

Peace It Together NEWS
The Monthly Newsletter of UNOY Peacebuilders
Number 43 – September 2008



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1. MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Dear friends,

Welcome to the latest edition of the Peace It Together Newsletter from UNOY Peacebuilders. This month, UNOY has selected its member in Peru to highlight their peace building efforts. In the Campaign section an activity recently run by our member in Palestine is recognised; as well as a member who attended the Biennial Meeting of States in New York City. In the Network section there are updates about the Summer School UNOY recently hosted and our recent Advocacy Newsletter. In the Themes in Focus section we have decided to extensively highlight the Georgia-Russia conflict. The Highlighted Resource and Opportunities and Events are of course included also. Once again I hope that you will enjoy reading, and do not hesitate to send articles for inclusion, or any comments about the newsletter to campaign@unoy.org.

Peaceful regards,

Gemma Sou

Editor

2. MEMBER OF THE MONTH:

Brigadas de Voluntarios, Peru (By *Jorge Galiano*)

The Brigada de Voluntarios Bolivarianos (BVBP) of Peru, (BVBP) was founded in 1982, as one of the conclusions of the Second Meeting of Mayors of the Bolivarian Countries. This was convened by the Metropolitan Municipality of Lima in order to celebrate the birth of Simon Bolivar. "Liberator of America".

The Bolivarian volunteers organized a series of proposals suggesting new proposals for the Peruvian and Latin American youth to promote a democratic organization of young people, for young people. They proposed working partnerships between social organisations and youth policies. They wanted to raise the promotion of, encourage and stimulate new leadership linked to the changing reality of the country, and the challenges of governance.

Since 1986, BVBP began work at the national level and to develop exchanges between volunteers of youth organizations from Europe, Asia, North

America. They also began work involving network integration and interaction in Latin America.

Today BVBP has 26 years of work experience, and is regarded as one of the most valuable organisations for volunteerism in Latin America. They act as leaders of National Day celebrations, of the Global Youth Service Volunteers, and maintain numerous contacts with youth programmes. These include the Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service (CCIIVS) of UNESCO, UNOY Peacebuilders, Youth Action for Peace (YAP) and many more.



One of the main activities of BVBP is to develop annual courses on "Central Youth Leadership" where activities are implemented to promote internal democracy. Every two years they undertake the National Congress and they attend the National Meeting of Presidents annually.

In 2008 they had a presence in over 23 provinces of Peru, and 4 districts in the city of Lima, thus illustrating that they remain a pivotal force in the work of youth volunteers. We wish BVBP much success in their future projects.

3. CAMPAIGN NEWS

3.1 Hoping Against Hope, AEI Sumud Concept

(By *Fuad Giacaman, AEI Open Windows, edited by Gemma Sou*) "From the ashes of our hopelessness Spring the flames of our hope" Graffiti on the Wall near Rachel's Tomb/Bethlehem.

Sumud is the persistence in living, preserving, celebrating, asserting and showing a strong attachment to the Palestinian home, community and land in spite of



continuous obstacles and challenges, hoping for a bright future of justice, peace and freedom. In a way, by exploring Sumud, one touches the spirit or soul of Palestinian society.

Creatively, AEI-Open Windows addresses this concept of Sumud in different types of activities. For example, AEI-Open Windows has established the "Sumud Peace House", which is located in a desolated area in Bethlehem because of the building of the Wall around Rachel's Tomb. The Sumud Peace House is a cultural initiative against the fragmentation of community life inflicted upon civilians by the Wall and a show of support for life-giving sources of community building. On the other hand, AEI has been also organising public actions against the injustice of the occupation i.e. the Living Star and the Human Clock. (see above picture)

AEI also organizes a yearly summer school for around one month entitled "Arts and Sumud". The summer school encourages Palestinian youth and women to communicate the concept of Sumud through different kinds of arts, including handicrafts and popular arts.

Furthermore, AEI has been publishing several publications about *Sumud* with non-violent educational materials; like "*Challenging the Wall: Toward a Pedagogy of Hope*", and "*Hoping against Hope*".



Sumud has been a very important concept for the AEI, especially during the AEI youth and women groups' weekly meetings; the members discuss and reflect on this value in a peace and spirituality activity called RRCA (Read, reflect, Communicate and Act). It builds inner-peace through reflection, meditation, peace and spirituality activities, which are essential for creating inner-strength as a step towards building external peace. www.aeicenter.org

3.2 Biennial Meeting of States *(By Charles Bwembya, edited by Gemma Sou)*

The Biennial Meeting of States took place between the 14th and 18th of July 2008 at the United Nations headquarters in New York City. Charles Bwembya from Coalition for Peace was fortunate enough to attend and he now shares his observations with us. The meeting brought together government representatives from all U.N member states, to discuss the progress of the programme of action on small arms. NGO's from across the globe also attended to discuss their work and recommendations on small arms in their respective countries. Interestingly, at least 5000 people were shot dead world wide during the five days of the meeting, illustrating the severity of this problem.



The meeting focused on reducing illicit arms brokering, improving the management of stockpiles and strengthening international cooperation. Extensive networking also took place, as Charles enjoyed fruitful discussions with the Centre for Conflict Dialogue of New York, who are now collaborating with him on several of their programmes, and who would now like to cooperate with UNOY Peacebuilders.

From this meeting several position papers were generated and a report was read which highlighted that firearms ought to be marked at the point of manufacture to help trace the locations of illegal trade. There were also recommendations on the management of state arsenals and on the legislation of arms brokering. The substance of the report was weaker than IANSA members and most gun-affected countries had hoped. For example, the recommendation on stockpile management does not mention ammunition, despite this being the main cause of explosions. There is also no obligation for countries to mark firearms at the point of import, which would significantly increase the effectiveness of tracing. Towards the end of the meeting, states

strengthened their commitment to work together to curb the illicit arms trade. 134 states voted for the outcome of the Biennial Meeting, with no state voting against it and Iran and Zimbabwe abstaining. www.copafira.org

4. NETWORK NEWS

4.1 UNOY goes to school...! *(By Silvia Silvozzi, former UNOY European Desk Officer)*

This summer UNOY Peacebuilders undertook a new adventure. In partnership with the department of Social Sciences at the University of Utrecht, UNOY has once again developed the peacebuilding skills of youth during a two-week (4-15 August) course entitled "Education for Peace, Human Rights and Justice" in Utrecht.



Throughout the Summer School there were five focal themes: *A culture of Peace and Non-Violence, The Challenge of a Culture of Peace, The Problem of Violence, The United Nations and the development of Peace, Human Rights and Justice, and The Challenge of Peace Education.* Furthermore, the Summer School aimed to cultivate conflict management and transformation, non-violent strategies, overcoming prejudices by inter-ethnic and inter-religious dialogue, conditions of learning and teaching peace, school development towards a culture of peace and finally civil peace action.



UNOY's involvement has been dedicated to the organisation of the event, in terms of the programme's content, as well as the execution of more logistical tasks. A team of members composed of those from The University of Utrecht and officers from UNOY (whose programme directors are Prof. Lennart Vriens and Menno Ettema respectively)¹, were responsible for preparation of the Summer School. This team set up the aforementioned curriculum of the programme, with much attention being given to the combination of academic knowledge and non-formal education.

An open-day to UNOY's office was an opportunity for an interactive session on the theme of Peace work.



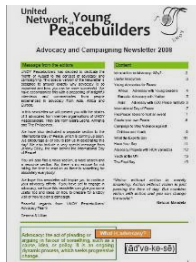
Four workshops were performed by the team of UNOY Peacebuilders. This excursion to The Hague was concluded with a guided tour around the Peace Palace.

Without doubt the diversity of the group, which included international students, social workers, activists and professors, made the 2008 Summer School on Peace Education, Human Rights and Justice a welcome opportunity for a wide spectrum of

¹ The whole team of preparation: Lennart Vriens, Menno Ettema, Anke Kooke, Janne Poort-van Eeden, Elly Rydes, Annick Peskens and Silvia Silvozzi.

experiences, from direct problem solving, peace meditation, to friendship...and of course, fun! The ultimate goal of the creators was to '...allow the participants to learn new strategies in order to create a culture of peace...'. Feedback from all participants; was also supplied which will allow UNOY Peacebuilders to further improve future Summer Schools.

4.2 Advocacy Newsletter (By Gemma Sou)



Last month UNOY Peacebuilders dedicated the Peace It Together Newsletter to Advocacy. This special version of the newsletter was designed to answer exactly why advocacy is so important and how you can be more successful when undertaking such work. The newsletter included interviews, commentaries, useful resources and news items. We hope that you enjoyed this Newsletter and found it useful and engaging. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our members and affiliates who contributed to the Advocacy Newsletter. Furthermore, the entire UNOY Peacebuilders team would be delighted to hear about your thoughts and opinions about the Advocacy Newsletter. What did you think of the exercises? Did you like the layout and design? What did you think of the content in general? Please send your comments to advocacy@unoy.org and we will consider them fully.

4.3 UNOY Board Inauguration

UNOY Peacebuilders would like to welcome and wish good luck to all members of the new board which was inaugurated on September 5. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank all previous board members for their involvement in UNOY. A full list of the new board members can be found online: <http://unoy.org/about/present.html> Please find below a message from Wout Visser, Chair of the UNOY Peacebuilders' Board, on behalf of the new board:

Being a youth led organization is part of the vision UNOY Peacebuilders is aspiring to. An element of the restructuring of the network, that started in 2006, was the installation of a Board that should mainly consist of 'young people'... The definition of youth was stretched slightly for this occasion, but the Interim Board did manage to make it happen: as of September 5th onwards, a new Board comprised of 10 members is in function (median age of 28 and slightly gender-unbalanced...) Our main tasks are to provide overall guidance to the network and assist the International Secretariat in coordinating and realizing the various UNOY projects.

During a nice event with games, speeches (the inevitable tear welling up), flowers and other gift giving going on, we gave a big Thank You to the Interim Board for their fantastic work in spearheading the past years' developments (and getting us in!). Of

course, since we all hate saying goodbye (really, we do) we consider their stepping down merely as a change in their relation to the organization, not a final 'let's draw the curtain, and see you never again' goodbye! Especially for Maria Kooijman, we will make sure to celebrate our 20th anniversary appropriately next year. Watch this space...

Now, on a more practical note. The size of the Board led us to divide ourselves up into a Daily Board, dealing with operational issues, a General Board, dealing with more longer term strategic issues and, importantly, thematic Working Groups to practically support the network's efforts in Fundraising, Advocacy & Campaigning, Monitoring & Evaluation, Gender mainstreaming and other important and pressing tasks. Together with our international members, staff in The Hague, our large pool of advisors and other interested stakeholders, these Working Groups must become the beating heart of the work UNOY Peacebuilders is carrying out to link young people working for peace.

4.4 Who Joined Us and Who Left



Michaela Almeida was born and raised in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. She is from Cape-Verdean origin. She studies European Studies at The Hague University, where it is her last year. She has also studied for 6 months at The University of Granada in Spain. For now she is interning at UNOY as the new African Students Conference Coordinator 2008.

However, the arrival of Michaela sees the sad departure of the European Network Coordinator and Campaign Desk Officer Silvia Silvozzi, and Gemma Sou, formerly the Asian Network Coordinator and Advocacy Officer. We also see the departure of our Information Desk Officer Amira Paripurna who has returned home to her native Indonesia. We thank them all for their efforts at UNOY Peacebuilders and wish them well with their future plans.

5. THEMES IN FOCUS

5.1 The Real Reasons for the Georgian-Russian Conflict (By Nino Togonidze of Tbilisi YMCA and Giorgi Shubitidze, photos supplied by HCA V anadzor)

For the last month we have witnessed the open aggression from Russia towards Georgia. This action was not drawn solely against Georgia, but was opposed to all the countries which support Georgia.



The provocation of the war from Russia can be explained in the following way:

Russia is opposed to NATO entering the Caucasus, as Russia will lose their influence here and NATO will then be able to approach the Russian border from the South Caucasus.

Georgia's integration into NATO brings an opportunity for Western countries to be supplied with energy by avoiding going through Russia. Russia was losing control over the separatist regimes existing on the territory of Georgia.

As the internally displaced people from the conflict region of Samachablo (so called South Ossetia) stated, from the 1 August, intensive bombing of Georgian villages had started, which occurred every day from 7PM until dawn. The Russian peacekeeping army was absolutely inactive and had not implemented its functions at all.

"...From the early hours of August 1, these villages sustained civilian casualties, and the destruction of property on a massive scale." The high-calibre weapons used by the separatists were supplied by Russia. These weapons are illegal in the conflict zone, under the terms of the international agreements Russia so strenuously claims Georgia has broken. By using these weapons, South Ossetia officially broke the cessation of hostilities agreement, and effectively went to war. Still, Georgia did nothing, hoping the attack would stop.



All through this onslaught, Russian forces stationed in the area did nothing. In spite of Georgian efforts to defuse the situation, the hostilities continued night after night, more damage was done, and more and more innocent civilians hurt.

Officials in charge of conflict settlement traveled to the region on a daily basis in an attempt to begin negotiations and avoid bloodshed. Each time they attempted to talk, the separatists stated poor excuses—mobile phones went mysteriously haywire, and convenient flat tires derailed planned meetings.

On August 6 and 7 Georgia's top negotiator arrived in Tskhinvali in a last ditch push for peace. The situation became critical, with ever more sustained attacks wreaking destruction in peaceful villages. President Saakashvili proposed negotiations yet again. Georgia also declared a unilateral cease-fire.



The bombardment of Georgian villages continued, leveling the settlement of Avnevi to the ground. There was every risk the remaining villages might be overrun, and

totally destroyed. With a Russian invasion force at the border, Russian planes bombed targets far outside the conflict zone, and the lives of thousands of civilians were at risk, thus the government of Georgia was forced to attempt to repel the threat.

Georgia did not roll the dice and hope for the best, as some people thought, it was forced to try to protect its citizens, which is a government's fundamental duty.

Russia forced Georgia into this war. No matter what Georgia did, the decision to destroy the country had been taken at the highest level a long time ago.

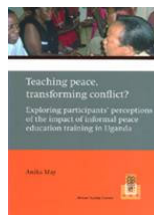
Georgia did not act rashly, Georgia did not respond to provocation. Georgia tried to avert this catastrophe, and when it became clear that it would be impossible, Georgia tried to defend itself. If Russia is allowed to duplicitously feign innocence, the world will give it a green light for it to repeat what it has done in Georgia elsewhere." ²

****DISCLAIMER****

Please note that the statements and opinions expressed in the above article concerning the conflict between Georgia and Russia, although edited, are those of the authors and not necessarily the official standpoint of UNOY Peacebuilders or of the editor.

6. HIGHLIGHTED RESOURCES

'Teaching Peace, transforming conflict? Exploring participants' perceptions of the impact of informal peace education training in Uganda', Anika May



This contributes to the bridging of peace education and conflict transformation, and explores the field of peace education from a participants' perspective. The nature and origins of peace education are first outlined. Taking the example of one specific workshop-style peace education programme that is implemented in Uganda, she then presents an analysis and discussion of its impact. She details major lessons learnt that can be applied to other, similar trainings and closes with recommendations for peace education programmes.

7. OPPORTUNITIES AND EVENTS

7.1 9th International Conference of Chief Justices of the World Global Symposium: 'Awakening Planetary Consciousness' (December 12-15, 2008, Lucknow, India)



This is an annual event to establish sustainable development, world unity and world peace. There is no registration or participation fee. See:

www.wmgd.net/symposium

SUPPORT UNOY PEACEBUILDERS

UNOY Peacebuilders needs your help to develop and grow in outreach and strength, either in terms of finances, materials or work. Your donation of any size will be used to train and enhance the capacity of young people to engage effectively in building peace.



You can financially contribute by making a deposit in our bank account:

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 Editor: Gemma Sou, United Network of Young Peacebuilders, Laan van Meerdervoort 70, 2517 AN The Hague, The Netherlands Tel: +31 70 364 7799; Fax: +31 70 362 2633; E-mail: campaign@unoy.org

² SOS Georgia, <http://sosgeorgia.org/analysis/busting-the-myths-just-whose-war-was-this/>, "Busting the Myths: Whose War Was It Anyway?", September 1, 2008