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# **Children and Peacebuilding**

## **Experiences and perspectives**

**World Vision discussion papers**

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Children and Peacebuilding: Experiences and perspectives

Editor: Heather Elliott

Editorial assistance: Jennifer Poole, Alison Wells, Anne Carroll

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or

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599 Avebury Boulevard  
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## Partnering with children for peace

Melanie Gow

In 1998 I visited Uganda for the first time. It was November, and there had been recent activity by the rebel group the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in the north of the country. The day I arrived in Gulu, people were tense – talking about the ambush of local NGO workers the night before which had seen four killed just outside the centre of the town. Gulu had seen fighting and bloodshed for over a decade. Its people were tired, many had been forced off their land and were living in crowded displacement camps, with limited access to services and little sense of security.

I sat on the ground with the local community leaders and we discussed the impact of the conflict upon them, their families and community. The war had been devastating emotionally, economically, culturally and socially. The people had little hope for peace.

After meeting with the community leaders, I visited World Vision's Trauma Counselling Centre for formerly abducted child soldiers. These children had managed to escape, or had been rescued, from the LRA. I was hesitant about entering the Centre, expecting to be greeted with more pain, despair and hopelessness.

The pain was certainly there but the first thing I saw as I entered the Centre was a lively group of school children, all in uniform, gathered around a young, bewildered-looking boy. I walked over to the group to discover that the young boy had recently escaped from the LRA with whom he had spent three weeks after being taken one night from his home. The children in uniforms were his classmates come to visit him at the Centre and welcome him home. They were laughing and dancing, some were hugging the boy tightly.

Through the World Vision Uganda staff I asked the children about the conflict, its impact, how they felt, and what they thought the future would hold. The children talked of being frightened at night, of how they must take certain action to minimise the risk of being abducted by the rebel soldiers. But they also talked hopefully and loudly about peace and forgiveness. Some of them mentioned former child soldiers who had been reunited into their community – they said that despite what a child may have done during his or her time as a soldier, the community valued them. That even though sometimes the adults in the villages did not want to accept these children back because of the horrible things they had done as child soldiers, these returned children were their friends – it was not their fault that they were abducted and forced to fight. I saw that the first seeds of peace had sprouted.

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I was also struck by the fact that boys and girls at the Centre were placed together in the camp, though they had separate dormitories. I knew that some of the young boys at the Centre had raped and beaten other children whilst in the LRA, and that many of their own victims were here. I spoke with a group of girls at the Centre aged between seven and 17, all of whom were abducted by the LRA, and had been raped. One of the girls shared with me that a boy who raped her was here at the Centre. Though it's hard, she explained, she forgives him; she too did things that she wishes she had not, the hatred is too tiring to maintain, and she wants peace, both for herself and for her community.

These children are the victims of war that we so often read about; they are the devastating statistics of which UNICEF reminds us:

*In the last decade alone around two million children have been killed in armed conflict, and at least three times that have been injured, maimed or permanently disabled.<sup>1</sup> In 1998 alone, some 300,000 children were being used as soldiers in 34 conflicts around the globe.<sup>2</sup>*

Such statistics cannot begin to encapsulate the many millions of children who suffer emotionally and psychologically due to the impact of armed conflict. But these children are also much more than victims of conflict. What struck me in Uganda was the children's desire for peace, and their commitment to its reality. Given the horror, abuse and pain that these children had faced, I was particularly confronted by this – especially since adults in the same community often reacted in a manner more obviously reflecting their horrific experiences.

## Children's right to participate in building peace

*The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.*

- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

*"We do not want to inherit the country that adults have created for us. We want to live a different kind of life and to get it we have to be involved in creating it. We will never give up."* - Juan Elias Uribe, 17 years<sup>3</sup>

The right of children to participate actively is the foundation of children's involvement in peace making. Children are potentially among the most powerful of peace builders, and we should listen to them, learn from them and support them in their endeavours. All around the world – Uganda, the Great Lakes, Colombia, the Balkans, Australia, the Philippines, Indonesia and elsewhere – children are challenging adults to resolve differences, confront the causes of conflict and go forward in peace. Some are forming children's or youth movements for peace.

"So often if young people are given the chance to begin to articulate their thoughts, feelings and desires, one finds that these expressions are fresh, courageous and hopeful," notes Jennifer Klot, a UNICEF specialist on peace education.<sup>4</sup> Children and adolescents bring particular perceptions to any situation based on a variety of experiences and biological realities such as age and gender. To discount these opinions, or to fail to incorporate them, does a disservice both to the children (in reality a denial of their human rights) and, equally as important, to the community.

Too often, however, we as adults underestimate the potential of children<sup>5</sup> as subjects in the development process, and as peacebuilders. Despite the almost universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)<sup>6</sup>, the issue of children's right to participate in decisions that affect them, and to have their opinions heard and considered, continues to create concern and apprehension among many adults and decision-makers. Precisely why is not clear, though there have been attempts to justify such reactions invoking a mixture of culture, religion, concern and fear.

Nonetheless, there is increasing discussion internationally about the right of children to actively participate in their own development and in the development of the communities to which they belong.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, children themselves are actively engaging in this process at their own initiative and for their own imperatives. To claim that children are not capable of such roles is to ignore the multitude of living examples around the world.

Children, who are directly impacted by the wars and the

economic and social policies of adults, are refusing to accept the status quo as they search for alternative realities. Around the world children have become activists for change in the fight against exploitative child labour, for their right to education, against the debt which cripples their countries, and in movements for peace.

In her paper 'Kids' Talk: Freedom of Expression and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child', Randini Wanduragala notes that "participation rights represent the coming together of a number of different rights" – which include the right to information in order to be able to formulate opinions, the right to be heard and the right to hold opinions.<sup>8</sup> The right to participation is enshrined in at least four of the key Articles of the CRC.<sup>9</sup>

Enabling children to participate is an important component of giving children the political space to take a progressive role in their own societies. This need not be at an international, or indeed even at a national, level. While children may well create this space themselves where none is created for them, the positive impact of deliberately choosing to promote and support the participation of children, to partner with them in this process rather than fight against them, can be extremely powerful. For example, experience has shown that children's own voices against violence can be an inspiration for adults.

The principles of participation espoused by the CRC have in some instances helped legitimise children's own attempts at expression; in others, perhaps the actions of children have validated the Convention in the eyes of many. Sara Cameron, who documented the words and pictures of children in Colombia's peace movement, said that "without the CRC, the Children's Movement for Peace would never have achieved the same impact. Thanks to the CRC, it is possibly the most profound example to date of the power and potential of child rights to change our world".<sup>10</sup>

### Child peacebuilders: Agents of lasting change

Apart from it being a fundamental right that children be able to participate in processes that impact the major issues affecting their lives – which for millions of children include conflict and peacebuilding – and apart from the value of the unique perceptions and learnings that they bring to such participation, there are other reasons why children's participation is potentially beneficial to both the children and the communities from which they come.

The old adage "children hold the future in their hands" has fresh impact in the context of a community in conflict, or having recently emerged from armed conflict. Peace activists and others who have worked in conflict

zones will continually stress that conflict is cyclical.

If conflict is not adequately addressed, it will re-ignite. Indeed some observers hold that all the current conflicts in the world are old – merely existing wounds re-opened by a new generation.

Peter McKee, an experienced youth and community worker in Northern Ireland, maintains, “In a generational sense, the war and all its attendant negative influences become a cyclical process, passed from fathers and mothers to sons and daughters. The children and young people of today become the fighters and politicians of tomorrow.”<sup>11</sup>

Peacebuilding has both preventative and curative approaches to conflict, and children, as the decision-makers of the future, must be part of both. Conflict, of course, does not end with the signing of peace accords or the laying down of arms (just as peace is not necessarily present until the outbreak of armed violence). Lasting peace requires a substantial process of ‘building’.

Peace, justice and democracy, particularly in communities emerging from conflict, need to form part of an educational platform for both adults and children. In a number of countries around the world, NGOs and agencies such as UNICEF are focusing on peacebuilding as a meaningful educational priority, of importance to both children and adults. In communities where conflict has been the norm, it will be difficult for children to inherit such concepts. But as armed conflict persists throughout the world, and as the changing nature of that conflict makes living with one’s former enemies an ongoing reality for so many, the significance of such education is increasingly imperative.

UNICEF’s Susan Fountain defines peace education as:

*the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behaviour changes that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural, to resolve conflict peacefully and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national or international level.*<sup>12</sup>

Empowering children to participate in processes that promote peace is an essential part of their learning – ensuring children’s participation is multi-faceted, characterised by both learning and doing. Children in particular should be supported to build peace through education, active participation and ongoing discussion. Adults should also be encouraged to both teach and to learn from children.

## Conclusion

*“Peace is most important because without it you cannot have any other rights.” – Dilia, 12 years*<sup>13</sup>

Children all around the world are building peace within

their families, amongst their friends and within their communities.

They have often achieved remarkable results in the most difficult and challenging of environments, their commitment to peace instilling hope, inspiration and change. What is important is that children are given the space to do this, are supported, and are respected, in their attempts to build peace around themselves.

To ignore children’s potential and achievements toward peace is to negate their human rights. It is also to curtail the possibility of lasting peace that seeks to break the traditional and cyclical nature of conflict. Adults and children alike have a responsibility to their communities to build peace. They should be given the opportunities to do so.

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**MELANIE GOW** is World Vision International’s Child Rights Policy Officer based in Geneva. She has worked for WVV for six years, researching issues such as child labour, the use of child soldiers, and the sexual exploitation of children. Melanie is convenor of the Geneva-based Sub Group on Sexual Exploitation of Children, is a member of the Steering Committee of the International Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, and sits on the World Bank’s Child Labour Advisory Panel. She has a Master’s degree in Development Studies and is currently working on her Masters degree in Public and International Law.

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<sup>1</sup> UNICEF, *The State of the World’s Children 1996*, UNICEF, New York, 1997, pp. 40–41.

<sup>2</sup> International Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, *Stop Using Child Soldiers*, International Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, Second edition, London, 1998, pp. 14–15.

<sup>3</sup> S. Cameron, ‘Voices of Colombian Children on War and Peace’, in *Development: Children and the new millennium*, Vol. 43, No. 1, March 2000, p. 84.

<sup>4</sup> J. Klot, ‘UNICEF’s Agenda for Peace and Security for Children’, in *ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>5</sup> In accordance with Article 1 of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*, adopted by the UN General Assembly, 1990, children here are defined as those below the age of 18.

<sup>6</sup> Only the United States of America and Somalia have failed to ratify the CRC.

<sup>7</sup> For an excellent discussion of children’s right to participate, see: World Vision UK, *Child Participation: Challenges of empowerment*, Discussion Paper No. 9, Milton Keynes, Spring 2000.

<sup>8</sup> R. Wanduragala, ‘Kids’ Talk: Freedom of Expression and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child’ in *Child Participation*, p. 15.

<sup>9</sup> *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*, Articles 12, 13, 17 & 9 (2).

<sup>10</sup> S. Cameron, ‘The Role of Children as Peacemakers in Colombia’, in *Development, op.cit.*, p. 44.

<sup>11</sup> P. McKee, ‘Re-education, Adolescence and Conflict Resolution: Lessons from Northern Ireland’, in *ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>12</sup> S. Fountain, *Peace Education in UNICEF*, UNICEF Staff Working Paper, Programme Division, UNICEF, New York, June 1999; see: [http://www.unicef.org/pdeduc/education/peace\\_ed.htm](http://www.unicef.org/pdeduc/education/peace_ed.htm)

<sup>13</sup> S. Cameron, ‘Voices of Colombian Children on War and Peace’, in *op. cit.*, p.27.





# At the mercy of strangers: ambiguous alliances between children and adults in Africa

Lincoln Ndogoni

The outcome of traumatising abuse of children is absence of peace and the planting of seeds of violence and conflict in the continent of Africa. This paper broadly suggests a framework that may be used to explain and address the root causes of child abuse and mistreatment in such activities as forced participation in adult-generated wars, in labour, prostitution, forced early marriages and other types of abuse occurring in many African communities.

Based on personal observations and interactions with abused and traumatised children in East and Central African communities, it is argued here that child mistreatment is a multidimensional and interactive problem involving the multiple, rapidly changing social, cultural, political and economic environments in which the African child exists today.

Many effects and impacts of child abuse become visible only in the long term, when abused children grow up and become the perpetrators of the same, if not worse, forms of abuse of their own or other children. Unless the root causes of child mistreatment are addressed, and abused children are allowed to be children again, initiatives for conflict prevention, development and peacebuilding end up feeding into and strengthening the abusive systems. Thus, this paper argues that a critical aspect of peacebuilding in Africa is stopping violence against children.

Furthermore, it is argued, if the resources and energy expended by the tens of thousands of child soldiers currently being used in wars across Africa can be harnessed to 'fight' for peace, Africa within no time could shift into a path of healing, recovery and development. We need to have a concerted effort to begin training and 'arming' children in Africa to fight for peace.

Finally, the paper highlights the urgent need for adults of goodwill, childcare agencies and the UN to re-think and devise new approaches that will ensure long-term peace and positive child growth and development.

## Root causes of child mistreatment

In East and Central Africa, child mistreatment may be viewed as a multidimensional and interactive problem involving the child and the multiple environments in which the child lives. It is in these environments that child abuse is rooted. Depending on the needs of the adult population at given times, children are variously provided with the conditions for healthy positive growth and development or have their lives abused and destroyed. At present, war, civil conflicts, natural disasters and unprocessed trauma, hopelessness and anger are common in Angola, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Somalia, the Sudan and Uganda. Childhood has been denied for a majority of children and will eventually be destroyed unless African adults – and indeed the world – wake up to this reality.

Let us consider the two main environments that can be seen to influence child growth and development in East and Central Africa:

### *The primary environment*

The child's primary environment may be seen as composed of individuals or structures with whom or with which the child has daily and ongoing contact. These include the people they live with; their home, school, church; and routine daily activities. Child development research tells us that the most significant factor in a child's life is his or her relationship (attachment) to parents and/or guardians in the primary environment.

Within emerging African societies, the observable attachment is the mother–child relationship, because many fathers have not taken responsibility for care of their children. On the contrary, in the cash economy the father's role of income earner seems to have played a role in turning children into labourers to supplement and/or bring income home and in some cases into instruments of war. More and more people are striving – some greedily – to increase their share of economies that are providing less and less.

In the past, the extended family or community would usually intervene when an adult at the primary level was incapable of caring for a child. But for families in transition today, this option is less readily available. When primary care takers are abusive, especially while the child is developing predictable patterns of behaviour that will influence later aspects of life, the consequences are long-lasting.

The existing poverty, competition for resources, suppression of women, loss of family support networks, and ethnic differences in rural and urban economies have led to a range of both physical and psychological abuses of children by their primary care givers or 'protectors'. Working with abused children in Central and East Africa has taught us that many of those seeking or needing psychosocial assistance have developed enormous anger, hatred, fear, guilt, hopelessness or confusion, and indeed feel very bad about their situation in the world.

For example, thousands of street boys and girls in the cities and towns have developed a pattern of expecting pain or injury. There is also a clear pattern of older abused children – in their desire to keep the needed primary attachment – developing the confusing tendency of wanting to care for the abusive parents and/or guardians, to engage in activities that serve to meet those adults' needs. Providing care for younger siblings within the family is also demonstrating secondary assistance to parents. However, for many such children it is only a matter of time before breaking point is reached and they become ready recruits for crime or rebel groups – most of which are led by formerly abused children – and the cycle continues.

### **The secondary environment**

This larger environment consists of the broad ideological, institutional, religious, ethnic and economic patterns and systems in a given culture or sub-culture. Though the main driving forces and factors are many and may be difficult to determine, they are important because they inform the attitudes and perceptions that individuals hold towards children.

One of the most disturbing phenomena under this category is the current widespread use of children in Africa as instruments of war and civil conflicts. This takes place despite the agreements, laws, charters and protocols for preventing the military recruitment of children. Why do adults continue to use children in these wars? Could the same reasons explain why, in the last 10 to 15 years in Africa, not a single rebel war has been fought without using children? Evidently, for rebels and other fighting groups and governments, the stakes for not using child soldiers are high.

The ready availability of small arms and light weapons clearly increases the likelihood of warring factions using

children. But equally, the majority of child soldiers are emotionally and physically deprived children, who are easy and inexpensive to program and manipulate. In addition to deprivation, such children have carried unprocessed anger, confusion and need for revenge – the latter in easier reach now that they can carry a gun – all emanating from mistreatment by care givers in the primary environment.

We can certainly assert that unless civil conflicts and the accompanying shipment and stockpiling of small arms are put to a stop, children already frustrated by abuse and mistreatment at the primary environment will be psychologically prepared for recruitment by the warring factions.

At this stage and for this generation of children, peace becomes elusive!

When reference is made to 'children and war' in Africa, the image is usually one of child soldiers or child victims of armed conflict. Yes, it is shocking that children are fighting on the frontlines, blown up by mines or falling victim to famine or disease in refugee camps. But open warfare is only part of a much broader picture of violence against children at the secondary environment level. Thousands of other children, many of them orphaned, struggle to survive in close-to-battlefield conditions on the streets of Africa's cities – from Nairobi to Monrovia to Luanda – who spend their days begging, cleaning car windows, selling their bodies, and numbing their inner pain by inhaling chemical solvents or glue. Guns, knives and fights are chilling parts of daily life, compounded by drug addiction, drug-related crime and HIV/AIDS, drawing in ever-younger children.

These violent environments contain the seeds of future conflict. All of what are now termed 'complex human emergencies' have their roots deep in long-running psychological, cultural, social, political and economic crises. Even those disputes that appear most surprising have clear antecedents. For instance, the outbreak of violence and genocide in Rwanda in 1994 came as less of a surprise to those who lived there (or who since have been patient enough to listen to the internally wounded survivors and perpetrators), given the sharp trans-generational psychological divide between the Hutu and the Tutsi. As rehabilitation takes place, the underlying issues are yet to be addressed.

Such pressures built up over generations are more often than not passed on to children, leading to a volatile situation in which underlying tensions erupt to the surface and the seeds of the next cycle of violence are planted. At times, what goes on in the name of reconstruction and development does not deal with the invisible destruction.

Pointing out the chronic nature of many crises is not a counsel of despair. Rather, what it does suggest is that

these underlying issues need to be identified and processed so that children are not further harmed in the context of policies or programs designed to provide peace, care and protection – and children of future generations will not live in a constant state of war.

### **Rescuing at-risk, abused and traumatised children**

Can foster parents, sponsors or local and international humanitarian agencies help our children? From the foregoing we can conclude that abused and mistreated children live at the mercy of adults who hold misguided values about children or very little knowledge of what children need for appropriate growth and development.

Children who survive wars and other forms of abuse are likely to be suffering trauma resulting in severe psychosocial problems. However, it is clear that not all children are impacted in the same way or to the same degree. The factors that determine the extent to which children are traumatised include a child's resilience, family support, the types and duration of traumatising event(s) and the nature of the abuser or oppressor.

To break this cycle of violence on children and bring about healing, conflict transformation and sustainable peace and reconciliation, we need community-based interventions that can address the identified problems at both primary and secondary levels. The bottom line is that each and every child deserves a safe and supportive environment. To achieve this, intervention must include legal, psychological, economic, political and spiritual aspects.

#### **Suggested interventions**

Incorporating some of the following suggestions in programs by local and international agencies would go a long way in reducing the negative impacts of violence and abuse on children:

- Trauma processing and counselling needs to be a first and significant step for children – one that we believe also has positive impacts on adults. A concerted and focused effort by all key actors to support the psychological recovery of those who have been traumatised by their experiences in wars, forced labour, prostitution and other ills that besiege children in Africa.
- Strengthened procedures to monitor and prosecute war crimes must be accepted by all parties. The fact that international law provides standards for protecting children is not lost on us. But in the current situation in Africa, these standards have no meaning unless they are vigorously enforced, adult offenders punished, and other practical actions taken to help stall the momentum of violence.
- Advocacy for a ban on the manufacture, use, stockpiling and sale of anti-personnel landmines and stronger

restrictions on small arms sale/acquisition. In many cases, current beneficiaries of the trade in these items could be approached with alternative trade activities in Africa and elsewhere which are profitable but have a positive impact.

- A clearer, stronger focus on policies that will address the primary causes of wars and conflicts – the poverty, destitution and human distress which often are the breeding ground for intolerance, hatred and violence. To achieve this requires support for long-term economic development and empowerment for peace among adults and children.
- Educating children and nurturing children's energy to promote a culture of peace, dialogue and understanding within and between families, different ethnic groups and communities in transition.
- A positive, restorative approach in dealing with at-risk and abusive families. The focus of intervention here is on enlisting greater cooperation from parents and care givers (who themselves may have been abused children), in order to develop desirable, effective strategies of child-rearing and to promote an optimal balance between the child's needs and the parents' child-rearing abilities. This approach would be different from the traditional approach used by child protection agencies, where the focus is on identification of parental/adult misdeeds and weaknesses. Humanitarian agencies and civil society working with communities at the grassroots level can play a big role in finding ways of integrating this approach into community development work.
- Finally, initiatives to provide substitute 'family' or 'community' units for children who need them. In recognising that one size does not fit all, different children and communities will have different needs that may be supported differently. For example, establishment of community-run group homes to take care of the thousands of child heads of household who may have lost their roots as result of war, HIV/AIDS or other disasters; or encouraging adoption where the child needs a more permanent, stable family arrangement (there are still many capable and caring couples in Africa looking for children to nurture; new efforts, policies and laws are needed to facilitate these couples and children in need of permanent families coming together).

### **Conclusion**

In attempting to rescue children from violence and abuse and create peace for our children, we must begin to see that the breakdown of the family system in Africa at the primary level is the starting point for children being mistreated and/or abused. Without proper interventions and treatment where necessary, such children are susceptible to growing up, whether as criminals or

combatants or parents, to mistreat others – including other children and their own children. Governments, adults of goodwill, with support from the UN and other agencies, must be compelled to formulate laws and policies that will ensure that children grow up in non-abusive primary and secondary environments despite the challenges of poverty and changing family systems.

The international community may indeed wish to consider whether, in the future global village, it wants to do business with ‘damaged’ adults and hoodlums, or with a healed and forward-looking African leadership. It is our hope that African children can once again start to dream of the day when they will become teachers, doctors, farmers – in a word, leaders or citizens supporting their communities and the Africa of the future.

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**LINCOLN K. NDOGONI** is Psycho-Social Programs Researcher/Coordinator for World Vision in the Africa region. He was the team leader of WV Rwanda’s Psycho-Social Support program for three years, working with a team of Rwandans to set up and deliver community-based psycho-social support services for people recovering from the genocide.

Prior to joining WV, Lincoln was a social sciences lecturer at the University of Nairobi, and worked as a consultant counsellor and trainer for a number of NGOs and private institutions in East Africa. He holds a Masters degree in Development Planning and a post-graduate diploma in Counselling Psychology.

## Peace education in Montenegro

Judy Hanawalt Slobig

In January 1999, World Vision established an office in Montenegro to provide emergency relief for the influx of internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Kosovo. Due to the violent conflicts 1.6 million people were forced to flee their homes.<sup>1</sup> Approximately half of these people fled from Kosovo, exacerbating ethnic tensions and economic difficulties in neighbouring Albania, Macedonia and Montenegro. The remaining half were internally displaced within Kosovo.

By mid-June 1999, Montenegro was straining to support more than 91,000 IDPs from Kosovo, as well as approximately 30,000 refugees from Bosnia and Croatia.<sup>2</sup> Most of the IDPs in Montenegro had suffered both physical and emotional trauma from:

- physical and emotional brutality
- separation and/or death of loved ones
- enduring a long journey across snow-covered mountains with inadequate clothing, shoes, food or water
- witnessing acts of violence
- witnessing death and desertion of bodies

Research has indicated that 50% of an IDP/refugee population will suffer traumatic stress reactions, such as depression, anxiety, and panic disorder.<sup>3</sup> Research also indicates that between 15% and 30% of the adult population in a host community or country also experience stress reactions to bombings, as well as to shortage of resources, and mounting political tensions.<sup>4</sup> The combatants in conflict can also suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) following the war, ranging from 28% in moderate combat, and 65% in severe combat.<sup>5</sup>

### Effects of trauma

In the 1990s, 'man-made' disasters, such as civil unrest and terrorism, escalated to an alarming level worldwide. Today 80-90% of all conflict-related deaths are civilian casualties from "massacres, ethnic cleansing, indiscriminate attacks and collateral killings in crossfires,"<sup>6</sup> and the impacts of horrific violence create feelings of fear and insecurity, distrust and irrational behaviour in those who survive.

When the trauma continues for weeks, months, and years, individuals may develop psychological, cognitive, behavioural, and physical symptoms of trauma as reviewed in Table I. Major areas of long-term impact on and disruption of family life following a traumatic event relate to personal, relationship, environmental, employment and financial issues.<sup>7</sup>

**TABLE I: IMPACT OF TRAUMATIC EVENTS**

<p><b>Psychological</b> anger, worry, denial, heroism, sadness, hopelessness, 'survivor guilt', feeling overwhelmed</p>	<p><b>Cognitive</b> blaming, confusion, disorientation, difficulties with comprehension or decision-making, memory problems, poor concentration, compulsive thinking</p>
<p><b>Behavioural</b> crying, angry outbursts, eating problems, social withdrawal, sleeping problems, communication problems, neglect of personal hygiene, excessive use of alcohol or drugs</p>	<p><b>Physical</b> body pain, dizzy spells, overfatigue, weight changes, breathing changes, excessive perspiration, increased heart rate, elevated blood pressure</p>

Hanawalt Slobig, 1997

Traumatic psychological reactions are intensified by repeated exposure to violence. Cohen (1998) indicates that a child who has witnessed or been a victim of violence in his/her younger years, is far more likely to commit violent acts in adulthood. Le Doux (1996) explains that traumatic memories are encoded in the brain, particularly by the hippocampus (long-term explicit memory), causing the amygdala (short-term implicit memory, primary fear) to become hypersensitive. Thus it is important to address the trauma of violence in order for a person to re-establish a healthy *weltanschauung* (interpretational worldview).

Research has indicated that traumatic events 'rupture' the development of children and adolescents,<sup>8</sup> and that traumatic experiences can damage and distort the development of children unless interventions are provided at an early stage.<sup>9</sup>

## Trauma recovery

People forcibly displaced from their homes or countries need time to rebuild their physical environment, as well as to grieve and recover from the psychological and emotional trauma they have experienced.

Major stages of the 'loss cycle'<sup>10</sup> include:

- initial shock and denial
- anger and blaming
- depression and detachment
- dialogue
- acceptance and return to meaningful life

The length of time an individual needs to pass through each of these stages will be conditioned by the person's age, life experiences, support systems and coping skills. As can be imagined, the psycho-social healing of a community following traumatic events is an even more complex process, since an individual's reactions to trauma is often perpetuated at the community level.

The first focus of World Vision Montenegro Community Services staff (comprising a social worker, psychologists and educational specialists/school counsellors) was to provide an extensive trauma education program in camps, collective centres and private accommodations. The CATH (Creative Activities for Trauma Healing) program taught adult and adolescent IDPs that stress or trauma reactions are a temporary, 'normal' response to extremely 'abnormal' situations, and trained parents and caregivers how to recognise and appropriately alleviate symptoms of trauma or stress in children:

**TABLE 2: AGE-RELATED REACTIONS TO STRESS**

Age group	Some typical stress reactions	Recommendations
<b>Preschool</b> (birth to 5 years)	crying, sadness, confusion, irritability, nightmares, disobedience, thumb-sucking, eating disorders, excessive clinging, regressive behaviour, loss of bladder or bowel control, development of fears (being alone, noises, dark),	hold, hug, be patient, play together, listen to feelings expressed, give verbal reassurance, establish predictable routines
<b>Latency</b> (6-11 years)	depression, bedwetting, school problems, disobedience, sleep disturbance, physical complaints (headaches, nausea), refusal to go to school or group activities, development of fears (dark, falling asleep, noises)	hug, play together, listen to feelings, clarify misperceptions, give verbal assurance, encourage children to draw or act out feelings and fears, establish predictable routines, discuss with activity leader/teacher, be patient with behavioural changes
<b>Pre-adolescent &amp; adolescent</b> (12-18 years)	aggression, confusion, depression, disobedience, sleep problems (sleeplessness, night fears), school performance problems, anti-social behaviour, physical complaints (headaches, stomach aches), risk-taking behaviour	hug, listen attentively, share information, clarify misperceptions, give verbal assurance, encourage peer sharing, talk to teacher or counsellor, establish predictable routines, be patient with behavioural changes, avoid alcohol, nicotine, caffeine, drugs
<b>Adults</b>	fear, anger, confusion, depression, withdrawal, hopelessness, eating problems, sleep problems, relationship and communication problems, physical complaints (headaches, ulcer, chest pain), abusive behaviours, startled reactions to sight, smell, sound triggers, excessive alcohol, nicotine, drugs	listen attentively, share information, clarify misperceptions, verbal assurance, establish predictable routines, seek counselling, provide reassuring physical contact, encourage regular meals and physical activity, encourage expression of feelings and group activities, avoid alcohol, nicotine, drugs, excess caffeine
<b>Senior citizens</b>	worry, apathy, memory loss, depression, withdrawal, sleep problems, helplessness, disorientation, eating problems, accelerated physical decline	listen attentively, give verbal assurance, provide companionship and reassuring physical contact, establish predictable routines, encourage peer sharing

Hanawalt Slobig, 1997

## Peace and tolerance education

Whereas the CATH Program targeted children and adolescents among the IDPs, it was to broaden this support to *all* children and adolescents residing in Montenegro that the peace education program was initiated.

The Peace and Tolerance curriculum, entitled 'Creative Problem Solving in the Classroom', incorporated many of the above recommendations for coping with traumatic stress.

The pilot curriculum was initiated and written by the World Vision Community Services Manager in collaboration with a psychologist consultant from UNICEF, and with the approval of Montenegro's Deputy Minister of Education. Its implementation in primary schools was funded by UNICEF. The goal of the Creative Problem Solving in the Classroom (CPSC) curriculum was:

*To promote peace and understanding among elementary school children throughout Montenegro.*

The objectives of the CPSC curriculum were to:

- teach strategies to enhance cooperation and collaboration in the classroom
- teach strategies to promote good communication and listening skills
- teach strategies to reinforce positive affirmation for all students
- teach strategies for appreciation of diversity in the classroom
- explain reasons for escalation of conflicts and strategies for creative problem solving in the classroom.

The first four objectives emphasised techniques to prevent conflicts in the classroom, and the last taught an analytical approach to understanding and resolving classroom conflicts.

Significantly, teachers at the primary school in Murino (northern Montenegro), which is located near a bridge that was bombed in the Spring of 1999, were particularly interested in participating in the curriculum. Four students had been killed, one of the teachers who attended the training had lost her child, and two other teachers who participated had lost a parent and a sibling respectively. (Following the training, a World Vision Community Services psychologist spent one day a week at the Murino school, providing support to teachers and students still exhibiting symptoms of trauma following the incident.)

At the seminar, teachers participated in the activities

and discussions that were to be implemented in their classrooms. They were provided with supplies and an instructional manual with twelve 45-minute classroom lessons that could be completed over a 12-week period.

### **Follow-up and evaluation**

Supervision of the teachers was provided both through group discussion with teachers in each school, facilitated by the psychologist consultant from UNICEF, and through classroom supervision of teachers by the World Vision Community Services Manager, psychologists and educational specialists.

The goal was to provide one group and/or multiple classroom supervisions in each school every two weeks.

Classroom supervisor evaluation forms were completed by the World Vision Community Services Manager, psychologists and educational specialists, using a rating scale of 'very good', 'good', 'average', 'below average' and 'unsatisfactory' on:

- pupils' interest in the lesson
- pupils' behaviour during the lesson
- pupils' ability to complete their tasks
- pupils' communication with their teacher
- pupils' communication with each other
- implementation of the Peace and Tolerance curriculum in the classroom.

All the classroom evaluations by the Community Services staff were scored between 'very good' and 'good', except for a 10% rating of 'average'. Those teachers who received an 'average' rating were teaching in small, overcrowded classrooms and had more difficulty implementing the curriculum. Both school directors and teachers gave verbal positive evaluations of the CPSC curriculum and commented that the children were enthusiastic about the project, more interactive and cooperative, more sensitive to the needs of their classmates, and exhibited fewer conflicts in the classroom.

### **Teacher feedback**

In June–July 2000, 44 teachers and school directors (i.e. approximately one-third of the trainees), from eight of the nine participating schools, attended a workshop to provide evaluations of their classroom implementation of the CPSC curriculum, and of the group and classroom supervision processes.

Teachers and directors were divided into three groups (grades 1 and 2, 3 and 4, and 5–8) and asked to evaluate the twelve CPSC lessons by degree of ease or difficulty in implementation.

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All three groups indicated that all the lessons were generally easy to implement, and indicated satisfaction and success in implementing the CPSC curriculum. The grades 3 and 4 group reported that children had difficulty with a specific activity that required them to identify and express

their own feelings or the feelings of others, while the other two groups said that the children found them difficult to understand. Teachers of all three groups named 'communication' or 'closeness' (between students or between students and teacher) as one aspect they liked the most.

## What did you like most in the program?

Grades 1 & 2	Grades 3 & 4	Grades 5 – 8
communication between teacher/students, freedom of speech, imagination, game activities, activation of children, reduction in problems	communication between children, cooperative group work, sitting in circles	closeness between teacher/students, classroom atmosphere, active learning, non-grading, respecting differences, freedom of expression, creative problem-solving

## What did you learn while working on this program?

work organisation, freedom for children, resolution of problems, assessment of conflicts by children	need for ministry of education agreement, better communication, use of "I" messages	facilitation skills for all students to participate, marks do not indicate potential, resolution of conflicts, affirmations, closeness aids educational process
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## In what areas would you like to expand your knowledge?

tolerating differences, solving concrete conflicts, professional contacts	accepting differences, solving concrete conflicts	respecting differences, solving concrete conflicts, creative problem-solving
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When asked to suggest improvements to the training, the teachers requested additional training and seminars, particularly in 'understanding/accepting differences'; more specific age-appropriate curricula for the various grade levels (some suggested one be developed for adults); re-design of several curriculum modules to meet time and space constraints in the classroom; and financial compensation for the extra work required.

Regarding strategies for supervision of the CPSC curriculum, they expressed desire for:

- the timing and duration of the group supervision to be adjusted, in order not to interfere with the regular teaching schedule
- more direct classroom supervision
- more training in the area of conflict resolution
- more meetings to exchange ideas and experiences

During the evaluation weekend, teachers repeated verbally comments they had made during the supervision times. They commented that they have better relationships with their students and that the conflicts in their classrooms have lessened since implementing this CPSC curriculum. They also said that the training not only enhanced closeness and better communication with their colleagues in the school, but also improved communication with their friends and family members.

## Revision and future directions

Following the evaluation, the World Vision Community Services Manager and a UNICEF psychologist consultant revised the CPSC curriculum to respond to the teachers' suggestions. UNICEF developed a questionnaire for teachers to complete both prior to implementing the CPSC curriculum, and again at the end of the 12-week period. The teachers are also instructed to evaluate each classroom workshop with the students.

The 195 teachers who underwent the first stage of training implemented the curriculum in their classrooms in 2000 and again in 2001.

A further 250 teachers from ten schools have been trained in the 2000–2001 program. In all, more than 15,000 school children throughout Montenegro have been impacted by this project during its first two years.

At the time of writing, approximately 50 teachers had begun a multi-level training process to become CPSC trainers. By February 2001, ten teachers were qualified to assist with training and supervising a further 25 teachers in the ten elementary schools selected to 'partner' with the pilot schools. These ten teachers have also offered training to an additional 70 teachers in their neighbourhood schools, so the curriculum will potentially reach thousands more primary school students in Montenegro.



In 2001, UNICEF and World Vision Montenegro adapted the curriculum for use with high school teachers, and weekend training seminars for designated pilot high schools were envisaged. In addition, discussions have been held with Christian and Muslim religious leaders with a view to religious education teachers being trained in the CPSC curriculum, and with relevant groups regarding implementing the curriculum in settlements and collective centres.

**JUDY HANAWALT SLOBIG** was Community Services Manager for World Vision Montenegro from 1999 to mid-2001, training and supervising a multi-ethnic, multi-religious professional team that provided trauma healing/crisis counselling strategies and programs for IDPs and refugees, including a community resource centre serving some 1200 children per year; a non-formal curriculum to teach basic written language and mathematical skills to Roma children; and a mobile educational/recreational/disaster response bus called 'World Vision on Wheels'.

Prior to joining WV, Dr Hanawalt Slobig worked as a consultant on disaster preparedness and peace issues for private and government bodies, as a social worker in various fields, and as a researcher on development issues.

She is trained in social work, mediation, conflict resolution, cognitive behavioural therapy, and post-traumatic stress and trauma survival, and has a PhD (Hons.) in Multicultural Studies from the Union Institute (Cincinnati, Ohio), and Masters degrees in Urban Affairs and Social Work from the University of Wisconsin.

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<sup>1</sup> Figure from UNHCR, May 1999.

<sup>2</sup> UNHCR, June 1999.

<sup>3</sup> McFarland & de Girolamo, 1996.

<sup>4</sup> Helzer et al., 1987; McFarland & de Girolamo, 1996.

<sup>5</sup> Snow et al., 1998.

<sup>6</sup> Maynard, 1997.

<sup>7</sup> Hanawalt Slobig, 1997.

<sup>8</sup> Gordon & Wraith, 1993.

<sup>9</sup> Ayalon, a specialist in child trauma, 1998.

<sup>10</sup> Molgaard, 1995.



## Schooling as brainwashing

Katarina Tomaševski

The main purpose of human rights is to provide safeguards against abuses of power by the government. Nevertheless, in education we tend to focus on getting all children to school rather than insisting that they be protected from brainwashing or violence while they are in school.

We really should know better because we have ample evidence on abuses of schooling. Any schooling is called 'education', even if it is – as in the case of re-education – aimed at curing ideological or political dissidents of their subversive ideas by forcing them to regurgitate the official dogma. Little information is available on institutionalised attempts to brainwash young children into thinking about their peers as 'them', schooling them to fear and hate other children as 'them'. Educating Hutu and Tutsi children separately in Rwanda proved that incitement to genocide could be cloaked under the name of 'education'.

A great deal of similar brainwashing is likely to be taking place around the world. Few voices are raised in protest. Few people deem it crucial to investigate what is happening in the school, in the classroom, what safeguards are needed to protect children from abuse. The myth that any and every schooling is worthy of the name 'education' – and is inherently good – prevails.

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Perceiving schooling as inherently good, and concentrating on securing additional funds to provide more of it, would never be endorsed by the Indigenous peoples in Latin America who have experienced 'education' as oppression. Anybody who has tried to attain agreement on history textbooks between Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian authorities realises that history is a political minefield. Using human rights safeguards to constrain the power inherent in writing history books – from which the coming generations are going to learn their history – is as difficult as it is important.

We know that 'education' means different things to different people from the way that it is defined. Both in theory and in practice, education can be seen as a means to retain and eliminate inequality. Even if common sense is due to rebel, we accept the idea that education can serve two mutually contradictory purposes, not questioning the utility of endowing this one phenomenon – education – with the capacity of achieving two opposite results.

The first step out of this quagmire, then, is to listen to our rebellious common sense, which tells us that 'education' is an umbrella term which encompasses an immense variety of phenomena – from training children to obey orders or schooling young people into submission, to helping children

recognise and develop their talents, fostering their curiosity and nurturing their ability to help others. 'Education' is capacious enough to accommodate rights and wrongs. Long enumerations of the purposes of education in international human rights treaties require promoting human rights, but how can one introduce the language of rights against the foundation of wrongs?

One illustrative example of 'education' used to retain and reinforce inequality is the division of labour between Taliban's ministries of religion and education in Afghanistan. Education of girls pertains to the ministry of religion, while that of boys pertains to the ministry of education. As likely as not, girls are taught about their lesser worth and kept in school much too short a time to enable them to question that idea. Boys are, in the meantime, probably taught about their superiority.

What is the rights-language likely to mean to children who were trained to memorise and regurgitate each lesson, and beaten if their memory failed them? Training children into unquestioning obedience is probably an efficient method for spawning child soldiers, but it should not be called education.

Historically, education was a means for religious proselytising, a scheme aimed at training poor children

# Schooling as brainwashing

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to earn their livelihood, an imposition by the state endeavouring to teach the whole population one language or a single ideology. Education came to be considered a human right late, and the long heritage of right-less education colours domestic laws and policies in most countries. Religious schools tended to be the initial outreach of institutionalised education and combined proselytising with literacy. Compulsory education came later, defined as a duty rather than a right of the child. And yet, getting all children into school is still mistaken for fulfilling their right to education – even though they can be brainwashed, indoctrinated, abused.

All rights of the child should apply to education and in education. If they do not, human rights will never be achieved through education.

As adults we should – but almost never do – acknowledge that we routinely abuse our power over children. More often than not, our slogan is “Children are ours; and so are their rights.” International human rights law protects the parental choice of education of their children, but requires states to constrain that choice where it jeopardises the best interests of the child.

A visiting Martian, free from our history of right-less education, would have a great deal of difficulty understanding what humanity, as species, is really trying to do regarding education of its children. In one country, we are expelling girls from school because they are wearing a headscarf, in another we are expelling them from school because they are *not* wearing a headscarf. Nobody would be able to persuade such a visiting Martian that we really care about children’s education, least of all about their rights.

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**PROF. DR KATARINA TOMAŠEVSKI** has been the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to education since 1998. She is also Professor of International Law and International Relations at the University of Lund (the Raoul Wallenberg Institute and the Faculty of Law) and External Lecturer at the University of Copenhagen Centre for Africa Studies. Previously she has held positions at the Danish Centre for Human Rights, McGill Centre for Medicine, Ethics and Law (Montreal), the Global Programme on AIDS of the World Health Organization, and the Institute for Social Research (Zagreb), and has researched a wide range of humanitarian and human rights issues. Dr Tomaševski’s recent publications include *Responding to Human Rights Violations, 1946-1999* (Kluwer, Dordrecht, 2000), *Between Sanctions and Elections* (Pinter Publishers/Cassell, London, 1997), and *Thematic Guide to Human Rights of Women* (with G. Alfredsson, Martinus Nijhoff, 1995). She holds graduate degrees in International Law from Harvard Law School (LLM, 1977) and International Law and International Relations from the University of Zagreb (PhD, 1980).

## Building bridges of peace in Mindanao: a role for children

Aimyleen Velicaria and Maria Cecil Laguardia

The issue of peace and conflict in the Philippines' Mindanao region is an age-old one that has posed a significant threat to the stability of the country. Over the years, the national government has taken multiple measures to address the recurring conflicts but very few have succeeded.

The Peace Agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the Moro National Liberation Front (MILF), signed in September 1996, provided for the establishment of the Special Zone of Peace and Development in the Southern Philippines and a mechanism called the Southern Philippines Peace and Development Council covering 13 provinces, and all villages and cities situated in them. These areas have been the focus of intensive peace and development efforts, including private and public investments for economic improvement, aimed at all the people in Mindanao. However, insurgency by groups claiming to be freedom fighters continues to threaten the moves for lasting peace and order in the region.

Within the broader Philippine peace movement, humanitarian NGOs are the most recent but one of the most active sectors in the peacebuilding process. Whether intentional or not, the efforts of such NGOs to introduce development at the grassroots level in far-flung areas have facilitated the empowerment of rural communities, opened doors to long-term socio-political change, and promoted social values such as inter-group or inter-religious solidarity, which in turn have enhanced the quest for a society of peace.

World Vision Development Foundation (WV) is one of several large NGOs in the Philippines engaging in community projects that address poverty – a major root cause of armed conflict. Through its area development programs, which are funded by child sponsors in various countries, WV provides opportunities for people of diverse ethnic origins and faiths to work cooperatively together in the cause of development. In these endeavours, children – who may normally play minor roles in community affairs but who are severely impacted by conflict – are recognised as a strong group who have a major role to play in promoting a culture of understanding and unity.

During 2000 and 2001, WV has carried out Local Capacities for Peace / Do No Harm<sup>1</sup> workshops in Mindanao. The LCP/DNH tool provides communities – including youth – with a forum to examine and understand the 'dividers' (existing and potential tensions or capacities for violence) and 'connectors' (capacities and resources for peace that already exist despite the conflict) in their communities. It also assesses the impact of project activities on both these dividers and connectors, so that where negative impacts are identified, other options can be explored and used.

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### Background to the conflict

Mindanao's population of 20 million includes 13 Islamic ethnic groups (*Moro*), 21 indigenous *Lumad* groups, and at least nine migrant groups from Luzon and the Visayas, some of whom are Christians.

The conflict in Mindanao, rather than being a 'religious war' between Christianity and Islam, can be traced to social injustice suffered by Muslim minority groups in the

region. Historically, different forms of oppression have allegedly been inflicted by Christian migrants, most commonly the expropriation of ancestral lands. Such actions have triggered the rise of Muslim insurgent groups such as the MILF. According to MILF legal counsel Lanang Ali, the war is "not *against* Christians, but *for* self-determination" of the indigenous people of Mindanao.

In Maguindanao province, a Muslim *barangay* (village) official puts the blame on unscrupulous government surveyors who carry out unauthorised land surveys and produce doubtful results – such as additional hectares appearing on the titles of influential land owners who have treated surveyors to a night of merriment at local drinking places. Poor farmers who have tilled untitled lands for decades have been unknowingly robbed of their rightful claims as a result of such corruption. These farmers often take up arms to protect their only source of livelihood, declaring: “*Inyuha kang papel, amua ang lupa* (which means in Visayan ‘The paper document is yours, but the land is ours’)!”

Age-old land disputes, power struggles, cultural differences and corruption also fuel hostilities between the Visayans, Ilonggos, B’laans and T’bolis. In South Cotabato and Sarangani, two of Mindanao’s more prosperous provinces, relations between Visayans, Maguindanaoans, T’bolis and B’laans are coloured by varied tints of discord.

Conflict does not only occur between people of differing ethnic or religious backgrounds. During a Local Capacity for Peace (LCP) / Do No Harm workshop held by WV staff at a *barangay* in Malapatan, Sarangani province, Pedrito<sup>2</sup> related how his family was being thrown off the land where they had lived for 30 years by the land owner, a fellow Visayan. The reason: Pedrito’s family had refused to sell their chickens at half the market price to the land owner’s wife, so she became angry and persuaded her husband to evict them. Pedrito pleaded that his father had worked for the land owner all his life, but was not confident that his pleas would be heard. For reasons so seemingly petty, many villagers are suffering at the hands of their neighbours.

## Children’s potential for peace

Experience in four provinces of Mindanao has demonstrated to WV that children can be very active participants in the peacebuilding process.

### Zamboanga

In the district of Sangali in Zamboanga province, children have acted as bridges to allow better relationships between families from diverse ethnic groups and religious affiliations – Christians and Muslims. Through a primary school built in the community with support from WV, children of these families had the opportunity to interact with each other, and changes have since become evident in the relationships between adults in the area. How and why did this occur? Abduraman, a tribal leader, relates:

*“Communication in our barangay used to be very difficult. People spoke in different dialects because they come from different places...but since our children began to receive formal education, they have become channels of understanding among people.”* He explains further: “*Children learned to understand and speak each other’s languages. So that when parents (who are unschooled) hear any unfamiliar word, they ask their children to interpret it for them.*”

In the same *barangay*, three sponsored children, Elaine (15 years old), Maricel (14) and Lorence (16), all leaders of the local youth organisation, are at the forefront of activities which promote inter-faith fellowship among young people, such as sports competitions. Children in Zamboanga have also been active in peace rallies and advocacy; WV sponsored children, for example, have participated in ‘Week of Peace’ celebrations in Mindanao. During the event, they pledged their commitment to work for peace by signing the United Nations Manifesto of Peace 2000. Subsequently they convened a gathering that was attended by young people from all over the province, on the theme of reconciliation among people of different faiths.

### South Cotabato

Children of South Cotabato are no strangers to hostilities between ethnic groups. Meriam, a 14-year old sponsored child from Polomolok, South Cotabato, says she has often been bothered by the problem of ethnic discrimination in the community where she lives. One incident she has never forgotten was that of a Kaulo worker: “The man was not given his salary, so he attacked his employer with a *bolo* (jungle knife),” recalls Meriam. The Kaulo tribal people are considered to be at the bottom of the social strata where Christians, Muslims and B’laans own the land and all the means of livelihood. Few Kaulos are able to read or write. Meriam is a B’laan but says she has Kaulo friends. “Like me, Kaulos are also Filipinos...they are different only because they are poor and do not go to school,” she asserts. She encourages her friends to understand the Kaulos and to get rid of any misconceptions. She also hopes that with the help of WV, “people will receive adequate education...and will no longer hate the Kaulos.”

In facing the obstacle of inter-group enmity, some children have found they must face up to the dilemma that they themselves have absorbed prejudices. “Many of us find it hard to speak about people from other tribes because they might react negatively,” expresses 17-year old Amy, another sponsored child from Polomolok. Amy says that she and many of her friends often “could not avoid accepting wrong notions about Muslims or B’laans, because we were born to that belief.” Amy and Meriam are thankful that WV helps them stay in school because this is where they can exercise freedom to mingle with other children.

At least in school, they say, they have the 'space' to share their vision for peaceful coexistence – to explain to other children that despite distinctions in the ethnic origins of people, they are all citizens of the same country.

## **Sarangani**

In Malapatan, Sarangani province, B'laan families have had the same problem ever since a particular family migrated to their community. "Our worst problem is land conflict," strongly asserts Cababa Palalisan, the tribe's most respected elder. The B'laans are the first settlers of barangay Libi; their ancestors were the first to till the land and build a community here. But the older B'laans were not educated in modern ways, and did not know that they had to secure formal documents to prove ownership of the land. They discovered this when they learned that the new migrants had already claimed ownership of the B'laan ancestral land and had obtained complete legal entitlements. The resulting shock and outrage threatened to erupt into serious conflict.

With the support of advocates, a petition was filed to the local government office to amend the deed of title and hold another survey to prove the B'laans' lawful claim to the land. Being empowered in this way gives these people another option: a hope that future conflicts will be dealt with legally rather than through violence. And the elders look to their children to ensure justice for their people in the future. "Our hope is that World Vision will continue to bring more of our children to school so that they will know their rights and we will no longer succumb to greedy oppressors," says elder Cababa.

## **Maguindanao**

A recently-completed WV project was in barangay Dilembong in Maganoy, Maguindanao – a purely Muslim community. Dilembong is an area where a series of encounters between government troops and rebel forces have taken place, and families have learned to live with the threat of war. "Wars have become a part of our life," says Saddat, an 18-year old youth leader; "we have often stopped going to school, because the schools become evacuation centres whenever there is armed conflict." Monambay, aged 13, adds: "We are forced to stay home instead of going to school because we are afraid that we might get caught in the crossfire." Abdullah, a 17-year old high school student, says: "I was once stranded in my school because the rebels had seized the road to my home." Twelve-year old Normina relates: "My family has learnt to sleep in the treetops to escape the fighting between the soldiers and the rebels...we leave our homes and food behind...we eat *ube* (purple yam) or root crops that we find whenever they are available."

Saddat adds: "It is harder for poor families to earn a living...and send their children to school, when they always have to run and hide whenever there is an encounter between government soldiers and the rebels."

In Buldon, Maguindanao, where WV is starting community development work, public school teacher Araceli Lagdamen sadly confides, "Children are the foremost victims of the conflict. There is an adverse effect on the quality of education." Buldon is one of the municipalities hardest hit by intermittent clashes between Moro dissidents and the military. In 2000 when former president Estrada's administration declared an all-out war against the dissidents, the high school was turned into a military base, complete with armed personnel carriers, a launching pad for military manoeuvres against an MILF stronghold. The school's 300 students crowded into four makeshift, poorly ventilated, classrooms with no chairs – students had to sit on the floor or stand for the duration of classes – until WV facilitated a private donation of 300 chairs, teachers' tables and blackboards. Another barangay of Buldon has been in existence for 41 years but has yet to see even a single classroom built; children have to walk for three kilometres to school in a neighbouring barangay.

Saddat himself used to feel uneasy dealing with non-Muslims. He admits he grew up with a belief that most Christians persecute the Muslims. But when he attended the Regional Youth Assembly held in Cagayan de Oro in May 1999, he realised that nothing should stop him from having friends of other religions. "I had a chance to share my thoughts about Christians, and I learned how they felt about Muslims like me," Saddat relates. "Through that activity, I understood that we both had some wrong ideas about each other." After the assembly, Saddat felt he had to encourage other youth in Dilembong to take part in worthwhile activities to promote peace and order in their barangay. Today, he is President of the newly created Dilembong Children and Youth Affairs body. The young people leading this group have come up with projects to help their community and to address the problem of peace and order.

Over the past four years, WV has been facilitating regional children and youth assemblies that have gradually fostered a better understanding of and respect for the diversity in ethnicity and religion among the peoples in Mindanao. As a key agency implementing the 'Expanding Children's Participation in Social Reform' initiative,<sup>3</sup> WV encourages children in its area development programs to take the lead in conducting activities that promote interaction, especially between children and youth. Training and seminars, sports, fellowships and theatre groups are favourite activities where children and young people are fostering a deeper sense of camaraderie and solidarity.

Strong links between conflict and poverty have been observed in many WV project settings, including barangay Dilembong. Here, WV has helped at least 300 families with livelihood assistance, such as providing them with *carabaos* (water buffalos) for farming, which enabled them to augment their incomes. Significant wider improvements have become evident in the lives of these people: “We used to worry about thieves who stole our cattle and rice harvest,” declared Talunsay Kalimbang, manager of the local cooperative, “but since WV extended livelihood opportunities, cases of theft have significantly declined.” Since theft has declined, intra-community tensions have declined, making the environment more stable.

## Observations

In summary, some observations can be made:

- The impact of events such as ethnically mixed children’s and youth assemblies should never be underestimated, as the young have proven to be enthusiastic peacebuilders capable of influencing others positively.
- While linguistic differences can cause divisions, joint education and other activities have connected youth of all faiths, and through these young people, inter-community relations have been strengthened, and peace and understanding promoted.
- If the children of this generation are educated, know their rights and understand the laws of their country, then their communities will not lose their lands due to ignorance of these laws. If people understand their rights and the legal means of protecting their resources, then conflict and tensions will be reduced. Therefore, in the long term, educating children of all ethnic groups in Mindanao will help to reduce tensions over land ownership issues.
- There are strong links between conflict and poverty. Alleviating poverty can both reduce intra- and inter-community tensions, and help build a stable environment that supports peacebuilding at a broader level. The causes of poverty must also be addressed.

## Seeing through the eyes of children and youth

Children’s peacebuilding is a key potential of community development in areas affected by conflict, as observed by Siobhan O’Reilly in relation to WV area development programs.<sup>4</sup> Children’s simplicity, humility and peace-loving nature best exemplify the character that all individuals need in order to coexist with others. Rather than having fixed views, most children are flexible and open to new ideas and initiatives. They see simple answers to problems, which adults often fail to see, yet are often blind to religious or ethnic differences that pose obstacles for adults. Christ has always taught us to

be child-like, but as adults we often think of children’s ideas as absurd.

So many children of this generation, like children in Mindanao, are living in the midst of war. All have been affected in some way; many have been traumatised. Some have somehow learned to own the conflicts around them. Rather than feeling powerless victims, children affected by armed conflict need to have a voice, and need to be empowered to be part of the peace process. At the same time, we must not forget children’s right to learn and to play.

Perhaps looking at adult problems and carrying out peace initiatives from a child’s well-meaning, pure-intentioned perspective may lead us to a genuine answer in the long quest for peace and solidarity in the Philippines. Both Muslim and Christian children WV has met have said that peace will be possible when people “learn to understand and accept differences”, “exercise liberty to practise their own beliefs and traditions without trepidation”, and are “afforded equal opportunities for development; and also that peace must “begin within oneself”.

LCP analysis reveals that children and youth are key stakeholders that unite communities and can act to bridge divides. At the same time, WV has found that LCP workshops have helped to ‘jump-start’ adults to overcome long-entrenched obstacles by seeing their situation with new eyes. Indeed, in the LCP workshops adults sometimes express their wish to begin again – to become like children who are able to accept and forgive and develop non-violent ways of dealing with conflicts.

Lorline and Erlinda (both Ilonggos) of barangay New Dumangas in T’boli, South Cotabato, shared how an LCP workshop held in their community taught them to be sensitive to the feelings of their T’boli neighbours, to treat them fairly, and to discourage other Ilonggos from taking advantage of illiterate T’bolis “*para malikawan ang pag-ilinaway* (meaning, in Ilonggo, ‘so as to avoid conflict’)”.

At an LCP workshop in Sarangani, one resident expressed surprise and relief at learning that people of other communities had similar experiences of violent conflict to her own, and Pedro (mentioned above) discovered that he could approach a government agency about the loss of his land. A non-formal education program supervisor, Saed Buaya, said he was “inspired” to press further for the goal of a school where illiterate adults could learn the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic.

## The long haul

In almost all areas of Mindanao, peace is being intensely promoted. In Cotabato City, a hardware store is named *Peace Commercial*, jeepneys have *Peace be with you* signs, a community cooperative is called *Prime Movers for Peace*



and Progress, and the mayor of Buldon has a Yes to peace sticker on his front door.

Peace signs abound in cafes, bus terminals, offices and on t-shirts. A huge banner congratulates 'Peacemaker' Muslimin Sema as the newly elected mayor of Cotabato City.

Peace is the buzzword at the moment. However, WV experience with communities shows that in-depth and long-term engagement and encouragement are required to move people towards better relations. WV is also learning that even before, or alongside, attempting peacebuilding efforts, relief and development interventions must *do no harm* but rather encourage people to try non-violent options.

As the writers of the book *Under the Crescent Moon: Rebellion in Mindanao*, Marites Danguilan Vitug and Glenda Gloria wrote, "Mindanao is a work in progress". It may be a long haul, but many hands – including small ones – are working hard to achieve lasting peace.

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**AIMYLEEN P. VELICARIA** was Communications Specialist for WorldVision Development Foundation's Expanding Children's Participation in Social Reform project, and is currently Coordinator for WVDF's Initiative against Child Labour. She has a graduate degree in Communications with a major in Broadcasting.

**MARIA CECIL B. LAGUARDIA** is WVDF's Peacebuilding Communications officer.

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<sup>1</sup> The Local Capacities for Peace / Do No Harm tool was devised by Dr Mary B. Anderson and the Collaborative for Development Action in Massachusetts, and elaborated in Dr Anderson's book *Do No Harm: How aid can support peace – or war*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder/London, 1999.

<sup>2</sup> Some surnames are not used to protect the individuals concerned.

<sup>3</sup> The ECPSR initiative, funded by USAID, was an eventual outcome of the 1995 Anti-Poverty Summit held in Manila in 1995, where children's organisations presented then President Ramos with a list of demands. Following the Summit, consultations were held in 10 provinces and cities, spearheaded by WorldVision Development Foundation, Christian Children's Fund, Educational Research & Development Assistance Foundation, and PLAN International. ECPSR was developed as a response to the consultations' finding that children's participation in national, regional and local development needed expanding.

<sup>4</sup> Siobhan O'Reilly, *The Contribution of Community Development to Peacebuilding: World Vision's Area Development Programs*, World Vision UK, 1998. Includes case studies from Ethiopia, Ghana, Uganda, India and Bangladesh.



*(above)*  
Eder David Contreras, a member of the Council of the Movement of Children for Peace, and President of the Board of Directors of World Vision's National Network of Child and Youth Peacebuilders.  
*Photo: Kevin Cook, WorldVision.*



*(left)*  
Every day, Eder helps his mother with the chores. He believes children cooperating with their parents is part of peacebuilding in Colombia.  
*Photo: World Vision.*

## Colombia's children: agents of a new culture of peace

Sandra Botero and Astrid Zacipa

Every day, after arriving home from high school where he is in the third year, Eder David Contreras, a 12 year-old boy, helps his mother with the chores, in their house made of cement blocks, zinc tiles and standing on bare earth. Their impoverished Cantaclaro neighbourhood in Montería city, northern Colombia, shares the culture of the 'macho man' that prevails in Colombia's Caribbean region. According to this culture, a man doesn't help with the housework (a 'female' task), dominates his wife, and quite often, has several women and sets of children at the same time. But Eder doesn't agree with the *machismo* culture; he considers it a form of violence that should be eradicated. He is convinced that he must help his mother, Liney, as far as he's able to – after all, she is his best friend.

Eder is one of 4000 children (of the total of 48,300 sponsored children participating in World Vision Colombia's programs) that are part of the 'World Vision National Network of Child and Youth Peacebuilders'. As part of the broader Movement of Children for Peace, they work to change the culture of violence in their communities and to sow seeds of peace in the midst of the war.

### History of the Movement of Children for Peace

In Colombia and around the world thousands of children die each year because of violence. During the last two years, confrontation between insurgent groups and the Colombian Army has intensified. Statistics of corpses, kidnappings and internally displaced people (two million at present) are increasing daily, and the civilian population, especially children, are most affected.

Colombian children are facing not only the violence of armed conflict but also violence in their homes: verbal and physical threats, neglect or indifference. Witnessing or experiencing street crime or domestic violence affects the normal development of children, and this is the situation that countless children have been experiencing in the communities where World Vision Colombia works.

Yet, as agencies that work with children are keenly aware, children – more often than adults – display the willingness to forgive and forget, to promote friendship and affection, and can see others as equals without a sense of superiority or difference. The Movement of Children for Peace began in October 1996 when UNICEF, government entities and NGOs (including World Vision), supported by a network of private and governmental institutions, set up a national campaign for children. Its focus was 'children for peace and against war', and its steering committee consisted of children as well as adults. World Vision has encouraged all children affiliated to its programs to support the Movement.

The Movement's first step was to hold a national poll, in 1996, for children and adolescents in which they could vote 'Yes' to their right to life and peace.

The response was overwhelming: 2,373,000 votes from children between seven and 18 years of age.

With such a clear endorsement, the committee of children that organised the poll stayed together and became actively involved in the meetings – wanting to ensure that the children's votes for peace would be taken into account. They also wanted the wider community to support their struggle for peace and to acknowledge their role as a legitimate social force. In addition, they wanted to ensure respect for Articles 12, 15 and 29 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child:

- Article 12: Children's right to express their opinions about situations affecting them, and to have those opinions taken into account
- Article 15: Children's right to form associations for peaceful purposes
- Article 29: Children's right to an education that allows them to develop their whole potential

Among the Movement of Children for Peace's significant achievements has been, by means of its massive vote for peace, persuading the Colombian Government to stop recruiting underage youngsters into compulsory army service. Instead, young people participate in social or civic campaigns, such as street clean-ups and educating citizens,

for example, about good behaviour as pedestrians and drivers.

Each NGO involved has worked with its child representatives in the Movement to develop different activities for children.

Within World Vision, these child representatives have had an influence on all the communities assisted by World Vision's area development programs.

The Movement of Children for Peace, and within it the group of World Vision peacebuilders, has received recognition for its efforts in multiple ways, nationally and internationally. The children have been nominated three times for the Nobel Peace Prize, and have been awarded the Great Cross of the Order of Social Solidarity in Spain, and third place in the World Children's Prize, given annually by the Swedish Monarchy.

## Breaking out of a history of violence

Eder was born in Montería city but his ancestors were from Urabá, a banana-growing region in north-eastern Colombia where violence had taken root during the 1940s. At that time, Urabá suffered the violence of abuse by the powerful US-based United Fruit Company of its local employees; the employees rebelled and were slaughtered by the Colombian Army. Armed revolutionary groups quickly took root in Urabá; in turn, paramilitary death squads were formed to counteract the revolutionaries. From an industrial protest controlled by blood, this region became one of the Colombia's worst 'hotspots' for clashes between army, leftist guerillas and right-wing death squads.

Eilen López, 57, Eder's grandmother, escaped from Urabá 30 years ago, after her husband was 'taken away' by armed men from one of the death squads. "He never came back. I didn't know who was after him, but I and my children had to run away; otherwise they would have killed the rest of us," Eilen contends. Together with her son, Eber (Eder's father), they lived some years in the north-western province of Antioquia until finally settling down in Montería city. There, Eber met Liney. Amid economic difficulties and other deprivations, they set up their home and raised five children: Yolima (now 13), Eder, Mitzi (6), Edward (5) and Erika (3).

In a region where men are 'supposed to' control the family, Eder grew up seeing his mother work hard. Liney is active in the Cantanclar neighbourhood, where she works as a 'community mother' with the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare (a State entity). Her house serves as a day-care facility. "The community mothers take care of children aged between two and seven, from eight o'clock in the morning to 12 noon, while their real mothers are out earning money by washing, ironing and doing various other chores at rich people's homes. For mothers who

work the whole day, I deliver their children at noon to the grandparents or the children's older siblings.

"We help many single mothers, widows and women who have been abandoned by their husbands. The community mothers take care of the children, feed them, play with them and train them to be prepared for kindergarten level," says Liney.

Liney is the family's breadwinner, and this job is their livelihood. Eder's father has spent a whole year looking for work, unfruitfully. With desperation in his eyes he declares: "I feel ashamed and guilty when I see, for example, that my children need clothing, food, and I'm not able to supply their needs... But this is the situation of many Colombians... I need to be patient and continue looking for a job."

## A great four-foot high peacebuilder

Despite his short stature and age, Eder is very mature in his way of thinking and expressing himself, and especially in his sense of responsibility towards God and towards the peace of his country. He is member of the Council of the Movement of Children for Peace, and President of the Board of Directors for World Vision's 'National Network of Child and Youth Peacebuilders'.

Eder says that although it is not easy, for example, to intervene in a quarrel between adults and tell them that they could solve their disagreement more quickly through dialogue, "the smile that they give me in the end is so rewarding, especially if that smile comes from a child."

Liney tells a story of how her son became a peacebuilder. "Being a community leader, I got to know about World Vision's work. Eder was with me during the meetings and the 'Peaceful Coexistence' training workshops. He started to be sponsored when he was 9. As he grew up, his desire to work for other children and the community increased. As a community mother, and due to the time I invested in the training sessions organised by World Vision and my housework, it was very difficult for me to communicate the 'Peaceful Coexistence' messages in my neighbourhood. So I wrote notes that Eder distributed from house to house... I think that's the reason he has always spoken and written so well." She adds: "He has a lot of energy and good will. Since he was a baby, he has had a kind of spark, of light. I simply taught him what I learned."

Eder says the happiest moment in his life was the first time he traveled to Bogotá, in October 1998, and met other Colombian children who were speaking out about peace in the midst of the conflict, and about the difficulties facing their impoverished communities. "I was the happiest boy in the world, because I could see that in every corner of our country there are children who are

aware that they can speak a message of peace, no matter what difficulties they have," he said.

Eder views peace and development as two sides of the one coin. He says:

*"I would like to be able to let everyone know that at last peace has arrived. Why? Because peace is not absence of conflict but opportunities for all...peace means we help each other, live in real solidarity with each other, and share our world."* and:

*"For peace to be a reality, there must be a fair distribution of our country's resources. Colombia has enough natural wealth for everybody to have what he or she needs. The problem is that it is not well distributed and that the armed conflict wastes it, uselessly."*

He is also conscious of the need to care for the environment, saying:

*"The only way to preserve life on our planet is to take care of nature."*

### **Eder dreams of his future**

When Eder thinks about how his life will be ten years from now, he imagines himself promoting peace no matter what activity he undertakes. He knows, however, that Colombia is a country where many who have fought for peace have died under fire from those who profit from the war business. His mother is also keenly aware of this: "I feel satisfied and proud of being the mum of a boy that goes to communities and asks them to try to make peace. But I also feel scared about it. I am not calm until he returns home." Then she adds: "Anyway... I feel very happy about the work Eder does and I ask the Lord's blessing for him, wherever he is."

Eder is very brave, saying: "The truth is that no-one is ever free of danger, of something unexpected happening... My objective is to weaken the heart of the violent ones, with love. It is as if I were their enemy, but a peaceful enemy... I want them to know that I am not afraid of continuing with my work, telling communities the advantages of peace. I have faith in God. I know He protects me and helps me. He is the one who has allowed the Child Peacebuilders to be listened to... I feel secure, because I 'attack' with my heart," he concludes.

When asked what kind of career he would like, he says: "I love animals a lot. The saddest moments in my life have been when my pets have died. When I am adult I want to be a veterinarian." Then he adds: "I would also like to be a journalist", and relates how the people on his block nicknamed him 'The Journalist' because once he created a toy video camera with recycled materials and pretended to be a journalist, interviewing everyone

in the neighbourhood, then showed them drawings of what he had 'recorded'.

Whatever he decides to do with his life in future, Eder will have the good fortune of his father and mother supporting him totally in the development of his activities.

### **World Vision peacebuilding**

World Vision has worked in Colombia since the 1970s, assisting children, their families and communities with basic needs such as clean water, health care or education; training for men and women in small business skills; emergency relief supplies following floods, earthquakes and other disasters, and community leadership training. World Vision Colombia believes that, in seeking to promote justice by creating conditions and opportunities for development for children and young people, and in encouraging people to be the main actors in their own development process, we are also working towards a society that experiences a culture of peace.

World Vision's coordinators of peacebuilding activities, both in the national office and at community level, aim at creating a consciousness of peace among children, adolescents and their families, as well as awareness of what each individual can contribute to peacebuilding. The *National Plan for Peace Builders, 2001-2005*, seeks to unify the understanding of this objective among all the local peacebuilding programs. It is World Vision's goal that all the children assisted in our programs across Colombia will become peacebuilders, both participating actively in the organisation of activities and in the activities themselves, so that the message of peace reaches its full potential.

Peacebuilding activities in every locality aim to develop creativity and sensitivity among the children. An example is the *Lúdica y Paz* ('Playing and Peace') workshops organised in all World Vision Colombia's area development programs, where children are taught music, dancing, drama, and painting. Besides learning the relevant techniques, children discover how such art forms can help them feel spiritual peace and how to share this with their families and friends. At the same time, they are shown a pleasant and useful way to profit from their free time, and to freely express all their feelings and opinions, including their own conception of peace.

It is easy to see the potential of these workshops in helping to reduce the risk of children and adolescents falling into destructive life patterns such as drug addiction, crime and prostitution. These three problems occur in alarming magnitudes in Colombia, where there are two million child drug addicts, a million and half youths belonging to street gangs and 25,000 children and youngsters involved in prostitution.

## Impact on adults

The child peacebuilders plan, lead and take part in activities of practical benefit to their communities (such as clean-up and tree-planting campaigns, and information-gathering about community needs). They also promote positive spiritual values (solidarity, mutual respect and love). Residents identify the children as peacebuilders and community leaders, and reward them with acceptance and gratitude.

Parents have been challenged to change their behaviour in the family context, to take the time to communicate and get to know their children better, to express love through support and care where once they mistreated them – because they have seen the changes in the attitudes of their children. Through encouraging adults to be involved in their activities and their proposals, and through their own examples, the children have promoted the transformation of their communities.

## Child peacebuilders' self-evaluation

The *National Plan for Peace Builders, 2001-2005* was developed following two national meetings, held in March 2000 and April 2001, that brought together child peacebuilders from each area development program supported by WorldVision Colombia. At these meetings the children gathered in groups to give their opinions on topics very close to their own experience, such as children's rights, drug addiction, minors in armed conflict, forced displacement, child abuse, and youth entrepreneurs.

Their conclusions included:

*"The right for which we demand the most respect is the right to education."*

*"We must enhance communication with our parents, so that we are not lacking affection, and so that later on we don't fall into drugs, which are a dead end."*

*"The parties in the Colombian armed conflict must take us into account, listen to our opinions about what is going on, and never involve us in the conflict, either directly or indirectly."*

*"As peacebuilders, we must make parents aware of the terrible consequences of child abuse, so that it is eradicated."*

*"We must not expect things to be given to us. As young people, we must work in our own right to fulfil our life's project."*

At the April 2001 meeting, the children made up a list of the weaknesses, strengths, threats and opportunities that

peacebuilding children have to face in all the WV programs across the country. Their conclusion was that the main weakness in the work of peacebuilders is that parents are not integrated in some of the activities, and are not always good receivers of the peace message their children want to bring to them. Their main strength, they said, is their talent. Their main threat? The violence in the country, from the different death squads.

The children see the armed conflict itself as their greatest opportunity – it allows them to engage many people in discussion about the goodness of peace. "Although it seems an absurdity, the country's difficult environment itself constitutes an opportunity for the child peacebuilders group to work to create a better country, to improve it deeply, from its roots," says Monica Godoy, who was also a peacebuilder sponsored by WorldVision. Monica is now 18 years old and works in the national coordinating office of World Vision peacebuilders.

Another activity at the April meeting was a study of the manual *'Manos a la Paz' (Hands for Peace)*, a project initiated by several NGOs in the country. They learned to make peace with their hands, symbolically:

- with their little finger they say 'no' to violence
- with their ring finger they call for generosity
- with the middle finger they call for respect
- with the index finger for communication
- with their thumb they call for solidarity
- the palm of their hand symbolises the importance of preserving life on Earth.

The children agreed on a Mission and Vision for the WorldVision Colombia National Network of Child and Youth Peacebuilders:

### **Mission:**

*To build a culture of peace and non-violence through the participation, influence and work of boys, girls and young people who are committed to themselves, their families and their communities, in order to create a new generation which lives in peace, love and justice in all the areas of their lives.*

### **Vision:**

*We want to see boys, girls and young people in our communities who are aware of their essential role in the construction of a culture of peace and non-violence in our country. Children and young people who take an active, responsible and purposeful role in the different aspects of civil society and before the State.*

As a goal for the year 2002, the promoters that coordinate the activities of the child peacebuilders from each World Vision-assisted community have planned to convene workshops for both children and parents, in order to reduce the 'generation gap' and improve their relationships.

World Vision's five young representatives, members of the Board of Directors of the Movement of Children for Peace, are Yurani Córdoba, Mayerly Sánchez, Alex Millán, Monica Godoy and Eder Contreras. Soon, all the children of the World Vision National Network will gather at six regional meetings to discuss and enlarge their concept of peace, and enumerate steps and strategies to help children be better peacebuilders.

At the time of writing (August 2001), Eder was organising a campaign to clean up the neighbourhood where he lives; this will involve all the children and youngsters of the community (in their free time) cleaning the gutters so that when the rainy season comes there won't be overflows, which have caused tragedies in the past.

## Observations

The children who take part in the World Vision Peacebuilders group have grown up in hostile conditions, with severe economic limitations. Among them are children whose families have suffered, and continue suffering, internal displacement due to the armed conflict. There is also the threat of further displacement because, in spite of their innocence, they are considered military targets by the armed groups.

Yet rather than see their experiences as an obstacle, these children base their message of peace on precisely these difficulties they have faced throughout their lives. People living in Colombia are constantly reminded of the conflict in their country by the actions of armed groups and the horror that violence brings about, and this gives the children a ready audience for their message of peace.

The Movement of Children for Peace, and within it the network of 4,000 child peacebuilders in World Vision-assisted communities, has provided children and young people with tools and opportunities to develop leadership, programming and practical skills – not just for themselves but in support of their communities.

These children have become multipliers of the message of peace, encouraging people of all ages to be active in transforming their culture into one of peace. Through encouraging children and adults to be involved in their activities and their proposals, and through personal example, they are helping to transform their

communities, motivating them to work for the common good, to reflect on the terrible consequences of violence, and to look towards a change in their current conditions.

The Movement has allowed the boys and girls of our country to show the rest of us the enormous potential that exists for peaceful solutions to conflicts. It has also shown that children have a new and true message about peace to give to the world. These children are planting seeds for peace in a war-ravaged land, and working for the Colombia and world that they dream of – where all boys, girls and young people may have a better life, with new horizons, and new doors of hope and love.

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**SANDRA BOTERO** is Communications Officer for World Vision Colombia. Her training is in Journalism and English. Prior to joining WV she worked with the major daily newspaper *El Tiempo*, directed Journalism workshops for children and teenagers of public schools in Bogotá, and taught English at the Externado de Colombia University.

**ASTRID ZACIPA** works in project reporting and monitoring for World Vision Colombia. Since joining WV in 1989, she has researched and written numerous articles on development issues, and assisted donors in their understanding of development. Prior to joining WV, she trained as a Spanish and English teacher at the Universidad Pedagógica Nacional, and taught English at both secondary and university levels.





**Wukandi:<sup>1</sup>****youth initiatives for Indigenous reconciliation in Australia**

Malcolm Langford

*“I will never forget the image of a group of Aboriginal children sitting in the dust, and a solitary white figure – me... I talked to them, had a photo taken, and felt special that I had made new friends. Seeing these people, I felt that this was their land, and I was an intruder... They didn’t make me feel unwelcome, quite the contrary actually, but I had this deep sense that the country – all of it – belonged to the first Australians.”*

– Emily McPherson, 14 years<sup>2</sup>

“Where are all the other young people?” was the question two Indigenous girls asked after attending a workshop on reconciliation in Darwin in 1996. That question sparked a youth-initiated movement for reconciliation that has journeyed alongside an official reconciliation process in Australia.

Peacebuilding in Australia may sound strange to many people, including Australians. Yet it is important to recognise that “conflict can be latent and that peace is not just about the absence of conflict”.<sup>3</sup> The colonisation, genocide and dispossession of over 200 years have left a painful legacy for Australia’s Indigenous people. It was only in 1967 that they were granted the right to vote, and today their rights still languish as they endure higher rates of disease, unemployment, imprisonment and homelessness. Speaking at an international conference in 1999, an Indigenous Australian said: “There is no peace in my country”.<sup>4</sup>

This paper sets out the history and nature of the conflict, reconciliation and the role children and youth have played in the reconciliation process.

**Conflict in Australia**

It is estimated that Indigenous people have occupied the Australian continent for at least 40,000 years. Their languages and cultures are quite diverse but have always placed strong emphasis on both land and community.

In 1776 the Australian continent was claimed for the British Crown by virtue of the declaration of *terra nullius* (land belonging to no one).<sup>5</sup> While the Crown required that “consent of the natives” be obtained, the ‘discoverer’, Captain James Cook, did not consider Indigenous people capable of giving such consent, and no treaty was entered into. Twelve years later a fleet of ships from England landed in what is now Sydney. The settlers (or invaders) were often welcomed by Aboriginal people but when it became apparent that land would be acquired, conflict quickly arose.<sup>6</sup>

Some 100 years later the Aboriginal population had dropped from approximately 250,000 to just 60,000 as a result of “protracted frontier violence, introduced diseases, theft of land with the consequent destruction of hunting grounds, and outright neglect.”<sup>7</sup> In contrast, an estimated 2,500 European settlers and police died in the conflicts. Indigenous people today make up about 2.1 per cent of the Australian population.<sup>8</sup>

Most Indigenous families have experienced the forced removal of one or more children<sup>9</sup> from several generations. Initially children were used as cheap labour, but removal became part of a wider plan to assimilate Indigenous people of ‘mixed descent’ into white society on the assumption that those of ‘full descent’ would die out. This genocidal practice continued until the 1970s and has had a devastating impact on Indigenous communities.

Relationships between Indigenous people and police have always been characterised by conflict, particularly as police were given extensive control over Indigenous communities. Adult Indigenous persons are 11 times more at risk of being imprisoned, and 27 times more at risk of being placed in police custody, than other Australians. For juvenile offenders the risk of detention is much higher – more than 30 times higher in some jurisdictions.<sup>10</sup> The death of 16 year-old John Pat, from closed head injuries, in a police cell in 1983, was instrumental in bringing about a groundswell of demand for action and the establishment of a Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

Despite extensive recommendations in 1989 the situation has not changed significantly.<sup>11</sup> In 1997, Amnesty International reported that “while relations between many Aboriginal communities and the Queensland Police Service are considered to be improving, there have been a number of setbacks in recent years.” In November 1993, Daniel Yock, a 16-year-old Aboriginal dancer, was found dead in the back of a police van in central Brisbane, an incident which led to serious clashes between Aboriginal people and local police.<sup>12</sup>

The poverty and social exclusion of Indigenous people have been a source of conflict, particularly when their rights to resources and justice have been asserted. There has been a perception amongst many non-Indigenous Australians that Indigenous people are granted ‘special benefits’; some political parties and movements have exploited this notion, their activities possibly falling under the label of ‘conflict entrepreneurs’. Adam Hill, who speaks on reconciliation for World Vision Australia, notes that many non-Indigenous children hold the view that Indigenous people received extra benefits from the government and that he has been cautious of opening debate due to underlying tensions.

## Australia’s reconciliation movement

Australia began an official decade-long journey of reconciliation in 1991 under the leadership of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation. This culminated in the presentation of a ‘People’s Declaration’ to the Federal Government and a march by approximately 200,000 people over the Sydney Harbour Bridge. However, Australians remain divided on key issues around reconciliation – particularly those of apology, social justice, land rights and a treaty.

World Vision Australia has supported the reconciliation process through educational programs for schools, youth conventions, churches and other forums. The agency’s appointment by the Federal Government to coordinate Australians For Reconciliation in Victoria and its chairing of the National Sorry Day Committee have enabled it to further support young people’s initiatives toward

reconciliation. Through its Area Development Program with Indigenous communities in Papunya, Northern Territory, World Vision has also facilitated exchanges between youth.

Reconciliation is often understood as the restoration of relationships. It should address the conflict that caused the breakdown in relationship, usually involving justice and forgiveness, and therefore contributing towards peacebuilding, diminishing the potential for present and future conflict.

The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, established in the wake of the Royal Commission, defined reconciliation as:

*A united Australia which respects this land of ours; values the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage; and provides justice and equity for all.*

The former Chair of the Council colloquially defined reconciliation as “the time when Indigenous people and non-Indigenous people are seated together at dinner parties, and the names of Indigenous people are in the diaries of non-Indigenous people”. Views amongst Australians differ, however, on what constitutes reconciliation. A survey of attitudes towards the Council’s *Australian Document Towards Reconciliation* found that:

- 16 per cent of Australians do not acknowledge Indigenous people were treated harshly or unfairly in the past.
- 70 per cent of Australians believe the Government should assist Indigenous people, but the majority do not believe their present disadvantage stems from past injustice.
- 40 per cent of people believe the community and government should not apologise for what happened in the past.

There has also been some reluctance from Indigenous people in discussing reconciliation when issues of social justice have not been addressed.<sup>13</sup> Others, such as Ray Minniecon of World Vision Australia, also note the difficulty of trying to restore a ‘relationship’ that has not previously existed in a genuine form. Indigenous people were largely subject to the ‘god complexes’<sup>14</sup> of non-Indigenous people, even when non-Indigenous people were well-intentioned.

The challenge of reconciliation is also complex when youth are considered. Stephen Walsh, a member of the VICSTARS youth initiative, agrees with survey evidence suggesting that “young Indigenous people are more angry than their parents about what happened in the past”. The reverse is true for non-Indigenous people, with youth very supportive of reconciliation.<sup>15</sup> This is largely a result of the greater access to information young people have had about Indigenous history, particularly

through education in classrooms beginning in the 1970s. However, there are a significant number of non-Indigenous youth who are not supportive of reconciliation as World Vision has discovered in some of its youth conventions in non-urban areas.

## Youth participation in Australia

The importance of facilitating children's participation in social and political matters is gradually being recognised in Australia. The United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* provides for children's participation by enshrining their right to express [their] views freely in all matters affecting them, those views being given due weight in accordance with the children's age and maturity; and the right to freedom of expression, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas.<sup>16</sup>

Children are too easily assigned to decorative or tokenistic roles. Proponents of different models of participation suggest that children should be genuinely involved as is appropriate; this may range from being assigned a role, and being consulted by adults, to sharing decisions on an adult-initiated project, or initiating a project themselves.<sup>17</sup> The litmus test for each model is the genuine involvement of children, and the processes behind the appointment of children and behind decision-making.

In Australia, children participate principally through leadership roles in schools or projects initiated by adults. The Federal Government withdrew funds from the Australian Youth Policy and Action Coalition which had a young person as its spokesperson; the Government subsequently set up an annual Youth Roundtable to hear the voices of youth – although there was no structure for following up their recommendations.

## Youth and reconciliation

The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation comprised 25 community leaders from across Australia and attempted to raise awareness of reconciliation, gain commitments to address the social and economic inequality of Indigenous people, promote a people's movement and present a national document of reconciliation. Children were not formally represented on the Council. Nevertheless, young people have contributed dynamically to the reconciliation process, instigating and leading a number of conventions and public events, facilitating school groups and presenting declarations to the Australian Government.

### STARS Initiative

In 1996, 18 students from Kormilda College attended a meeting on reconciliation in Darwin. On discovering that they were the only youth involved, they discussed the possibility of holding their own conference. Six of those students subsequently attended the National Reconciliation Convention.

There, at a workshop on Reconciliation and Youth, they discovered to their disappointment there were again only adults discussing what young people wanted. The students returned to Darwin and formed the Kormilda STARS (Students that Action Reconciliation Seriously). The aim of STARS was:

*To build bridges for a better understanding and to see reconciliation actioned seriously in as many schools in Australia as possible to promote reconciliation among young people.*

One of the definitions of reconciliation adopted by STARS was:

*Reconciliation = connectedness. Where people have been disconnected from God, each other (in families, across cultures), their language, land and destiny, reconciliation is restoring these connections.*

The group's first initiative was a day and night event for Darwin students. This was followed by a National Youth Reconciliation Convention with 270 students from across Australia.

The Conference opened with a welcome from traditional Indigenous land owners, speeches from public leaders, traditional dancing and plays written by students about racism. The youth then drafted their own Charter on Reconciliation, which was later presented to the Australian Government. One participant said:

*"The students worked very hard for well over a year, planning and organising with help from a small group of teachers. Students really did do the bulk of the work, and took an upfront role in the Convention itself, introducing speakers, making speeches themselves, chairing workshops and making day-to-day decisions to meet the ad hoc situations that arose."*

Adults were only allowed to speak in workshops if invited to by the youth, to enable students to talk freely without adult domination. There were also creative workshops, which a teacher involved with STARS said "gave students an opportunity to express themselves in a medium that they were comfortable with."<sup>18</sup>

The Conference also gave non-Indigenous students a chance to meet Indigenous people. Ari Sharp, who later organised a forum in Victoria, said, "It was the personal contact that was good about the Convention... Hearing their stories about the stolen generation, about their lack of schooling... it made me realise it was wrong."

As a result of the Conference many students went back to their schools and formed reconciliation groups, wrote to newspapers and spoke on radio about reconciliation. Two further Conferences<sup>19</sup> followed in the next two years, one with 240 delegates. At Corroboree 2000, the major national gathering that culminated the reconciliation decade, two STARS students made speeches along with other national leaders at the presentation of the National Document on Reconciliation to the Federal Government.

## South Australian Youth Reconciliation Council

Another initiative emanating from the STARS movement, which broadened the focus from students only to all youth, was the South Australian Youth Reconciliation Council (known as "SAYRC") – an alliance formed between STARS and the State Advisory Committee on Reconciliation. SAYRC organised peer education on reconciliation in schools, and contributed Indigenous perspectives to the Constitutional Centenary Foundation and to Youth Parliaments.

SAYRC also initiated the planning – subsequently taken on by the State Advisory Committee – for a Walk for Reconciliation that would bring together 50,000 Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in a public show of support for reconciliation. The largest mass walk or march in South Australia had previously been 10,000. The State's major newspaper reported that:

*An estimated 50,000 people crossed the King William Road Bridge yesterday in an overwhelming show of support for the rights of Indigenous Australians. It was a march unlike any other, with fathers, mothers, children, students, office workers and pensioners all walking in harmony... After they crossed the bridge the walkers spilled into Elder Park and stuck in the turf cut-out images of hands symbolising the journey of healing.<sup>20</sup>*

## Local exchanges

Students of other schools, such as Avila Girls College, initiated their own reconciliation groups. Over a number of years this group set up displays, arranged for speakers and musicians to visit the school, participated in marches and arranged a banner and 'Sorry Book' for all students to sign. The group also designed reconciliation badges (which were made available for all students to wear to signify achievement in school) and was instrumental in introducing both Indigenous poetry into the literature curriculum and Indigenous justice issues into the religious education program.

Most significantly, after recognising that none of the students knew Indigenous people first-hand, the group initiated exchanges with an Indigenous school, Worowa College (this was quite symbolic considering that the Indigenous school had 15 students and the Girls College over 1000 students).

The students all commented that they enjoyed being able to run the group and that the assisting teacher "did not boss them around".

World Vision Australia also facilitated an 'immersion' of non-Indigenous students to its Papunya Area Development Program in the Northern Territory. One

participating student said of this experience:

*"As we sat around the campfire, under a canopy of a billion diamonds strewn across a black velvet heaven, the community's elder women gave us skin names, an honour rarely bestowed on 'white fellas', truly making us part of their community."*

## Conclusions

The road to genuine reconciliation in Australia is long, but children and youth have shown that they can play a part in this journey – not tomorrow, when they have become adults, but today.

The above initiatives illustrate children's ability to instigate movements for peace, and their maturity to decide on the level of adult involvement that is desirable to achieve the aims of their projects. The challenge for such children's movements is finding sustainable structures and logistical support, and it is here that teachers, other adults and agencies like World Vision can provide assistance.

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**MALCOLM LANGFORD** was born in Melbourne and raised in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea. He worked as a lawyer as well as for a number of human rights organisations, including the Human Rights Commission, before joining World Vision Australia as Campaigns & Policy Officer for Children's Rights, working on policy and advocacy projects with a focus on young people. He is currently studying in Italy towards his Masters degree in International Law.

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<sup>1</sup> *Wukandi* is an Aboriginal ceremony of reconciliation that was performed at a youth-initiated conference on reconciliation in 1998 which had not previously been performed outside of Arnhem Land. Aboriginal dancers and musicians consigned all the hurts and wrongs of the past to an especially created area of sand, then conference delegates shared a meal sitting in lines on the ground facing each other to symbolise their acceptance of each other.

<sup>2</sup> Emily McPherson, 'White Girl in a Black Land, My Journey Across the Gulf', *The Age* (newspaper), Melbourne, 1998.

<sup>3</sup> Siobhan O'Reilly, *The Contribution of Community Development to Peacebuilding: World Vision's Area Development Programmes*, World Vision UK, 1998, p. 29.

<sup>4</sup> Comment made at the Hague Appeal for Peace Civil Society Conference, May 1999; attributed to Kathy Malera-Bandjolan from the Malera Bandjolan (a matrilineal people in north-east New South Wales who are struggling to protect their ancestral lands and culture from gold mining).

<sup>5</sup> See chronology in P. Havemann, 'Indigenous Rights in the Political Jurisprudence of Australia, Canada and New Zealand' in P. Havemann, *Indigenous Peoples' Rights in Australia, Canada and New Zealand*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999, pp. 22–64.

<sup>6</sup> Judith Monticone has meticulously documented 1264 conflicts that principally occurred during the 19th century: J. Monticone, *Healing the Land: A closer look at the needs of the Australian reconciliation movement*, Volume 1, Healing the Land, Canberra, 1999. See also R. Broome, 'The Struggle for Australia: Aboriginal-European warfare, 1770-1930', in M. McKernan & M. Browne (eds), *Australia: Two*

centuries of war and peace, Australian War Memorial and Allen & Unwin, St. Leonards, 1988; and H. Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier: Aboriginal resistance to the European invasion of Australia*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1982.

- <sup>7</sup> World Vision Australia Indigenous Programs, *Mabo, Native Title, Wik and the Ten Point Plan*, paper, revised October 1999.
- <sup>8</sup> Source: 1996 national Census.
- <sup>9</sup> Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Bringing them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families*, HREOC, Canberra, 1997.
- <sup>10</sup> World Vision Australia Indigenous Programs, *Indigenous Deaths in Custody and Incarceration Rates: An Overview of the Findings in the 1991 National Report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and Subsequent Trends*, Sydney, January 2000.
- <sup>11</sup> Office of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, *Indigenous Deaths in Custody: 1989-1996*, Report prepared for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, 1996.
- <sup>12</sup> Amnesty International, 'Police Brutality Against Queensland Aborigines', *Amnesty International Report - ASA 12/03/97*, April 1997, Australia.
- <sup>13</sup> These criticisms are similar to those levelled at the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission: see Desmond Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, Doubleday, New York, 2000.
- <sup>14</sup> Jayakumar Christian, *God of the Empty-Handed: Poverty, Power and the Kingdom of God*, MARC, Monrovia, California, 1999.
- <sup>15</sup> In the 1999 *National Perspectives Survey* of 600 young Australians by the National Youth Roundtable National Perspectives Working Group, 84.6 per cent of youth said reconciliation was "very important" or "important" to them. See: [http://www.thesource.gov.au/youth\\_roundtable/default.htm](http://www.thesource.gov.au/youth_roundtable/default.htm), under 'previous roundtables'.
- <sup>16</sup> United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, Articles 12 and 13.
- <sup>17</sup> Roger Hart, *Children's Participation: The theory and practice of involving young citizens in community development and environmental care*, UNICEF, New York, 1997.
- <sup>18</sup> Paul Tolliday (teacher) in *STARS - Making a Difference: A Reconciliation resource for teachers and students in Australia*, video and curriculum notes, Council for Australian Reconciliation, 2000.
- <sup>19</sup> World Vision was able to play a supportive role to the STARS movement with the organisation of their conference in Melbourne in 1999.
- <sup>20</sup> N. Lloyd & T. Williams, '50,000 say they're sorry', *The Advertiser*, Edition 2, Adelaide, 13 June 2000, pp. 1-4.



## Children, violence and peacebuilding in Maluku, Indonesia<sup>1</sup>

Messalynda Ratna Putri

We never realise how wonderful our country is until the beauty of other countries is shown to us. Something really makes our own country special; most of the time we cannot explain it, but we can certainly feel it. Is this good or bad? It is both.

It seems that everybody knows something about Indonesia. Depending on their point of view, it is good or it is bad. Consisting of more than 13,000 islands and 200 million people, nothing could sum up Indonesia better than two words:

- *diversity* – in all aspects of the nation's life: ethnicity, languages, customs, and religions
- *unity* – the slogan that all Indonesians have learnt, though some do not understand, and some even want to eliminate.

But the arrogance of politics has created an Indonesia in the process of losing its present generation. There will not be a bright future if there is no meaningful movement across the nation to protect, maintain and work together to create a just, safe and peaceful environment for our children.

Indonesia has seen so much violence within the past three years. The year 1998 witnessed economic tragedy – a disastrous and bitter moment in Indonesian history. This crisis, described by the World Bank as the most dramatic economic collapse anywhere in 50 years, snowballed to immobilise almost every single part of the nation's life. The *rupiah*<sup>2</sup> was depreciated more than 80 per cent; hundreds of companies, from the small-scale to the largest, collapsed (at least 70 per cent of companies listed in the Jakarta Stock Exchange became insolvent); unemployment increased to its highest level since the late 1960s (20 million people – more than 20 per cent of the total workforce – without jobs), and prices skyrocketed. As a result, the proportion of Indonesians living below the poverty line has substantially increased to between 50 and 100 million, compared to the 25 million claimed by the government before the crisis.<sup>3</sup>

This acute economic crisis quickly expanded to political crisis and then to social crisis. Indonesians who were previously calm and living peacefully became brutal. At a time when ordinary Indonesians were suffering daily hardships, elite politicians appeared to be enjoying theorising and making satirical speeches about the problems; to be putting their own economic interests and ambitions first, accusing one another and making

statements that confused the public. Brewing social tensions could no longer be suppressed. The anger of the people at politicians' arrogance and the government's powerlessness to control the crisis led to protest action and bloody riots in the capital city, Jakarta, and surrounding areas. Demonstrations by students in large Indonesian cities pushed the leader of a 32-year regime, Soeharto, to resign on 21 May 1998.

In this situation, the rule of law has become vulnerable and social cohesion is breaking down. Co-existence and trust are being replaced by insularity and sceptical attitudes towards other groups (whether based on religion, ethnicity, or any other reasons) have taken root. This change has been evident in the troubles in Poso, Central Sulawesi (December 1998), Ambon and other parts of Maluku (January 1999), Sambas in West Kalimantan (January 1999), Sampit in Central Kalimantan (March 2001), and in ongoing conflicts in Aceh, West Papua and other provinces which are seeking independence. Many people are being injured or killed, thousands of homes, social services, schools and facilities have been destroyed. Approximately 1.25 million people are displaced and close to half of these (600,000) are children.<sup>4</sup>

## Conflict in Ambon, Maluku

Since mid-January 1999, Ambon Island has been in a state of bloody civil war. Administratively, Ambon city is the capital of Maluku province.<sup>5</sup> The islands of this province were known as the original Spice Islands; the starting point of the European exploration to America which subsequently changed world history. As a consequence of its past importance, traders from China, Arabia, India, Java and latterly Europe came and subsequently influenced the local culture, introducing religions to the population whose beliefs were predominantly animistic. Islam arrived in the 13th century in North Maluku and later spread to the northern part of Ambon Island. Christianity came with the Portuguese in 1511 and spread among the animists in the southern part of Ambon Island. Catholicism was largely replaced by Calvinist Protestantism with the consolidation of Dutch power in the early 17th century, though remains strong in south-east Maluku.

Similarities in culture and previously shared animistic beliefs meant that relations between Christian and Muslim Moluccans were largely harmonious. Particularly in the area surrounding Ambon Island, the two communities were regularly tied in traditional alliances called *pela* and *gandong*. *Pela*, a vow of brotherhood, can be made within Muslim or Christian villages, or between the two; *gandong* exists between two or more villages descended from one patriarch.

In most cases, *gandong* exists between Muslim and Christian villages. Villages tied by these vows are traditionally required to help each other, and this includes helping to build places of worship. While continuing this close cooperation, both the Christian and Muslim communities remained deeply loyal to their respective religious faiths.<sup>6</sup>

The conflicts, however, have drawn a big question mark: How do we explain such brutal violence between neighbours? Why are these people, who so recently saw themselves as brothers and sisters, so easily able to destroy and kill each other? Who are the provocateurs? Who are the 'actors' behind the scene? What political arrogance has been responsible for suffering, rather than goodness, engulfing these communities?

## WVIL children and peacebuilding program

In May 1999, two months after the first riots occurred in Ambon, WorldVision Indonesia (WVIL) staff went to Ambon to conduct a brief assessment before commencing a project providing rehabilitative assistance – housing, medical care and trauma counselling – to 15,000 internally displaced people (IDPs). At that point in time, this seemed the most

appropriate response to the crisis facing these people.

It is said that 'time can heal', but in Ambon things grew worse over the next eight months. During this period WVIL continued to provide assistance; the situation had become more dangerous, but we were already committed to supporting the IDPs. When WVIL staff visited Ambon to gather further information about their needs, in July and again in December 1999, shots and bomb blasts could be heard all over Ambon city, and more and more buildings and houses were burned.

This period challenged WVIL to think strategically about activities around the issue of peacebuilding. How could we contribute to reconciliation among the conflicting parties? It was clear that WVIL itself could not create peace among Ambon's communities – hatred between Christian and Muslim adults had already infected their children. Muslim children were saying, "kill the Christians" and Christian children were saying the same about Muslims. Since the beginning of the violence, children have seen with their own eyes their homes and schools being burned; have experienced separation from their parents and are now staying in the camps with very limited access to play and no access to school. Many now know what it means to lose forever their father or mother – in some cases, seeing him or her killed by a neighbour; and have endured many other sad things. They are in a highly traumatic condition and environment, and if no-one gives attention to this situation, there will be no peace in Ambon's future.

A carefully considered approach to the internally displaced children became the first WVIL strategy towards strengthening local capacities for peace<sup>7</sup> in Ambon communities. This approach was based on the premise that children can play a very important role to 're-connect' communities through shared values that have been broken by conflict, and that the children would be more responsive than the adults.

In January 2000, following appropriate reflection, negotiation and planning, and when conditions were conducive, WVIL returned to commence the Ambon Rehabilitation Project, in collaboration with the local NGO Salawaku Maluku Foundation.

## Ambon Rehabilitation Project

The project had two main activities (alternative education and trauma counselling) and two supporting activities (basic health and sanitation), both focusing on children under 13 years old. Through these activities we hoped that children could become the seeds for peace, at least in their immediate environment. In implementing the project, WVIL needed to be careful to maintain its neutrality in the eyes of the conflicting parties by choosing an appropriate local partner agency, and by electing to



work in a part of Ambon that was still accepted as neutral by both parties.

The IDP camp chosen as the initial project base housed 6,000 IDPs, including children, when the project began in January 2000 (at the time of writing, mid-2001, it had more than 13,000 IDPs). It was one of only three areas that still had both Muslim and Christian IDPs. Although within the same camp area, Muslim and Christian dwellings were located separately, not mixed; the children played separately but watched each other. This had been happening for more than a year, since they had come to the camp.

WVII realised that the project might only have a small and seemingly insignificant impact, but believed that we had to start somewhere, and that from the small we could go on to bigger things. The message underpinning the project was simple: that all should give the best for our children's future.

By the end of the project, in January 2001, however, we were greatly encouraged. A total of 279 Christian and Muslim children were now interacting with each other and attending the alternative primary school being conducted within the camp complex.

Thirteen teachers, of all backgrounds, from among the IDPs were working together to give lessons to the children. Furthermore, at several meetings conducted for students' parents, people from the two 'sides' to the conflict sat together and started to talk again to their estranged neighbours, discussing what might be the best approach to their children's education.

The 'unseen wall' was starting to crumble. This process did not stop with the education component of the project. For the trauma counselling, WVII conducted eight-day training courses for Muslim and Christian volunteers selected from among the IDPs. Three facilitators – themselves of Muslim, Catholic and Protestant backgrounds, respectively – from the Faculty of Psychology at the University of Indonesia trained more than 25 young Muslim and Christian people. Observing the interaction between trainees was instructive. On the first and second days, they sat with those of their own group/religion; on the third day, they started to talk to those of other groups. On the fourth through seventh days, they began to play, have mixed discussions, and sing together; on the eighth day they promised to give all their energy to start bringing peace within their camp's environment. By the end of the project they were best friends.

After their training was completed, they attended the alternative primary school every day to conduct group counselling sessions for all children. They sang, told encouraging and positive stories, played games and drew pictures with the children, in order to help them release

their traumatic feelings and hatred.

One big moment for both the staff and the parents was the first time they tried to bring all the children in the camps – some 400 in all – to play together on the field near the school. First the Muslim counsellors brought the Muslim children to the field and began playing. When the Christian counsellors arrived with the Christian children, the Muslim children stopped playing. Both groups of children suddenly fell silent and just looked at each other.

Then music was played and the counsellors tried to break the ice by jumping, smiling and singing. The Christian children started to walk and run to the field, then suddenly the two groups of children were holding hands, singing together, and finally beginning to interact affectionately and have fun together.

A Muslim father watching the scene was visibly moved by that moment. When interviewed by WVII staff,<sup>8</sup> he said that he really hoped that the project would bring a good future for the children, and peace.

Through these activities and hard work by all involved (staff and volunteers, WVII and Salawaku Maluku Foundation, and the people themselves) we believe the project has had a positive influence on adults and parents in the camps, and reduced the tension and rigidity that existed between Muslim and Christian IDPs. This is not the end, however, but just a beginning. This is not 'ready stock' but needs a long, ongoing process. Even though WVII funding for the project formally ended in January 2001, we are seeking other possibilities to follow it up.

### **Lessons learned**

Some important lessons have been learnt. Working in the Ambon context and specifically on this project has taught World Vision to explore new possibilities for making wise and neutral approaches to peacebuilding activities in situations of open conflict. One major issue for reflection, prompted by the experience of this project, is the question: Why did WV's intervention with those children occur *after* the conflict took place? Two further questions we have been considering are: What is the potential for 'peacetime' development programs influencing communities to strengthen their local capacities for peace, so that they can protect themselves from negative external influences? And finally: What role could advocacy play in conflict and trauma prevention?

### **Magazines for peace and children's rights**

One follow-up project developed by WVII is a children's magazine with peace themes, that aims to help build understanding and tolerance in parts of Indonesia currently affected by conflict. UNICEF studies have shown the effective impact that education-related programs,

# Indonesia

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*(top & middle)*  
The ice breaks, and Muslim and Christian children finally play together – a popular traditional game Ular Naga ('Dragon').

*(bottom)*  
IDP children with a teacher/counsellor at an informal education class (uniforms, books and school supplies were freely distributed).

*All photos by Johnson Tobing, World Vision.*



including magazine initiatives, can have on conflict-affected areas.<sup>9</sup> WVII has already developed a *Hak Anak Indonesia* ('Rights of Indonesian Children') magazine that aims to make Indonesians aware of children's rights as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (see Appendix A for an English synopsis of the first issue, which contains themes promoting inter-group understanding).

In August 2001, a pilot issue of *Harmonis* ('Harmonious') was published, focusing on the general theme of 'peace and conflict' (see Appendix B for an English synopsis of the pilot issue). It will be trialled among Muslim and Christian children in Ambon and North Maluku, in collaboration with the Education Ministry of Indonesia, the Salawaku Maluku Foundation and another local NGO.

The main articles of the magazine are in the forms of cartoon stories and short text stories with full-colour illustrations, which communicate the major theme of each issue. Minor features include fun and interactive folktales, contributions of young readers themselves (poems, jokes, anecdotes, drawings, and letters – answered by the editorial staff or other students), and problem-solving activities, puzzles and games.

Plans are for the magazine to be printed and distributed every two months to primary school children of grades 4, 5 and 6. A curriculum for 15 issues is being developed, and it is envisaged that the magazine will be integrated into the national curriculum, with class teachers teaching the main articles. The minor features would not need to be taught in the classroom – rather, it is expected that students will enjoy them in their spare time and that this will enhance enthusiasm for the lessons. After learning the main topics at school, each student will be asked to take his/her magazine home and encourage family members and neighbours to read or discuss it. After two weeks at home, s/he must bring it back to school to be put in the school library, so that students of the lower grades also can read it.

Teachers will be trained in the use of the magazine, and in some basic conflict resolution and trauma counselling skills. The training of teachers will provide them with resources to overcome their own experience with violence and intolerance, and build their capacity to take leadership as peace workers in the schools and also in their communities. Building teachers' capacities as community leaders strengthens and supports the development of civil society at a time when people with differences begin once again to interact.

Feedback on the pilot edition gained from students, teachers and other relevant parties (on aspects such as the relevance of its themes to their local context, level of language difficulty, effectiveness of the text and illustrations, and on the proposed curriculum topics)

will facilitate improvements for the 15 forthcoming issues. It is anticipated that the magazine's distribution will be expanded to other areas, depending on the availability of funding. At the time of writing WVII was seeking funding for the 15 further editions.

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**MESSALYNDA RATNA PUTRI** is Peacebuilding and Advocacy Coordinator for World Vision International – Indonesia, based in Jakarta. She was WVII's Coordinator for the Ambon project, visiting Ambon six times in 1999–2001. Ms Ratna Putri is a member of the World Vision International Local Capacities for Peace (LCP) Working Group, which is focused on developing the institutional capacity of WV offices in the Asia region to design and implement programs which build local capacities for peace. She has conducted several LCP / Do No Harm workshops within Indonesia, notably in regions where conflict is prevalent. She has a Bachelor's degree in International Private Law from the University of Indonesia and worked as a corporate lawyer before joining WV.

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<sup>1</sup> Maluku is the Indonesian name for the province widely known as 'the Moluccas'.

<sup>2</sup> The rupiah is the Indonesian monetary unit.

<sup>3</sup> 'Laporan Akhir Tahun Bidang Ekonomi', *Kompas*, 21 December 1998; and '140 million Indonesians below poverty line in 2000', *Indonesia Observer*, 14 December 1999.

<sup>4</sup> This number was quoted by the Chairman of the Indonesian Red Crescent Mar'ie Muhammad in mid-2001.

<sup>5</sup> Ambon city was previously the capital of a Maluku province which included North Maluku, but the two provinces were divided in 1999 into Maluku province with Ambon as its capital and North Maluku province with Ternate as its capital.

<sup>6</sup> 'Analysis of the Sectarian Conflict in Moluccas and its Role in the Islamicisation of Indonesia'. Report by Jubilee Campaign, UK, December 1999.

<sup>7</sup> The Do No Harm / Local Capacities for Peace framework for assessing the impact of relief or development aid in conflict settings, and identifying local resources, attitudes and actions that 'connect' rather than 'divide' people, was developed by Dr Mary B. Anderson and the Collaborative for Development Action in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and elaborated by Dr Anderson in the book *Do No Harm: How aid can support peace – or war* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder/London, 1999). The framework has been further developed with feedback from practitioners. See <http://cdainc.com>, click on the 'LCPP' link.

<sup>8</sup> Interview conducted between 10 and 19 May 2000, when Mr. Johnson Tobing (WVI Communications staff) visited the Ambon project. The moment when the 400 Muslim and Christian children in the camp played together, and interviews with community members, were recorded and documented on video. The video cassette is being used by WVII to raise funds so that the project can continue.

<sup>9</sup> Susan Fountain, *Peace Education in UNICEF*, UNICEF Staff Working Papers, June 1999, and Mary Pigozzi, *Education in Emergencies and for Reconstruction: A developmental approach*, UNICEF Working Papers Series, June 1999. The effectiveness of a magazine project is also described as a case study in Mary B. Anderson, *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace – or War*, see note 7.



## Hak Anak Indonesia: a magazine on children's rights

What follows is a page-by-page English synopsis of the first issue of the magazine *Hak Anak Indonesia (The Rights of Indonesian Children)* which World Vision Indonesia has developed to promote the rights of children, and peace, in Indonesia.

### HAK ANAK INDONESIA - Volume I

(page 1 – front cover) Title: *THE RIGHTS OF INDONESIAN CHILDREN*

Banner: An anthology of stories for children based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Illustration: Four children playing football

(page 2) Contents

Editorial Board

Foreword by James L. Tumbuan, National Director of World Vision International – Indonesia.

In his foreword, Mr. Tumbuan notes that World Vision Indonesia is motivated to publish this booklet because only a very small number of Indonesian people, especially the children, know about the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The occasion of publishing this booklet is in celebration of World Vision International's 50th anniversary, and of World Vision Indonesia's 40th year of ministry in Indonesia.

(page 3) Editor's introduction, saying that there are still many violations of human rights and of children's rights in Indonesia due to a lack of awareness, or ignorance, of such rights. The main purpose of this booklet is to introduce highlights of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child to the readers (especially children) through colourful short stories and cartoon stories.

(pages 4–5) *The 'Bengawan Solo' Song*

A short story. One afternoon, a boy is invited by friends to go to another child's house. He refuses to go with them because his father has told him that the child's family, of Chinese ('immigrant') descent, is not nationalist – they speak Chinese at home rather than the Bahasa Indonesia language. The boy's friend disagrees, saying people cannot be judged as non-nationalists just because they speak their own vernacular at home, and that everybody has the right to his/her own language, religion and culture. Suddenly, the boy's mother comes out and tells her son to go with his friends. She explains that her husband hated that family because they had refused to lend him some money last Sunday; however, they did loan the money to her the following day. She asks her son to go and pay back the money. When the children arrive at the other family's house, they hear the grandfather quietly singing the 'Bengawan Solo' – a local popular song – with a Chinese accent. He also happens to be making ten Indonesian flags for the children's celebration of Indonesian Independence Day at the school. The children feel that he is very kind to them.

*The main messages of this story can be found in Article 30 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which states that wherever people are in an ethnic, religious or linguistic minority or of indigenous origin, each child belonging to such a minority shall not be denied the right to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practice his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.*

(pages 6–9) *Reconcile, Dad!*

A cartoon story. Two children, a girl and a boy, are good friends as well as cousins. However, the boy's father and the girl's mother – grown-up brother and sister – have a hostile relationship. The sister occupies the inherited family home with her husband and children, but the brother wants to repossess it and live there with his family. The feuding siblings do not know that their children are friends, and that they often meet at the swimming pool. One day, the girl gives the boy a birthday present at the crossroads; she cannot go to his house due to the bad relationship between their parents. When the boy gets home, his father asks him to help gather stones which he plans to throw at the house he is claiming. The boy does not agree with his father and complains to his mother; his mother also disagrees with such hostility, especially when the children become involved. The father, angry at his wife and son, storms over to the house where his sister is living with her family. To his surprise the sister, having now rented another house for her family, hands over the key of the house to her brother. Suddenly, the brother changes his mind. He apologises to his sister, and gives her back the key. She says that she has been ashamed of their hostility, and they reconcile. In the end, it was the children who made them reconcile.

*The main messages of this story can be found in CRC Article 14 (to respect the right of the child to freedom of thought and conscience) and Article 38 (to ensure that children do not take a direct part in hostilities).*

*(pages 10–12) A Letter from Cut Dina*

A short story. A young girl tells her mother about the letter she just received from her pen pal in Aceh province. In the letter, the pen pal complains that she and other children in Aceh province are under stress and fear because battles and riots often occur there. They cannot go to school or play outside their house or in the playground. The girl's mother asks her to reply as soon as possible, to encourage her pen pal. On her way back from posting her letter, the girl sees a lot of men talking with the village chief at the playground; they are telling him that the land owner wants to build a supermarket on the playground. The chief does not agree with that idea, and tells the land owner this, but she insists on building her supermarket. Just then, the young girl interrupts their discussion and asks the land owner to cancel her plan to build the supermarket, because the playground is the only place where she and her friends can play. She decides to give her pen pal's letter to the land owner to read. A week later, the girl sees people working on the playground; they are not building a supermarket, but a building for sport and art, a swimming pool, a merry-go-round and swings. The land owner comes to the girl's house to return her letter, and says that the pen pal's letter really changed her mind about building a supermarket on the playground.

*The main messages of this story can be found in Article 31 of the CRC (The right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child).*

*(pages 12–13) Playing One against the Other's Tactics*

A cartoon story. Some village boys are busy making toy weapons, when suddenly a man appears and offers them real weapons, such as bows and arrows, air guns and spears. He tells them that tomorrow, their village will be attacked by children from another village. He also does the same thing in the other village, telling those children that tomorrow the children of the first village will be waiting for them at a certain bridge. The next day the children of the two villages start fighting a real fight at the bridge. When all the adults from the two villages are at the bridge trying to stop the fight, the man's friends arrive at the villages in trucks. They enter the houses of the villagers and load their valuables onto the trucks. Meanwhile, the police who were informed about the fight arrive to stop it. The police also catch the man and his friends, and take them, as well as the children, to the police station. The police treat the children kindly, as witnesses. One of the policemen explains that the man and his friends have violated the law by robbing and by involving children under the age of 15 in a hostility.

*The main messages of this story can be found in CRC Article 37(b) (No child shall be deprived of his or her liberty unlawfully or arbitrarily. The arrest, detention or imprisonment of a child shall be in conformity with the law...), and Article 38.2 (to ensure respect for rules of international humanitarian law applicable to children in armed conflict).*

*(pages 14–15) Let Me Choose for Myself*

A short story. A girl is confused by a matter of religion. Her mother is a Christian and her father is a Muslim; her mother wants her to be a Christian, while her father wants her to be a Muslim. Her friends often ask her what her religion is, because in Indonesia everyone must have a religion and only one religion. One evening, on the way home from a Balinese dance lesson, her friends ask her again what her religion is, because at school she attends lessons in the Islamic faith while on Sundays she goes to church with her mother. The friends' homes are in different directions, so after leaving them at the crossroads, she goes on alone. It begins to rain and she is invited by the mother of a Muslim family to take shelter in her house. When the woman invites her to join the family in prayer, however, the girl runs away even though it is still raining. Arriving home, she cries out to her parents, "I am angry with both of you. You make me so confused. I don't know what my religion is because each of you wants me to follow your own religion." Seeing how upset she is, her parents embrace her and apologise to her. "Now you are free to choose your own religion because that is the right of every child," they both say. This makes the girl very happy.

*The main messages of this story can be found in CRC Article 14 (To respect the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion).*

*(pages 16–19) Mr. Roto's Wheelchair*

A cartoon story. One day a boy takes his grandfather's wheelchair to the playground without his knowledge or permission. He plans to tease a new boy in the village who is in a wheelchair. His friends, however, say that he should not tease or insult the boy because of his physical disability. They say he is a nice boy, and has a lot of talents – he won a children's drawing competition at the provincial level and came second in a wheelchair race at the district level. But the boy, wanting to show up the new boy, challenges him to compete in doing a drawing and in a wheelchair race. The new boy wins both contests; in fact, in the wheelchair race, the boy using his grandfather's wheelchair falls into a ditch. When he returns home, he is also punished by his grandfather: he has to push his grandfather in his wheelchair for twenty five circuits around their residence complex while his friends are laughing at him.

*The main messages of this story can be found in CRC Article 2.1 (Each child is to be treated without discrimination of any kind, including whether he or she is physically disabled or for other reasons), and Article 23 (A mentally or physically disabled child should enjoy a full and decent life and take an active participation in the community).*

(pages 20–21) *A Song for Grandmother*

A short story. A boy is very eager to play piano, but his parents have forbidden him from spending time on anything except his homework and reading school textbooks. They want him to become an academic, because they and his uncles and aunts are all academics. However, because he is so eager to become a pianist, the boy secretly asks another boy's mother to give him lessons. Because he is so talented, within a short time he can play the piano and even create his own compositions. One day, he and his parents go to Bandung to see his sick grandmother. While his parents are talking with his grandmother in her bedroom, the boy goes to the living room where he discovers the old piano. He begins to play one of his own compositions, *A Song for Grandmother*. The parents push the grandmother out in her wheelchair to the living room to find out who is playing. His father is angry at him, saying he is just making a lot of noise, but his grandmother says he is a talented piano player, like his late grandfather. She also says that his parents must not forbid him to play piano, because as a child he has the right to the development of his personality and talents to their fullest potential. The boy's parents apologise and promise they will give him the freedom to play piano and to read books other than textbooks; he can even watch television, as long as it does not interfere with his school duties. His grandmother asks him to play his composition once again. Then suddenly, to everyone's surprise, the grandmother recovers from her illness.

*The main messages of this story can be found in CRC Articles 13 and 29 (The child shall have the right to freedom of expression, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas either orally or in writing, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice).*

(pages 22–23) *The Soccer Field*

A cartoon story. Sub-village 008 has a field where children usually play soccer or other recreational activities. One evening, the village Board members hold a meeting at which they decide to build houses for sale or for rent on the soccer field because it will be financially more advantageous. One man attending the meeting does not agree with the plan because the children of the village really need the field as a playground. He returns home and tells his family what has been discussed at the meeting. The next day, his son tells his friends about the plan. None of them agrees with the plan either. They decide to write a letter of protest to the sub-district chief and ask the people of the village to add their signatures in support. All of the residents sign the letter. As a result, the sub-district chief cancels the Board's plan.

*The main messages of this story can be found in CRC Article 31 (The right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child).*

### **Harmonis: a children's magazine for peace**

The following is a synopsis of the pilot version of the proposed *Harmonis* magazine, included here to give an example of the approach WVI is taking with the project. It should be noted that the content summarised below will be circulated only to the initial pilot audience, in order to seek feedback and then refine the approach for future editions of the magazine.

A curriculum covering 15 issues of the magazine has been developed, and it is earnestly hoped that resources to continue producing and disseminating this magazine will be available. For further details or to support this project, please contact: james\_tumbuan@wvi.org

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#### **HARMONIS - Pilot Issue**

(page 1 – front cover) Title: *Children's Magazine: HARMONIS*

*Creative. Clever. In harmony. Peaceful*

Banner: Restore My Peace, Sherina the Golden Voice, Romeo and Juliet

Illustration: Two boys quarrelling and ready to duel physically, separated by a girl

(page 2) Table of contents

Editorial Board

Foreword by the Editor

The Editor introduces the new children's magazine *Harmonis* to the readers – primary school students of grades 4, 5 and 6. As well as being the Indonesian word for 'harmonious', *Harmonis* stands for '**H**arapan **A**gar **R**ukun dan **M**akmur **O**rang-orang **N**usantara **I**ni **S**eluruhnya', meaning: 'Hope that the whole people of this Archipelago will live in harmony and prosperity'. The Editor asks the readers to take an active part in developing the magazine by sending their own works in the form of simple poems, jokes, anecdotes, drawings, letters, and by answering the quizzes, games, etc.

(page 3) *I Need to Know*

This article introduces what is meant by conflict, and three main causes of conflict: competition in meeting human needs, misunderstanding, and provocation by a third party. Nevertheless, not all conflicts are negative: there are also some positive conflicts, that can enrich the relationship between the conflicting persons, making them more understanding and empowering them to overcome their conflicts in the future. We cannot prevent the occurrence of conflicts, but the important thing is to manage them so that they will not result in damage, and to change them into positive conflicts.

(pages 4–5) *Don't Cry, Mrs. Ijah!*

An illustrated story about a woman who was very sad because her son and his friends were going to Jakarta to fight a war. Her son did not know his enemies, nor the purpose of the war, but he was paid Rp.50,000 (US\$5) to join. A man in the village, hearing about this, said that provocateurs wanted to incite the people against each other, not for the sake of the nation but for the sake their group. He discussed with key figures in his village how to overcome the provocation. A few days later, Mrs. Ijah was very happy, because her son had decided not to go and fight. The villagers drove the provocateurs away from the village, having discovered their evil intention and tactics.

(page 6) *According to Me*

A dilemma for young readers to solve. Dody is doing his homework at home when his friends come to ask him to join them in fighting with the youngsters of the village. His friends say that if he is ready to join them in fighting, he will get some money, but if not, they will hate him and treat him as an enemy. Readers are asked what they would do if they were Dody. Three examples of answers to the dilemma are given.

(page 7) *My Culture, Your Culture*

A space for students to share a specific cultural tradition of their communities. The purpose is that readers can understand and appreciate the diverse cultures or traditions of other communities, and not be fanatical about his/her own culture. Among the Batak Karo, one of the hundreds of ethnic groups in Indonesia, nearly all men are smokers because every formal meeting or discussion is started by smoking a cigarette. It is very common in the countryside for a young man to have a girlfriend from a neighbouring village, but to obtain a girlfriend, he must first have 'permission' from young men of the girl's village. To introduce himself to those young men, he starts by offering cigarettes which they then smoke together; if this does not happen, he is regarded as impolite. This tradition causes nearly all young Batak Karo men to become smokers. They are not aware that smoking is hazardous to their health.



(pages 8–9) *Profile: Sherina Triawan Munaf*

An interview with 11-year old Sherina, who is a very popular singer and a soap-opera star in Indonesia; she also appears in a television advertisement, promoting a peaceful life among multi-ethnic and multi-religious Indonesian people. The interview focuses on Sherina's career and achievements, the secret of her success, and her messages to the readers, especially the primary school students living in the IDP camps in Maluku.

(page 10) *Your Letters*

A space for young readers to ask questions, which will be answered by editorial staff and associates. In the pilot edition, five questions and answers (as examples) deal with: the purpose of learning and doing homework, why we should not sit too close to the television set, what we can do to prevent toothache, why we should not cut down trees in the protected forests, and why it is not good to build a hen cage on the wall of our home.

(page 11) *Wisdom There, Wisdom Here*

A space for readers to share the proverbs of their own communities. The purpose is to introduce the richness of wisdom among Indonesia's ethnic traditions and to increase tolerance among young readers. Readers are invited to write the proverb in both the national language (Indonesian) and their local language, elaborate the meaning of the proverb, and then give examples of its application in real life. In this edition, the proverb is: "Don't measure the size of other's shirt on your own body". The interpretation is that we cannot appraise the conduct of other people from different cultures using the criteria of our own culture.

(pages 12–13) *The Hat of Pride*

A short story of a boy who was very proud of his hat, given to him by his uncle, which shows a picture of a well-known musical group. His younger brother wants to borrow the hat for an outing with school friends, but the older brother says no. The younger one takes it without asking, then loses it, making his brother very angry. Their mother asks the older boy to forgive his younger brother and be reconciled, but the boy says he will not forgive until he gets back his hat, and punishes his younger brother by not letting him use his other toys. One day, the younger boy goes missing – in search of the hat he had lost. Frantic that he will be lost or get into serious trouble, the mother and the older boy go looking for him. When they find him, they are relieved, and the boys soon forgive each other.

(pages 14–15) *Let's Play Games and Puzzles*

Four kinds of games or puzzles asking readers to:

- find out ten words that can be produced by a peace and conflict situation
- rewrite a secret message in normal writing
- change the position of one of the matches so that a word meaning *ulama* (Muslim scholar) appears
- a crossword puzzle

(pages 16–17) *That's Children's Nature*

A comic strip. On her first day at kindergarten, a girl is teased by another child, who tries to take by force the swing on which she is playing, and tears her dress. The girl's mother confronts the other child's mother angrily and a conflict between the mothers develops. A teacher tries to reconcile the two mothers. Meanwhile, the two children become good friends, and share their cakes with each other. The two mothers, ashamed to be still in conflict while their children have been reconciled, also become reconciled. After this, the children are in conflict again, but this time it does not cause the two mothers to be in conflict. The two mothers and the teacher say: "That's children's nature...ha, ha, ha!"

(pages 18–19) *Let's Contribute*

A space for young readers' works, such as simple poems, jokes, anecdotes, drawings, etc. In this edition, there are seven poems, one joke, five *pantuns* (a type of Indonesian poetry) and two drawings.

(pages 20–21) *Restore My Peace*

A short story about a competition among primary school students to compose a song that will help people of their country, which is suffering many conflicts, to love peace. The prize is a large sum of money. One boy is reluctant to join in the competition because of an inferiority complex (his mother is a poor widow). But suddenly, his elder brother is hospitalized following a bomb explosion and the family needs money for medical expenses. This motivates the boy to join in the competition. He wins, and ends up singing his song 'Restore my peace' on the television. His brother and mother are very touched, not only because of the prize but because of the message of the song.

## appendix 2

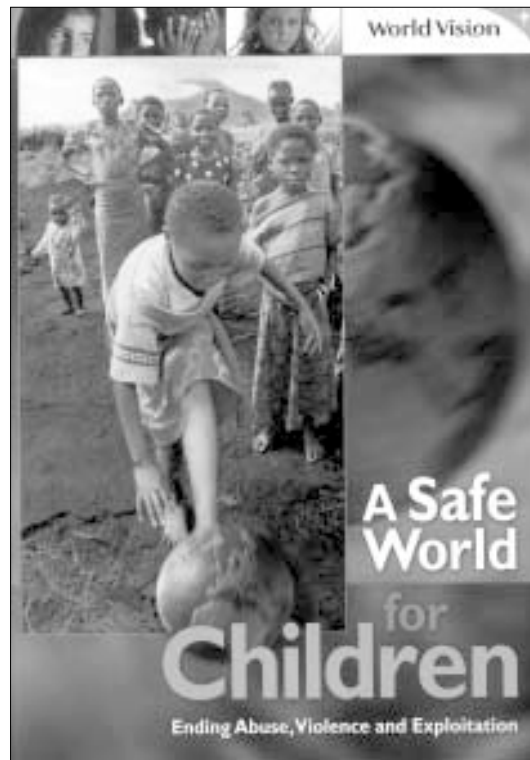
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(pages 22–23) *Romeo and Juliet*

A classical story by William Shakespeare, about two teenage lovers in Verona, Italy, who come from two families, the Montagues and the Capulets, that were caught in a bitter feud. After their secret wedding, Juliet's cousin, Tybalt, challenged Romeo to fight. But Romeo refused because he thought that Tybalt was his new relative. To defend the Montague honor, Mercutio (Romeo's friend) accepted the challenge of Tybalt. Mercutio was stabbed dead in this fight. In revenge, Romeo then fought and killed Tybalt. Romeo then was exiled from Verona. Unaware that Juliet was already married, her father tried to marry her with her cousin, Paris. In order that Juliet was able to escape from her father's demand, Friar Laurence gave Juliet a drug that made her sleep like a dead person for 42 hours. Romeo heard of the death of Juliet, and took poison so he could die by Juliet's side. When Juliet woke up and saw her husband dead, she stabbed herself. Aware that the death of the two lovers was the fruit of their feud, the Montagues and the Capulets then ended their conflict.

(page 24: Back cover) *The Millenium Ant: The Fruit of Arrogance*

A cartoon story. The Millennium Ant is very arrogant. He says that his duty is to eradicate crimes and to maintain peace, and boasts that he has superior strength, a killing punch, and that he can fly like an arrow. When he demonstrates his capability to fly like an arrow, he crashes into a tree trunk and ends up in a lot of pain. The snake is laughing: "Ha, ha, ha... it is because you are arrogant!"



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