating in post-conflict recovery development activities. The project was initiated by the Uganda Joint Christian Council as part of the country's return to relative stability after decades of military dictatorship and civil war.

Another interesting project, the Peace-building and Conflict Resolution Project of Presbyterian Church of Ghana youth, trains church youth to train others in conflict resolution and peace-building skills. Communities then have youth and community leaders who act as resource people for the effective handling of conflict situations and to promote peace-building.



Families displaced by October 2008 fighting in the eastern Congo took refuge in a church and adjacent school in Goma, where ACT International provided food, non-food items and shelter support. © ACT/Paul Jeffrey

Yet another example was the human rights work of the northwestern diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania. Since 2002, a small human rights office had been helping parishioners and citizens there to take a stand in their communities and in court against all kinds of violence. The work strengthened church workers to respond to violence, resolve conflicts and defend human rights locally, including in cases of cruelty.

The 2010 IDPP encouraged prayer for NGOs working for peace in Africa. In South Africa, for example, Rural Education, Awareness and Community Health (REACH) addressed sexual harassment, domestic violence and HIV/AIDS on farms and in communities of the Western Cape.

Over the Decade as a whole, African church contributions to and participation in peace-making intensified at community, national and regional levels. Churches participated in peace negotiations in Sudan, Burundi, Uganda, Kenya and the DRC for example. They promoted interfaith networks like IFAPA (Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa) and the Council of Religious Leaders. They trained communities in conflict transformation and reconciliation methods including traditional ones and developed peace-building resources. They did pioneering work in helping people to recover from conflicts and wars – more than 16 African countries have now established national Truth and Reconciliation Commissions. ■

More Information:

DOV Web page on the Annual Foci: <http://bit.ly/hrspXD>
and pages on
Africa 2010: <http://bit.ly/awlg5y>

Caribbean 2009: <http://bit.ly/eWJrc7>
Pacific 2008: <http://bit.ly/ej4x9y>
Europe 2007: <http://bit.ly/i9xnsl>
Latin America 2006: <http://bit.ly/hWCqys>
Asia 2005: <http://bit.ly/e8eMco>
USA 2004: <http://bit.ly/hKNvAU>
Sudan 2003: <http://bit.ly/hByG83>
Palestine/Israel 2002: <http://bit.ly/eoGL50>



A "Schritte gegen Tritte" animator discusses violence and non-violent conflict resolution with a children's group in a way that encourages them to reflect on their own situations.
© Klaus Burkhardt



DOV Stories and Examples of “Good Practice”

The wealth of energy and commitment that was mobilized or strengthened by the DOV must be assessed locally and nationally as well as internationally. In 1995 the WCC Central Committee noted that the Programme to Overcome Violence “can only succeed to the degree that member churches give it priority in their own work”.¹ The same dynamic held true where the Decade to Overcome Violence made a difference as well.

When, where and how the churches responded to the call to commit themselves to overcoming the spirit, logic and practice of violence and war was each church’s responsibility. The WCC had a coordinating role. It facilitated exchanges, highlighted experiences and worked to build commitment. It did not set out to coordinate or monitor each activity or project that took place. Churches asked for and received advice, materials and support of different kinds from the WCC and from each other. Reports were sought and received by the WCC secretariat, but were by no means comprehensive. At times, news about significant initiatives around the world – ranging from one-off events to long-lasting campaigns at local, national and regional levels – never made it beyond their particular ambits and networks.

The programmes described in this chapter have thus been selected from among those that were in touch with the DOV office or provided reports of their work. These include several church-based initiatives that were specifically conceived and carried out as contributions to the DOV as well as ongoing initiatives whose organizers contacted the DOV office, sent information on their work and asked to be linked up. All of them were publicized by the DOV via its Website, publications or other avenues as examples of “good practice”. They represent innovative and effective models of how the DOV was embodied practically on different levels. However, the selection does not constitute an exhaustive list. Many worthy endeavours are not reported here.



On 8 October 2010, Viva Rio's Family Health team in Coelho Neto organized "Children's Day" leisure, health promotion and dengue fever prevention activities with the community. © Viva Rio/Flávia Ferreira

Overcoming Violence in the Favelas, Viva Rio, Brazil

“Nowhere do so many people get shot as in Brazil... Just behind Rio’s dream beaches, war rules.”²

At 7 p.m. on the seventh day of the seventh month of 2000, millions of people across Brazil watched popular actress Fernanda Montenegro on their favourite TV channel asking them to turn off their lights, place lighted candles in their windows and go to work wearing white clothes to signal their desire to stop violence and crime and ban the use and sale of small arms. Many did as they were asked... and a national campaign was born!

On the same day, Viva Rio handed out manifestos against armed violence and for the ban on small arms in 14 state capitals including cities known for their extreme violence – like Recife, Brazilia, Salvador, Vitoria, São Paulo and Rio.

Those who signed the manifesto staged street demonstrations and committed themselves to explain the campaign objectives – “social investment” for youth in the poorest and most violent city districts, approval of the draft law [on small arms], police reform, the democratization of the legal system – to friends and neighbours and to demand government action.

Viva Rio is a non-governmental organization headquartered in Rio de Janeiro. Its main goal is to promote a culture of peace and social development through field work, research and formulation of public policies. It was founded in December 1993 by representatives from different sectors of civil society.

The immediate cause was a massacre of street children by police in front of a church in Rio’s Candelaria neighbourhood. Local shop-owners ordered and financed the bloodbath because they were annoyed by the children’s begging. Rio’s slaughter of the innocent was a wake-up call for researchers, businesses, artists, journalists and politicians to begin developing strategies to reduce the growing number of trigger-happy police and criminals. They founded Viva Rio, organized funding, and named anthropologist Rubem Cesar Fernandes as director.

Fernandes was a member of the WCC Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA) and Viva Rio became a founding partner of the WCC’s “Peace to the City” network (see POV and the Peace to the City Campaign in “Overcoming Violence 1994-1998: from Programme to Decade” section on p. 12). It also worked closely with the WCC in the context of the DOV and Fernandes was a long-time member of the DOV Reference Group.

By virtue of its broad public support, Viva Rio was able to reach every social niche in the city from drug dealers to cabinet ministers. Today, the organization boasts 1,000 employees and 3,000 volunteers. They run projects in 354 *favelas* (shantytowns) including sports for 300,000 children and high school diploma tutoring for 25,000. In June 2001, they organized the public destruction by bulldozers of some 100,000 weapons confiscated by the police.

Solutions created by Viva Rio through research, development and field tests are initially deployed on a small scale. Once positive results are achieved, these efforts are expanded and can become public policies to be reproduced by the state, the market and other NGOs.

For Viva Rio, “There are no simple answers as to why poverty and social exclusion are associated with armed violence. However, when violence breaks out, three factors feed back into one another creating a vicious circle.”

In their research and work, Viva Rio colleagues observed that

- youngsters in low-income neighborhoods are those most highly exposed to armed violence;
- firearms are the main vector of the violence epidemic. They render conflicts more violent and generalize lethal crimes; they are a symbol of the lack of security; and
- *favelas* and poor suburbs are critical areas.

“It is therefore necessary to integrate safety, social inclusion and development to interrupt this cycle. Social work has to be developed in synch with processes of urban rehabilitation. Based on these principles, Viva Rio works on three different levels – community action, international human safety, and communication.”³

Its Community Activity runs an innovative educational programme to achieve economic inclusion for outcast youngsters at risk. Projects include a Fast Track Schooling Programme; a Children’s Hope Space; the Ana and Maria project that provides emotional support and guidance to pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers with small children; Fight for Peace, a project that provides civil rights courses and boxing training to 40 *favela* boys; Training for the Job Market; Neighbourhood Gardeners; and Citizenry Rescue, a one-year experimental project to assist 100 children and youngsters who seek social reinsertion.

The Viva Rio Human Security project does research and analysis on juvenile and armed violence, arms control and public security; gender violence, peace culture and drug policies. It exchanges information with universities, researchers, NGOs, national and foreign organizations. It includes a Religion and Peace project that promotes networking opportunities for religious leaders, NGOs and social movements, sponsors empowerment workshops and lectures on firearms control, police reform, youth and armed violence and the culture of peace. Bulletins and editorials on related issues are printed and published in religious media. Support and sponsorship is given to different religious groups, helping them to organize campaigns and events on these topics.

Viva Rio runs several Internet communication projects to give positive media visibility to slums and low-income communities. The goal is to strengthen local culture, increase people’s self-esteem and fight against stigma and prejudice. Projects include the *Viva Favela* Website that posts content directed specifically to the young population of low-income communities, offering them access to services and products that relate to their own interests and unique social needs; an Internet portal



Fruit of a partnership between Viva Rio and the Ghetto Film School (GFS), students from the New York/the Bronx free cinema school, young Carioca audiovisual workshops participants and a troupe of actors got together in 2009 to film a short movie entitled “Triangle”.
© Viva Rio/Ana Lucia Valinho



In July 2003, Rio de Janeiro hosted the first weapons-burning ceremony in South America. 300 rifles were destroyed in a fire and another 3,858 weapons of various types were crushed by a steamroller. The ceremony was promoted by the Rio state government in partnership with Viva Rio. © Viva Rio

called *Qual Vai Ser?* (What's Up?) that disseminates cultural issues; *Comunidad Segura*, a Website dedicated to the exchange of information and ideas pertaining to human security; and a Community Radios Network. Other services include a legal office for conflict resolution, and training for the police.

Many of Viva Rio's workers are volunteers and companies that wish to develop their own voluntary work programmes and stimulate employees on experiencing solidarity can also contact the Solidarity Network for support.

Besides coordinating voluntary work, the network also prepares and deploys campaigns for donation of food, personal hygiene products, books, clothes and toys that are sent to daycare centres, retirement homes, orphanages and other charitable institutions. Awareness campaigns on dengue fever prevention and blood donation are also organized or supported by Viva Rio. All these initiatives are covered by the media and featured on the Viva Rio website to stimulate further participation. ■

More Information:

Viva Rio website: <http://www.vivario.org.br>

Community outreach: <http://bit.ly/hB6YWs>

Human security: <http://bit.ly/i7gA2k>

Communication: <http://bit.ly/eVObeW>

Volunteers: <http://bit.ly/dFLxID>

Efforts to overcome armed violence and control small arms possession and sales gather momentum. WCC press release, 7 August 2000 <http://bit.ly/gGEeV2>

Report: Vivario - Long Live the Favela, feature story, Institut für Friedenspädagogik Website. <http://bit.ly/gvbuBV>

Training Peace Educators, Argentina

One of the Conference of Central and Latin American Churches' (CLAI) efforts to contribute to the Decade, *Aprender a educar para la PAZ: Instrumental para capacitación de educadores en educación para la paz* is a training for peace trainers' teaching kit. It was developed at the request of a consultation on "Violence and Peace in Latin America and the Caribbean" convened by CLAI in Buenos Aires in December 2005.

A multidisciplinary team representing various church-related institutions worked together over 2006 to articulate the kit's theoretical framework and strategies for its diffusion. At two meetings in Porto Alegre, Brazil in May and August 2006 they agreed, firstly, that school teachers should be incorporated into the task of teaching a culture of peace and, secondly, that rather than being treated like other subjects, teaching peace should be seen as a daily task.

Under the team's guidance, a manual was prepared by Marcelo Rezende Guimarães. It was published by CLAI and the Rede Da Paz in Brazil in December 2006 and presented to the CLAI Assembly in Buenos Aires in February 2007 and to representatives of CLAI in the Dominican Republic in September 2007, many of whom signed up to take the course while some undertook to use the manual to train other trainers.

The training for trainers' course presented in the manual consists of 13 four-hour workshops divided into three modules:

- A conceptual module designed to familiarize teachers with the concept of peace education. This covers their own identity as peace educators, their goals and the means to be used in pursuing these and nonviolence as the basic reference.
- A thematic model presenting the basic themes to be covered such as human

rights, conflict resolution and disarmament. This introduces the search for the underlying causes of war and efforts to bring about a culture of peace, promoting human rights, putting nonviolent resolution of conflicts into practice and disarmament and promoting human security.

- A third module presents a methodology that includes multiplication of “culture of peace circles”, constructing pacific communities, organizing action for peace and creating nuclei of peace educators.

At a Parliament of Schools for Peace and Solidarity organized in October 2007 by Argentina’s Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, some 200 young people from various parts of Argentina discussed a chapter in the manual on “Rethinking the notion of peace”. The manual was subsequently approved by the government for use in all the country’s state schools. ■

More Information:

Aprender a educar para la PAZ. Instrumental para capacitación de educadores en educación para la paz. CLAI ediciones / Editora Rede da Paz, December 2006.

Creating a Violence-Free and Safe Jamaica: VPA Jamaica

“Jamaica, an island of only 2.7 million people, is locked in a crisis of aggression and violence. Forty percent of the recurrent hospital budget of the Ministry of Health is consumed in the treatment of trauma. It is estimated that the cost to the country of criminal violence alone is between four and five percent of the GDP.”⁴

The global Violence Prevention Alliance (VPA) was launched at the WHO Assembly in January 2004 (see “Networks Related to DOV” section on p. 128); the Jamaican chapter was launched in November of the same year.

The Jamaica VPA’s mission is “to create a violence-free and safe Jamaica”. The Alliance provides an opportunity for organizations from all sectors of society to unite around a shared public health approach to violence prevention that addresses the root causes of violence and improves services for victims.

Alliance initiatives have reduced violence in several neighbourhoods which have become “safe communities”. “By bringing together various organizations and creating discourse, the VPA is able to initiate interventions from the roots and dance hall level to governmental and international agencies.”⁵

VPA projects include:

- A Crime Observatory Project that integrates data on crime and violence from several organizations including the Jamaica Constabulary Force and the University of the West Indies Institute for Criminal Justice and Security. Beginning in July 2008, it successfully mapped homicides and crime hotspots in ten communities across the island.

Law enforcement officers were trained in data collection and analysis.

Community members received training to introduce them to alternate occupations reducing dependency on the spoils from armed violence, such as producing cash crops. Workshops taught life skills and literacy, supported by the VPA training and job placement programme. Grief counseling workshops were supported by church services.



Top: Young people learn computer skills in the Jamaica VPA Learning Networks Project. © Jamaica VPA
 Bottom: Representatives of the Jamaica VPA participate in the 2009 Peace Month campaign calling for a stop to violence. © Jamaica VPA

The Mapping Project promoted partnership between the Crime Observatory and community groups, the police and interested individuals working on the ground to help better their communities. The overwhelming response from communities provided an avenue for them to channel their interests into participatory action, resist violence and create peace and “social capital”.

- The Learning Net-Works Project is intended to improve self-esteem and create positive attitudes among inner-city youths. It uses computer software to improve literacy and mathematical skills while simultaneously teaching computer skills.

The programme targets unattached “corner youths” from violence-torn communities. It aims to attract their interest and assist in developing their literacy skills to the point where they become functionally literate. It also provides training in conflict management, leadership and life skills and facilitates linkages to entrepreneurial and job/placement opportunities for skills training. “This holistic approach seeks to develop young people through an improved knowledge base and marketable skills, and inculcate positive values and attitudes needed to help them find alternatives to violence and become worthwhile citizens.”⁶

Learning Net-Works uses computer software purchased by a private foundation and put at VPA’s disposal. Currently, there are six functional centres with over a 100 enrolled students.

- *Click* is an annual summer project sponsored by corporate bodies with 20 youngsters from “safe communities” to learn digital photography and video animation skills while experiencing mentorship, guidance and life skills from trained tutors. In February 2008, \$10,000 was donated to each child based on the proceeds collected from the sale of their 2007 photographs. All *Click* participants serve two summers.
- Peace Day Initiatives include a peace march, a concert, and various community activities. Peace Day has evolved into a month-long campaign for Peace. In 2008, more than twenty church groups gave their support to Peace Month activities.

The work of VPA Jamaica provides a link between the Decade and the IEPC, where it is featured in the workshop programme. ■

More Information:

VPA Jamaica Website. <http://vpajamaica.com/>

VPA Annual Report 2008. <http://bit.ly/he4fE9>

Women Stop a War, Bougainville, Papua New Guinea

Bougainville, Papua New Guinea (PNG) 1989: a copper mine co-owned by an Australian mining company and the PNG government became the focus of conflict. The introduction of Australian and New Guinean workers caused resentment and the exploitation of the mine became increasingly intertwined with issues of Melanesian indigenous identity. What began as a campaign of sabotage escalated into a violent

campaign for independence, resulting in the formation of both the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) and a government-backed militia (the PNGDF), the declaration of Bougainville's independence and a descent into lawlessness and violence.

Women occupy a crucial place in traditional Bougainville society, determining kinship ties and land inheritance. From the early days of the Bougainville crisis, women's groups played an important role in initiatives to end the violence and promote a sustainable solution to the conflict. Although their participation in the formal peace process and political arena was limited, women's groups on both sides of the conflict helped create and sustain pressure for peace through marches, vigils, petitions, mass meetings and conferences. They also played an important role in awakening the international community to the suffering of the Bougainville people.

According to the coordinator of the Bougainville Inter-Church Women's Forum (BICWF) Sr Lorraine Garasu, women experienced harassment by both the BRA and the PNGDF forces. Freedom of movement and communication were restricted, affecting the supply of medicines, basic goods and the provision of education. Restrictions on movement meant that women often had to wait days before they could go to their gardens to collect food.

Women in the BRA-controlled areas bore the brunt of the war. Behind the eight-year blockade, they struggled to care for their children without medicines, immunization and adequate food supplies. Many babies died from preventable childhood diseases. Those in the mountains suffered from lack of warm clothing. Women and girls in both areas were at risk of rape by soldiers from all factions. The "divide and rule" tactics of the PNGDF were successful in creating and maintaining divisions between Bougainvilleans, with the consequence that peace groups were initially forced to operate in isolation from each other.

Individual women nevertheless used their high status in the family to negotiate peace in their communities and their influence as go-betweens with the warring factions to maintain constructive dialogue. Mothers went into the bush to attempt to bring their sons home. In south and southwest Bougainville, women went into the jungle to negotiate with the local BRA.

Groups such as the Catholic Women's Association and the Bougainville Community Integrated Development Agency (BOCIDA) were the mainstay of humanitarian networks that provided food, clothing and medicines to those in government and BRA-controlled areas. These clandestine networks were the only source of emergency assistance.

In October 1994, the national government called a peace conference in Arawa. Though the BRA and BIG leadership boycotted this event, women's groups took the opportunity to meet and air their views. Shortly after this, Catholic women organized a Bougainville Reunion in Buka. More than 2,000 women from all over Bougainville attended this conference.

In 1995, women from the BRA and government-controlled areas sent separate delegations to the Fourth Global Conference on Women in Beijing. On their return, women from northern Bougainville conducted a silent march in protest against the war in defiance of the state of emergency.

The Bougainville Inter-Church Women's Forum (BICWF) was established in 1995 as a united women's voice from all church groups. It included a wide range of women many of whom had not previously been politically active. Later in 1995, the BICWF began to organize for a Women's Peace Forum which was subsequently held in Arawa in August 1996. About 700 women met to discuss how they could move towards a united front and find lasting solutions to the Bougainville Crisis.

October 1996 brought Bougainville women from both sides of the blockade together at a forum in Sydney; it produced a position paper that became a stepping-stone for further peace talks.

Since the 2001 peace settlement in Bougainville, the Bougainville Inter-Church Women's Forum (BICWF) has focused on critical literacy, reproductive health and education, counseling and a programme to combat violence against women. © UnitingWorld



A negotiated settlement was achieved in 2001. The women's contribution was part of "an extraordinary array of creative initiatives and interventions that succeeded not only in ending the organized violence but brought together Bougainville society within a national framework [...]."⁷

While the question of women's participation in structures of the new government remains open in post-conflict Bougainville, a range of NGOs led mainly by women have since focused their work on critical literacy, reproductive health and education, counseling and a programme to combat violence against women.

The BICWF has shifted its focus to small business training and capacity-building for women and local women's organizations. It has developed an education pack of materials about the conflict and peace process for use in critical literacy training workshops across Bougainville. A "Learning from the Bougainville Peace Process"



programme helps workshop participants understand their own conflict resulting from the Bougainville crisis. ■

More Information:

“The role of women in promoting peace and reconciliation.” Article by Sr Lorraine Garasu, *ACCORD*, Conciliation Resources, 2002. <http://bit.ly/hSsw3T>

“The origins of the conflict”. Abstract of an article by Mary-Louise O’Callaghan, *ACCORD*, Conciliation Resources, 2002. <http://bit.ly/hnj1Tk>

Bougainville Inter-Church Women’s Forum (BICWF) Website. <http://bit.ly/e6H47l>

Young Ambassadors for Peace

*“The YAP programme has taken us by surprise. It has exceeded our wildest expectations. (...) There is a continuing and constant demand from our partner churches right across the Asia-Pacific region for workshops and support.”*⁸

“*UnitingWorld*: connecting communities for life” is an agency of the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) with a charter to stand in solidarity with church partners in Africa, Asia, and the Pacific. It is the UCA’s agent for partnerships between churches and communities worldwide and its peace-making programmes are run through Young Ambassadors for Peace (YAP).

Founded in 2001 by a former nun from the Philippines, Joy Balazo, YAP is training, networking and movement-building rolled into one. The programme assists young people to develop a culture of peace based on justice. It exposes them to the idea that conflict can be resolved through peaceful means and that lasting peace with justice is a possibility. YAP tries to equip young people to actively and constructively participate in the struggle for justice and peace in their countries.

YAP has peace-making centres across some of the most conflict-ridden areas of Asia and the Pacific: Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, Burma, the Philippines, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. Each centre is supported by local staff trained to run effective peace-building workshops. The programme empowers young people to create peace, resolve conflict and build friendships across barriers of tension and violence, paving the way for much-needed development.

YAP training takes the form of workshops with grassroots participants leading the way. The rationale is that globalization has made many grassroots people feel powerless. While communities formerly had their own ways of dealing with conflict, fear and mistrust have blocked their capacity to do so. YAP training concentrates on scaling down fear, helping people to rediscover themselves and rebuild trust so they can work together to resolve problems nonviolently.

There is much preparation before any workshop; people need to understand something about the purpose and methods before committing. A 2006 workshop in the PNG Highlands, for example, was preceded by two years of preliminary planning and commitment. Teaching methods include role plays, small group discussion, games, drawing a conflict map, outlining the needs and fears of the parties involved and lectures on issues like discrimination, prejudice and peace-building methods. The “burning of prejudices” is a key activity: participants write their prejudices and negative feelings about others on paper and burn them. Testimonies suggest that this brings release and healing to many participants.⁹

A YAP Coordinators and Leaders Workshop in 2005 assisted young people to move from being participants to becoming leaders. During the workshop, they heard each others’ stories, built relationships and established communication avenues, agreed



Top: WCC Living Letters team visits Young Ambassadors for Peace in Ambon, Indonesia. © WCC

Bottom: YAP’s work is coordinated in Ambon City, although activity takes place anywhere from the city to the outer islands 300 kms away. The major conflict in this area is between Christian and Muslim communities. Each workshop includes a mix of members from both faiths and is organized to enable each faith to make their regular religious observances. © Unitingworld

on the vision, aims, values and structure of YAP and were trained in a range of skills including bookkeeping and administration. YAP also began inviting members from one country to act as resource people in selected YAP programmes in other countries.

YAP coordinators

- manage funds and provide regular financial reports to the central office;
- organize activities for the expansion of YAP and recruit new members;
- identify possible donors and contributors within the community;
- attend community meetings on behalf of YAP;
- convene area meetings for planning, monitoring and evaluation.

The programme's training and networking approach builds a strong commitment to peace-building. A participant in a YAP coordinators' meeting in Canberra, Australia in March 2005 testified that:

They have not given up hope or their commitment to peace.

They learn to know and work beside people from 'the opposition'.

They work in their local areas where they are known and have earned trust.

They are given practical tools to use in peace-making and guided to take small simple steps in that process.

They have discovered that change for peace can only happen when there is change in their own hearts and attitudes.

People who have been leaders of violence are now leading in new directions.¹⁰ ■

More Information:

The *UnitingWorld* Peace-making Programme Website at <http://bit.ly/bMOGmp>



Educating Children without Corporal Punishment, Cameroon

EMIDA (Education our le Mieux-être de l'Individu et le Développement de l'Afrique) is a family education programme in Cameroon devoted to the development of a more harmonious society in which avoiding corporal punishment within the family and at school will help one generation to transmit responsible behavior to the next, and in which the potential of each child and of the adult she/he will later become can develop.

The programme was initiated in 1998 by a long-time development worker from the Exchange and Mission department of the Swiss Protestant churches working in Cameroon. In Gabriel Henry Nicole's experience, conflicts over children's education were often related to their punishment by beatings (*la bastonnade*) with serious

consequences not only for the children but also for the country's human, social and economic development. Together with Cameroonian partners, Nicole founded what was to become EMIDA in 1998.

For EMIDA,

- violence practiced by loving parents teaches children that it is acceptable to use violence against someone you love, and even more normal on anyone else;
- violence teaches children to fear their parents and adults, lack respect for younger and weaker persons, hypocrisy, lies etc.;
- violence hampers the development of fundamental values such as a sense of responsibility, initiative and creativity, and the need to struggle for oneself;
- violence can also create an urge for revenge and compensation.

In 2000, EMIDA obtained UNICEF funding to undertake a survey of educational violence applied to children in the family and primary schools in Cameroon. Based on a sample of 2000 children, 1000 parents and 105 teachers, the survey found that 97 percent of the students had been physically punished. In response, EMIDA began training parents for their role as parents.

The training is based on adult formation and the interactive and decentralized transmission of knowledge. Through workshops, participants discuss subjects like parental models, developmental stages, punishment, bed-wetting, problems at school, going out late at night, obedience, sexual education and the like. EMIDA staff explains how to practise this new knowledge at different periods of the child's life.

EMIDA's specialized social workers train groups of 20 animators belonging to parents' or women's associations. The animators in turn work in pairs to train 200 adults per association. Each parent receives the EMIDA manual and each group of 20 animators is encouraged to form their own association and stay in touch with the 200 parents.

In 2002, EMIDA published a parents' training manual that suggests a relationship based on expressing love, dialogue and mutual respect. Between 2002 and 2006, the programme trained some 12,000 parents and 50 associations. In the interests of consistency between home and school, EMIDA began to test joint training of parents and teachers in 2003 in collaboration with parents' associations. In July 2004, less than a year later, the Ministry of Education authorized EMIDA to work in schools under the supervision of National Education Department staff. A second manual for discussions with teachers, and a third for trainers were subsequently published.

Today, EMIDA continues to

- promote development of children's potentials by training people responsible for their education;
- reinforce the capacities of community groups to sponsor such trainings;
- undertake research, information and the collection of data on educational violence; and
- engage in networking and advocacy with state authorities, opinion leaders and development partners aimed at the adoption of laws forbidding the use of violence in children's education. ■

More Information:

EMIDA Website: <http://www.emida-cameroon.org/>

Une belle aventure: aimer et élever son enfant / A wonderful adventure: loving and bringing up your child. EMIDA 2002. <http://bit.ly/hcS5T9>

Guide de discussion avec les enseignants. <http://bit.ly/feOZS8>



Rita Wheazor (centre left, foreground), director of War-Affected Women in Liberia (WAMIL) with other members of WAMIL. © ACT International/Callie Long

Muslim and Christian Women Pray the Devil Back to Hell, Liberia

“In the past we were silent, but after being killed, raped, dehumanized and infected with diseases and watching our children and families destroyed, war has taught us that the future lies in saying NO to violence and YES to peace! We will not relent until peace prevails.”¹¹

Over 200,000 people died and another half million Liberians were displaced as a result of devastating wars between 1989 and 1997 and also between 1999 and 2003. Liberian women in record numbers were confronted with unspeakable violence. During the war and post-conflict periods, these women faced the death of family members, sexual violence, shame, stigma and challenging economic and social environments.

Founded by the presidents of two different Lutheran churches, Leymah Roberta Gbowee and Comfort Freeman, the Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET) mobilized women in the early days of Liberia’s first civil war. WIPNET staged public marches in 1991 to advocate for peace and security, and started to attend peace talks by 1993. The lull following the 1996 peace agreement and the 1997 election was

short-lived. War resumed in 2000 and WIPNET intensified its efforts to mobilize women to call for peace.

A defining moment for WIPNET's inclusion in Liberia's peace process during the second civil war occurred when President Charles Taylor challenged them to find the rebel leaders. The women funded a small delegation's trip to Sierra Leone where some of the rebel leaders were staying. They arranged meetings between Taylor and the rebel leaders, earning a reputation as objective intermediaries.

In 2003, because of the brutality of the war, WIPNET launched the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace Campaign to confront and engage the rebels directly, traveling all over the country and region. Christian and Muslim women joined forces; inspired by the work of the Christian women's peace initiative, the-then assistant minister for Administration and Public Safety and president of the Liberia Female Law Enforcement Association formed the Liberian Muslim Women's Organization to work for peace.

The Peace Campaign started with local women praying and singing in a fish market. Thousands of women united their efforts, staged silent nonviolent protests, forced a meeting with President Charles Taylor and extracted a promise from him to attend peace talks in Ghana. They also withheld sex until their husbands saw the light and pledged to wage peace, too.

A delegation of Liberian women went to prayerful sit-ins outside the presidential palace, blocking all the doors and windows and preventing anyone from leaving the peace talks without a resolution. The women of Liberia thus became a political force to be reckoned with. Their actions brought about an agreement during the stalled peace talks. As a result, the women were able to achieve peace in Liberia after a 14-year civil war and later helped bring to power the country's first woman head of state, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

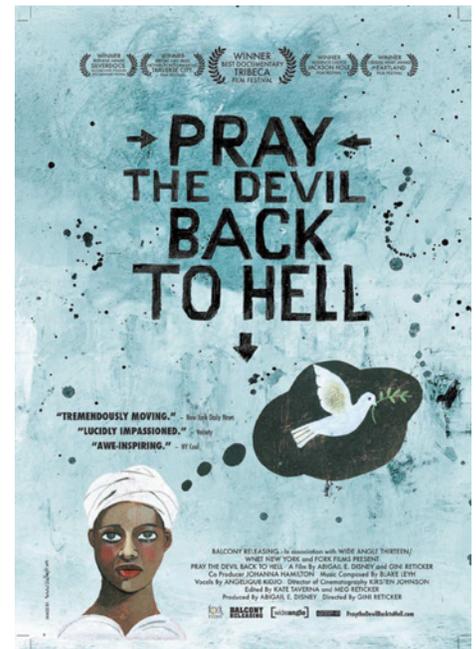
An award-winning 2008 documentary film entitled *Pray the Devil Back to Hell* tells how Liberian women – Muslims and Christians – prayed for the devil of war to get back to hell. The film reconstructs the Peace Campaign's struggle through interviews, archival footage and striking images of contemporary Liberia. It is compelling testimony to the potential of women worldwide to alter the history of nations.

Filming in Liberia in 2007 was a challenge. The number of recently demobilized, unemployed soldiers made security a concern and most of the country including Monrovia was without electricity. Finding a cameraman who had worked for Sirleaf's two predecessors was a critical breakthrough. He arrived with footage of the women meeting then-president Charles Taylor. It became one of the most important moments in the whole film.

After that, the two film directors had to ask people to look and look again for any footage of the women in action. There were hours and hours of footage of child soldiers, of dead and mutilated bodies, of mass burials and very little of the women. Piece by piece, through many individual cameramen in Liberia, different NGOs and news agencies from all over the world, archive material started trickling in.

"In Liberia, so many children were groomed to be murderers, rapists and looters. The women came to see these child soldiers for what they actually were: children. Gbowee and the other women did not see themselves as angels or the child soldiers as devils. These armed boys were recognized as victims of the men who used them as flesh and blood tools of terror."¹²

"*Pray the Devil Back to Hell* gives us a good look at how and why the Christian and Muslim women earned the respect of their countrymen. They learned why, when and how to stand up for essential human interest."¹³ ■



More Information:

Amnesty International Website, page on “Women of Liberia fighting for peace.”

<http://bit.ly/bN416n>

Film Website: <http://bit.ly/f75F2j>

“Sending the Devil Home. A documentary shows how women toppled a dictatorship and brought Liberia’s decade-long civil war to a halt.” Article by Stanley Crouch on *the ROOT* Website. 9 July 2010. <http://wapo.st/dtvPNM>

Wikipedia Website: <http://bit.ly/ds2qOX>

The Decade in Germany¹⁴

Regional member churches (*Landeskirchen*) of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) and German peace initiatives demonstrated their serious commitment to the DOV by carrying out a wide variety of activities and events at different levels – local, regional and national – throughout the Decade. The following account highlights some of the major DOV-related activities and events implemented across Germany over the years 2001-2010.

An “Open Forum”, MEET (More Ecumenical Empowerment Together) and an Ecumenical Network in Germany (ÖNiD) were the three main networks through which pan-regional activities were coordinated.

The “Open Forum for the Decade to Overcome Violence” was a network established in January 2000 by groups involved in the WCC’s Conciliar Process for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC), employees and volunteers from churches organized in the Council of Christian Churches in Germany (ACK) and from various German ecumenical peace groups and institutions. 30-40 network participants met twice a year and set up a mailing list for information exchange. Without a budget or a fixed structure, their endeavours were supported by the EKD. The Open Forum paved the way for campaigns, cooperation for the German Protestant *Kirchentag*, publications and two national consultations (in 2005 and 2010) on a common agenda for “just peace”. It created trust and initiated cooperation between the “roots” and formal church structures.

In 2006, many young German delegates attended the WCC’s Ninth Assembly in Porto Alegre, Brazil. To bring the Decade closer to youth groups at home, they compiled a folder entitled “*Gewalt global überwinden. Junge Impulse.*” (Overcome violence globally: Young impulses.) This initiative developed into the MEET (More Ecumenical Empowerment Together) network, a young German Christians’ information and discussion forum. Following its annual assembly in 2009, a “Letter to Parents” was published by the peace movement with MEET which described how young German Christians experience the striving for “Peace on Earth”.

The Ecumenical Network in Germany (ÖNiD) was founded in 2006 as a cooperative platform for ecumenical groups, regional networks and national organizations committed to Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation within church and society. It sees itself as an integral part of but also as a counterpart to the institutional church. ÖNiD has prepared for the 2011 International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC) in several theme-oriented work groups including a Solidarity Economy Global Academy. It contributed to the first draft of the Ecumenical Declaration on Just Peace, while ÖNiD groups were also involved in formulating draft declarations for the IEPC.

At the beginning of the DOV, the ACK together with the DÖSTA (German Ecumenical Study Commission) initiated a working group to accompany the Decade with theological background reflections and publications. This group consisted of

Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant theologians. They held two annual meetings to address subjects such as the fascination of violence (2004), Mennonite peace theology (2005), healing of memories (2006), overcoming violence and eschatology (2008) and the legacy of René Girard's thinking on sacred violence (2009). The question of the legitimacy of military action was examined in relation to Lutheran Churches with reference to the 1530 Augsburg Confession and its Article 16 that deals with "just warfare" and killing "without sin".

In 2001, the Baden-Wuerttemberg "Protestant Work Group for Peace" (EAK) published an insert for the Protestant hymnbook that includes the Augsburg Confession with a correction to Article 16, withdrawing the condemnation of nonviolence. A gesture of reconciliation between Lutherans and Mennonites at the assembly of the Lutheran World Federation in 2010 in Stuttgart laid the foundation for a new interpretation or revision of the Augsburg Confession.

In 2003, the German "Diakonisches Werk" initiated an international Decade project to overcome domestic violence whose centrepiece was an interactive circulating exhibition, "76 Rosenstraße", conceived in cooperation with the "Brot für die Welt" campaign and presented at the 2005 German *Kirchentag* in Hanover for the first time (see description below).

With billboards, a postcard series and a Website, the Open Forum's "Respect Campaign" encouraged young people aged between 12 and 21 to discuss and participate in a competition on the notion of "respect". The campaign recognized young people's creativity and focused on the needs and interests of youngsters in Europe, linking closely to the 3rd European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu in 2007. Prize-winning projects from schools and confirmation classes, games for youth groups and film recommendations were presented in a brochure for confirmation and youth work. The "Respect Campaign" billboards and postcards are still in demand today.

During the Decade, several German regional churches designed training courses to introduce peace theology and nonviolence, qualify participants for conflict analysis and encourage them to apply peace education at school. Basic two-week courses were designed for church and civil society multipliers in the hope that these would be incorporated into church education from confirmation class up to theological studies levels.

More than 900 13-16-year-olds attended two-day peace training seminars designed by the Evangelical Church of Baden. The young people were sensitized to different forms of violence; they learned to analyze the causes, methods of dealing with escalating situations of violence and of settling conflicts in a constructive manner. The seminar used mainly experience- and practice-based teaching methods, and the youngsters were encouraged to reflect on their own lives and contexts. In order to transmit Decade concerns throughout the church, a total of 180 church employees and volunteers were trained as peace-making trainers. The EKD Conference for Peace-Building recommended this project to other regional churches.

Beyond Germany itself, highly skilled and experienced Peace Service volunteers are active in conflict regions around the world within the framework of national and local partners' peace-making endeavours. On their return, they report on their experiences in parishes and schools.¹⁵

"Let justice roll like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!" (Am 5,24) is the motto of a "Danube Wave of Peace" project jointly initiated by South German and Lutheran churches in Austria, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. As the Decade drew to a close, they suggested that the river Danube might symbolize their future peace-making activities together.

The six churches are seeking new ways to shape the region's future together. In the context of societal and economic changes in an integrated Europe, they intend to face their regional challenges like intercultural understanding and better living

conditions for immigrants together

From September 2010 to May 2011, the six churches are taking it in turns to celebrate an international peace service and will attend a final celebration in Germany at the beginning of July 2011. ■

More Information:

Council of Christian Churches in Germany (ACK) Website (in German):

<http://bit.ly/eKt7zE>

ÖNiD Website (in German): <http://www.oenid.net/>



In 2007/2008, an evaluation of the "Schritte gegen Tritte" project involving more than ten schools showed that it is a key factor in long-term improvements in school climate and conflict management. © Schritte gegen Tritte

"No Kick from Kicks", Germany

Designed for young adults, a *Schritte gegen Tritte* (No kick from kicks) awareness-raising programme in Germany focuses on structural, cultural and personal violence and offers methods of nonviolent conflict resolution taking into account the age and gender of participants.

A church seminar programme, it draws its inspiration from a biblical spirituality of nonviolence but also from the history of anti-racism and anti-apartheid work in South Africa as well as from a wide spectrum of other religions and experiences around the world. The programme was designed in 1993 by Rev. Klaus J. Burckhardt, officially adopted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hanover's "Working for Justice" Department and implemented in the Brunswick area from 1996-2007.

In 1997, *Schritte gegen Tritte* began cooperating closely with a state-related agency – the Arbeitsstelle Rechtsextremismus und Gewalt (ARUG) focusing on "Right-wing Extremism and Violence" and in 2009 the two bodies together produced a brochure entitled *Gib dem Hass keine Chance - Neo-Nazis enttarnen!* (Don't give Hate a Chance – Unmask Neo-Nazis) to be used in schools and congregations to discuss violence.

Schritte gegen Tritte teaching material is presented in seminars that help to shed light on structural, ethnic and personal violence in connection with racism and marginalization and encourage young adults to reflect on their own situation. Such seminars are now organized in 40 German schools and 60 congregations each year. In addition, 140 teachers have studied the project's methods and material and are currently working in schools and congregations around the country.

In Johannesburg, the South African theatre group "Hlalanathi" conducts "Steps against violence" workshops in ten inner city schools. A "Peace Train" project involving two exchanges between German and South African schools took place in 2001 and 2002. Regular exchanges with German facilitators and several theatre tours in German schools have strengthened the working relationship between the partner organizations.

A typical all-day *Schritte gegen Tritte* seminar would present the experiences of the South African anti-apartheid movement, tailoring this material to the local scene in an inter-active and participatory way. Another approach focuses on the experiences of young migrants from the African continent on their way to Europe who encounter the violence of both border police and prejudice. Participants are encouraged to talk about their own experiences of confronting violence and to analyze its root causes. Such seminars provide Christian ethical guidelines for active nonviolence and introduce concrete approaches that participants enact through role-play; the aim is to promote analysis and understanding, and instill courage.

Among the teaching materials developed by *Schritte gegen Tritte*, a booklet about neo-Nazis called *Wir erobern die Städte vom Lande aus* (We conquer the country's

cities) offers “10 arguments why Christians raise their voices against Right-wing extremism” and suggestions on “Debate with neo-Nazis”, “What congregations can do,” or “Successful networking against the extreme right”. ■

More Information:

Schritte Gegen Tritte Website: <http://bit.ly/gYiQy3>

Domestic Violence and the “76, Rosenstrasse” Exhibit, Germany

From 2003 to 2006, the Social Service Agency of the Protestant Churches in Germany (*Diakonie*) and its “Brot für die Welt” (“Bread for the World”) campaign carried out an international project on “Overcoming Domestic Violence” as their contribution to the Decade to Overcome Violence.

The project assisted partners, institutions and organizations worldwide to discuss domestic violence, pool their expertise and develop strategies. The target groups were primarily partner organizations in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Eastern Europe and Germany already involved in combating domestic violence. The project also attempted to reach out to multipliers in the ecumenical and secular spheres.

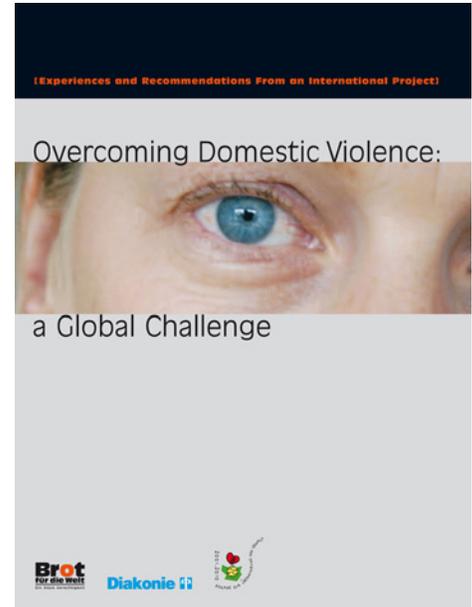
Over a period of three years, development cooperation experts and church representatives, human rights experts, legal experts, doctors, policemen and representatives from the media met at various international workshops on different continents to discuss strategies for overcoming violence, reflect on their own set of problems, develop new ways of conflict resolution and plan further action.¹⁶

Experience gained at strategic workshops and international professional conferences revealed considerable expertise, marked creativity and serious commitment to fighting domestic violence on all continents. Informal networks were set up in Cameroon, for instance, where various NGOs worked jointly on a shadow report to the UN CEDAW. Discovering that gender-specific discrimination is very similar in quite different regions motivated participants to learn from each other and take new measures against gender discrimination. On the other hand, it became obvious that the subject is a bigger taboo than was expected in many parts of the world.

The Social Service Agency and “Brot für die Welt” also made another and highly innovative attempt to bring domestic violence out of the shadows into the light of public attention and to suggest strategies for overcoming it.

Based on findings from the international project and on what they had already learned from their long-time commitment to violence prevention and support to victims of domestic violence, the two agencies created an interactive exhibition called “76, Rosenstrasse” and launched it at the German “Kirchentag” in Hanover in 2005. Since then, the exhibition has been touring Germany and other countries. For the February 2006 Ninth WCC Assembly in Porto Alegre, Brazil for example, it was adapted to the Brazilian context.

The heart of the exhibition is an outwardly inconspicuous three-bedroom flat in which, looking more closely and actively, the visitor can detect evidence of various facets of domestic violence. The rooms contain furniture and everyday objects as well as audio clips and information boards. In the living room for instance, an answering machine reveals details of the family’s history: the daughter’s fears, the mother’s humiliation by her violent partner. A doctor’s certificate on the table illustrates the consequences of domestic violence while the savings book in the living room cabinet details the global costs of this catastrophe. In the bedroom, visitors are



told how rape and attempted suicides destroy many people's lives. These bare facts and figures also have a voice: on a CD player approximately 60 people talk about their first-hand experiences of domestic violence.

The second part of the exhibition is a forum for information, reflection and exchange. Posters and presentations suggest concrete measures and strategies whereby everyone can contribute to overcoming domestic violence.

The exhibition can be ordered from Brot für die Welt.¹⁷ ■

More Information:

Overcoming Domestic Violence: a Global Challenge. Experiences and recommendations from an international project. Social Service Agency of the Protestant Church in Germany, English edition, Stuttgart, 2007. Also available in German, Spanish, French, Portuguese. <http://bit.ly/ep4135>

Peace Counts: School, Tour and Foundation; Germany

“Every day, the media show us how to make war. But how do we make peace? The search for answers has led reporters sponsored by the Peace Counts Foundation into 30 conflict zones to take a closer look at the work of successful peace-builders.”¹⁸

“Peace Counts” is a German journalistic and educational project that focuses on highlighting peace-makers who may not have received significant coverage in mainstream media. The project was started by journalist, Michael Gleich in cooperation with the German news agency *Zeitenspiegel* and the Institute for Peace Education in Tübingen.

A Peace Counts Tour funded by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen (IFA) selects projects from around the world that serve as successful examples of crisis prevention, nonviolent conflict resolution and peace-building. Inter-disciplinary teams of journalists and researchers visit the projects and document the results of their work in text, image and sound. This material is prepared for use in a variety of media formats, translated for international dissemination and then distributed. These reports have been featured in domestic and international newspapers and magazines and have reached an estimated readership of over 40 million people. The project also organizes discussion forums with various project partners which are directed primarily toward a specialist audience.

“The project targets the general population, experts, peace activists and multipliers in Germany and throughout the world. All reports are published on a Website which makes them accessible worldwide. Together with the Institute for Peace Education in Tübingen, Peace Counts produced a CD ROM containing presentations of various projects for use in youth-orientated activities and school instruction. A photography exhibition was also developed in cooperation with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and the GTZ (German Technical Cooperation). This exhibition (...) has been shown at events such as the 2005 German Protestant Church Congress (*Kirchentag*), the 2005 Shanghai International Arts Festival and the 2006 WCC Assembly in Porto Alegre, Brazil.”¹⁹

“Peace Counts closes the gap between professional journalism – which is largely subject to market forces and which focuses more on current wars and crises than on long-term peace-building efforts – and actors involved in civil conflict resolution who rarely possess the necessary resources and skills to present their goals, methods and achievements to a broader public audience.”²⁰



At a workshop in the School for Peace halfway between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, young women from Palestine (left) and Israel (right) locked themselves in a room for three days and shared their opinions — open and sometimes cruel. © Peace Counts

The Peace Counts School is an educational programme of the Institute for Peace Education in Tübingen, Germany in cooperation with the Peace Counts Foundation. The school has developed courses and teaching aids for ongoing and relevant peace education in schools in CD Rom format and online. This material encourages and equips children and young adults to take responsibility for their environment, their immediate family and community; to develop an understanding of contexts elsewhere in the world; and to engage in peace endeavors.

The Peace Counts exhibition and accompanying course material focus on central aspects of people's lives together such as fear, interdependence and conflict and reconciliation, and suggest ways to overcome violence and resignation. Using concrete examples, the course suggests how to

- recognize violence, call it by its name, and end it;
- understand how conflicts can escalate, and find ways to de-escalate and resolve them;
- discern how the media treat war and violence, and do sensitive peace reporting;
- and understand what it means to be a peace-maker.

Peace Counts material includes reports from the Peace Counts on Tour visits to regions like Afghanistan, Columbia, India, Ivory Coast, Japan, Macedonia, Mali, the Middle East, Northern Ireland, the Philippines, Russia, South Africa and Sri Lanka. These reports focus on actions by peace-makers and discuss topics like “How to make peace” and “Peace journalism”. ■

More Information:

Peace Counts Website: <http://bit.ly/h9eDg3>

Peace Counts School : <http://bit.ly/h9VwKx>

Peace Counts on Tour: <http://bit.ly/dEjE1o>

100,000 Roses Say No to Violence, Switzerland



Awaiting "customers" were some of the 100,000 roses sold in 2005, each with its little Bread for All and Swiss Catholic Lenten Fund flag. © Patrick Kummer

Every year, Swiss Catholic and Protestant churches organize an ecumenical Lenten campaign around a particular issue. The theme chosen in 2005 was overcoming violence. Under the banner "We believe. Violence shall not have the last word", over a thousand parishes around Switzerland set up stands to sell 100,000 fair trade roses on 12-13 March 2005. The Max Havelaar roses were donated by the MIGROS supermarket chain and proceeds from the sales helped to fund violence-related projects supported by "Bread for All", the Development Service of the Protestant Churches in Switzerland and the Swiss Catholic Lenten Fund.

"The ecumenical campaign (...) aims to demonstrate that peace can spread. Our aid agencies are supporting their partners in the South who must often work in extreme conditions in their struggle against violence and in favor of reconciliation."²¹

Each rose represented a message of peace as well as each human being's right to moral and physical integrity and was sold for a symbolic price of CHF 5; buyers were given a postcard featuring one of the following maxims:

- You begin by violating human rights and end up perpetrating massacres. (Kofi Annan)
- Violence reduces human beings to the level of objects. (Simone Weil)
- An eye for an eye: a logic that will finish by blinding the world. (Gandhi)
- A brutally plucked flower loses its perfume. (Arab proverb)²²

The roses were sold at street stands, shopping centres, get-togethers, youth centres, old-age homes and Lenten meals.

Coordinating the campaign, the two church agencies provided flyers, posters and press releases as well as detailed guidance on timing, publicity, how to contact local schools, communes and associations and the media, how to attract local personalities and volunteers, inform the local police, organize pick-up points, transport, keep the roses fresh...

"Everyone who bought a Max Havelaar rose has contributed to overcoming violence. We wish to thank them!" the two church bodies said at the end of the very successful 100,000 roses campaign.²³

This was good news for the participants and for the agencies' partners in the South. Campaign proceeds helped finance violence prevention work with, for example, a group of men in South Africa involved in overcoming domestic violence. The Carice village community in Haiti was empowered to bring a return about to peace. Displaced people in Indonesia found a sanctuary where they were able to overcome their traumatism and counter violence. ■

The Decade in the USA²⁴

In the long, dark shadow of 9-11, the DOV Committee of the US Conference of the WCC began its work.²⁵

The DOV was launched in the USA in Nashville Tennessee in April 2001 by the Board of the US Conference of the WCC. Although racism was the major focus of the launch (see Launching the Decade in "An Overview of International Actions and

Projects” section on p. 21), 9/11 changed that – at least for the first half of the Decade.

At the year’s end, an international delegation from seven WCC member churches came to express their sorrow and support for the people in the US. Being ministered to rather than providing comfort, counsel, ideas and service was a new and deeply moving experience for many US Christians who encountered the team.

And when the new US DOV Committee – a very small group of WCC member church representatives – began their work in 2002 and early 2003, it centered on creating educational materials about the potential demands and consequences of the US waging war on Iraq. Church leaders and boards issued statements that needed to be distributed and, in many cases, defended.

On August 30, 2002 for example, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson broke with a long tradition of either silence or outright support of war in a pastoral letter to the 11,000 ELCA congregations explaining his opposition to US intervention in Iraq.

Several weeks later, 38 leaders from American, Canadian and British churches attending a WCC Central Committee meeting in Geneva, Switzerland issued an urgent call to the American government to pull back from its unilateral movement towards pre-emptive military action against Iraq and to seek the appropriate counsel of the Congress, the United Nations and its allies. This appeal was followed by an outpouring of statements of opposition by the churches, their boards and women’s organizations through the fall of 2002.

In a letter underwritten by a national “Churches for Middle East Peace” coalition, 49 Protestant, Orthodox, Catholic and Evangelical leaders expressed their opposition to US military action in Iraq as early as September 12, 2002. The use of a pre-emptive strike could not be morally justified the coalition argued; to use it was to risk its justification by other nations in the future.

Faced with mainstream media’s lack of interest in statements by mainline churches, the National Council of Churches prepared a 30-minute spot for CNN and Fox cable news in New York and Washington D.C. in which United Methodist Council of Bishops ecumenical officer Bishop Melvin Talbert called the US intention a violation of “God’s law and the teachings of Jesus Christ”.

Members of WCC member churches joined the millions of people at a national protest in Washington, D.C. in January 2003. While churches rarely sponsored these mammoth gatherings, they often shared information so that individual members might join other dissenters, whether in large demonstrations or through Internet petitions.

Representatives of the US Conference for the WCC addressed a message to the WCC’s Ninth Assembly in 2006 saying that the US-led Iraq war was a “mistake”, and apologizing to the ecumenical community for failing to raise a prophetic voice to prevent it. Explaining the timing of the statement, United Church of Christ president Rev. John Thomas noted that “(...) the US is being perceived as a dangerous nation.” The Assembly was “a unique opportunity to make this statement to all our colleagues” in the ecumenical movement. The statement also mentioned global warming, Hurricane Katrina, “starvation, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the treatable diseases that go untreated” and the war in Iraq.²⁶

During the Decade, US churches forged new ways of partnering with those working against violence on the international level. When the WCC invited its member churches to take part in the UN International Day of Peace by observing a 21 September International Day of Prayer for Peace (IDDP), the chief executive of the United Methodist Church Women’s Division Dr Janice Love delivered an address on the power and promise of peace at the Church Centre for the UN in New York, and the US DOV Committee distributed a bulletin insert on the IDDP.

2004 was the year of the DOV Annual Focus on the US; the Decade was thus the central emphasis of the US Conference annual meeting in Atlanta, Georgia in



At the 2008 annual meeting of the US Conference for the WCC, Janet Johnson Bryant accepted a "Blessed Are the Peacemakers Award" on behalf of Liberia's Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET) from Lois McCullough Dauway. © WCC/Philip Jenks

October. Special efforts during the year included a statement exploring the theological dimensions of "The Power and Promise of Peace" theme, an explanation of the relevance of the Decade for the US, preparation of an ecumenical peace calendar and of Lenten reflections (see below); and "Blessed are the Peacemakers" awards. In addition to national events, judicatories and congregations offered hundreds of other contributions to peace-making through sermons, services, retreats and trainings in nonviolence. (See "Annual Foci" section on p. 61.)

"Shift Your Space: Transform the World" was the title of a DOV event in October 2004. Attending the event at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago, some 45 young participants listened to presentations on DOV-related issues, played a game about cultural clues for immigrants and discussed the lessons of Hurricane Katrina in relation to race and class in the US.

In the wake of the 2006 Israeli bombardment of southern Lebanon, the US Conference urged the WCC to issue a statement supporting a global initiative to ban cluster bombs and in February 2008, the WCC Central Committee adopted a statement supporting a global ban.

Discussions about gun control and small arms trafficking, violence in the streets and against ethnic groups, as well as churches' engagement in peace-making occupied the first days of a ten-day visit to the US by a Living Letters team in September 2007. The team travelled to New York, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia and New Orleans. (See Living Letters Visits top bar in "An Overview of International Actions and Projects" section on p. 23.)

In the New York area, they met with members of a multicultural church in Brooklyn that ministers to immigrants from the Middle East and worshipped at an historic church serving the African American community in Harlem. In Washington D.C., they heard about the grim statistics of epidemic gun violence; in Philadelphia, they learned about church programmes aimed at reducing violence and met with African-American church and civic leaders who work to make the city's streets safer. In New Orleans, North American WCC president Rev. Dr Bernice Powell Jackson told them that "New Orleans is the ground zero of every racial social and economic injustice in the US."

A day before their February 2008 meeting, US DOV Committee members and ecumenical partners helped rebuild homes as part of a Church of the Brethren disaster service project in New Orleans. During the year, the Committee also helped develop a data base and centralized online calendar for the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI). (See Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel in "An Overview of International Actions and Projects" section on p. 24.)

In 2009, the US DOV Committee with support from the US Conference of the WCC wrote to newly-elected US president Barack Obama expressing the churches' readiness to "roll up our sleeves and partner with you to help bring about the changes that are so desperately needed for the United States". Among these, the letter identified a need to "lift up the common good over self-interest and greed," "recognize our own complicity in building a predatory economy on the backs of those most vulnerable, and reconstruct an economy with an emphasis not just on the middle class, but on the poor", "renew a concrete, measurable commitment to human rights; rebuild an education system that attends to the needs of all of society; replenish God's good creation in whatever ways possible; and recommit ourselves to the right of every person to have access to health care."²⁷

In 2010, the US DOV Committee supported a major conference hosted by the Church of the Brethren and other peace churches. Committee co-chairs Angelique Walker Smith and Michael Trice wrote a paper for the November Centennial Gathering/CWS and NCCUSA General Assembly in New Orleans. An important

contribution in the lead-up to the IEPC, *Christian Understanding of War in an Age of Terror(ism)* begins by naming the open and painful wounds in the church. Tracing the past, present and future, the paper confronts painful issues of terrorism v. peace-making as Christians are called to be the body of Christ across divides of war and peace in a post-Christendom context. ■

More Information:

2004 US Annual Focus on the DOV Website: <http://bit.ly/hKNvAU>

2006 *Letter from the US Conference for the WCC to the 9th Assembly, Porto Alegre, Brazil*. Message to the Ninth Assembly, 14 February 2006. <http://bit.ly/gGsM6p>

2007 *Living Letters visit to the US*, DOV Website: <http://bit.ly/fLoj2a>

2009 *Letter to President Barack Obama* from the US Conference of the WCC, 20 January 2009. <http://bit.ly/f2jQQo>

Lenten Fast from Violence, USA

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; Where there is injury, pardon; Where there is doubt, faith; Where there is despair, hope; Where there is darkness, light; Where there is sadness, joy. — Saint Francis of Assisi

A November 2000 letter from the US Office of the WCC invited churches in the USA to begin the Decade with a Lenten fast from violence and requested their prayerful as well as financial support. A brochure explained that

In the Orthodox tradition of Great Lent as in Roman Catholic, Anglican and several Protestant traditions, Christians undertake three spiritual disciplines: prayer, fasting and charitable giving. On the occasion of the common dates of Lent and a common celebration of Easter on April 15, 2001, and the inauguration of the Decade to Overcome Violence – Churches seeking Peace and Reconciliation (2001-2010), US member churches of the WCC invite all Christians to

- *pray the prayer of St Francis daily during Lent,*
- *fast from violence and abstain from ways in which we consume and support violence individually and communally for the Lenten period, and*
- *give to those efforts that address the causes and consequences of violence and that support peace and reconciliation.*²⁸

US Christians, the invitation explained, might “fast” from violent TV shows, movies, video games and toys that encourage violent play or glorify war, music with violent lyrics, taxes that pay for war, products manufactured in sweat-shops or by child labor and/or financial investment in companies that produce violence.

“As we experience freedom from some aspect of violence during our fast, we can consider making changes to our lifestyle,” the US Office suggested. Citing Isaiah 58:6, it invited US Christians to “a life-long fast that addresses the sources of violence in our world.”

In response and starting in 2001, some US churches invited their congregations to participate in the Lenten Fast from Violence. During the 2004 Annual Focus on the USA, the DOV Committee of the US Conference of the WCC published Lenten reflections and suggestions on ways to observe the fast in 2005; the 2006 Lenten series appeared on the WCC and denominational Websites.

The reflections were organized into six weeks corresponding to the weeks of Lent, and were accompanied by resource guides highlighting responses by people of faith to overcoming violence. Topics included violent video games (week 1); violence in creation (2); violence against women, including trafficking (3); militarism (4); Iraq (5); local violence caused in individual communities by poverty or structural violence (6).²⁹ ■

More Information:

To the Churches of the USA. An Invitation. US Office of the WCC flyer.



A prayer ritual during the First People's Forum on Peace for Life held in Manila in September 2002. The ritual celebrated and gave thanks to the spirit of life-birth. © Peace for Life



Peace for Life panel at a Forum press conference. The panel members emphasized the importance of international solidarity in strengthening local struggles. © Peace for Life

Peace for Life: Inter-faith Resistance to War and Economic Globalization, Philippines

Peace for Life (Pfl) defines itself as a global solidarity network and movement of peace advocates rooted in faith communities and social movements “engaged in various forms of resistance to Empire [sic]”. As such, it is committed to interfaith, South-South and North-South solidarity and “progressive faith-based responses to the imperatives of justice and peace”. It is engaged in networking, information exchange, common action and the programmes and projects of its participants.

The call to form a new ecumenical alliance that would gather faith-based resistance to war and economic globalization emerged at a September 2002 international ecumenical conference on “Terrorism in a Globalized World” in Manila, Philippines sponsored by the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) and the WCC. The call was fleshed out at an October 2003 international workshop on “A People’s Forum on Peace for Life” in Seoul, Korea which challenged “churches and partners around the world to join in a movement for inter-faith, multi-religious solidarity to resist domination and militarized globalization and to build peace for life”.³⁰

The First People’s Forum, held at the end of 2004 in Davao City, Philippines, served as *Peace for Life’s* inaugural assembly. Held in Muslim Mindanao, the Forum sought to address peace “in the context of a world where religious divides are exploited and exacerbated in order to advance an agenda of global economic and military domination”. Its theme, “Sowing Seeds of Peace in the Era of Empire: Christians in Solidarity with Muslims,” highlighted “the critical need to build interfaith solidarity in the Islamic context of war and peace and recognized the urgency of coming together in the face of the flagrant misuse of religion (...) as an excuse for war by the US Empire and its allies.”³¹

Initially conceived as a mainly-Christian ecumenical initiative in solidarity with other faith groups, Peace for Life was subsequently affirmed as a place for people whose varied spiritualities were nurtured as a collective resource for resistance to all forms of injustice.

Participants in the First People’s Forum affirmed that “We are Christians whose faith teaches us the spirituality of resistance against those who arrogate power and use the scriptures to divide people according to religious beliefs and cultural practices; we gather to reclaim the progressive tradition of the world ecumenical movement. We are Muslims who believe that Islam is a religion of tolerance, compassion and peace, and we disapprove of the terrorist acts committed by the militant fringe within the community. Together, Christians and Muslims, we take an unequivocal

stand against the Empire.”³²

PfL organizes international People’s Forums in various regions; peace and solidarity missions to conflict areas where partners are actively engaged in struggles for peace, justice and freedom; celebratory cultural events like the international Peace Festival in Mumbai in December 2006; networking and speaking tours; and workshops and seminars at such events as the 2007 World Social Forum.

An example of PfL’s peace and solidarity missions was a May 2006 team visit to Nepal. In the context of nationwide protests against the monarchy and popular outcry for the restoration of democracy, the team noted that the country’s faith community – Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, Bahais and Kirats – led by the Inter-religious Council Nepal was playing a key role in peace-building, but that minority religious communities and indigenous nationalities had been largely excluded from the country’s mainstream economic and political life. “The people of Nepal,” the team observed, “have already achieved a level of political awareness and sophistication unseen at any time in their history and, hence, are in the best position to chart their own political future.”³³ PfL follow-up included an international information campaign and a tri-country programme involving sharing of experiences between Nepal, Philippines and Sri Lanka.

PfL collects and provides news, information, analysis and reflections via a Website and mailing lists; develops bibliographies, resource lists and articles; maintains a pool of resource persons who can offer a faith perspective on specialized topics; and releases action alerts and bulletins.

The network relates to Christian and ecumenical organizations and institutions, faith-based communities, organizations and alliances and social movements. Its secretariat is housed at NCCP headquarters in Quezon City, Philippines. While its positions on various issues are seen as contentious by some, Peace for Life nevertheless benefits from support from, and maintains programmatic relations with the WCC, the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC, formerly the World Alliance of Reformed Churches-WARC) and the CCA.³⁴

Although it originated and is administratively based in Asia, PfL’s global networking scope is illustrated by its action, for example, on the issue of extra-judicial killings in the Philippines. In July 2006, the PfL secretariat conducted a public forum at a then-WARC theological consultation in Manila. It subsequently helped organize a high-level Philippines delegation visit to Canada and the US in March 2007 to present an NCCP report on extra-judicial killings to church leaders, legislators and UN officials there. PfL was also one of the organizers of a symbolic tribunal held in The Hague later that year to draw international public attention to the mounting death-squad killings and human rights abuses in the Philippines.

Another example of its outreach is PfL’s Palestine solidarity initiative, a project that began with the participation of people of various faiths representing the Middle East, Asia, Africa, the Americas and Europe in an Interfaith Peace Pilgrimage and Solidarity Visit to Palestine-Israel in November 2007.

The Peace for Life Secretariat joined the Philippine Solidarity for Just Peace in Palestine (PSJPI), the NCCP and the Ecumenical Bishops Forum (EBF) and since 2007 have taken part in the activities of a WCC-convened World Week for Peace in Palestine-Israel³⁵. The 2010 week in the Philippines included a Sunday celebration in some churches on 30 May and 6 June and a street march and public demonstration in front of the Israeli Embassy in Makati on the morning of 2 June. A copy of a “Church Leaders’ Statement for Just Peace in Palestine” was delivered to the Israeli ambassador. The statement was signed by bishops and heads of churches well as ecumenical and faith-based networks and institutions like the NCCP and PfL. The Philippine World Week culminated with an Ecumenical Service and a Solidarity Forum on 3 June. ■

More Information:

About us, Peace for Life Website: <http://bit.ly/i5qNyr>

A Covenant of Self-Understanding and Purpose, Peace for Life brochure.
<http://bit.ly/h0Q1Df>

Peace for Life 2004-2009. Narrative report, Peace for Life Secretariat, April 2010.
<http://bit.ly/hU1jmq>



Participants greet each other at the July 2009 Mennonite World Conference held in Asunción, Paraguay. © Lowell Brown

Historic Peace Churches International Conferences³⁶

At the start of the Decade, the WCC asked for advice and guidance from the Historic Peace Churches (HPC), namely, the Church of the Brethren, Religious Society of Friends and Mennonites. The HPC responded by funding a full-time staff position on the DOV team for the entire Decade, thus providing precious support to DOV coordination and networking.

The HPC also conducted its own series of international conferences during the Decade, the first of which was held in Bienenberg, Switzerland in the summer of 2001. Some 60 HPC representatives, primarily from the US and Europe, proposed that churches around the world develop ministries such as prayer, being present in places of conflict, breaking the silence, fostering direct contact between armed groups, addressing the international arms trade, focusing on violence against women and children, training the military to use nonviolent methods and writing history in terms of maintaining peace rather than as a succession of military conquests. Participants also called for a second conference of HPC representatives living in areas of heavy conflict. An account of these conversations was published in 2004.

A second conference in Limuru/Nairobi, Kenya in August 2004 focused on violence in Africa. Some 90 HPC representatives from Kenya, D.R. Congo, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Rwanda, the Great Lakes Region, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia, Tanzania and Zimbabwe attended. The conference considered how love for one's neighbour and enemy can be expressed in regions of violent conflict. It heard about victims of brutal violence who had remained mute for months but after attending trauma centres had begun to recover their speech and will to live, gradually daring to tell their stories. They heard how commitment to peace led victims and perpetrators from the same neighbourhoods to meet together.

Reports on peace-building work by HPC members in Africa highlighted special ministries to women and programmes for youth. At considerable risk to themselves, a group of interfaith religious leaders in Burkina Faso had brought a proposal for a National Day of Forgiveness to their president; its implementation prevented a devastating civil war. Those from Nigeria told of interfaith conversations that helped reduce violence between Muslims and Christian HPC members in Southern Sudan by engaging local communities in covenant-making ceremonies. These stories and presentations were also published.

A third conference was held in Solo, Indonesia in December 2007. Some 80 representatives of the HPC in Aotearoa-New Zealand, Australia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea and the Philippines attended. The theme, "Peace in our Land," sought to explore issues of religious pluralism, extensive poverty and injustice in the world's most diverse continent. Participants heard the story of a Mennonite pastor who joined an extremist Muslim group and who, over five years succeeded in reconciling seemingly impossible differences between the group and Christians. Participants listened to a children's choir from a Mennonite orphanage, all of whose members had

lost their families in violent riots. They heard many stories of nonviolent responses to harassment of Christians in India, Indonesia and the Philippines, of public demonstrations and Christian Peacemaker Teams. Atomic energy and global warming were topics that received particular attention. These discussions are in the process of being published under the title of *Overcoming Violence in Asia*.

A fourth HPC international conference on violence took place in Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic in November 2010. Some 70 persons from 17 countries in South and Central America attended. There were many stories of solidarity, walking together with children, youth, women, families, migrants, persons deprived of freedom and victims of war. The focus of the discussion was on overcoming racism, intolerance, discrimination, urban violence, gang behaviour, forced migration, domestic violence, child abuse, violence against women and gender violence.

Inspired by the Decade to Overcome Violence, the participants in each of these four Historic Peace Churches international conferences invited and challenged churches around the world to see the ministry of nonviolence and just peace-making as being at the centre of the Gospel, and thereby to live in the continuing presence, power and Spirit of the Prince of Peace. ■



A drama entitled "United in Christ" being performed at the July 2009 Mennonite World Conference. © Wilhelm Unger



"Without Economic Justice, Violence Erupts and Peace Diminishes" is the title of one of the articles in this chapter. A July 2008 protest demonstration in Manila against Philippines president Gloria Arroyo's economic policies is an example of 21st century struggles for economic justice in the context of globalization and "the monopoly of economic power by a few vis-à-vis the material deprivation and therefore the indignity inflicted on the majority." © WCC

DOV Themes and Issues



Interreligious Cooperation in the Challenge of Overcoming Violence

Religious communities are the most organized communities in the world. Local churches that belong to the WCC member network are located in some 110 countries and number in the hundreds of millions. Where there are no WCC churches, there are Roman Catholic churches and, these days, particularly in many parts of the global south, Evangelical and Pentecostal churches. Where there are no churches, there are synagogues, mosques and temples of various sorts. In small villages and in local neighborhoods of large cities, religious people gather together in groups of anywhere between 20 or 20,000 people about once a week, or at least once a month. Usually, one person gets up in front of them and tells them what God's will is for them, and most people try to follow that exhortation. They also know how to collect money! If we could get just ten percent of those religious communities, no, even one percent, to cooperate and act together in the pursuit of just peace, what a difference that would make!

Of course most religious communities, indeed many churches, do not want to be so engaged. This is true among Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and other religious communities as well. It is also true that we can easily find allies from other religions who will stand with us for just peace when many Christians will not. Sometimes the more difficult dialogue is the intra-religious one. Our allies in other religions

also find this to be the case.

There are many reasons for this. Some objections are theological. For example, early in the Decade, a WCC Faith and Order study document called “Nurturing Peace, Overcoming Violence: In the Way of Christ for the Sake of the World” called the churches to repentance that, as Christians, “we have been among those who have inflicted or justified violence.” That confession, the document asserts, is also “a confession of faith that violence is contrary to the spirit of the Gospel and that the churches are called not only to affirm life in its fullness to all people but also to overcome violence within and around.” The document goes on to “discern ways in which some theological convictions and traditional attitudes that the churches have cherished for too long have allowed or perpetrated or justified certain forms of violence.” Among several theological convictions that deserve scrutiny it lists: “the way atonement is understood and interpreted in contexts where violence and the suffering of the innocent are held inevitable for the ultimate good.”¹

Although a decade has passed, those questions have not been adequately explored from the Christian perspective. Indeed, we have not yet made a strong enough case to our churches that peace is at the core of the Gospel and that engaging in the pursuit of peace is an imperative for Christians. In all the other religious traditions similar questions arise. We have learned that often it is the interreligious conversation that pushes religious communities to do their internal work. An urgent next step in interreligious dialogue, therefore, is the common exploration of theological impediments to the pursuit of just peace.

Over the course of the Decade, it appeared that violence that could be attributed to religion increased around the world. Some major media outlets perpetuated the notion that religion was the cause even in conflicts that had their origins in political and economic questions. This is not to say that religion does *not* initiate violence. A quick look at the history of Christianity will prove that point. A more careful analysis of most conflicts seems to indicate, however, that the underlying causes of conflict are often political and economic and that various actors use religion to justify their violence. For example, the Ninth WCC Assembly in Porto Alegre’s response to



Several key leaders of the Christian churches in Iraq met with international church leaders, including members of the WCC Central Committee, about the ongoing situation in Iraq. From left to right: Archbishop Mar Severius Hawa, Archbishop Avak Asadourian, Patriarch Mar Addai II, Archbishop Mar Georgis Sliwa (speaking), Rev. Elder Yousif Jamil Al-Saka. © WCC/Aneth Lwakatare

the brewing cartoon controversy acknowledged that such tensions reflected other issues such as the Arab-Israeli conflict and the war in Iraq: “The real tension in our world is not between religions and beliefs, but between aggressive, intolerant and manipulative secular and religious ideologies.”² Keeping the public discourse honest by challenging lazy journalism that, in collaboration with manipulative ideologies, castigates religion in one broad swoop is an important next step in our work of overcoming violence.

At the same time, the work of overcoming violence and building peace requires that religious communities cooperate with each other. The WCC’s Accompanying Churches in Situations of Conflict programme required that the Council use the strong relationships of trust it had built over 40 years to bring religious leaders to the dialogue table to find ways to cooperate, negotiate and strategize about building peace. While this can be an effective strategy, its drawback is that religious leaders are often too politically allied, which makes it too difficult for them to take courageous stands for peace.

The more promising opportunity for peace therefore lies in working with grassroots movements that organize religious communities to engage in the work of just peace. There are effective interreligious grassroots organizations in many countries, of which Australia, India, Liberia, South Africa and the US are prime examples. The WCC’s work on interreligious cooperation has sought to bring these groups to share their learnings and work together for peace.

The Decade to Overcome Violence was officially kicked off at the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin in 2001. Back at that time there could have been no better place to celebrate the beginning of the Decade – the gate was wide open. There could not have been a more tangible expression of how the world can be transformed by nonviolent means. For it was in Leipzig in 1989 in St Nicolai’s church as people gathered for Monday

Churches at Work for a World without Nuclear Weapons

evening prayer, that the movement began and grew to be the torrent that toppled the Wall. As the people marched over the rubble, an East German army chief remarked, “We were prepared for everything – everything, except candles and songs and prayers.” ■

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More Information:

Interreligious dialogue and cooperation page on the WCC

Website: <http://bit.ly/hZXh3q>

During the WCC Decade to Overcome Violence, world affairs provided dramatic evidence that even the most horrendous forms of violence beget more such violence. Between 2001 and 2010, the global threat from nuclear weapons rose steadily. As dangers grew, a renewed international consensus for the abolition of nuclear weapons emerged and churches active against nuclear arms made substantial new contributions.

The WCC was established in 1948 shortly after the first atomic bombings and just as the Cold War nuclear arms races and bomb tests began. Since then, the international ecumenical community has advocated consistently for the elimination of nuclear weapons on the basis of faith, morality and the common good.

As the DOV began, the number of governments with nuclear arsenals was increasing. By 2000, rivals India and Pakistan had come out as nuclear-weapon states and Israel's undeclared nuclear arsenal had become a permanent source of danger and instability in the Middle East. Also, after the attacks of 11 September 2001 and the US' designation of Iran, Iraq and North Korea as an “axis of evil”, three nuclear-related crises dominated the decade: unresolved nuclear issues figured prominently in the invasion and occupation of Iraq; the stand-off over Iran's nuclear programme; and the collective inability to stop North Korea from developing nuclear weapons.

These crises reflect the inherent instability that worries church and other peace advocates. Five recognized nuclear powers have not fulfilled their promises to eliminate nuclear weapons. The US and Russia still possess tens of thousands of warheads of unimaginable destructive power, even after making substantial arms reductions in the vast nuclear arsenals they built during the Cold War. India, Israel, Pakistan and North Korea have emulated them and acquired nuclear arms. A larger number of countries have had nuclear programmes while even more possess sensitive nuclear energy technology for civil uses such as electricity generation or are planning to acquire it in response to climate change.

The DOV took place during a dangerous decade. The WCC Assembly, Central Committee and Executive Committee made and affirmed policy on nuclear weapons seven times during the Decade – issuing more statements than on any other public issue:

- 2001 - Statement on Nuclear Weapons Disarmament
- 2001 - Statement on Nuclear Disarmament, NATO Policy and the Churches
- 2004 - Statement on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty
- 2006 - Minute on the Elimination of Nuclear Arms
- 2006 - Statement on Iran and Nuclear Non-Proliferation
- 2007 - Statement on the Churches Vigilance against Nuclear Proliferation
- 2009 - Statement of Hope in a Year of Opportunity: Seeking a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World

The WCC general secretary, the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA) and active member churches made regular use of these policies during times of crisis and opportunity. They did so in public statements, official letters and position papers and by sending ecumenical delegations to UN conferences, national governments and civil society forums.

Churches together brought a unique global voice to this critical global debate. The WCC membership is from more than 100 countries including all the nuclear-weapon states, allied countries protected by them and the majority of non-nuclear-weapon states. On that basis, WCC churches worked to translate universal religious values about the sanctity of life into responsible public strategies and actions for the political arena.

Three tenets shaped ecumenical strategy during the Decade. The first was to mobilize support and consolidate action among latent majorities opposed to nuclear weapons in churches as well as in civil society and governments. The second was to build ecumenical advocacy around incremental steps that enhance legal and geographic protection for the global majority who are put at risk by a small nuclear-armed minority. And the third was to select advocacy goals that promote the public good by holding governments more closely to common standards.

The case of NATO is illustrative. The WCC pursued reform of NATO's nuclear policy in order to change the practice of stationing US nuclear weapons on the territory of non-nuclear-weapon states. A first phase involved sending ecumenical

delegations to key capitals to lobby against continuation of this NATO policy. The second phase was a cooperative effort of councils of churches on both sides of the Atlantic. There were a series of joint letters to NATO and its leading members from the Conference of European Churches, the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, the Canadian Council of Churches and the WCC, plus expert seminars and high-level meetings supported by the Dutch ecumenical agency IKV Pax Christi that provided church input to a major review of NATO security doctrine in 2010. The initiative appealed to the new interest in certain NATO states to contribute to the re-emerging goal of a world without nuclear weapons. It opened doors for further work.

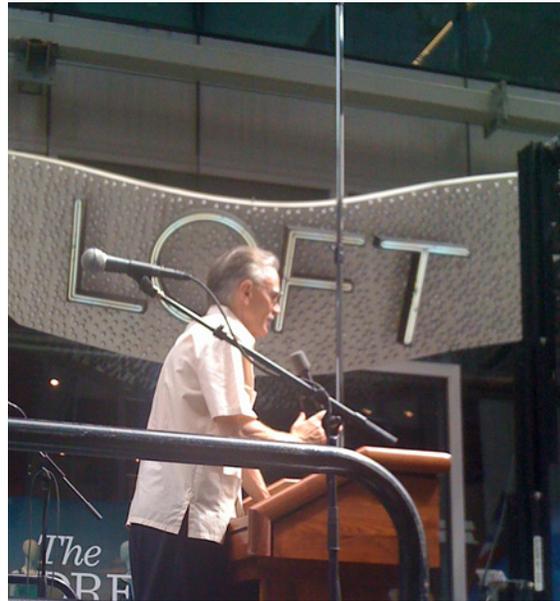
Member churches also took part in a growing ecumenical nuclear network by joining delegations, providing input to new policies, offering expertise from among their membership, reaching out to other churches and contacting their governments. Some answered the call of the 2006 WCC Assembly in Porto Alegre, Brazil to raise awareness of the nuclear threat among post-Cold War generations.

These initiatives involved WCC member churches and ecumenical partners in Argentina, Australia, Burundi, Canada, France, Finland, Germany, India, Kenya, Korea, Liberia, Malaysia, Namibia, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, South Africa, the US and the UK as well as at the European Union level, the Middle East region and elsewhere. When the annual WCC UN Advocacy Week in New York had a nuclear disarmament focus in 2007, nearly half of the participants signed up to learn more and collaborate on the issue.

By the end of the Decade, a basic advocacy standard had been met by members of this network. More and more churches collaborated so that governments would hear ecumenical advocacy "in stereo" – member churches and partner organizations presented the same policies and requests for action in their national capitals as ecumenical delegations and the WCC did at the UN.

Member churches working with the Geneva secretariat in this way were able to implement a goal set at the 2006 Porto Alegre Assembly, namely, to support the establishment of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones. The WCC played a catalytic role in bringing the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone into exist-

On the eve of the May 2, 2010 historic UN review conference of parties to the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons treaty, Rev. Dr Michael Kinnamon, general secretary of the US National Council of Churches, told gatherings in New York's Times Square and at the Church Center for the UN that nuclear weapons "are a crime against humanity" and must be removed from the face of the earth.
© NCCUSA



tence. As part of a step-by-step process, churches collaborated to identify and advocate with specific governments to ratify the necessary treaty. Success came in 2009 when Africa's Treaty of Pelindaba entered into force.

The addition of 54 countries in the Africa zone to the web of similar Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones in Latin America, the South Pacific, Southeast Asia and Central Asia meant that at the end of the decade, a total of 116 nations had joined forces to ban and exclude nuclear weapons from their territory. The WCC also began work to ensure that all the nuclear-weapon states sign legally binding protocols not to threaten or attack members of these treaties.

Together these 116 nations make a powerful geo-political statement. The zones not only cover the geographic south; they also include more than half the countries in the world and most of the Global South.

Toward the end of the DOV, the Ecumenical Call to Just Peace and the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation in 2011 invited churches to approach the work of peace and justice on different levels – local, ecological, economic, socio-political and international. The inter-sectoral approach is timely, especially in addressing the most global threats to peace. Global military spending climbed steadily during the decade to levels higher than even those reached at the height of the Cold War. Monies spent on nuclear arsenals alone would have been enough to finance most of the Millennium Development Goals, enhancing human security worldwide. Meanwhile, advances in climate science showed that the long-term climate impact of nuclear war is many times more deadly than the horrific blast, heat and radiation effects for which the weapons are best known. In this and other fields, it had become clear that there can be no peace among the nations without peace in the marketplace, peace in the community and peace with the earth.

As the decade ended, the site of the next WCC Assembly was chosen. Busan, Korea lies at the heart of a region where peace is tenuous and unstable, where thermonuclear bombs have been used in warfare and where for seven decades whole populations have lived under nuclear threat. During the DOV, churches from every region have demonstrated the will and the capacity to offer a stronger and more united Christian wit-

ness for peace. The experience may encourage some to turn their attention toward Northeast Asia and to pursue there the ecumenical commitment to support peoples and nations in every region to live without resort to arms. ■

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More Information:

WCC Website page on public witness: addressing power, affirming peace > Justice and accountability > nuclear arms control. <http://bit.ly/fDSoS6>

Ninth Assembly *Minute on the elimination of nuclear arms*, Report presented to the 2006 Ninth Assembly of the WCC, Porto Alegre, Brazil, 23 February 2006. <http://bit.ly/fiS22v>

Statement of hope in a year of opportunity: seeking a nuclear-weapon-free world. Report on public issues, WCC Central Committee, Geneva, September 2009. <http://bit.ly/dTplKy>

Confronting and Transforming Cultures of Discrimination and Dehumanization

The assumption that some human beings are inferior to others has always allowed and justified violence against certain groups of people all over the world. Doctrines of redemptive violence, theories of just war, the legacies of the crusades and colonization, the evils of slavery and human abuse and the practices of discrimination and exclusion have their roots in certain detrimental anthropological assumptions that often serve exploitative powers. Some Christianizing missions too were guided by these assumptions of superiority.

Violence is not only an intention to physically abuse the other but also and essentially an attempt to shame and violate the dignity of the other. Some justify such violations as normal.

Not surprisingly therefore, most victims of the many forms of violence are those who are branded and treated as inferior. They include the victims of racism, Dalits and other oppressed groups in South Asia and elsewhere, Indigenous Peoples, women, children, minorities and people living with disabilities. With strong support from religious scriptures and traditions, their exposure to a variety and combination of different forms of violence is often seen as divinely ordained and inevitable. Creation myths and anthropologies, notions of purity and pollution, social hierarchies and superstitions reduce millions of people worldwide to the status of objects for abuse and exploitation. Some Christian theologies and traditions have been complicit in this crime against these communities.

In its determined pursuit of peace based on justice, the WCC has long attempted to uphold the dignity and equality of all human beings. Christian involvement in actions for peace is motivated by this commitment to justice and life for the poor and vulnerable. Therefore, with the conviction that overcoming the violence against these silenced and sidelined victims is an important element in building a culture of peace, WCC programmatic instruments on Churches Overcoming Racism, Solidarity with Dalits and with Indigenous Peoples have attempted to draw the attention of the global DOV community to the violence that, in a variety of ways, tears apart the lives of large sectors of society and the global community on account of their social locations and identities.

Racism today operates by influencing and moulding attitudes and social behaviour rather than, as was the case in the days of the apartheid, through visible structures and ide-



Among the many communities taking part in the protest march through the streets of Durban, preceding the 2001 UN World Conference Against Racism were migrants from many parts of the world. © WCC/Paul Weinberg

ologies. The WCC's Just and Inclusive Communities Desk attempts to help churches to become aware of the sin and violence of discrimination and exclusion right in their midst. It also encourages them to work towards justice that not only restores the dignity of the victim but heals the disfigurement of the aggressor, including the churches themselves.

The focus on transforming the aggressor led the WCC to identify and understand the disfigurement not only of the victim of violence but also of the aggressor. Taking note of the fact that it is not only individuals but also structures and cultures that brutalize human communities and relationships, a theological consultation on structurally embedded forms of violence, under the theme "Cruelty – the ugly face of violence" took place in Crêt Bérard, Puidoux, Switzerland in December 2006. Organized by the WCC and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), the gathering focused on cultures and traditions as well as social, economic and political structures that are themselves cruel, as well as creating an ethos that "enables" people to become cruel. Twelve case studies from different contexts and perspectives provided the basis for the debate on racism, casteism, patriarchy, xenophobia, terrorism and counter-terrorism, torture of prisoners, genocide, rape and sex trafficking and occupation. Some papers from this consultation were published as a book entitled *Cruelty and Christian Witness: Confronting Violence at its Ugliest*. (See Theological Study and Reflection in "An Overview of International Actions and Projects" section on p. 27.)

In 2004, the WCC produced a study guide, *Transformative Justice: Being Church and Overcoming Violence*, which was translated into several languages. In commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade, a gathering of nearly 100 people was convened in Montego Bay, Jamaica in 2007 by the WCC in partnership with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Council for World Mission. It focused its attention on addressing certain



A "Churches against Racism" conference in the Netherlands in August 2009 sought to take on the legacy of the WCC's historic anti-racism efforts. Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands was a guest of honour at the conference. © Jaap de Jager

contemporary forms of slavery and on the continued race factor that is still, after all these centuries, at work in these manifestations.

Taking into account the new challenges posed by large-scale migration from the global South to the North, two conferences – in Doorn, Holland in June 2009 and in Cleveland, Ohio in 2010 – focused exclusively on the need to make confronting and transforming cultures of discrimination and dehumanization part of churches' efforts to overcome violence. The Cleveland conference also responded to the draft Ecumenical Declaration on Just Peace (see Preparing for the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation in "An Overview of International Actions and Projects" section on p. 49).

Meanwhile, a Global Ecumenical Conference on Justice for the Dalits convened jointly by the WCC and the Lutheran World Federation in Bangkok in 2008 dealt with stories of the extraordinary forms of violence both direct and structural to which nearly 250 million Dalits are exposed. As those on the bottom rung of the social ladder, Dalits are treated with the utmost contempt but are blatantly exploited at all levels. The WCC also organized a Living Letters visit to Kandhamal, Orissa, India where several Dalit Christians were killed and attacked in 2008 (see Living Letters Visits top bar in "International Actions and Projects" section on p. 41). The Bangkok conference and the WCC's subsequent work on Dalits lifted up social justice as an important area of engagement for the churches during the Decade. ■

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More Information:

WCC Website: Unity, Mission, Evangelism and Spirituality Programme, Churches Overcoming Racism page:
<http://bit.ly/fAimM6>

Statement from the delegates of the ecumenical conference "Abolished, but Not Destroyed: Remembering the Slave Trade

in the 21st Century», Runaway Bay, Jamaica; December 2007. <http://bit.ly/eToIVQ>

Message from the 14-17 June conference "Churches responding to the challenges of racism and related forms of discrimination and exclusion". Dorn, Utrecht, The Netherlands, 17 June 2009. <http://bit.ly/e3mo6o>

Statement from the WCC Conference on racism today and the rationale for Continued Ecumenical Engagement, Cleveland, Ohio, August 2010. <http://bit.ly/fJa1jF>

Bangkok Declaration and Call from the Conference on Justice for Dalits, 21-24 March, 2009, Bangkok, Thailand. <http://bit.ly/e3mo6o>

The Responsibility to Protect

The concept of the Responsibility to Protect (“R2P”, for short) holds that national governments clearly have the primary and sovereign responsibility to provide for the safety of their people. However, when there is egregious failure to carry out that responsibility whether by neglect, lack of capacity or direct assaults on the population, the international community has the duty to assist peoples and states and, in extreme situations, to intervene in the internal affairs of the state in the interests and safety of the people. Hence, the innovation introduced by the concept of R2P regarding the protection of civilians is a significant normative change: sovereignty is redefined as a duty-

bearer status rather than as an absolute power, for states can no longer hide behind the pretext of sovereignty to perpetrate human rights violations against their citizens and live in total impunity.

The use of force for humanitarian purposes has been quite a controversial issue among churches of the ecumenical community since the inception of the WCC. Given their different historical and contextual backgrounds, some have argued that in particular cases and when a number of criteria are met, the use of force may be justified – the “just war” theory. Others strongly oppose any argument justifying the resort to the

An Afghan refugee girl in front of her family’s tent in the Shamshatoo refugee camp near Peshawar, Pakistan. © WCC



use of force and support intervention by creative, peaceful and nonviolent means. As for the Orthodox Christian families, there is a strong pacifist stance which identifies itself with a nonviolent response to aggression and with Christ's voluntary assumption of suffering and non-retaliation in the face of his torture and execution; in the extreme cases where force is used, war is considered as evil and sinful and calls for repentance.

R2P is a three-fold concept which includes the Responsibility to Prevent, the Responsibility to React, and the Responsibility to Rebuild. During the Ninth Assembly of the WCC in 2006, the churches of the ecumenical movement agreed on the preventive dimension of the R2P concept and added the following point: "In calling on the international community to come to the aid of vulnerable people in extraordinary suffering and peril, the fellowship of churches is not prepared to say that it is never appropriate or never necessary to resort to the use of force for the protection of the vulnerable."³ In other words, the use of force for humanitarian purposes cannot be totally excluded.

In a meeting held in New York City in 1999, UN secretary general Kofi Annan asked the WCC general secretary, Rev. Dr Konrad Raiser, to contribute to the international debate on the use of force for humanitarian purposes by bringing a theological and ethical perspective on the issue of intervention for humanitarian purposes.

In April 2005, the WCC held a high-level seminar in Geneva, Switzerland on "The responsibility to protect: ethical and theological reflections"; several eminent speakers such as the Hon. Gareth Evans, Dr Cornelio Sommaruga and others participated in this event. The outcome of the consultation has been compiled in a publication. In February 2006 and as the culminating point of this process, the WCC adopted a statement on "Vulnerable populations at risk. Statement on the responsibility to protect" during its Ninth Assembly in Porto Alegre, Brazil.⁴

At the World Social Forum (WSF) in January 2007, a workshop was organized on «The Responsibility to Protect: Focus on Africa». The workshop was very well attended, thus indicating that this agenda is close to the heart of many in Africa and beyond.

In October 2007, a presentation on "Human Dignity and

War: The Christian Churches perspective" and focusing on R2P was made at the invitation of the Holy See. It was published in article form in the Spring 2008 issue of the *Bulletin of the Boston Theological Institute*. In November 2007, an international theological consultation on "The Responsibility to Protect" was organized in Arnoldshain, Germany. ■

Semegnish Asfaw, from Ethiopia worked as WCC research associate on the Responsibility to Protect. She was responsible for coordinating the DOV Living Letters visits during 2010 and is part of the planning team for International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC) with special responsibility for the IEPC expert consultations. She also coordinates the tri-annual IEPC newsletter, Bits and Peaces.

More Information:

See 2006 Assembly R2P Statement on the WCC Website:

<http://bit.ly/epRCXU>

DOV Web page on a November 2007 international ecumenical consultation on "The Responsibility to Protect", held at the Evangelische Akademie Arnoldshain - Schmitten, Germany. <http://bit.ly/eVP9Hk>

The Responsibility to Protect: Ethical and Theological Reflections, Doc. PUB 3.1, WCC Central Committee 26 August-2 September 2003. <http://bit.ly/eJD10t>

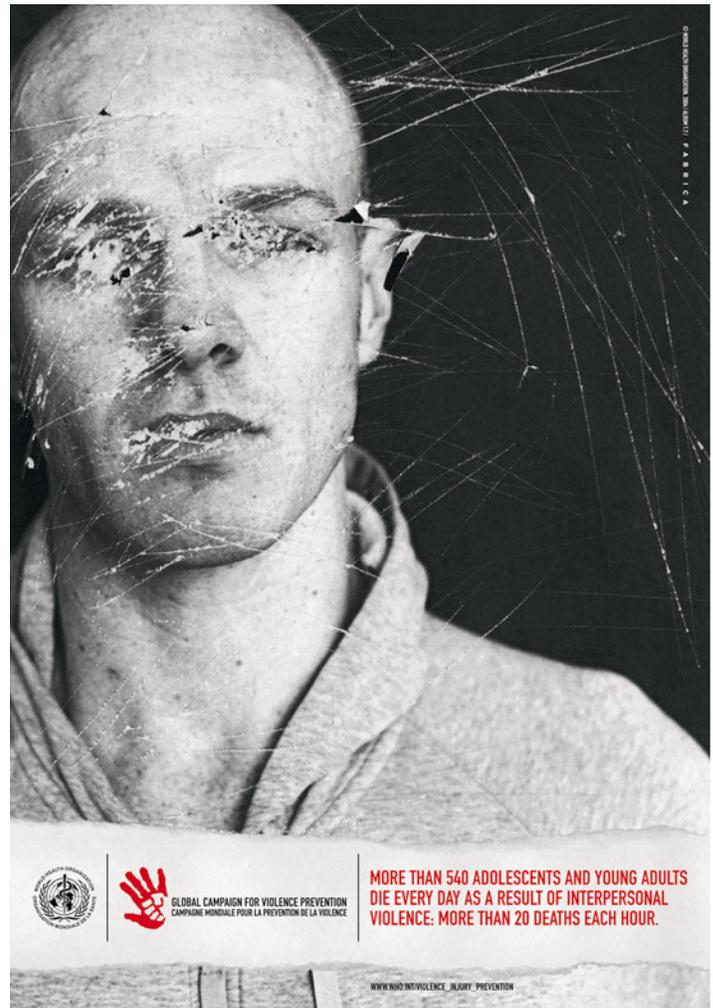
Violence Prevention – A Public Health Approach⁵

Violence accounts for some 1.6 million deaths a year – about the same as tuberculosis and 1.3 times the number of deaths due to road traffic accidents. Over half of these are due to suicide, a third to homicide and about 10% to war and other forms of collective violence.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines violence as the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation. WHO divides violence into three main types: self-directed violence (suicidal behaviour and self-abuse), interpersonal violence (child maltreatment, youth violence [including gang violence and armed violence], intimate partner and sexual violence and elder abuse), and collective violence, which includes war, terrorism, state-perpetrated genocide. The acts in each of these types of violence can be physical, sexual, psychological or can involve deprivation or neglect.

In 2002, the World Health Organization (WHO) launched the *World Report on Violence and Health*, the first comprehensive review of the problem on a global scale. Its key message is that violence can be prevented and its impact reduced by adopting a science-based public health approach. The main features of this approach are as follows:

- Rather than focusing on the individual, it tackles the problem at the level of whole populations, aiming to provide the maximum benefit for the largest number of people.
- It focuses on preventing violence before it occurs by addressing the upstream determinants rather than responding to violence once it has already happened. In other words, it emphasizes the primary prevention of violence while recognizing the ongoing need to mitigate the consequences of violence through treatment, care, support and rehabilitation.
- It views violence not as the outcome of any single factor but as the result of multiple risk factors interacting at all four levels of a nested hierarchy made up of:
 - the individual level, which refers to biological, demographic and personal history factors. Risk factors for



violence at this level include sex, age, socioeconomic status, impulsivity, low educational attainment and harmful use of alcohol;

- the relationship level, which consists of relations with peers, intimate partners and family members. Examples of risk factors at this level include poor parenting and marital discord;
- the level of the community, which encompasses contexts such as schools, workplaces and neighbourhoods in which social relationships are embedded. Risk factors at this level include, for instance, high levels of residential mobility and weak social cohesion, drug trafficking and high-levels of unemployment;
- the societal level, which refers to wider social factors that influence rates of violence such as cultural norms that support violence as an acceptable way of resolving conflicts, policies that maintain high levels of social and economic inequality and inadequate legislation.

The public health approach promotes an intersectoral-sectoral response to a multi-faceted problem whose numerous

WHO poster on violence prevention reads: "More than 540 adolescents and young adults die every day as a result of interpersonal violence: more than 20 deaths each hour." The posters serve as visual support to the awareness-raising Global Campaign for Violence Prevention and the World report on violence and health. © WHO/Fabrica

interacting determinants lie within the remit of many different sectors such as the health, educational, social welfare, criminal justice and law enforcement and employment sectors. Each sector has an important role to play in addressing the problem of violence.

The public health approach is a data-driven approach based on prevention programmes that have been scientifically proven to work, based on rigorous outcome evaluation studies using research designs such as randomized controlled trial or quasi-experiments.

The *World Report on Violence and Health* has provided the framework for WHO's violence prevention activities, including:

- mobilizing political support to prevent violence through, for instance, the World Health Assembly;
- advocating for change through, for instance, the WHO-led Global Campaign for Violence Prevention and the Violence Prevention Alliance, a network of some 50 governmental, non-governmental, and international organizations and private foundations;
- developing, widely disseminating and implementing guidelines such as *Violence Prevention: the evidence and Preventing intimate partner and sexual violence against women: taking action and generating evidence*;
- implementing violence prevention programmes in countries around the world such as child maltreatment prevention activities in Brazil, China, Malaysia, Malawi and South Africa and intimate partner violence and sexual violence prevention activities in Latin America and Africa.

Since its launch, the *World report on violence and health* has helped generate significant momentum internationally and within many countries. Over 25 countries have developed reports and/or plans of action on violence and health; more than 100 health ministry focal persons for the prevention of violence have been appointed; countries are increasingly taking stock of levels, patterns and consequences of violence and their responses to it; and, especially since 2005, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of violence prevention programmes around the world. ■

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More Information:

Krug, Etienne G., Dahlberg, Linda L., Mercy, James A., Zwi, Anthony B. and Lozano, Rafael, eds *World Report on Violence and Health*, World Health Organization, Geneva, 2002. <http://bit.ly/fpPuu2>

Violence prevention: the Evidence, WHO/JMU Centre for Public Health. ISBN 978 92 4 150084 5 (NLM classification: HV 6625). <http://bit.ly/e9yUHn>

Without Economic Justice, Violence Erupts and Peace Diminishes

Even before the Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV) commenced in 2001 and under its Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC) programme, the WCC had been linking the promotion of economic and ecological justice to overcoming violence and building peaceful communities. Behind this programme lay the understanding that violent conflicts often stem from widening socio-economic disparities between the “haves” and “have-nots”, and especially from the monopoly of economic power by a few vis-à-vis the material deprivation and therefore the indignity inflicted on the majority.

This intensifying problem – in the current era of globalization – is also related to the destruction of our planet’s ecological commons. Outright ecological plunder by the powerful and the dominant economic system promote an unsustainable level of production, consumption and waste while the dominant agricultural system is transforming our bio-diverse landscapes, full of life, into large-scale monocultures that promote death and destroy livelihoods and communities. Indeed, the mutilation of the Earth, largely in pursuit of wealth and profits, is in itself an act of violence against the wonderful Creation we have been given.

The impetus for both the 1994-1998 Programme to Overcome Violence and for the 2001-2010 Decade to Overcome Violence came initially from the JPIC programme. Regrettably however, the ecumenical debates on how to implement the DOV may not have been holistic or explicit enough to establish the critical link between work on economic and ecological injustice and that on overcoming violence. In other words, while the JPIC programme views violence as implicitly and mainly structural or institutional in nature, there has been a tendency in some ecumenical discussions to focus more narrowly on inter-personal violence, which no doubt remains pervasive in many of our societies and has wrought terrible suffering but which is often rooted in or shaped by socio-economic structures that propagate and maintain inequalities.

It is argued that economic systems, policies and agreements designed to enrich and concentrate wealth in the hands of a few at the expense of the majority are inherently violent, resulting as they often do from the direct exploitation of human beings, especially women and children and of ecology. The abject poverty, alienation and displacement – manifesta-

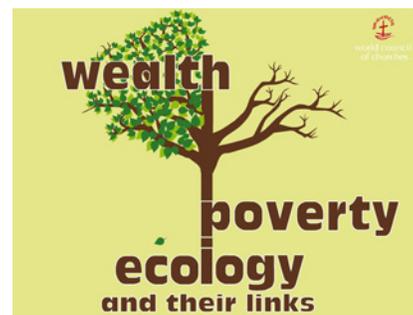


Demonstration in Manila, Philippines, against President Gloria Arroyo’s economic policies on the occasion of her State Of The Nation Address, 2008. © WCC

tions of economically-related violence – caused by such systems and policies have in turn provoked conflicts and violent reactions ranging from civil wars to riots, guerrilla warfare and revolutions. The commodification of food has led to land-grabbing and threats to food sovereignty and food security. With the support of the armaments industry, skewed concepts of security uphold these systems and ensure that economic power stays in the hands of certain nations, enterprises and individuals. (An extremely controversial point remains the question of whether all forms of violence are necessarily destructive and morally reprehensible. Faced with state-sponsored violence, some violent political struggles have ushered in more just social and economic orders.)

Countless illustrations of the essential link between economic violence and other forms of violence can be gleaned from history. Landlessness and hunger have fuelled agrarian unrest in many societies since time immemorial. In Cochabamba, Bolivia in 1999, communities successfully rose up against the privatization of water and sewerage facilities pre-

Poster of a consultation on "Linking poverty, wealth and ecology: North-American perspectives". The consultation was part of the WCC study project on Poverty, wealth and ecological debt known as AGAPE. © WCC



scribed by international financial institutions that made basic public goods suddenly inaccessible and unaffordable to poorer populations. Across Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America, measures to cut social support following the recent global financial and economic crisis were met with massive street protests and riots. Unable to eke out a living from liberalized agricultural markets and facing massive indebtedness, thousands of farmers in India have committed suicide over the past ten years. Likewise, violence against women and children and foreigners cannot be easily separated from larger economic realities; studies indicate that instances of abuse sharply increase in periods of economic difficulty. Racism, casteism and xenophobia are all deeply rooted in economic injustice.

A more direct connection between economic injustice and violence has been the institutional use of wars and other violent military means – to the tune of trillions of US dollars – to seize and control prized resources such as land and oil. And especially following the events of 11 September 2001, there has been a growing convergence between economic globalization and militarization: as markets have become more globally integrated, the mechanisms to secure and protect these have by necessity become more violent.

The interaction between economic injustice and violence – how inequalities at global, national and local levels are imperiling God’s vision and mandate of fostering peaceful communities – was re-affirmed by the WCC Central Committee at its 2006 meeting. The Committee called for a visible connection between the “Alternative Globalization Addressing Peoples and Earth (AGAPE)” process and the DOV International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC) to take place in Kingston in 2011.

Since then, regional studies and consultations on poverty, wealth and ecology and their linkages were undertaken from 2007 to 2010 in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific, and Europe. A North American consultation will take place in 2011, and a global conference to be held in China in 2012 will attempt to formulate and bring a common message to the next WCC Assembly in Busan in 2013.

An important part of the poverty, wealth and ecology study process is to explore and develop greed/wealth lines alongside poverty lines to guide churches and Christians. Inherent in the

study process is the recognition that structural greed foments both economic violence and political violence; and therefore a much more equitable distribution of assets among and within nations and the eradication of poverty are central to overcoming violence and sustaining peace. The IEPC plenary on “Peace in the Market Place” will be an important opportunity to propagate and further discuss these ideas.

In connecting economic justice to the DOV, one of the key questions is: how can we overcome violence by building equitable socio-economic relationships, just sharing, care for Creation and sustainable use of resources? ■

Dr Rogate R. Mshana is an economist from Tanzania who serves the WCC as programme executive on poverty, wealth and ecology and as director for the Justice, Diakonia and Responsibility for Creation Programme.

More Information:

Alternative globalization addressing peoples and earth (AGAPE).

A background document. WCC, Geneva, April 2005.

<http://bit.ly/hitYsv>

P3 Public Witness: Addressing Power, Affirming Peace / Programme plans 2007-2013 – Summary. WCC Central Committee September 2006. <http://bit.ly/ihHYLL>



IANSA 2010 Global Week of Action against Gun Violence, Nicaragua. A public event was organized in Enrique Gutiérrez, a neighbourhood of Managua seriously affected by gun violence. During the event, people handed in their guns to the police and children exchanged toy guns for backpacks. © IANSA

Networks Related to DOV



One of the goals of the Decade to Overcome Violence was to “identify and bring together people with different gifts, knowledge and experience for mutual enrichment and inspiration for work in overcoming violence”. Or, put more succinctly, “to facilitate linkages among people, efforts and resources along the lines of DOV”.

Networking at various levels was thus an important emphasis throughout the Decade. In addition to relating directly to numerous churches, church councils, church-related groups and NGOs around the world, the WCC participated in the work of several important international networks aimed at promoting peace and nonviolence. It also facilitated the setting up and running of two advocacy networks focused on particular aspects of violence, i.e., small arms, and violence against people with disabilities.

The work of these networks and their links to the Decade are described below.

Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network

“As the author of the letter to the Ephesians stressed: Christ came to tear down the walls (Eph 2:14). Whenever we consider the ways in which to respond to issues of disability, we do well to remember the walls that we have set up. All of these walls are so human, yet they contradict Christ’s ministry of reconciliation; walls that shut people in or shut people out; walls that prevent people from meeting and talking to others.”¹

“The kinds of violence perpetrated against persons with disabilities (PWDs) are physical, sexual, emotional, financial and spiritual,” suggested Chinese-Filipino biblical scholar Amanda Shao Tan in an article in the July 2004 issue of *Ministerial Formation*. “When a person has the power to provide assistance, orthotic equipment, medication, nutrition, or transportation for the well-being of PWDs but intentionally withholds it, s/he commits violence. To deny PWDs community involvement, relationship, and employment when they are capable, and to treat them as non-persons are also considered acts of violence. Church members, like the society, can look at PWDs with discrimination and prejudices. (...) Though the members may not have any intention to harm those members with disabilities, nonetheless, at times, the latter may feel violated.”²

Although the WCC had treated the issue of disability as an important concern of the church since 1971, the WCC’s Eighth Assembly in Harare, Zimbabwe in 1998 took a major step forward when it decided to create an Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network (EDAN), based on recognition that a network *initiated and run by persons with disabilities* would be an excellent model. Its creation ushered in a pronounced shift in emphasis from service provision to more inclusive theology.

EDAN is both a movement and an institution. As a movement, it develops regional networks to lobby for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the general life of the church. At the institutional level, EDAN is part of the WCC structure.

EDAN is managed as a decentralized operation from Nairobi, Kenya under the auspices of the National Council of Churches of Kenya. The work is headed by a consultant. An international Reference Group assists in policy direction and envisioning of the work; volunteer regional coordinators in Latin America, the Caribbean, North America, Europe, Middle East, Africa, Asia and the Pacific initiate and coordinate re-



A Pre-Assembly EDAN meeting was held before the Ninth Assembly of the WCC in Porto Alegre, Brazil in February 2006. © WCC/Paulino Menezes

gional networks that take responsibility for detailed operations regionally, nationally and locally.

The EDAN global network has maintained and extended the fellowship forged between diverse disability advocates; a newsletter published quarterly and posted on the WCC Website until 2005 provided a channel for sharing information between them and provided information on technological developments and related skills, educational materials and opportunities as well as advocacy efforts with the aim of increasing possibilities for social and economic re-integration of PWDs.

With the assistance of the WCC Faith and Order team, EDAN produced the WCC policy statement entitled “A church for all and of all”. This document, commended to WCC member churches for study, reflection, feedback and action, highlights the fundamental theological issues that challenge the church to become holistic and inclusive in its relationship to disability issues. With the WCC Ecumenical Theological Education (ETE) desk, EDAN also developed a prototype co-curriculum in disability studies to prepare ministers for pastoral work with PWD.

Through its participation in the Decade to Overcome Violence, EDAN has contributed to addressing systemic violence. It was represented on the DOV Reference Group, worked closely with DOV during the WCC’s Ninth Assembly in February 2006, especially in planning a “Mutirão” on violence and disability, and prepared a Bible study on disability and violence for a DOV Bible studies series.

Participation in DOV opened wider horizons in thinking about violence and disability. With disability on the DOV agenda, EDAN conducted and/or facilitated a number of consultations on the relationship between disability and violence.

A November 2004 EDAN disability and globalization consultation in Johannesburg, South Africa attended by economists, social planners, women and young people who were also people with disabilities (PWD), for example, looked at

Foundation for a Culture of Peace

- globalization, international debt burdens, poverty and their impact on people with disabilities especially in developing countries;
- Structural Adjustment Programmes resulting in the shrinking public sector inputs, commodification of health care, rehabilitation and education;
- lowered legislative controls on social and environmental standards and impacts on persons with disabilities;
- globalization's positive impact in the area of technology and the information revolution which have brought new assistive devices, created jobs that need no muscle power as well as a potential for investment in human capital, including persons with disabilities, in the new knowledge-based global economy.

Two Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) workshops in 2005 moved disability discourse from an “independence versus dependence” model to a perspective of “interdependence”; and went beyond the “inclusive communities” model to one that locates persons with disabilities as leaders of movements for eco-justice. An EDAN-CCA-National Council of Churches in Korea workshop in Seoul in June 2006 on the theme of “Being Inclusive Communities for All: Participating in Eco-Just Peace Movement” translated the issues raised in the previous two workshops into concrete plans of action.

Other consultations and workshops in Africa, Latin America and Asia have looked at the “Response of women with disabilities to violence and HIV and AIDS: A Social Transformation Approach,” the “Rights of People with Disabilities,” and “Disability discourse for theological colleges;” several workshops were geared to particular groups like Indigenous blind men in Latin America or deaf Christians. ■

More Information:

EDAN Website: <http://bit.ly/g576Nf>

During his tenure as director general of United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) from 1987 to 1999, Professor Federico Mayor launched its Culture of Peace Programme, whose objectives revolve around four principal themes: education for peace; human rights and democracy; the fight against isolation and poverty; defense of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue; and conflict prevention and the consolidation of peace. The UNESCO Culture of Peace Declaration and Programme of Action were adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 1999.

Having decided not to present himself for a third term at UNESCO, Professor Mayor returned to Spain in 1999 to create the Foundation for a Culture of Peace. The Foundation's objective is to contribute to building and consolidating a Culture of Peace through reflection, research, education and on-the-spot action. Its activities focus mainly on linking and mobilizing networks of institutions, organizations and individuals who have proven their commitment to Culture of Peace values. Concrete actions focus mainly on informative and educational activities such as, for example, workshops to allow journalists to work and reflect on the Culture of Peace.

Another Foundation for a Culture of Peace project is a campaign to encourage reforms of international institutions so as to contribute to the establishment of “a consistent, transparent, responsible and effective global architecture based on international legislation whose democratic value and legitimacy is widely accepted.”³

The Foundation's “Common Patrimony of Humanity” project resources a group of jurists and international law specialists to propose a legal framework able to preserve the world's significant holy places, particularly Jerusalem, for humanity as a whole.

Assembled in Montserrat, Spain in April 2008 on the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a Culture of Peace Foundation conference on “Religions and the building of peace” called on

- “religious leaders at all levels from the highest hierarchies to the grassroots level to enhance and exercise their crucial role as actors of peace and mutual understanding;
- civil society, the institutional actors and the media to

Global Priorities Campaign



Foundation for a Culture of Peace
president Professor Federico Mayor.
© Francesco Allegretto

work hand in hand to diligently and tirelessly, with resolve and imagination, achieve and go beyond the Objectives of the Millennium and in this way accelerate the transition from the use of force to word and dialogue, from violence to intercultural and interfaith harmony, from clash to alliance, from an economy of war to an economy of global development, from a culture of war to a culture of peace based on justice and freedom;

- media to avoid the wide dissemination of stereotypes and biased images and to promote better understanding between different cultures and religions.”⁴

Declaration signatories included, among others, Fondation pour le Dialogue des Civilisations president Mohammad S. Khatami and Middle East Council of Churches president, former WCC moderator H.H. Aram I as well as Federico Mayor himself.

The Foundation promotes and participates actively in the World Forum of Civil Society Networks – UBUNTU, whose main objective is to unite and federate efforts to build bridges of dialogue and communication among national and international institutions – including NGOs, academic, artistic, professional and humanitarian institutions in order to “shape a debate which, well-oriented and united, could play an important role on the worldwide scene”.

Professor Mayor and WCC general secretary Rev. Olav Tveit were special guest and speaker, respectively, at a December 2010 International Congress on the Human Right to Peace held in Santiago de Compostela, Spain. The congress was co-sponsored by the WCC, the Spanish Society for International Human Rights Law, Forum 2010 and the Institute for Peace Studies (Alexandria, Egypt). ■

More Information:

Foundation for a Culture of Peace Website:

<http://bit.ly/dOI949>

“[The equivalent of] UNICEF’s annual budget is spent on military purposes every 15 hours, even as one billion children live in almost unimaginable conditions of deprivation.”⁵

In 1999, a group of concerned individuals in the US from different faith traditions initiated “Global Priorities” to explore ways to address the imbalance between world military spending and expenditures on unmet human needs. By late 2000, members of the US Congress agreed in principle to initiate a bipartisan resolution on American military spending, but September 11, 2001 led to a reconsideration of this earlier commitment.

Meanwhile strong ties had been established by Global Priorities with the Roman Catholic Church, the WCC Office of the Decade to Overcome Violence, The Lutheran World Federation, among United Methodists and with others on the national and international level.

Global Priorities then initiated a series of international meetings to develop ways to make progress in the post-September 11 security environment and confront questions of human security more broadly. Through an emphasis on child survival, major religious traditions were able to agree on the need for such action.

The Campaign was officially launched in October 2005 at UNICEF House in New York. Its underlying principle is that human security can be achieved through determined measures to eradicate extreme poverty and to realize economic, social and cultural rights. Majority opinion can ultimately be swayed by articulation of values whose roots are in every oral and scriptural tradition of the world’s great religious communities: concern for our children, our elders, our disabled and all the vulnerable members of our societies.⁶

In the US, Global Priorities worked closely with a retired army officer to develop a congressional resolution on drastic reduction of nuclear weapons in 2008. The bipartisan resolution was reintroduced in March 2009. It called for reductions in US and Russian nuclear arsenals that would lead to savings of at least \$13 billion annually and direct \$3.5 billion of the savings toward increased nuclear security efforts. An additional \$2.5 billion per year would be redirected toward the Millennium Development Goals of enhancing child survival, including

IANSA and ENSA

alleviating hunger and improving education around the world.

A DOV study by on *World Military Expenditures* published in 2005 demonstrated that government military spending was depriving many societies of funding for basic social services and development aid (see World Military Expenditures Versus Spending on Education and Health in “International Actions and Projects” section on p. 47). ■

More Information:

Global Priorities Website: <http://www.globalpriorities.org/>

Small arms violence indiscriminately affects countries in the midst of conflict *and* peace, in the global south *and* north, across ethnicities and religions, among both the poor and privileged. From child soldiers in Sierra Leone to school shootings in the US, the vicious cycle of victims-perpetrators-traumatized survivors has created an extraordinary burden of cumulative tragedies and public crises worldwide, sustaining cultures of fear and justifications of violence.

Created in 1998, the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) is a global network of over 200 member organizations in more than 40 countries all seeking to address the epidemic proliferation of small arms in an holistic way. The WCC was a founding member of IANSA.

An IANSA Women’s Network was formed in 2001 as a women’s caucus at IANSA events. It is the only international network focused on the connections between gender, women’s rights, small arms and armed violence and now links members in countries ranging from Fiji to Senegal, Argentina to South Africa, Canada to Sudan.

The proliferation of small arms is also a direct challenge to the Christian imperative to abandon vengeance as a means of conflict resolution and to live faithfully in pursuit of justice, reconciliation and peace.

With parishes and congregations located at the heart of communities, churches are well placed to address the relevant social, economic and political measures needed to reduce the demand for, and reliance on small arms by individuals and communities and to help not only victims and their families but also the perpetrators of small arms abuse whose rehabilitation calls for a place of refuge, confession, healing and hope.

To this end, the Ecumenical Network on Small Arms (ENSA), a network of predominantly Christian and faith-based organizations was created in 2001. With the WCC as an active partner, ENSA engaged churches to mobilize faith-based convictions, experiences and religious constituencies to advance the goal of controlling small arms.

This strong position and unique faith perspective enabled churches and the ecumenical community to address the material, moral, ethical and spiritual dimensions of the small arms problem. They could be vital partners in helping to inform, mobilize and provide an holistic and spiritual contribution to



Top: Sierra Leone 2001: Ex-combatants proudly show their new ID cards which give them access to various benefits and allow them to move around the country. © WCC/Peter Williams
 Bottom: An illustration from a 2010 IANSA paper entitled "Joined-Up Thinking: International Measures for Women's Security and SALW Control". © Design: Sabina Echeverri

the international disarmament campaign.

Two regional consultations contributed to the formation of ENSA in the context of the Decade to Overcome Violence and prepared for a 2001 UN-sponsored Conference on the Illicit Trade of Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects.

The first was a January 2000 ecumenical consultation on Small Arms in Latin America sponsored by the WCC in collaboration with the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI) in partnership with Peace to the City partner "Viva Rio" (see *Overcoming Violence in the Favelas, Viva Rio, Brazil* in the "DOV Stories and Examples of 'Good Practice'" section on p. 79).

The second consultation, on small arms in West Africa, was held in November 2002 near Accra, Ghana and was organized by the Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in West Africa (FECCIWA) and the WCC.

Both consultations provided an opportunity for churches in the two regions to develop clear and cohesive action plans towards reducing the proliferation of small arms in their re-

gions through awareness-raising, improved controls and legislation, reduction and removal of small arms, increased involvement of women and youth, victim support and strengthened linkages and partnerships.

At mid-decade, ENSA members convened by the WCC were active as a church-related advocacy network and as a group within IANSA. The focus was the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, launched after the 2001 UN conference. Members formed ecumenical delegations to promote needed policy change with governments, especially for the benefit of communities affected by the small arms proliferation and use. The ecumenical advocates came from churches, specialized ministries and church-related networks in Africa, Europe, Asia and the Americas. Their strategy was to raise issues that drive the demand for arms and to promote mechanisms that establish or improve standards of accountability for arms producers and traders, including rehabilitation and recovery assistance for victims of armed violence.

Ecumenical policy was spelled out in a formal Statement on the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons adopted by the WCC Executive Committee in 2005. In the statement and in work that continued till shortly after the 2006 Assembly, the WCC also began to promote a broader Arms Trade Treaty in addition to the more limited Programme of Action. The ATT, as it is known, rose to the top of the small arms agenda in the remaining years of the decade. ■

More Information:

IANSA Website: <http://bit.ly/hohZnc>

The UN Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World and the International Coalition for the Decade



The UN General Assembly proclaimed the first decade of the 21st century as the International Decade for the Promotion of a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World. This followed resolutions about the International Year for the Culture of Peace and the International Day of Peace.

The action plan for the Decade proposed eight spheres of activities to promote the Culture of Peace:

- To reinforce a culture of peace through education
- To promote economically and socially sustainable development
- To promote the respect of all human rights
- To ensure the equality between women and men
- To support democratic participation
- To develop comprehension, tolerance and solidarity
- To support participative communication and the freedom of movement of information and knowledge
- To promote international peace and safety

Anticipating a lack of funding and follow-up by the UN system, an UN-based action group called for the involvement of civil society as well as the UN and its member states in partnership for a “global movement for a culture of peace.” This global movement was initiated by UNESCO in 2000.

The global movement developed during the first five years of the UN Decade. In order to measure its progress, UNESCO in November 2004 established a Website and a network to contact thousands of NGOs, requesting them to contribute to a report on progress toward a culture of peace to be submitted to a UN General Assembly plenary meeting to mark the midterm of the Decade.

Over three thousand pages of text and 500 photographs from 700 organizations in more than 100 countries were submitted to the Website’s information board.

In response to the first survey question, “Has your organization seen progress toward a culture of peace and nonviolence in your domain of action and in your constituency during the first half of the Decade?” an overwhelming majority of the respondents from every part of the world replied that they have seen progress, although it was difficult to measure quantitatively.⁷

In response to the second question, “What are the most

important obstacles that have prevented progress”, the two most frequent responses were: a) lack of adequate resources; and b) lack of media attention.

In fact, according to the 2010 Civil Society Report on the Decade: “As during the first half of the Decade, media attention to the Decade and support by UNESCO have been insufficient.” More than that, the report complained that “UNESCO abandoned the communication and networking arrangements established during the International Year for the Culture of Peace that were meant to provide an instant update of developments related to the observance of the Decade.”⁸

Meanwhile on the related NGO front, some national NGOs coalitions promoting the UN Decade were established in several countries, including Austria, France, Italy and the Netherlands as of 2001. In June 2003, these national coalitions along with international organizations set up an International Coalition for the Decade for the Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World to coordinate its members’ actions by gathering resources and information and sharing experiences and dialogue, particularly about education for peace and nonviolence. It was also intended that the International Coalition represent its member coalitions on the international level and coordinate international campaigns or actions upon themes of the UN Decade.⁹

The WCC/DOV and the Pontifical Council on Justice and Peace joined the International Coalition in 2003 in an observer and advisory capacity. The coalition brought together 15 national coordinating groups and 19 international organizations working for the goals of the International Decade. They lobbied for UN adoption of an International Declaration on the Right of Children for an Education without Violence and for Nonviolence and Peace.

Other coalitions and foundations with a direct and special relationship with the Decade for a Culture of Peace included the Fundación Cultura de Paz established by Federico Mayor Zaragoza after leaving his post as director-general of UNESCO, where he had been responsible for the initiation of the Decade. This coalition coordinated and published the Mid-term Decade Report from Civil Society in 2005. (See Fundación Cultura de Paz, above),

Classified as an international organization whose prior-

WHO Violence Prevention Alliance¹⁰

ity concern was “understanding, tolerance and solidarity,” the WCC/DOV provided information on churches’ actions and activities in the context of the Decade to Overcome Violence as input to the Final Civil Society Report of the UN International Decade for a Culture of Peace, submitted to the September 2010 UN General Assembly. ■

More Information:

World Report on the Culture of Peace:

<http://decade-culture-of-peace.org/>

UNESCO Website for Culture of Peace:

<http://www.unesco.org/cp>

Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World. A mid-term report from the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR). Alkmaar, 17 March 2005. <http://bit.ly/gd4CCx>

Final Civil Society Report on the United Nations International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World (2001-2010). May 2010.

<http://bit.ly/cPzsSM>

The Violence Prevention Alliance (VPA) was officially formed in January 2004 at a World Health Organization-hosted “Milestones of a global campaign for violence prevention” meeting. The Milestones meeting reviewed the progress made since the 2002 launch of the WHO’s *World Report on Violence and Health* and its subsequent Global Campaign for Violence Prevention.

The *World Report on Violence and Health* was the first comprehensive review of the problem of violence on a global scale – what it is, whom it affects and what can be done about it.

The VPA is a network of WHO member states, international agencies and civil society organizations working to prevent violence. VPA participants share an evidence-based public health approach that targets the risk factors leading to violence and promotes multi-sectoral cooperation. It is an opportunity for groups from all sectors (governmental, non-governmental and private) and levels (community, national, regional and international) to unite around a shared vision and approach to violence prevention that works both to address the root causes of violence and to improve services for victims.

Based on the finding that interpersonal violence alone causes a significant portion of worldwide violence-related deaths and disabilities and that its many sub-types are closely related to self-directed and collective violence, initial VPA efforts concentrated on interpersonal violence while at the same time addressing its links with other forms of violence.

In 2009, WHO and John Moores University (Liverpool) launched *Violence prevention: the evidence*, an eight-part briefing series on the evidence for interventions to prevent interpersonal and self-directed violence. The briefings focus on preventing violence through

- developing safe, stable and nurturing relationships between children and their parents and care-givers;
- developing life skills in children and adolescents;
- reducing access to lethal means including guns, knives and pesticides;
- promoting gender equality to prevent violence against women;
- changing cultural and social norms that support violence;
- and reducing violence through victim identification, care and support programmes.

They provide clear directions on how violence prevention funders, policy-makers and programme implementers can boost the impact of their violence prevention efforts.

A John Moores University Violence Prevention Website provides an evidence-based resource for policy-makers, practitioners and others working to prevent violence. It includes a searchable data base of abstracts from published studies that measure the effectiveness of interventions to prevent child abuse, elder abuse, intimate partner violence, sexual violence and youth violence; key publications and resources on violence and its prevention; news and updates from the field of violence prevention; and links to relevant organizations.

In 2004, the WCC/DOV office produced a CD ROM containing background documents and other resources, including the WHO *World Report on Violence and Health*. Judging that WHO's analytical information on violence and violence prevention would be useful for the churches' efforts, the WCC/DOV coordination office attended several WHO Milestones conferences as a VPA member and consistently shared and publicized VPA insights, facts and information with its partners. WCC/DOV also encouraged churches to join national or regional VPAs, following the example of the churches in Jamaica (see description of the work of the Jamaica VPA in "DOV Stories and Examples of 'Good Practice'" section on p. 82). ■

More Information:

WHO Violence Prevention Alliance (VPA) Website:

<http://bit.ly/9RgASF>

Who World Report on Violence and Health. Eds. Etienne G. Krug, Linda L. Dahlberg, James A. Mercy, Anthony B. Zwi and Rafael Lozano. World Health Organization, Geneva, 2002. <http://bit.ly/fpPuu2>

Violence prevention: the evidence. WHO/JMU Centre for Public Health. ISBN 978 92 4 150084 5 (NLM classification: HV 6625) <http://bit.ly/e9yUHn>

WHO Violence and Injury Prevention and Disability (VIP) Website: <http://bit.ly/dZAmcA>

John Moores University violence prevention Website: <http://bit.ly/hmDadR>



It sometimes felt during the DOV as though we were driving with the handbrake on. Despite this, we have set some crucially important things in motion.

Rev. Hansulrich Gerber



CONCLUSION: WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED, AND WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

By Hansulrich Gerber

The aim here is to describe the context in which the Decade happened and to cast a critical eye over what it has achieved. From that vantage point, I will offer some observations about the challenges and stumbling blocks that I see ahead today, in the aftermath of the DOV.

The Decade has not been an unmitigated success, but it *has* had some real successes and it has set in motion a process of prioritizing peace in the ecumenical movement that cannot now be stopped.

The Decade began in a context of

- the end of the Cold War, and of apartheid;
- the start of an ubiquitous daily liturgy of violence all over the world;
- the first fruits of interdisciplinary research on violence prevention work;
- the recognition and spread of new approaches in peace-building and conflict resolution;
- growing acknowledgement among the international community of religion's potential to play a constructive role in peace-making and its the importance for the work of reconciliation;
- the waning public influence of the churches in Europe and North America;
- the UN Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World;
- the institutional shrinkage and, hence, the reduced capacity of the WCC.

The Decade followed several high-profile ecumenical projects that called for continued effort and follow-up. These included, firstly, the conciliar process around Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC), launched at the 1983 WCC Assembly in Vancouver, a process that never actually ended but gradually assumed a lower profile during the 1990s.

Another precursor was the 1988-1998 Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women. This Decade made it eminently clear that violence against women is widespread in all cultural and confessional contexts. It successfully used the model of "Living Letters" to reach many in the churches, yet the hopes of the Decade were not fully realized across the membership of the WCC.

Immediately preceding the DOV was the Programme to Overcome Violence (POV), which began with a campaign called Stop the Illegal Occupation in Israel-Palestine (see "Overcoming Violence 1994-1998: From Programme to Decade" section on p. 11), and included the innovative Peace to the City (PTTC) campaign and prepared the ground for the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) (see Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel in "An Overview of International Activities and Projects" section on p. 24). Of these initiatives only the EAPPI – firmly anchored in the life of the churches – remains. The letting-go of the high-profile Peace to the City Campaign and the PTTC network did lasting damage to the Decade.

What Has the DOV Accomplished?

1. The DOV has moved the concern for peace, reconciliation and justice closer to the heart of the churches. It has not moved peace into the centre of church life, but it has revealed how much peace is still marginal.
2. The DOV has helped to raise the profile of many long-standing peace initiatives and to help build them into networks. It has contributed to the awareness of peace work and the motivation to take it up. In this regard, the DOV Annual Foci were instrumental, as were the Living Letters.
3. The discourse on war, peace and violence has shifted from

the debate on just war to the elaboration of the meaning and the practice of "just peace". The shift created an agenda that has become inescapable for churches. Debate over the emerging norm, the Responsibility to Protect, brought the shift into focus. (See The Responsibility to Protect in "DOV Themes and Issues" section on p. 114.)

4. During the Decade, the complexity of issues around violence has become much clearer and the discourse more differentiated. The DOV has helped to spread lessons learned through the World Health Organization's work on violence and thus contributed to more effective approaches to violence prevention.
5. Nonviolence has until now hardly been part of the theological vocabulary or of church liturgies. The DOV has helped to reintroduce this challenging notion and has revealed a tremendous ignorance of active nonviolence among churches.
6. Through expert consultations, the DOV has provided a platform to understand the importance of the healing of memories and to hear healing stories from different parts of the world. Regional consultations on related subjects have also helped explore forgiveness and reconciliation.
7. Finally, the DOV has facilitated the development of some new directions in interreligious encounters and cooperation for peace, through seminars at the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey during the first half of the Decade and interreligious initiatives during its final years.

Challenges for the Work Ahead

1. Setting nonviolence and peace, the healing of memories and reconciliation in the very centre of the churches' life must be vigorously pursued beyond the Decade and at all levels of church life. Appeals and statements made over decades need to be actually applied. For that, we need new partnerships that generate joint practical commitments. The threat to the human family of direct and indirect

violence against nature was not taken into consideration sufficiently by the DOV, especially at its beginning. The subject has been brought to the table in the latter part of the Decade, as its urgency increased drastically and calls for immediate action multiplied.

2. The theological discourse generally assumes that violence essentially originates from conflict and that conflict, if not stopped, inevitably leads to violence. That is inconsistent with much of the biblical narrative, the lessons of history and the findings of modern science. This theological and cultural mentality overlooks the fact that conflict does not exclude love, but violence does. The confusion of conflict and violence, very common in the news media, is detrimental to the ministry of reconciliation and for building peace. It is precisely for this reason that close collaboration between theology and sociology/anthropology and a consistent interdisciplinary approach between churches, civil society and the scientific community is essential. We see such cooperation growing within the Violence Prevention Alliance initiated by the WHO. (See Violence Prevention, a Public Health Approach in “DOV Themes and Issues” section on p. 116, and WHO Violence Prevention Alliance in “Networks Related to DOV” section on p. 128.)
3. There is still much theological and educational work to do on the DOV objective to “relinquish any theological justification of violence”. Such work is imperatively ecumenical and interdisciplinary. It requires deep reassessments of common assumptions on atonement and redemption.
4. Nonviolence as a way of life and an approach to conflict must be pursued as a beautiful, spiritual and practical value. Nonviolence is far more than the notion of not using force. Nonviolence needs to be rehabilitated in church and society as realistic, risky and faithful to the human calling, regardless of religion or creed. Conflict does not break communities and oppress people; violence does so, in many forms. The real alternative is nonviolence, which means respect and love or loving kindness. Is not that how God is revealed in Christ?

5. The senseless and scandalous increase in world military spending goes largely unchallenged among the churches. At the end of the Decade, world hunger could be eliminated with one week of the world’s military spending. The DOV has not managed to mobilize churches on this issue. Perhaps the stones will cry out. (See World Military Expenditures Versus Spending on Education and Health in “International Actions and Projects” section on p. 47, and Churches at Work for a World without Nuclear Weapons in “DOV Themes and Issues” section on p. 109.)

It is difficult to measure the Decade’s achievements in programmatic terms. However, the endeavours of so many individuals and organizations over a period of ten years have contributed to an essential shift in ways that will last. The DOV increased the churches’ awareness that peace is a gift of God and offered more differentiated analyses of peace than many churches had known previously. The DOV was a beginning. It is up to us all to continue the work. ■

A Swiss Mennonite minister, Rev. Hansulrich Gerber trained as school teacher and catechist and worked in youth ministry, then studied theology in Elkhart, USA and was pastor of the Mennonite Church in Bern, Switzerland. Prior to joining the WCC’s Decade to Overcome Violence, Rev. Gerber served ten years as Europe director for the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). He is now president of International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR) and coordinates IFOR Switzerland.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

- 1 English Revised Version.
- 2 *Decade to Overcome Violence – Message, Letter, Basic Framework*, in: WCC, Central Committee, Minutes of the Fiftieth Meeting, Geneva, Switzerland, 26 August – 3 September 1999, pp.185-195.

OVERCOMING VIOLENCE 1994-1998: FROM PROGRAMME TO DECADE

- 1 *Just Peace Companion*, Chapter 2, “Recollecting the Stories: Decade to Overcome Violence,” draft document, p.17.
- 2 This account largely reproduces a text on the WCC International Affairs, Peace and Human Security - PEACEBUILDING AND DISARMAMENT Web page <http://bit.ly/ghjTaS>. It also draws on material posted on the now-dormant Peace to the City Website: <http://bit.ly/dZMrgJ>.

WCC ACTIONS AND PROJECTS: AN OVERVIEW

Launching the Decade

- 1 2001 WCC Activity report.

Theological Study and Reflection

- 2 *Realising mutuality and interdependence in a world of diverse identities*. Aide memoire, *theological consultation organized by WCC/Faith and Order in partnership with the Church of Norway and Norwegian Church Aid*. FO/2005:09, June 2005. Oslo, Norway, 27-30 April 2005. <http://bit.ly/euNYoY>
- 3 *Ibid.*

Women in Church and Society

- 4 The Tamar Campaign was conceived by the Ujamaa Centre for Biblical and Theological Community Development and Research at the University of Kwa-Zulu/Natal's School of Religion and Theology in Pietmaritzburg, South Africa in the 1990s.
- 5 An anthology on *Redemptive Masculinities* is a forthcoming WCC Publication, EHAIA Series.

- 6 Maryann's Reflection. DOV Website. <http://bit.ly/fxUfbx>
- 7 *Created in God's Image: From Hegemony to Partnership. A Church Manual on Men as Partners: Promoting Positive Masculinities*. Eds. Patricia Sheerattan-Bisnauth and Philip Vinod Peacock. World Communion of Reformed Churches / WCC, Geneva, Switzerland, November 2010 ISBN 978-2-9700686-7-9. <http://bit.ly/gXrCsc>
- 8 Breakthrough is an innovative, international human rights organization using the power of popular culture, media, and community mobilization to transform public attitudes and advance equality, justice, and dignity. Through initiatives in India and the US, Breakthrough addresses critical global issues including violence against women, sexuality and HIV/AIDS, racial justice and immigrant rights.

Impunity, Truth, Justice and Reconciliation

- 9 The latter being a case study mentioned in an article published in French “*Ethique, Justice Restauratrice et droits de victimes*”, in Martin A. (ed.) *La mémoire et le pardon*, L'Harmattan, Paris 2010.
- 10 An independent study commissioned by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan that aims to provide guidance to states facing the daunting challenges bound up in their efforts to combat impunity
- 11 The International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (Disappearances Convention) entered into force on 23 December 2010, after Iraq became the 20th country to ratify it. <http://bit.ly/bURQ9Y>
- 12 The Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law were adopted and proclaimed by the UN General Assembly resolution 60/147 of 16 December 2005. <http://bit.ly/icmZhZ>

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- 13 Story of Alix Lozano shared by Janet Plenert, in Jacques Matthey (ed.): *Come, Holy Spirit, Heal and Reconcile! Report of the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, Athens, Greece, May 2005*. Geneva, WCC, 2008, pp. 191 and 192.

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14 *Call to Recommitment. Mid-Term of the Decade to Overcome Violence 2001-2010: Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace.* WCC Ninth Assembly, Porto Alegre, Brazil, February 2006. <http://bit.ly/hHSDPG>

15 *Ibid.*

16 *Ibid.*

Living Letters Visits (Preface)

17 *Gun control issues, peacemaking activities greet Living Letters team at start of United States visit.* WCC press release, 20 September 2007. <http://bit.ly/gChjJc>

Living Letters Visits

18 *Living Letters to Kenya 30th January to February 3rd 2008,* DOV Website, <http://bit.ly/fhaNLn>

The Right of Conscientious Objection to Military service

19 *Minute on the right of conscientious objection to military service,* WCC Central Committee meeting, September 2009: <http://bit.ly/2y3JPa>

World Military Expenditures and Spending on Education and Health

20 *Decade to Overcome Violence. Churches seeking Reconciliation and Peace.* DOV brochure, WCC 2006, p.3.

21 *Statement by the WCC Executive Committee,* 13-16 September, 2005. <http://bit.ly/ehhOFU>

Getting Ready for the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation

Expert consultations

22 The Expert Consultations page on the DOV Website at <http://bit.ly/h66goi> was the main source of information on the “expert consultations”.

23 *Expert Consultations – 2007-2010: Key Learnings,* WCC-IEPC internal document.

24 *Violence in media and entertainment: Challenges and opportunities.* International consultation, Boston, USA, June 2010. DOV Website <http://bit.ly/i0kb47>

25 *R2P and Just Policing: A Roman Catholic and Yoderian Perspective,* paper presented by Tobias Winright (Ph.D.) during the consultation on the Responsibility to Protect, Arnoldshain, Germany.

26 *Peace and Peacemaking as an Interfaith and Ecumenical Vocation: an Orthodox View.* Paper by Rev. Dr Emmanuel Clapsis, pre-IEPC Inter-Orthodox consultation, Leros, Greece, September 2009. <http://bit.ly/h0FUOO>

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Spiritual Life Working Group

28 IEPC Spiritual Life Working Group: Recommendations, Saydnaya, Syria 1- 7 December 2008. Unpublished internal document.

29 IEPC Spiritual Life Working Group: Recommendations. Hildesheim, Germany, 8-14 August 2009. Unpublished internal document.

Towards an Ecumenical Declaration on Just Peace

30 Statement on the responsibility to protect in the report on “Vulnerable populations at risk.” Report from the Public Issues Committee, WCC Ninth Assembly, Porto Alegre, Brazil. 23 February 2006. <http://bit.ly/epRCXU>.

31 *Churches world-wide to participate in major mobilization for peace,* WCC press release, 28 March 2007. <http://bit.ly/h0yCGX>

32 *A Mennonite-Catholic Contribution to the International Ecumenical Declaration on Just Peace,* WCC press release, 17 April 2008 <http://bit.ly/hWG2Yx>

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35 *Ibid.*

36 *Ibid.*

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- 5 *Ibid.*
- 6 *Living letters at US churches' gathering: solidarity and challenges*. DOV website, October 2004. <http://bit.ly/eNH5M9>
- 7 *Building Communities of Peace for All*, DOV Newsletter, No.1 February 2005, p.2. <http://bit.ly/dWwftz>
- 8 Report on the 2006 Annual Focus on Latin America. Unpublished internal report.
- 9 DOV Web page on Pacific focus resources. <http://bit.ly/dEbjz>
- 10 *Peace Sunday Worship resources 2009*. CWS Action Against Poverty, New Zealand, Website. <http://bit.ly/gqCWYs>
- 11 *Moruroa: The Story Isn't Over*, feature article by Nic Maclellan, 15 May 2009. <http://bit.ly/hFANi5>
- 12 *STRATEGIC PLAN 2008 – 2012*, Pacific Conference of Churches, November 2007. <http://bit.ly/gGsq1A>
- 13 Report on DOV Reference Group and IEPC Planning Committee meeting, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 23-30 January 2010. Unpublished internal report.

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- 3 *About Viva Rio*. Viva Rio Website. <http://bit.ly/earkTH>

Creating a Violence Free and Safe Jamaica: VPA Jamaica

- 4 Jamaica VPA Fact Sheet. <http://bit.ly/euLp7i>

5 *Ibid.*

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7 ACCORD/Conciliation resources Web page on PNG-Bougainville project. <http://bit.ly/dObUqs>

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- 8 From an unpublished letter to DOV from Rev. Ron Reeson, YAP project officer, Uniting International Mission, UCA NSW. April 2006.
- 9 *Ibid.*
- 10 “Does it really work?” article by Margaret Reeson, YAP International Committee member in *LivePeace, YAP Newsletter*, Issue 01, June 2005.

Muslim and Christian Women Pray the Devil back to Hell, Liberia

- 11 Statement of intent issued by the Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET). <http://bit.ly/ds2qOX>
- 12 “Sending the Devil Home. A documentary shows how women toppled a dictatorship and brought Liberia’s decade-long civil war to a halt.” Article by Stanley Crouch, on *the ROOT* Website. 9 July 2010. <http://wapo.st/dtvPNM>
- 13 *Ibid.*

The Decade in Germany

- 14 This account was provided by Rev. Dirk Rademacher and other members of the German Open Forum for the Decade.
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The project’s formal activities included the following meetings:
 - A strategic workshop at the World Social Forum in Mum-

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- An international professional conference in St Petersburg, Russia in October 2004
 - An international professional conference in Dhaka, Bangladesh in November-December 2004
 - An international professional conference in Yaoundé, Cameroon in March 2005
 - A panel discussion, workshop and “76, Rosenstrasse” exhibit at the Protestant Kirchentag, Hannover, Germany in May 2005
 - A workshop, 76, Rosenstrasse” exhibit and international professional exchange “Femme globale” in Berlin, Germany in September 2005
 - A workshop and 76, Rosenstrasse” exhibit at the Ninth WCC Assembly in Porto Alegre, Brazil in February 2006
 - An international professional conference in Managua, Nicaragua in February 2006
 - The Rosenstrasse” exhibit and panel discussion at the central station in Stuttgart, Germany in March 2006.

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Interreligious Cooperation in the Challenge of Overcoming Violence

- 1 *Nurturing Peace, Overcoming Violence: In the way of Christ for the sake of the World. An invitation to a process of theological study and reflection on Peace, Justice and Reconciliation during the Decade to Overcome Violence: Churches Seeking Peace and Reconciliation 2001-2010.* Programme desk on Theological Study and Reflection on Peace, Faith & Order, WCC, Geneva, September 2003. <http://bit.ly/fskHez>
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- 3 *Vulnerable populations at risk. Statement on the responsibility to protect.* Report to the WCC Ninth Assembly, Porto Alegre, Brazil, 23 February 2006. <http://bit.ly/epRCXU>
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Violence Prevention – A Public Health Approach

- 5 See account of the work of the WHO Violence Prevention Alliance in the Related Networks section, below.

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- 1 *A Church of All and for All - An interim statement* presented to the 2003 WCC Central Committee meeting. <http://bit.ly/hQ6PC8>
- 2 “Voicing out for the Silenced: A Seminar Curriculum on Disability and Violence for Local Churches and Theological Institutions” in *Ministerial Formation* No. 103, July 2004, p. 14. <http://bit.ly/i9yMW2>

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APPENDIX II: Members of the DOV Reference Group

2001-2007

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A record of gratitude and a sign of hope, *Overcoming Violence* summarizes the many activities initiated by the WCC Decade for Overcoming Violence, which was launched to aid churches in moving peacebuilding from the periphery to the centre of church life and witness. The reader gains a sense of the energy, creativity, and passion that the initiative engendered around the globe.

There is a need to bring together the work on gender and racism, human rights and transformation of conflict in ways that engage the churches in initiatives for reconciliation that build on repentance, truth, justice, reparation and forgiveness.

The Council should work strategically with the churches on these issues to create a culture of nonviolence, linking and interacting with other international partners and organizations, and examining and developing appropriate approaches to conflict transformation and just peacemaking in the new globalized context.

Therefore, the WCC proclaims the period 2001-2010 as an Ecumenical Decade to Overcome Violence.

— Excerpt from *Together on the Way* – Official Report of the Eighth Assembly of the WCC, Harare, December 1998



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