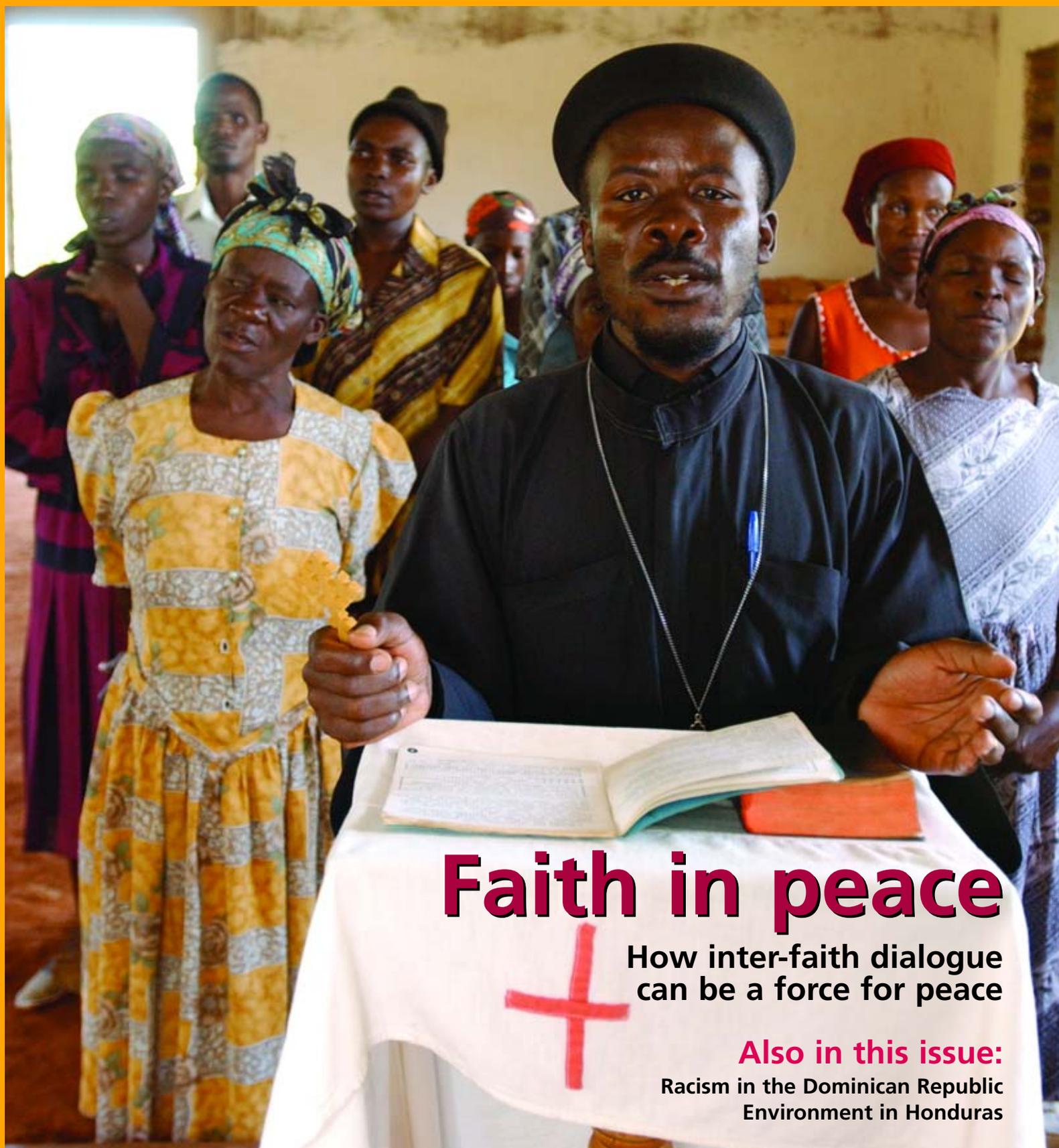


autumn 2005

interact



Faith in peace

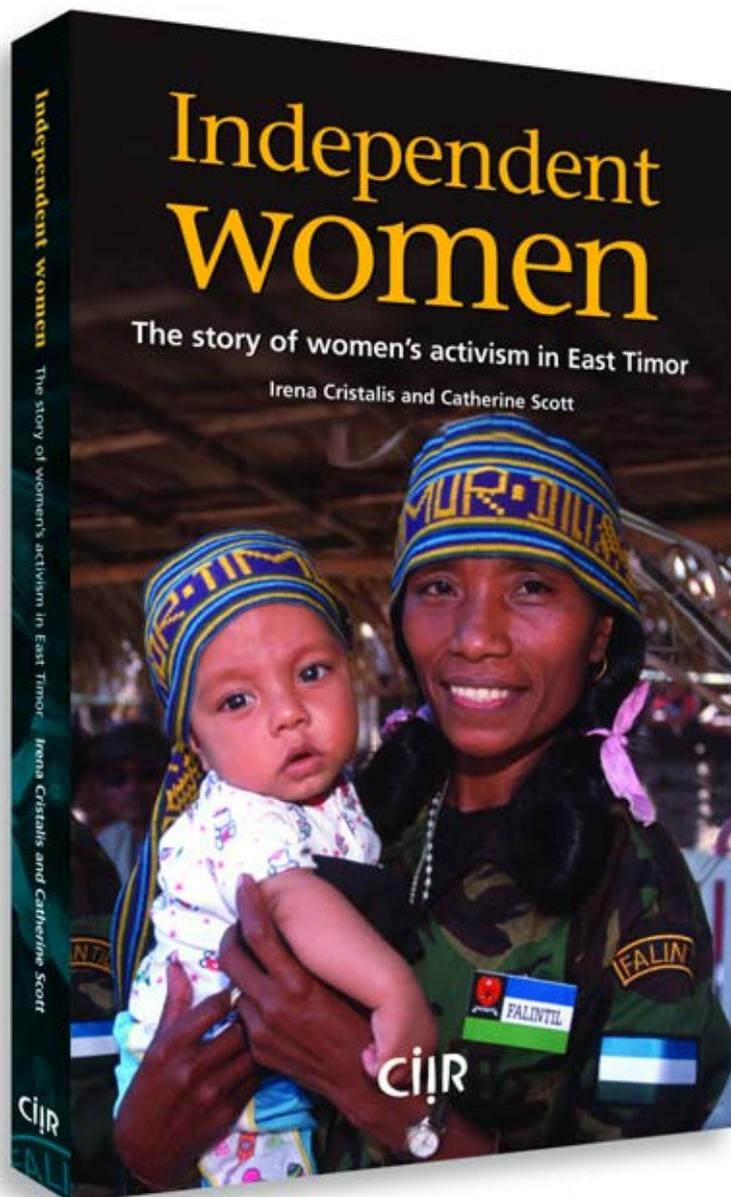
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can be a force for peace

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'Independent women is a profound testimony to the unique character of East Timorese women and to their resolve and courage in the long process of struggle for the liberation of their country and now their own liberation'
– Olandina Caeiro

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editorial

Faith in peace

All religions advocate peace and goodwill. Yet from ancient times to the present day, religion has been either the cause of, or the excuse for, violence and war. This is nowhere more apparent than in the universal fear, distrust and loathing currently being fostered by Christian fundamentalists and Islamic extremists.

Yet, as with so many spheres of life, where the leaders lead, people with their own minds, and their own values, refuse to follow. This issue of *Interact* looks at the ways in which people of all faiths, supported by their local religious leaders, are coming together to confront situations of violence and build peace and togetherness.

These examples show that in the hands of the people, the shared values of the world's religions are strong enough to overcome their differences. They hold out the hope that in a world of accelerating discord, inter-faith dialogue may help us – in the words of Dr Chandra Muzaffar (see *insight*, page 10) – discover our common humanity, make peace not war, and bring an end to people's everyday experience of violence and conflict.

Editor

Cover picture: Morning prayer at a church in Kenya. Photo: Peter Williams/WCC.

What's in a name?

CIIR's director of communications **Nick Sireau** explains how and why the organisation has decided to change its name

IT'S A WEEKDAY MORNING in the CIIR communications office. The phone rings: it's the BBC. They want to know what we can tell them about the growth of the Catholic charismatic movement in East Africa. I tell them that this is not something we know anything about: we're an international development organisation, not a think-tank that studies Catholic movements.

The BBC journalist sounds confused. 'Oh, so you're not an official Catholic research institute?' No, I reply, we're an agency that places development workers with local partner organisations and that carries out advocacy on specific issues such as

'We realised that the organisation was in danger of losing its roots'

poverty in Haiti or the environment. The journalist sounds even more confused: 'So why are you called the Catholic Institute for International Relations?'

Another day, and the phone rings on reception at CIIR. It's a parish minister. He would like to know the addresses of Catholic dioceses in Asia. We reply that this is not the kind of information we have because we're not an official Catholic agency and we don't deal with such matters. The minister is confused. How can an organisation with a name like ours not have this information?

Confusion

These are just two among countless examples of how CIIR's name creates confusion. With a name like

Catholic Institute for International Relations, journalists frequently ring up to ask for comments on the Vatican's latest document or on church politics. Meanwhile members of the public contact us about official church issues. Very few contact us because of what we actually do.

Indeed, this is the problem. When the Sword of the Spirit changed its name to CIIR in 1965, it was adopting what naming experts call a descriptive name: it does what it says on the tin. At the time and for the following few decades, we were more or less a Catholic Institute for International Relations. Although we had a strong development programme, a large part of our resources went into policy, research and education work on issues relating to international relations, such as apartheid in South Africa or the drugs trade in Latin America.

At the time, CIIR received funding from the other main development agencies, such as Oxfam and Cafod, to say the things they felt they could not say for fear of jeopardising their programmes on the ground. But by the mid-1990s, these agencies had put in place strong policy and campaign units. Funds to CIIR's education department dropped and the work was scaled down and integrated with the development programme.

Two names

By then, though, the organisation faced another difficulty. To reduce the difficulties linked to being a Catholic organisation working in Muslim countries such as Yemen, in 1993 the overseas development department of CIIR renamed itself as International Cooperation for Development (ICD), and most of our country offices followed suit.

This created a major communications problem: the organisation was now known by two names. This meant that many of our stakeholders were not aware of the other side of the organisation. Development workers and partner organisations often had little knowledge of our links to church communities in the UK, while many members in the UK had little understanding of the secular development work being done abroad.

It was clear that we needed to build a strong and unified organisation. So in 2002 we set out to try to make the organisation more cohesive and encourage agreement on what we believe and why. We did an



in-depth survey of our stakeholders – staff, development workers, members, funders and local partners – to see what they valued about our organisation.

Executive director Christine Allen explains: 'We realised by then that the organisation was in danger of losing its roots. The two names were symptomatic of a tension in the organisation that was making us lose not only our history but also our focus.'

Vision and values

Based on the results of the survey, we developed a cohesive vision for CIIR that was immersed in its history yet looking to the future. This was put together in a leaflet on CIIR's vision and values that was sent to all our members.

For instance, the leaflet says in its introduction: 'CIIR is rooted in a radical, progressive Christian tradition, with a vision for transforming the world into one marked by justice, love and peace. Respect for human dignity and justice is a hallmark of Catholic social teaching and is shared by people of faith and no faith.'

The logical follow-on from the vision and values work was to develop a strategic plan. This took most of 2004 and involved staff worldwide. We developed three themes for the organisation: promoting a sustainable environment; tackling HIV and AIDS; and supporting civil society. We also developed four strategic aims: focusing our development programme; ensuring financial stability; making our communications more effective; and strengthening the faith dimension.

Taking stock

Throughout the vision and values and strategic planning work we were increasingly aware of the problem caused by our two names. For Helena Molyneux, chair of CIIR's board of trustees, 'It became more and more apparent that the names were a hindrance rather than a help. They did not reflect who we were or what we did and they prevented us from recruiting new supporters.'

This was the crucial factor that convinced the board and the senior management that a review of the names was needed. Our supporter base was falling, with barely 1,500 paid-up members and efforts to recruit more failing. Compared to organisations such as Oxfam or Christian Aid with their hundreds of thousands of supporters, or even organisations of a similar size to ours such as Farm Africa, with its 40,000 supporters, we are in danger of losing our credibility. This limited supporter base

reduces the impact of our advocacy – and with barely five per cent of our funding coming from our membership and church agencies, it also affects our financial stability.

But our research showed that growing our supporter base with our existing names would prove difficult. Discussion groups revealed that members of the non church-going public were suspicious, believing that the name CIIR represented a missionary agency that used the name ICD to cover up evangelistic work. Members of the Catholic public believed that the name CIIR represented the diplomatic wing of the Vatican. All said that the name ICD was too bland and meaningless. And all concluded that they would never join an organisation with such names.

Progressio

After months of generating and discussing potential names, the name Progressio was agreed by the board as the best name for CIIR. It fits all the criteria we believe make a good name: short and easy to remember; distinctive and able to stand out from other organisations; not an acronym; not too descriptive and yet rich with meaning.

This last point is crucial. The names CIIR and ICD were too descriptive. As soon as the organisation

'The names [CIIR and ICD] did not reflect who we were or what we did and they prevented us from recruiting new supporters'

started changing, the names no longer fit. Progressio, however, has a resonance for the Catholic community because it echoes *Populorum Progressio*, the key international development and justice document to come out of the Second Vatican Council. The name also works for the secular public because it reflects the concepts of progress and development. It's a name that we can fill with meaning and that can adapt as the organisation changes over time.

We believe that this new name – which we will start using from January 2006 – will free the organisation to move forward. It's a great organisation, with a strong history and much promise for the future. We believe that Progressio is the right name at the right time and that it will help ensure our long term success.

Nick Sireau is CIIR's director of communications.

PROGRESSIO
CHANGING MINDS ● CHANGING LIVES

Revisiting South Korea

Catherine Scott, who worked on CIIR's programme in Korea from 1988 to 1995, writes about her reunion with former colleagues during a recent visit

SEVENTEEN YEARS AGO, South Korea was still living under a repressive government. CIIR supported Korean activists in their campaigns for greater democracy and governmental accountability, for the rights of women and trade unionists, and for eventual reunification with the North. Our Korea programme ended in 1993, but I was invited back by former partners in July to see how they had progressed over the past decade.

Tuesday: Met by Chun Soon Ok. Her family is famous because her brother Chun Tae Il self-immolated in the peace market in 1970 to highlight the exploitation of the garment workers. Since CIIR ended our Korea programme they have made a major film about him, and Soon Ok's translation of his life story is now published in English. Soon Ok helped us to raise awareness in both Britain and Ireland of the plight of South Korean workers. Thirteen years after coming to London with no English, she returned to Seoul with a PhD. She is now back at the peace market organising women workers as she did before.

In Busan, reunion with Hae Jin – a Buddhist monk with a beautiful face, shaved head, and inscrutable grin. He takes us to several Buddhist temples and we

encounter this attractive religion, the chants, the incense and the mediation. Hae Jin explains Buddhism's quest for Wisdom and Mercy, about how you need both, that one without the other doesn't really work....

Thursday: Off to Cheju island with Hae Jin to meet Chang So Young – a Catholic activist I met in the early 90s. She now works for an environmental NGO which deals with some of the social problems associated with being one of Japan's most popular tourist resorts. We visit St Isidore's – a Columban mission – and are introduced to some of the amazing work the missionaries have been involved in since they came to Cheju after WWII .

Saturday: Our exposure to Buddhism continues, as from Cheju-do, Hae Jin takes us to Mara-do – a tiny idyllic island on the southernmost tip of South Korea. Paradise – blue sea, and total quiet but for the waves crashing against the volcanic rock. Hae Jin is renovating a beautiful temple on the island as a way of raising funds for the overseas projects he supports in Indo China. He leads the prayers, and I join in the chanting, trying to make sense of the experience, limited both by my understanding of Buddhism

and the language barrier, but by no means feeling alienated....

Sunday: Back to Seoul and a whirl of reunions. Regina Pyon, one of CIIR's most long-standing partners, turns up and within half an hour has whisked me off to the latest anti-war demonstration – this time outside the presidential palace to denounce the rotation of Korean troops to Iraq.

Tuesday: Regina takes me to see Fr Mun Jeung Hyun's latest protest – at the removal of a US base from Seoul to Pyontae, a rural area where the farmers are being coerced into selling their land so nuclear weapons can be sited there. He had been to Seoul that day to talk to politicians to try to persuade them to stand up to the Americans. He knows the odds are against them, but Fr Mun is a firebrand and definitely not a quitter. He takes us to one of the nightly vigils the farmers hold to keep up their morale. Candles held aloft, they renew their commitment to the struggle with speeches, one after another – true Korean activist style.

Saturday: The *pungmulori* drumming troop playing traditional Korean drums outside the Gyeongbokgung palace was a fitting denouement – and as is the usual temptation with this dramatic display, I took far too many photographs which fail to capture the sheer exuberance of the performance which must, above all, be *heard*...

South Korea is a melting pot of traditional and modern, eastern and western, noise and quiet. It faces one of the world's biggest challenges – the eventual removal of the demilitarised zone at the 38th parallel so that a people who were one for more than a thousand years can be reunited.

It was a fantastic gift to be invited back – you have worked so hard, achieved so much. I pray that the eventual reunification of your proud country will crown your achievements.

Catherine Scott is CIIR's regional manager for Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

The pungmulori drumming troop playing traditional Korean drums.





Different faiths, shared goals

'I'M BORED with all this talk of dialogue!' The phrase echoed round the room where a small group of Muslims and Christians were talking with Dr Chandra Muzaffar (the keynote speaker at the CIIR Annual General Meeting). Amir was putting into words his many years of frustration at the lack of political change and the apparent ease with which his community seemed to be disregarded.

Amir's point raises an important question about the nature of dialogue, especially that with those in positions of power. How much of today's 'dialogue' is really a one-sided conversation that aims more at persuading the other to change or to accept a particular position than to discuss and find a mutually acceptable space?

One of Dr Chandra's key points was that dialogue today takes place in a context of the wider political, social and economic factors in our world. Far from being separate from politics, religion is very often entwined with these hegemonic structures.

Hegemony can seem an overwhelming concept – that the dominant forces are so dominant, they are able to influence right across the whole spectrum of societal structure in order to keep a particular order, ideology and control. Within this context then, what hope is there for dialogue? Is it merely a matter of tokenism?

Clearly there are genuine attempts – particularly at local level – to build bridges between communities and faiths, building on the common areas and recognising the differences. For Dr Chandra, it is in recognising the differences and contradictions that we achieve progress. For then can different faiths and communities unite in a shared goal. For our

Inter-faith dialogue can play a crucial role in bringing about change, writes **Christine Allen**

purpose is not just to dialogue, that is merely a stage in the process. Our purpose is achieving change.

However, the many local initiatives that are taking place to build dialogue and understanding between communities and faiths can never become a real solidarity if there is not a coherent framework into which that work can fit. Communities that are already marginalised and excluded recognise tokenism only too easily. We all need to appreciate the contradictions that exist in our world and take steps to overcome them.

Christians and Muslims share a common religious heritage and in particular a shared concept of the goodness of God and the innate goodness of the human soul. Yet our histories are littered with violence, oppression, power structures and realities that did not (and indeed do not) reflect these values. Such contradictions undermine the credibility of religions to speak of peace, justice and change.

Yet there are also many positive resonances and lessons that we can learn from our historical past – such as from the likes of Martin Luther King or Gandhi who took clear positions in their struggles for justice. A central point was their commitment to non-violence. Today all religious people have a clear imperative to speak out loudly and clearly to condemn violence in all its forms.

The adage 'the end justifies the means' is often used to provide an excuse for intolerable behaviour, whether it be war or terrorism. Yet surely it must be the case that the end must *influence* and be a

pointer to the means. If we seek to bring about a world of peace, justice, equality, even democracy, then the way in which we do that has to reflect those values.

Seeking to bring about a world marked by those values is neither a short term nor easy task. So the process by which we embark on

Dialogue is merely a stage in the process; our purpose is achieving change

that journey must be one of a story in the making. Otherwise it becomes a means by which the hypocrisy and contradictions are made evident, rather than the way by which we travel on a shared journey.

Christine Allen is CIIR's executive director.

ciirpeople



This is my last agenda piece for a little while, as I shall be going on maternity leave soon. I intend to return to CIIR after a year-long break and wish you all well. David Bedford is taking over as Acting Director from November 2005. David has a lot of experience in a range of fields from health education, UNICEF and most recently with YMCA England, of which he is chairman.

Faiths join together for peace in West Papua

Jane McGroarty/CIIR



Marching for peace in West Papua.

PEOPLE FROM ALL FIVE major faith communities in West Papua – Protestant, Catholic, Muslim, Buddhist and Hindu – joined together in an inter-faith prayer march on 20 September to celebrate their shared commitment to peace.

Around 500 people, including faith leaders, religious

congregations, police and military authorities, joined a 10-km march along a route that passed by places of worship. The peace march capped off a week-long series of events related to the 'Papua, land of peace' campaign.

This commitment of faith leaders to build peace and reject violence was also evident when 87 faith leaders from across West Papua attended a workshop to explore their role as agents for peace and justice. The faith leaders spent four days in intensive discussion to build a shared understanding about pressing problems in Papua and their role in addressing these problems. On the close of the workshop, and to mark the beginning of the week of peace, Papuan faith leaders issued a strong statement of their shared concerns and a joint appeal for peace.

These events come at a time of increasing concern about stability in the region. In August, civil

society held a mass action to reject a package of autonomy reforms launched three years ago by the Indonesian government to supposedly address grievances among Papuans regarding their rights, governance and welfare. Papuans are disillusioned by the lack of seriousness within the central government in implementing autonomy and all trust has been eroded. A recent decision to increase troop numbers in Papua by as many as 15,000 personnel has also raised concerns about increased military operations, and there has been an increase in worries regarding the possibility of communal tensions or conflict.

Amid this tense situation, the unity of faith communities and their prayers for peace are not simply symbolic. The peace march was an act of defiance against efforts to divide the community and a declaration by Papua's faith communities of their commitment to overcome all obstacles to genuine peace.

See page 15 for more on inter-faith peacebuilding in West Papua.

interactnow

To read more about the statement by Papuan faith leaders, and about CIIR's inter-faith peacebuilding programme in West Papua, Mindanao and East Timor, go to www.interfaith-asia.org

Calls to end impunity for violators of human rights in Indonesia

CIIR HAS DENOUNCED a ruling by an Indonesian Human Rights Court on 9 September acquitting two senior police officers accused of human rights violations in relation to a police operation in Abepura, Papua, in 2000, that resulted in the killing of three Papuan students and the torture of more than 100.

According to Theo van den Broek, CIIR country representative for East Timor, 'The ruling is further proof that the Indonesian government is neither willing nor able to bring human rights abusers in the Indonesian security forces to book.'

The ruling also casts further doubt on the prospects for justice for victims of rights violations in East Timor. In August the East Timorese and Indonesian governments launched a Commission for Truth and Friendship as a means to promote reconciliation and rebuild ties between the two countries.

However, there are concerns within civil society that the commission does not allow for the legal prosecution of those responsible for human rights abuses and will, therefore, deprive victims of the justice they deserve.

East Timorese women tell their story

A BOOK telling the story of women's role in the recent turbulent history of East Timor, drawing on extensive interviews with women activists in East Timor, was published by CIIR on 20 October 2005.

Speaking at the launch of *Independent women*, co-author Irena Cristalis said: 'We felt strongly that the story of women's activism in East Timor needed telling not just for people in other countries but also for East Timorese women themselves. Women activists were so involved that they did not have time to reflect on what they had achieved or analyse where they were going.'

See the advert on page 2 for more details.

Muslims lead prayers for peace in Mindanao

THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY of Mindanao in the Philippines – one of three areas in CIIR's South East Asia inter-faith peacebuilding programme – began the Holy Month of Ramadhan on 4 October with prayers for 'just, genuine and lasting peace' in the Bangsamoro homeland.

In a message to mark the beginning of the Ramadhan, Al Haj Murad Ebrahim, chair of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front

(MILF), sent greetings of peace and solidarity to fellow Muslims on behalf of the MILF leadership, which is locked in an ongoing struggle with the Philippines government for the self-determination of the Moro people.

The Moro people can be more hopeful that their prayers for peace may be answered this year. The latest round of peace talks between the Philippines

government and the MILF held in mid-September produced significant progress in addressing some of the last remaining obstacles to a peace deal. As the 1,426th Ramadhan begins, Muslims and non-Muslims alike are cautiously optimistic that this coming year will bring about a just resolution to the question of Moro self-determination and deliver long-awaited peace to Mindanao.

See page 12 for more on inter-faith dialogue for peace in Mindanao.

Somaliland elections judged a success

SOMALILAND'S FIRST-EVER parliamentary elections on 29 September were carried out in a peaceful, free and fair fashion, according to a team of international observers coordinated by CIIR.

The elections were won by the ruling party, the Union of Democrats (UDUB), which took 33 of the 82 seats in parliament while opposition parties Kulmiye (Solidarity) and UCID (Justice and Welfare) took 28 and 21 seats respectively.

Ahmed Ali Adami, deputy chairman of Somaliland's National Electoral Commission (NEC), said: 'This is the best, impartial and honest result that we can offer and we urge people not to speculate on the issue.'

CIIR's election team, comprising 76 international observers from four continents, worked closely with other organisations from South Africa, the United States and Scandinavia, as well as a team of local observers on the ground. More than a third of the 982 polling stations were covered.

The team's interim report commended the committed and enthusiastic participation of Somaliland's citizens in the election, despite the challenging circumstances given Somaliland's war-torn background. Three political parties were able to present their platforms in

competitive fashion, despite a lack of policy distinction, and local civil society contributed greatly to the process. Women participated to a high level, although it was disappointing that out of 246 candidates only seven were female (of whom two were elected).

Recommendations included the need for a national census to help set up a voter registration system. This could help eliminate the biggest problem observed by the monitoring team – attempts at multiple voting. However, these attempts were often detected and were far less numerous than in

2002's local elections and the presidential election in 2003.

CIIR believes that the conduct of the poll bodes well for Somaliland's nation-building process. Dr Steve Kibble, CIIR advocacy coordinator for Africa and Yemen and joint coordinator of the mission, said: 'We wish to congratulate the NEC and Somalilanders in general on their enthusiasm and commitment to their democratic process. We know there were many obstacles to overcome and inevitably with these first-ever parliamentary elections, there were some difficulties. We would urge in particular that the lack of women candidates – the majority of the population and from all accounts the majority of voters – be urgently addressed.'



Women queuing to vote in the Somaliland elections.

Steve Kibble/Yaqub Warsame



Children light candles in a vigil for peace at Bouddhanath stupa in Nepal.

Transforming faith

The progressive, inclusive and universal values of religion can provide hope to an increasingly divided world, writes **Dr Chandra Muzaffar**

ASIA GAVE BIRTH to all the religions of the world, yet inter-faith dialogue does not really interest the governments or the people of Asia. This is a pity because different religious communities live cheek by jowl in various parts of Asia, and in the last few decades we have had many conflicts involving different religious communities in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Papua, amongst other countries.

Very often the root causes of these conflicts are socio-economic and socio-political, but somehow religion is manipulated and religious sentiments are exploited so that religion is perceived as the cause of these conflicts. This is why there is an urgent need for us in Asia (and indeed the rest of the world) to understand each other and for the different religious communities to reach out to one another.

Shared values

But we have to go beyond this: our purpose should be to connect with what is common amongst us, to discover our shared values, because at the core of our religions is a shared value system.

For instance, almost every religion has a profound respect for the environment. A common principle is the concept of the judicious use of our natural resources with our unborn generations – the generations of the future – in mind.

In almost all our religions there is the notion of an ethical basis to the economy. In all our religious philosophies there is very strong opposition to oppression and exploitation: a commitment to equity, to justice. In all our religions there is a notion of moral leadership, ethical leadership, accountability, good governance.

In all our religions there is a commitment to peaceful relations within and amongst communities and nations. There is – and this needs to be emphasised over and over again – a profound dedication to the principle of peace.

In all our religions there is an awareness of the unity of the human family.

Common ground

These notions of human existence bind us together, and it is so critical at this juncture to make people aware that this is the common ground on which we stand, and that this common ground is the basis on which we should build human civilisation in the 21st century.

Unfortunately, religious societies – Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist – have so far failed to translate these ideals, these values, into reality. Instead, injustice, oppression, ill-treatment of women in particular, the marginalisation of minorities – these have been the common themes. We must be brave enough to face the truth that this has been the abysmal record of religion in action.

Perhaps the most important reason for the gap between the ideals professed in religion and what is practised is the intervening force of

the human ego and the interests that grow out of the human ego – interests which prevent us, as fallible creatures, from achieving the ideal.

But there are other reasons. When I look at Asia – the continent that gave birth to all the great religions and these great ideals – one could argue that Asia's relationship with the dominant West has also been a factor in the marginalisation of those ideals which are so important to religion.

Religious ideals

During the centuries of colonial rule, religious ideals – faith-inspired notions of community, of organising community – were set aside. A different notion of society enveloped the whole continent and it remained dominant for long centuries.

Look at the way in which modern society looks at issues like the environment. It is not a notion of environment informed by our religious ideals. Look at the destruction of the environment that is taking place in China. Is that from Taoism? Is that from Buddhism? Is that from the Confucian ethic? No, it is a notion of environment that China has adopted and embraced from the dominant West. Neither are other notions – the use of resources, the concept of the economy, the concept of family, of community – based upon a religious worldview. Today, notions of what is ethical don't count in China's march to the future.

And this is happening all over Asia. We talk of India as the next great giant that's going to modernise and transform itself. But what sort of India will this be? It won't be Gandhi's vision of the world that will shape the India of the 21st century. It's some other India that we are going to see. It's an India that will embrace contemporary notions of progress, meaning a readiness to exploit resources and develop the economy without any thought for ethical principles, an eagerness to pursue politics without looking at principles.

It is not that development is not important, but that there is a certain idea of development that has become pervasive all over the world. It is a vision of change in which

religious values, religious principles, don't really count.

Ideology

Yet these religious values have, at a global level, played a key part in forming our contemporary world. Take, for example, the relationship between Islam and the contemporary world. The notion of independence and autonomy – closely linked to the Islamic vision of justice – explains the tensions between Islamic countries and the centres of power in the West. Islam (as a civilisation) will never accept the dominance, the control and the hegemony exercised by the centres of power in the West.

For a lot of Muslims, this question of autonomy and independence is not at the ideational level, it's at a very concrete level. They see it in terms of the imperialist attempt to control their oil. They see hegemony in the attempts to control the strategic sea routes of the world –

It is upon this transformation that the future of humankind depends

seven of which are linked to Muslim countries. They see hegemony in the 800 American military bases that garrison the globe.

What has made it worse in the last few years, since the emergence of the neo-cons (under the Bush administration), is the reinforcement of hegemony through the role played by yet another ideological group – the Christian right.

The Christian right supports hegemony. It supported the conquest of Iraq. It supported the conquest of Afghanistan. The Christian right has a view of Palestine that is totally negative. It's against the Road Map. It's against the two-nation solution. So now the Christian right is part of hegemony.

And a fringe within the Muslim world has chosen to respond to this hegemony through violence; hence Al Qaeda; hence the violence of Osama Bin Laden and groups of that sort stretching from Spain to Indonesia – opposing hegemony but choosing violence as a way of opposing hegemony.

In other words, we have a situation today where you have extremist groups on one side (part of the ideological apparatus of hegemony) and on the other a group, equally extremist and violent, opposing hegemony. State terrorism against private terrorism; wholesale terrorism against retail terrorism; that is the reality that confronts us.

Hopeful signs

If this were the only choice we had before us, it would be a tragedy. But there are hopeful signs. The most hopeful sign is that in every religious community – Muslim, Christian, Jew, Buddhist and Hindu – there are progressive groups which have a different view of the world – opposed to hegemony, opposed to occupation, but not prepared to take the violent path.

For instance, there are groups in almost every Muslim country that look at the challenges that confront us from a different perspective altogether. They believe in communicating with other religious communities; looking for shared values; working together to bring about the transformation that we have been talking about, but doing it in such a manner that one does not alienate the other. One works with the other. And this is also true of Christians, Buddhists, Hindus and others.

For me it is a sign that will not transform just society but religion itself and it is upon this transformation of both society and religion that the future of humankind depends.

We have to transform our understanding of religion by transcending this exclusive notion of religion, discovering our common humanity and – in the process – we will transform our civilisation.

Dr Chandra Muzaffar is a Malaysian Muslim scholar, activist and head of the International Movement for a Just World (JUST). This article is an edited extract from his speech at the CIIR Annual General Meeting in October.

interactnow

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Dialogue in the midst of violence

Fr Angel Calvo is a witness to the power of inter-faith dialogue in the troubled region of Mindanao in the Philippines

MY FIRST CONTACT with the Muslim world was on my first assignment to the mission of Basilan in mid-1972. Basilan is a small island in the southern Philippines, close to the larger island of Mindanao. Its 300,000 inhabitants are a mixture of diverse ethnic groups. Most of them are Muslim, with a minority of Christian migrants who have settled from the rest of Mindanao and Visayas.

We were a team of young missionaries who had come from Spain to assist the new Bishop. It did not take us long to realise that behind the lush vegetation and natural richness of the exotic landscape lay a complex social and

political situation. Most of the people of the island suffered from the exploitation of big landowners under circumstances of abandonment and injustice.

When martial law was declared a few months later, the resistance of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) – a leading Muslim rebel group – was turned up full blast, bringing conflict, destruction, violence and death. These tragic events awakened us from our missionary enchantment and made us question our own presence in the middle of these confrontations between Muslims and Christians, their fears, and the bitter accusations that were hurled between both communities.

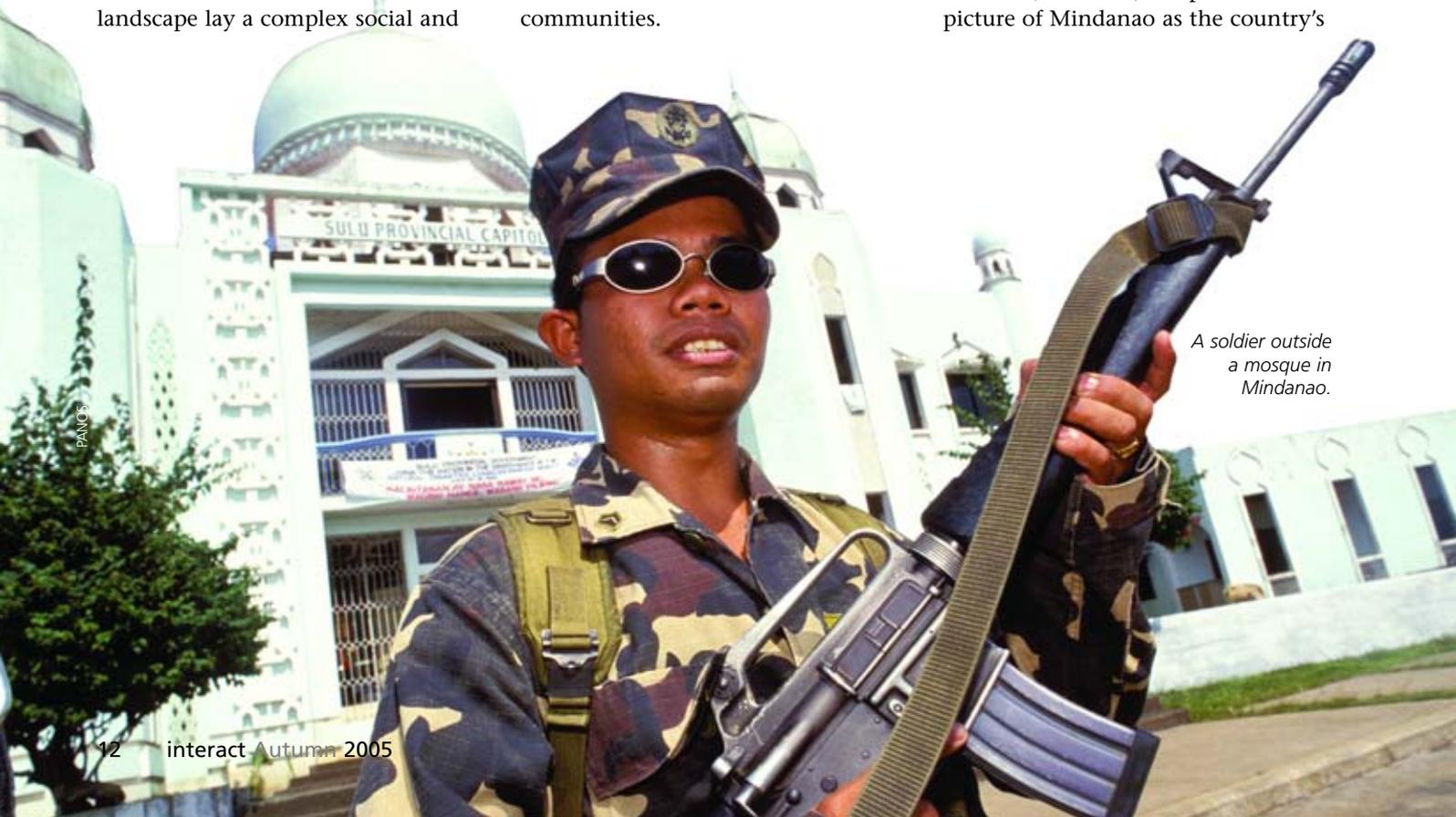
Roots of conflict

We discovered that the conflict had deep historical roots. Before the arrival of colonial powers, different ethnic groups in Mindanao had adopted the Islamic faith and were known collectively as the 'Moros'. This was a pejorative term given in the 16th century by the Spanish conquistadores who named the islands 'The Philippines' in honour of King Philip II of Spain.

Yet neither the Spaniards, the Americans who took over at the turn of the 20th century, nor the Manila central government at the point of Philippine independence were ever recognised by the Moros. Their religion had conferred on them an immunity from foreign cultural and political influences that strengthened their resistance to all kinds of externally imposed power. With the ascendancy of the MNLF, the term 'Moro' became a badge of honour, and the 'Bangsa Moro' the proud Moro race or nation who were never subjugated, unlike the rest of the Philippine population.

The rebellion of Muslim groups with their radical stance of independence for Mindanao is also a response to long standing economic and political exploitation, a combination of domination and neglect at the hands of landowners and multinational companies. The rebellion, however, has painted a picture of Mindanao as the country's

A soldier outside a mosque in Mindanao.



'Wild West', a place where warlordism and the power of guns have become the norm.

Dialogue of life

Analysing the history of conflict in the communities and honestly reflecting on the mission of the church in Asia, we found ourselves cast into the dynamics of dialogue in a most crucial way. In response we embarked on a dialogue of life with the Muslim communities, undertaking common projects in search of justice. People, families, communities that are confronted by fear, prejudice and recent violence, meet in common projects and discover together that they are affected in the same way by the same basic problems.

In spite of cultural differences and religious beliefs, the common aspirations for land, health, education and the future of children, security, and the struggle against political manipulation and other oppressive forces, have so far sustained us, and ultimately have helped us develop friendship and intimacy across communities.

The point of reference of inter-religious dialogue cannot, of course, be anything other than the religious experience of believers: that is, the search for God, and the salvation that God offers through human mediation. Yet the most immediate reference for the believer is precisely the search for universal fraternity, that human solidarity which is a fundamental part of the same saving experience of God who gives life to all and who desires all to live in harmony – an essential element of all religions.

So this experience cannot be reduced to a mere 'spiritual' relationship. It must take into account the human conditions besetting these communities, which are frequently characterised by poverty, injustice, lack of freedom, and sometimes violence. For the privileged place in which God is manifested as God of Life is precisely in the poor – the victims of violence, oppression and injustice.

Opening doors

Like other places, the communities of Basilan and the rest of Mindanao are fragmented and hurting, with

deep wounds inflicted by a systematic form of violence which has social roots. The wounds are recent and still fresh, with the majority of families – Christian and Muslim – having been victims of fighting or abuses from military or rebel forces. Sometimes, tragically, this has resulted in deaths that reinforce the historical prejudices, distrust, rejection and hatred.

In this environment it can be extremely difficult to evoke an attitude of dialogue. In addition, several radical groups use religious feelings as a reason for and vindication of the imposition of their world view. They can provoke major aggression and division.

Yet it is precisely in these situations of generalised violence that it is more than ever necessary to take the risk of establishing bonds of union. These are conditions that call for the opening of doors for the joint exploration of solutions based on understanding, justice and peace, and above all on a deep religious attitude of reconciliation.

Culture of peace

The Movement for Peace that we have started in the city of Zamboanga is called PAZ (Peace Advocates Zamboanga) using the native Chavacano dialect of the area. It began as an idea of the local church to respond from an authentically Christian perspective to the spiral of violence confronting us in Mindanao. In particular, it was a reaction to a new wave of violence caused by the new movement of the Abu Sayyaf group with its continuous threats against the Christian community and its leaders, missionaries, and sisters.

With a group of Muslim leaders – SALAM Peace Foundation – we work together to show to our communities an alternative to the culture of violence that has come to dominate the consciousness of the people. Our work tries to offer an understanding of life that conceives of peace as the centre of human behaviour and of communitarian relationships at all levels. This is an alternative to all the existing manifestations of violence in society, trying to replace them with new social structures that encourage relationships and processes of living

together in peace. This has to do with a new type of education, which is creating a new culture: the culture of peace.

These new cultural styles imply above all an attitude of acknowledgment and mutual respect, accepting cultural differences and fostering a special sensibility to the cultural and religious elements of the diverse communities. A culture of peace implies a deep encouragement of reconciliation, acknowledging the wounds and capacities for violence that marked our history. Only from an attitude of forgiveness can the solid basis of hope for peace be built.

Bearing fruit

This approach and the shared efforts for peace and solidarity throughout the years are now bearing fruit. In recent years, other religious groups of evangelic tradition are integrating themselves into this process of dialogue for peace. Together with other peace advocates in the Muslim and Catholic communities, they have emerged to become a new Inter-Religious Solidarity Movement for Peace. This group currently coordinates a series of activities to promote human rights, conducts education for peace at various levels and carries out peace advocacy with armed groups.

The process of building a new culture is in itself a process of inter-faith dialogue among the diverse religious traditions. At the same time, it is a process of dialogue within a religious community that needs to accept the genuine demands of the religious experience while overcoming other fundamentalist insinuations. This is the authentic inter-faith dialogue from the same realities of life that encourage actions of justice, human dignity and progress in all members of the community.

Fr Angel Calvo, CMF, is a Claretian missionary born in Spain who has been working in the island of Mindanao, southern Philippines, for more than 30 years – mainly with Muslim communities. He is the director of Peace Advocates Zamboanga for the Diocese of Zamboanga and founder and lead convenor of the Inter-Religious Solidarity Movement for Peace.



Iqbal Menezes outside the mosque in Dili.

Living together

The village of Uato Lari in East Timor shows that it is possible for people of different faiths to live and work together, writes **Iqbal Menezes**

EAST TIMOR walked a difficult path to nationhood. In 1999, after the referendum that decided East Timor's independence, our country was left bloodied and charred. The scars of our history – both in the distant and recent past – made it difficult for us to live together as one community. Everyone had their pain, their secrets, their resentment and their shame. This made us suspicious of each other.

Religious differences have been one cause of suspicion and distrust. After all, Indonesia is predominantly Muslim, and for the majority Roman Catholic population in East Timor (only three per cent of the population of East Timor are Muslim) it is difficult to disassociate Islam from Indonesian occupation. Even for us, as native Timorese Muslims, it has been hard to shake off the negative image of Islam and overcome people's suspicions. Yet we are Timorese with the same determination to build our new country, and human beings with the

same desire to live in peace with each other and with god.

Building relations

In the village of Uato Lari in the south-east of East Timor, the mixed community of Catholic, Protestants and Muslims were finding it particularly difficult to rebuild their village and their community post-independence. Uato Lari was among one of the more badly destroyed villages. By the time the militia had come and gone, there was hardly a building left standing. Relations between community members were strained.

The United Islamic Centre of East Timor (UNICET) became aware of the problem in 2003, and set about trying to change it. Together with CIIR's community development project officer, Ildefonso Gutierrez, we visited the village to see what we could do to help. We held meetings with the villagers and began to try to understand their problems. We found that whether Catholic, Protestant or Muslim, people

generally shared similar concerns. Most of all, they wanted to be able to earn a living to feed their families and build a better life.

We started to work with the villagers to see if there was something they could do together to fulfil this goal. After many meetings and much discussion, the villagers decided to build a small fish farm. The chair was Protestant, the secretary Catholic and many Muslims joined up – each of the village's three religious communities were involved.

Common interest

Putting their religious differences aside, the group was able to work together. The simple fact was they had a common interest and a shared commitment to make the project a success. More than that, the opportunity to work together helped to build communication and trust among the different religious communities.

The success in rebuilding community relations became clear to me when I heard that the members of the group – Catholic and Protestant alike – had offered to help their Muslim brothers repair the roof of the local mosque. Just imagine that – working together to repair a Muslim place of worship! For me, this was a sign that we had succeeded in reversing the bad image of the Muslim community and establishing a real sense of pluralism.

The Islamic faith emphasises the importance of tolerance and the obligation to uphold and expand pluralism. This thinking has guided the work of UNICET in its work over the past three years to open channels of communication with religious institutions and leaders in East Timor. We at UNICET hope that our efforts to build pluralism and inter-faith ties can be a positive example to communities in East Timor of the importance of pluralism. The success of our work in Uato Lari, and the ability of the people there to live together amid their differences, is proof that this is possible.

Iqbal Menezes is Director of the United Islamic Centre of East Timor.

Solidarity in adversity

Religious leaders are speaking up against the climate of fear and suffering in Papua, writes [Theo van den Broek](#)

BACK TO THE OFFICE AGAIN! It is almost 11pm on a Tuesday evening in December 2003 in Jayapura (capital of Papua, a province of Indonesia). For the past two days, my staff member Rika and I at the Office for Justice & Peace have been trying to finalise a joint end-of-year statement by religious leaders in Papua. We have been running from one religious leader to another to renew their agreement every time we make a small change.

A couple of minutes earlier we left the house of the Muslim representative. He suggested still more changes, and we need to get his signature before he leaves Jayapura the next day for a trip to Jakarta.... We are tired and the diocese office is dark. But outside the window, we can see the fishermen's lights shining in the bay. We are not the only ones still working.

Division

2003 was a year of increasing internal division in Papua under Jakarta's divide and rule policies, a year of losing all trust in the government at any level, a year of increasing frustration. For many years Papuans have been struggling to get the attention of the central government in Jakarta as well the attention of the international community. They feel they were robbed of their freedom and right to determine their own fate way back in the 1960s (when Indonesia assumed control of the territory). Since then they have been denied many of their basic rights, including the freedom of speech and opinion. Any time they bring up their rightful claims they have paid dearly for their courage. People have been killed, jailed and tortured. The indigenous

community, especially in the inland areas, has developed the attitude of a silent community, living in fear and suffering.

Mainly a Christian island, huge nationally planned and spontaneous migration means nearly half the current population are people who originated from other parts of Indonesia. This has resulted in a mix of ethnic groups as well as religious communities, a reality that can easily be used to spark horizontal conflicts.

The churches have followed developments over the years with a lot of worry. At the end of 2003, the religious leaders were eager to get a message about their worries across to the authorities as well as to the people. Bishop Leo Laba Ladjar told his J&P office staff: 'We have just celebrated Idul Fitri [the Muslim celebration following Ramadhan] and in a few days we will celebrate Christmas: both celebrations of peace and harmony; both celebrations of human dignity. Working for peace is

Jane McGrovy/CIIR



Papuan women selling their garden produce outside an Indonesian-owned store.

at the very heart of our respective religious missions. Therefore we, as religious leaders living in Papua, have to join our strength to speak up and assist in the creation of a world that is worth living in by human beings, respected in their uniqueness as well as in their togetherness.'

Speaking up

This was not the first time religious leaders had spoken up jointly in public. In previous years, many joint

continued overleaf

Prayer march

A highlight in the building up of joint awareness and action by religious leaders in Papua was the joint celebration of 'A Day of Prayer for Peace' in September 2002. A 'prayer march' was organised, led jointly by religious leaders side by side with the head of the army, the head of the police, the speaker of the parliament and the head of the government in Papua.

The march, which lasted for four hours, was divided over five stops, at each of which was a ceremony of prayer and an appeal for peace. The march started at the Parliament building, where Buddhist representatives led the prayer. The next stops were at the mosque, the Protestant church and the Catholic church. Finally, the 1,500 marchers crossed the road to the police headquarters, where the march concluded with a Hindu prayer and the lighting of candles by all the leaders present. The main aspiration of the marchers was expressed simply but clearly on the banners they held: 'My Peace, Your Peace, Our Peace'.

statements were released, reacting to events, protesting injustice, defending the voiceless, calling on the authorities to be responsible, and repeatedly backing up exposés of human rights violations.

Nowadays any political player in Papua has to listen to the joint religious leaders, who have committed themselves to promoting peace under the heading 'Papua, land of peace'. In the midst of a lot of confusion it seems that the religious leaders offer a place where people can take refuge and get their voices heard.

This openness is the result of years of sharing information and trying to keep in touch with what is happening in daily life. Simple experiences have fed this process. After a discussion session with villagers in a remote village, Haji Zubaer Hussein, regional head in Papua of the Muslim organisation Majelis Ulama Indonesia, told me: 'This was really eye-opening; people talked so freely and opened their hearts without being afraid.'

I had invited Haji Zubaer to take part in this discussion when I was

'We have to support each other to safeguard Papua as "Land of Peace".'

facilitating training on human rights in Welesi, a village in the Baliem valley where some Muslim proselytism was taking place in the midst of a majority Catholic community. The discussion was held in the Catholic church in the middle of the village, but this wasn't a problem for Haji Zubaer. He just trusted me and trusted that this was the way for us to show that at the end of the day 'we all just want peace!'

Togetherness

Building up togetherness among religious leaders works through this kind of shared experience. Sensitivity to and reflection on what is going on around us leads to shared motivation and action. Yet there has been some reluctance and doubt. One Protestant



Muslims and Christians, women and men, Indonesians and Papuans: a scene from the 2005 Papua week of peace (see news, page 8).

minister told me in 2004: 'This is all very interesting, but the church shouldn't get into politics. We have a government and security forces to take care of things. Let's pray!'

It's not easy to answer that kind of attitude. The same argument is used by the government and security forces as well, as they feel more at ease when they can keep the church and religion out of sensitive issues. Nevertheless the words of Haji Zubaer Hussein resonate more clearly: 'We have to work on the unity of our people.... We have to work on reconciliation among believers of different religions.... We shouldn't do that alone but in close and intense cooperation with the leaders of other religions ... as well as with the people. We have to support each other to safeguard Papua as "Land of Peace".'

Honesty

As recently as August this year, religious leaders in Papua have been speaking up. Once again their message sounds very clear: 'We believe that the central government as well as the regional government are not serious in protecting the very identity and the right of life of the indigenous community in Papua....' Clear and honest language.

There have been several important elements in this process towards togetherness and solidarity of the

joint religious leaders in Papua. First, in getting to know each other they have gained trust in and respect for each other as people who have a similar mission and who are not competing with each other. Second, a very human and helpful aspect is the appreciation they receive from the people, who recognise their joint commitment for peace and justice. Third, they have worked to translate motivation into concrete action, taking care that any joint action is based on being informed and accurate about what is happening, especially when dealing with sensitive events such as human rights violations.

Finally, although they didn't avoid some theological reflection, they have mainly tried to stay away from challenging theological discussions. The joint mission of the different religions is first of all a basic, human one. The leaders have come together because of social and political issues that affect the communities they serve. What unites them is the awareness of having suffering people on their doorstep who have no other place to go....

Theo van den Broek was director of the Office for Justice & Peace for the Catholic church in Jayapura, Papua, between 1998 and 2005. He is now CIIR's country representative in East Timor.

IN AN ISLAMIC HOME, men and women have different roles. Men are obliged to do the hard chores which require physical strength. They have to provide comfort for the women, because women have the burden of bearing children, bringing up children, and looking after the sick, old and disabled.

Many Somali homes are organised along these traditional lines. But at home, religiously educated women are very powerful. They are the special advisers of their husband, sons and brothers in their work, social life, politics and financial affairs. It is very likely therefore that if the wife of a president, king, government minister or judge is of bad character, then their country is more likely to be at risk.

Responsibility

There are many stories among the teaching of our Prophet Mohamed (peace be upon him) regarding the duties and responsibilities of a Muslim mother, wife or sister in respect to both national interest and world peace, as well as justice and reconciliation. A wife, for example, is expected to remind her husband every morning not to steal, not to be party to any injustice or corruption of any kind, not to be irresponsible, and not to bring home illegal earnings.

Muslim women can take part in any activities as long as they are

Women & Peace

'I remember how in the years of civil war in the 1980s, the women worked together to develop and promote peace. As women we'd meet together and draw up lists of points to discuss with our husbands, our brothers and our sons. Sometimes we assigned a few women to travel around the region to talk to the men with guns. We had to find ways to influence men and convince them to establish peace and rebuild the country.'

– Extract from Amran Ali Mahmoud's article in *Interact*, winter 2003/4.

Religious inspiration

Amran Ali Mahmoud explains how Islam has inspired women in Somaliland to work for peace and justice on an equal basis with men

permissible, legal and do not destroy or harm or create problems between herself and the family and society. In Islam we believe that 'good families make a good community and good communities make a good world'.

Islam prohibits corruption of all kinds, killing, jealousy, aggressive behaviour, irresponsible behaviour, laziness and hatred. Women in Islamic countries need to study and learn more of their own scriptures, in order to know and understand their rights and responsibilities. In this way they can strengthen their faith – as the saying goes, 'A strong believer is better than a weak one.'

Reconciliation

When I moved back to Somaliland in early 1994 I noticed a change in the way people were treating each other – especially in people who came back from refugee camps. Even though I still see the kindness and the goodness of our Islamic culture, I noticed that people were more violent than before. That's when I decided to work towards peace and reconciliation.

I started with my neighbours and relatives. I used to visit them in their homes and read for them parts of our Koran and the teachings of our prophet (peace be upon him). I also started sharing verses of the Koran and the teachings of the prophet (peace be upon him) with my own family –

including the men.

Tribalism is for most Somali people the cause of their problems. The second cause was fighting for the meagre resources that they can lay their hands on, whether it is water, food or land. Indeed, civil war broke out soon after I settled in Hargeisa (the capital of Somaliland) in 1995.

I realised, along with my friends and colleagues, that there is an important role for us women, but we did it in a very tactful way. Allah supported us and we believe our efforts were fruitful.

Amran Ali Mahmoud is a former director of Somaliland's ministry of family welfare and social development. She now works at the University of Hargeisa.

A Muslim woman in Somaliland.



Nick Sireau/CIR



Nowhere to turn

Haitians living in the Dominican Republic face the constant threat of summary deportation. Words and pictures by **Gianni Dal Mas**

IF I STILL LIVED IN ITALY and saw three army trucks packed with men, women, boys and girls, all terrified and with nothing in their hands, straight away I would think there is something very wrong taking place.

But being in the Dominican Republic, on the border with Haiti, something like this has a different meaning. These trucks are the sign that a massive repatriation of Haitians is once again taking place.

In a population of nearly 10 million people, over half a million Haitians move in and out of the country on an irregular basis. There are moments at which a Haitian – any Haitian who walks through the streets of Santiago or Santo Domingo, or who is asleep in his or her home – can be a victim of the military round-ups. Whether they have legal permission to be in the Dominican Republic or have crossed the border illegally, they are forced onto a truck or bus belonging to the Dirección General

de Migración (Department of Immigration) and taken to the nearest border crossing.

This repatriation to Haiti is very simple – because in the Dominican Republic, a Haitian has no rights. The Haitian deserves no official document of expulsion; he or she is simply pushed onto the other side of the border.

Tension

On Friday 13 May 2005 there were not three trucks, nor five nor ten. Throughout the whole weekend, the Dominican army expelled more than 2,000 Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian origin, taking them to the border crossing at Dajabón/Wanamant. A multitude of terrified and disorientated people became the victims of what turned out to be the biggest mass repatriation since 1991.

Four months after this mass repatriation the situation has not improved, due to continuing acts of

violence which keep the tension high between the Dominicans and the Haitian minority living on the east side of the island.

The military operation last May had its origin in the killing of a Dominican woman a few days before, allegedly by three Haitians during a robbery attempt in the town of Hatillo Palma (100km from the border with Haiti). The death caused a violent reaction among the local Dominican community, the majority of them farmers, who took to the streets in protest against the Haitians living in the village. Armed with sticks and machetes, they shouted phrases such as 'We don't want Haitians here in Hatillo Palma'. Many people were injured. In response the army and the Dirección General de Migración began picking up all the people in the area with dark skin, with the supposed intention of protecting lives.

Repatriation

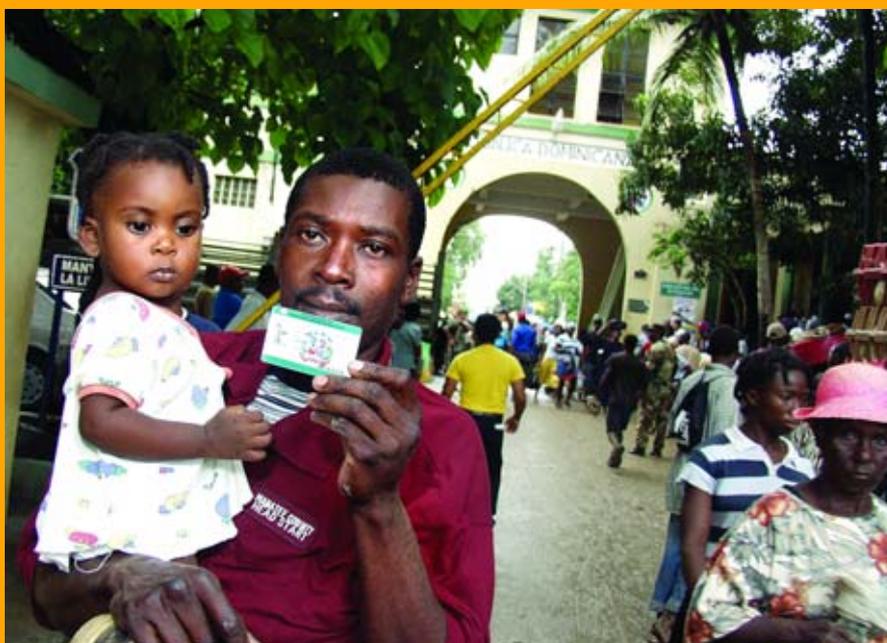
Straightaway it was clear that the Dominican authorities had decided to take advantage of this situation to 'clean the zone'. The people being repatriated through Dajabón came from different provinces: men and women, boys and girls, taken by force from their homes at five in the morning, without discrimination between those with and those without documents, without distinction between Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian origin, without

continued on page 20

Left: A Dominican identity card, broken by a Dominican soldier. The card's owner is Andres José Bensen, a Dominican student who has Haitian origins (he was born in the Dominican Republic to Haitian parents). Andres avoided being repatriated only because, on the military truck taking him to Dajabón, he argued and presented his student card. Eventually the military stopped the truck and left him in the street, far away from his house in Batey Libertad. Most of the people being repatriated were from Batey Libertad, which means 'freedom', in the county of Esperanza, which means 'hope'. From 13 to 15 May, people in the Dominican Republic with black skin had no hope and no freedom.



Right: Rounded up at the border: a soldier at Dajabón collects a family facing deportation to Haiti.



A man holds his temporary work permission, given by the Dirección General de Migración to migrants working on farms or other enterprises in the Dominican Republic. These plastic badges cost migrant workers 1,000 pesos (US\$35) and give them permission only to stay and work in a specified area or region of the country. If an immigrant has to return to Haiti for any reason – such as to visit their family – they cannot legally return to the Dominican Republic: the badge will be confiscated. Most of the repatriated Haitian workers reported that the Dominican officers confiscated or broke their permission badges, so they had to pay for another one if they wanted to stay legally in the DR. This man said: 'I didn't give it to the soldiers because when the soldiers came to the village I saw soldiers taking the badges off some friends of mine. I realised that they were going to repatriate me anyway, so I thought it would be better to hide my badge and save 1,000 pesos!'

A man crossing the Massacre river with his children. When the bridge is closed, people are forced to wade across the river. The river gets its name from a massacre of Haitians that took place in 1937 during former president Trujillo's policy of 'Dominicanisation of the frontier'. The river allegedly ran red with the blood of the slaughtered Haitians. Discrimination against, and hatred and suspicion of, Haitians has long been an undercurrent of Dominican life.



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For more information and pictures, see www.solidaridadfronteriza.it



Behind bars: people of Haitian origin on a bus taking them to the border for repatriation to Haiti.

time to collect their belongings or to notify their families. They were expelled from the Dominican Republic with only the clothes they were wearing, and sometimes barefoot.

Between 13 and 15 May, members of the Solidaridad Fronteriza and Solidarite Fwontalyè (organisations coordinated by the Jesuit Refugee and Migrant Service, located in Dajabón and Wanament) gave shelter to 1,598 people, and counted more than 100 people with legal documentation to stay in the Dominican Republic. With my camera in my hand I caught three days of injustice and violation, which could be seen reflected in the eyes of the people being repatriated. Human rights agreements and conventions had been momentarily put aside.

In the Catholic parish of Wanament, one Haitian in his 40s asked me: 'Why all this? We left our homes and jobs, others had to leave their children. They throw us out of the Dominican Republic as if we are at war!'

Injustices

Activists responded by denouncing the repatriations at a national and international level, sending reports and photographs to newspapers and publishing them on the new Solidaridad Fronteriza webpage: an essential tool to tell the rest of the world what we were witnessing with our own eyes. The support we received was quick and effective, so much so that the government of the Dominican Republic

had to stop the mass expulsion operation due to the unwelcome attention they received.

One month later, the president of the Dominican Republic, Leonel Fernandez Reyna, admitted for the first time that what immigration and the army had done during that tragic weekend was to violate the rights of the Haitians in a 'despicable' way. He said that this would not happen again. He accepted that the activists were not anti-Dominican and recognised officially that our claims were based on facts.

However, this was not enough to put a halt to the injustices nor did it resolve the situation, which only got worse. Since May, cases such as that of Hatillo Palma have multiplied dramatically, with a surge of anti-Haitian violence surfacing each time a Haitian commits a crime against a Dominican.

Hatred

These bursts of xenophobic violence, that have left a high number of people dead or injured, have been supported by leaders of the 'nationalists', who have found breathing space in the media. Their campaigns of ethnic hate have left the Haitian community living in constant fear of being repatriated, with no hope that the state will follow a more just and humane migration policy, or normalise once and for all the status of the migrants living in the country.

On a civil society level, the Jesuit Refugee and Migrant Service and other organisations working in this area are

lobbying the National Migration Council for a fairer and more coherent migration policy. Recognising that each country has the right to repatriate irregular immigrants, we nevertheless consider that it is the country's duty to find the most respectful way of doing so.

At the same time, we believe that a country in which a good proportion of the economy is sustained by the cheap labour provided by Haitians has a duty to establish clear norms for the regulation of the thousands of immigrants who have been allowed into the country on an irregular basis from neighbouring Haiti. The Dominican state must find an immediate legal and just solution to the existing and difficult problem of migration, before the people start resolving it through their own means.

Here in Dajabón, we continue to see repatriations. These may be of less intensity compared to what happened in May, but the news we receive from other cities in the interior of the country keeps us in a state of constant alert. Each time a Dominican takes to the street threatening Haitians and shouting 'We don't want Haitians in our community', we know that sooner or later, three, five, ten trucks full of men, women, boys and girls, terrified and with nothing in their hands, will appear ready to be pushed over the border.

Gianni Dal Mas is a CIIR/ICD development worker with Solidaridad Fronteriza. He is from Italy.

Avoiding free-fall

Salvadoran economist **Dr Raúl Moreno** explains why Central American economies need regional integration, not a free trade agreement with the United States

CENTRAL AMERICAN COUNTRIES are moving inexorably towards a free trade agreement with the United States. CAFTA – the Central America Free Trade Agreement (to which the Dominican Republic has also recently been added) – is promoted by their own governments as favourable and beneficial to small Central American economies.

It is presented as a simple commercial agreement with magical powers like the wand of Harry Potter. With a wave of the hand we will be able to eliminate national unemployment and generate a boom in our exports through selling 'nostalgic' products like iguana soup, zemita and doughnuts to Central Americans living in the US.

But perhaps we should stop to consider Mexico's experience with the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which reflects the impact that CAFTA would have in the countries of Central America and the Dominican Republic.

Bankrupt

In the 11 years since NAFTA was introduced, millions of maize farmers, who have not been able to compete with the subsidised maize of the United States, have been bankrupted. The country's dependency on overseas food and vegetable oil products has deepened. There has been a massive failure of many Mexican businesses. In spite of NAFTA being presented as an instrument for the creation of jobs, any jobs that have been created are mostly precarious and poorly paid.

NAFTA has also contributed to a loss of national sovereignty, because it effectively prevents the Mexican government from defining its public

policies. Under NAFTA, national governments which implement policies that limit the ability of private corporations to make profits – such as environmental laws or taxation regimes – can be sued before international tribunals. Already US businesses

'[CAFTA is a] lethal instrument for subjugating Central American interests, especially the interests of its people'

Metalclad, Waste Management, Karpa, Adams, Fireman's Fund and Gami Investments have lodged cases against the Mexican state before international tribunals.

CAFTA conserves the structure, principles and content of NAFTA, with the additional problem that it corrects – in the interests of transnational companies – those 'loose threads' which NAFTA left loose. It becomes a more lethal instrument for subjugating Central American interests, especially the interests of its people.

Disproportionate

In fact these so-called free trade agreements are not really about 'free trade'. They are instruments of a far wider spectrum that just the export and import of goods. They are instruments to bring about the privatisation of public services, to strengthen the intellectual property rights of businesses, to enable patenting of vegetable species and even the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples, among many other areas.

Free trade agreements are driven by a logic which privileges gain above human

rights and sustainability. It is overwhelming and disproportionate to see how these treaties contain an extensive list of rights granted to foreign businesses, in contrast to the omission of mechanisms which might guarantee the fulfilment of people's economic, social and cultural rights, or the conservation of the region's ecosystems.

In negotiating the agreements, the serious economic, technological, social and institutional imbalances between the subscribing countries have been ignored. The United States has freely exercised its crushing capacity to impose its interests in the negotiations and determine the results.

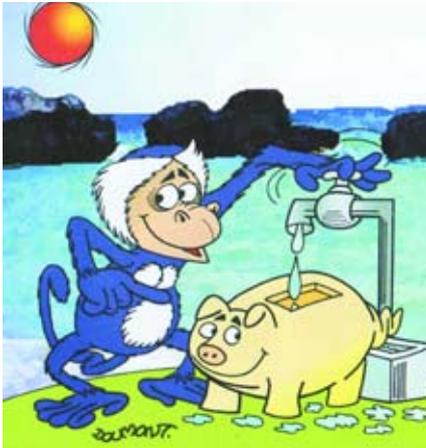
Unequal

It is extraordinary that CAFTA is presented as a vehicle for economic growth and the generation of employment, seeing that it reproduces the policies of economic deregulation which are the foundation of the failed neoliberal project of the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which over the last 15 years have deepened the structural problems of the Central American economies.

It is clear that CAFTA will not resolve the historical and structural problems of the region. Instead, independently of CAFTA, Central America needs to put its own house in order – to tackle the huge inequalities which currently leave the majority of the region's people stuck at the lowest rungs of human development.

Regional integration – seen as a systematic project distinct from the CAFTA project of subjugation of Central American economies to the economy of the United States – could take us nearer to the possibility of just and sustainable development. Central American countries should turn their attention to ways of cooperating to stimulate sustainable and fair development in each country of the region, instead of opening up their markets to the imperatives of transnational corporate gain.

Raúl Moreno is a professor of the Faculty of Economic Sciences of the University of El Salvador and member of Red Sinti Techan (the Network for Citizen Action on Trade and Investment), a group of nine NGOs from El Salvador working against free trade agreements in Central America.



Environmental superheroes

Ruth Escribano describes a new tool for environmental education in Honduras



IN ORDER TO LOVE AND PROTECT, knowledge is needed: let us get to know the beauties of our Bahía de Tela (Tela Bay).’ This is the message of a new manual produced to help protect the environment and promote responsible eco-tourism on the north coast of Honduras.

The manual features five cartoon ‘amigos’ who each represent one of the different ecosystems in Bahía de Tela: the crab Jajá represents the lake, the iguana Gana represents above all the forest, the monkey Tono represents the mangrove swamps, the dolphin Serafin represents the sea, and the penguin Don Listo represents the rocky headlands.

The manual is a joint project of the municipal education office in Tela, Prolansate (the foundation for the protection of Lancetilla, Punta Sal and Texiguat) and the municipal tourism unit. It is designed to be used by teachers to promote environmental awareness among school students and help them appreciate the types of tourism that can be done in harmony with the environment.

The first section of the manual defines the key concepts; the second contains the basic information needed for more

understanding of the historico-cultural and natural assets of Bahía de Tela; the third explores the theme of sustainable tourism through exercises that can be conducted in the classroom (or, better still, outside it); the fourth examines the serious problem of litter in the community, and some possible solutions.

As well as Spanish, the manual uses the *garifuna* language to reinforce indigenous cultural identity. There are also maps, illustrations and photographs of local tourist attractions.

In conclusion, the manual reminds us that ‘tourism should allow the conservation and enjoyment of natural riches, architectural monuments, traditions and gastronomy, historical memory and works of art, since tourists want to know of and enjoy these marvels. Those who visit us and do not share this aim are not the kind of tourists that we want for our community and our people; so it is important to take measures that promote visits from the first kind of tourist, and above all give a good example of respecting and loving what is ours.’

Ruth Escribano is a CIIR/ICD development worker with Prolansate. She is from Spain.



WHEN YOU SEE PEOPLE SUFFERING, you become uneasy and you get up from your chair.' So says Archbishop Pius Ncube of Bulawayo who of necessity has become a prominent critic of president Robert Mugabe over measures taken by the ruling Zanu-PF party to tighten its hold on power.

With the closing down of the independent media the 58-year-old Ncube feels that the desperate situation in Zimbabwe must be made known. 'We have been made voiceless by this government and my role is to denounce the evil things going on,' he says. 'The mediation work of many groups – some involving other African heads of state – has not worked, and Mugabe simply won't listen.'

He points to an ecumenical delegation which met with Zanu-PF officials and Mugabe himself no less than 45 times in recent years 'but to no avail'. This was an important process, in his view, but it has been inadequate in dealing with a ruthless administration determined to stay in power. 'In this context,' he says, 'peacebuilding must involve identifying injustices and revealing the truth about Zanu-PF's government, and that is certainly something I have taken on.'

Church role

When asked about the role of the Zimbabwe church as whole, particularly the bishops' conference, Ncube expressed disappointment that 'quiet diplomacy' is favoured even though it has not achieved results. He feels exasperated that a report produced by the bishops' own Justice and Peace Commission after elections in March this year, which were marred by violence and vote rigging, has not even been discussed 'because some of my brothers are so pro-Mugabe that they would not participate in the discussion'.

Although Zimbabwe's six bishops and three diocesan administrators publicly condemned the recent government demolitions campaign, Ncube feels that follow-up has been lacking and that no consistent lobbying process is in place. He urges the laity to speak out on critical issues for 'there is too great an expectation of bishops leading the way'.

Ncube however feels supported by other bishops' conferences in Africa, particularly those of Southern Africa, Zambia and Malawi. Cardinal Napier in South Africa, shocked by the suffering

Standing up to be counted

Archbishop Pius Ncube of Bulawayo speaks to **Ellen Teague** about the crises in Zimbabwe

he witnessed while visiting Harare recently, has since met with President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa to urge him to stop giving tacit support to the Zanu-PF government. Three million Zimbabweans – around 20 per cent of the population – have fled the country, many of them to South Africa. Bishop Kevin Dowling of Rustenburg, the vice-chair of the South African bishops' Justice and Peace Commission, has also joined with Ncube in condemning Zanu-PF's recruitment of young people into youth militia and brutalising them.

Bearing witness

So, Ncube is not alone in his view that identifying and naming the causes of injustice and hardship is a first step in peacemaking and he feels Church representatives must be proactive in doing this. He acknowledges that ordinary Zimbabweans have kept the church from feeling comfortable. 'People in my diocese could see access to food aid being used as a weapon against government opponents,' he says, and have alerted him to the fact 'that the vulnerable are struggling to survive with inflation at 400 per cent and

unemployment at 70 per cent.'

The non-violent witness of Mahatma Gandhi has inspired Ncube's approach and, from within the church, Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador and the late Pope John Paul II. Violence cannot be tackled with more violence, in his view, and he begins every day with 30 minutes of meditation. The struggles of the day ahead can include death threats to himself and intimidation of his family, especially his elderly mother.

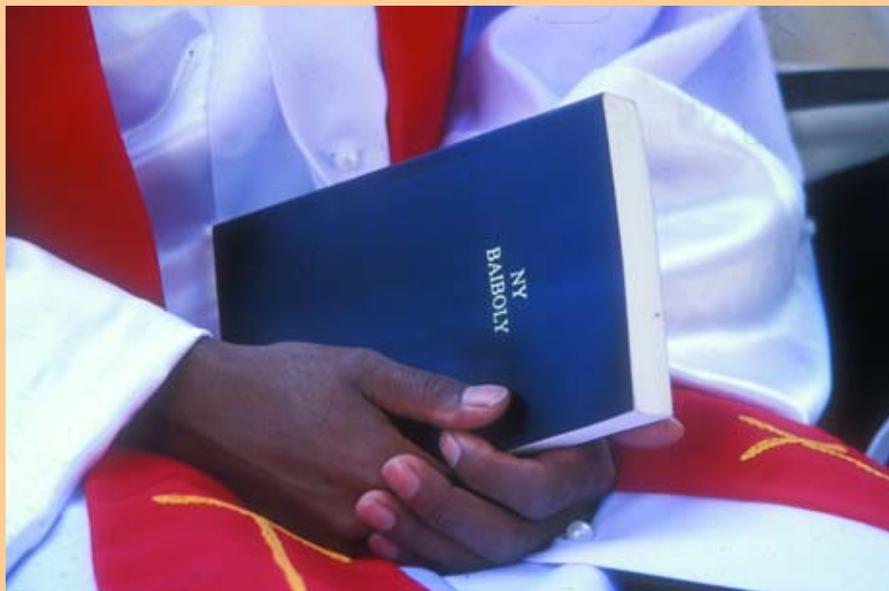
Twenty years ago, Zimbabwe's Catholic bishops failed to speak out against the Matabeleland massacres which took place in Ncube's home region. Perhaps this has influenced him to reject a stance which may keep officials happy and the church safe but which ignores the plight of those facing poverty and human rights abuses.

In speaking out against fraudulent elections, human rights abuses and economic hardships, Ncube is prepared to stand up and be counted.

Ellen Teague is a freelance Catholic journalist who writes and campaigns on justice, peace and ecology issues.



Pius Ncube speaking at the launch in South Africa of a report on the 2005 Zimbabwe parliamentary elections called 'Out for the Count: Democracy in Zimbabwe'.



A man in Madagascar holding a Bible translated into Malagasy.

Called to be peacemakers

Violence and war will never bring peace, writes **Chris Cole**

AROUND 2,000 YEARS AGO the Roman military commander Flavius Vegetius Renatus wrote 'If you want peace, prepare for war'. In stark contrast, at around the same time, Jesus and the early Christians were urging people to love their enemies (Matt 5: 44-45) and extolling the virtues of non-violent peacemaking (Matt 5: 4-12). One philosophy hailed armed conflict as a means of security, while the other suggested that real peace and security lives in the practice of love and justice.

Unfortunately, the Roman military philosophy of 'might is right' seems as strong today as ever. Over the past couple of years I have had the opportunity to meet and debate publicly with Dr Deborah Allen, head of corporate social responsibility for Europe's largest arms company, BAe Systems. Dr Allen, representing BAe Systems, argues just as the ancient Roman commander, that peace will only come if we are strong and rigorous in our defences and prepared to meet force with force.

By contrast, through the international work of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, I have been privileged to be in contact with many people who put their lives on

the line to try to build peace and security by working to meet force with non-violence and love. Very recently, for example, Charlotte (name changed) has been working with some of the communities affected by Robert Mugabe's Operation Murambatsvina ('drive out rubbish'). People in the displaced communities are extremely angry about how they have been treated and there is growing talk of armed resistance. In response to this Charlotte is working with other women in the displaced communities to undertake non-violence training and engage people – in these very difficult circumstances – in non-violent peaceful resistance to the injustice.

Across the other side of the world in Colombia, San José de Apartado is Colombia's oldest and largest 'peace community'. In 1997, its 2,000 inhabitants, who were weary of the deadly repercussions of taking sides in the nation's 41-year-old armed conflict, asked the army, leftist guerrillas and right-wing paramilitary militias to stay out of their village. Since then, more than 50 other communities aided by human rights and church groups have followed, refusing to sell food and give information to any armed group. They

have taken an extraordinary stand against violence at the very centre of a war zone, refusing to support any armed group.

For those of us trying to follow the Christian call to be peacemakers here in the UK I think we need to perhaps take our lead from those like the villagers of San José de Apartado or Charlotte in Zimbabwe who stand up and confront – just as Jesus did – the structures that make conflict and the philosophy that 'might is right'.

Most people can remember very well where they were on September 11, 2001. I was among around 2,000 people taking part in a protest outside a massive arms fair in London's Docklands (a fair which has just recently taken place again in London). While the fact that there was a huge arms fair taking place here in the UK at the same time as a major act of terrorism was something of a coincidence, it is important to realise that there are real connections between our proliferation of weaponry through the arms trade and our real insistence as a nation – despite all evidence to the contrary – that peace and security is best served by an ability to inflict death and destruction on others.

Real peace and security lives in the practice of love and justice

Scripture tells us that real security does not come from weaponry and violence but from justice. 'Integrity will bring peace,' says Isaiah, 'justice give everlasting security' (32:17). To be a peacemaker in today's violent world, to be in solidarity with the thousands of people around the globe working tirelessly to build real peace and security, I think we need to continue to follow the example of Jesus and absolutely reject the idea that violence and war can ever bring real and sustainable peace.

Chris Cole is director of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FoR) which was started by Christian conscientious objectors at the beginning of the first world war. Today FoR has branches and affiliated partners in over 40 different countries.