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Asking the Right Questions: Gender and Nonviolence

the
newsletter
of the women's
working group of
War Resisters
International



A few participants at the Asking the Right Questions consultation relaxing.

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Sawadee-ka!

Welcome to this special issue of the War Resisters International (WRI) Women's Working Group newsletter. This issue is devoted to the Asking the Right Questions: Nonviolence Training and Gender consultation, which took place October 3 to 8, 2004, in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

This report can only give a taste of the insights, enthusiasm, questions, energy, and tears that were shared during the consultation. A longer report of the consultation is available upon request from WRI or from the International Fellowship of Reconciliation's (IFOR) Women Peacemakers Program (WPP). The consultation was co-organized by WRI and IFOR's Women Peacemakers Program, with support from the International Women's Partnership for Peace and Justice, a Thai-based feminist nonviolence training centre.

Some 35 women participated in the consultation, from 22 countries. Casha Davis organized a skillful group of professional interpreters who provided interpretation into and from English, French and Spanish throughout the consultation.

Every day began with a personal story from one of the participants. This sharing was followed by a panel of participants who addressed different aspects of the day's theme. Participants would break into small groups after the plenary session to reflect on some of the questions raised by the panelists.



Ouyporn Khuankaew (right) at her workshop on spirituality in daily work with Lee duCharme (Canada-left) and Ysabel Perez (Peru—middle).

After lunch, the first series of workshops would begin, followed by a break, then another series of workshops. After dinner participants would then gather together for more small group reflection on what they had learned during the day—and what questions remained.

The days' themes were:

Day 1: Creating a Base of Understanding: Definitions of Nonviolence, Violence, Gender, Sexism, Feminism, Power, Empowerment and Training

Day 2: Training Techniques and Methodologies: How Do we Integrate Nonviolence and Gender?

Day 3: Integrating the personal and Political

Day 4: Working in the World: How do we bring our trainings to broader audiences?

Day 5: Creating Resources: How do we create and exchange resources?

The consultation took place months before the devastating tsunami that cost so many people their lives. Several participants came from or were working in countries directly affected by the tsunami. The concerns expressed by the email communications among participants and organizers in the wake of the disaster show that the consultation did foster solidarity. Everyone involved in the consultation was saddened to learn in

particular of the personal losses suffered by peace educator Zulfinar, from Banda Aceh. A special section in this report includes an update on some of the ways peace groups are responding to the disaster.

Asking the Right Questions: Some Highlights

by Shelley Anderson

How can I adapt exercises from another country for use in my own community?

Like all good consultations, the Asking the Right Questions consultation raised more questions than it answered. Over 300 inquiries and application were received by the organizers of the consultation, indicating a high interest in the issue of gender-sensitive nonviolence training.

The goals of the consultation, established by a team of six organizers (Joanne Sheehan, Dorie Wilsnack, Ellen Elster and Casha Davis of the WRI Women's Working Group; and Isabelle Geuskens and Shelley Anderson of IFOR's Women Peacemakers Program) included:

- Breaking the isolation of women nonviolence trainers
- Bridging the gaps between different cultures and social change movements (for example, global justice, youth, trade unions, development, etc.) and in particular between generations of women trainers
- Supporting women trainers in developing methodologies, materials, modules, to integrate gender into their trainings
- Exploring new ways of organizing and activism.

The consultation succeeded in bringing trainers from a wide variety of movements and countries together. After a traditional Thai ceremony to focus our wandering spirits, women shared, in an opening exercise, some of their experiences as trainers in economic literacy, women's empowerment, fundraising, preparing for nonviolence direct action, gender, children's rights, anti-trafficking, and more. Some were gender trainers who wanted to integrate nonviolence in their training, while others were nonviolence trainers who wanted to add a gender perspective to their work.

All the women had a lot of questions!

Where can I find practical information on gender and nonviolence in my own language?

During the welcoming WRI Women Working Group members Joanne Sheehan and Dorie Wilsnack led the group in several exercises. "As a nonviolence trainer,"



Nonviolence trainers Maria Maghi (Indonesia-left) and Jill Sternberg (USA/East Timor-right) at the panel on integrating nonviolence and gender in trainings.

said Joanne, "I know how much my training improves when I share with other trainers. This sharing is one of the most important things I do. We are going to look at nonviolence and gender to see how we can do this together. Our long-range goal is to plant seeds and structures for the on-going empowerment of women trainers. What are the needs and resources we need together? We are going to look at how we can define the kinds of training we do, to see the similarities and the different perspectives, so our trainings can improve. Hopefully we will all go back with a bigger bag of tools."

The exercise drew all participants into two circles, an inner circle and an outer circle. Facing each other, participants shared on a one-to-one basis their responses to questions like "What was your first experience as a participant in a training? What does being a trainer mean to you? What was your first experience as a trainer? What was your first experience with nonviolence? When did you first become aware of your gender?"

Creating a Base of Understanding: what are the definitions We Begin With? (Day One)

This exercise helped to create an atmosphere of trust and sharing, as did the moving personal story that began the first full day of the consultation. Sahro Mohammed shared how she lost her family during the war in Somalia. Now a student in the Netherlands, she works with Somali women's group to fight female genital mutilation and to end impunity for crimes against

women. A panel moderated by Saswati Roy (India), with Veasna Am (Cambodia) and Okama Epke-Brook (Nigeria, working in Sri Lanka), explored definitions of gender, nonviolence, and power.

That afternoon participants broke into smaller groups to explore more deeply their definitions of key words such as nonviolence, gender, violence, sexism, empowerment, training, power and feminism.

Developing Training Methods: How do we integrate Nonviolence and Gender? (Day Two)

Mai Jan Inkum (Thailand/Kachin from Burma) provided background to the war in Burma during her personal story, while moderator Jill Sternberg (USA/East Timor), Maria Maghi (Indonesia), Susan May Granada (Philippines/Sri Lanka) and Ysabel Perez-Berru (Peru/the Netherlands) explored the day's theme during the morning panel session.

Workshops took place in the afternoon: a four-hour long workshop using the **From Violence to Wholeness** model was facilitated by Cindy Preston-Pile (USA) and Martine Sauvageau (Canada). The workshop began with an opening ritual, and included an introduction to the process, agreements, a name game, an exploration of responses to violence, images of nonviolence, embodied power, and circle-of-truths. The workshop concluded with an evaluation and closing ritual.

Natasha Dokovska (Macedonia) conducted a **Training Workshop on Peace Journalism**, which included examples of the roles media play in both peacebuilding and in inflaming violence. The role of new technologies such as the internet was also discussed. Sarom Sek (Cambodia) explored the annual peace march in Cambodia in her workshop on **Dhammadayietra Training Models and Applications**.

Lee Mckenna duCharme (Canada) facilitated a **Training for Economic Literacy with Popular Education Methods**. Participants were divided into two groups and asked, as a group, to design together the ideal village. Two very different and beautiful drawings were made by the groups, who then explained why the villages were made the way they were. Then Lee, complete with hat and tie, and a volunteer then visited each village as representatives of a multinational corporation. The two, speaking quickly and persuasively, tried to persuade the villagers that their lives would be better if they sold the

communities' natural resources to the corporation. Specific villagers were offered large sums of money to sell the resources to the corporation.

The second half of the "Village Game" consisted of a de-briefing: discussion about what had happened, and about the successful or unsuccessful ways the villagers developed to retain their ideal home. Some villagers stood on their drawing when the businessmen tried to grab it. Others linked arms and physically separated the businessmen from the drawing. One village leader, drawing on local custom, walked the businessmen away from the other villagers, insisting that the businessmen must drink coffee with the village elder before any negotiations began.

The exercise was very participatory and there were several questions about the methodology. For example, the 'villagers' belonged to many different nationalities—how would it have played out if it had been participants from only one country? Or if it had been a male-only or a mixed (female and male) group? Lee said she has used this tool in mixed groups, and that while women were normally the first to feel anxious about the appearance of the businessmen, the women in mixed groups usually wait for a male leader to take action. Men were often the first to create physical protection for the village, and were often very confrontational. Often during the game a villager will agree to betray the village. It is almost always a man who agrees to betray the village, perhaps because "men usually receive the economic benefits first."

Lee said she would point out the differences in behavior between women and men as the differences appeared



Gender trainer Gladys Gbappy-Brima (Sierra Leone) shares her personal story of strength and struggle with participants.

during the game, in order to raise questions about gender. She asks some participants to be observers during the game, and ask them to tell the entire group what they saw. “Observing is a great way to elicit discussion without judgment,” she said. The game is most often played with between 20 to 25 people.

Popular education methodology involves supporting people to name their **Experience**, then to **Reflect** upon the experiences, **Generalize** the experiences and reflections, and then to **Apply** the learnings to reality.

Integrating the personal and political (Day Three)

Joy Mbaabu (Kenya) shared her story, telling participants, “We all need to have supportive relationships from where we can derive moral will and strength. My high moment was when my organization premiered mediation training in my country. We are still lobbying for mediation’s inclusion as an official method of conflict resolution. Our targets are refugee women, the marginalized, and poor urban women. It is exciting times when we finish a training and these women have completely transformed their thinking. They have a new sense of power and looking at life.”

Marianne Wiseman (Australia/Kosov@) moderated the panel of Maria Tsvere (Zimbabwe), Clotilde Ngendakuma (Burundi) and Zulfinar (Aceh). Maria talked about violence against women and children in Zimbabwe, while Clotilde spoke of how trainings have helped women deal with the trauma of the genocide in Burundi, and supported reconciliation between Hutus and Tutsis. “These trainings allowed participants to open up. Before this women were afraid. No body wanted to say they were Hutu or Tutsi. But after undergoing these trainings, women were proud to say they belonged to their ethnic group. I saw that this could help improve ethnic relationships,” she said. The work has also helped her to heal her own wounds, she said.

Aceh: Peace Education is essential

Zulfinar, a peace educator in Aceh, Indonesia, spoke next. “Aceh faces an endless cycle of violence due to rich resources,” she said. “It is very complicated, and not just an ethnic conflict but a political conflict between Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM). Peace education is essential due to this.

“Most Aceh people are victims in this fighting. The political situation is very unpredictable. The killings made a mark especially in rural areas. In the capital city there is some conflict, but in rural areas there are many armies, and very scared villagers. Children see soldiers every day, and guns and tanks. So when they play they say ‘I’ll be a sergeant.’ This effects education. In 1998 schools were burnt so many can’t go to school. Many children study at the mosques.

“It is hard for us to find justice. If we want to solve this conflict we must have education. Peace education is the best way to tell how important peace is in life. Banda Aceh has the first of its kind peace education program, based on Islamic and Aceh tradition, in Indonesia. Most of the program aims are Muslim. They include the ability to respond to conflict without bloodshed; how to neutralize violence; strengthen tolerance in a diverse world; develop moral character for young adults; good Islamic qualities; and how to act as responsible members of society.

“The program allows children to play a dominant role in their own learning. It allows children to discover ways to deal with conflict creatively. Our peace education has games, drums, has a relation with students’ daily life. This participatory method is new in Aceh. This training is just given to students, because they are the leaders of the future.

“At first Aceh people were pessimistic when we presented this training to the students. People said it doesn’t reach those who do the conflict—give it to GAM and TNI (the Indonesian military)—not to the children! Our answer was that soldiers want to fight, so the training won’t be successful with them.

“Being a trainer of peace education makes me feel I make a contribution. Most students after the training have more knowledge about equality. Women always get second place in Aceh. It is a culture where women can’t be leaders. In the family the boy gets an opportunity to do everything, but the girl just stays in the kitchen. As a trainer I give hope to people that violence can be solved without violence. I’ve only been training since 2000. I want to learn from you!”

The afternoon workshops included sessions by Virginia Pilua (Solomon Islands), Julienne Mukabucyana (Rwanda) and Joanne Sheehan (USA).

Working in the World (Day Four)

Jill Sternberg led participants in a moving tribute to women who have suffered from violence, and to the women who inspire us. Janine Ahie then greeted the consultation in Maori during her personal story, and led participants in an energizing set of exercises. Moderator Okama Ekpe-Brook (Nigeria) introduced Joanne Sheehan, who spoke about War Resisters International's (WRI) new Nonviolence Program. The goal of this program is to develop and distribute resources, including a handbook with case studies and training exercises. The program will include networking; campaigning resources; materials on conscientious objection (to include gender sensitive training); a Dealing with the Past component (on ways communities can heal from the trauma of organized violence, including seeking justice); and workshops and trainings on active nonviolence. This last component will concentrate on the development and making available materials on-line.

Janet Wambedde (Uganda), Rasoamihamina Razananoely (Madagascar) and Ia Verulashvili (Georgia) then addressed the question of how we can bring our training to a wider audience. Ia cautioned activists to join together in coalitions because "No one listens to you if you are alone."

Peter Slattery then gave a workshop for all participants on ideas and strategies about working with men and boys about gender. "Gender is part of everything, every single thing, we do," Peter began. "So whenever you work, it includes gender. Men are scared about gender. Many men become defensive, because men have been attacked, for very good reasons, when the talk turns to gender. The exercises I will do with you I would do with men and boys."

"First, write down in pictures or words: What gives your life meaning and purpose? What do you hold close to you? Write it down. Look at what you've written—is anything there that is the most important? What stands out?"

Peter then asked the participants to get in small groups of five or six, to talk about what they wrote down, and to make a body picture/sculpture/image of one thing that gives meaning to their lives. Making such physical images helps people who are illiterate, he pointed out, or who are speaking a language that is not their mother tongue. "There is also lots of discussion about men not being good in talking," he said. "In this exercise we are trying to find out what matters to men, so that we can have a conversation. So if you feel threatened and

attacked, as men are these days, instead of telling men anything, ask them things. I emphasize that the men I work with have absolute privacy and control over what they say. Just to focus on who you are and how you respond, that's gender. I constantly move from playful to serious, from general to personal, from power relations in the world to power relations in your family."

During the afternoon participants divided themselves into different groups to visit four separate local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The NGOs included **The Community Health Project**, founded by Mrs. Pimjai Inthamul, a prominent grassroots leader who has been living with HIV for the past 16 years. Mrs. Pimjai has integrated Buddhist practice and activism in her personal life and in her work. The **Women's Education for Advancement and Empowerment (WEAVE)** supports refugee women from Burma in four project areas: early childhood development (WEAVE supports some childcare centers in refugee camps); women's health education, capacity development and income generation: WEAVE, PO Box 58, Chiang Mai University, Chiang Mai 50202, Thailand. Tel. +66 53 221 654; tel/fax +66 53 357 695. Email: handicrafts@weave-women.org. Web: www.weave-women.org

Education Means Power of Women Engaged in Recreation (EMPOWER) is a local NGO that speaks out for the rights and protection of women in the sex industry. EMPOWER centers in Bangkok and in Chiang Mai provide legal and health services, language training (particularly in English, so sex workers can better negotiate with foreign clients), skills development, and a sense of community among women. Lastly, **the International Women's Partnership for Peace and Justice (IWP)** combines feminist and Buddhist principles and methodology in its work to support grassroots and NGO activists working for social change in the areas of justice and peacebuilding. The core components of IWP's programs are nonviolence, feminism and spirituality to promote social change. IWP conducts its work with activists from India (Ladakh and Tibetans in exile), Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Burma and Thailand. IWP's work includes trainings, seminars and study tours, and regional and international workshops. The focus of IWP's work since 2003 has been active nonviolent resistance, leadership for social change, gender and diversity and Buddhist peacebuilding, and anti-oppression work between women from the global north and global south. Participants visited the center in Mae Rim and met Ouyporn Khuankaew, the IWP director and co-founder.

Moderator Marianne Wiseman (Australia—seated) listens as Ginger Norwood (USA) of the International Women's Partnership for Peace and Justice makes announcements.



Creating Resources (Day Five)

After a powerful sharing by gender trainer Gladys Gbappy-Brima of Sierra Leone, the last day of the consultation began with a Training Market. Participants were encouraged to share and ‘shop’ for training resources that they needed. Blank charts labeled ‘Networks’, ‘Strategies’, ‘Exercises and techniques’ and ‘Written materials’ were placed around the large plenary hall, and groups congregated in front of each chart, based on what participants needs.

Training Networks

Every participant either belonged to or had heard of specific training networks. Some networks were organized around specific issues, such as the Association of Women in Development or for specific regions, such as the Balkan Action Network on Small Arms or CAFOB: Collectif des Associations et ONA Feminines de Burundi. Some useful peace-oriented training networks included:

- The West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP—which has a women in peacebuilding program WIPNEP), Ampomah House, 37 Dzorwulu Highway, Box CT 4434, Accra, Ghana. Web: www.wanep.org
- The Centre de Ressources pour la non-violence (CRNV), 1945, rue Mullins, bureau 160, Montréal, Québec, Canada H3K 1N9. Web: www.nonviolence.ca

There were many needs listed for written materials, especially in languages other than English. Success stories of African and Asian women activists and practical training materials on gender and nonviolence topped the list. Materials on spirituality and nonviolence, and how to integrate spirituality into our trainings, were also requested. Some training materials that were mentioned include:

- “*Women and a Culture of Peace*” workshop kit and poster from the IFOR Women Peacemakers Program
- *From Violence to Wholeness* (FVTW) manual from FVTW, Pace e Bene, 1420 W. Barlett Ave., Las Vegas, Nevada 89106, USA. Web: www.paceebene.org

Participants had a great wealth of experience in training strategies, including strategies for working with specific communities, such as lesbians and gays; media workers; rural communities and youth. The needs were also great: how to include men in our work was often cited, as were strategies for working with young people, with illiterate communities, and strategies for building women’s leadership in movements that are currently dominated by men.

Among the needs for exercises and techniques there were specific requests for exercises showing similarities between nonviolence and feminism, and the contributions they make, exercises showing importance of considering gender in nonviolent trainings for men and women, videos or DVDs that show exercises on gender and nonviolence, and handbooks on training techniques for peace education.

The consultation ended that night with a traditional northern Thai meal. The excited conversations and high energy during the meal, and the sad goodbyes the next day, resulted in a critical last question for all the participants of Asking the Right Questions: how can we continue the sharing that was begin here?

Shelley Anderson is a WRI Women Working Group member and Program Officer for the IFOR Women Peacemakers Program.

Gender Resources

Bridge is an on-line database of materials on gender mainstreaming, gender experts and gender and development: BRIDGE, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton BN1 9RE, UK. Tel. +44 (0) 1273 606261; +44 (0) 1273 621202. Web: www.ids.ac.uk/bridge Email: bridge@ids.ac.uk

Peacewomen is an on-line resource on news about women's peace activism and developments in United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325: www.peacewomen.org (in English, French or Spanish).

For a monthly bulletin on new research publications on a wide variety of gender issues, including gender and conflict, gender and globalization, and violence against women, see **www.eldis.org**. Email: eldis@ids.ac.uk

The **United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM)** operates a Trust Fund to Stop Violence Against Women and publishes materials on gender and peacebuilding (see especially the Independent Experts Assessment on Women, War and Peace). Web: www.unifem.org

For the latest news and manuals on gender equality and women's empowerment see **www.un.org/womenwatch**

The **United Nations Development Program** materials and manuals on gender and good governance, gender mainstreaming and more (see Gender Approaches in Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations): www.undp.org/gender

Websites on Men against violence against women:

www.mencanstoprape.org
www.menovercomingviolence.org
www.men-stopping-rape.org
www.menstoppingviolence.org

Peter Slattery did a workshop on working with men at the Asking the Right Questions consultation. His web site: www.peterslattery.com.au

The **White Ribbon Movement** began in Canada as a response to the 1989 Montreal massacre, when a man with a gun entered the Montreal University Engineering School, screamed "I hate feminists!" and murdered 14 women students. The Movement develops curriculum to educate boys on gender issues, raises funds for women's shelters and conducts public awareness campaigns on stopping violence against women. The

Movement has since spread to dozens of countries, including Brazil (www.lacobranco.org), Denmark (www.whiteribbon.dk), South Korea and Sweden (www.whiteribbon.nu). 365 Bloor St., East, Suite 203, Toronto Ontario, Canada M4W 3L4. Tel. +1 416 920 6684; fax +1 416 920 1678. Web: www.whiteribbon.ca

Masculinity

The **European Profeminist Men's Network** operates a documentation center and database at Toulouse University, France, and an on-line discussion forum (in French and English). Web: www.europofem.org; email: city.shelter@skynet.be; traboules@traboules.org

XY: Men, Masculinities and Gender Politics, Australia, published as a magazine from 1990 to 1998, and now is an online forum: www.xyonline.net



Hamida Hudda (India-left) and WPP Program Manager Isabelle Geuskens (Netherlands-right) enjoying a moment together.

WRI Women

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Peacebuilding in Tsunami-affected areas

It is estimated that women comprised up to 70% of Aceh's per-tsunami population of four million people. Men fled the war or emigrated in search of work. According to a short update by Nonviolence International: "Given that more men survived the tsunami because of their physical strength and speed, a horrendous percentage of those killed probably were women and girls."

The Indonesian government is still operating out of a counter-insurgency mindset which is understandably creating additional challenges for Aceh's recovery. Groups like the Asian Human Rights Commission (www.ahrchk.net) have expressed concerns about the strict control of the Indonesian military over aid stocks and distribution in Aceh. For more information on military obstruction of relief aid see www.indonesiaalert.org

Nonviolence International (www.nonviolenceinternational.net) had peacebuilding classes in 100 high schools in Aceh, and a peacebuilding course for Muslim religious clerics. UNICEF reports that 1100 schools were destroyed in Aceh. Nonviolence International (email: nonviolence@igc.org) is accepting donations through their website for relief efforts in Aceh.

Peace Brigades International has returned to Aceh with security and trauma counseling teams. Web: www.peacebrigades.org

Local NGO offices were destroyed in most of Aceh and many activists lost their lives. The office in Banda Aceh of the NGO **Relawan Perempuan untuk Kemanusiaan** (RPuK—Women Volunteers for Humanity) was also destroyed, but RPuK activists are providing support to survivors: RPuK, Jl. Air Bersih no 106, Teumpok Teungoh, Lhokseumawe, NAD, Indonesia. Tel/fax: +62 0645 40977. Donations may be made to RPuK. Bank: LippoBank. Branch: Cabang Menteng Jakarta. Account number: 717-10-70975-3. Name of account holder: Ir. Samsidar.

The women's group **Solidaritas Perempuan** is also organizing relief for grassroots women. Funds can be wired to: Solidaritas Perempuan. Account number: 000.02.14.42.096 (USD) Perserikatan Solidaritas

Perempuan. Swift Code: ABN – AIDJA. Bank Name: ABN AMRO BANK N.V. Jakarta Main Branch Jl. Ir. H. Juanda, 23-24, Jakarta 10029 Indonesia, PO.BOX 2950. Tel. +62 21 2312777. Fax: +62 21 2313222.

In Sri Lanka **the Association of War Affected Women** (email: venuwan@sltnet.lk; web: www.awawsl.org) has an email bulletin on tsunami affected women and set up a fund. Name of Account: Fund for Tsunami Affected Women. Bank account No: 0004120-1. Bank: Bank of Ceylon, Pilimathalawa Branch. Swift code: BECY-LK-LX, 7010/587.

The **Nonviolent Peaceforce teams** in Sri Lanka are monitoring and reporting on the delivery of relief aid in refugee camps. See web: www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org

From India Saswati Roy from **Swadhina** (email: mainoffice@swadhina.org, swadhina@vsnl.com) writes: "Some of our working villages at Kanyakumari area in South India have been severely affected. These villages are located by the sea shore. Some of our workers are now living at relief camps. There is huge loss of life and property. Most of the fishing community have lost their fishing nets and boat, meaning ruining of their economic activity. Please help us in whatever way you can. Please send your cheque named 'Swadhina' to: KURVE Wustrow 'SOKO Indien', Konto-Nr. 6021646, Kreissparkasse Luechow-Dannenberg (BLZ 25851335), Germany or to United Bank of India, A/C Number 3750, ("Swadhina"), 19 Broad Street, Calcutta 700019, India.

The **Cultural Academy for Peace** has also initiated relief work. Contact: Beena Sebastian, Cultural Academy for Peace, 35/761, North Janatha Road, Palarivattom, Kochi 682 025, Kerala, India. Tel: +91 484 2349562, 2339403. Email: koluthara@eth.net