

Newsletter #14

Editorial

The summer is almost gone... time to meet and take stock of what happened this summer all around SCI workcamps! A few Peace Messengers met in October in Belgium, and brainstormed on the future of the network- more information inside this issue!

We also share with you Peace Messengers stories from all around the world: Sri Lanka, Nigeria, United Kingdom, and from a PM Travelling Workcamp participant. A testimony by a PM Training participant, who is planning to organise the next PM training, is also included.

Do not hesitate to also tell us about your experiences- send all stories and pictures to peacemessengers@gmail.com .

Article Budapest

From one PM training seminar...to the next ?

From 16 to 22 May, 20 participants from SCI branches all over Europe met in Budapest for the 2010 edition of the Peace Messengers training "Voluntary Approach towards a Culture of Peace", organised by the Hungarian branch of SCI: Útilapu Hálózat.

The training aimed at increasing our knowledge in peace education and cultural diversity, letting us know about the Peace Messengers group, and providing us with tools to create and run workshops. This year a particular



focus was set on "Migrations, Refugees and European borders". It took place in a forest on the hills of Buda, the perfect place to build a united group, relax in nature, do outdoor activities (under the rain!) and resist the tentation of going out too much in the city.

From the very first contact I knew I would enjoy my time there. After a few ice-breakers and highly-needed name games, the group spirit was already there and we remained united all along the week. We soon started the serious work: a succession of energizers, games, lectures, practical exercises, artistic workshops, debates and debriefings... The activities were varied so as to keep us attentive, let us know a certain number of methods, and help us find which one we feel most comfortable with. Being comfortable will be essential when we run workshops in real situations. Most of us had expressed their fears about it.

The Prep Team involved us a lot: we were encouraged to share ideas and bring in our own experience. A significant part of the contents had to come from us, the same way most of the contents of our future workshops will come from the participants.

Apart from the variety of nationalities and countries of residence (many of us live abroad), we also had different backgrounds, experience, roles within SCI, and motivations for participating. Far from dividing us, this diversity turned out very valuable since everyone had something different to offer.

The agenda was quite loaded and the timings rather tight. But we managed to stick to them. Surprisingly enough I never felt overwhelmed, tired or bored. I do not know if the secret to hard work is having good laughs but it certainly helped! A nice energy circulated within the group.

On Wednesday the trainers had pity on us and took us to an excursion in the city centre. Two itineraries were proposed, each one guided by a volunteer. Those who wanted to go on their own could just go and join us again later. If Útilapu Hálózat were a tour operator, "Guidance and Freedom" would be its motto. In the evening we discovered that in Hungary, as in many other places, the best food in town is the middle-eastern one!

On Friday, we ran the workshops we had elaborated in small groups. What a surprise and what a relief: we did it well! Not only had we acquired new knowledge and new skills; we had also gained in self-confidence. Also I realised I had learnt about myself. And I think some of the concepts we talked about can be useful in everyday life. Last but not least, we were given the will to get involved with Peace Messengers in several ways in the future.

We left the training with the will to meet each other again (which on Planet SCI is not as impossible as it may first sound). Some of us even wish to participate to the trainers' training and organise next year's Peace Messengers training. We do hope to transmit to the new generation all that we have received in Budapest. In the meantime, let's go bring the world our peace messages...

Patrick Leveux

Photos: <http://picasaweb.google.com/utilapuhalozat/PeaceMessengerTraining2010Csilleberc#>

PM Autumn Meeting 2010

In early October, 4 Peace Messengers and other guests gathered to evaluate the season and brainstorm to design a new structure for the network, in order to spread responsibilities and develop exchanges and sharing of experience between Peace Messengers.

New coordinators

We decided to share the coordination tasks between few people, and we identified the following profiles :

- *Training coordinator*
- *Website coordinator*
- *Newsletter coordinator*
- *General advocacy and networking coordinator*
- *Online training coordinator*
- *Mailing List and Wiki coordinator*

..not all positions are filled, so if you would like to take on one of the position, or contribute to on of these areas, get in touch wit us- we'll introduce you to the new coordinators in next issue of the newsletter !

And then we had another brilliant idea...Introducing :

The Regional/Thematic Godfathers and mothers :

The 'Godfathers' will coordinate subgroups.

Regional subgroups will consist of a branch where PM are particularly active and neighbouring branches, where PM can be more or less active, and who can easily meet. This way the coordinator can more easily provide support an advice to other branch, and foster exchange of information with people they will know personally. The cooperation can be at different level: just collecting information to share it with the PM network at large, organising bilateral or regional events, organising joint PM workshops...The coordinators will in any case report regularly to the PM network what is going on in their region.

Three 'clusters' are already proposed:

Austrian-Hungarian Empire, with SCI-Austria as Godfather – could include

Austria, Hungary, Serbia, Slovakia, Czech Republic...

Balkan Federation, with Lorena/PVN Albania as Godmother

Northern European League, with Sylvie/SCI-BE as Godmother- could include SCI-BE,

VIA-BE and NL, SCI-FR, IVS-GB, even VSI-IRL

Thematic subgroups will consist of branches that are interested in a specific topic and would like to have joined activities on this theme. They would be invited to develop a page on the PM website.

One group is already proposed, on refugees issues, with SCI-Austria, VSI-IRL and

IVS-GB.

Projects

This kept a bit of time to discuss about projects for 2010-11, namely: organising a PM training seminar, as well as a Training on Trainers; updating the PM Handbook; creating a toolkit on intercultural dialogue to be used on workcamps; finalising the website; more online courses..

Interested? Get in touch and join us!

PM on an interfaith project

Report on the Leicester Interfaith Gardening Workcamp(9/8/2010-19/8/2010).

This workcamp had 5 main themes. Firstly, learning about different religions in Leicester. We went to a mosque, a synagogue, a sikh temple, a hindu temple and quaker meeting house. We were given talk and had a question and answer session. There was also a chance to watch a service in some of the places. Secondly, gardening. We spent a couple of hours at each place doing gardening and sometimes painting. Importantly we did the gardening with members of the religious groups and this gave us a chance to talk informally to the members about their faith. Thirdly, studying about the slave trade. We saw the house where the abolition of slavery movement started. Then we visited Liverpool where we had a slavery tour and visited the slavery museum in Liverpool. Fourthly, we went to the Holocaust memorial centre in Nottinghamshire. Then we saw a harrowing film about the holocaust, visited the museum and gardens. We also spent time doing gardening at the centre. Fifthly, there was a talk about Pierre Ceresole, to whose memory the workcamp was dedicated. On top of all this I managed to do a peace messenger session. Also we had a gospel singing workshop (recommended even for the vocally challenged) and a tour of the city of Leicester.

For me this workcamp was a profound experience in many ways. The day in Liverpool looking at Britain's involvement in the slave trade was both painful and moving. And it is worth remembering that slavery continues today in the form of child slavery and sex slavery (check anti slavery international's website for more). The day at the Holocaust memorial centre was equally painful and moving. And still genocide has continued in places like the Balkans, Rwanda and Sierra Leone. It's as if we are sometimes unable or unwilling to learn the lessons of history. But I need to talk about the moments of the workcamp that inspired me like listening to Sara Elkes, the founder of the Leicester interfaith gardening project. Now in her 80's but still passionate about peace and religious tolerance and understanding. Also just talking with people from different religions and discovering more was inspiring. Equally inspiring, finding out more about Pierre Ceresole who, in 1920, at Verdun, France, managed to bring together people from countries who had been at war less than 24 months previously.

So what next? Well I know SCI Poland have done a project in 2009 on religious tolerance but maybe other SCI branches and partners and peace messengers could think about setting up a interfaith gardening workcamps in their countries. If not a international 2 weekcamp, maybe a weekend project for local members. I think many SCI people live in places live in cities and towns where diverse religious groups live. I think as a peace organisation, SCI would be in a good position to develop interfaith projects. The Leicester Interfaith gardening project has been going for 15 years. I am sure if you contact the IVS office they can give you information. Be inspired!

Michael Burkett,

IVS- Great-Britain

Peace project in Nigeria

SCI Peace Corps created in Nigeria

Great news of the wonderful events happening in Nigeria to commemorate the 90th Year of SCI peace project worldwide.

Under the aegis of Service Civil International - Switzerland, the energetic young people and elderly veterans of VWAN-Nigeria converged at the monumental city of Idanre in Ondo State Nigeria to discuss and explore more possibilities on areas of living and working together in harmony and peaceful atmosphere.

Pamina Sigrist, Maria Dobrinas of SCI-CH and Kola Aganran representing VWAN SCI-Contact group in Nigeria facilitated the scintillating programme with the presence of a renowned Professor in Conflict Resolution Department of University of Ibadan to deliver a technical papers on Conflict Resolution and Crisis Management in Nigeria and Africa in general.

New impetus were discovered, members were richly blessed with warm responses from all participants. The PVP Seminar / work-camp was a huge success. Resources of Peace messengers, No War Action Campaign and SCI-Archives materials were on hand to bring SCI Peace Ideology and Philosophy to the whole community. New branch was formed in the State, Peace Corps were constituted and SCI awareness was created in the State. CD-ROM and Photo Album were created. BRAVOOO!!

Spreading the message- even in unlikely places !

One of the Souvenir T-Shirts for the programme was requested by Immigration Officer at our border point from the our SCI-CH volunteer at the point of departure as solidarity to join in the SCI campaign for peace worldwide.



Travelling Workcamp 2010

TRAVELLING WORK CAMP 2010`

This article has already been published in SCI e-zine

Some twenty years ago, as a Conscientious Objector to obligatory military service in Spain I was given the opportunity to take part on a work camp as a volunteer; the organization behind was the SCI and the camp was in the Istrian town of Savudrija of the newly independent Croatia. The object of the voluntary work undertaken by the SCI, more specifically of our group of volunteers sent from Catalonia and other regions of Spain, was to work on a peace education program involving refugees victims of the war, mostly children from Bosnia, but also Serbian and Croatian. That experience was my first contact with the SCI and even though that first taking part as a volunteer had, somehow, shaped my life afterwards, it has taken twenty years for me to go back to a work camp organized by the SCI. Why, then, at a time in life when one is supposed to have started a family, got chained to a mortgage and begun a Pension Plan I decided to spend some of my holidays as a volunteer?

As a secondary school teacher I have become increasingly preoccupied with the conflicts that originate in the classroom in public schools, the widening distance between parents and children, children and teachers, teachers and parents. The need to direct more attention to education and conflict resolution within our schools has become obvious in recent years, thus I believe that a training in peace education and conflict resolution is a must for anyone interested in and working with children and young people. Hence my interest in participating on a work camp which offered the possibility of taking part on a training course on Peace Education, put it into practice through the creation of a workshop and presenting it on different work camps all over Germany. It was challenging, but also very interesting.

We stayed in Martin Niemoeller's house in Berlin, where we spent the first week of training. There were the teamers Anne and Felix, eleven volunteers from eight different nationalities and two trainers, the amazing Kathy Schroeder and Lorena Rodriguez. The time table was pretty tight and Kathy made sure that the schedule was kept; meals and house duties were organized in teams and although there was some time to relax, the training program was very intense. After five days of training we were ready to become Peace Messengers, it was time to form our own teams in order to create the workshops in Peace, Violence and Conflict Resolution that would be presented to the different work camps.

Two weeks of intense travelling by train with Zosia and Ana; three volunteers with no previous experience as Peace Messengers, three volunteers from three different countries and background travelling together in order to deliver a message of peace.

Our route would take us to Sanzkow, where we were to join a group of volunteers taking part on the initiative "Bürgerhaus e.V." (www.burgerhaus-ev.de/sanzkow). This was our first work camp as Peace Messengers. We arrived there on Monday afternoon and were welcomed by the team leader and the group of volunteers; it is interesting to realise looking back, that, although we never spoke about it, we managed to melt with the group of volunteers very quickly, perhaps because we were aware of the fact that our visit was very short and we wanted to make the most of it: getting to know the people, their work, their opinions and share of experiences, was very important to us. We understood that our presence, our task as Peace Messengers, would only make sense if we were able to integrate our workshop within the group's inquietudes; thus the workshop would be, in part, a practical set of instruments to be used by the group and by each individual within the group. Work camps may be envisaged as ideal contexts for Peace Education but, do work camps automatically mean Peace? And how a group of volunteers with no previous experience, get together to talk about it? Meeting the first group of volunteers helped us to shape our own discourse and by the time we reached Glücksburg, the second work camp, our confidence had been established.

We arrived at the "Artefact Centre" (www.artefact.de) on Friday evening, so we spent the whole weekend engaged on leisure activities with the volunteers, which included a bicycle ride around the Baltic Sea coast on the Danish border. On Monday we joined the rest of the volunteers in the task of cleaning and building compost toilets, on Tuesday we presented our workshop and left the following Wednesday. In this camp, the group of volunteers was far more eclectic than in the previous one, there were people from Japan, Russia, Ukraine, France, Italy and Germany and it was very interesting to observe the different reactions to certain aspects of Peace and Violence depending on the cultural background.

Our third and last work camp was Tagungshaus in Wernsdorf (www.tagungshaus-wernsdorf.de). Personally speaking, this was a true discovery. An amazing group of people already living and working together, far from power-based structures; it really seemed rather pointless to do a workshop on Peace when we could learn so much about it from those people who were already living it. I had one of the best moments of my journey working alongside Claudia, a member of the community, helping her to build a giant swing for the children. Nevertheless, after a day's work, the time to do our workshop arrived and we presented it to the volunteers working there, a very enthusiastic audience ready to participate and help. The next day we were going back to Berlin to close the circle.

Once back in Berlin we met the rest of the travelling work camp volunteers, the family of Peace Messengers we had become. We were all full of stories and anecdotes; we found out that another group could not travel to the first work camp because it had been suspended, other groups had been less fortunate than ours and not in all the camps had been met with the same hospitality we had generally encountered; we were all tired and smelly and very eager to see each other again.

I am sure that I can speak for the majority of us who took part on the travelling work camp when I say that we enjoyed it greatly and there are moments we will never forget. Personally I learned a great deal about Peace, Violence and Conflict Resolution, about other people but above all, about myself.

Alex Graupera

Peace Brigade of SCI-Sri Lanka

History and Objectives

In 2003, SCI international adopted the strategic plan for 2004-2009 in order to better coordinate the action of the branches around common goals. One of these goals was "to improve the quality of peace education within the movement." Peace Messengers were formed to make this goal a reality. Peace Messengers are volunteers visiting work camps in order to run peace education activities. They can visit work camps of their own branches, or in other countries. There is no fixed format for Peace Messengers sessions. The activities can be very different: an exercise aiming at raising awareness on one particular issue related to peace, a presentation, a testimony, an artistic workshop, or even a whole programme resulting in workcamp participants running awareness raising activities themselves in the local community. As a means of contributing and participating in this ambitious project SCI-Sri Lanka inaugurated the "Peace Messenger Brigade" with fifty activists – young and old, male and female, experienced and new recruits – they came from all parts of the country and represented all ethnic and religious groups.

What we did

We organized a two days residential workshop in Blue Rose training centre for SCI and non SCI volunteers. The program mainly focused on Theatre which is one of the best methods to approach the concept of Peace and the central values of the SCI. The session was conducted by a very experienced drama trainer attached to the University of Peradeniya.

On the first day the participants were warmly registered and had a game to get to know each other. Then the objectives of the workshop were presented to the group. In the evening they had a session about the peace messengers program and the ways and means of adapting the available resource materials to suit local conditions and expectations

The introduction to theatre and film was presented by Mr. Keneth and we had some documentaries related to the theatre. The next day was allocated to some group work on voice training and imagination. Then we taught about how to express ourselves through the concept of drama. This is the summery of the program we did and the program will be continued in the near future.

Decisions/suggestions/ actions taken by the participants

- The Peace messenger's brigade was formed to carry out the peace related actions in the future.
- To organize a workcamp on the theme "NO MORE WAR" in the Northern part of the Sri Lanka.
- To conduct study sessions during the work camps to convey the message of Peace with the collaboration of campers and the local community.
- To make new links with the other like minded organizations who work for Peace.
- To form a group within the Peace messengers' brigade to translate documents related to peace in to local languages so that all the members could fully understand the concept.
- A group was appointed to raise funds to carry out the work of PM. It comprised 5 members
 - Irshad Azmy
 - Christy Roy
 - Shakir Hussein
 - Niruban
 - Natasha Yatawara
- A group was formed to write articles/documentarys for the news letter/ publicationsetc. Natasha Yatawara, Charitha Jayasooriya and Niruban agreed to do this.
- One of the participants suggested to get appropriate action as peace messengers to control the CO2 emission in Kandy district. Eg: to organize a workcamp in Kandy centre, write a project proposal to control the CO2 emission.

Follow up actions taken by the Peace Messenger Brigade

The Peace messengers' brigade organized a work camp under theme o "NO MORE WAR" in Jaffna peninsula. Jaffna is very different from other parts Sri Lanka because of a more profound reason. It is a center of the Tamil speaking minority and has been a battleground between Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (Tamil tigers) and Sri Lankan army for almost three decades. Jaffna was a prohibited area for civilians from other parts of the country and was approachable only by air. Free movement of the people of Jaffna was also very much restricted and was under the rule of the military.

As SCI Peace Messenger's we are very proud that we were able to organize the first International "NO MORE WAR" workcamp in this area. It was held from 19th of August 2010 to 30th of August 2010. Volunteers worked in Neervely Ramapilli School in Kopay.

Peace Brigade of SCI-Sri Lanka

They painted the class rooms together with the parents, teachers and the students. And also they constructed live compost bins and taught them how to separate garbage in to organic and non organic waste. Meanwhile some volunteers cleaned and decorated the school premises. The special feature is the peace messengers organized a peace day for students to express themselves. They had a poster/ banner competition under the theme of "Peace". The students and the staff had a cultural event together with SCI volunteers. The Peace drama and some classical music events were presented by the school drama team.

Beside the above routine program the volunteers were able to involve themselves in several other relevant activities with the help of a local NGO - CHA (Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies) in Jaffna. During the last two days of the work camp SCI volunteers got the chance to visit an Island in the vicinity called Eluvaitivu which is nearly three Kms away from the Jaffna peninsula. The Island is populated by nearly 300 inhabitants, the majority being fishermen but still under the control of Military. We were very lucky to visit them and help them as the first volunteer group after liberating them from three decades cursed battle. An awareness program on personal hygiene and sanitation was conducted by some experienced volunteers while presenting them tooth brushes and tooth paste. Some sport items were donated by the SCI since the school in the Island did not have any sport equipment. There is no doubt that the children and the SCI volunteers had two days which was full of adventure and unforgettable events.

Conclusion

It is obvious that with the past moving life style and the struggle of living SCI volunteers can't find enough time to dedicate for the SCI. But without the involvement of more people in our all activities and actions it is very hard to implement the decisions/ suggestions we take. So we are hopeful that the qualitative and the quantitative participation of members would be involved with the SCI in near future.

As a voluntarily organization works for peace and environment sustainability, we would be more efficient, meaningful and transparent. It would lead to a sustainable existence of SCI in the future.

Finally I wish to acknowledge with thanks to all the SCI members who supported and guide to make this workshop success.

Link to Picasa web album:

http://picasaweb.google.com/placement.scisl/SCI_SL_PeaceMessengersProgram1_1213_06_2010?feat=directlink

Reference:

<http://www.spaceforpeace.net/contact-us.phtml>

21st of June 2010

Maduka Karunaratne

Office LTV- SCI Sri Lanka

