

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, JUNE 7, 2010

### Highlights of InterChange's work over the past year

#### **A message from the President**

Writing the annual President's Report provides an opportunity to reflect back over the year and see the big picture of how our organization has developed, something that is not always possible when immersed in our everyday work. From this vantage point, the past year was focused on strengthening, deepening and consolidating InterChange. We recently completed the process of incorporating our organization, and after a long process of consultation and dialogue, we've adopted a new logo that our members around the world are excited about. We also developed new policies as needed, with one such example being a policy on joint projects that has enabled us to do peacebuilding in Sierra Leone with a partner organization, CD Peace,

Other highlights of the year include recruiting a Board member with fundraising and finance expertise; launching vibrant local centres in Nairobi, Kenya and Kampala, Uganda; strengthening the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) local centre and laying the groundwork for education and training work; and developing an international project on using elections as peacebuilding opportunities.

*Anne Goodman, President*

#### **2009 Annual General Meeting (AGM)**

At the AGM, held on April 20, 2009, members were updated about InterChange's work over the year through the President's and Treasurer's reports and presentations from the InterChange project coordinators. Members had an opportunity to give input into the InterChange logo. Board elections were held, with the meeting acclaiming all the members that were nominated to the InterChange board for a 2-year term. This included members running for another term, as well as two new board members, David Macharia from Kenya and Grace Bantebya from Uganda.

As has become our practice, the AGM included an educational component, in this case a workshop entitled *Peacebuilding as a Healing Art*. Regine King, a genocide survivor from Rwanda and a PhD candidate, presented her story, after which participants were given the opportunity to reflect on this topic and apply the principles to their own real-life experiences.

#### **2009/10 InterChange Board**

InterChange Board members worked hard over the past year, taking on responsibility for committees, various areas of governance, and local centre activities. This year we had equal numbers of Toronto and international members. As usual, Board meetings were conducted with the Toronto members in person and the international members on Skype or phone, and we continued to use a "buddy system" whereby each international Board member was paired

with a Toronto-area Board member. To streamline our process, we also adopted a process of alternating Board meetings and executive committee meetings.

The 2009/10 Board was as follows:

Anne Goodman (President) – Toronto	Tor Iorapuu– Jos, Nigeria
Katie Meyer (Vice-President) – Toronto	Issa Kirarira– Kampala, Uganda
Carolyn Webb (Secretary) – Toronto	Grace Bantebya, Kampala, Uganda
Michael Wheeler (Treasurer) – Toronto	David Macharia– Nairobi, Kenya
Sara Escott– Toronto, Canada	Charles Tauber– Vukovar, Croatia

At our Board meeting in May 2010, we appointed a new Board member with fundraising and finance experience, Sarah Lounsbury. Her appointment will be ratified at the 2010 AGM. Sara Escott and Grace Bantebya will not be continuing on the Board next year, but they plan to stay involved in InterChange in other ways. We expressed our appreciation to them for the contribution they have made to InterChange during their term on the Board.

### **InterChange Local Centres**

InterChange is a Canadian charitable organization with members (including Board members) in different parts of the world. Our work is both international and local, and Local Centres bring InterChange's work to the local level, in accordance with and advancing InterChange's Vision, Mission, principles and policies. We seek to establish local centres where there is a concentration of InterChange members, recognizing that the form and composition of the centres may differ from place to place. Over the past year, we developed a local centre manual and a process whereby local centres are approved by the InterChange International Board.

A highlight of the past year was undoubtedly the launching of local centres in Nairobi, Kenya and Kampala, Uganda. Both Centres had their inaugural meetings in July and have been holding regular meetings and activities since that time.

*The Nairobi Local Centre* provides a place for its members to share experiences and build each other's work. The Centre is also interested in promoting interfaith and intercultural dialogue between people from diverse backgrounds. The Quaker Church compound has been supportive in providing meeting space, although some of the meetings are held in the home of the Centre's co-ordinator, David Macharia.

Concerned about a repeat of the post-election violence that occurred in 2007–8, the Nairobi centre proposed a project that would engage in preventative peacebuilding work in advance of Kenya's upcoming election period. InterChange has since adopted this as an international project with a week-long *Training of Trainers* workshop on peacebuilding and healing to be held in Nairobi in October 2010 with facilitators from Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria, Croatia and Canada. We

aim to have 20–25 participants from various parts of Kenya and surrounding countries in the region, mainly Uganda, which is also facing elections in the near future.

***The InterChange Uganda Local Centre*** has been holding monthly meetings in space provided at the Busabala Road Nursing Home by its director, Dr. Edward Ssembatya and is in the process of registering as a Community Based Organization (CBO). The Centre has developed a very comprehensive programme of activities which include:

- Various projects run through peace clubs at local schools and colleges
- Media partnerships with newspapers and radio stations
- Sharing ideas and capacity building between members of the local centre
- Peacebuilding campaigns in partnerships with local council leaders and religious leaders
- Events to mark UN international days of peace and tolerance, and InterChange local days
- Participating in conferences and events to reduce tribal, political and religious tensions
- Working with the Nairobi centre to plan the Train the Trainers pre-election workshop
- Relief work to help the victims of a landslide affecting 3 villages in the Bududa district

Lack of funds for computer access and transport, especially for student members of the centre, poses a significant barrier to the centre.

***The Greater Toronto Area (GTA) Local Centre*** has also had a very active year. Patrick Habamenshi, a member of the Rwandan diaspora community, has played a leadership role as the group's coordinator. The Centre balances its activities between those that deepen relationships between its members and those that provide outreach and education to the broader community. A highlight of the year's work was the *Peacebuilding Show-and-Tell Symposium* in November in which participants shared an overview and sample activities of peacebuilding education and training, and then discussed where and how these activities could be used. Other projects of the centre include the development of a digital storytelling activity building on previous work in this area and a diaspora component of the "Elections as peacebuilding" project.

***In Vukovar, Croatia***, the Coalition for Work with Psychotrauma and Peace, also known as Global Regeneration for Peace (CWWPP/GRP) serves as the local host of the Vukovar Local Center (VLC) of InterChange. InterChange Board member and local centre coordinator, Charles Tauber, sees the work of the two organizations as being closely intertwined, and we will be looking to develop a Memorandum of Understanding in the future to clarify the situation.

InterChange members in ***Kisumu, Kenya***, and ***Jos, Nigeria*** and ***Somalia*** have also expressed interest in developing InterChange Local Centres.

## **Communication**

InterChange is an organization based on relationships, but because of the geographical distances that separate us, most of our communication is done over the internet through our listserve and our online organizing tool, Basecamp. We also use phone calls and Skype for our international

Board meetings, sometimes with less-than-ideal results, and we continue to search for better communication technology. We have found there is no substitute for face-to-face meeting for deepening our relationships and helping members get a better sense of each other's realities. A visit of InterChange president, Anne Goodman, and Toronto-area member, Jennifer Ball, to East Africa in July, with Kenyan Board member, David Macharia, joining them to visit Uganda, proved invaluable in building a foundation for the Board and the new local centres.

### **Education and Training**

Education and training remains a key focus of InterChange. We collected data on education expertise and needs through a survey (still available on our website) and discovered our members are working on and interested in a wide spectrum of education and training activities at all levels and in many locations, including schools, universities and the community; formal, non-formal and informal education; education aimed at peace literacy and at reconciliation; and courses and workshops using the arts, sports and other creative means.

The Vukovar Local Centre is working on courses for Workers in Areas of Regeneration, differentiated into three levels, as well as continuing to work on creating BA and MA programmes. They feel that onsite, online and blended programs each have their place in their work, and they are also looking to set up formal associations with educational institutions.

In the GTA, InterChange is working toward community workshops and courses with the focus on developing a culture of peace. They hope to build on a recent pilot project in a Toronto high school which involved immigrant students, mostly from conflict areas, their parents and the community. The GTA centre also continues to have ongoing involvement from graduate students, including those in the graduate Certificate in Community Healing and Peacebuilding.

In Kenya, InterChange we continue to have involvement in tertiary education across the country, both at the formal level and informally through the peace clubs, of which David Macharia, local centre coordinator serves as patron. The InterChange Uganda centre is involved in a wide number of formal and non-formal education and training activities.

### **InterChange Research and Projects**

InterChange research and other projects emerge from our members' interests and integrate with education, action, and community building. Over the past year, the *Food/Peace book* remained an area of interest, and *Diaspora Dialogues for Peacebuilding* continued as a broad focus area under which various projects and activities fit. Another focus was the development of a collaborative Participatory Action Research (PAR) to be done in the context of our international project on using elections as peacebuilding opportunities.

InterChange projects are listed on the website, along with the contact people and information on how to get involved.