

# *Many to Many*

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*“Many to Many” under the aegis of Operation Peace Through Unity is a communicating link between “we, the peoples” of all nations, races, creeds and ideologies offering in the spirit of the preamble of the United Nations Charter an instrument for the furthering of better relationships based on deepening mutual understanding and the aspiration to promote unity and cooperation beyond all differences.*

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## *I. Silence*

With the ceaseless and deafening clamour of this day and age we may not often take the time to reflect on the significance of silence. We might also not have noticed the soundless build-up of diffusing shades, veils – even walls – infiltrating our societies, behind which is hiding the true identity or origin of the many ills besetting the world.

Yet, silence speaks more clearly and more powerfully, about matters that words cannot express. Whether it is the resigned quiet in the eyes of those who have given up the struggle; the rigorous stillness before a burst of energy is released; the tainted bulletproof glass walls behind which deceit and malice hide; or the interludes between sounds which allow intensification and expansion of the capacity to listen and absorb information – these and many other forms of silence are places where we may need to look for the true meaning and substance of the words we use incessantly and in such abundance.

Today we have become astute manipulators of words. We know how to string words together which will most effectively ‘sell’ our product. Whether we are advocating the latest electronics, household goods, drugs, weaponry, or raising funds for worthy causes, we have learnt, almost to perfection, how to persuade a potential buyer. We don’t shy away from using any explicit graphics which could help our enterprise become more successful and, as the market becomes increasingly insensitive to such imageries, these graphics continue to excel in the competition for our attention.

But the implosion of the financial world market has revealed the self-destructive consequences of greed and corruption and, coinciding with the rising groundswell of peoples uniting in a clarion call for freedom, fairness and equal opportunities for all, it has - in its own way - contributed to the inauguration of profound changes to the climate of all relationships. As some of the many silencing veils and walls are dismantled, we acknowledge that human beings have been taking more than they have been giving, and that we are deeply indebted to nature which for so long has been struggling to sustain our increasingly gluttonous appetites. We are also freeing ourselves from the inhibitive notion that solutions to the challenges ahead rely purely on the currency called money; we are realising that our common future will depend on our willingness to invest the immeasurable wealth of skills, ingenuity and spirit within the human being in the restoration and renewal of all relationships.

It has been said that – beyond all demarcations – we may find the ‘synthesis of the heart’. As another year approaches in which numerous meetings and summits will take place to discuss and seek solutions to the many issues that concern us all, we are provided with new opportunities to choose which direction to take, and decide what commitments we are ready to make. Shall we acknowledge the responsibility we individually must take for the current crises and collectively resolve to put our house in order?

Let us hope that 2012 will be the year where we will breathe life and substance into the words we speak, and the promises we make; that this is the time when we will expand and intensify our heart’s capacity to listen to the cry of all who suffer, and apply our collective skills to service for the New World.

On hearing the cacophony of noises when musicians are tuning their instruments before a concert it is hard to imagine the beautiful musical performance that will follow. So, isn’t it entirely possible that the chaotic clamour throughout the world today might transform into a glorious symphony of multiple sounds, when the synthesising tap of the baton of the ‘conductor’ within is heard, bringing healing to the world and all that lives within it?

## II. *Right to Development*

On the 8 November the world commemorated the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN General Assembly Declaration on the Right to Development.

The 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph of the 1<sup>st</sup> article of the Declaration states that *“the right to development is an inalienable human right by virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realised”*. And in the UN Millennium Declaration all heads of State and Government again confirm their commitment ‘... to making the right to development a reality for everyone and to freeing the entire human race from want’.

At the launch of the 2011 commemoration (8 November) the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon emphatically pointed out that, although the Declaration, which since its adoption has been re-affirmed over and over again, exists on paper it has - in practice - been languishing, and that: *“visible, accountable hands in government ceded too much to the invisible, unreliable hands of the market”*. Elaborating further, Ban Ki-moon said that *‘human rights were too often subverted for financial gain’*; our environment was being *‘sacrificed for the economy’*, and lavish luxury was *‘fed off of deplorable want’*. A call for change echoes across the world.

Urging world leaders to listen carefully to all peoples Ban Ki-moon said that, as he himself had listened to people - whether in refugee camps; in the ‘ashes of war’; in cooperatives and communities throughout the world - the message had always been the same: people asked that the world would help them, so they could help themselves and realise their inalienable right to build their own future so they could live with dignity and free from want and fear.

Ban Ki-moon mentioned the recent G20 meeting in Cannes, where he had called on the G20 leaders to write a New Social Contract for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: *‘not only for people living in the world’s wealthiest nations, but for all’*. ([www.un.org](http://www.un.org)).

The UN Secretary-General further called for the world community to invest in people, women and youth in particular, who make up more than two-thirds of the world population, saying that: *“when we give women equal opportunities, we right a social injustice. When we give youth jobs, we transform frustration into production”*.

He also reminded the audience that although development is the path to peace, our world is filled with violence and war, and is ‘drowning in arms’: *“We have to beg for funds for peace operations while military spending tops a trillion dollars”*.

Disarmament, economic issues and human rights are all crucial to development, concluded the UN Secretary-General, and when we take on global problems as a whole, solutions cut across categories.

The 2012 Rio+20 Conference is our chance to define a path to the future we want.

In her closing statement at the UN General Assembly, commemorating the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Right to Development, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms Navi Pillay, summoned up her key messages throughout the year as follows:

*“First and foremost, development is a human right. The Declaration of the Right to Development puts people and their rights at the centre of public policy. Development must aim at the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and provide for a fair distribution of benefits, without discrimination.*

*Secondly, the right to development belongs to all. The anniversary stands in the uneasy light of the fact that for millions, development remains in the realm of rhetoric. We must respond to the aspirations of those who live at the margins, both locally and globally. Vulnerabilities of persons living in developing countries, the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries, Small Island Developing States, in countries in conflict and post-conflict situations, and in fragile States justify particular action. Poverty can breed conflict, and too many are locked in cycles of meaningless violence, too many lives are being lost, far too much money is spent on military might, and far too little on fulfilling human rights: The internationally agreed development goals are in fact being shot down in a world where global military expenditure has doubled since the adoption of the MDGs in 2000 reaching a record high of over 1.5 trillion dollars.*

*Thirdly, the right to development responds to contemporary challenges. The gradual transition to a single global economy calls us all to our common humanity and our common but differentiated responsibilities. Reform for more democratic, inclusive and participatory global economic governance will promote an enabling environment for development. And the right to development can support the internationally agreed development goals including the Millennium Development Goals.*

*Finally, we must act together. Our common heritage of a complex web of interconnected challenges, calls for human solidarity and renewed partnerships. We must foster policy coherence and systemic integration of human rights, including the right to development, across sectors, across institutions and across layers of governance. Human aspirations for well-being can be realized only when there is a strong accountability framework.” <http://www.ohchr.org/>*

### ***III. Climate Vulnerable Forum***

The Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) came into being in November 2009, just before the Copenhagen Climate Summit (December 2009). This initiative by the government of the Maldives was initially joined by other Heads of State, Ministers and representatives from Africa, Asia, Caribbean and the Pacific governments, representing some of the world’s most vulnerable countries, who signed the Climate Vulnerable Declaration on 10 November 2009 in Male, the Maldives. Since then, some 20 other climate vulnerable countries are participating in this initiative, with many other countries as observers, including the US, UK and Russia.

The CVF Declaration begins with following words: *“ Expressing our determination, as vulnerable States, to demonstrate leadership on climate change by leading the world into the low-carbon and ultimately carbon-neutral economy, but recognising that we cannot achieve this goal on our own; now therefore, declare our determination, as low-emitting countries that are acutely vulnerable to climate change, to show moral leadership on climate change through actions as well as words, by acting now to commence greening our economies as our contribution towards achieving carbon neutrality...”*

They are likely to combine their existing pledges with poverty alleviation and are agreeing to act regardless of whether a global agreement is achieved in Durban in the following weeks.

#### ***IV. International Day for the Eradication of Poverty 17 October 2011***

With the aim of highlighting the urgent need to include the issue of people living in poverty in the 2012 Rio+20 Summit discussions, the theme chosen for this year was: 'From Poverty to Sustainability: People at the Centre of Inclusive Development'.

People living in poverty and destitution are facing an increasingly challenging combination of difficulties as climate change, environmental degradation and rising food prices threaten their very survival.

Since its inception, the focus of this international day has been to listen to the voice of people living in poverty and emphasize their vital contribution to poverty eradication. It is crucial that the 2012 Rio+20 Summit listen intently to people living in poverty, that their experiences and expertise are included in the decision-making processes, and that concrete action is taken to respond to their needs and demands. ([www.un.org](http://www.un.org))

***"We can meet the challenges we face — the economic crisis, climate change, rising costs of food and energy, the effects of natural disasters. We can overcome them by putting people at the centre of our work. Too often in the debates that will shape our future, I see three groups missing. The poor, the young and the planet." Ban Ki-moon***

#### ***V. International Day of Rural Women 15 October 2011***

Since the 15 October 2008 the International Day of Rural Women has been observed in recognition of the vital contribution by rural women, in developing as well as in developed countries, in livestock care, in providing food, water and fuel for their families, and in caring for children, older persons and the sick.

In his message for the 2011 celebration, the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said that although study after study has shown that 'rural women are pivotal to addressing hunger, malnutrition and poverty', and often are 'the entrepreneurs and educator, the healers and helpers who can contribute to food security and economic growth in the world's most remote and vulnerable settings', they nevertheless lack equal access to opportunities and resources.

We need, said Ban Ki-moon, to invest in rural women and eliminate discrimination against them in law and in practice. We must also give women equal access to resources and provide them with a role in decision-making: *"As we prepare for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, to be held next year in Rio, let us remember that rural women have enormous untapped potential to generate results"*.

**56<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW):**

The theme for CSW's 56<sup>th</sup> session, which will take place from 27 February to 9 March 2012, is: **“the empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges”**.

In preparation for the 2012 meeting and for the fullest possible understanding of the issues that need to be discussed, the UN Women (UNW), together with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Food Programme (WFP), convened an expert group meeting in Accra, Ghana, in September this year. Here the group explored a wide range of strategies that could in the future enhance the role of women in poverty and hunger eradication and secure their rights and opportunities.

Ban Ki-moon concluded his statement to the International Day of Rural Women, by saying: *“I call on all partners to recognise the contribution of rural women to our world, and to help them do even more for our shared future”*. <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw56/egm.htm>

## ***VI. Voice of Somali Women for Peace, Reconciliation and Political Rights***

**Amina Sharif Hassan**, co-founder of Voice of Somali Women for Peace, Reconciliation and Political Rights (1993), wrote the following Open Letter (dated 31 October, 2011): to the People of Southern Somalia; the Somali people in general; drought-affected people in the Horn of Africa; the Intergovernmental Authority of Development; African Union, United Nations, UN Political office for Somalia, Civil Society office of UN, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, League of Arab States, World Interfaith, Muslim and World League.

### **“Introduction**

*This letter offers my perspective on the tragic situation in Somalia today. Beginning with a brief description of the crisis, the letter then looks at the historical response to drought and other disasters in Somalia, and examines the effects of the long-running war in the country. It ends with suggestions on how to deal with the situation and a plea to the people of the world to respond to this human catastrophe.*

### ***The Current Situation***

*A major disaster is occurring in Somalia. On September 05, 2011, the UN warned that 750,000 people are at risk of dying as a result of the drought and famine currently occurring in that country. In August 2011, in a presentation to a US congressional Committee dealing with foreign aid, government official, Nancy Lindborg, reported estimates that more than 29,000 children under the age of 5 had died in Southern Somalia in the previous 90 days. There is a huge exodus of starving people, walking for days to get bread or water. The mortality rate is high, especially in the elderly, infants and children, and malnutrition and dehydration in adults is also increasing. The situation requires a sophisticated emergency health intervention. The Deyr season, a second major rainy season started in October, 05, 2011, but because the drought-affected people were in emergency camps, far away from their farms, it was impossible for them to cultivate their land. This means they will lose an entire planting season even though the rain is plentiful. The next season is the Jilaal, the dry season which typically starts in December and continues until March. This means that even if drought survivors manage to return to their farms, they may not be able to sow their crop till March 2012, harvesting it around June*

2012. It is thus likely that large numbers of people will have to remain in the camps, dependent on aid.

### **Background Information**

*Drought is not a new situation in Somalia, but historically it did not lead to disaster. The people of Somalia had traditional ways to deal with drought. If drought occurred in dry land regions of southern Somalia, males from the region travelled to the riverine and city areas to do seasonal work, bringing their families to join them if the drought was prolonged. When the rains returned, the men would go back to cultivate their farms. That was how they maintained their families for centuries and they never left their land for good. The host region's people and this influx of people exchanged service and trade benefits, and understood, supported and respected each other. There were both exchanges of work for money and voluntary help from the host regions. The values and practices of helping and hosting all kinds of people when they were in a crisis reflected both the Somali habit and Islamic law.*

### **The effect of the war**

*As a result of the prolonged war, the people in the South are experiencing extreme poverty and lack of social services, and can no longer support each other in this way. Wars in Somalia started in the central regions in the late 1970s, spreading to the North during the mid 80s and to the South in 1991.*

*Southern Somalia has become a battlefield between the ousted regime and later militias from different Somali tribes, and other non indigenous international and regional stakeholders. The 21-year conflict has become increasingly anarchic and reckless, resulting in displacement of people, man-made human disasters and emergency situations. It has also torn apart the traditional Somali social cultures and norms.*

*Most of the Somali people are suffering war trauma related problems including:*

- ! *Poverty and induced starvation*
- ! *Forced migration*
- ! *Lack of self determination*
- ! *Food used to induce exiles from their homeland*
- ! *Dependency on foreign aid.*

*Large numbers of people have become internal refugees, driven away from their farms and prevented from producing agricultural products and other local goods and services. They have become dependent on foreign aid.*

### **What is needed?**

- ! *Both the Somali government and the international community need to strategize ways to take advantage of the Deyr rainy season to cultivate the deserted land and transport its people back to continue their lives independently.*
- ! *Develop and modernize indigenous food security systems for the people in Somalia and the region.*
- ! *All stake holders must rethink building emergency camps far away from the disaster area. Emergency programs must be closer to home.*

### **A final plea**

*I would like to urge the good citizens of the world to take action to help this human catastrophe. And I also urge the suffering people themselves to look for opportunities. It is a fact that there are*



*opportunities and lessons to learn from each and every disaster. There is always hope, and a light will shine somewhere in the tunnel that will guide us to peace and prosperity.*

*I urge the world to humanize globalization. We need to harmonize business, interests and human well-being.*

*God bless the World with peace Insha' Allah. Amen.*

*Amina Sharif Hassan*

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## ***VII. Whose Community? Memory, Conflict and Tradition Uganda and Rwanda, 12<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> August 2012***

*Through the University for Peace in Costa Rica ([www.upeace.org](http://www.upeace.org)), OPTU has received a paper from the Equator Peace Academy, calling for fellows interested in participating in the Equator Peace Academy (EPA) of Uganda Martyrs University, Uganda. The deadline for receiving applications is 25 March 2012. The following is the full text of the paper:*

The Equator Peace Academy (EPA) is a programme of Uganda Martyrs University that among many activities organises an annual international Academy Summer School designed to confront thematic issues in selected countries of the Great Lakes Region of Africa. This is a call to interested fellows who intend to participate in the first Academy from 12-26 August 2012. The Academy is organised in Uganda and Rwanda under the theme *Whose Community? Memory, Conflict and Tradition*, with the aim of confronting the problematic of intolerance to diversity, divisive governance and the turbulent past. This annual event takes place in a span of two weeks and is an amalgamation of pluralistic views on various differences (ethnic, religious, political, etc.) and scientific research governing these issues, and dealing with the tumultuous past. It employs an open, dialogic, experiential, and reflective methodology to experiment practical learning framed on the logic of searching for solutions to the contemporary conflicts in the region and world over, where people regarded as *Others* constantly suffer segregations and have provoked violent conflicts.

EPA is based in the Great Lakes Region of Africa due to historical facts. The region has witnessed shocking horrors in the past and conflicts continue to take place even today. Within the past two decades alone, the region has seen hundreds of thousands of murdered people floating in the rivers of Rwanda, innocent civilians driven from their homes and massacred in Burundi and Uganda, hundreds of thousands killed in ethnic violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo, tens of thousands killed or exiled in racial and religious conflict in Southern Sudan, thousands of people crammed into Internally Displaced Persons camps in Kenya and refugees faced with forced repatriation in Tanzania. It is a region that has failed to learn from its past experiences as people of a particular ethnic, religious, political affiliation and race have often meted violence on those who appear different and regard them as “others” or as people beyond their “borders” of relationships. In the region, the boundaries of a moral universe are limited borders of tribe, language, religion or nation and beyond these borders lie people who threaten their own survival and can be segregated. The logic of these moral borders is placed among the causes of civil wars and conflicts in the region.

In Uganda, EPA will focus on two regions: North and Central. In the North, fellows will confront the aftermath of the two decades of war between the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), and the Government of Uganda. Specifically, fellows will have an interface with parents of the abducted children, and the former abducted school girls of St Mary’s, Aboke Girls Secondary School in Kole District who have become the international and media face of thousands of children abducted



during the LRA war. The fellows will also have an interface with the survivors of the Barlonyo massacre in Lira District as well as the former LRA commanders and Uganda Peoples Defence (UPDF, the national army) commanders that were involved in the war. In addition, the fellows will interact with the cultural, religious and civic leaders who attempt to give leadership in addressing post conflict issues in the aftermath of the war. Furthermore, fellows will interact with the community, visit the mass graves in the region in an attempt to answer the questions: whose community was the LRA fighting for? Whose community was the Government of Uganda fighting for? Whose community are the cultural, religious and civic leaders governing? Which tradition brought this war? Which tradition has resulted from this war? What do we do with the memories of this war? What memories are being held and promoted? Whose community are we advancing?

In Central Uganda, fellows will have an interface with the officials of Buganda Kingdom. Buganda Kingdom is central to the history of Uganda. For instance, the name Uganda is derived from Buganda. During the colonisation of Uganda, Buganda collaborated with the colonisers, the British. Consequently, Buganda enjoyed some favours from the British Imperialists. In 1997, the government of Uganda removed the favours that Buganda enjoyed during the colonial period. This created a rift between the government and the Buganda establishment. To date, any government that comes to power has to deal with this issue. The questions that the fellows will have to confront in Buganda are: whose community is Buganda Kingdom advocating for? Whose community is the government of Uganda advocating for in Buganda? Whose tradition is the Buganda Kingdom promoting? Which memories are the government of Uganda and the Buganda Kingdom promoting? Which conflicts are facing both the government of Uganda and the Kingdom of Buganda? Can Buganda and Uganda be one community? Who is telling the story of Buganda and for what purpose?

In Rwanda, fellows will come face to face with the aftermath of the 1994 Tutsi genocide and Hutu massacres. The fellows will visit the National Genocide Memorial sites and the churches where the genocides took place as well as mass graves. While in Rwanda, some of the questions the fellows will attempt to answer include: whose community were the Hutu and Tutsi fighting for? Which tradition resulted in the massacres and genocide? Which memory is Rwandan government promoting? In what ways can a 'Rwandan' memory be constructed? How best can a Rwandan community be built? What is the past to the Rwanda community?

Fellows will have an opportunity to compare and contrast the identified sites in the context of Ugandan and Rwandan experiences as well as in the light of the experiences beyond the Great Lakes Region with a view of transforming both the theoretical models and concrete practices. It is hoped that this transformation will result into openings for durable solutions to inform policy makers in Uganda and Rwanda as well as influence the academic conversations in dealing with the human condition in Great Lakes Region and beyond.

We look forward to selecting a small, but critical group of fellows who may include academics and practitioners in governments, civil society organisation, and private sector interested in engaging the theme: *Whose Community? Memory, Conflict and Tradition*, from the Great Lakes Region and beyond.

Join us by filling the application form (deadline 25 March 2012) on:

<http://www.fiuc.org/umu/index.php/general-faculties/departementofgoodgovernance>

The vision of the Uganda Martyrs University's Department of Good Governance and Peace Studies is: *"to build a better and more humane world where human security, social justice, progress and the common good are cherished and promoted. The Department stands for a world where international peace and security are founded on the respect of human dignity, human rights and fundamental freedoms through the observance of international law, international norms and*

values, the rule of law, and concern for a better governed world.” E-mail: [mngabirano@umu.ac.ug](mailto:mngabirano@umu.ac.ug) , [mangucia@umu.ac.ug](mailto:mangucia@umu.ac.ug) , or [oesibo@umu.ac.ug](mailto:oesibo@umu.ac.ug)

### ***VIII. Ubuntu***

On the Elders website appears an article by Archbishop Tutu in which he writes about his participation in a recent debate, hosted by the Forgiveness Project. In the article he professes being ‘a passionate believer in Ubuntu’, this African philosophy which says that my humanity is bound up in yours: ‘*I need you in order to be me*’. We, all of us, are on a continuous journey towards forgiveness, says Archbishop Tutu, and ‘I am still learning what forgiveness means to different people’.

Among other participants in the same debate were Mary Kayitesi Blewitt, who had lost over 50 members of her family in the Rwandan genocide; a former IRA activist, convicted of the IRA Brighton bombing (1984), as well as the daughter of one of those killed in the bombing.

Such crimes, says Archbishop Tutu, ‘cause a breach of trust that makes you question your whole relationship with humanity’, and concludes:

*‘Forgiveness is never easy or cheap. It isn’t something you can demand of others. Forgiveness is a deeply personal journey to reconnect with the whole of humanity around you, and therefore reconnect with yourself. It is essential because it reveals how we are inextricably bound to each other. As I have said before, there is no future without forgiveness’.* (<http://theelders.org/>) e-mail: [connect@theelders.org](mailto:connect@theelders.org)

The **Forgiveness Project** is a UK-based charitable organisation that works with any group who wants to explore the nature of forgiveness. Its vision is to help build a better future by healing the wounds of the past and assisting in the opening of a dialogue about forgiveness and promoting understanding through:

- Awareness – raise the debate about forgiveness by collecting and sharing personal stories;
- Education – encourage and empower people to explore the nature of forgiveness and alternatives to conflict and revenge; and
- Inspiration – engage civil society, as well as transform hearts and minds.

<http://theforgivenessproject.com> - [info@theforgivenessproject.com](mailto:info@theforgivenessproject.com)

### ***IX. The State of the World’s Volunteerism Report***

On the International Volunteer Day, 5 December 2011, the very first State of the World’s Volunteerism Report (SWVR), published by the UN Volunteers programme, will be launched, and be available in print as well as on the website.

The SWVR examines the important contribution of volunteerism in many diverse fields, such as sustainable livelihoods, social inclusion, disaster risk reduction, governance and political participation. It also offers suggestions on how volunteerism can be taken forward and provides an alternative vision of a better future society. Through their voluntary actions, people around the world in their millions are contributing to meeting the Millennium Development Goals. It is the

hope that this and future State of the World's Volunteerism reports will result in fundamental changes and affect the perception, discussion, research and practice of volunteerism for peace and development in the future.

UN Volunteers is dedicated to engaging volunteers throughout the world in development projects to promote sustainable and inclusive human development. Some 7,700 qualified individuals of different nationalities are working in developing countries under its mandate. Many volunteers are working under risk in highly volatile regions assisting in peacebuilding and peacekeeping activities as well as humanitarian aid.

UNV sees volunteerism *'as a powerful means to mobilize all segments of society to become active partners in building a better world. One of its main challenges is to get the contributive role of volunteerism in meeting development goals broadly recognised, and to prompt governments to factor volunteer actions pertinently into their development project.'*

Together with a number of other organisations, UNV has created the World Volunteer Web (<http://www.worldvolunteerweb.org/>)

*"At the heart of Volunteerism are the ideals of service and solidarity and the belief that together we can make the world a better place. In that sense, we can say that volunteerism is the ultimate expression of what the United Nations is all about"*

- Former UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan.

## ***X. 'We Are 7 Billion People, With 7 Billion Possibilities'***

On the 31 October the world population reached 7 billion. It took only 12 years for the world to leap from 6 billion to 7 billion says a report, launched recently by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), entitled the State of the World Population 2011 – People and Possibilities in a World of 7 Billion.

The report outlines the many challenges that the global community is facing in the context of the changing 'demographic landscape' and explores the lives of ordinary people and the real-life challenges they face as they seek to build better lives for themselves, their family, and community. Today, people of 24 years or younger make up nearly half of the world population, and many of them are leaving rural areas to seek jobs within the urban areas, while the older population are left behind, often without the support they need.

Although the report points to the many things that need to be taken into consideration when dealing with a world population of 7 billion (from 2.5 billion in 1950), it also looks positively toward the future and makes the case that, *"with planning and the right investments in people now – to empower them to make choices that are not only good for themselves but for our global commons – our world of 7 billion can have thriving, sustainable cities, productive labour forces that can fuel economic growth, youth populations that contribute to the well-being of economies and societies, and a generation of older people who are healthy and actively engaged in the social and economic affairs of their communities"*. (<http://www.unfpa.org/swp/>)

The following quotes are taken from the Foreword to the Report, written by Babatunde Osotimehin, Executive Director, UNFPA:

*“How did we become so many? How large a number can our Earth sustain? These are important questions, but perhaps not the right ones for our times. When we look only at the big number, we risk being overwhelmed and losing sight of new opportunities to make life better for everyone in the future.”*

*“.. we should instead be asking ‘what can I do to make our world better’ or ‘what can we do to transform our growing cities into forces for sustainability’?”*

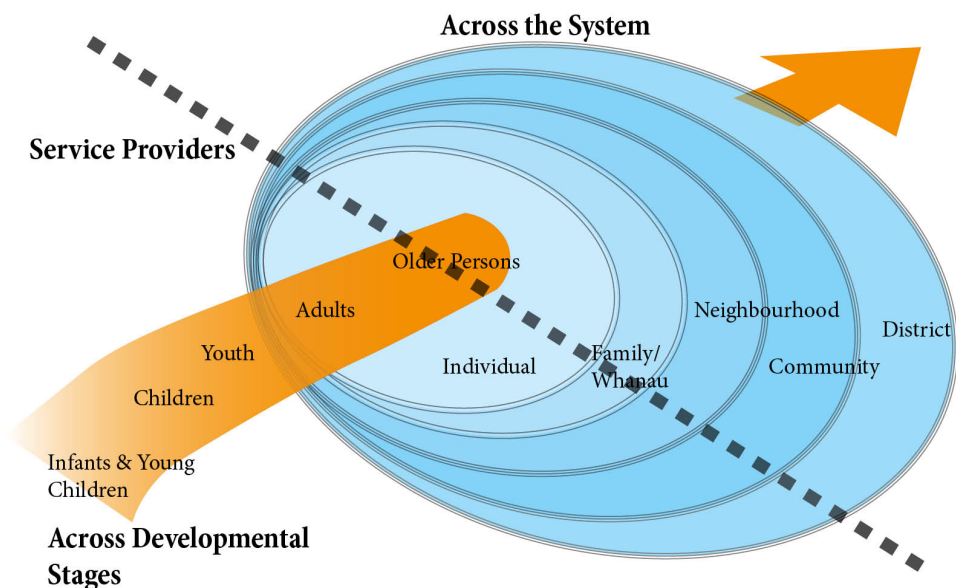
*“We should ask ourselves what each of us can do to empower the elderly so they can play a more active role in their communities. What can we do to unleash the creativity and potential of the largest cohort humanity has ever seen? And what can we do to remove barriers to equality between women and men so that everyone has the full power to make their own decisions and realise their full potential?”*

*“We all have a stake in the future of humanity. Every individual, every government, every business, is more interconnected and interdependent than ever, so what each of us does now will matter to all of us long into the future. Together we can change and improve the world”.*

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*‘Between the strong and the weak it is liberty that oppresses  
and the law that liberates’  
Jean Baptiste Henri Lacordaire (1802-1861)*

## ***XI. Wanganui Peace Forum Thursday 10 November 2011 Report Peace Building in Wanganui: Identifying and enhancing community capacities for peace***



**We need to take into account the complexity of experiences and needs throughout the community - individuals, their families/whanau, and their local neighbourhoods, communities and the district as a whole. We need to look at the experiences and needs across the lifespan – infants, young children, youth, adults and older persons. A range of providers and services represent and support groups at different levels within the system and at different**

**developmental stages. Together representatives of different groups, people of different ages and a range service providers can strengthen the fabric of the community.**

Representatives from a wide range of Wanganui organisations, from children and young people, older people and several cultures, joined forces with the National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (NCPACS) at the Otago University, the Mayor of Wanganui, Annette Main and Operation Peace Through Unity, for a full day meeting to:

**identify and enhance local strengths and capacities to build a culture of peace and understanding and to promote community partnership and resilience.**

Although the forum was asked to look at building a peaceful community in Wanganui, the many efforts that already take place locally to promote peace and reconciliation were acknowledged and appreciated - from a hospice doctor helping to reconcile a divided family at the end of life, or the women's refuge providing a safe haven for women at threat of violence, or environmentalists concerned about the negative impacts of globalisation.

Mayor Annette Main opened the morning session saying that:

*“For our community this is an opportunity to come together and share what we are doing well and look at how we can meet the challenges ahead to create a better and more peaceful society and place to live.”*

This was reinforced by Professor Clements in his opening remarks:

*“As far as I know, this is the first time in New Zealand that local government has assisted in gathering together relevant stakeholders to think intentionally about how to create and sustain a peaceful community, rather than to do so reactively after some terrible event. In this respect, I believe the district to be a genuine pioneer.”*

Key issues to arise were a growing gap between 'rich' and 'poor', deep seated cultural differences, and, dignity and assistance for young and old people. Before the local representatives contributed their goals, successes and what was still needed (from a short questionnaire issued), Professor Kevin Clements, Director of the NCPACS gave an introductory keynote address.

Professor Clements began by stating that it was time for change – that, “business as usual cannot be sustained”. The focus of this change is the community where the need to really listen to what people are saying is vital. There is a general disillusionment with politics, political leaders, and leadership in general, often because of the obvious and growing inequality of incomes, leading to poverty, which is at the heart of many social problems.

He described the problem we face as a 'wicked problem'. This can be taken in many ways, but is a term used in the social sciences to denote, in layman's terms, a problem that is difficult or impossible to solve because of incomplete, contradictory and changing requirements that are often difficult to recognise. Such problems transcend political jurisdictions. A collaborative approach to finding a solution requires those involved and likely to benefit, being active participants in the process, but the drawback is the time taken to achieve a shared understanding and commitment to a solution. However this can work well as witnessed by the process to achieve the Gonville Centre. (more later)

Professor Clements urged those present to seek to generate a more just and equal community by creating relationships of deep attachment. This was as a result of a longitudinal study carried out by the Otago University which found deep rooted conflict and violence in families in which children have poor attachments to their parents.

*For young people attachment to parents/family is far more crucial than attachment to friends, although having both contributes to a well-adjusted young adult. Peer attachment does not ameliorate the negative consequences of having a weak attachment or disconnection from parents in adolescence.*

When working toward a more caring and humane society we need to focus on ‘caring’ rather than bureaucracy, to celebrate differences and to be an active and engaged community. The community is a large family. This was echoed by the Mayor later in the day, when she urged us all to attend and take part in local functions.

***“Create a community-based working model involving the maximum inclusion of all people.”***

This would require a movement away from the current adversarial system to one based on **respect, listening and real dialogue.**

Four suggestions for action were offered:

1. Inspire and sustain a more active community voice and avoid individualism. To intentionally build community and resist attempts to individualise problems.
2. Responsive Governance – Wanganui District Council to lead with innovative change. To build an infrastructure that is responsive to different kinds of needs.
3. Embrace differences. To learn how to embrace differences and the conflicts within these. To ensure these are dealt with creatively and consistently through analysing learnings and the problems that arise.
4. Grapple with the societal divide – close the income and other inequalities both locally and nationally. To work towards equal access to resources for all in the community

Professor Clements ended by posing the question of “How to Bridge the Gap?”

This provided the springboard for the rest of the forum. An early comment was that the order of the suggested solutions be reversed, with #4 as the primary issue, leading to the solution of the other 3 points.

Participants were then asked to share the successes of their organisations, what they still hoped to achieve, and to suggest what was needed to achieve their goals. Contributions fell into several broad categories, including: community and cultural diversity, underlying problems, relationships and youth. The following is a sample of comments contributed (taken from the questionnaires returned):

- ! *“The community at large has raised awareness of family violence, what it is and where to get help.”*
- ! *“Recognition of how wonderful living in Whanganui is (regardless of the spelling) and how great the people are.”*



- ! *“The more we talk together, the closer we will become: you will learn about me and I will learn something I didn’t know about you.”*
- ! *“Encouraging participation and inclusion.”*
- ! *“Agencies working closer together – building mutual respect and captur(ing) the collective wisdom.”*
- ! *“Young people **need** work if not in training, from employers who need workers but can’t afford them.”*
- ! *“Restorative practices rather than punitive approaches to conflict.”*
- ! *“Democracy was bad for indigenous people ... (we) are not going to be invisible any longer.”*
- ! *“Individuals matter and need encouragement. Remember to say ‘thank you’.”*
- ! *“Work back from death – the equaliser.” (Everyone is equal then)*

After lunch, the meeting resumed at the Wanganui District Council chamber where the morning session was summarised and an opportunity was given to identify any gaps.

***What is peace? Relationships and connections with others.***

Several aspects of this were raised, including the need for genuine participation in a safe environment respecting place, space and security. ‘Elites’ do not have the answers and while often presuming to know what others ‘need’, they may have to relinquish power and control so that real leadership and mentoring can take place. A good example of this was the community consultative process followed in planning the Gonville Centre. This involved local people (and organisations) working out what was needed to meet the needs of the people of Gonville and has been such a success that consultations are under way in other suburbs, such as Wanganui East and Castlecliff. It brings together health, social, cultural and educational facilities in one place. If government agencies can be included in this process, then Wanganui will have real, decentralised hubs.

The challenge of the income inequality gap was a recurring theme throughout the day and it was suggested that it needed to be closed from both ends – providing the dignity of work and encouraging philanthropy by the wealthy.

The day’s discussions could be summarised under the headings of a clear vision for Wanganui/Whanganui, community hubs, community story telling/social activities and capacity development. Collaborating and sharing the work and resources of the many local organisations, opening our hearts to others and having the will to make Wanganui/Whanganui the best place to live in peace and harmony with all our neighbours was the message taken away by participants.

Thanks were offered to the Mayor, the Quaker Settlement, OPTU and Professor Clements and Dr Elspeth Macdonald from NCPACS as well as all who attended.

**“There was general agreement that until we really listen to each other, our deep seated problems, be they personal, cultural or economic, will not be solved. The solutions that will ‘bridge the gap’ between us all, and enhance the capacity for peace within our community, must come from each one of us.”**

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The **education4peace** website <http://podcasts.otago.ac.nz/nzpeace-ed/> has been developed by the National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies as an online resource to support NZ collaborations around education for peace – the sharing of information and exchange resources. The areas of interest include education for non-violence, human rights, and peaceful solutions and practices at all levels of the NZ national curriculum and more broadly for school communities and students. We aim to work with teachers/curriculum groups to help develop relevant resources and capacity for the teaching of peace education in the NZ school curriculum.

## ***XII. THE GREAT INVOCATION***

From the point of Light within the Mind of God  
Let light stream forth into the minds of men.  
Let Light descend on Earth.

From the point of Love within the Heart of God  
Let love stream forth into the hearts of men  
May Christ return to Earth.

From the centre where the Will of God is known  
Let purpose guide the little wills of men –  
The purpose which the Masters know and serve.

From the centre which we call the race of men  
Let the Plan of Love and Light work out  
And may it seal the door where evil dwells.

Let Light and Love and Power restore the plan on Earth.