

## Conference Summary

### First International Conference of the Catholic Peacebuilding Network

**Hosted by the Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies  
University of Notre Dame**

**May 17-19, 2004**

From May 17-19, 2004, invited participants from Asia, Africa, Europe, Latin America, and the United States gathered at the University of Notre Dame's Center for Continuing Education for a consultation of the Catholic Peacebuilding Network (CPN). Hosted by the Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, the consultation was dedicated to sharing experiences, analysis, and insights regarding peacebuilding initiatives in Colombia, the Philippines, and Rwanda, as well as stories of peace and conflict from across Africa. The consultation was structured as a series of presentations and discussions concerning the efforts of Catholics and their partners in peacebuilding. (See Appendix I for the conference schedule.) It was aimed at helping CPN to discern the most appropriate ways to contribute to peace practices as it grows and develops.

#### **Overview of the conference**

Selection of the aforementioned countries as the focus of the consultation was governed by a set of specific criteria. It had been determined that they should

- be the site of a current or recent serious armed conflict;
- vary by world regions, culture, and religious as well as ethnic demographics;
- not include the U.S. or Europe; and
- have a Catholic population whose contribution to peacebuilding is or could be significant.

A second set of criteria had been devised for selection of peacebuilding cases within the designated countries. They should

- involve key actors with a Catholic (or catholic) identity;
- represent initiatives with an important but not exclusive focus on the grassroots;
- vary in degrees of development and capabilities;
- be significant enough to be of interest to one another, south-south;
- involve at least some degree of local cross-organizational networking; and
- be likely to contribute to and/or be able to benefit from CPN involvement.

For the presenters themselves, it was expected that they be

- connected to or representative of significant local peacebuilding associations;
- nominated by one or more current CPN members or member organizations;
- able to describe the broad context and discuss peacebuilding initiatives of others;
- fluent in English; and
- interested in CPN, as well as open to future involvement.

Four representatives each from Colombia, the Philippines, and Rwanda were invited to present an overview of peacebuilding efforts in those countries, a description of specific efforts, and an analysis of the needs of local peacebuilders as well as the challenges they face. Representatives from Uganda, South Africa, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) were also invited to present more briefly on the latter topics in their own countries. Representatives from Catholic Relief Services (CRS), the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), Pax Christi International (PCI), the Life and Peace Institute (LPI), Maryknoll, various U.S. members of CPN, and local university faculty and graduate students also attended the consultation. (See Appendix II for a list of attendees.)

### **The major presentations**

The sessions opened on the afternoon of Monday, May 17, with a discussion of CPN by Scott Appleby of the Kroc Institute, Ben Schennink of PCI, Fr. Ferdinand Muhigirwa, SJ, of the Central African Social Apostolate, and Claudette Werleigh of LPI. Appleby welcomed those assembled, offered background on the evolution of CPN, and described points of agreement among its members. The first of these was that CPN is not intended to duplicate the efforts of others. The second was on five possible areas of concentration, including support for grassroots peacebuilding efforts, research and its pastoral applications, training, networking, and functioning as a clearinghouse for information on peacebuilding. The third point of consensus was on the theological contributions Catholicism can bring to peacebuilding, and the fourth on the importance of both vertical and horizontal social linkages. The final point was on the evolution and understanding of the term "peacebuilding."

Ben Schennink noted the many commonalities between the CPN and PCI, and explained that the latter was holding its meeting in the US this year to strengthen links between people of the Global South and the U.S. as well as Western Europe. PCI is a democratic movement with an elected leadership; it works with but independently of the bishops. Schennink provided background on the history of PCI and described the challenges it currently faces, concluding with the suggestion that CPN and PCI avoid unnecessary duplication and work together.

Ferdinand Muhigirwa observed that no international CPN can exist apart from peacebuilding efforts at the local, national, and regional levels. He referred to existing peace training institutes in Africa, speaking of the need for peaceful relationships among people as well as for a spirituality of peace.

Claudette Werleigh highlighted the ecumenical and inter-religious character of LPI's work. She spoke of the importance of working for peace with humility, of building peace with people rather than "teaching" them peace, of respecting others and their experiences. Violence can stem from perceptions and misperceptions of the other, frustrated hopes, and fear of losing privileges.

Keynote Session

In the evening, Tom Bamat (Maryknoll) introduced and moderated the keynote session, entitled "Peacebuilding in an Age of Counter-Terrorism." The speakers were George Lopez, Director of Policy Studies and Senior Fellow at the Kroc Institute; John Paul Lederach, Professor of International Peacebuilding at the Kroc Institute; and Marie Dennis, Director of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns. Lopez explained that the problem with the United States resorting to the war model as a response to the attacks of 9/11/01 is that it breeds an escalation of violence and makes military victory the only option. Instead of responding to the attacks on their own criminal terms, the Bush administration set up a non-ending metaphor and real condition of war. It has failed to distinguish between terror as a strategy and terror as a way of being, despite the fact that similar lines of reasoning, now debunked, were employed in fighting the Cold War.

John Paul Lederach addressed the need to unmask some elements of what actually takes place in the naming of terrorism, as well as to recognize the deeper moral and religious significance of this naming with

its stark dichotomies. He also explored both the theological nature and sociological locus of peacebuilding (which is to dwell in the prohibited threshold that lies between the names, and by so doing, to rename them).

Marie Dennis observed that security must be an inclusive human security, or it will not be at all, and made suggestions for how the U.S. federal budget could be re-focused for peace. She pointed out that the U.S. lacks moral credibility with the rest of the world, and identified the need of the people to learn to grapple with certain cultural habits, fear, and vulnerability.

### Case Studies and Stories

Beginning the morning of Tuesday, May 18<sup>th</sup>, and ending after lunch the next day, were informative, detailed presentations by panelists from Colombia, the Philippines, and Rwanda. Each of these was followed by a discussion. Two sessions on "Sharing Stories of Africa" were also included in this time period, one featuring presenters from South Africa and Uganda, the other focusing on the DRC.

John Paul Lederach introduced and moderated the Colombia presentations, made by Monsignor Hector Fabio Henao, Director of the Colombian Episcopal Conference's Social Ministries, Amanda Romero, representing the Andes Branch of the American Friends Service Committee, and Martha Ines Romero of CRS Colombia. They cited data on casualties of the war in Colombia, analyzing some of its causes and the implications of U.S. aid. They also sketched the history of the peace process and offered an overview of peacemaking efforts in general, as well as the specific efforts of the organizations they represented. In a society polarized by racial and economic inequalities, drug trafficking, and U.S. intervention, challenges that face peacebuilders include the need for:

- political negotiation that involves civil society;
- a humanization of the conflict that would address issues such as kidnapping, release of political prisoners, and the human rights of internally displaced persons; and,
- mobilization of civil society and the churches on a common agenda in a manner inclusive of both genders and all ethnic groups.

Mary Ann Cejka (Maryknoll) moderated the panel on the Philippines, whose members included Rudy Buhay Rodil of Kalinaw Mindanaw (Peace to Mindanao), Myla Leguro of CRS Mindanao, and Grace Rebollos of Peace Advocates Zamboanga (PAZ). Rodil provided background on major social problems in Mindanao, a history of the Bangsamoro struggle, and an overview of approaches to peacebuilding. Leguro summarized the peace and reconciliation efforts of CRS in Mindanao, including community-based solidarity projects, peace zones, inter-religious dialogue, and peace education (such as the Culture of Peace Workshops). Grace Rebollos spoke of the work of PAZ in the area in and around Zamboanga City, including its participation in the Mindanao Week of Peace and its partnership with SALAM. She spoke of the impact of the 9/11/01 attacks in the U.S. on peacemaking in Mindanao, and of some networks that have formed there to define areas of "common ground" in working for peace.

In the first "Sharing Stories of Africa" session, chaired by Andrea Bartoli (Sant' Egidio Community), Fr. Peter-John Pearson of the South African Bishops' Conference spoke of a general "amnesia" regarding apartheid on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its end. He affirmed the importance of taking this anniversary as an opportunity to move from the struggle for peace to the sustenance of a peace based on justice and informed by traditional wisdom. Sr. Specioza Kabahuma, representing the Uganda Catholic Secretariat's Justice and Peace Commission, explained that "terrorism" started a long time ago for Ugandans. She lamented that conflicts such as those arising from the influx of refugees and the activity of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) get little attention from the international community. Cristina Lee, representing CRS' peacebuilding program in Uganda, described the program, stating that it started in 2002 and operates mostly in the North,

in response to the LRA conflict. She provided some statistics on casualties and displaced persons due to this conflict, and identified challenges facing local peacebuilders.

Fr. Bill Headley (CRS) moderated the presentations on Rwanda, first calling for a moment of silence out of respect for Rwanda's "special claim to the paschal mystery." Headley then introduced the panelists as follows: Bishop Kizito Bahujimihigo of the Diocese of Ruhengeri; Fr. Antoine Kambanda of the Justice and Peace Commission for the Archdiocese of Kigali; Therese Nduwamungu of Caritas Rwanda; and Paul Rutayisire of CRS Rwanda. The panel provided historical background on events before and after the 1994 genocide, described the role of the church today in working towards reconciliation, and presented an overview of reconstruction efforts. Challenges that face peacebuilders include the following: a political culture with some impunity and clientelism; fragile societal bonds and divisions based on fear and desire for revenge; the uneven quality of judgments made by the *gacaca* courts; the weakness of civil society; and a lack of adequate initiative on the part of the churches and other organizations. The presentations concluded with a video segment of a *gacaca* court hearing a case related to the genocide.

In the second "Sharing Stories of Africa" session, chaired by Jerry Powers (USCCB), Fr. Ferdinand Muhigirwa spoke of signs of hope in the DRC amidst widespread death, destruction, and incompetent leadership. He reported on peacebuilding efforts by PCI, justice and peace commissions, non-governmental organizations, and religious congregations, and emphasized the need for the church to grow in moral credibility if it is to be an effective witness for peace.

#### Lessons and Suggestions

On the afternoon of Wednesday, May 19, Maryann Cusimano Love, Professor of Politics at the Catholic University of America, led a plenary discussion on overall learnings from the consultation and possible roles for CPN. After beginning with a reflection on the previous Sunday's reading from John's Gospel ("Peace I leave with you...not as the world gives peace"), Cusimano Love presented those in attendance with a list of notes and observations from the various presentations and discussions. In addition, she compiled a list of peacebuilding needs mentioned throughout the consultation, and a list of roles, both general and specific, for CPN (See Appendix III). After reviewing these lists with those assembled, she invited their input.

Scott Appleby spoke of the potential and the limits of CPN, observing that the consultation thus far had laid the groundwork for CPN as an international entity that could continue to grow. As a network, it could involve universities and the media; it could provide opportunities for mentoring by experienced peacebuilders for those less experienced, and for needed dialogue (e.g., between Muslims and Christians). It could and should produce publications and other peacebuilding tools. But an important constraint is the question of how to serve a widening group with limited resources.

Appleby also took this occasion to announce that Jerry Powers will be assuming the role of coordinator of the CPN, mentioning the many gifts and assets that Powers would bring to the position. CPN's Advisory Council will be expanded as well. For the next two to three years, CPN will be included in the budget of the Kroc Institute, but it will need to move toward financial independence.

Some comments, questions, and suggestions from the floor (loosely grouped together for the purposes of this summary) were as follows:

- It is important to know where the CPN would stand vis-à-vis other organizations such as Pax Christi, and to coordinate efforts, building on what already exists.
- Should CPN play a role in lobbying policymakers?
- Research issues: CPN could sponsor research utilizing a case study approach to focus on critical current issues (e.g., Muslim-Christian relations, indigenous survival, etc.). Research could

provide analysis of root causes of violence and propose strategies for pre-emptive peacebuilding. CPN could provide a link among Catholic peace research institutes and Catholic peace scholars.

- CPN should begin with humble actions, focus on the grassroots.
- Will CPN make members' activities better? Will it facilitate members' sharing of experience? Promote new activities and initiative? Will it be mutual and interactive?
- CPN could be organized as small groups around common orientations (e.g. theology, spirituality, politics, and practical issues, all as related to peacebuilding).
- Articulating a Catholic theology of peacebuilding is important, but CPN must take it a step further by addressing how to concretize and implement that theology. Can CPN help the Catholic Church become a peace church? Awaken the "sleeping giant"? Link peace practice and theory?
- CPN could interface across faiths.
- CPN might be useful in conflict prevention (e.g., in a place like Venezuela)--often overlooked by other groups. If the network is sufficiently widespread, it could help to bring invisible conflicts and invisible grassroots peacebuilding to light. Could the CPN as a network be useful in alerting its members to brewing situations, making it possible for them to respond quickly?
- How can CPN avoid being a U.S. network plus a few internationals? How to involve international input and cultural diversity in such matters as style, agenda, and topics chosen? CPN could promote more North-South and South-South exchanges.
- Funding issues: Can some resources come from the South? Those in the South can't just be on the receiving end. If a network develops and CPN proves viable, the Kroc Institute should pay for regional meetings.
- CPN can link peacebuilding with justice issues by working for transformation of systems.
- CPN could help bring together practitioners of trauma healing.

### **Evaluation and Closure of the Consultation**

The final session of the consultation was an evaluation led by Reina Neufeldt (CRS). Participants were invited to fill out questionnaires in the first several minutes of the session, then to share some of their comments with the group. Written evaluations were generally positive, with all average numeric ratings falling above 3 on a scale of 1 to 5. The following received average ratings above 4: the Keynote Session; the Colombia, Philippines, and Rwanda Presentations; the content of the consultation; and the conference facilities. The average overall rating of the consultation was 4.1.

In both the written and spoken evaluations, common critiques had to do with insufficient time for presentations and discussions, omission of introductions at the outset, excessive historical background during the presentations (background material could have been distributed), and reliance on a lecture format (rather than more interactive modes of communicating). Participants noted insufficient time to interact informally, and evening sessions that were difficult for jet-lagged participants. A few mentioned feeling uncomfortable with what they felt were luxurious accommodations. Participants overall were impressed with the richness and quality of the presentations, and appreciative of the opening prayers in the three major country presentations. They expressed gratitude for having been included in the consultation, as well as interest in and optimism for the future of the CPN.

The consultation concluded with a concelebrated Liturgy of Thanksgiving and a meal. Fr. Bill Headley, celebrating his 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a priest, presided at the liturgy and preached the homily. Participants then enjoyed a festive dinner together at Sunny Italy in South Bend.