



# Friends Peace Teams Peace Ways

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By John Michaelis, Co-coordinator, Asia/West Pacific Initiative

## Asia/West Pacific: New Work in Nepal

September, 2012

I was privileged to travel to Kathmandu twice in 2008 to facilitate the first Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) workshops in Nepal. Those ranged from a Basic to facilitator training workshops. Subhash Kattel, who was instrumental in the invitation to bring AVP to Nepal, has organized some fifty workshops since then. Recently he was asked by the United Nations Refugee Agency to organize a series of workshops in two refugee camps in eastern Nepal where violence has been on the rise in recent years.

The kingdom of Bhutan, a small country east of Nepal and bounded by India and Tibet has interested me since I learned they base their economy on the GHI (Gross Happiness Index) rather than GDP (Gross Domestic Product). However, my opinion of Bhutan has changed since I learned that seventeen years ago they forced out more than 100,000 of their population, mostly ethnic Nepalese, more than 50,000 of whom are still housed in refugee camps near Damak, in south-eastern Nepal.

As often is the case in such situations, substance abuse in the camps—mainly alcohol consumption by men—has risen to the point where violence against women and children has become a serious problem.

I received a plea from Subhash a month or so ago to drop everything and come to assist in training a facilitation team to work in the camps. The training

is now complete. Fifteen new facilitators are keen to practice newly acquired skills.

I followed much of the AVP process I learned from Nadine Hoover in Indonesia. In the Advanced and Training for Facilitators (T4F) AVP workshops, the participants set ground rules they would follow in their daily lives, not just while they were in the workshop. They chose as a goal to live AVP transforming power in their lives. They felt that transforming power as described in the AVP

mandala was insufficient for their purpose and, after thoughtful discussion, they defined transforming power as *loving yourself, loving other people as you would like to be loved, and practicing integrity in all aspects of life.*

The consensus process in the advanced workshop followed the principles of discernment. We practiced times of silence, listening to each other speak from the silence, recognizing the wisdom of each

participant, and seeking the best solution for the situation, regardless of personal interest. We dealt with complex decisions including whether or not to cancel a basic workshop that was scheduled to follow the T4F.

Four facilitators, including Subhash, are now in one of the refugee camps in Damak, facilitating the first workshop there. They hope to complete at least twenty workshops by the end of 2012.



AVP facilitation class in Nepal, with their transforming power mandala

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## Preparing for Elections in Kenya

October, 2012

Building on the Election Violence Prevention Project initiated during the 2010 Burundian elections by the African Great Lakes Initiative, we are now working with the Kenyan Friends Church Peace Teams (FCPT), training citizen reporters to monitor the situation throughout the election process and report intimidation and violence to the Call-in Center.

Although the next election is scheduled for March 4, 2013, we have already activated the Call-in Center, trained citizen reporter trainers and conducted five citizen reporter trainings.

One area of particular concern is Mt. Elgon, on the border between Uganda and Kenya. From 2006 to 2008, perhaps 600 people were killed and almost 100,000 displaced in a major clash over land.

### Friends Peace Teams

Friends Peace Teams (FPT) is a Spirit-led organization working around the world to develop long-term relationships with communities in conflict to create programs for peacebuilding, healing and reconciliation. FPT's programs build on extensive Quaker experience combining practical and spiritual aspects of conflict resolution.

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Photo by Judi Brill

**HROC participants and facilitators on Mt Elgon in April 2012, joined by four Friends World Committee for Consultation World Conference attendees.**

In 2008, the Kenyan army entered the area and killed the leader of the rebel group and many of his armed followers. But little has been done on the underlying issues that led to the violence. An election will give opportunity for revenge killings.

Since 2008, FCPT/AGLI has conducted a number of Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) and eight Healing and Rebuilding Our Community (HROC) workshops on Mt Elgon.

In August 2012, we conducted citizen reporter training and within a few days we received alarming text messages to the Call-in Center. Four people were killed by an unknown gang, a school was burned down and threatening leaflets were sent to businessmen stating that they would be attacked if they did not leave the area. There were also reports that the two rival politicians in the area were recruiting youth militias.

Call-in Coordinator Peter Serete and FCPT Coordinator Getry Agizah attended a meeting called by the government chiefs in the area affected, but they felt that the

administration was doing little to address the situation.

Consequently, Peter and Getry called a meeting of those people from Mt. Elgon who had attended the AVP, HROC, and citizen reporter trainings for a consultation. The sixty local residents pinpointed a nearby community where much of the violence was originating. FCPT/AGLI is proposing to do a series of civic-education and HROC workshops and to train a group of citizen reporters in that area who will be organized into watch-dog groups.

When reports of incidents are made to the Call-in Center, the center can contact all the citizen reporters in the affected area, communicate with government and election officials, and report to international Quaker organizations.

Will this be effective in preventing violence? I don't know. I do know that we peacemakers should use all the resources and knowledge we have to do the best we are capable of today.

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## Peacebuilding en Las Américas: Guatemala

The people of Guatemala endured 36 years of civil war and genocide. The war ended in the 1996 Peace Accords. The trauma of war added greatly to the burdens of mental illness and disability among Guatemalans, particularly in rural indigenous communities who were disproportionately affected by the violence. The government of Guatemala has not adequately addressed the problems. Justice remains elusive for victims of the genocide, human rights defenders continue to be intimidated, and authorities fail to uphold the rights of Indigenous Peoples (Amnesty International report on Guatemala, 2012).

Rape and violence during the war normalized violence against women, which is widespread. The genocide deliberately destroyed the fundamental social fabric of Mayan communities because cohesion in a community is needed for resistance. It is also needed for healing.

Today, Guatemala is one of the world's most violent countries and impunity for criminal violence is the norm. Youth under 30 make up more than half of the population. The lack of work and educational opportunities and resulting poverty drive young people into criminal gangs. Fifty-five percent of all murder victims and perpetrators are young people. In Guatemala, a repressive, traumatized and violent society, mistrust is a tangible reality.

In *Programa Alternativas a la Violencia (PAV)*, a series of experiential, small-group workshops of 20 hours, participants develop a special sense of community based on trust and mutual respect. That atmosphere enables participants to explore and reflect on themselves and their lives so that they can access transforming power. They begin healing and strengthening their personal resources for dealing with violence. The workshops are a powerful resource in the lives of participants.

*Through the Community Based Trauma Healing workshop . . . I found a space to share and express them [my traumas] without fear or feeling ashamed of the reality in which I live and I face each day.*

*I also achieved understanding of the trauma that has affected my father for many years and which he has not had the opportunity to*

*express, [and I feel] challenged to help him by using some techniques I learned in the PAV workshop.*

Mildre Azucena Yaxon Sazo, September 2012

PAV Guatemala is a sustainable, locally governed organization that aims to provide a strong PAV workshop program with expanded accessibility, especially for vulnerable youth and women. An interim governance committee has established a PAV Guatemala logo, brochure, and Facebook page. A web site is being developed. The workshops in the past 18 months have trained and mentored 20 new facilitators, with about 50 percent of them being youth between 18 and 30. Established facilitators have also been given ongoing training.

Guatemalans in PAV hope to build peace in their families, communities, schools, and church groups.

### Tears

Today you came to me  
I felt you in the warmth of my tears  
your wrinkled face laughed with me  
I felt again your energy  
You are not physically present  
but you are close to my soul  
You live in my mind  
You remain in my heart  
The injustice of your death  
no longer hurts me  
because in the memory of my people  
you live on  
You live in the voice of your family  
you live in the minds of your grandchildren  
Dear Uncle, today I rediscovered you  
in eternity

©Julio Cochoy September 11, 2012

Julio Cochoy, an indigenous Guatemalan, was 13 when Guatemalan Army soldiers occupied his town, Utitlan, terrorizing the residents. His uncle was brutally killed by the soldiers. Julio's book, *Breaking the Silence*, includes testimonies from 36 families from the town.

## Friends Peace Teams

# PeaceWays

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## Behind the Scenes



Hi. My name is John Kintree. My job title is Accounting Specialist, and I work in Friends Peace Teams' St. Louis office, which supports all of the FPT initiatives. One deposit and one disbursement at a time, the mission of Friends

Peace Teams is advanced by the work I do, and people's lives are changed.

In addition to recording income and expenses, I maintain a database of donors, reconcile bank statements, submit periodic reports and payments to the IRS and state and local governments, arrange for printing and mailing PeaceWays, and respond

to a variety of requests for information from within and outside of FPT. My job is stimulating and rewarding.

On average, I work 15 to 20 hours per week. Our office is in the basement of the St. Louis Friends Meeting. Members of the Meeting help as volunteers. Janet Heath and others help write thank you notes to donors. Debra Penna-Fredericks takes care of writing checks to pay expenses. Tom Paxson, who now lives in Pennsylvania, arranges wire transfers of funds.

One of the best parts of my job is communicating with the coordinators of the three initiatives. I take pride in making sure that there is clear accounting and reporting of the funds available for their work. Through their work, the efforts of the many people in the communities our projects serve, and the larger circle of generous supporters, I feel as if I am part of a greater whole. It feels good. ■

Please contribute to the Friends Peace Teams general fund by making undesignated donations to FPT. The general fund provides administrative support to the initiatives, as described above, publishes PeaceWays, and maintains the FPT web site. Checks may be made out to "Friends Peace Teams" and mailed to the address at right. Or, donate online at [www.friendspeaceteams.org](http://www.friendspeaceteams.org).

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