

Plowshares Institute

Digging Deeper to Open Avenues of Hope

By Bob Evans, Executive Director

A full year after the bombing of Iraq, Spring 2004 has not brought relief to the United States or the world community from threats of war, terrorism and violations of human rights and civil liberties. The threats stretch from wanton violence in Iraq to unrest in Afghanistan, Palestine, Israel and Haiti. Violations of due process and human rights flourish from Guantánamo Bay to Harare, Zimbabwe. Lack of housing, health, employment, and education plague displaced people throughout our fragile world. At the same time, the scourges of HIV/AIDS and malaria continue to have devastating effects, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa.



Indonesian Muslims and Christians working together on peace skills.

In the midst of this dismal picture, Plowshares finds promising rays of light and hope. These signs range from Parents for Peace in the polarized Middle East to new initiatives for human rights, democracy, and proactive conflict intervention in Indonesia. Grassroots quests for peace are growing along with reactions to pre-emptive military action on the suspicion of threat. Government officials and candidates who promote curtailment of civil liberties and military intervention are being rejected by citizens from Hong Kong to Spain. There is also growing reliance on spiritual, moral and cultural resources for peace building. While these peoples' movements have not yet finished the work of replacing militarism with diplomacy and peace building, they are clearly getting stronger.

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Cuba: A Country in Transition

By Elizabeth Vélez, Plowshares Program Coordinator

In March, a 15-member Plowshares delegation met with Cuban economic, political, religious, and academic leaders in Havana and Matanzas. During the ten-day seminar, this group of US citizens visited Cuban schools, hospitals, homes, churches, and seminaries. In regular "debriefing" sessions, participants expressed their amazement at the Cuban people's beautiful spirit; their commitment to the social welfare of all Cuban people; and the level of sophistication with which speakers analyzed Cuba's economic and political situation, relationship with the rest of the world, and the complexity of the Cuban reality.

While elements of the US news media suggest otherwise, the delegation found Cuba to be a complex, vulnerable country that has achieved major accomplishments in the delivery of social services. Cuba has the highest literacy rate of any country in America's Southern hemisphere, provides its people sophisticated health and education services free of charge, and guarantees housing to all citizens. While economic imbalances and a serious lack of personal political freedom continue to influence Cuba's development, Cubans are generally proud of their country's accomplishments.

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Update on Indonesia

The first open, democratic presidential election in Indonesia's history this coming July highlights the critical importance of Plowshares joint project with Indonesia's Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, "Human Rights, Democracy and Conflict Transformation: Addressing the Roots of Terrorism." A primary goal of this program is to equip some 3,600 senior government and civic leaders with greater awareness of human rights, principles of democratic participation, and skills of conflict transformation and proactive peace building.

The avenue for this three-year training program is a variety of focused Action Plans and workshops developed by a core group of policy level members of the Ministry staff, university human rights programs, the court system, non-governmental human rights organizations, police, and military personnel. Plowshares accompanied the first team of delegates to South Africa in November, 2003

South-South Dynamics: The power of the South-South connection between Indonesia and South Africa became clear from the first days of the two-week visit. The schedule incorporated dialogue with a range of South African leaders including the Speaker of Parliament; members of the Cabinet; the "head man" of a Cape Flats "informal" settlement; and trainers of human rights, democratic participation and diversity management. South African consultants, Craig Arendse of Mediation and Transformation Practice and Alison Lazarus, Director of the Senior Government Programme at the Centre for Conflict Resolution, University of Cape Town, led training seminars.

Judo Poerwowidagdo, Director of the Jakarta-based Center for Empowering Peace and Reconciliation co-lead the delegation with Bob and Alice Evans of Plowshares staff.



Indonesian women in the 2003 South Africa delegation visit with Centre for Conflict Resolution Senior Government Trainer Alison Lazarus (left) and Hon. Thandi Modise, MP, Chair of the Parliamentary Committee on Defense.



The Indonesian delegation to South Africa takes a break at Cape Point "where two oceans meet."

The delegation was very positive about the educational fruits of the experience and the impact of the experience on shaping their Action Plans for Indonesia. The South African dialogue partners were also positive about the experience, noting that the insightful questions the Indonesian delegates posed challenged them to reflect critically on the first ten years of the new South Africa.

Action Plans: In February 2004 the Evans consulted individually with the Indonesian delegates on their developing Action Plans and criteria for the second team of policy-makers traveling to South Africa in 2004. The Action Plans include: development of human rights and reconciliation committees in conflicted provinces throughout Indonesia; a project to promote women's human rights and improve police response to instances of spouse abuse and rape; a program on children's education rights; and a plan to ensure a free and fair process in Indonesia's legislative and presidential elections in April and July 2004. Some of the new programs are already reaping benefits for vulnerable constituencies in Indonesia. Aside from the critical topics and well-conceived Action Plans, Plowshares' enthusiasm for these programs is based on the participants' national leverage through the Ministry and their deep commitment to concrete results.

Training Workshops: Also in February, Plowshares staff members led two workshops with our Indonesian Partner organization, the Center for Empowering Reconciliation and peace. One was a "training of trainers" for conflict transformation and the other an intensive four-day case teaching and writing workshop.

Continued on page 4

Traveling Seminar Survey

- * Sitting by a fire surrounded by a Masai family and their cattle in Kenya's Rift Valley
- * Discussing the economic future of South Africa in the Anglo American board room.
- * Joining a Christian congregation singing exuberant hymns in Nanjing, China
- * Eating an ice cream cone and talking to students about human rights in Central Havana
- * Meeting with displaced farmer workers struggling for survival in Northern Brazil
- * Exploring the majesty of Manchu Picchu in the Peruvian Andes
- * Sharing group experiences after a weekend of living with families Soweto

central part of the Institute from its inception almost 25 years ago. Plowshares staff are convinced that these learning experiences equip participants to live more creatively and constructively in our interdependent world. Many of you have said they are "life changing" experiences. In an effort to improve the quality and better understand the long-term effects of these experiences, we have developed a brief on-line survey for all past seminar participants. We hope to publish what we learn from the survey in our next Newsletter.

These images capture the diversity of Plowshares international seminars that have been a

Celebrating Plowshares Volunteers



Jean Upton (l) and Cynthia Wood have given many hours to the development and management of a recent survey sent to participants in Plowshares international seminars. (See box on p. 5)

Peace Skills Workshops in Cuba

In on-going collaboration with the Cuban Council of Churches and the Ecumenical Seminary in Matanzas, Plowshares offered two workshops in March on "Empowering for Reconciliation: Skills for Conflict Transformation and Peace Building."

meeting community expectations for promised services in light of limited resources that are affected by the poor economy and the United States embargo. Many conflicts arise over unequal access to dollars, either from overseas relatives or the parallel dollar economy.

The first workshop was held at the First Baptist Church in Matanzas City. The one-day session was enthusiastically received by local clergy and lay leaders who are struggling with issues of conflict within congregations and communities. Participants expressed special concern for

The second workshop was a full two-day event sponsored by the Center for Reflection and Dialogue located in Cardenas. The center, in cooperation with the Cuban Council of Churches, focuses on questions of public dialogue and action on issues of mutual concern. This workshop included some 25 church leaders, faculty members from the University of Havana, and faculty from the Ecumenical Seminary. This basic course in conflict transformation and peace building helped equip participants to be agents of reconciliation in their congregations, communities and at the national level.



Dwight Lundgren (r), National coordinator for Intercultural Ministries- Reconciliation for the American Baptist Church, presents a Spanish translation of the *Peace Skills Manual for Community Mediators* to Renario Arce, former head of the Cuban Council of Churches.

Participants expressed special concern for

The Council is encouraging greater dialogue between Cubans and Cuban-Americans, preparing Cubans to deal constructively with periods of transition. Plowshares Institute and the Center for Reflection and Dialogue identified a common vision and mission and will continue to explore ways to support and strengthen one another in the task of peace building.

Digging Deeper to Open Awareness of Hope, Continued from Page 1

As citizens of the world, we all have a stake in working towards peaceful and just transformation in national and global conflicts. Plowshares' understanding of this process is to identify the systemic causes of conflict and create innovative alternatives that humanize and restore relationships between disputing parties. This involves *recognition* of one another's deepest needs and *empowerment* with skills to reach a just resolution.

Plowshares workshops on conflict transformation and peace building stress the importance of deep listening in which "digging deeper" for mutual understanding is a central component of constructive communication. The past few months of programmatic work at Plowshares have involved digging deeper into Plowshares' resources in order to help our partners around the world develop skills and effective approaches to systemic problems and address the roots of violence and terror. Our work with the Indonesian Ministry of Justice

and Human Rights equips project participants to be more effective agents of reconciliation through intensive workshops and encounters with transformative programs in South Africa.

We are digging deeper in our work with mediators and non-government organizations in Zimbabwe who are seeking to empower citizens to claim their rights and voices in a fragile democracy. Plowshares continues to support colleagues in South Africa, especially religious leaders, as they seek to deliver integrity training, economic empowerment, and moral leadership for social transformation.

We are also digging deeper with our friends in Cuba who, in a very vulnerable period, are searching for a vision for Cuba that can bridge the gap between Cubans and Cuban-Americans. In the US we are encouraging community and church leaders to draw more deeply on spiritual resources to address issues of sexuality, marriage and affirmative action in ways that

can unite rather than divide communities.

Many of our long-term initiatives have not yet found stable, peaceful, and just solutions to systematic conflicts, but Plowshares continues to act on the belief that our partners can reach these goals with continued empowering engagement.

In light of limited funding, we are digging deeper as an organization through more effective deployment of staff resources that we might better respond to the many requests for our ministry within the bounds of limited financial resources. In turn, we are asking our individual supporters and foundation sponsors to dig deeper in giving the financial resources which under gird programs that they acknowledge are pioneering efforts in peace and reconciliation. Finally, we are digging deeper within our own spiritual resources as we are called to be agents of reconciliation in the name of a loving God who is inclusively forgiving and all merciful.

Update on Indonesia, continued from page 3

These courses produced new teaching designs and approaches for government agencies, religious leaders and NGOs throughout Indonesia and a series of new Indonesian case studies.

The cases focus on rural provincial issues such as warfare between tribal groups over stolen water buffalo. Reflecting the vast social and cultural differences in Indonesia, these topics are in stark contrast to urban case studies which focus on economic disparity, political disputes, and cross cultural (mis)understanding.

Next Steps:

The second group of Indonesian delegates to South Africa will represent the government, police, military, and civic organizations from major conflict-areas such as Aceh and Papua. Plowshares will design and lead the new delegation's initial training in Indonesia in September 2004, design the South African program, and accompany the delegates to South Africa in December for extensive dialogue and strategy-planning sessions.

Plowshares celebrates this unique opportunity to work with dedicated partners in strengthening Indonesia's emerging democracy.

Plowshares Traveling Seminar to Cuba, Continued from Page 1

However, US foreign policies, including the embargo, obstruct Cuba's attempts to diversify and revitalize its economy while strengthening more isolationist factions within the government.

Economically, Cuba is once again in transition. After the 1989 sudden withdrawal of Cuba's principle trading partners, the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, Cuba's foreign trade contracted by 80 percent, resulting in an economic decline of 35-40 percent. Without sugar subsidies from the Soviet Union, Cuba was forced to develop new trading partners, extract additional natural resources, and open its economy to the outside world, most notably to Canadian and European tourism.

In order to capture the capital necessary to engage the global market, Cuba legalized the US dollar in 1993, creating a two-currency system. While succeeding in attracting tourism and foreign investment, the two-currency system has resulted in increased inequity and imbalanced economic incentives. Some well-trained professionals are leaving their peso paying professions in favor of service-oriented, dollar compensated tourist positions. At the same time, many Cuban youth are rejecting higher education and professional opportunities in favor of jobs in the tourist sector or in other countries.

New economic realities challenge Cuban churches to reinterpret their mission in light of increased social need. Cuba continues to deliver a high standard of health care and education, but decreased capital and increased inequality have led to housing shortages, underemployment, and material deficiencies. While the government continues to view the Church primarily as a spiritual organization, Church-developed social programs such as housing revitalization projects, neighborhood gardens, club sports, community projects, and classes on topics as diverse as human sexuality and biblical exegesis are beginning to address the needs of those most affected by economic transition. These are some of the first steps toward what we in the United States might refer to as "civil society."

The Plowshares delegation found Cuba to be a complex entity shaped largely by economic necessity, changing internal realities, and the foreign policies of its northern neighbor. Cubans continue to oppose the economic embargo as morally wrong yet fear the changes its demise would certainly entail. Increased tourism, and the revenue it provides, strengthens the government's ability to deliver necessary services but exacerbates income inequalities and threatens to alter Cuba's uniquely sustained culture through "McDonaldization,"



March 2004 Cuba Traveling Seminar participants ready to board their bus for the Kairos Center to learn about the church's growing role in community revitalization.

as has occurred in many parts of Eastern Europe. In light of these challenges, Cuba's people remain committed to many of the values of the revolution, they maintain hope in light of difficult transitions, and they continue to graciously recognize a difference between the people and the policies of the United States.

Plowshares Institute remains committed to supporting our Cuban brothers and sisters through these difficult transitions with training events and person-to-person exchanges. Twenty years of experience have proven that the relationships formed and lessons learned by traveling seminar participants continue to affect their political, religious, philanthropic, and personal decisions for many years after the experience. Plowshares will continue to work towards increased peace with justice by keeping the bridges between our nations open and active.

If you were part of any Plowshares international seminar and did not receive either the posted letter or survey, please let us know! [Plowshares@PlowsharesInstitute.org]

The brief questionnaire takes about 3 minutes to answer, and your perspectives are valuable for future seminar planning. Just send us your e-mail address, and we will send you the on-line survey. If you do not have access to e-mail, we will be glad to mail you a paper copy.

Plowshares 2005 Traveling Seminar to Indonesia: Human Rights and Democracy in a Christian/Muslim Context

August 1-15, 2005



Plowshares Institute, the Indonesian Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, the Jakarta-based Center for Empowering for Reconciliation and Peace, and Hartford Seminary invite you to join a traveling seminar to Indonesia. Indonesia, the world's fourth largest country, has the world's largest Muslim population – larger than the entire Middle East combined. A secular state, Indonesia also has the largest Reformed Christian population in the world and an influential Hindu community.



The Ministry of Justice and Human Rights is aggressively pursuing policies of protection of human rights, promotion of democracy, and constructive engagement in ethnic/regional conflicts. The seminar will focus on Western/Muslim dialogue, terrorism, and the challenge of “Western” conceptualizations of human rights and democracy in an Indonesian context.

Participants will visit Bali, Yogyakarta, and Jakarta, three distinct regions that reflect Indonesia's scenic, cultural, and religious diversity. In each location, participants will meet with academic, government, cultural, and religious leaders who will share their views on Indonesia's Muslim-Christian relations, economic development, and transition to democracy.

Indonesia Traveling seminar leaders are **Rev. Dr. Robert A. Evans**, Executive Director of Plowshares Institute, and **Rev. Dr. Judo Poerwowidagdo**, Founding Director of the Center for Empowering for Reconciliation and Peace. **Prof. Dr. Hafid Abbas**, Indonesia's Director General of Human Rights Protection, is a primary seminar host.

The cost of the seminar, \$3800, includes tuition, visas, room and board, and travel from the US West Coast.

Application deadline: May 1, 2005. Academic credit and limited scholarship aid available.

For applications and additional information contact:

Plowshares 2003 Global Gifts

Plowshares supports partners around the world through financial grants. While some gifts support specific projects, Plowshares often identifies its contributions for “general support,” confident that our partners will apply the funds where they are most needed. This past year, recipients have applied Plowshares gifts to a board range of needs including laboratory equipment for malaria testing in Uganda, bedding and books for an orphanage and school in South Africa, medical supplies for a rural clinic in Peru, and social ministry and suffrage campaigns in Hong Kong. In 2003, Plowshares supported the following organizations

African Evangelical Church of Jabavu, South Africa
 Alternativa, Peru
 Amity Foundation, Hong Kong and Nanjing, China
 Church of Uganda, PDR, Uganda
 College for Tertiary Studies, West Ankole, Uganda
 Diakonia Council of Churches, South Africa
 For All the Children, Iraq
 Hong Kong Christian Council, China
 Hong Kong Christian Institute, China
 ITEBA, Salvador, Brazil

Jiangsu International Cultural Exchange Center, China
 Joint Enrichment (Youth) Project, South Africa
 Koinonia House, South Africa
 Martin Luther King Center, Cuba
 Medical Ministry International, Bolivia
 Nanjing Theological Seminary, China
 South Africa Council of Churches, South Africa
 St. Paul's Church, Cape Town., South Africa
 The Hope Community Sisters, South Africa
 Joint Christian Council, Uganda



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Churches and Other Organizations

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 Ecumenical Association for Housing
 First Church in Windsor, UCC
 First Church of Christ, Simsbury
 First Presbyterian Church, Hartford
 Fort Hill Presbyterian Church
 Hartford Seminary
 Hodges Boulevard Presbyterian Church
 Immanuel Presbyterian Church
 Presbytery of Southern New England
 Riverside Presbyterian Church
 Simsbury United Methodist Church
 St. John's Episcopal Church
 Trinity College
 Westminster Presbyterian Church
 Wilbraham United Church

Matching Grants

Aetna Insurance
 American Airlines
 Illinois Toolworks

Plowshares Partners at Work in Zimbabwe and South Africa

Once considered Africa's bread basket, Zimbabwe can no longer feed its own citizens. Over 6 million people, almost 1/3 of the population, are at risk of starvation. Politically generated violence is extensive, and the inflation rate is currently at 600 percent. In the face of debilitating hardship for most citizens, a small, political elite is reaping vast financial rewards through the black market and speculation in foreign currency.

There are rays of hope even in the midst of this tragedy. In January, Bob Evans responded to a request from colleagues to follow up on previous work in Zimbabwe by providing consultation and support for conflict intervention strategies. Discussions with religious leaders disclosed that three bishops - Anglican, Roman Catholic, and Evangelical - who have worked with Plowshares Institute and the Centre for Conflict Resolution in South Africa in conflict transformation and peace-building, are courageously investing in a process to restart dialogue between

the principal political parties. Over the last few months they have visited the presidents of three neighboring countries to share their experiences of Zimbabwe's "lived realities."



The Pact-Plowshares workshop in Zimbabwe considers the dynamics of structural change.

Pact
Working with a new Plowshares partner, Pact, a development agency based in Washington DC, Bob also provided support for an emerging network of non-profit organizations in Zimbabwe committed to empowering local and regional communities to demand and defend their human rights and promote constructive dialogue among opposing factions. A joint workshop with Pact

helped equip representatives from several non-profit organizations to strengthen their community's ability to constructively approach the current conflicts and challenges.

CCLT
While in Southern Africa, Bob also attended a trustees meeting in South Africa with the Church Community Leadership Trust (CCLT), a non-profit organization with which Plowshares has worked closely for many years. The Trust is conducting a three-year program with church leaders, women, and youth on "moral regeneration for social transformation." This program is especially important in light of recent allegations of corruption against individual South African officials. CCLT is also exploring strategies through which South African church leaders can influence the Zimbabwe crisis by promoting genuine dialogue to alleviate the suffering of millions of citizens. Plowshares continues to work closely with international partners to promote peace with justice in these neighboring nations.

Mailing List Updates

We sometimes have short news items that we email to friends. If you wish to receive them, let us know your email address. We would also appreciate address changes before they occur.

It costs Plowshares \$ 2.00 to print and mail each newsletter. If you would like to be taken off the mailing list, please let us



Name _____

Street 1 _____

Street 2 _____

City, State, Zip _____

Email Address _____

Plowshares Institute
809 Hopmeadow Street
P.O. Box 243
Simsbury CT 06070
Phone: 860 651-4304
Fax: 860 651-4305
Email: plowshares@plowsharesinstitute.org



*Education, Research, and Dialogue
toward a More Just, Sustainable,
and Peaceful World Community*