

EEF - NET

News · Information · Discussions on Ecumenical Learning

Edited by the Education and Ecumenical Formation Staff of the World Council of Churches

No 16 / April 2005

*Christian
education
belongs ...
to the
whole church*

Dear Colleagues in Education and Ecumenical Formation

God, in your grace, transform the word - the theme of the Ninth Assembly of the WCC – is very significant for those of us involved in education and ecumenical formation. The essence of our work is transformation under the grace of God. Educational processes which only enable individuals and communities to be better informed or skilled may be useful. Forms of Christian nurture and formation, which are limited by the boundaries of Christian division, may be convenient for churches. However, in the light of the gospel, we must see such as ultimately deficient as they do not lead to the fullness and wholeness God offers us.

The WCC Assembly is a unique opportunity to learn. For delegates, the programme offers significant opportunities for engagement with one another. For others, there is still an opportunity to participate – the Mutirão. The first article describes how this works and the possibilities for participation. Please, if you are able, take advantage of this. If you have experiences of ecumenical formation, here is your opportunity to share them on a global stage.

*The WCC Study Process on Holistic Education came as a suggestion from the constituency before the last Assembly. We have reported on the progress of this study process in the pages of EEF-NET. Now we are able to announce, see Resources section, the publication of the **Holistic Education Resource Book** as one of the outcomes. We hope this will make a major contribution to the practice of educators in the ecumenical movement.*

One of the most significant events in which we have been involved was the launch of the Tamar Campaign for Africa. The issue of violence, particularly sexual, against women and children in our churches and society at large is one we must not ignore. The launch workshop reported in this issue was painful as the stories of women were told. It was also powerful as the contextual Bible study approach enabled participants to wrestle with the issue from the basis of faith.

We hope that the summary reports of the WCC Commission on Education and Ecumenical Formation and of the WCC staff working on the programme give you a picture of the aspirations, reflection and activities of the WCC. The Commission is as representative of denominations and regions as a group of 30 can be. All the members share one common feature that they have knowledge and experience of ecumenical formation in its many manifestations. Their work comes to an end at the Assembly so the publication of their report is a good opportunity to offer them the appreciation they deserve.

We have had several requests for additional copies of the supplement to the last issue of EEF-NET – Getting Ready – written to help you prepare for the Assembly. Further copies are available. You may also reproduce the material providing you acknowledge the source.

The education and ecumenical formation staff of the WCC

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EEF-NET is produced twice a year by the Education and Ecumenical Formation staff of the Mission and Ecumenical Formation team of World Council of Churches. Contributions of articles or use of material (quoting the source) are most welcome. Editorial board: Nyambura Njoroge, Simon Oxley, Tara Tautari, Editor: Simon Oxley. Editorial assistant: Judith Kocher. Spanish translation: Suecia & Oneida Méndez. Printed by: Imprimerie Arduino. Address: Education & Ecumenical Formation, World Council of Churches, P.O. Box 2100, 1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland. Tel: +41 22 791 6115 Fax: +42 22 710 2444 E-mail: simon.oxley@wcc-coe.org or judith.kocher@wcc-coe.org Web: <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/education/index-e.html>

***EEF-NET* is distributed free of charge. However, any contributions towards printing costs will be gratefully received (minimum US\$20 or equivalent)**

Cheques in the name of: World Council of Churches/*EEF-NET*, PO Box 2100, 1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland

Bank transfers to a World Council of Churches bank account (please indicate: "for *EEF-NET*"):

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Mutirão

Coming together to make a difference

What is the WCC Assembly?

The WCC assembly, held every seven or eight years, is the highest governing body of the World Council of Churches. The 9th assembly will be held in Porto Alegre, Brazil from 14-23 February 2006, around the theme "God in your grace, transform the world." Delegates from each of WCC's 342 member churches will come together to evaluate the Council's past work, to reflect together on the theme and to provide guidance and leadership for the Council's future work.

But just as the ecumenical movement is much broader than the WCC, so too the assembly is an opportunity for the larger ecumenical family to come together. Representatives of related organisations, of other churches and other faiths, advisors, and guests will be present as well as a large number of people from all regions that are interested in supporting and learning more about the ecumenical movement. In addition, many Brazilians and Latin Americans will come to the assembly.

While the number of official delegates will be relatively small (less than 800), the *Mutirão* will enable much broader participation in the life of the ecumenical movement. As an integral part of the assembly, the *Mutirão* will provide a space for workshops, celebrations, seminars and exhibits for the whole assembly community.

What is the Mutirão?

The word *Mutirão* comes from a Brazilian word meaning a meeting place and an opportunity to work together for a common purpose. In Brazil, for example, people in poor communities sometimes "make a *mutirão*" to build a house together. They ensure that there is the needed expertise on how to build a house and then the community works together to realise a concrete objective.

The *Mutirão* at the assembly will provide a space for reflection, celebration, and exhibits. A full programme will provide a rich array of offerings on many different issues organised by churches and related organisations in all parts of the world. The *Mutirão* will have a particular Latin American and Caribbean focus with many participants from the region and will have a special focus on youth.

Who will participate in the Mutirão?

The *Mutirão* is open to any person, congregation or organisation that wishes to accompany the assembly in a spirit of ecumenical sharing, celebration and formation.

What will the Mutirão offer to the Assembly?

The *Mutirão* will offer workshops and seminars, cultural events and exhibits to all

participants in the assembly. It will provide a space for home groups to meet. The *Mutirão* will provide an opportunity to deepen substantive reflections on the theme of the assembly and the plenaries presented in the first half of the assembly. Delegates are encouraged to participate in the *Mutirão* offerings and to bring these reflections into the decision-making process.

As an integral part of the assembly, the workshop offerings in the *Mutirão* are intended to supplement and accompany the assembly deliberations. Assembly insights and deliberations are expected to help guide the work of the many churches and ecumenical organisations that will participate in the *Mutirão*.

What will participants in the *Mutirão* do?

- Pray together with all assembly participants in morning and evening prayers as part of the assembly community and participate in worship services at midday
- Engage in daily Bible studies around the assembly theme
- Participate in some of the 15 workshops organised from 12.30-15h every day
- Attend seminars on ecumenical formation for those who are new – and not-so-new – to ecumenism
- Celebrate being together in Latin America by participating in programmes of music, dance and drama and by joining Brazilian youth in the Youth Space
- Participate in the Women's Space being organised by Brazilian women
- Follow the assembly plenaries on economic justice, unity, religious pluralism,

the Decade to Overcome Violence, Latin America and the theme: "God in your grace, transform the world" as well as business sessions

- Worship in Brazilian churches and participate in the Latin American celebration on Sunday
- Browse exhibits prepared by churches, networks, ecumenical organisations, seminaries, and many other organisations
- Have the opportunity to meet well-known theologians, grassroots Christian activists and many others from all over the world.

What can you offer to the *Mutirão*?

You can come to the *Mutirão* to participate in the many diverse offerings. You can bring a group from your congregation, your agency, your school or your organisation. If you would like, we will try to provide a room at the *Mutirão* for your group, to serve as "home space" throughout the assembly.

You can propose to facilitate a workshop or seminar or cultural offering or exhibit. These will be organised by people coming to the *Mutirão* and offer an opportunity for reflection, discussion and celebration. Forms are available to propose a workshop or an exhibit. While the deadline for workshop proposals is 1st July 2005, you are encouraged to submit these as soon as possible. Decisions will be communicated by 1st September at the latest.

In deciding on workshops, attention will be given to ensuring a diversity of offerings as well as to regional and gender balance. Proposals from traditionally marginalized

groups are particularly encouraged. If there are several proposals on a given issue, the proposers will be encouraged to work together in putting together a single workshop or to offer an alternative proposal.

Workshops for the Mutirão should:

- Encourage open exchange of experiences and ideas. Participatory and creative methodologies are encouraged
- Be proposed or endorsed by a WCC member church, church-related organisation, a recognised ecumenical partner, or by WCC
- Address key issues facing the churches and the ecumenical movement in today's world and should
- Relate to the theme of the assembly: "God in your grace, transform the world"; there is particular interest in workshops which explore alternatives to the present world order and/or which are action-oriented
- Include youth perspectives to the extent possible; priority will be given to workshops initiated by youth.

How can you participate in the Mutirão?

To participate in the *Mutirão*, complete a registration form and return it to the assembly office. The assembly office will arrange hotel accommodation for you and include you in all mailings about the assembly. While WCC is able to provide subsidies for only a very few participants in the *Mutirão*, participants are encouraged to be creative in seeking funds to enable their participation.

The registration fee for the assembly ranges from USD100 to USD350. The cost of a shared hotel room is about USD30 per day and 3 meals cost about USD15. The organisers are working to find lower-cost alternative lodging, particularly for young people.

How can you learn more about the Mutirão?

To propose a workshop or exhibit or to request more information about the *Mutirão*, contact mutirao@wcc-coe.org. Workshop proposals from Latin America will be forwarded to the appropriate bodies in the region.

Tamar Campaign in Africa

Violence against women and children is an evil which makes churches uncomfortable, not least because we have to face the fact that this takes place within the church community as well as in the wider society. The attitude may be of silence, denial or even of placing the blame for the violence on the victim. This kind of violence is as much the concern of the Decade to Overcome Violence as large scale conflicts.

The Tamar Campaign addresses this in the context of Africa by using a process of contextual Bible study. A workshop to launch the Tamar Campaign across Africa was held at the end of February 2005 in Limuru, Kenya.

The main objective of the workshop was twofold:

1. to raise critical awareness of the wide range of increased violence against children and women and in particular the heinous crime of sexual violence on female bodies of all ages and its extreme forms in war-torn situations in Africa;
2. to introduce the methodology and strategy used in Tamar Campaign to break the chains of conspiracy of silence and to end sexual violence through contextual bible studies that bring together socially engaged biblical scholars, theologians and pastors with "ordinary readers" of the Bible (literate or not), who share their resources in order to find empowering and liberating ways of living.

The Tamar Campaign, so called because it is based on the rape narrative of Tamar by half-brother Ammon (2 Samuel 13:1-22), is the brain child of Ujamaa Center for Community Development and Research formerly known as Institute of the Study of the Bible and Worker Ministry Project (ISB-WMP) at the School of Religion and Theology in the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

The workshop had four major components:

- Contextual bible studies on 2 Samuel 13: 1-22; 2 Samuel 11: 1-27 and Mark 5: 21-6:1 and session on different kinds of violence against children and women and case studies on rape, incest and child sexual molestation.
- Launching of the Campaign in Africa by planting 30 trees on the grounds of St Paul's, Limuru, the host and a dinner for about 200 people from churches, NGOs and government officials in Nairobi City.
- Worshipping in local churches in Limuru area and Nairobi City with the opportunity to preach and/or speak about the Campaign.
- Sessions on the way forward and evaluation on the above activities.

Each morning begun with devotions and we closed the workshop with an Eucharistic worship service. Overall the participants appreciated the opportunity to engage in such a difficulty topic that is surrounded by

deep secrecy, conspiracy of silence, denial and ignorance despite the fact that sexual violence happens more often in Christians homes, manse, churches and church-related institutions than it is acknowledged. There was an overwhelming agreement that for contextual bible studies to be effective on any topic proper training of facilitators must take place and resources on the methodology be produced to accompany the training.

Fortunately for the workshop participants, Gerald West, one of the facilitators and initiators of Tamar Campaign had produced a resource manual: *Doing Contextual Bible Study* to provide a sample of nine bible studies shaped extensively by communities of the poor and marginalized in South Africa that come from real life contexts. Additional books and articles were made available to each participant to introduce them to basic hermeneutical and pedagogical principles of contextual bible study and the wide range of violence against children and women.

In addition to the symbol of trees signifying the beginning of a new journey for all those who will (and who have already) benefit from Tamar Campaign, we also used the symbol of light (candle) and life (water) at the dinner gathering as a way of suggesting a variety of symbols that people can use to launch the Campaign in their local context.

Some glimpses from the workshop are:

- During the bible study on King David and Bathsheba (wife of Uriah) participants were able to name this narrative as a rape case instead of the traditional interpretation of adultery. Both this narrative and that of Tamar and Ammon, demonstrated that a number of people are usually involved in the rape of one woman and how the crime also leads to further

violence – creating a conspiracy of secrecy and silence and a chain of violence.

- At the tree planting launch a sample of eight cases of rape reported in Kenyan newspapers in January and February 2005 alone were read out loud while two women held the newspaper pages with these stories and pictures. This was a powerful moment of the reality in Kenya (a peacetime context) to the extent that some participants were overcome with emotions and were unable to plant the trees because they were made to relive their own story.
- At the dinner we were given a quiz by the Nairobi Women's Hospital (a private hospital that has a center that provides services to sexually violated women, children and men - about 5% of all cases - free of charge if they report within 72 hours) on sexual violence that was enlightening as well as very shocking to learn that 45% of cases that are reported at the hospital are of girls under the age of 15.

Prior to the workshop the planning committee hosted by St. Paul's College did a lot of promotional work on the launching of the Campaign among the churches and NGOs (and UN agencies) that focus on gender-based violence in Nairobi as a way of creating partnerships and alliances beyond church institutions. The workshop provided ecumenical learning and educational skills. However, the greatest challenge is to raise funds to support training of facilitators and to encourage theological educators and theologians to develop relevant curricula and liturgies for churches and teaching institutions to keep the vision alive. Even the deputy commissioner of police in Kenya made a commitment to take sexual violence in the country more seriously and in collaboration with churches.

The workshop is part of follow up from September 2002 Conference on Theological Education and Ecumenical Formation with the theme "Journey of Hope in Africa" that was sponsored by the then Education and Ecumenical Formation (EEF) Team. It is a fulfilment of one of the commitments in the plan of action on the "contextualization of theological education" in the context of increased child sexual molestation, incest and rape in Africa and the part this growing heinous crime plays in the spread of HIV & AIDS disease.

The workshop was the collaborative work of FECCLAHA (Fellowship of Christian Councils of Churches in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa) and St. Paul's United Theological College, Limuru, Kenya and WCC and in partnership with Ujamaa Center for Biblical and Theological Community Development and Research. 45 participants (25 women and 20 men) and facilitators from 20 African countries south of Sahara attended, among them lay theologians, administrators of theological institutions, pastors and social scientists. The participants were drawn from a wide range of WCC member churches as well as Pentecostal churches.

Resources:

Amnesty International. *Kenya: Rape - The Invisible Crime*, March 2002.

ECA-WIDNET (Eastern and Central Africa Women-in-Development Network) *Violence against Women: Trainers Manual*, Paulines Publications Africa, 1997.

Ministerial Formation, No. 103/July 2004 & 104/January 2005, WCC.

Echoes: Justice, Peace and Creation News, No.22/2004, WCC

Umlilo, Thandeki. *Little Girl, Arise: New Life after Incest and Abuse*. Cluster Publications, 2002.

West, Gerald. *The Academy of the Poor: Towards a Dialogical Reading of the Bible*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2003.

West, Gerald. *Contextual Bible Study*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1993.

This article is based on a report prepared by Nyambura Njoroge.

Marks of Peacemaking

WCC Scholars studying in the US meet to reflect on their experience

It is always a joy to have the opportunity to meet with people and to share common concerns, to learn about each other's lives, to be in community together! In our busy lives, its not always easy to find the time to do this, and yet amidst reports to write, essays that needed to be finished etc – a group of WCC scholars based in the USA, gathered in St Louis, Missouri, April 2005, to attend the annual meeting. The ten students sponsored under the WCC Scholarships Programme came from Uganda, Romania, the Philippines, Kenya, India, Indonesia and the Solomon Islands.

"It was such a wonderful experience to feel as one community journeying together in the ecumenical boat. I came. You came as well. Suddenly we realised that Ecumenism is me and you, as miracle children of God."

*Renemsongla Ozukum,
(WCC Scholar, Nagaland- India)*

What are the marks of peacemaking in the life of the churches? This question was highlighted continually throughout our time together. Indeed, the theme of this gathering focussed on issues of peacemaking in the context of the ongoing *Decade to Overcome Violence*. The discussions included reflections on peacemaking in our home countries; peacemaking in the USA; and how our scholars' ideas and views are challenged and changed by their experiences in their host country. Being 'strangers' in a foreign land brings its own challenges where we must make sense of a different social and cultural world. Our meeting together allowed for a deeper reflection on the students lives in the USA, and

gave us a space to begin to unpack these experiences.

"In the midst of my cultural, linguistic, spiritual and intellectual struggles I owe this (Union Theological Seminary, New York) community in the way they try to be constantly respectful, to let each member to unreservedly discern and articulate their own perspective...however, this process is of course, not free from tensions which I consider constructive, to fortify my energy to walk through this cross-cultural odyssey."

*Lidya K. Tandirerung,
(WCC Scholar, Indonesia)*

The gathering was also blessed with an abundance of gifts! Gifts of hospitality, hosted as we were by Rev. Dr Diane Windler and Eden Theological Seminary. The gift of worship, both at Eden and in local churches. Gifts in the presence of resource people, including the WCC President for North America, the Rev. Dr Bernice Powell Jackson, who preached at the opening worship, and the Rev. Dr Michael Kinnamon who moderated the work sessions on the four areas of peacemaking: family, congregation, denomination and nation.

"Rev Dr Diane and your team at Eden, thanks for your care. Eden Seminary thank you for your hospitality. We felt good and received...our two guest speakers on Saturday, we appreciate the skills you imparted into us on 'peace making.' God help us to implement them."

(David Kataate – Uganda)

From the beginning of the meeting it was apparent that thoughts of home were never far from our minds. Of particular significance for us was remembering families and friends who had been, and who were now coping with, the effects of the Tsunami in Asia and parts of Africa. Our worship reflected our solidarity with churches involved in post-tsunami reconstruction and we shared stories of the suffering and hope found in such situations.

The sharing of stories was a powerful tool of communication, giving us glimpses into a scholar's life journey, their dreams and aspirations. From these stories, we were conscious of the sharp contrasts in the societies in which we live. While some churches live amidst abject poverty, pandemic diseases, corrupted states and economic disintegration, others battle against the 'devaluing of traditional values,' spiritual poverty, excessive affluence and unbridled militarism. Mission and witness amidst religious plurality, the role of women in culture and society, the importance of education and ecumenical formation – these were just a few of the things discussed! And enhancing each conversation was the diversity in the makeup of the group of scholars. Men and women of different ages and different denominations, lay and clergy, married and single, some who had left families behind to come to the USA, some who had left their countries for the first time. Each had a story to tell, a song to share, a prayer to offer.

Kapayapaan

K-apayapaan, shatipah, shanty, damai

A-madi, ngentitchen, pyung-hwa, penghwon,

P-ing-an, yim juig, santi and shalom,

A-ll of these terms are equivalent to the English term, 'peace.'

Y-et, it seems that despite our desire to have peace, peace is hard to attain.

A-round the world there are different forms of violence;

P-lenty of people don't experience a 'positive' or a 'negative' peace.

A-midst the prayers and efforts of peacemakers and proponents of peace,

A-ggression, hostility, and different forms of injustice are still prevalent.

N-evertheless, I'm still hoping that the time will come that 'humanity shall live in peace.'

*Rosalyn 'Sally' M.Laylo
(WCC Scholar, Philippines)*

What was particularly impressive in this meeting, was witnessing the 'mindful listening' of the group, giving each speaker due respect and careful consideration for what they were sharing. In this manner, a sense of community was quickly built. It also helped to have a number of students and WCC staff who had attended the previous year's gathering. This continuity was instrumental to the success of the meeting.

The writer Goethe, once said that 'We must always change, renew, rejuvenate ourselves; otherwise, we harden.' One of the great things about being around the WCC scholars was seeing their openness to change, and their commitment to constant renewal in their own ecumenical journeys. The challenge remains how to translate experiences gained abroad, and bring them to bear once we return home, to take up our work in our churches once more.

"Creator God, may our discussions at this gathering prove useful in your sight. Inspire us in the ecumenical movement to remain on the move, and keep us alert to the ways in which we may be empowered by your Grace, to be instruments of peace and transformation in our families, congregations, denominations and nations."

*Closing Worship
(WCC Scholars gathering 2005)*

This report was prepared by Tara Tautari who is responsible for the WCC Scholarships Programme.

Reflection on the World Forum on Theology and Liberation

Rose Wu

As many liberation theologians pointed out, the World Social Forum has been a symbol of hope and empowerment for activists throughout the world who search for an alternative to the present manifestation of globalisation based on neo-liberalism. Through the inspiration of the World Social Forum, the first World Forum on Theology and Liberation was brought into being this year. The forum was successful in gathering almost 200 Christian theologians from different continents under a theme with the same spirit as the World Social Forum: "With the Help of All Religions, a Better World Is Possible."

The forum believes that since we live in a globalised era geographic boundaries should not influence the liberating process of the poor, for we all live in the same world ruled by the same system. Therefore, either we survive together, or we will all be oppressed together. There is no other choice: liberation is necessary worldwide and so is theology.

I would like to highlight five significant points as my personal reflection about the forum below.

1. At the forum, the central emphasis of the "option for the poor and oppressed" of liberation theology was confirmed again and again. Different liberation theologians noted that the essential spirit of all liberation theologies must emerge from the authentic struggle and wisdom of those marginalised in our societies—women, the poor, sexual

minorities, the disabled, aboriginal people, ethnic minorities, migrant workers, refugees, etc. Thus, the activities of liberation theologies should move beyond the ivory tower of academic circles. From the perspective of liberation theology, the poor and oppressed are not merely victims: they are God's instruments to enable us to see the new horizon of God's Kingdom, which is filled with hope, justice and peace.

2. Another concern, which drew much attention of the forum's participants, was how theology can help to create interdisciplinary theoretical work on alternatives to the current ideological hegemony of neo-liberalism. Presently, the majority of economists in universities, institutes and government departments, as well as the mass media, continue to champion a neo-liberal dogma that economically, ideologically and politically reinforces a hegemonic power system. Thus, a good deal of discussion focused on ways theology can play a role in strengthening interdisciplinary research and alternative socio-economic models.

Today movements of indigenous people and others at the grassroots, environmentalists and feminists are already generating a new political culture based on spiritual and social visions from their traditions. They challenge us to live in a world with a plurality of cultures; they demand justice as a prerequisite for a meaningful form of human solidarity; they urge us to commit to a communitarian and cooperative system that binds us together in order to survive.

The events of the World Social Forum during the past four years have been major expressions of this emerging solidarity. These are networks of people, which are driven by a spirituality that affirms life. These anti-hegemonic alliances, both globally and at the local level, need to be the locale of doing theology.

3. The voices of women at the forum did not end at the conclusion of certain presentations. Rather, they were like a symphony brought forward by women of diverse traditions and cultures that significantly challenged the patriarchal nature of Christian traditions as well as mainstream liberation theology. An Indian Dalit feminist theologian, Evangeline Anderson-Rajkumar, put forward a critical statement during her presentation: "The Church ought to own the task of gender justice as a core faith task and treat it as a priority issue if it truly wants transformation. . . . When we dream of a theology for another possible world, the engendering of theology, our mission, our administration, our leadership and our whole way of life becomes a core necessity. The engendering process cannot be a concept. It has to take concrete root and involves critical engagement in the struggle for liberation and justice." On the other hand, there were voices urging an expansion of the notion of gender to include a wider range of sexual identities, such as gay, lesbian, bi/transsexual, etc. We also need criteria that keep images of God from being distorted by machismo and domination. One criteria is compassion for, and presence with, the people.

4. Another powerful voice at the forum came from the indigenous peoples of Latin America. Their ritual form of presentation expressed the deep yearning of humanity to be in relation to the oneness of God's Creation. This reminds us to ask the profound question of who we are as earth

creatures, as members of integrated ecosystems that constitute the whole earth community.

5. The last concern, which was shared among the speakers as well as in group discussions, was the issue of interreligious dialogue and cooperation. We all agreed that the future of theology must adopt an inclusive model of dialogue and communication with people of other faiths in order to build another world more strongly rooted in peace and justice.

To conclude this article, I want to share with you a story, which was told to me by a sister from Kenya at the forum. She told me that because of poverty and social stigmatisation countless HIV/AIDS patients do not receive proper treatment and die in Africa. As a result, many orphans are left behind to live their lives in poverty and isolation. In order to break the prevailing indifferent attitude, she and some other women began to take the children home and treat them like their own children. She said the victimisation of these orphans is not only being poor; the most terrible thing, she said, is society's negative and discriminative attitude toward AIDS victims. For the orphans, another world is not only possible; it has been realised through the action of these women in Kenya. By opening their homes to the children, they not only serve the basic needs of the poor, but they also break the social stigmatisation of AIDS victims and illustrate how we can live out the true spirit of Christian hospitality for the most marginalised and oppressed people of our society.

*Rose Wu is Director, Hong Kong
Christian Institute*

*This report is an extract from the ACISCA,
Association of Christian Institutes for
Social Concern in Asia, E-NEWSLETTER,
Easter and Spring 2005 - www.acisca.org*

Resources

Holistic Education Resource Book Learning and Teaching in an Ecumenical Context

Eds. Peter Schreiner, Esther Banev, Simon Oxley

A holistic approach to education can sharpen a critical view of the dominant approach to education that is only mind-centred and neglects other dimensions of the human being. This resource book includes texts, comments, and extracts about holistic education from various regions of the world, different areas of concern and many pedagogical approaches and projects. All the material contributes to a holistic approach to education where a focus on interconnectedness and educating the whole person in community is at the centre.

Whilst a holistic perspective on reality and on education is not new, there is a new recognition of its significance at a time when the dominant worldview clearly shows its limits. The Holistic Education Resource Book contributes to a dialogue between education philosophy and religious education, spiritual education and the search for peace and justice, reconciliation and healing as a yearning of all human beings.

The book comes out of the ecumenical movement and is one outcome of the Holistic Education Study Process of the World Council of Churches. Its editors are two members of the WCC's Commission on Education and Ecumenical Formation, Peter Schreiner and Esther Banev, and a WCC staff member, Simon Oxley. In particu-

lar, Peter Schreiner, who works for the Comenius Institute, Germany, undertook much of the work of seeing the book into print.

Different types of texts are presented, some theoretical, others practical, coming out of concrete experiences in a specific context.

Getting Started

The first section, Getting Started, introduces the concepts of holistic education and the WCC Study Process on Holistic Education. There are questions and answers about holistic education and the eight principles coming out of the study process.

Ideas and Perspectives

The second section on Ideas and Perspectives opens with an article looking at contributions to holistic education from different theories.

Then there are four specially commissioned articles on holistic education from a *Christian perspective* written out of different traditions and educational experiences:

Holistic Education: Sign Posts and Warnings; Holistic Education in a Biblical Perspective; The Pursuit of Wisdom: Holistic Education in the Classical, Biblical and Patristic Tradition; Educating the Whole Person: an Orthodox Perspective.

Looking at *educational perspectives*, the tensions between transmission and transformation, banking and liberation (Freire), and teaching and learning are examined.

The final part contains twelve articles and texts on *educational approaches with holistic elements*, for example: spiritual education; godly play; global education; critical pedagogy, feminist pedagogy; teaching from the heart.

Ideas into Action

The third section, Ideas into Action, contains an analysis of a questionnaire sent to those who are involved in various kinds of holistic education to examine their aims, values and practices. The full responses of four selected case studies are given and a description of some projects which could be described as taking a holistic approach.

Conclusion

At the end of the book, there is information about selected books and related websites.

The Epilogue states:

Through the theology and educational theory and through the case studies, we have tried to demonstrate that a holistic approach to education is required by Christian faith and our nature as human beings. It is not just another methodology,

which may come in and out of fashion but a basic approach which can be expressed in a wide variety of ways appropriate to particular contexts. A holistic approach to education is necessary in every stage of formal education and should be the basis of informal education. It is essential for learning that involves whole people in community.... This resource book is not the end of a process. It is an invitation and an encouragement to start or to continue to do education holistically.

Holistic Education Resource Book: Learning and Teaching in an Ecumenical Context is published by Waxmann, Münster/New York/München/Berlin, 2005, ISBN 3-8309-1451-2.

We can make available, free of charge, individual copies of the Holistic Education Resource Book to certain educational institutions and church/ecumenical education offices. Please contact: education@wcc-coe.org

Eliminating Corporal Punishment Moving Toward Constructive Child Discipline

The Decade to Overcome Violence is concerned with personal violence as much as larger scale conflict. UNESCO has produced a book, which will help us reflect on corporal punishment as violence being done to children.

To discipline or punish through physical harm is clearly a violation of the most basic of human rights. Yet in at least sixty states, beating children with sticks, belts and other implements, and deliberately humiliating them in other ways, remains an authorised part of the school system, according to a new UNESCO publication on how to eliminate corporal punishment.

It must also be said that many Christians and people of other faiths regard corporal punishment as being a divinely ordained right of parents (and schools who stand in loco parentis) over children. That 'the rod and reproof give wisdom' (Proverbs 29.15) is firmly embedded in parts of faith systems. This publication will not assist in the theological arguments but does offer constructive approaches to discipline which make physical harm unnecessary.

This publication clarifies the human rights imperative and logical dictates of child development knowledge for eliminating corporal punishment of children. It provides guidance for selecting and applying constructive disciplinary practices that respect the human dignity of children. The publication was commissioned by UNESCO's Education Sector.

The publication includes three major sections: 1 The Human Rights Imperative for Ending All Corporal Punishment of Children; 2 Corporal Punishment: Prevalence, Predictors and Implications for Child Behaviour and Development; and 3 The Way Forward to Constructive Child Discipline.

1. The human rights imperative for ending all corporal punishment

The section outlines in detail the human rights standards that require prohibition of all corporal punishment. Hitting people violates their fundamental rights to respect for their physical integrity and human dignity, as set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Children are people too and equal holders of human rights.

This is confirmed in the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child, which is also the first international instrument to require protection of children from "all forms of physical or mental violence" (article 19). The Committee on the Rights of the Child, Treaty Body for the Convention, has consistently interpreted it as requiring prohibition of all corporal punishment, including in the family. It has emphasised this in its concluding observations on reports from more than 130 states, in the conclusions of two days of General Discussion on violence against children (in 2000 and 2001) and in its first General Comment on "The Aims of Education".

Condemnation of corporal punishment on the basis of the child's human rights, quoting the Convention and the Committee on the Rights of the Child, has been expressed by other human rights bodies and by judgments of high-level courts in all continents.

Abolition of corporal punishment in schools and other institutions and in penal systems for young offenders is accelerating in all continents and is complete in Europe (although enforcement may not be consistent). The banning of corporal punishment by parents and all caregivers, begun in Sweden 50 years ago, has spread to at least 12 countries.

2. Corporal Punishment: prevalence, predictors and implications for child behaviour and development

Corporal Punishment is counterproductive, relatively ineffective, dangerous and harmful according to research findings.

Corporal punishment has not been found to be an effective means of achieving positive long-term developmental outcomes, such as moral internalisation or social problem solving. Corporal punishment threatens the physical well being of the child. Physical harm is a repeated risk, particularly for young children, and the more often it is used the more likely it is to progress to severe forms of violence.

Corporal punishment has been found to be consistently related to poor mental health; including depression, unhappiness, anxiety, and feelings of hopelessness in children and youth. Corporal punishment is a risk factor for relationship problems, including impairment of parent-child relationships,

increased levels of aggression and anti-social behaviour in children, raised thresholds for defining an act as violent, and perpetration of violence as an adult, including abuse of one's family members.

Factors most strongly associated with use of corporal punishment by a caregiver are approval of corporal punishment, experience of physical punishment as a child, anger reactions to conflict with the child; attributions of the child's behaviour to wilful defiance, and marital and parenting stress.

3. The way forward to constructive discipline

Established human rights standards require abolition of all corporal punishment, and the evolving understanding of child development and social environments add strong arguments against corporal punishment and other destructive punitive practices, including psychological maltreatment. The Convention on the Rights of the Child provides a vision and accompanying set of standards for the goals of child behaviour and development that have achieved international and cross-cultural acceptance and commitment.

The following principles, derived by combining principles in the Convention on the Rights of the Child with understanding of child development, are offered to guide the selection and development of constructive discipline practices:

- Respect the child's dignity
- Develop pro-social behaviour, self-discipline, and character
- Maximise the child's active participation

- Respect the child's developmental needs and quality of life
- Respect the child's motivational characteristics and life views
- Assure fairness and transformative justice
- Promote solidarity

In this section, an international panel of experts presents descriptions some of the constructive discipline orientations and practices known to be applied in Asia, Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and South America. They include: involving learners and their parents in decisions about codes of conduct and associated practices; providing guidance in the selection of positive models in peers and classmates; family meetings and inter-generational dialogue; rendering services to the community to rectify rule infractions; exploring ethical-moral meanings and implications in current events. Additionally, two experts on Indigenous peoples provide descriptions of constructive child rearing and discipline orientations and related practices for peoples they know well, including the provision to young children of a mentor among the older youth who gently guides them into the practices and norms of good behaviour appropriate for their age and status and reinforcement of connectedness to each other and the community through guided observation and the words and advice of elders.

Further information on a wide variety of constructive discipline practices is provided by examples from and reference to Internet sources (compiled by the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children: www.endcorporalpunishment.org)

Conclusion

The conclusion of the book is that corporal punishment of children breaches children's fundamental human rights. It has been found to be a threat to the healthy development and welfare of children and their societies, and an ineffective form of discipline or control. Constructive, non-violent, child discipline is needed. It should be formulated and applied in a manner that respects the human dignity and rights of the child and understanding of child development. Positive, non-violent ways of discipline and child rearing are being promoted and applied in all regions and cultures. Supportive information, resources and guidance for achieving constructive discipline and child rearing are available. They should be promoted and made readily accessible to families, schools and communities throughout the world.

This article is based on material produced by UNESCO – www.unesco.org

More Good Practice Guides in Ecumenical Learning

Ideas to help us learn together more effectively

Three new Good Practice Guides have been added to the series.

One is in the General Principles area - #6 All Ages. This raises the question why we so often divide up people according to age when engaged in learning activities in the churches. There may be times when this is appropriate but there are times when everyone would benefit by learning together across the ages. Intergenerational learning should not just be the young learning from the old but vice-versa too. Ecumenical learning by its nature should be for everyone.

The other two are in the area of Specific Methodologies - #24 The Talking Circle and #26 Visiting places of worship.

The Talking Circle draws on a living experience of some First Nations people in North America. The Circle offers a model of: equality; everyone having a voice; listening and speaking; entering into relationships where reciprocity is sought and mutuality lived; welcoming all contributions; honouring all voices; affirming a diversity of wisdom; decision making with respect to the whole community; the foundation of building community. The Talking Circle is based on respect for one another and the whole creation. It can move us away from confrontational or antagonistic styles of discourse into a participation in the circle of life.

Participating in a visit to a place of worship other than one's own can be an enriching experience. Observing rituals in a different tradition allows the participant to engage in

the tradition with all five senses. Experiential exercises such as these also allow participants to move outside the "theoretical" understanding of a new tradition and into a fuller appreciation of "the other". The Guide gives advice on preparing for a visit with the hosts and with the participants, and on carrying it out.

The current list of Good Practice Guides in Ecumenical Learning is:

General Principles

1. Beginning where we are
2. Fully involved
3. Speaking for ourselves
4. Creating the right environment
5. High expectations
6. All ages

Specific Methodologies

21. Faith based debates
22. Brainstorming
23. Simulations and role plays
24. The Talking Circle
26. Visiting places of worship

The Good Practice Guides in Ecumenical Learning can be found on www.ecuspace.net Click on *Contributions* and then on *by issue*. From the list, click on *Ecumenical Formation* and then on *Practical Tool*.

Global Campaign for Education – website

The Global Campaign for Education promotes education as a basic human right, and mobilises public pressure on governments and the international community to fulfil their promises to provide free, compulsory public basic education for all people; in particular for children, women and all disadvantaged, deprived sections of society.

The campaign is driven by the conviction that quality education for all is achievable, and by the concern for the immense costs of failure. The Global Campaign for Education believes that in an increasingly knowledge-based economy, exclusion from education will translate into growing poverty, inequality and deprivation.

The website contains news and analysis of education and downloadable resources, which include:

- Girls can't wait: Why girls' education matters, and how to make it happen now
- Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals
- Partnerships for Girls' Education
- Life skills-based education for HIV prevention: A critical analysis

Visit www.campaignforeducation.org

Report of the WCC Commission on Education and Ecumenical Formation

24-29 November 2004 at the Seminario Evangélico de Teología,

Matanzas, Cuba

The meeting was held at SET, an ecumenical seminary, which embodies the values, promoted by the Commission of contextual and holistic ecumenical formation. The Commissioners welcomed visitors to their sessions representing the Cuban churches and council of churches. Meetings were held with the faculty and students of SET and with Cuba's Central Committee member responsible for religious affairs. Daily worship was supported by the SET liturgy group around the running theme of seeds. The Commission was concerned that those African members who were able to attend were prevented from doing so because of difficulties in obtaining transit visas.

The process of the meeting (conducted in an open circle and in small groups) began with Commissioners reflecting on their own experience and understanding of ecumenical formation. Each of the three programme sections of the staff report were then discussed. Issues emerging from Commissioners and staff were identified, systematised and prioritised. Commissioners finally evaluated the experience and work of the Commission.

The Commission affirmed the significance of ecumenical formation for the future of the ecumenical movement and the aspects of that currently being given priority in the WCC's Programme. In doing so, it was

recognised that ecumenical formation is not simply about understanding ecumenism but transformation of attitudes and relationships for individuals and churches. This view is strengthened by the theme of the 9th Assembly – God, in your grace, transform the world. Concern was expressed that some in the ecumenical movement want ecumenical formation, which will facilitate co-operation but leave them unchanged.

The specific advice of the Commission was grouped under four headings:

1. Relating to ongoing activities

- ▶ Continue to collect and disseminate stories, which demonstrate successful outcomes of ecumenical formation.
- ▶ The external evaluation of the Scholarships programme established for 2005 needs to develop criteria for success, consider the benefits of intra and inter-regional placements and assess the effectiveness of National Correspondents. (In regard to the latter, the situation in some countries was felt to be unsatisfactory. However, it was recognised that the system of National Correspondents should not be terminated until a potentially more effective process for local validation and prioritisation had been found.)

- ▶ Continue to support opportunities for women especially in ecumenical theological education and the award of scholarships.
- ▶ Learning from our neighbours – both in the sense of ecumenical formation within the Christian community and interfaith education – must remain a priority.
- ▶ The publication of the Holistic Education Resource Book (joint project with the Comenius Institute, Germany) in 2005 should be used to promote holistic approaches in ecumenical formation.
- ▶ New strategies for funding are required.
 - (1) For theological education through Ecumenical Theological Education and Scholarships, the efforts of programme staff (e.g. the Scholarships Round Table meeting) have failed to address the severe imbalance of funding for theological studies as opposed to those which can be described as development. The actual and potential role of pastors in community development is not understood as development. This now requires higher level advocacy by the leadership of the WCC.
 - (2) For Scholarships, the development of an alumni network was suggested.

2. Relating to particular challenges

- ▶ The prevalence of fundamentalism in churches and in society requires an educational response in terms of research, awareness raising and the development of learning processes, which offer broader worldviews.
- ▶ A dialogue between theologies and pedagogies, already happening in a few places, needs to be encouraged and engaged with.
- ▶ There should be a strong relationship between ecumenical formation and spiritual formation, an increasingly well documented area of theory and practice.
- ▶ Recognising the urgent need and experiencing the approach of the location of the meeting, ecological concerns should be a significant dimension of ecumenical formation.
- ▶ Expertise developed through our programmatic activities should be shared more widely than the immediate context of the participants.

3. Relating to the discipline of ecumenical theological education and ecumenical formation

An initiative should be taken by the education and ecumenical formation staff to relate effective educational methods, curriculum development and the training of teachers for contextual and creative ecumenical theological education and ecumenical formation. In theological education, faculty is often appointed for their academic specialism or pastoral experience with little regard for their potential as educators. They are, therefore, ill equipped to develop appropriate curricula or effective methods. It was noted that there are a number of places in different regions with good practice in this respect. WCC should draw on this experience.

4. Relating to emerging proposals for further consideration

- ▶ A process of ecumenical formation for church leaders could be developed involving group exposure/reflection visits.

- ▶ The potential of Central Committee meetings, especially for the new Committee appointed following Porto Alegre, for more intentional ecumenical formation of its members should be explored.
- ▶ Appropriate ways of and policies for enabling the full participation of people with disabilities should be developed.
- ▶ For Scholarships, the further use of block grants based on the evaluated experience with the Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation, Zambia should be considered for partner institutions in other regions.
- ▶ For Ecumenical Theological Education, the value of regionally based consultants has been demonstrated by the experience in Asia/Pacific, Central & Eastern Europe and Latin America/Caribbean. The Commission, therefore, advocates the appointment of a consultant for Africa/Middle East.
- ▶ For Ecumenical Theological Education, the Commission believes that the time is right for a professional external evaluation similar to that to be undertaken for Scholarships.

At the end of its meeting, the Commission evaluated the experience of its work since Harare following the request of the Programme Committee. This is reported separately.

Reflecting on the implications of the 2003 merger of the Education and Ecumenical Formation and the Mission and Evangelism staff teams and looking to the future, the Commission adopted the following statement:

The Commission affirms the centrality of education and ecumenical formation as one of the primary means to preserve and enhance the present and future health of the ecumenical movement. The Commission wishes to say that it sees no closer relation of its work to Mission and Evangelism than to any part of the Council's work.

As the ecumenical movement takes a new shape in the coming decades, the need to form future clergy and lay leaders to think and act ecumenically is critical. While co-operation with all programme areas is essential, the necessity for education and ecumenical formation to be visible, both through a distinct staff and advisory structure, is vital.

The Challenge of Ecumenical Formation

Summary Report on Education and Ecumenical Formation in 2004

Introduction

The given objective of the programme programme on ecumenical formation is *to revitalise and support ecumenical formation within the churches and the ecumenical movement*. The thrust of this programme is in what is encouraged, enabled and supported to happen in the churches, councils, organisations and networks of the ecumenical movement. Thus in 2004 the programme has accompanied, produced learning resources for and co-organised learning opportunities with educators in this constituency.

Trends

As evidenced by the positive response to the opportunities and resources offered through this programme and by the outcomes of, for example, discussions on the reconfiguration of the ecumenical movement, there is an increasing awareness of the need for ecumenical formation. However, ecumenical formation often only seems to be valued in its utility for understanding the ecumenical movement and not necessarily for its potential for enabling people to become ecumenical. The transformational nature of ecumenical formation can be seen as threatening to the status quo. In other words, the idea of ecumenical formation is well received in the constituency but perhaps only on their terms.

Having said that, there are areas that are suspicious of or antagonistic towards ecumenism. In such places ecumenical formation is perceived as dangerous. This means advocating ecumenical approaches without talking about ecumenism - thus the title of the seminar referred to below 'Education for Unity'. It requires creativity in engagement.

Another prevalent phenomenon is the rise of denominationalism, even among those who are part of the ecumenical movement. In many places this has weakened existing ecumenical educational institutions by creating denominational institutions alongside them. One area where the ecumenical movement has failed to learn is how to hold one another to account without breaking fellowship.

The individualisation of education whereby the benefits of education are only seen in terms of the betterment of the individual permeates much church thinking. Thus many applications for scholarships are based on what further education or training can do for the nominated person rather than on an understanding of the benefit to the church or organisation and the community they serve of having someone who has received that. The quality of learning in theological education is often only assessed in terms of individual performance and not of collaborative learning that enhances the church as a learning community.

The programme challenges an understanding of academic discipline based curricula with the possibilities of learning that is issue oriented, interdisciplinary, integrative and holistic.

Paulo Freire insisted that education should be a process of conscientisation. Ecumenical theological education and ecumenical formation should be learning the churches to engage with such issues as HIV/AIDS, violence and poverty.

The reality in most places of religious plurality can be seen as a threat which makes the churches and their educational institutions withdraw into a protected Christian comfort zone. Worse, it may produce violence between faith communities. This programme attempts to encourage people to see the great potential of learning from and learning with those who are different.

Promoting and delivering ecumenical learning

A CD-ROM of resources for the ecumenical formation of staff of the WCC and partner bodies has been produced and ecumenical formation opportunities created for WCC and for agency staff in collaboration with Ecu-Learn, Germany. Internet and print resources for ecumenical learning and for holistic approaches have been developed. In collaboration with the Ecumenical Disability Advocacy Network (EDAN), the programme has been working on a popular study guide on the integration of people with disabilities in the churches. *EEF-NET*, the biannual journal of the whole programme, has shared reflection and experience of ecumenical formation.

There has been joint consideration of strategies for ecumenical formation with

two regions – Europe and the Pacific – involving the Regional Ecumenical Organisations and other partners. The programme has continued to collaborate with education-related ecumenical networks at the global level (e.g. OIKOSNET – laity centres and movements of social concern) and regional (e.g. the European Conference on Christian Education).

A small research project into good practice in interfaith education has been launched in collaboration with Hartford Seminary, USA that has a strong academic track record in this area.

Ecumenical Theological Education

Support for Ecumenical Theological Education has continued to be given through the active involvement of three consultants in their respective regions – Asia/Pacific; Latin America/Caribbean; Central and Eastern Europe. The consultants have worked closely with regional associations of theological schools, where these exist, and contributed to the reflection on appropriate, contextual and ecumenical ministerial formation. They also prioritised requests for assistance with faculty and library development.

The curriculum on HIV/AIDS prepared for African theological institutions has served as an inspiration and model for engagement with theological educators in other regions. Following this model curriculum development was undertaken on the issue of disability in collaboration with EDAN.

An emerging concern has been the engagement of theological educators in Africa on the issue of violence (particularly sexual) against women and children in the churches

and society at large. This has involved articles in *Ministerial Formation* and preparation for the Africa launch of the Tamar Campaign in 2005. There has been a continued emphasis on the theological education of women.

A cross-programme workshop, *Education for Unity and Unity in Education*, was held in Prague to look at opportunities for ecumenical, religious and theological education in Central and Eastern Europe.

Scholarships

Scholarships assist the further education and training of those working for churches and related organisations with a special emphasis on the opportunity for ecumenical formation. The experience of WCC scholars of studying in another country has

continued to produce leaders and advocates for the ecumenical movement. In 2004 76 scholarships were awarded for individuals and 12 for group training. The regional initiative of funding 20 scholarships per annum at the Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation in Zambia continued and was positively evaluated for the Scholarships Working Group.

Regional consultations for Africa and the Pacific were held to assist the National Correspondents and other stakeholders in understand the programme and how it operates and to ensure that priorities and procedures are responsive to regional needs. Two booklets have been produced – one to outline the criteria and procedures for application; one to assist scholars to gain the maximum ecumenical formation benefit from their experience.

News from the Networks

The Intereuropean Commission on Church and School (ICCS)

ICCS organised a study day in the Council of Europe on Thursday 28 April 2005. The theme was: *Education that takes account of religion: How can this contribute to democratic citizenship?/Europe without division between the old and the new members: those who can/wish to be members of the EU and those who cannot/do not wish to belong.*

The instigation of the Study Day was undertaken by the ICCS with the World Catholic Association for Communication (SIGNIS), (in collaboration with the Conference of European Churches (CEC)).

The study day, which was aimed at international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), took place in a context of intercultural work including the Council of Europe Projects on Education for Culture. The organisers were very pleased by the Opening by Mr René van der Linden, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. The study day was an opportunity to share the work with INGOs as well as to contribute to Council of Europe projects, including that on Education and Culture, and to further the work with organisations that represent civil society. Presen-

tations were given by Prof Grace Davie, Exeter and Jean-Paul Willaime on Cultural Identity and Religious Identity, by Prof Friedrich Schweitzer, Tuebingen on Religious Education and Civil Society. A contribution of Prof Flavio Pajer from Rome will be included in the conference proceedings. At a round table at the end of the study day successful examples of a non-confessional awareness of religion were shared. The study day marks a new step in the co-operation between ICCS and the Council of Europe. A report of the study day will be available. Contacts through: president@iccsweb.org

ICCS Conference in 2006. The board of ICCS has agreed to hold its next European Conference in Estonia, 5-9 July 2006. The triennial conference is always a good opportunity to share contemporary developments in the relationship between church and school as well as Religious Education in the various European countries. A special emphasis in the programme will be given to the situation of Religious Education in Estonia. Information about the theme and the programme will be available in summer 2005. Please contact the ICCS secretary, Dr Roger Jensen, for more details.- secretary@iccsweb.org

Coordinating Group for Religious Education in Europe – CoGREE

A CoGREE conference on the theme, *Living together with the Other - Education & Religion in a European Context* will be held 5-8 October 2005 in Berlin. The aims of the conference are:

- To contribute to the dialogue between politics and education in Europe
- To discuss relevant developments in the European education policy
- To intensify the cooperation in religious education in Europe.

The conference is being organised by CoGREE, the Protestant Academy in Berlin, the Church office of the EKD

(Evangelical Church in Germany) and the Comenius-Institut, Münster. The conference is planned for 70 permanent participants, the integrated congress can host 120 participants. The conference will be held at Evangelische Bildungstätte auf Schwanenwerder, the conference venue of the Protestant Academy in Berlin – www.berlin-schwanenwerder.de. Part of the conference will be a congress with enlarged participation on Thursday 6 October at Berlin, Gendarmenmarkt, Französische Friedrichstadtkirche.

The programme will include presentations, a round table, working groups and plenary sessions. More information - cogree@comenius.de

International Federation of Associations of Christian Higher Education – IFACHE

The third General Assembly of the International Forum of Associations of Christian Higher Education will be held in Sao Paulo, Brazil from 22-26 November 2005. The Assembly will be hosted by COGEIME,

Conselho Geral das Instituições Metodistas de Educação. The theme of the Assembly will be *The Ethics of Christian Higher Education in a World of Globalisation and Plurality*.

OIKOSNET

Association of Christian Institutes for Social Concern in Asia – ACISCA

Felix N. Sugirtharaj writes: “ The Tsunami struck at 9.30 am. I rushed to the Marina Beach immediately to see the devastation caused by the Tsunami. What I saw at a close proximity from the sea – the loss of human lives, the destruction of houses, boats, ships etc have been communicated to all ACISCA and OIKOSNET members through my E-mail letter dated December 31, 2004. The next day with my colleagues and friends, we travelled down south in Tamilnadu to enumerate and make on the spot study of Tsunami-affected villages in Tamilnadu. The damages caused by Tsunami also have been enumerated and this information also

has been shared with all the members of ACISCA. ... Churches were the first to respond through generous gifts to Tsunami victims. The emergency relief was deeply appreciated and accepted by the people with tears running through their cheeks.”

ACISCA has been involved in organising practical, social and psychological assistance for those suffering from the effects of the tsunami. A *South East Asia Interfaith Workshop Emphasising Relief for Tsunami victims* will be held in July 2005.

Courses in Lay Leadership Training – CLLTs

A regional CLLT is being planned by ACISCA in Baguio, the Philippines in September 2005 with 20 overseas young (25-35) staff of ACISCA centres plus 10 Filipinos from the centres in the Philippines. The theme will be *People's Participation for Social Transformation* with the sub-themes of: *Poverty and Globalisation;*

Indigenous People's and Land Rights; Women and Children; Ecological and Disaster Management.

A global CLLT will be organised through OIKOSNET in 2007

Ecumenical Association of Academies and Laity Centres in Europe- EAALCE

For the first time the annual conference of EAALCE was held in Russia. It took place in September 2004 at St. Andrew's Biblical Theological Institute, Moscow on the theme *Drawing a Map: Europe with or without Russia?* For Russia, the effective solution of problems raised by EAALCE is certainly

crucial. The Association's activities have their main aim in intensifying the laity's role in church life and dealing with some vital social problems through many-sided dialogue and co-operation between the people of different countries and religious beliefs.

OIKOSNET (cont.)

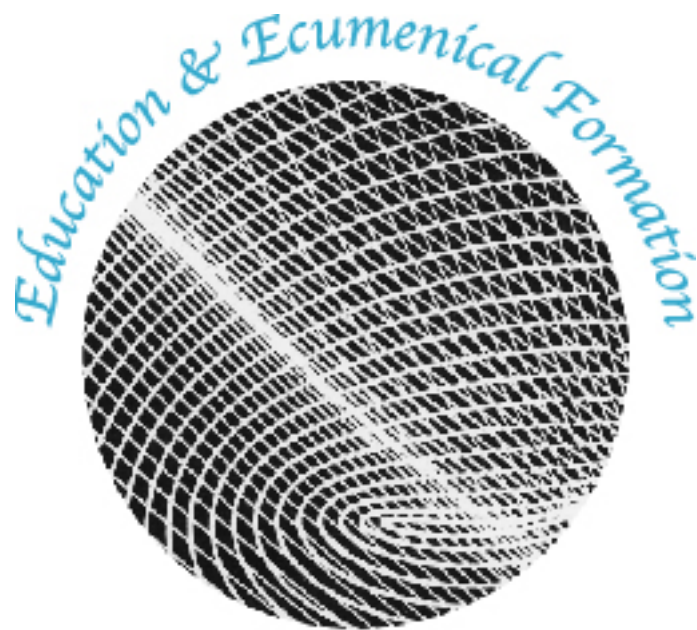
Four groups of participants had an exposure programme, which raised historical, cultural, societal and religious issues. Coming together, a keynote lecture was given by Andrei Zubov, professor of comparative religions in Moscow State Institute of International Relations. According to the speaker, Russia once was a part of Europe, but now, unfortunately, it couldn't be defined as an European country in the full sense of the word. Political perturbations of the 20th century have driven Russia out of the European cultural milieu. If Russia is to reappear on the European political map, then it should embody European standards

of living. Modern European society has a lot of problems to face – some of them are identical with those of Russia, some are not – and their effective solution would become possible only when we work together, by means of dialogue and mutual enrichment. It was stressed by Prof. Zubov that Christian values could be – and should be – the most important guiding lines on that way. Other speakers emphasised the importance of the EAALCE conference in the process of European integration and the inestimable contribution made by all people of good will in the formation of the united Europe.

North American Retreat Director's Association, NARDA

The theme of the NARDA conference held at **Pendle Hill in April 2005** was *Sacred Spaces/Just Relations: Center Activities for a Transforming World*. The conference considered how to enact the call to a transforming world in policies, programs, and organisations The Sacred and Justice

building work of Pendle Hill - through their decisions about the purchase and preparation of food, their shared duties at the center, their work in a economically distressed community and their Peace Network offered a good context for exploring the theme.



Education and Ecumenical Formation
World Council of Churches
P.O. Box 2100
1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland