

FRIENDS PEACE TEAMS

2015 Report to North Pacific Yearly Meeting

Friends Peace Teams celebrated our accomplishments, shared the goals of the Initiatives, established common goals, conducted necessary items of business and enjoyed a day of workshops, ever broadening our horizons, at our meeting in Richmond, Indiana May 14-17 this year. The workshop day, termed Peace Quest, has recently become a feature of our otherwise business meetings. We were very fortunate to have Mary Lord with an extensive background in Quaker peacemaking as our keynote speaker. Workshops varied from practice on non-violent communication to using Aikido to reduce conflict with body language.

The following are some of the activities currently engaged in by the Initiatives which are differentiated by geographic regions. It should be remembered that the Initiatives are not isolated from one another but kept vibrant by the cross pollination of ideas and facilitators common to all.

African Great Lakes Initiative: AGLI has programs in Burundi, Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda (known as the Great Lakes area of Eastern Africa). One of the distinguishing features of this Initiative has been increased collaboration with groups with compatible goals and working methods. HROC Burundi, as part of Quaker Peace Network, is developing Peace and Democracy groups for this year's election. These groups will train in the Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities program and become citizen reporters. Citizen reporters have been used several years...volunteers who monitor not only election sites, intervening with peaceful solutions when conflict begins to escalate into violence, but in other situations in which there is a high probability of violence. One area which has suffered intense unrest, Mt Elgon, (Kenya) has benefited greatly from not only the more well known efforts, AVP and HROC but also other activities e.g., the Inter Ethnic Youth Dialogue. A fine example of collaborative effort has been that of AGLI with Catholic Relief Services in the Central African Republic, where Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities have been conducted for refugees and other residents. In Burundi, our clinic, after years of administrative obstacles is able to distribute ARV drugs, used in the treatment of Stages 3 and 4 of AIDS. In Uganda, an AGLI work camp has developed into a three fold program, Bududa Vocational Academy, the Children of Bududa (educational opportunities for children orphaned by AIDS) and the Woman's Microfinance Initiative. In Congo, Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities workshops are being held for the deaf community...a perfect match as the disabled communities suffer trauma particular to their disability. It is impossible to list all the ways in which the African Great Lakes Initiative is responding to areas of need in Eastern Africa. Suffice to say, they manage great success in inventive ways to respond to changing crises with flexibility and local cooperation despite a strained budget.

Peacebuilding en las Americas: PLA is currently active in Guatemala, Honduras, Columbia and El Salvador. They too, have relied heavily on collaboration with like minded groups to experience success in their non violent communications work and in the treatment of trauma. One example of the results of collaboration are the AVP workshops being provided to inmates of the National Prison El Porcenir through the Peace and Justice Program of the Mennonite Church. AVP Guatemala is spearheading the spread of AVP in several areas of the country, along with Quaker assistance. PLA also collaborates with the Sisters of Mercy in providing a credit union, training for income generating work, women's health services and advocacy for justice and the treatment of women in Honduras. Despite a small budget and hampered by local political realities, PLA persistently and consistently remains a viable instrument for change among our southern neighbors.

Asia West Pacific: AWP is the fastest growing and the most geographically diverse Initiative currently in Friends Peace Teams. Work in Indonesia continues at the peace house, interactive developmental play with children is consistently showing positive results as does the development of a ceramic water filter to be locally produced. AVP workshops continue with Palestinians and Israelis. For this year, there are plans to interact with local leaders to influence the public dialogue about peace in South Korea. In the Philippine, AVP will be introduced. In Nepal, AVP workshops had been spreading very quickly, interrupted by the earthquakes. After assisting as much as possible with immediate emergencies, AWP staff have retreated until the basic needs of shelter, food and water are sufficient to begin to help Nepalese resolve some of their trauma.

As I reflect upon the successes and struggles of the Initiatives of Friends Peace Teams and of Friends Peace Teams itself to support such ambitious endeavors, my respect deepens as I meet and support Initiative Coordinators, short term and long term volunteers from the West, local volunteers and members of all the collaborating groups who share a vision of peace. To all our supporters. Thank you. Your moral and financial support continues to touch the lives of many and to turn the tide away from violence into peace.

--Ann Dusseau