

BERKLEY CENTER

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About the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs

The Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs at Georgetown University, created within the Office of the President in 2006, is dedicated to the interdisciplinary study of religion, ethics, and public life. Through research, teaching, and service, the Center explores global challenges of democracy and human rights; economic and social development; international diplomacy; and interreligious understanding. Two premises guide the Center's work: that a deep examination of faith and values is critical to address these challenges, and that the open engagement of religious and cultural traditions with one another can promote peace.

About the World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD)

The World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD) bridges between the worlds of faith and secular development. Established by James D. Wolfensohn, then President of the World Bank, and Lord Carey of Clifton, then Archbishop of Canterbury, WFDD responded to the opportunities and concerns of many faith leaders who saw untapped potential for partnerships. Based in Washington, D.C., WFDD supports dialogue, fosters communities of practice, and promotes understanding on religion and development, with formal relationships with the World Bank, Georgetown University, and many faith-inspired institutions.

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The United States Institute of Peace is an independent, nonpartisan institution established and funded by Congress. Its goals are to help prevent and resolve violent conflicts, promote postconflict peacebuilding, and increase conflict management tools, capacity, and intellectual capital worldwide. The Institute does this by empowering others with knowledge, skills, and resources, as well as by its direct involvement in conflict zones around the globe.

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INTRODUCTION

The experiences of women in conflict-affected countries and regions are increasingly in the international spotlight. This recent attention has focused both on efforts to understand better the gender dynamics of conflicts, and on lifting barriers that have marginalized women from peacebuilding or obscured the important work they do. The role of religion—belief systems, structures, and religious networks—in women’s lives, particularly as barriers to women’s social and political participation, is also a lively topic. And, especially since September 11, 2001, the often neglected roles of religion in conflict – not only as a source of conflict but as integral to building peace – are receiving welcome attention. In these emergent conversations, however, there is a piece that, strikingly, is missing: women’s roles in peace, where religion is important to their motivation or a source of practical support. Religion, indeed, tends to be cast in negative roles where women are concerned and there are important truths in these perceptions. Anecdotal evidence, however, suggests a far more complex and varied picture. The problem is that much of the peacebuilding work of women of faith is shrouded in a cloak of invisibility.

In 2010, the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs at Georgetown University, the United States Institute for Peace (USIP), and the World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD) embarked on an investigation into the relationships between women, religion, and peace. The project involves two symposia held in 2010 and 2012, a USIP-published *Peaceworks* publication following the first symposium, entitled *Women in Religious Peacebuilding*, and a set of commissioned papers that form the core of a forthcoming book.

An important facet of the investigation is a series of interviews with practitioners and scholars (the collection of these interviews is ongoing). They consti-

tute a central element in our research of a subject on which most activity is undocumented and largely unknown. These interviews offer individuals’ reflections on underlying questions that are at the core of our investigation, such as: how is peace defined? What motivates those involved in peacebuilding? What advantages and disadvantages do women peacebuilders possess? What particular challenges do they face? How do women’s religious beliefs and religious affiliations help and/or hinder them in their work? What kinds of networks have been of most help to them? What kinds of partnerships work best? And what, in their view, are the priority areas where support is needed to achieve lasting peace?

Most interviews were conducted by Susan Hayward (USIP) and Katherine Marshall (WFDD and Berkley Center), and, in a few instances, WFDD colleagues. Conversations, in person or by phone or Skype, were transcribed and edited thoroughly by both interviewer and interviewee, and posted on the Berkley Center’s website, with interviewees’ approval. A few interviews conducted in the context of other investigations, by the Berkley Center and WFDD, are included as they include insights relevant to the women, religion, and peace investigation.

This publication provides readers with a glimpse of the breadth and depth of the investigation of women, religion, conflict, and peacebuilding. It highlights the interviews, which constitute a series of living stories, and its aim is to ensure that the collection is available to a wider audience than those who encounter them on the Berkley Center or USIP websites (<http://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/projects/women-religion-and-peace-experience-perspectives-and-policy-implications> or <http://www.usip.org/>). As the interviews are continuing, this document should be viewed as a work in progress.

Tragically, three women interviewed have since died unexpectedly: Zilda Arns Neumann was killed during the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, where she was working at the time; Dekha Ibrahim was killed in an accident in Kenya, her home country, in 2011. Lynn Lysi died in March, 2012 after a heroic battle with cancer. We honor them and highlight the wisdom they brought to our work.

Theirs and other women and men's stories unveil a wealth of activity by women inspired by religion in peacebuilding efforts around the globe. Many women draw on their faith and faith-based networks as they work for peace and social justice, even when cultural traditions and religious institutions cast them in subordinate and restricted roles. The work of religious women peacemakers deserves more attention by practitioners and researchers, who can learn from their experiences, find creative ways to better support their work, and connect them to broader efforts to build peace. The following are several key emerging themes that are woven throughout the interviews.

Religious women's "invisibility" runs several layers deep. Women, whether religious or secular, are rarely present in formal peace processes (i.e. they are rarely signatories of peace agreements, nor are they present at the negotiating table or in leadership cadres from which negotiators are typically drawn). This is the core concern that led to the passage of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and the ongoing efforts by the international community to boost women's engagement. Even in those discussions about women's participation, however, religiously-linked women often go unseen, adding another layer to their invisibility. Analyzing peacemaking and peacebuilding processes from the perspective of religious actors, another dimension of invisibility stems from the oft-missing presence of religious leaders in state-led peace processes or in initiatives led by major international organizations and non-governmental organizations. This is the case even when religious issues are in dispute, such as in Israel-Palestine. When religious leaders do convene, and on the occasions when they are formally engaged in peacebuilding work, women are rarely seen or heard during those discussions, because so few are recognized as leaders or hold positions of power within formal religious structures. Fi-

nally, much of the peace work by women religious is not classified as such, given its tendency to focus on communities, far removed from both religious and state-led high-level initiatives. In short, four levels of invisibility shroud a rich vein of work that emerges from discussions with women from many disciplines, world regions, and fields of endeavor.

Does this matter, and if so, how and why? The question arises in part because some women point to the benefits of invisibility, including the possibility it offers them to work with greater flexibility, unconstrained by bureaucratic or political considerations and leaving aside the perils of ego and scrutiny that can accompany more visible efforts. In what are often male dominated public spheres, women may be seen as non-threatening given their perceived limited power and status, and so are less likely to attract opposition. Women may have more freedom to operate outside security or even legal bounds for these very reasons, moving about more freely than men in places like Aceh or Colombia. Thus, some women argue that their work is best kept under the radar, allowing them to labor quietly but effectively for peace behind-the-scenes, where sometimes it can matter most.

The drawbacks to their invisibility are many, but the most telling are a lack of resources, lack of knowledge sharing about important advances and creative approaches, and lack of celebration or recognition of their courageous work. This in turn deprives other women and young people of worthy role models. Women's inclusion in public service work, including work for peace, reflects a conviction that women's skills are needed and that the agendas women tend to advance both enrich and alter broader agendas. In this effort it is important to ensure that religiously linked women are not neglected, as is often the case, especially when secular groups are driving the process.

Women demonstrate a particular focus on reconciliation and trauma healing. Religiously-inspired and connected women may have special aptitudes or be well placed to advance reconciliation and healing in conflict-affected communities. Women practitioners of trauma healing have found that integrating religious

teachings into psycho-social and support-oriented activities raises women's and also their communities' optimism about the future and increases the likelihood of forgiveness among them. Religious teachings and practices from many different traditions include messages about tolerance, forgiveness, and reconciliation, which many women draw on in their work.

Trauma healing programs seek to address not only emotional and psycho-social wounds, but also situational problems that perpetuate violence. Women often approach the process differently than men, developing relationship-oriented programs that include elements of faith to sustain their messages. These programs are especially effective when the trauma is a result of gender-based violence used as a tool by armed groups. Women's groups have proven results as a key resource for victims of conflict, adding powerful value to religious peacebuilding approaches.

Religiously linked women are often active in work against domestic violence and rape as a weapon of war: In conflict-affected societies where gender and sexual-based violence occurs, it occurs often, and when policies fail to prevent it, it becomes a norm in the society that is far more difficult to remove. Since women are far more likely to suffer violence and sexual assault during violent conflict, it is hardly surprising that they give this issue high priority, engaging in active efforts to combat it and offer support to survivors of sexual violence. Women, often empathetic to the situation of victims or rape or sexual assault, play a key role in shaping government-supported or locally-supported programs to assist victims' emotional and physical reintegration into society. These traumas are dealt with in parallel to traumas caused by other aspects of war, such as losing husbands, fathers, brothers or children to violence.

A major obstacle to eradicating domestic violence and rape in traditional communities is that because of societal taboos, men and women alike are inclined to deny its occurrence. Women religious peacebuilders understand the cultural and religious dynamics at play which can make their work more effective. Likewise, when women are more engaged in political processes, or in setting agendas for action, issues like domestic violence and sexual-based violence as a

tactic of war are more likely to be a focus.

Spirituality and feminism, religious women's organizations and networks, and secular women's approaches. A prominent theme is both the perception and reality of tension between secular women's movements and women whose primary organizational approach is couched in religion. These tensions persist even when they are working for common goals. While these tensions are real and there is particular unease at what is perceived and described as "western feminism," that is hostile towards religion many women argue that the tensions are most pronounced in the United States and Europe and may fade in the rest of the world. Women's efforts to understand core teachings of their faiths that empower them are a significant development and gives new impetus to women's peace work in several very different world religions. A finding of some projects is that feminism and spirituality are indeed compatible in most faith traditions.

Several promising efforts work deliberately to support and honor religiously inspired women peacebuilders, and seek actively to support, draw attention to, and honor women with religious links who work for peace. Prominent among them is the Global Peace Initiative for Women (<http://www.gpiw.org/>), founded by Dena Merriam and actively involving Sister Joan Chittister and Rev. Joan Brown Campbell. The Tanenbaum Center actively works to honor women peacemakers and reflects spiritual dimensions of their work (<https://www.tanenbaum.org/programs/peace>), as does the Niwano Peace Prize (<http://www.npf.or.jp/english/NPP/PeacePrize.html>). Religions for Peace focuses on women through its Women of Faith Network and the Parliament of the World's Religions and United Religions Initiative both work globally to ensure that the traditional male bias in religious gatherings is tempered by explicit efforts to include women in leadership and discussions. At a national level, the Federation of Muslim Women Association of Nigeria (FOMWAN) is an example of an inter-faith group addressing a conflict-prone situation, as is the Women Reborn project in Palestinian communities in Israel. Specific religious communities lend their support to women actively involved in work for peace, across international boundaries; the Benedictine order is a prominent example.

INTERVIEW SUMMARIES

MOHAMMED ABU-NIMER, Professor in the International Peace and Conflict Resolution program at the School of International Service and Director, Peacebuilding and Development Institute at American University.

As the Director of the Peacebuilding and Development Institute at American University, and an expert on conflict resolution and dialogue, Mohamed Abu-Nimer has focused on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but also has been intervening and conducting conflict resolution training workshops worldwide.

This exchange between Mohammed Abu-Nimer and Susan Hayward on June 13, 2010 focused on his experience as a participant and facilitator in a range of interfaith dialogues in the Middle East and beyond. Believing in dialogue as a tool for social change, Abu-Nimer works to leverage the process for political action and impact. He highlights the limiting factors for organizations working in the Israel-Palestine conflict: many organizations have fear backlash from working with the “other side.” Abu-Nimer discusses how his religious background shapes the way he approaches peacebuilding and his emphasis on Islam’s teachings on forgiveness and peace. The role of women in religious peacebuilding is severely limited, he argues, in large measure because clergy are generally men in Islam and Judaism. Yet women play a key role in the peacebuilding process because they can relate to marginalized people in society and are more likely to gain the peoples’ trust. The field of religious peacebuilding is in danger of fragmenting into narrow, overly specific subcategories, Abu Nimer warns. Thus, rather than creating separate initiatives for women, what is needed is to mainstream the role of women in religious peacebuilding to benefit the field as a whole.

AGNES ABUOM, World Council of Churches’ Executive Committee, representing the Anglican Church of Kenya

Dr. Agnes Abuom is the co-President of Religions for Peace and the National Council of Churches of Kenya, and founder and Executive Director of TAABCO Research and Development Consultants. She served as the Africa President for the World Council of Churches (1999–2006).

Agnes Abuom is a leading figure within African ecumenical circles and, increasingly, within global faith institutions. This discussion between Dr. Abuom, Katherine Marshall, and Thomas Bohnett took place in Accra, Ghana, on July 3, 2009 and highlights Dr. Abuom’s experiences with political, ecumenical, and peace movements. She recounts her early years growing up in Kenya and her “faith biography.” Involved from her girlhood in both religion and politics, by the late 1990s she was actively engaged in Africa-wide leadership in the WCC and with the Council of African Leaders. In recent years she has been a central figure in deliberations on conflict in the Horn of Africa, bringing together Muslim and Christian leaders. Dr. Abuom addresses issues of women’s roles in religious contexts but also in African politics, highlighting the need to bridge the gap between political leaders and religious peacebuilders. Religious leaders, she argues, have very little knowledge about the tools available to them through the state or even about how the government as an institution functions. Engaging in advocacy programs is most meaningful if those involved understand well the structure of the institutions in play.

DIANNE (DEE) AKER, Deputy Director, Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice (IPJ) at the University of San Diego.

Dee Aker is a psychological anthropologist, conflict resolution professional, and the founding director of IPJ’s Women PeaceMakers Program, Nepal Project, and WorldLink program. She has organized international conferences on gender and peacebuilding with UNIFEM and various INGOs and is executive producer of three Women PeaceMakers films.

This discussion with Katherine Marshall (on June 30, 2010) focuses on the Women PeaceMakers Program at the University of San Diego, which Dr. Aker created and directs. It involves intensive efforts to document and share the work of women peace practitioners from all world regions. While religion is not an explicit element of the program, Aker observes that women from very different world religions often find a common unifying thread in their religious experiences, and many cite the personal inspiration of their faith as a foundation for their peace

work. Many peacemakers the IPJ works with are deeply engaged in their faith traditions but also have strongly ecumenical views and are open to all faiths. Most, she observes, do not have formal roles in their religious institutions. The program has identified women who use the essence of their spirituality and beliefs to bring people together across great and often violent barriers and histories. IPJ promotes network building among the women, regionally and online, and it actively supports global policies that bring women into policy circles and peacebuilding programs at the national level. Aker's multidisciplinary and multicultural approaches, with years devoted to communications challenges and bringing women's stories to light, are highlighted in this interview.

SANAM ANDERLINI, Co-founder of the International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN)

Iranian by birth, Sanam Anderlini is an international activist working to bridge divides between women in conflict areas and international policy makers. Her career includes work with International Alert (a UK based NGO) to advocate for and draft UN Security Resolution 1325 and field research on women's contributions to conflict prevention, peace processes, governance, transitional justice, and post-conflict issues in twelve countries. Her published works include Women Building Peace: What They Do, Why It Matters.

This discussion with Katherine Marshall in Washington, DC on January 3, 2012 focuses on Ms. Anderlini's wide-ranging and unique experience working to bring women's roles in peacemaking to center stage. She reflects on different issues for women in conflict, highlighting obstacles and the directions she believes progress can and should take. She highlights the dimensions of religion that give women hope amidst horrors, and emphasizes the importance of understanding different contexts in which women operate. Finally, Ms. Anderlini addresses gaps in the capacity to move from ideas to action, especially at intermediate levels (between the grass roots, where much is taking place, and senior leadership, where the importance of increasing women's roles is often quite well understood). Especially in the Middle East, where the critical human rights issues relate to women, there is all the more need to sharpen focus, define practical action steps, bring different voices into peace processes at every level, and work out practical and meaningful ways to monitor progress.

JOAN ANDERSON, Soka Gakkai International (SGI) Office of Public Information

Joan Anderson is a member of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI) Office of Public Information. In 1990, with Voluntary Services Overseas she set up its Cambodian program in 1991. She helped coordinate Save the Children UK's humanitarian program in Iraq until 1993, when she returned to Cambodia as country director of Save the Children UK's projects assisting vulnerable children.

This discussion, on November 5, 2009, between Michael Bodakowski and Joan Anderson, focuses on the work and philosophy that informs SGI's unique role in different societies and its central focus on peace. The fundamental flaw with development programs, Anderson argues, is that they improve tangible situations without improving the morale and confidence of the people in that situation. Without addressing the latter, monetary and infrastructure changes will see very little impact.

SCOTT APPLEBY, John M. Regan Jr. Director of the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies and Professor of History at the University of Notre Dame.

R. Scott Appleby is the John M. Regan Jr. Director of the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies. His long academic and policy advice career has focused on research on comparative religious movements and religious history, and on the roots of religious violence and the potential of religion for peacebuilding.

This exchange between Scott Appleby and Katherine Marshall in July 2010 offers a review of women, religion, and peace, but also focuses on Appleby's experiences in his peacebuilding work, and how religion intersects with it. Appleby pleads for using the term peacebuilding (in contrast to peacemaking or conflict resolution), arguing that "Peace is never fully made, but always being built". He argues that we need to avoid "essentializing" gender roles. Fragmentation of the subfield should be avoided; separation of genders and disciplines is detrimental to the society as a whole. Appleby feels the field must undertake research to understand better the work that women, especially in religious communities, are doing to promote peace. Women, he believes, instinctively dig deeper into the roots of a conflict situation, and thus are naturally far more adept at peacebuilding than men. Women embrace the concepts of healing, restoration, and reconciliation, and are ready to counter the forces of violence and destabilization by combining their forces with male peacebuilders. He gives examples of leading women who have been part of the Kroc program, all of whom have been inspired by faith and recognize religion as an important part of the lives of the people in the communities they serve. Appleby stresses that religious belief is an important factor in the peace-

building methods he sees as most creative and significant. The discussion concludes with reflections on how the Notre Dame Kroc program on religion and peacebuilding has evolved and what makes it distinctive.

MARGUERITE BARANKITSE, Founder and director, Maison Shalom, Burundi

Marguerite Barankitse grew up identified as a Tutsi. Always challenging the ethnic discrimination that threatened Burundi's peace and prosperity, she has focused on children's welfare and rights. Her original community of foster children has evolved as Maison Shalom, a complex of schools, hospitals, and a network of care extending throughout Burundi.

This conversation between Marguerite Barankitse, Aline Ndenzako, and Katherine Marshall during an October 2011 visit to Washington, DC, focuses on Maggie's work for peace in Burundi: her vision of what is needed, how peace is linked to justice, and what women can and do bring to the cause of peace. She returns constantly to her central preoccupation with children, both the 20,000 who have come under her direct care through the Maison Shalom (which she founded and leads) and all Burundi's children. She emphasizes that women play central and creative roles in building true peace. Faith, she says, has a powerful role in her life and has always motivated her work. She expresses dismay at a system that finds itself able to fund weapons and thus perpetuate violence but is unable to fund hospitals for the sick. Maggie's story is inspirational and unique. She started Maison Shalom (now a thriving center with hospital, schools, and banks) from nothing, as well as the City of Angels, a network that supports children nationwide. With no funding at the start, over time she has acquired official support from UNICEF, and Maison Shalom is now officially registered as an NGO. Maggie's aim is to provide love and stability to children whose lives have been ripped apart by Burundi's protracted and pervasive conflict. A video about her work, prepared as part of the Opus Prize celebrations in 2008, can be viewed here, and a recent video that marked her award in October 2011 of the Chirac Prize (in French, English subtitles), here.

ELA BHATT, Founder, Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) Ahmedabad, India

A respected leader of the international labor, cooperative, women, and micro-finance movements, Ela Bhatt founded the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in 1972. She has received

many awards for her pioneering work, most recently the Niwano Peace Prize in May 2010.

This discussion between Ela Bhatt and Katherine Marshall took place in Tokyo in May 2010, as Bhatt celebrated being awarded the prestigious Niwano Peace Prize. Ela Bhatt worked with colleagues to found the Self Employed Women's Association, whose aim is to document, validate, and monetize women's contributions to the workforce and the economy. She has long worked to effect change through political action. The discussion reflects on Ela Bhatt's career and explores issues of peace and justice pertinent to India and beyond. The influence of Gandhi's thinking on her life work is highlighted, as is her relentless advocacy for the poor and for women. She underscores the importance of self-reliance and of linking organizing and advocacy at different levels, from local to global. Visibility, voice, and viability are keys to changing the ethos of poverty; working through networks is what can unlock the potential for change. As a Hindu, religion has influenced her life and work by compelling her to try to fix the problems she sees that so deeply affect poverty stricken and marginalized women in India and more generally in conflict situations.

ANDREA BLANCH, President of the Center for Religious Tolerance

Andrea Blanch, PhD, President of the Center for Religious Tolerance, has published extensively in the fields of serious mental illness and trauma, conflict management and systems change, and women's mental health. Blanch was a 2009 Yale Fellow in the Women, Religion, and Globalization program.

This June 2010 discussion between Andrea Blanch and Katherine Marshall focuses on Dr. Blanch's work as a supporter and partner in the Women Reborn Project in Israel. The project is based in the Palestinian village of Fureidis in Israel, and is a remarkably successful example of women's empowerment. The program focuses on leadership training, and it has engaged a wide range of partners, including secular women's organizations, Muslim scholars, and Jewish women. Blanch highlights the importance of a path that women follow (both individually and as groups), from building trust and relationships towards wider engagement in political processes. Women's approaches offer powerful ways to heal deep wounds in communities and societies. Blanch highlights that over time, the project focused increasingly on the roles of religion in women's lives, and helped bring an appreciation for the compatibility of feminism and spirituality. The project highlights "interspiritual" work,

bringing people of different religious backgrounds together for activities and worship. The key take-away from these efforts is that the women appreciate that violence and trauma go hand-in-hand, and that by working on interfaith trauma healing projects they were simultaneously working to end conflict.

VIRGINIA M. BOUVIER, Senior Program Officer in the Center for Mediation and Conflict Resolution at USIP

Virginia M. Bouvier, a senior program officer in the Center for Conflict Management at USIP, focuses on Colombia and Latin America. Bouvier has also served as a consultant and research director for the Women's Leadership Conference of the Americas, a joint project of the Inter-American Dialogue and the International Center for Research on Women.

This exchange between Ginny Bouvier and Susan Hayward on July 2, 2010 focuses on Bouvier's experience growing up within the Catholic Church, her exposure to liberation theology, and her growing commitment to issues of human rights and gender in Latin America. She emphasizes ways in which women have used and defied gender expectations to seek justice and to form bonds of solidarity. Women in the Catholic Church in Latin America have distinctive experiences that arise from the specific nature of armed conflict and dictatorship there, and the challenges that women have faced in finding positions of authority within the Church and other institutions.

SISTER JOAN CHITTISTER, Executive Director, Benetvision

Joan Chittister is a Benedictine sister and the Executive Director of Benetvision. She is a regular columnist for the National Catholic Reporter and a founding member of the International Peace Council, as well as co-chair of the Global Peace Initiative for Women. She was selected in 2009 by the TED organization to be a member of the Council of Conscience.

This exchange with Katherine Marshall in June 2010 explores Sister Joan's path to her present work. Her focus on peace processes and the women's movement stems from her Benedictine faith; Benedictines, she explains, strive for stability, which goes hand in hand with peace. Her most urgent call is to include women in policy processes at all levels, to hear women's agendas and then to honor them. She highlights the benefits of a collaborative, consensus decision-making style that characterizes many women's groups. This is a better process, especially in conflict situations, than the taffy pull, tug of war style that a decision-focused, masculine style process entails, she argues.

Educating girls and nuclear disarmament are two top priority issues to address. Though many practitioners in the field recognize the imperative to hear women practitioners' voices in the peacebuilding process, change is slow to take hold. The National Organization of Women and Women's Nation both can organize women's groups and make their voices heard, but they are not the norm. What is special about what women bring to the process is the ability to leave their personal pain and trauma at the door when attending peacebuilding workshops and meetings with women of other faiths and from the other side of the conflict. They are needed in policy decisions to push women's agendas that are so often ignored.

DENISE COGHLAN, Director, Jesuit Refugee Service, Cambodia

A Sister of Mercy from the Brisbane congregation in Australia, Sister Denise Coghlan RSM helped found Jesuit Service in Cambodia and currently directs Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS). Denise is on the advisory board of the International Campaign, which advocates for funding for survivor assistance, mine clearance, and monitoring of international law.

This exchange in May 2010 between Sister Denise, Michael Bodakowski, and Katherine Marshall explores issues that link women, religion, and peace. Sister Denise reflects on her 20+ years working in Cambodia and how her faith and her sense of justice motivate her work from start to finish. She highlights the challenges facing people with disabilities, of post-conflict reconciliation, and rebuilding trust. As part of Jesuit Refugee Service programs, people are surveyed about what are the most valued and helpful forms of aid. JRS then works to make these a reality: for example, knowing that independent mobility helped ensure the dignity of disabled peoples, JRS opened a center to make wheelchairs for those living in rural homes. She discusses how the legacy of the Khmer Rouge affects families and society in Cambodia today. JRS, besides tangible and material support to people with disabilities, emphasizes projects that aim to rebuild trust in Cambodia, trust for fellow citizens that was destroyed under the Khmer Rouge regime. While faith-inspired organizations are an important link between the policy and community levels, Sister Denise stresses that faith-inspired organizations must be experts in their field; faith alone is not always sufficient to make lasting contributions. Finally, she describes her international work on landmines and cluster bombs, which won her team a Nobel Peace prize.

PATRICIA DEBOER, Asia Regional Director, American

Friends Service Committee, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Patricia DeBoer has served as Asia Regional Director for the American Friends Service Committee, based in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, since 2001. She began her career with the academic study of international gender issues, but her fieldwork drew her into the field of peace and development.

This exchange reflects two separate discussions, the first in September 2009 with Augustina Delaney, and the second in July 2010 with Katherine Marshall and Ethan Carroll, both in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The context was primarily WFDD's review of development and religion in Cambodia, but the aim was also a broader exploration of issues related to peacebuilding and women, peace and development, and the evolution of the unique role of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). Ms. DeBoer describes both the history and the spirit of AFSC's Cambodia programs, current challenges and strategic directions, and how AFSC works to support emerging Cambodian organizations. AFSC's work, she emphasizes, differs markedly from that of traditional human rights organizations. The latter come into conflict situations after crises as a response mechanism, but AFSC works over the long term to organize communities and strengthen them to build lasting peace. She reflects on how religion is part of both peace and development challenges for contemporary Cambodia. Buddhism is a central part of Cambodian life and should be leveraged as a tool for building and developing effective peacebuilding programs. She also describes AFSC's approach and future direction in Asia, notably its focus on China.

MARIE DENNIS, Co-President, Pax Christi International

Marie Dennis has served as director of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns in Washington, DC and New York, and is currently co-president, with South African Bishop Kevin Dowling, of Pax Christi International. She has also been involved with the White House Task Force on Global Poverty and Development, the Catholic Peacebuilding Network, and Jubilee USA Network.

This exchange in April 2010 between Marie Dennis and Katherine Marshall focuses on the different ways in which Ms. Dennis has engaged issues of peace and justice, from her personal lifestyle to global arenas. She discusses efforts to link her growing commitment to social justice to her family's lifestyle. Her experience with the Maryknoll Global Concerns office has brought to light for her many dimensions of how women suffer in conflicts, especially at the grassroots level. She stresses the important roles that outsiders can play in accompanying

women as they articulate their understanding of injustice, helping to give them an authentic voice. She describes the important work of Pax Christi as a network linking groups working on peace. The interview highlights the complex interconnections between the development of a thoughtful feminism, rooted in theology, as well as both local and global struggles to address injustice, inequality, and exclusion. Her aim is not only to counter the invisibility of women, but also to allow them to be who they are called to be. Women, in Ms. Dennis's experience, have always played a central role in issues of peacebuilding, but rarely receive credit for their work. Marie Dennis' humility, caring, and authenticity come through strongly in the conversation.

VISAKA DHARMADASA, Founder and Chair, Association of War Affected Women, Sri Lanka

Visaka Dharmadasa is the Founder and Chair of the Association of War Affected Women and Parents of Servicemen Missing in Action, educating soldiers and community leaders about international standards of conduct of war. She is a member of Women Waging Peace as well as of the global advisory council of Women Thrive World Wide.

During this exchange with Michael Bodakowski and Katherine Marshall in November 2010, Visaka Dharmadasa discusses her work to build sustainable peace in Sri Lanka. She recounts how she came to establish the organizations Parents of Servicemen Missing in Action, and the Association of War Affected Women, after her own son was declared missing-in-action. Describing the role of the Catholic Church in building bridges in Sri Lanka, Ms. Dharmadasa highlights the universal religious values that can lead opposing groups to peace. She also reflects on the impact of the 2004 tsunami on Sri Lanka and stresses the gaps in aid coordination that detracted from relief efforts. Throughout, she highlights the importance of making space for women in both peacebuilding and democratic processes. Through the Association of War Affected Women, she is training women to run for political office, thus both reducing the problem of invisibility among female peace workers and increasing the influence women have on drafting legislation that protects their rights.

JOYCE S. DUBENSKY, Executive Vice President and CEO of the Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding

Joyce S. Dubensky is Executive Vice President and CEO of the Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding. Before joining Tanenbaum, Dubensky was Deputy Director with the New

York Region of the National Conference for Community and Justice. She served as General Counsel with the United Jewish Appeal-Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York.

In this exchange between Joyce Dubensky and Katherine Marshall in June 2010, Ms. Dubensky highlights Tanenbaum's efforts to fill gaps in awareness and understanding of women's important roles in peace processes. She stresses the deeply entrenched societal patterns of bias, which deflect this understanding, and her ideas for changing the situation. Much of her work at Tanenbaum has been dedicated to finding those women practitioners who were placing themselves at risk for their peacebuilding work, and documenting and promoting their work, thus reducing their striking invisibility. Peacemakers engage in an intensive interview process that leads to in-depth case studies that explore their motivations and approaches, especially those linked to their faith. In reflecting on her diverse career experiences, she highlights a consistent thread: pursuing justice, which has always motivated her and been at the center of each activity she has undertaken. Her witness highlights how the pursuit of social justice has drawn her increasingly to focus on the deeply embedded barriers that center on gender, race, class, and religion, and she explores special qualities that religiously motivated women bring to the work of peace. A long-term view is an essential element in pursuing social justice, she argues. The aim must be to change the way diplomats and policy makers approach women's issues and religious peacebuilding overall.

SCILLA ELWORTHY, Director, Oxford Research Group

Dr. Scilla Elworthy founded the Oxford Research Group (ORG) in 1982 to develop effective dialogue between nuclear weapons policy-makers worldwide and their critics. In 2003 she founded Peace Direct to fund, promote, and learn from peacebuilders in conflict areas. In 2007, she was appointed a member of the International Task Force on Preventive Diplomacy and the World Future Council.

This exchange between Scilla Elworthy and Katherine Marshall in July 2010 traces Elworthy's multi-faceted work over the years on women and peace. She began decades ago, inspired by a report she compiled for UNESCO reviewing its contribution to the 1980 UN Mid-Decade Conference on Women. Many threads link work at the global level, for example on nuclear disarmament, with actions at the local level, where women play prominent and creative roles in working for peace. She urges a focus on making women's work more

strategic. Her approach emphasizes understanding and dialogue, as she has worked to appreciate how people think about peace, as well as the pragmatic dimensions of the power they exercise and roles they play.

MARI FITZDUFF, Professor and Director of the International Master of Arts Program in Coexistence and Conflict, Brandeis University

Mari Christine Fitzduff is professor and director of the international Master of Arts Program in Coexistence and Conflict at Brandeis University. From 1990-97, she was chief executive of the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council. She has worked on programs addressing conflict and coexistence issues in many countries—including the Basque Country in Spain, Sri Lanka, the Middle East, and Indonesia.

This exchange in June 2010 between Mari Fitzduff and Susan Hayward focuses on her experiences living and working in Northern Ireland. She highlights the importance of space for ecumenical engagement across sectarian barriers in moving towards resolution of that protracted conflict, and the important roles of women in building coexistence. One specific contribution was women's roles in the push for integrated schools in Northern Ireland, with nuns, especially, taking a leading role in interfaith work. Senior leadership within the church communities, however, put up considerable resistance. In the post conflict period, the churches have found it fairly easy to reconcile, due to the foundations of the peace-building interfaith work on the part of the women.

MARC GOPIN, Director, Center on Religion, Diplomacy, and Conflict Resolution, George Mason University

Marc Gopin is the director of the Center on Religion, Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution at George Mason University's Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution. He has traveled internationally to lecture, conduct peacemaking training seminars, and engage in back channel diplomacy.

This May 2010 discussion between Marc Gopin and Katherine Marshall focused first on Marc Gopin's positive and varied experience working with women engaged in peace work in many places. Women's capacity to focus on relationships and stick to goals is a reason for their success in many areas, Gopin argues. Efforts led by women seem to have fared relatively well in the catastrophe of the economic downturn, a testimony to their pragmatism and stamina. A key to engaging women more ac-

tively in interfaith work is to refocus and reframe their participation to highlight women representatives rather than formal leaders (since formal women religious leaders are so scarce). Finally, the discussion touches briefly on the sources of inspiration that lie behind Gopin's lifetime work for peace.

NYARADZAYI GUMBONZVANDA, General Secretary, World YWCA

Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda, human rights lawyer and Zimbabwean citizen, is the current General Secretary of World YWCA. She is the 2011 recipient of the Human Rights Defenders Award, conferred by the Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association, an organization she served as first coordinator during its formative stages.

During two UN staff training events in Turin, Italy (November 2010 and September 2011), Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda and Katherine Marshall reflected on Ms. Gumbonzvanda's path and her perspectives on roles that religion plays in advancing her multi-faceted agenda. She argues passionately that bringing young women into global discussions, working for peace, and fighting discrimination against women are agendas that benefit all of us, not just "them." Religion is an integral part of these agendas at every level. She reflects on the YWCA Global Assembly in July 2011, and its significance for women's leadership and intergenerational dynamism and dynamics. Her work in conflict zones over many years gives her insights into the roles that women play. Speaking to the unique history and role of the global YWCA, she brings a distinct perspective to the history and contemporary reality of Zimbabwe, its pain and its resilience. She offers important wisdom about decision-making processes – consultation, participation, and empowerment—stressing the need to find better avenues to engage women and young people: "For a conversation and contribution of integrity, it is important to invest in a qualitative ways of bringing these diverse perspectives together."

"Development is not about families sitting and waiting for something to be done to them. Women, nurturing families, change communities and provide opportunities every day. They support children with schoolwork, grow vegetables, and feed the chickens. That is where it starts."

SUSAN HAYWARD, Senior Program Officer, Religion and Peacemaking, United States Institute of Peace

At the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) since 2007, Susan Hayward is Senior Program Officer in the Religion and Peacemaking

Center of Innovation. She worked earlier with the Academy of Educational Development in Colombo, Sri Lanka; the Harvard Law School's Program on Negotiation; and the Carter Center, and on political asylum, refugee policy, and human rights, in Minneapolis and Washington, DC.

This June 2010 exchange between Susan Hayward and Katherine Marshall focuses on the experiences that have inspired Hayward to press for more purposeful exploration of the issues of women, religion, and peace, notably drawing on her work in Colombia, Sri Lanka, and Iraq. She highlights her growing concern about the sidelined roles of women in work for peace and the need to turn women's issues into a central, not a peripheral concern. Instead of favoring the plans and agendas of men, women's initiatives need to be brought to the forefront. Hayward highlights the distinctive roles she has witnessed women play in shaping peace processes that blend religious and analytic approaches in creative and powerful ways.

QAMAR-UL HUDA, Senior Program Officer in the Religion and Peacemaking Program and a scholar of Islam at the US Institute of Peace

Qamar-ul Huda is a Senior Program Officer in the Religion and Peacemaking Program and a scholar of Islam at the US Institute of Peace. His research is on comparative Sunni-Shi'ite interpretations of social justice, ethics, dialogue, and the ways in which the notion of justice is used and appropriated.

This June 2010 exchange between Qamar-ul Huda and Susan Hayward focuses on Huda's experiences as a Pakistani-American, which led him into the field of Islamic peacemaking, and his work for USIP in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

SAMIA HUQ, Assistant Professor at the Department of Economics and Social Science at BRAC University, Dhaka

Samia Huq is the Assistant Professor at the Department of Economics and Social Science at BRAC University, Dhaka. She was involved in the South Asia Hub of Pathways of Women's Empowerment RPC (DFID funded Research Program Consortium headquartered at IDS, University of Sussex from 2006-2011).

This November 2011 discussion between Samia Huq, Katherine Marshall and Michael Bodakowski drew on Huq's co-moderation of the January 2011 Berkley Center/WFDD consultation (held in Dhaka, Bangladesh) on faith and development in South and Central Asia. She reflects on gender and Islam in Bangladeshi society. She recounts how her participation in

women's Islamic discussion groups inspired her to change her thesis topic and involved her in successive research projects investigating women's roles. Huq leads a research project looking at various forms of modern practice of religious adherence by women in Bangladesh, analyzing religious strands and changes for Bangladeshi society as well as how gender dynamics both shape and are shaped by Islam. Huq offers a comparative angle through her work with researchers from other Muslim countries. She reflects on her affiliation with BRAC, one of the world's largest and best-known NGOs.

DEKHA IBRAHIM, Wajir Peace and Development Committee, Kenya

Dekha Ibrahim Abdi was a peace practitioner based in Mombasa, Kenya, a consultant and trainer with Kenyan and international organizations. Abdi was a trustee of the Coalition for Peace in Africa and of NOMADIC, a pastoralist organization based in Wajir; she was one of the founders of the Wajir Peace and Development Committee, as well as ACTION (Action for Conflict Transformation). Dekha Ibrahim Abdi died on July 14, 2011, following a car accident in Kenya.

In this telephone discussion between Dekha Ibrahim and Katherine Marshall in May 2010, Ms. Ibrahim recounts how she first began to work on peace issues in northern Kenya and how her ideas and organizational base developed over time. As a teacher and educator, she focused her efforts on education in pastoral communities, which meant recognizing the limits of the traditional workday and traditional school day. She had to adapt and meet people when and where she could. At first, she and her colleagues went in blind to resolve conflicts, not knowing where their resources would come from or what the correct approach might be to combat gender-based violence. Over time, they gained support for their work, attracting attention from the NGO world. Dekha reflected on the nature of the conflicts that spurred her to action, on why women took the lead and what strengths they bring, and on her vision of how to build a peaceful community. More information and images of Dekha Ibrahim can be seen on Youtube.

“Participation in a peace process is not about the mathematics of numbers and percentages in relation to who is in majority or minority. It is about plurality, diversity, participation and ownership of all affected by the conflict.”

AYSE KADAYIFCI-ORELLANA, Founding Member and the Associate Director of Salam Institute for Peace and Jus-

tice, Professor in the Conflict Resolution Program in the Department of Government at the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at Georgetown University, Washington, D.C

Dr. S. Ayse Kadayifci-Orellana is a founding member and the Associate Director of Salam Institute for Peace and Justice. She has facilitated dialogues and conflict resolution workshops between Israelis and Palestinians, conducted Islamic conflict resolution training workshops directed to imams and Muslim youth leaders in the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Sudan, and organized and participated in interfaith and intra-Muslim dialogues, and also in the first American-Muslim Delegation to Iran.

This May 2010 exchange between Ayse Kadayifci-Orellana and Susan Hayward focuses on Dr. Kadayifci-Orellana's experience leading workshops on Islamic peacemaking in the Middle East, and her observations of women's roles, absences, and strengths for peacemaking. She also reflects on the challenges women religious peacemakers face, and gulfs that separate secular and religious women working for empowerment and peace.

AZZA KARAM, Senior Culture Advisor at UNFPA

Dr. Azza Karam serves as Senior Advisor on Culture at the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Before she joined UNFPA, she was the Senior Policy Research Advisor at the United Nations Development Program in the Regional Bureau for Arab States. Her publications include Transnational Political Islam (2004) and Islamisms, Women and the State (1998).

First Interview: This exchange between Azza Karam and Katherine Marshall in April 2010 focuses on Dr. Karam's experience in building networks of women involved in peace, and her ongoing research on the topic. Her interest stems both from her lifelong commitment to gender equality and her focus on human rights and democracy. The religious links came into focus early on, during the intensely political environment of the 1980s in the Arab world. Her work with religiously inspired political groups gave her insights into the complex roles of gender in these movements, including women's approaches to peace and social justice. Her work with Religions for Peace (she established and helped to build a women's network), UNDP (primarily working on the Arab World Human Development Report), and UNFPA have given Dr. Karam a unique perspective and understanding of these issues in relation to international organizations. She reflects on the shift from a status quo where women were significant but unseen forces in peace movements within religious spheres, and were accepting that role, to their more visible positions. She urges a

focus on women's stories as a way to enhance understanding. She also argues for a less mythologized approach to women's roles, one that addresses both women's roles as peacemakers and their part in fueling conflict.

Second Interview: This discussion between Azza Karam (in New York), Katherine Marshall and Michael Bodakowski in October 2011 builds on the earlier exchange on April 29, 2010. Dr. Karam highlights the complex evolution of thinking and approach within the United Nations system in relation to religion, seen from the vantage point of UNFPA. This has involved specifically intensive work to establish a network of faith-based organizations working on population issues; and simultaneously to set up an interagency task force within the UN system that addresses faith-based partnerships on an ongoing basis. She comments (as an Egyptian) on her perspectives on religious dimensions of the Arab Spring.

ASHIMA KAUL, Independent Peace Practitioner and Journalist

Ashima Kaul is an independent peace practitioner, journalist, and Executive Director of Yakjah Reconciliation and Development Network, a network of youth, women, and religious leaders in Jammu and Kashmir. She is also a consultant for Women Building Peace Constituencies in Kashmir at the Foundation for Universal Responsibility in New Delhi.

This June 2010 discussion between Ashima Kaul and Katherine Marshall reflects on women's roles in the Kashmir conflict and how religion is involved. Ms. Kaul tells how she reengaged in Kashmir after 1995, (born there, she left as a child). She was drawn by her insight that women's stories were absent in media coverage of conflict there. She realized that fundamental changes in how Kashmiris saw themselves were related to changes in Kashmiri Islam. Positive change is possible but very difficult, above all because of what she terms cultural insecurity. As Kaul has worked with women in Kashmir from many different communities, she has recognized the special roles that women could play in recovering and making useable and powerful mostly lost cultural memories and symbols. Using creative vehicles like theater, film, and storytelling, but also focusing on women's political roles, she highlights the importance of bringing women into political space where they can bring their insights into policy circles. In parallel, efforts to engage local Muslim religious leaders in work for peace can help in tempering forces obliterating traditional Kashmiri Islam, restore confidence, and empower women.

KATHLEEN KUEHNAST, Socio-cultural anthropologist and director of the Gender and Peacebuilding Center, USIP

Kathleen Kuehnast is a socio-cultural anthropologist and director of the Gender and Peacebuilding Center at the United States Institute of Peace. Kuehnast worked extensively with the World Bank, managing international research projects and advising policymakers on social development concerns, with a focus on gender related issues.

This June 2010 exchange between Kathleen Kuehnast and Susan Hayward focuses on Kathleen's experiences working in Northern Ireland and in Kyrgyzstan, which in turn led her into the field of conflict resolution, with a particular focus on gender dynamics in conflict. Kathleen presses for religion to be better understood and examined as it relates to gender dynamics in conflict and peace.

EMMA LESLIE, Director, Center for Peace and Conflict Studies, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Born in Australia, Emma Leslie directs the Center for Peace and Conflict Studies in Cambodia, where she is based since 1997. Her work focuses on peace education and conflict transformation. Leslie helped found the Asian branch of Action International Network and co-authored the peace and disarmament curriculum for Cambodian high schools.

This discussion with Emma Leslie took place in two parts, with two distinct areas of focus. A September 2009 discussion with Michael Scharff and Augustina Delaney was part of the World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD) review of faith-inspired organizations' work in Cambodia and thus focused on how faith influences development action and thinking in Cambodia. The second, a May 2010 discussion with Katherine Marshall and Susan Hayward, focused on women, religion, and peace. The discussion explores Leslie's background and sources of inspiration, and her reflections on the contemporary role of faith in Cambodia. She describes the various peace building networks she has worked with over the years and what she and colleagues have learned from the experience. She also reflects on interfaith work in Cambodia, and how religion is and is not linked to development. Then she addresses the special challenges of women working in conflict areas. She discusses CPCS's role in developing networks of peace actors, sharing knowledge, and advancing awareness at all levels of society on key issues surrounding peace.

“In Cambodia the the river flows in two directions; the Tonle Sap flows in one direction part of the year and then switches directions. That shapes the ethos of who people are. The rest of us might say: “The river cannot flow in two directions, that’s impossible!” Cambodians can live with that impossibility.”

LYN LUSI, Founder, Heal Africa, Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo

Born and educated in England, Lyn Lusi first came to the Congo in 1971 as a missionary teacher. She and her husband cofounded HEAL Africa in Goma in 1997, which provides comprehensive health care for people in eastern DRC. Lyn worked with local churches and communities to overcome stigma in HIV and gender-based violence. Lyn died in March 2012 after a long battle with cancer.

Lyn Lusi and Katherine Marshall spoke in Los Angeles in November 2011, as Lyn was honored with the Opus Prize.. The Opus Prize, one of the world’s largest humanitarian awards (one million dollars), honors extraordinary social entrepreneurs who are inspired by their faith. This interview includes some gems from her acceptance speech at Loyola Marymount University. Lyn focuses on her challenge to the churches to change the unequal gender roles that are still a reality in much of the world, and a call to young people to service, following their hearts and passions. HEAL Africa began as a health clinic but is now an ambitious community development program that works closely with Nehemiah committees in churches. Better treatment of women (their treatment is brutal and cruel in that conflict ridden region) and equal partnerships with women were Lyn’s priority goals and challenge, directed especially to the church leaders.

“A sculptor brought into his workshop a huge block of marble. And he began chipping away at this marble, chipping, polishing, chipping. His son came in to watch him and soon got bored, and went away. His son came back a few days later and saw this magnificent white lion. And he turned to his father and said, “Daddy, how did you know there was a lion in that block of stone?”

MARYANN CUSIMANO LOVE, Associate Professor of International Relations, Catholic University

Maryann Cusimano Love is an Associate Professor of Politics at the Catholic University of America. She has consulted with, inter alia, the National Intelligence Council, the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, the UN working group on Human Trafficking, and the

Franciscan Office for Justice and Peace.

This June 2010 conversation between Maryann Cusimano Love and Susan Hayward focuses on Maryann’s academic work seeking to bridge the U.S. Government and international relations organizations that have often failed to engage “religious actors and factors” with faith-based organizations and communities that are involved in peacebuilding and development. Though religious groups are not powerful economic actors, they have significant clout with grassroots networks that reach to the core of the communities and have a significant positive impact on the peace building efforts of other actors in the field. Maryann also focuses on how the Catholic Church has approached peacebuilding and reconciliation, and in particular, and how women have found leadership positions within social institutional arms of the Catholic Church.

S.K. MAINA, National Coordinator for Peacebuilding and Conflict Management (National Steering Committee) Secretariat at the Ministry of State for Provincial Administration Internal Security in Nairobi, Kenya

S.K. Maina is National Coordinator for the National Steering Committee on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management in the Kenyan Ministry of State for Provincial Administration and Internal Security. He is the recipient of some of Kenya’s highest awards, including the “Order of the Grand Warrior” and the “Head of State Commendation.”

As part of the Religion, Conflict, and Peacebuilding Fellowship, Consuelo Amat interviewed S. K. Maina, National Coordinator for Peacebuilding and Conflict Management (National Steering Committee) Secretariat at the Ministry of State for Provincial Administration Internal Security in July 2010. Mr. Maina describes the work of the Peacebuilding and Conflict Management Secretariat and its efforts (in summer 2010) to prevent violence around the constitutional referendum. Besides establishing peace committees, the Secretariat has worked to create specialized small arms and light weapons units in order to address security concerns and rampant criminal activity, especially in Nairobi.

MARILYN MCMORROW, Visiting Assistant Professor, School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.

Marilyn McMorrou, RSCJ, PhD, is a Visiting Assistant Professor in the School of Foreign Service. She has been at Georgetown since 1992, teaching in the Government Department and the School of

Foreign Service. She focuses on the political theory of international relations and on ethical analysis of urgent moral problems in world politics, such as human rights violations, absolute poverty and hunger, justifiable and unjustifiable resort to force, the plight of refugees and migrants, and environmental rescue and repair.

This June 2010 discussion between Marilyn McMorrow and Katherine Marshall focuses on her career and the factors that motivate her mission and her keen interest in justice and peace. McMorrow describes the path that has led her to focus on education and global ethics. She notes that her religious order, which is above all focused on education, has been actively engaged in movements for peace. She argues that conflicts worldwide are often fueled by religion or religious misunderstanding and it is thus crucially important to use religion and religious teachings as a tool to guide and nurture peace-building. She approaches her central mission of teaching about social justice through her concern about what constitutes peace and our ethical responsibilities in situations of conflict.

“As a metaphor for working for peace, I recall my gradual understanding of the guidance in the Christian Scriptures to let the wheat and the weeds grow together. Since it not possible to eliminate the weeds, the best one can do is focus on tending the wheat. . . .”

DENA MERRIAM, Vice Chairman and partner in public relations firm Ruder Finn, Inc., and the founder and convenor of the Global Peace Initiative of Women (GPIW)

Dena Merriam is Vice Chairman and partner in the public relations firm Ruder Finn, Inc., and the founder and convenor of the Global Peace Initiative of Women (GPIW). She began working in the interfaith movement in the late 1990s, when she served as Vice Chair of the August 2000 Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders held at the United Nations in New York.

This May 2010 exchange between Dena Merriam and Katherine Marshall highlights Ms. Merriam’s pioneering work in creating Global Initiative for Women, which focuses on women, religion, and peace. She recounts how she has come to see women’s spiritual voices as critical to global peace, and how their voices and the agendas and energy they reflect result in differences in approach and outcome. Her initiative has taken shape over the past decade, born of the glaring gap in women’s roles at the pivotal Millennium Summit of Religious Leaders at the United Nations in August 2000. She highlights GPIW’s

evolution from a focus on women’s roles in peacemaking in conflict situations (Israel, Palestine, Iraq), to a wider focus that extends to the environment and is inclusive of men and a broad range of traditions.

ZILDA ARNS NEUMANN, Founder and President, Pastoral da Crianza, Brazil

Dr. Zilda Arns Neumann was the founder and president of Pastoral da Criança, a Brazilian Catholic child development and family support organization. She was also the founder and national coordinator of the Senior Citizens’ Pastoral of the National Bishops’ Conference of Brazil and served as a member of the country’s National Health Council and National Council for Social and Economic Development. She died in the Haiti earthquake on January 12, 2010.

This January 2009 exchange with Katherine Marshall focused on Dr. Arns Neumann’s work and inspiration, and on her broad concept of peace and priorities. A pediatric and sanitary doctor, she was the founder and president of Pastoral da Criança - Children’s Pastoral; founder and national coordinator of the Senior Citizens’ Pastoral, social action arms of the National Bishops’ Conference of Brazil (CNBB) and many other official bodies in Brazil. She received different awards including: The Woodrow Wilson Award, The Woodrow Wilson Foundation, 2007; The Opus Prize, Public Health Heroine of the Americas Award (PAHO/2002); Brazilian Person of the Year on Work for Children’s Health (Unicef/1988); and the Humanitarian Prize (Lions Club International/1997).

PAULA NEWBERG, Director, Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, Georgetown University

Paula Newberg is the Marshall B. Coyne Director of the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy at Georgetown University. She served as a long-time Special Advisor to the United Nations, a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and a guest scholar at the Brookings Institute.

This January 2012 exchange between Paula Newberg and Katherine Marshall focused on Dr. Newberg’s broad work on issues of governance, human rights, and social justice, particularly in south, southwest, and central Asia—all areas in profound transition during the past two decades. She highlights the importance of understanding a wide range of social, political, and personal issues in conflict and transition environments, notably the role of minorities and vulnerable populations (including women and religious minorities). She highlights the important

intersections between beliefs, agendas, and actions, whether in local politics or within multilateral organizations and non-governmental organizations – and emphasizes that those who set agendas – often neither women nor minorities – frequently become victims of those agendas, a pattern of understanding and behavior that must be revised if social and political progress is to be solidly initiated and sustained.

FILIZ ODABAS-GELDIAY, Executive Director, International Association for Human Values and the Director for Government Relations, Art of Living Foundation

Filiz Odabas-Geldiay is the executive director of the International Association for Human Values and the director for government relations for the Art of Living Foundation. She also serves on the board of The Office of His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shankar. Formerly Washington correspondent for a Turkish daily and executive director of an international NGO, she worked closely with UNICEF in mobilizing children globally to help the needy in their communities.

In this July 2010 discussion with Katherine Marshall, Filiz Odabas-Geldiay traces her path to her present roles, starting in Istanbul, Turkey. She highlights her commitment to the humanistic approach of His Holiness Sri Ravi Shankar. Support for women is integral to his approach and thus his movement. The movement's approach to peace is through individual transformation, based on the conviction that only by mastering personal conflict can an individual contribute to peace in the community and the world. Examples discussed include work in Iraq, Haiti, Kosovo, India, and Sri Lanka.

JACQUELINE MOTURI OGEA, Director of the Women's Program at the Religions for Peace.

Jacqueline Moturi Ogega is the Director of the Women's Program at the World Conference of Religions for Peace. Before she joined Religions for Peace-International, Ms. Ogega served as the African Women's Project Director at Religions for Peace in Africa, where she established the African Women of Faith Network.

This May 2010 discussion with Katherine Marshall focuses on Ogega's work to support and develop the Religions for Peace Women of Faith network and her ongoing research in Kenya. That research investigates roles women of faith have played as peacebuilders in the ethnic conflicts among the Gusii and Maasai. Her analysis builds from the argument that women's multifaceted roles are important and often invisible, underplayed, or ignored. She sees peacebuilding as extending far beyond

conflict resolution to the broad development of communities and relationships. Training and confidence building play key roles.

MANAL OMAR, Director of Iraq, Iran, and North Africa Programs, United States Institute of Peace's Center for Post-conflict Peace and Stability Operations

Manal Omar serves as Director of Iraq, Iran, and North Africa Programs at USIP's Center for Conflict Management, which she joined in 2008. She previously worked with Oxfam - Great Britain as a Middle East program manager and with Women for Women International as regional coordinator for Afghanistan, Iraq, and Sudan. Omar worked with UNESCO in Iraq from 1997-98.

This June 2010 exchange between Manal Omar and Susan Hayward highlights Omar's experiences and insights into religion and its intersection with women's empowerment, development, and peacemaking, particularly with respect to Muslim women in the Middle East. She speaks to the challenges she herself faces as a spiritually devout Muslim woman operating in an often secular-biased development field, and emphasizes the need to build relationships between secular and religious women.

KATHRYN POETHIG, Associate Professor in the Global Studies Department at California State University, Monterey Bay

Dr. Kathryn Poethig is an associate professor in the Global Studies Department at California State University, Monterey Bay, and previously taught at St. Lawrence University. Poethig is on the Working Committee of the People's Forum on Peace for Life, a Global South-based interfaith initiative resisting militarized globalization. She has served on the Board of the Center for Women and Religion.

This May 2010 telephone exchange between Kathryn Poethig and Katherine Marshall explores Dr. Poethig's academic and professional experience with women's struggles for social justice and peace, particularly in the Philippines and Cambodia. She urges a particular focus on the role and efficacy of networks in both religious and non-religious contexts. Noting that the gulfs between secular and religious tend to be less pronounced outside the United States and Europe, she sees important roles for religious ideas and networks in women's movements. She highlights the importance of defining peace broadly so that it encompasses efforts to work for social justice, particularly when

that is the way women and women's groups frame their work for peace.

AMINA RASUL-BERNARDO, Journalist, Lead Convener, Philippine Council for Islam and Democracy

Amina Rasul-Bernardo is a journalist, Lead Convener of the Philippine Council for Islam and Democracy, and a founding member of the Women in International Security-Philippines and Muslim Women Peace Advocates-Sulu. She is also a Fellow of the Strategic Studies Group of the National Defense College of the Philippines, a Senior Research Fellow with the Asian Institute of Management Policy Center, and Managing Trustee of the Magbassa Kita Foundation Inc.

This July 2010 exchange with Katherine Marshall outlines the origins of Amina Rasul-Bernardo's work to bring Filipino Muslim women more visibly and centrally into peace work. She emphasizes that Southeast regional dimensions of this work have grown, highlighting the ways in which often invisible potential for social action can be transmitted into new domains. She explores why women, when given the opportunity and sound tools, can be the most effective peacebuilders.

ELANA ROZENMAN, Founder and Executive Director, TRUST – Emun

Elana Rozenman is the founder and executive director of TRUST-Emun, an Israeli nonprofit organization that works to build trust and mutual understanding in the Middle East. She served on the Global Council of the United Religions Initiative (URI) and is the co-coordinator of URI's Women's Interfaith Coalition. She also co-directs the Women's Interfaith Network of the Middle East and North Africa (WIN MENA), which trains religious women leaders.

In this June 2010 telephone discussion between Elana Rozenman and Katherine Marshall, Rozenman outlines her work through Trust-Emun, the NGO she co-founded. It brings together women from different religious communities in Israel and Palestine, so that they can understand each other and work for peace in Israel and the Middle East. Rozenman highlights the strengths that women bring, including their focus on family and community, and the inclusiveness and trust that is involved in their practices and processes. There are real merits in women working among themselves, using the truth of religion to bring understanding at a deep level and to empower women accustomed to patriarchal models. She argues that working at the grassroots, which differs from the policy

process, is vital to have the grounding to implement a political peace agreement. She also sees a great blessing in interfaith work and movements, both in local communities and internationally, as they can transcend the political processes in which we are currently mired.

DAVID SMOCK, Vice President of the Center for Mediation and Conflict Resolution, United States Institute of Peace

David R. Smock is vice president of the Center for Mediation and Conflict Resolution and associate vice president of the Religion and Peacemaking program at USIP. Before he joined USIP, Smock served concurrently as director of the South African Education program and as vice president for program development and research for the Institute of International Education.

This June 2010 discussion between David Smock and Susan Hayward focuses on David's experiences in international development and as a Christian minister that led him to work in the field of religious peacemaking. Smock speaks about his religious peacemaking work and the ways in which women have often been excluded from that work.

AFEFEFA SYEED, Senior Advisor, US Agency for International Development Middle East and Asia Bureaus

Afeefa Syeed is a senior advisor at the US Agency for International Development Middle East and Asia Bureaus. She has worked for over 15 years with various international and grassroots NGOs and US and international development agencies, public and private.

This July 2010 discussion between Afeefa Syeed and Katherine Marshall focuses on Afeefa's pioneering role within USAID and her rich experience there. She highlights the importance of listening to what communities want and driving programs from that perspective. Women are natural peacemakers, she argues, across many regions, from family to community to regional levels, sought out in conflicts because of their skills and approach. She also speaks to the active roles of youth, many now rediscovering non-violence and connecting across regions through new technologies, both to learn and to build alliances.

KAREN TORJESEN, Margo I. Goldsmith Professor of Women's Studies at the Claremont Graduate School

Karen Jo Torjesen is the Margo I. Goldsmith Professor of Women's Studies at the Claremont Graduate School, where she served for several years as dean of the School of Religion. Her research interests focus on the early church, including constructions of gender and sex-

uality, authority and institutionalization, and comparative study of Greek and Latin patristic traditions.

In this June 2010 exchange with Katherine Marshall, Karen Torjesen reflects on the evolution of her intellectual interest in religious history towards a focus on the role of women in the early church. That interest in religion and its gender dimensions went in parallel to a growing interest in women's studies. The two threads found themselves united in the development of Claremont's interreligious studies program and rooted in the social realities of the Los Angeles community. Her focus now is on linking academic and practitioner approaches that can lead to social change and has brought her back to women's studies. Her aim is to design new academic programs that focus on rigorous analysis of the cultural dimensions of change in a truly global context, in ways that integrate both religion and gender.

"As women, we wanted our story to be part of the master narrative, visible and celebrated. The same aspirations were what we found to be true in our interreligious work. It was basically no different."

WENDY TYNDALE, development scholar and practitioner, WFDD founding coordinator

Wendy Tyndale is a development scholar and practitioner who co-founded the Chile Committee for Human Rights in London in 1974. She worked in the Latin America department of Christian Aid for 11 years before joining the World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD); she also headed DFID's Latin America department for nine years. Tyndale is an advisory board member for the Knowledge Centre Religion and Development.

In this April 2010 telephone and email exchange with Katherine Marshall, Wendy Tyndale recalls how she came to be engaged with the start-up of the World Faiths Development Dialogue in 1998 and reflects on the experiences, especially in Central America, that inspired her interest in issues for women's roles in peace. Over her long career as a journalist and leader in Christian Aid, Tyndale was often and deeply exposed to conflict situations, especially in Central America. Mayans, especially Mayan women, faced special hardships during conflict, and the specific roles of some heroes and heroines within the Catholic Church stand out. Well-intentioned though somewhat marginal efforts to support women's empowerment were carried out by mostly foreign NGOs during and after the conflict. Although there were positive impacts, most noticeably in

boosted confidence for women, these NGO projects had little effect on women's overall economic status in Latin America. The project approach in Guatemala, for example, focused too heavily on small microfinance projects instead of addressing the structural problems of infrastructure and capacity issues the women faced. Religious and secular NGOs alike failed in most instances to find a common goal or vision, leading to disconnects in agendas and a pervasive lack of trust overall. Education and changes in traditions driving early marriage and constant child-bearing were and remain the major obstacles to women leading more meaningful lives within their communities. Tyndale also highlights critical roles that women, many inspired by theological reflection, played in the transformation and reunification of Germany after 1989.

HAJIYA BILKISU YUSUF, Journalist, Executive Director, Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria

Hajiya Bilkisu Yusuf studied journalism at the Moscow Institute for Journalism and International Relations. Her previous work experience includes working in the Ministry of Information, Kano, editor of Sunday Triumph Kano, editor of New Nigerian Kaduna, and editor of Citizen Magazine Kaduna. She is a founding member of several NGOs, including Women in Nigeria (WIN), the Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN), and AdvocacyNigeria, where she is the executive director.

In this July 2010 discussion with Thomas Bohnett, Bilkisu Yusuf recounts highlights from her career as a journalist in Nigeria, during which she frequently encountered government opposition to her coverage. She discusses the resurgence of Islam in Northern Nigeria and the deficits she sees in Islamic leadership in the region. Created with an Islamic perspective by Muslim women, her organization, the Federation of Muslim Women Association of Nigeria (FOMWAN), aims to fill yawning gaps in government services. It has worked with non-Muslim women's rights groups to promote understanding of the Sharia. FOMWAN has also established a Muslim-Christian Youth Dialogue Forum and an Interfaith Mediation Center to conduct peacebuilding workshops for traditional and opinion leaders in Northern Nigeria. Yusuf is more directly involved at present in addressing conflicts within Nigerian society. The city of Jos, in Northern Nigeria, has been rocked by ethno-religious violence, and FOMWAN has responded with protests directed at government and with mediation and outreach to Christian groups at the local level. Yusuf also touches on maternal mortality, education for girls, and the failures of governance in Nigeria.



INTERVIEW EXCERPTS

SCOTT APPLEBY

Four pleas: the term is *peacebuilding*; peacebuilding must be *strategic*; good research is badly needed; and let's bridge the gaps that separate different peacebuilding communities and avoid gender stereotypes

As people who have been explaining the difference between “sex” and “gender” for a generation know all too well, getting terminology and conceptualization right is essential, so I have a terminological and conceptual plea: the encompassing term is peacebuilding—not peacemaking, or conflict resolution, or even conflict transformation. My insistence on this point stems precisely from the fact that women are particularly adept at seeing the big picture, at perceiving connections and forging bonds, at refusing to isolate and preferring to integrate, and at understanding that new or renewed possibilities and hope unfold over the long duration, not in the six weeks or six months of a State Department’s timeline or a conflict resolution practitioner’s “getting to yes” agenda. Women, or those blessed with the aptitudes typically associated with that gender, instinctively go deeper, reaching beyond the presenting issues of a conflict, to the deeper wounds, the ruptured relationships and scars of violence and injustice that require years, decades, and lifetimes to heal.

“Peacebuilding” as a distinct concept and theory now has a shelf life. We use it to refer not only to the post-accord period of a conflict cycle, but to all phases of the cycle, because so many of today’s deadly conflicts are cyclical, so much so that it seems arbitrary and ahistorical to presume a starting and ending point, or even discrete, self-contained stages. First, peacebuilding in itself is not enough; it must be strategic. Maintaining strong and nurturing and peaceful personal relationships is not enough; personal transformations must engender structural transformation. And strategic peacebuilding must be gender-inclusive in every dimension. Women alone must not be the nurturers and healers, and men alone the power-brokers and politicians; women and men together must practice mercy and compassion,

and carry a big stick when doing so, as necessary.

A central dilemma is how we can avoid gender stereotypes while acknowledging different aptitudes, experiences, and skill sets, some of which, fairly or not, get attached to a particular gender. There is no dichotomy to be honored between claiming a voice and healing those who have been victimized, between organizing and lobbying for political change and building relationships across religious and ethnic divides, between mothering and fathering the family, and demonizing the structures that render equal access to education remote in the priorities of the state. We must not essentialize gender by leaving the structural questions to the men alone.

Such essentializing of feminine and masculine identities makes women’s (and men’s) varying experiences invisible but also often works as an ideological tactic to mobilize support for war and for peace. So to insist that peacebuilding at every level must be strategic is also to insist on deconstructing this essentialist discourse. That is: peacebuilding must leverage constructive personal relationships into political change and social transformation and calculate the impact and risks of certain kinds of actions; it must draw shrewdly on resources and partnerships at the governmental and national and international as well as the grassroots and local levels. Gender stereotypes are a real danger, especially if marginality, invisibility and the absence of voice are somehow seen as women’s special virtues and gifts. Women as well as men must be power brokers, senior mediators, development czars, and religious prophetesses within their own religious traditions.

In much of the discourse about religious women as agents of peace, religion is presented as primarily an interior, pri-

vate, devotional matter. Once again, religion is recognized as relevant only insofar as it represents an available resource located in a private or distinct sphere of social life. While it is important to explore how and why certain religious practices intensify during times of urgent conflict, it is also critical to interrogate how religion may be implicated and entrenched in the underlying structures of injustice and imagine ways of conceptualizing the connections between those two sets of inquiries. I am hopeful that recognizing women's peacebuilding work can position women within the religious community. It may stimulate, or be stimulating, the internal transformation of religious sensibilities and religious communities.

We need first-rate social scientific studies of what is actually happening in these so-called invisible realms of peacebuilding, conducted by women standing in some critical but positive relationship to the traditional religious community. One self-described Catholic peacebuilder observes that "if the general challenge is to expand women's role and participation in peacebuilding and to combat invisibility and women's limited access to key decision making structures, we cannot overlook the implications of this goal for our own religious community structures of authority and indeed for our own religious identities and agency within those structures." Scholars need to engage in serious theoretical reflection on the intersections of religion, women and peacebuilding—and resist replicating dichotomies already debunked in other contexts of research, not least in feminist studies.

Many remarkable women... have been part of the Kroc Institute's M.A. program in peace studies over the years. We identified at least 40 who have a special engagement with religion. Bina d'Costa, a faculty member at the Australian National University, originally from Bangladesh, is one of our prominent graduates who works on gender, religion and peacebuilding. She is the author, most recently, of an essay entitled "You cannot hold two watermelons in one hand': Gender Justice and Religious Identity Politics in Afghanistan and Pakistan."

Women, or those blessed with the aptitudes typically associated with that gender, instinctively go deeper, reaching beyond the presenting issues of a conflict, to the deeper wounds, the ruptured relationships and scars of violence and injustice that require years, decades, and lifetimes to heal.

Two friends from the Kroc M.A. class of '09 are now leaders of the International Women's Commission for a Just and Sustainable Peace. Dareen Khattab is the agency's coordinator for Palestine and is based in Ramallah. Christina Shaheen, based in New York City, is the agency's International Coordinator. Both of these women are highly gifted and effective peacebuilders. Burcu Munyas (class of '06), originally from Turkey, is another remarkable peacebuilder, whose work for Catholic Relief Services in Jerusalem has been profiled on the television program "Religion and Ethics Newsweekly."

Unfortunately, nuns have very rarely been a part of the program. Over the decade I have been director, we have enrolled two African sisters, from Kenya and the Congo. Other applicants from Africa or Asia have struggled with the English language requirement.

I joined Notre Dame's faculty in January 1994. At the time I joined the faculty, after several years studying religious extremism of various kinds, I was beginning to be interested in religion's constructive roles in ending conflict, reducing violence and building peace. In 2000, as Kroc director, I established a religion, conflict and peacebuilding program, supported by a Rockefeller grant, which brought scholars of religion to Notre Dame annually to work on these issues. Finally, this November, we are launching a project entitled "Contending Modernities: Catholic, Muslim and Secular," which brings scholars, practitioners and leaders from these traditions

to collaborate on research and education projects on development, climate change, youth, gender and other topics.

The Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies offers degrees at all levels of higher education—B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. in peace studies. We also sponsor and staff major research programs; currently, one of the most exciting is our study of comparative peace accords—what works, what does not, in structuring and implementing peace accords. The Kroc program draws in women much more disproportionately than men; it may be that the attraction lies in part in the fact that the program takes religion seriously. And the course work is clearly attentive to gender-related issues.

MARGUERITE BARANKITSE

Breaking barriers to peace and justice in Burundi, focusing on children, women's vital roles as "candles in the darkness", and working for honest government and ending poverty

I have always loved the John Lennon song, "Imagine." I wanted, from as long ago as I remember, to fix injustice and to make the world a better place. When I became a teacher, I said that I hoped to change something. My mother warned me then that I could do nothing, because the system was so unfair and I was just one person. But my mother had taught me my duty and she had never let me believe that there was something I could not do because I was a woman.

In Burundi, people call me a crazy person: Crazy Maggie. But at the same time the President has called me the nation's mother because everyone knows that I stand up for children. I may be crazy but I know that a nation must be founded on peace and on love. I know what is just and fair. We are one human family and our human vocation is to distribute happiness. I do what I can, as one crazy woman, with other crazy people who are my friends, and we help many children: thousands. But what we can do is just a drop in the vast lake of need. My dream is that the Maison Shalom can close, and that we have honest politicians who truly care and build the country we can have, and that our children deserve.

There were rumblings of trouble for months and years of tension between Hutus and Tutsis that made little sense to me. But on a terrible day in October 1993, after the Presidents of Burundi and Rwanda died in a plane crash and chaos erupted, I was with my seven children, and in an atmosphere of fear and killing and panic I sought safety. Many people were fleeing the killers and the army. I took refuge in the Archbishop of Ruyigi's quarters. However, the reb-

els got into the compound, and I hid the children in cupboards in the sanctuary of the church.

I began with absolutely nothing. At first, I had to scrounge everywhere to find food to feed them and clothes that they could wear. With God's help I was able to find enough so that we could survive. I went to the Bishop's house and asked for food and land. They gave us some land after a time. I went to the Belgian Embassy. The people there asked if I had an appointment. No, I said. So the person at the desk demanded to know: Who are you? What do you represent? I answered that I was just a mother. What do you want? They asked. I answered that I needed food for children who are hungry and that they must have some. At first they answered that I needed an appointment and must come to the office, write a proposal, wait for an answer, then file a report. But over time we built a more reasonable relationship!

But I had to find a place for all these children who had no one to love them, nowhere to go. Orphanages were not a solution. Their families were either gone or could not help at the time. So I was able to start Maison Shalom and gradually to build at our compound. We built houses, found land to farm, and built a small school. We took the name Shalom because my children heard on the radio that shalom meant peace and that is what we wanted. People helped as volunteers. We always try to create a family structure, with houses for the children. And we always try to reintegrate children with their original families whenever it is possible. There are even some children who live with the families that killed their

parents because they have been able to forgive.

Burundi's conflict is not settled yet, but besides violence there is a new threat, HIV/AIDS, that also leaves children orphaned and in need. So we work to support AIDS orphans and others affected by that and other diseases. We created the City of Angels that welcomes children from all backgrounds. The name Angels is for the souls of the children who have died. We now have 130 Angel homes in different regions of Burundi.

After seven years of operating Maison Shalom, I went to UNICEF seeking help, and they agreed. But they asked to see my statutes, the papers of the organization. Because they work with the government, they needed to be sure that we had a legal foundation. "Statutes?" I said. We had no statutes of any kind. I told them that we worked from the heart. They were shocked that we had been able to operate for years with no papers, not paying taxes, nothing. So I went to the Ministry of Social Affairs. They too were shocked, but helped us to register.

Now, since 2004, we are a registered, legal institution, a non-governmental organization with 300 full-time employees, and we pay taxes. We have an international presence as an NGO based in Luxembourg. So I need always to find the money to keep the operation running. After almost 20 years of work, we are a rather large organization. There are always more than 3,000 children in our care.

We have lots of services but what we offer most of all is friendship and love. We welcome women released from prison, street children, and people with HIV/AIDS. We have an international school. We have built a guesthouse, and a restaurant. I have to pay their wages and their taxes. Now we have three banks at Maison Shalom, and we offer micro credit to women. One day, 16 mothers died in childbirth. I persuaded the military to build a hospital, asking

them what they thought would happen when they died if they did nothing good. The Opus Prize that I received in Seattle helped me to expand that into a new and well-equipped hospital. We teach nurses there.

The main problem is poverty, not ethnic differences. It is not easy, though, nor is it the full and correct story, to explain the violence and corruption and anger and tension we have lived in Burundi with poverty alone. But unless we are able to deal with poverty and have an honest government that cares about people and tells the truth, it is not clear how we can find hope for a better future. However, my experience with politicians is that they do not care to help people, and they lie to achieve what they wish for themselves. We cannot rely on the government to build our society. It must be the women and the civil society.

Every day, you should ask, what have you done to help those in need? I do that every day.

The women of Burundi are candles in the darkness. They run homes for children, and they care for their families, no matter what happens and what extraordinary effort it takes. They understand what reconciliation is about, without explaining. They understand what a community is and what it needs to survive and thrive. Everyone at

Maison Shalom helps, in whatever way they can. They work on the land or help in the kitchen, whatever is possible. That is part of restoring their dignity. Everyone has to participate. That is important.

On discussing how faith affects her work: "If I were not a Christian, I would have committed suicide many times over the years. It is my faith that gives me strength. Whenever I face difficulties, I go to church, and pray to God to remove the obstacles that are in my path. And God answers my prayers. It is my faith that gives me the peace and confidence to hope in the darkest moments for a spirit of love that will allow us to forgive, and to be reconciled." Every day, you should ask, what have you done to help those in need? I do that every day.

SISTER JOAN CHITTISTER

A Benedictine Sister as a bold revolutionary: working for peace and stability through truly participatory consensus-focused decision-making

At the Global Peace Initiative for Women, we are working to bring the group of contemplative religious traditions together. One priority is to re-define security in ways that will help this group to put the different pieces and elements together. Global Peace Initiative for Women (GPIW) works to address women's issues such as war, trafficking, brutality, injustices, trauma and unreconciled hurts by bringing groups of different religious traditions together to discuss these issues. The convictions of the GPIW are echoed in the work of other peace-building organizations such as the Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice and the National Organization of Women, but though women bring insightful and necessary perspectives to breaking down the obstacles to justice and peace, their voices are rarely heard or maximized in the process.

The fight and energy in the women's movement is not what it once was. Women's voices are not being maximized, with a few exceptions, for example the National Organization of Women, which knows how to do it. But my faith was partly restored by the energy I felt from those young women [at the Nobel Women's Initiative]. People are coming at the problem from different perspectives, in a million voices. We felt very much part of the same presence, because of our common conviction that women are totally and absolutely part of the solution to the problems of justice and peace. Religion can throw moats between us and throw theological acid that makes religions puny and dangerous. But what I saw there was that a woman's quest is a profoundly spiritual one, whether or not it is labeled that way. I wish we had some way to have more

events like that, where women's voices are truly heard and maximized. I left happy.

[My involvement in the issues of women and peace began] because I became a Benedictine. I became a Benedictine nun at 16! That was in 1952, after I had plagued the prioress, Mother Sylvester, for two years to take me. She hesitated because I was an only child, [saying] my mother [needed] me. So I took my mother to meet her [and she told] Mother Sylvester that if I had made up my mind, that was what I was going to do.

I did not come to the issues through the peace movement or the women's movement; I have never been part of any secular organization. It came through the Church. The Benedictines are over 1500 years old. No institution of the Church is older, except perhaps the Church itself. And the Benedictine model has always been about peace, at any and every level. The Benedictines as a religious order worked for centuries basically to reclaim Europe after the fall of the Roman Empire. We were absolutely the first motels in Europe, and offered hospitality for hundreds of years. In many small villages, the central point was the Benedictine monastery, and the town grew up around it. The monastery employed people, taught them to farm, served as the judiciary, educated people, including girls, and served as nurses.

So if you are a Benedictine, peace is on your mind. Benedictines take a vow of stability, not of chastity and poverty. We take vows of conversion, obedience, and stability. That entails a life long com-

mitment to a particular community in a particular place. That sense of community is very important to us, and it is how we see ourselves and our social and civic responsibilities. So the answers to the questions—why women? Why peace? Why religion?—are very simple. I find myself in the middle of these issues, not as something outside, but as the result of a lifelong commitment that is deep and deeply authentic. It is part of the contemplative life: you put on the mind of God so you can see.

I loved the interfaith model [at the Geneva meeting of women spiritual leaders]. There were women there from every tradition, every denomination and spiritual bent, from many countries. But all of them knew that the national and denominational boundaries, barriers, and stereotypes were ridiculous. We spoke the same language, which was deeply spiritual, and we came in many ways from the same background. The women did not bring the legacies of conflict into the room, no matter how much pain they had lived. There was a great spiritual feeling, a great hope, and we all felt part of a real spiritual movement.

I am completely convinced that until women are more than token members of any movement and institution, there will never be peace or action on environment or real action on poverty. Women bring real differences in terms of style, goals, agendas, presence, and real skills in conflict resolution. The fact that existing institutions do not deal with women in any systematic fashion is a real issue. No one in governments or international institutions sits down with women's groups as they consider major legislation and other measures. But that is what they should do. We also need to work to model the kind of decision-making and policy making that is women's style, and that is quite different from the traditional, Daddy knows best approach.

I came to my commitment to women's issues through religion, and through the women in my life, including wonderful nuns. But some women have to leave religion to be able to come to the confidence and understanding that will allow them to think for themselves. I think it may be necessary for nuns to be able to hear these voices outside the religious systems. They can become healers between the systems. I don't know of any other way to do that, unless religion begins to look more women-friendly. Women have to take up women's issues, in the religious world and in the society, and more and more they can work together to open doors. What door is completely open? We have to keep pushing.

Nuclear weapons disarmament and education are two prominent issues: we have to keep looking at nuclear disarmament. The topic is an old one, but it is more urgent than ever. In poorer countries, there really is no substitute for education. Where the educational level of women is so low, there is little hope of bringing them into the decision-making process in meaningful way. We should never mask that crucial question, about what it takes for girls to go to school and stay there.

It is not what the mind knows; it is what the heart knows that changes the world. Women are the boldest and most unmanageable of revolutionaries.

We need to keep working for women in high positions, women in policy-making positions. I know the process is basic and slow but that is what makes the real difference. And in the meantime, I urge that there be clear, parallel processes. Whenever the Bishops meet somewhere, women should meet in a commission right across the street. They should discuss exactly the same agenda and at the end publish their recommendations, so there can be a comparison of where each comes out. And we have to keep finding ways to tap into women's agendas, through women's groups, and to honor those agendas. If this world is ever going to change, if this world is ever going to have peace, women must be involved.

DENISE COGHLAN

Understanding the true needs of refugee populations, and focusing on challenges facing disabled persons

I joined the Sisters of Mercy in Australia in the 1960s, and from there went to Papua New Guinea, where we established the first high school for women in the northern part of the country. Following my time in Papua New Guinea, I joined the leadership team for the Mercy Sisters in Brisbane. There was a request for a volunteer to go into the refugee service to work in the Thai camps with Cambodian refugees. So, even though I enjoyed my job at the time as coordinator for the Institute of Faith (a program for adult Catholics to refresh their theology and philosophy) in Brisbane, I felt I had to go.

We (myself and the fellow Jesuits I was working with) became the Jesuit Refugee Service. But in order to work in the country in those days, you had to strike an agreement with the local authorities. The authorities knew of our work with people with disabilities in the camps, and they asked us if we could implement vocational training for people with disabilities. We said that we did not want to be limited to work in a certain sector, but rather sought to be integrated into a rural community (or as rural a community you could work in at that time because of security). We thus had three strands to our work: 1) to work with people with disabilities as a symbol of the results of war, conflict, and exile; 2) to build a rural development project for the poor in the villages; and 3) to work for peace and reconciliation.

We tried to work on and introduce the theme of peace and reconciliation through all of our projects. At the Center of the Dove, we brought together people from all four of the different factions of the Cambodian conflict, to train them and then have them serve as teachers to others in society. For instance, in one case former enemies had come together in our vocational training workshop. In our sculpture

class, one man who was teaching looked down at one of his students and said, “You were probably the one that put down the mine that blew off my right leg.” This small example shows how reconciliation was at work in the Center.

The legacy of the Khmer Rouge is one of mostly trauma, violence and lack of trust: what I have seen for these women, particularly, is that their whole inspiration and ambition was thwarted. They had lived through incredible starvation and uprootment, and many had missed their chance to marry as well. That is why there are many single women from that era who are extremely talented, yet have not fully reconciled with the past. Depression is a major challenge facing these women today. There still remains today an incredible lack of trust between one Cambodian and another. You actually see this mistrust in NGO staff, as people of that era find it difficult to be governed by other Cambodians. Cambodian NGO staff prefer foreign directors in many ways, because of this legacy of mistrust among Cambodians.

In 1994, we changed the name Jesuit Refugee Service to Jesuit Service as the overarching organization, with Jesuit Refugee Service being a component. I was director of Jesuit Service up until July of 2009, but now have switched to solely manage Jesuit Refugee Service. Jesuit Service has programs to restore and create a more dignified life for people living in rural communities. People with disabilities devised a 12 point plan that sets out what they think are the things the poorest Cambodians need most, and they cover all of the areas that we are working in: 1) a house that shields them from the weather; 2) sufficient food; 3) water within a short distance of their housing; 4) prosthetics and wheel chairs; 5) access to education; 6) access to affordable health; 7) jobs and income; 8) roads to the village and to market;

9) clearing of landmines; 10) participation in decisions that affect their lives; 11) participation in cultural and sporting events; and 12) land titles.

We also have a center to make wheel chairs, and in the villages we have established 215 farmer solidarity groups. The solidarity groups address their own needs, as well as focusing on the needs of the poorest in their communities. On education, we work primarily in small village schools in grades one and two, and then provide students with access to scholarships so that they can attend government schools. We have a program for deaf people, making hearing aids and administering hearing tests. Also, we have six centers for disabled children that have not had access to schools, where they can stay and study, and then enroll in government schools.

The Jesuit Refugee Service helped people to repatriate and reintegrate into society as they returned from the camps. This had two aspects. The first was the purely physical assistance and providing shelter and material items. The second was designed to build relationships in the villages, so that the people could work together and rebuild trust. At that time, you were a refugee or a non-refugee, a distinction that had grown out of a period when they were throwing bombs at each other. Families accepted returnees for the first year because they brought food rations, but after that time life became difficult for the returnees.

UNHCR also asked us to help them with asylum seekers coming into the country, and that is now a large component of our work. The number of cases is not extremely large, but they are quite complex. We were recently working with a group of Uighurs from China. Previously we worked with the Montagnards from Vietnam, as well as Iraqis, Afghanis, refugees from Chad, Darfur, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Iran, and China, among others.

I am also involved in advocacy work. We just finished a research study on home evictions. On 24 January of this year, a development project came into a neighbor-

hood along the river and bulldozed cement houses to the ground. The residents were offered very little compensation, and what was offered is not nearly enough to buy an equivalent piece of land. The development companies tend to be very greedy, some from Korea and some from Cambodia. I do understand that people coming to the country to do business are looking to make a profit, but I also think that there is a role for faith based organizations to push these companies to uphold an ethical standard in their work. We became deeply involved in the landmine campaign in 1994. The three pillars of the landmine campaign are first, to ban the production use, export and stockpiling of landmines; second, to clear the mines; and third, to help the victims/survivors. In 2007, we also began another campaign to ban cluster bombs. This process was energized when the Israelis dropped bombs in Lebanon in 2006. Monitoring, working with government on

implementation, and direct service to the survivors is key to our work on all three treaties.

Because we came in as the Jesuit Refugee Service, the mandate is simple and clear: to accompany the people, to listen to their stories, the aspirations of the heart (to encourage and console), and to serve and uphold human rights. The aim of the Jesuit Service as a whole organization was to help towards reconciliation, peace, justice, and the full human development of the people hurt by war. Love was the driving force, Caritas, and helping the poorest to reflect on their current

situation so they can come up with their own constructive solutions. That was the basic drive and impetus from the beginning, but now for me, I see a need for interfaith work. The binding force and core value in both Buddhism and Christianity is compassion, Meta Carina, as it is called in Cambodia. It means to find the core values and work together.

With regards to faith, we do not proselytize, but if someone is attracted to Christ and his teachings, I rejoice, because for me Christianity properly lived gives great freedom. Improperly lived it can be a total burden, but the real message of Christianity is freedom.

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SCILLA ELWORTHY

Linking work for peace at global levels to women's prominent, creative and strategic roles in peacebuilding at the local level.

[My work on the intersection of women, peace and faith] started some 35 years ago, with a focus on weapons, militarism, and peacebuilding. In 1979, UNESCO asked me to do a review, as UNESCO's contribution to the 1980 UN Mid Decade Conference on Women, on the topic of women, peacebuilding, and international relations. I had not worked on the topic before and had therefore to find out about it. In doing so, I encountered outstanding women doing remarkable work. Elise Boulding and Betty Reardon, especially, led me to a wide range of work that was taking place, and we documented that work in our report. The report itself highlighted eight case studies of women peacemakers working in conflict areas, including Northern Ireland, the United States, and the Philippines. The case studies were full of fascinating, powerful material, and they showed the effect women had had, what challenged them, and what had defeated them.

The stories of what women were doing were distinct, but the links among them were remarkable. I saw a worldwide spread of ideas and examples. What was happening in Northern Ireland was important there but it also linked to other places. I did not want personally to continue with UNESCO. I was not cut out to work in a large bureaucracy. We came back to the United Kingdom, with our young daughter, and settled in Oxford. I became involved in peace work and protests, including Greenham Common. But gradually I came to realize that such work, while it was good in raising consciousness, was having little real effect.

An idea came like a flash into my head. Demonstrations in the street were not reaching those making decisions about nuclear weapons. What we needed to do was to identify those who really were making the decisions in weapons labs, in the military, departments of defense, intelligence strategists and weapons contractors - and look for an open dialogue, an informed discussion, with them. So, back in Oxford, I set out to create a research group to do this. At first it was three of us around my kitchen table, and it became the Oxford Research Group. Its focus was to understand how decisions are made, from the earliest drawings of nuclear devices to the actual deployment. It took four years before we produced our first book. It had a chapter on each country, with wiring diagrams on who was involved and how decisions were made, how groups were organized, from think tanks to political decision-making.

We formed a group called NATO Alerts Network in 1985, as a result of concern over the deployment of short range nuclear missiles in Europe. It brought together women leaders and parliamentarians from Eastern and Western Europe. One was the Speaker of the Bulgarian Parliament; the group was led by Margarita Papandreou, then first lady of Greece. We went with this group of about 30 impressive and experienced women to talk to our countries' military representatives at NATO HQ in Brussels. It was a shock to NATO that informed women wanted to enter a dialogue with them on nuclear weapons. It was the first time anyone from Eastern Europe had crossed that threshold, let alone women who were not

cleaners or secretaries. The Secretary General of NATO kept us waiting for 25 minutes, and then addressed us as “you young women who know nothing about war.”

We discovered on that visit that NATO had no hotline to the Warsaw Treaty Organization, meaning that if a military exercise was misunderstood as a nuclear attack, there was no fast way to communicate. Communications were apparently by letter, hand delivered, or via the media. We raised this at the very top, and within a few weeks a hotline was installed.

I also was working during this period towards my doctorate at Bradford University (in political science). My thesis also was focused on the processes of decision-making on nuclear weapons, and I conducted interviews with decision-makers in Britain and internationally, looking at what influenced them. It was around this time that I became a Quaker, inspired by my mentors Adam Curle, the first Professor of Peace Studies at Bradford - and Elise Boulding. I would call myself a sort of Buddhist Quaker. As I went deeper, I began to get more and more interested in the roles of women. I wanted to understand better the differences in the way men and women saw security and peace, and what motivated them. One of our main tasks as human beings is to balance the masculine and feminine within and around us. We need to work from a joint base of values that are grounded in respect for the earth.

Women especially were charting a course that was different from traditional models, starting new initiatives to prevent or resolve violent conflict, and they were effective. So from an exploration of ‘top down’ policy making, who did it and how, I moved to look at grass roots initiatives, working ‘from the bottom up’ and often with virtually no resources. I suppose the thread between the two is the absolute

determination that drives people; when they work together it is a recipe for success.

In 1988, in the course of the work to map the nuclear decision making processes, we had published a book (The Nuclear Weapons World: Who Where and How?) containing some 650 biographies of the people involved, of which only five were women. This really made me think. This book also got us banned. The problem was that we were attempting to render the process accountable, so the public could see how the processes worked, and that it was all done by human beings, not a machine. This means that the processes are something we have created and thus something we can shape and alter. It is not just women who work for peace, evidently, and Peace Direct supports women and men. But the most efficient institutions, the most effective approaches, do seem to be led by women. Peace

It was a shock to NATO that informed women wanted to enter a dialogue with them on nuclear weapons.

Direct, instead, believes that local people know best in conflict situations. We work to identify those who are most effective and offer them encouragement, media focus (when that is important for their safety), and resources to support what people are doing at the local level.

What is missing is an overall strategy for the building of peace worldwide. There are so many effective grassroots initiatives that do not get a fraction of the resources they merit; there are marvelous UN declarations that do not really deliver; there is excellent research coming out of university peace departments; there are even great initiatives on the part of governments, but all these are fragmented and do not work together as joint stakeholders in the building of peace. What interests me most is how those learning to work for peace from a basis of compassion and self-knowledge can also understand how the political system works, so that we can access the real levers of change. What we need to do is to reach more effectively those who have the power of decision.

MARI FITZDUFF

Inspiration from Northern Ireland: Women's roles in engaging groups across sectarian barriers to resolve long-standing conflicts

I was born in the Republic of Ireland, raised Catholic, and when I entered the University, I became very involved in the ecumenical movement. I think that shifted me significantly from having a Catholic perspective to having an ecumenical Christian perspective. When I subsequently moved to Northern Ireland, I found that certainly most of the Christian churches didn't seem to be responding in a particularly Christian way to the conflict. So I gravitated towards the Quakers and Mennonites, who seemed to me to be responding in a very thoughtful and courageous way.

[When my husband and I came back after traveling the world for a couple of years], we came initially to Northern Ireland, where the conflict had started five years earlier. We were in an interface area where there was a huge amount of violence happening around us. I believe there were thirty people killed within a square mile of us, Catholic and Protestant. I began to think there had to be a better way - it was an awful place to be living. You were in continuing danger; your children were in danger, businesses being blown up, including my husband's family business. So I began to look at conflict resolution.

During this time, in the late 1980's, a few of us set up the first ever mediation service in Northern Ireland, which addressed political issues. Because of my work at the university, and my setting up of the new mediation service, the British government approached me to see if we could help them better strategize the end of the war. The main approaches to conflict resolution employed by the government until this point had been economic and military. They had made quite a lot of progress on equality issues, but they had never looked at issues of inter-community relationships. So the Government then invited me and a colleague to write a

report about what they should do to this end. We wrote a report saying that they needed an organization outside of Government that could look at building a more shared society, and getting all sectors involved, while continuing to look at inequality. We proposed two institutes, one at the heart of government, and one independent, outside of it.

Subsequently, I was asked to lead the independent one, which I did. It was called the Community Relations Council and it was basically funded by the British government and the European Union. We took on the funding for the whole of civil society and the public sector, looking at how to put pressure on businesses, the public, communities, and all institutions such as museums (which only previously represented the Protestant population which were roughly two-thirds of the population, and completely ignoring the one-third Catholics who had lived in Northern Ireland since the division of the island in 1921). The purpose was to address proactively the divisions within society.

When I took over in 1990, by and large the major religions were following the people, not leading them. It was pretty disconcerting to see how little they were doing at the local level to mend relationships and address issues of difference. And there were individuals, Protestant and Catholic champions within the different churches. But by and large I saw that the churches themselves were a barrier to the work that needed to be done in Northern Ireland. In the 1980s, we still had the example of a Catholic priest who shook hands with a Protestant minister on Christmas Eve and the minister subsequently had to leave because of the anger it engendered in his community.

In terms of women, what was interesting is that there was a significant attempt to create integrated schools. Prior to that

period, except for one school, which had been created in the 1970's, all of them had been segregated into Catholic and Protestant schools. But, subsequently, in the 1980's there was a much more vigorous movement to create mixed schools. For many years, the Catholic Church said they would not provide chaplains for these integrated schools, because they felt the children should be going to Catholic schools, and for many years parents found it difficult to arrange for the various 'sacraments' that children participate in to establish their membership of the Catholic Church. But I do remember that some nuns went, on their own initiative, without church permission, and became chaplains at these schools. The nuns were more free to offer their services in ways that the priests could not. So you saw some of them doing the interfaith work, or getting involved in other issues where the priests were absent.

It was very depressing how little the church was willing to help, except for the odd handshake at a senior level. I can remember having conversations with very senior people in the Catholic Church about the fact that when there was talk of more integrated education at a high level, at the university and teacher training level -- there were sermons in the Catholic Churches saying this should not happen: we must keep our teachers separate. The Protestant churches were resistant too. They were afraid of losing souls, afraid of losing membership (afraid of mixed marriages), afraid of peoples' faith being challenged.

I would say that it is only since the ceasefire that the main body of the men in the churches has become involved. Like many others, in the post-conflict phase, as opposed to the all-out-war stage, the churches found it much easier to be involved when the war died down. We've been delighted to see that there is much more going on now in terms of the churches.

Women had a freedom that men didn't have. The fighters saw the men and the male organizations who sought to reach across barriers as very threatening. The women's groups were seen as less threatening, so they could get away with reaching

across barriers. Women were involved in ecumenical work, through community relations work which was more secular and then also some religious work. Some of it was formal within the churches & they would meet for a weekend to look at difficult issues together. There were a few that did interfaith work, on the interface between protestant areas and Catholics, and they sprang into action as necessary.

In Northern Ireland, women tended to contain the war but didn't end it until they became involved in politics in the mid-1990s. Women wanted to serve their communities but not be involved in politics, or be challenging the war itself. But a big change came in the 1990's: there were a number of active women's groups who wrote to the political parties asking them about their position on various women's issues and only one party wrote back. The women decided to form their own political party. They were non-sectarian, ecumenical, and represented all different classes.

They had a system in the Parliament at that time whereby you had to have so many Catholic and Protestant votes to pass significant votes. The women's party, the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, would re-designate itself depending on how it saw things. It was very much a process party, i.e. didn't stand for a particular political position, but helping the parties to find a solution.

The role of the church as an agent for change may be fading: what happened in the Catholic Church is that radical

women became so frustrated with the churches' stance of non-negotiability with women's ordination that they gave up on the religion. They left the Church. There are many women who came into the Protestant churches for ordination. But by and large, the churches were never seen as a way for women to gain authority as peacemakers in their local community. I think one of the tensions is that there is still a lot of exclusion in the churches, and a lot of good radical women who might have revitalized the churches have left out of dismay and disgust. Whether the confluence will come again interests me. It was a very interesting time in the 1980s, when women thought staying in the church and gaining more power in the churches, was possible. But then disillusionment hit, and it may be here to stay.

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MARC GOPIN

Highlighting reasons for women's success in peacebuilding and conflict resolution work: a case from Syria

A first and important priority is to reframe the discussion around who participates, because that is the key to engaging women more actively. What works and is meaningful is to focus on “religious representatives.” This makes it possible to reframe who is empowered and authorized to represent a religion. Using language and tests of eligibility that focus on women “religious leaders” is simply a non-starter at the global level, because of the barriers that block women’s participation in several traditions. It is important to look for women clerics, to have affirmative action to bring them in, but that should not be the central focus, and it simply excludes, for example, most of Islam and Orthodox Judaism. Some refer to “religious actors” but to me that tends to trivialize their roles and work and it lacks clarity.

And it is also important to make clear that the feminists at the table are not all women. There are men who are actively subverting systems, and changing laws. And a women’s agenda should not be just an elite group of women, for example powerful women CEOs, who may be neither particularly religious nor focused on women’s roles and groups. The idea is to have an agenda that is gender sensitive, and brings in whoever is needed to press and achieve it.

The wide range of kinds of activities that engage women is striking, and women are the creators and leaders in many of these activities and organizations. Women seem to have a capacity to make connections and to use many means to achieve that, including film, arts, and music. They are of-

ten able to connect, in places like Somalia, on a totally different level. Women there have been able to make connections between warring parties in a different way. There is a different level of seriousness and respect that they bring. To my mind bringing women into the process represents an important interfaith opportunity.

Hind Kabawat and I have worked closely together on Syria over several years and are close partners. Quite beyond her specific and extraordinary talents and intellect, there are some interesting elements of process that offer real lessons. Hind and I met at a World Economic Forum meeting at the Dead Sea in Jordan. In the irony of such meetings of the super powerful, many who participate and have extraordinary achievements behind them are actually rather disempowered in such settings, and the Syrian delegation fit in that category. This disempowerment creates a rather interesting dynamic of solidarity among disparate groups. Hind and I began, against that backdrop, to talk and realized an instant connection. Hind invited me to Syria and we began our effort in conscious, high profile public diplomacy, which opened up relationships more and more, reaching the civil society. At first, all the participants were male except her; we agonized about what to do about it. Over time, as people built trust with her, we could put more women on the programs. Eventually the press conferences and teaching sessions were half women. Early on, starting the process of change was an interfaith session where the participants were all male clerics, with Hind running the meeting, calling on speakers and ringing the bell, and determining how

much the clerics could say. They accepted it and that made possible a further opening up. A result of the dynamic that developed was that it was more egalitarian. And there was more of a conversation.

Some of the women active in interfaith work [who were engaged by this process] (and also the men) are perhaps rather nominally religious. That is generally fine, though it is important to try to create as far as possible common links. If some of those involved are super religious and some are not, there is an imbalance. Having a faith “test” for interfaith dialogue, however, is foolish. What you want to have are program builders. And perhaps even more important are the social networks. What matters are the private meetings, the lunches, dinners, intelligence gathering. Women have to be a key part of that and they are simply better at it, at every level. They are part of social structures. And who is at the lunches and dinners matters.

We had been somewhat less successful in bringing in young people, until this past year, when we started mediation training classes that have wonderful students, some of whom are religious. Overall, the image of interfaith has changed in fundamental ways through this opening up to women and youth.

A subtle dimension of women’s roles speaks to the complex dynamics at work. When Hind was there alone, as a famous and attractive woman, there was more of a “heterosexual moment” and therefore a special dynamic in the interactions. With more women at the table, a mix of women, it was harder for the men not to take them seriously as women, because the other women were there. But obviously the question of building trust and respect is a key.

I also have seen that many of the women have survived the recent crash in funding better than the men. It’s a phenomenon well worth reflecting on.

It seems to have resulted from a combination of idealism and pragmatism. Some of the men are more martyristic, and created ridiculously impoverishing constructs wherein they simply could not survive without money. Women have an idea of how to take care of themselves. The younger women starting out are more practical, even when they seem radical or unrealistic. They are self-sustaining and they are doing great work. But too often it is work that is really on the fringes.

Another way to think about identifying strong women who are doing important work is to define what it is that we are identifying as peace, because the lines between development and peace are fuzzy. I have in mind, for example, Batya Kallus, who is one of the best in Israel. She is sharply focused on Arab Israeli equality and her work on building bridges to the Arab world, bringing in the Knesset even, is some of the best I have seen. Finding real examples of success and replicating them is possible and essential. Many have no idea that there is a large enclave in Haifa where Jews and Arabs have lived together for decades. We need to put success in their faces, stop funding the extremists, and put the kind of money that is needed into the things that will work for peace.

The idea is to have an agenda that is gender sensitive, and brings in whoever is needed to press and achieve it.

My next book is an in depth study of the transcripts of movies, some of which we have made, that explore the inner life of peacemakers. I am asking why they take risks, why they reach out, and how they succeed in reaching over the divides. Why, when they are traumatized themselves, do they succeed? What do they look for? And I am excited about my very practical and different effort to bring business into the business of peace. My venture is demonstrating through business relationships that Jews and Palestinians, no matter how cynical and jaded they are, can do business with enemies. Business relationships often create other relationships and I want to exploit that for peacemaking.

DEKHA IBRAHIM

Merging traditional and civic spheres to give voice to women working in conflict resolution and peacebuilding – the Horn of Africa

I was born in Wajir, in the northern province of Kenya, and went to primary and secondary school there. My family are pastoralists, as is the community overall. My father, however, was working in the urban areas. Most of the family wanted nothing at all to do with urban life. They thought my father strange because he chose to live in the city. We were a family of girls. My mother married twice, but from her marriage with my father I had five sisters and one brother. My father wanted us to go to school. Again, this defied the norms of the family: why invest in girls? The family was seen as a lost cause, lost to western education and values, lost to Christianity (they feared the family would be converted in the city). They saw my father as a hothead. And when my father died, when I was young, they felt that he had been forewarned. This family of just women was simply a hopeless cause.

We continued to pursue our education nonetheless, but also kept up our dialogue with the extended family in the bush. I started my career as a teacher, an educator. I then began to focus on pastoral education, working with the problem of how to bring education to pastoralists who were moving constantly, and did not come to the city or towns. That was my background and my passion. As I was working with the pastoralists, though, I learned more and more about their culture, and had to face the problem of violence; because violence was everywhere: animal raiding, conflicts and killing, fighting and tension. We began working with all the leaders in the community: business, religious, political, and educators.

Our movement for peace started in 1993. We were four women, living in Wajir, who took the first steps. We were all working then in other jobs, as community development workers, secretaries, and teachers. At the start, ev-

erything we had came from ourselves, from our salaries and all sorts of contributions in kind: water, plates, tables; anything we needed, we found somewhere. I realized afterwards that that was part of the reason for our credibility. We had no idea how to organize, of what the NGO world represented. We worked from our homes. But this gave us an authentic base, and we gained both credibility and legitimacy for our mandate.

We started a mediation process, along lines that were quite familiar to us, part of the culture and tradition. The process involved a lot of shuttling from group to group, talking and talking, trying to start a dialogue and to build confidence. Then, once we had established that trust, we would allow the group that was in the minority to take the lead in the dialogue. And we gave logistic support to the process.

[The conflicts were] largely, at that time, within the ethnic group; the community was ethnic Somalis and Kenyan nationals. There were factions within the community and they were one against the other. But about three years down the line, this mutated and changed. At first, there was not a religious dimension but this did arise, because there was a Christian minority that was being attacked. The tensions did not arise because of historic religious problems within the community, but were sparked by a problem in a different part of the country. Again, we used the same kind of shuttle diplomacy. And we created through that process interfaith groups that took root and have lasted.

[The violence and conflicts] had many forms and many causes, but the most important (that led even to killing of children and women) was political rivalry. The 1990s

were a period when there was active contestation. It was a transition period, from military to civilian and from one party to multi-party, and the process of transition did not go smoothly. There were political wars, stolen elections, and bitter recriminations. But in this political scene, rape became a tool of strategy, to rape, burn, and loot. It was an awful distortion of the old traditions of how conflicts were handled in the community.

For a time, the tensions were within the community and within Kenya. But over time they took on a regional dynamic. There were refugees streaming over the borders from Ethiopia and Somalia, as well as arms. We became keenly aware of the international dimensions of conflicts, including the Cold War. We could see signs everywhere around us. National and international politics played out in our community. Religious tensions were not at all obvious or pronounced in the early years, but they did emerge, within the Muslim community and beyond, as the broader world intruded more and more into our lives.

I grew up as a Muslim, and am still a Muslim. And we worked from the start with both cultural and religious leaders. We also worked with non-Muslim religious leaders, particularly Father Babone, a Catholic priest. We used all the resources that were available, men and women, all faiths: Muslim, Catholic, Anglican, and Jewish.

With the religious leaders, we found cooperation from the beginning. The religious leaders were prompt to respond, they took on tasks, kept appointments, even if they were at two o'clock in the afternoon. They were ready to support us as long as we showed them respect, and did not insist on mixing men and women. We would open meetings with a Muslim prayer, and close with a Christian blessing. The religious leaders were disciplined and we enjoyed working with them, once we had built trust. They observed us and bought into the process that we were following. We also had good working relations with the military. The trust and cooperation were less true for the cultural leaders (the elders and traditional authorities),

though I note that there were many different reactions and approaches. Some leaders, for example, were both religious and cultural. The non-religious cultural leaders were often the most difficult, for example questioning why they should deal at all with women or young people.

From this work evolved a teaching and training guide: AF-RICA: Analysis, Flexibility, Responsiveness, Innovation, Context, Action. It is based above all on using context-specific approaches, on increasing and enhancing awareness, and on action learning. In intervening in active violent conflict, there are several different elements that are critical. Analysis of the context and conflict: conflict analysis is an intervention. It is done with the party affected by the violence and helps them to make sense of their context. [It] can also be used to support specific strategies of intervention. Flexibility in doing peace programming: the context

is dynamic and change is constant. It has to be flexible and responsive if it is to remain relevant to the context. Responsiveness in contexts that have both direct and structural violence is key. Innovation and thinking out of the box: to create what does not exist and to stretch the boundaries of the systems. Context specific action: there simply is no blueprint of action. One has to design context-specific action that is informed by the analysis, but that is also linked to the wider conflict system. Action and learning: that means reflecting on one's work, creating the physical and mental space to

think and observe. Being in constant action, it sometimes does not help to go slowly.

We have from the beginning been guided and inspired in building on existing systems, the systems that people know and use, for conflict transformation. To have lasting conflict resolution, traditional systems are crucial. When violence is most intense, people retreat from the civic sphere and they tend to go back to the traditional sphere. That is why it is especially important to have the two operating systems that are complementary, one that is truly inspired and driven by what people understand from their heritage and traditions, and one which has more modern and outside elements.

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EMMA LESLIE

Rethinking faith in development in contemporary Cambodia; building and maintaining strong networks

I grew up in Australia, very much in the Anglican Church. After university, I worked with Anglican organizations, including travelling with groups organized by the church to visit development projects in Asia. I was involved with the youth movement of the National Council of Churches in Australia, the Christian Conference of Asia and the World Council of Churches. When I finally came to live in Cambodia in 1997 under an ecumenical internship (Frontier Interns in Mission), I found I was seeking something wider. Further, I was disillusioned by the politics and bickering of church structures and the vying for power amongst Church leaders involved in the ecumenical movement. I had attended a course in the UK, called Working with Conflict, where 25 people from around the world of all faiths and backgrounds had spent three months trying to work on how to address conflicts nationally and internationally. I became convinced that we all needed each other to achieve true peace and justice. I think I started to become a humanist then, believing in the dignity of humanity and the whole inhabited earth, more than the doctrines I had been raised with.

In 1996, a small number of us who had graduated from the UK course, including my now husband Soth Plai Ngarm and Baht Latumbo, felt strongly we needed to develop a mechanism for Asian peace practitioners. We were frustrated by a lot of the Western thinking and teaching which existed in the field, and as it was fairly new as a field in the region (compared to say human rights or community organizing) we wanted to have a space for practitioners to meet each other and support each other.

Many of us had been involved in other networks which were based on organizational membership and after some time had ceased to exist, as people lost interest or momentum. We felt strongly that our network should be based on a model of the Asian extended family, thus the emphasis being on the rela-

tionship first before the task. Membership was made on an individual basis, regardless of which organization you might be working with at any given time. In this way, the network moves in and out of different organizations and structures, but stays with the individuals who hold the vision, passion, and long term commitment for building peace in their country, the region, and, of course, the world. As the network became stronger, we were cautious not to 'kill' the spirit of being an extended family. So we gathered those who had been highly motivated and active in building the network and called them the leadership.

We did, however, need a 'formal' structure through which grants could be received and which could serve as the legal entity for the network's activities. In the first few years of the network, the Cambodian organization, the Alliance for Conflict Transformation, provided that structure. With ACT's support we registered the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies in Cambodia as a legal organization, which is a home to the Action Asia network.

I see Cambodia as a center of learning for the rest of the region. Cambodia has faced genocide, a civil war, foreign occupation, UN peace keepers and administration, a peace process, and over the decade rapid development towards stability. Everything you might want to reflect on in terms of conflict and peace can be found in Cambodia, except perhaps people's movements.

It is useful to distinguish three different approaches in what is happening in Cambodia in terms of religious organizations. There is a high level approach. There are various interfaith meetings along those lines, but that does not really work very well, because most of the faith traditions do not really have "heads." Evangelical churches don't have somebody at the top,

and the Catholics don't really have archbishops, and the way Catholicism has developed here is not very structured. Inter-faith approach with nominal leaders has never really taken off, because it has been based on the flawed idea that you can put the pivotal people at the top together and get action.

A second level is less high level and more driven by practical action at a working level. That approach characterizes the work of the Cambodian NGO the Alliance for Conflict Transformation (ACT), whose approach was, "We're not working with the top level people, it's not an inter-faith dialogue, it's action for inter-faith peace." The aim is to work in practical ways with people involved in their faith group, and bring them together to show what is possible. That involves a whole different layer. And third, you have people who are just interested in working within their own groups, like Christians who will work with Christians, Buddhists with Buddhists, Muslims with Muslims.

On the role of Cambodia's Buddhist heritage in peacebuilding: this complexity and deep ambiguity do come into play in many ways, including how religion is involved. But to date people have not used faith-based approaches for peacebuilding very strongly. Because the conflict has been so political, it has always been through political parties that people engage in any kind of critique. Religion is something on the side. That made ACT's project on inter-faith peacebuilding quite unique and new. In the last three to four years, the recognition that Muslims exist here, and have been here for a very long time, has increased, and so have efforts to engage them in the process. More importantly, there are new reports now about how disproportionately the Muslims were affected by the Khmer Rouge years.

The burning of the Thai Embassy [incident in 2003] was a very critical moment, when the peace organizations, at least, came to understand that we were focusing on the past so much that we were not focusing on what is happening with people now. That is when ACT did their first ethnic-nationalism research, and we realized the huge differences that existed in perception amongst people of different ethnicities. Out of this rec-

ognition of worrying trends in relationships among different faiths as well as ethnic groups, we began to appreciate that we needed to focus more on faith perspectives and faith approaches. So simultaneously ACT, World Vision, and YRDP (who constitute a sort of "peace gang"), who have good networks and relationships with each other, took on the notion of doing inter-faith peace building. Thus you see the development of inter-faith curriculums in peace education. ACT is now trying to put those curriculums into the Ministry of Education.

A working group for inter-faith peace was formed. They had a series of consultations and discussions and a couple of case studies came out of their work. One case study looked at Kampong Cham province, where the statues went missing from the temple and Christian youth were blamed. The working group on inter-faith peace went up to the province and investigated and talked to people and tried to get to the bottom of why this

community had fallen apart down this religious line. They learned that the divisions stemmed from the fact that the church had been so aggressive in its push to try and convert people that the temple felt threatened, and so when something went wrong in the temple, they blamed the Christian young people.

I have seen that women in our network who are inspired by their faith to do peace work are more inclined to see and reach out to the religious sector as a resource or partner for their on-the-ground peace work. One thing that has been interesting, I think, for our women from Sri Lanka—

one Buddhist, one Hindu, one Christian—is the manner in which they have shared a feeling of being isolated from their respective religions because of their radical positions; radical in the sense of their politics, to some degree, but also because of their strong voice and bold peace work.

Religion is also relevant as we look at some of the gaps we see in approaches and in our understanding of both conflict and peace. Many of them also come out of a strong religious perspective. How do we foster and nurture that if we are not talking about what is important and relevant to them? And when we do focus on religion, how do we do so in a way that does not alienate or exclude secular young women?

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DENA MERRIAM

Involving spiritual women's voices in global policy agendas through the Global Peace Initiative for Women (GPIW)

My focus on women's voices in interfaith events and efforts sharpened after the 2000 Millennium Summit of Religious Leaders. Women were not prominent there, and a number complained, asking for a follow-up event that would address the gap. We convened a meeting of women religious and spiritual leaders in Geneva in 2002, and as a result the Global Peace Initiative of Women (GPIW) was formed. It is an international group, and focuses on peace, but peace broadly defined. Our mission is to look at how to mobilize the spiritual resources for peace that are too often hidden from view. But the effort was never designed to be just about women. Yes, women are the leaders, but it is not just formal religious leaders. We bring in young people and men also. More and more, our events and networks are not just women. But what we want to see, and do see, is women emerging in leadership positions. And we have seen this in many places, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India.

The Millennium Summit for Religious Leaders came about almost by accident, as did my role. It started with conversations between Maurice Strong, who was then working closely with the UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, and Ted Turner, who was considering his huge gift to the United Nations (to make up for what the United States was refusing to pay). Maurice was on Ted Turner's board and introduced him to Kofi Annan. In the course of the conversation, which was exploring the upcoming heads of state Millennium Summit for the year 2000 at the United Nations, Ted Turner, almost casually, remarked that if you really

wanted peace in the world, you should invite religious leaders and ask them to sign a commitment to peace. Kofi replied that this was a good idea.

In the end, the challenge of including women in the Summit was lost. And at the event, there were only a handful of women speakers in plenary sessions, and most of them were not religious leaders. I remember well one horrifying incident at the opening plenary. The Thai delegation of 13 included 12 monks and a nun (Mae Chee Sansanee Sthirasuta, who is now a friend). They were seated in the center section in the General Assembly Hall. A major Hindu leader arrived. The monks in this order were not permitted to see women, and so he could not enter the General Assembly Hall if there was a woman in his path. Mae Chee was sitting just there and so he could not enter. Our staff was frantic trying to get this resolved, and finally I was asked to move her. And I did, but this spoiled the opening for me. I found myself trying to explain and to apologize to her afterwards.

There were other things that made the few women spiritual leaders who were at the Summit unhappy. To accommodate for the lack of women religious leaders, we invited prominent women like Jane Goodall, but the women religious leaders felt seriously underrepresented. So a breakfast was organized where these concerns were aired. Indu Jain, head of the Times of India, recommended that we organize a special meeting that would focus on women. So we went ahead, with Kofi Annan's blessing, which meant that it could be held at the Palais des Nations in Geneva. The meeting took

some time in planning, because September 11 intervened. And it took some doing to mobilize the resources we needed to make it happen. The initial reaction we got from many leaders was that wanting to have a meeting of women religious leaders was just American feminism: there are no women religious leaders, we were told. Women are important in faith communities, but not as leaders.

The October 2002 meeting in Geneva was a great success. None of the grand issues from the 2000 Summit were discussed. The question was, how can women be of service in conflict areas? That's when Sister Joan Chittister, Reverend Joan Campbell, Venerable Dhammananda, and a constellation of women religious leaders came on board and agreed to form the nucleus of a continuing organization. The Global Peace Initiative of Women Religious and Spiritual Leaders emerged as that new organization. Eventually, as we learned that foundations did not want to support religious leaders, we shortened the name to Global Peace Initiative of Women.

And what we found there, and still find, is that there is indeed a real need to bring women's presence and voices into the leadership of the interfaith world. Women were there before, but they were not leading. And the interfaith mix made it especially complex given the attitudes of some who were in high positions to working with and respecting women.

There is no question: women are critical to peace. Women together can go further than any institution. And there may well be a real benefit that so few spiritual women are tied to positions of institutional leadership. True, some very significant people like Joan Chittister and Sister Joan Campbell and, to a degree also Dhammanada in the Buddhist world, can speak to anyone anytime because they have influence and are respected within the religious cultures. There are perhaps a dozen others like them. But we can go much further if we step

away from institutional positions, because what we need to talk about are changes in consciousness. The question of what women bring and how it is different was a central theme of the meeting GPIW organized in Jaipur, India in March 2008. It asked, what are the distinctive values and qualities that we bring? Men, of course, can have and bring the same qualities, the feminine qualities, and we can see some ways in which there is a broader shift in society in that direction.

Thus we are looking at peace in its broadest definition: the development of sustainable, inclusive, balanced societies that are truly prototypes of more peaceful, harmonious ways of living. We are finding materials that reflect where we are. And in this, even more than before, we find important reasons why women have to lead. Women have not created the structures we now have that are not functioning, so

we can more easily lead the changes towards the new structures we need. Women, we find, can more easily envisage and articulate the kinds of change that we need across all parts of society.

I see a great need to empower women in those conflict areas who have strong religious commitments. In most areas with conflict, notably Israel, Palestine, Iraq, Af-

ghanistan, and much of Africa (it may be less true for Pakistan where there are women Sufi leaders), there are women involved but very few women of stature. The major shift will come only when they realize that women need to be at center stage, and core members of the planning group that is shaping strategies for events and institutions.

Networks are the key. And in this field they play particularly essential roles, because everything is based on personal relationships. Building trust is what is important also in religious worlds. But it is important in building networks to be clear as to what your agenda is. It is important to have networks that go across faiths.

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ELANA ROZENMAN

Religious women as peacebuilders in the Israel – Palestine Conflict: Building trust between communities

I got started in a very intense, entirely unplanned, manner, about 13 years ago. My son, who was 16 at the time, was caught walking down the street in Jerusalem in the middle of the day, between two Palestinian suicide bombers. One hit him first from behind, the second in front. My son was hit by at least 100 pieces of shrapnel, which tore off his flesh, broke bones, and left burns all over his body. After a couple of years when my son had finally recovered enough that I felt able to leave him, I decided to work with women. I had always worked with women, and knew that women are able to relate at the heart level far more easily than men. I also wanted to work with religion, because I was a woman of faith. Religion is one area that can transcend, that can overcome divides. The truth that is inherent to religion is about living in peace in the Holy Land, so that we can sanctify it. So I began to work with women, and found Muslim, Christian, and Jewish women longing, indeed thirsting, to work with other women in normal relationships. They felt an intense need to bridge the divides.

The most important thing was opening our hearts, my heart also, and to keep them open. That is the hardest work in a conflict situation where people are literally killing each other. It is very easy to be caught up in vengeance, anger, fear, and suspicion. What we need is a daily practice centered in the heart, in keeping it open. I have to be able to maintain this spirit and sense when a Palestinian woman looks me in the eye and says that suicide bombers are justified because “we don’t have Apache helicopters and that is the only weapon we have.” I have to keep my heart open. And the same is true when confronted by a Pal-

estinian woman who rejoiced that her own son had blown himself up and killed children, because I know that at some level she is my sister.

Finding people largely follows the law of attraction. You can’t convince people to be in dialogue unless they want to be, unless there is either a desire or interest. So people find us. They are people who want some kind of normal relationship. We use word of mouth, and one woman brings another. The same is true when we work with clergy, through another organization that I work with, the Abrahamic Reunion. There, however, the clergy are all male because men are the religious leaders in the Middle East region, in all the faiths. Through these clergy, there are Muslim, Christian, and Jewish people who become aware of the work we do. And we work to make our work visible as much as possible.

Trust-Emun works on a major issue facing women’s groups, which is visibility in the community. The organization places importance on a public aspect of meetings and programs, so people in the community see religious leaders from the different faiths interacting in a positive manner. This sparks curiosity in the communities, leading more people to seek out Trust-Emun and hopefully, get involved.

We often want to be religiously focused. We generally take a topic, like marriage, the status of women, or raising children, for example, and talk about it from the perspective of each religion. What do the religions teach? What do the Koran, the Christian Bible, and the Torah have to say on the subject? That way, we learn from each other. It allows all of

us to deepen our knowledge of religions. We keep track of our progress, with evaluations, that we do in each meeting. Consistently, some 70 percent of participants said they had learned something new about another religion; 75 to 80 percent said they had changed their attitudes or learned something new about women of another religion; and 50 percent said they had learned something new about their own religion. At a basic level these are very simple but significant attitudinal changes.

And we decided that we did not want to do religious study by bringing in religious teachers, who would basically all be men. We did not need to rely on male teachers; we did not need to find a sheikh or priest or a rabbi. What we are interested in is women's religious experience, not formal texts. So the discussion after the information from our religious sources is always about our own marriages, our daughters, and about how things really happen in our lives. And we become part of each other's lives, meeting in our homes, staying in each other's homes; so that when my son got married (the one who was injured), my Muslim, Christian, and Druze sisters came to the wedding and danced with me.

We are deliberately and carefully not political, in any overt sense. But you have to recognize that what we do, for example having different faiths at a wedding, is very political. But it is not done for a political purpose. There are other groups that are political, that do political advocacy, and they are wonderful groups doing wonderful work. Our work, we say is not political; it is holy work. We are focusing on religion, finding women of faith, and coming together around our faith. In doing so, we are working to reinforce nonviolence, and to bring all the wisdom and truth in our religions together for that purpose. Our meetings are to study, to celebrate holidays together, to strengthen our sisterhood.

We have been very much blessed in the Abrahamic

Reunion to have enlightened religious leaders, who have welcomed the participation of women religious participants and leaders. And they have changed over the years. In some ways, we have become like a big family. We have gone together to Turkey and Cyprus on retreats, and meet regularly together in our towns and villages. And in this family setting the religious leaders have come to rely on the women for shared leadership. They consult us, and they see us as equals. There is a relationship of trust and respect.

Women just work differently from men. Part of the problem here, part of the horrible conflict we are living with, is the very macho model that has created it: a model built around conquest and warfare. We are all stuck in the mess that the men have created, and unfortunately the men have demonstrated

that they do not have the capacity to get out of it. What is needed to get out of it is for women to extend the ways that women react and respond to each other, and to have this accepted, understood, and adopted by men.

Because my work is non-political, I do not get into the policy level and kind of questions. I have wonderful sisters who are serving in the Knesset and the Palestinian legislature, who do address these questions, and I encourage them. But I really feel that the world of politics is beyond

me and leave it to them. We each have our role and our work. We are grassroots leaders. Other women and other groups are involved at higher policy levels, and have responsibilities in large organizations. They can directly affect policy. But that is a top down approach, and our work is from the bottom up. We need both to accomplish our goals. And for me, in our region, the grassroots is most important and essential. Past failures, for example the failure of the Oslo process, have been due to the fact that they were done top down, with men sitting and signing papers. First we have to build the relationships. We have to build trust in teach other.

And for me, in our region, the grassroots is most important and essential. Past failures, for example the failure of the Oslo process, have been due to the fact that they were done top down, with men sitting and signing papers.

WENDY TYNDALE

Women as actors during Central American Conflicts: Valiant efforts, disappointing results

I had never been to Central America until 1986, when I joined Christian Aid. I had lived in Peru and in Chile for two years each, and was well acquainted with the Southern Cone. I was then asked to head the Latin America Department for Christian Aid, and did so for nine years. I went to live in Central America for the first time in 1995 and stayed until just after the peace accords had been signed at the end of 1996. Christian Aid's Latin America Department was rearranged at that time, and I went to help set up an office that would work jointly with ICCO, Holland, Bread for the World, Germany, and DanChurchAid. I found Central America to be very different from other parts of Latin America. The sharp separation between social classes was not unfamiliar but was accentuated in Guatemala by questions of race and there, too, the horrendous acts of violence committed by the army, which were equally a feature of the civil conflict in El Salvador, were mostly perpetrated in areas populated by Mayans.

The office for DanChurchAid and mine (Christian Aid) were in Guatemala, and the others were in Costa Rica. The idea to have a joint office might have been a good one but it didn't work out in practice. Among these organizations, DanChurchAid was probably the clearest on what it wanted to do. Women were very high up on their agenda which focused on peace and gender issues. What they did was varied. They supported some groups of women who were widowed in the war. If I remember rightly, they also supported a middle class feminist movement and they supported peace and reconciliation workshops. Some of these may well have been run by the Mennonites who made a significant contribution to peace education in Guatemala at the time.

Christian Aid was also working quite a lot on women. However, looking back I think sometimes our work veered towards being based on wishful thinking rather than reality. As I recall it, we were hoping that through small development projects such as supporting weaving skills, we would help women directly to make advances in their lives. To a certain extent, I think that this does work. We had a cow project with women, and at the end of it they all said, "Before, our eyes were closed, and now they're opened." They had learned how to handle money for the first time. They'd worked as a group of women outside their houses for the first time. They were entranced with the benefits of the cow's manure for their maize. No mention was made of milk or cheese or anything else; it was the manure that was most important! But really, what was most important for them was the boost in their confidence. They realized that they were able to do things that they'd always been told they couldn't do. So I do believe, on that level, that these tiny projects did make a qualitative difference to the lives of those who took part and also threw up a few women who afterwards played wider leadership roles.

But, to be perfectly honest, their economic results were very modest and far less than we had hoped at the time. The evaluation of what the different programs for women accomplished were not very encouraging. The basic handicaps that women face—constant child-bearing and, even more, the huge gaps in education—kept them from getting ahead.

Religion was very often a point of division among women coming from different groups. The middle class women wanted nothing to do with religion

while for the poorer women, especially in Maya communities, it was absolutely central to their lives. In Guatemala, there was a middle class movement led by women, perhaps even two or three, and they had a feminist agenda. But with the class tensions in Guatemala, they were miles away from the grassroots women. I found their goals very unrealistic. The women I knew, the women in the poorest communities, mostly in rural communities, felt quite fearful about their feminist compatriots, because they always saw that kind of feminism as breaking up the family. They were always suspicious. Women were victims. And the Mayan women were the main victims of the conflict. Just to highlight one point, all their families were killed. However, there are many women in Guatemala who, guided by their faith, have worked relentlessly for peace ever since the time of the internal conflict.

In the actual conflict, the Catholic Church was, as always in that region, very divided. On the whole, though, it was far more in solidarity with the victims than any Protestant church. To complicate matters, it was during this period that the Pentecostal churches were sent down from the United States to counteract the Catholic Church, which was considered to be too left wing. Since then, the Pentecostal churches have all become indigenous churches, but that was not the situation during the war. At that time, therefore, the Protestants were not seen as part of the revolutionary movement and thus engaged directly in the conflict in any way. However, the Catholic Church was involved, at many levels and in many ways, up to the point that there were a lot of Catholics involved in one branch of the guerrilla movement. But the effects of the war were felt right across the Church, and loads of Catechists, priests, and nuns were killed, but mostly the Catechists. Many church people showed great courage, hiding and defending people, and they lost their lives. Bishop Alvarro Ramazzini, who was in

San Marcos at the end of the conflict, was interviewed just before the Peace Accord was signed. He was asked, "What's the most important thing you're going to do after the Peace Accord?" His response was, "Make up for all we've done to the Mayan spiritual tradition."

There were many nuns working in the areas, and they came from several different orders. The nun I know best is a Guatemalan from a Guatemalan order, but Belgian in origin. There were also foreign nuns, Canadian and American, and other Guatemalan orders. They kept working through the conflict. The nuns, I think, were the most heroic of the lot. Many of the priests played a very important role, too. Most of them were foreign priests, many of them Belgians. But the nuns were always very close to the people because they have no post of authority and they're more invisible.

When you ask, "What is needed to enhance women's roles?" I would see the education of young women as an absolutely top priority. Family planning would also be a priority, and acting to stop domestic violence.

The World Faiths Development Dialogue's effort was interesting but in general a disappointment. The idea was to support an interfaith process in Guatemala, as a pilot, aimed at nudging forward some of the ideals and agreements of the Peace Accord. And we wanted to have women included in the process. That was very difficult, however, and the meetings themselves tended to be rather dominated by the older

male leaders, in keeping with the tradition. As the group's focus turned to ethics and education, it was rare that women's issues or voices truly came into the conversation.

When you ask, "What is needed to enhance women's roles?" I would see the education of young women as an absolutely top priority. Family planning would also be a priority, and acting to stop domestic violence. Many of the women are on their own now, but the ones who are unfortunate enough to have men living in the house have a dreadful time.



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