20 years of UNOY

United Network of Young Peacebuilders
Welcome to UNOY Peacebuilders’ Anniversary Publication!

Dear friends of UNOY Peacebuilders,

In 1989, a Russian UN diplomat had a dream about a general assembly hall filled with young people discussing the major challenges facing humanity. The dream was so strong, that he decided to pursue it. Travels led him to meet people that advised and supported him in his effort to give meaning to this dream. Not long thereafter, the first group of young people from four continents met in Handel, the Netherlands and committed themselves to building a new international youth organisation, which they called United Nations Of Youth (UNOY pronounced as You Know Why).

20 years later, UNOY Peacebuilders has grown into an established network with members and affiliates all over the world. The organisation has kept its dynamism and commitment while continuously working for a Culture of Peace. UNOY Peacebuilders has gone through different phases, narrowed its scope, evolved, learned and professionalised. Still, the dream about a United Nations filled with youth has remained, at least in spirit. UNOY Peacebuilders is about giving a voice to young people and space and capacity for constructive action. Throughout its two decade long history, UNOY Peacebuilders has built the capacities of hundreds of young people.

As UNOY Peacebuilders enters its third decade, we thought it was appropriate to gather a few of the stories of the individuals that helped build, shape and benefit from the organisation. This publication is in honour of those individuals that made all this happen, from the enthusiastic team that brought the first group of young people together, to the members, affiliates, interns, staff, volunteers and board members who were all part of building, professionalising and sustaining the organisation. UNOY Peacebuilders’ path has been filled with young peacebuilders united in the mission and vision of UNOY Peacebuilders. A tremendous amount of volunteer work, commitment and enthusiasm was needed to realise the various projects and to bring UNOY to where it is today. The foundation for growing a strong membership-based network of youth peacebuilding organisations was laid a few years ago, ensuring a sustainable growth for the future. Generations of youth keep changing, and so do their needs. UNOY Peacebuilders tries to constantly address those, and to evolve. This has been possible due to the flexible structure of UNOY. However, as we grow, it is important that we do not loose the characteristics that made UNOY Peacebuilders unique. We are confident that new and committed individuals will continue to make this happen.

This publication is not intended as a strict chronological summary of historical milestones. Rather, the publication seeks to celebrate our achievements so far and aims to highlight the major historical events and success stories. At the same time, it seeks to give a space for the individuals involved in the last two decades to reflect on what UNOY Peacebuilders meant to them. This included both young people that were given opportunities through UNOY Peacebuilders, and also the people that worked hard behind the scenes to make it happen.
To us, UNOY Peacebuilders is about believing in young people and giving them opportunities. It is about inviting young people to their first international conference, accepting young people with spirit to do internships, or giving responsibility through having young people serve on our board or international steering group. We hope this publication will give you a greater insight into what makes UNOY Peacebuilders so unique, and also to reconnect or learn more about the individuals that together made a United Network of Young Peacebuilders.

We would especially like to thank Maria for her tireless help in guiding us through the process of discovering UNOY’s past and linking up with alumni, former staff, members and friends of UNOY Peacebuilders. We would like to thank our former colleagues for always being willing to give advice and to current colleagues for the support given in the realisation of this project. Finally, we would like to thank the graphic designer for making this publication a joy to read!

Lillian Solheim & Lee Bremner
Editors
20 Years of UNOY

Message from the Editors ............................................................. 1
Message from the Board ................................................................. 5
Timeline of the first two decades.................................................. 6
The First Years .............................................................................. 9
Early Regional Peacebuilding Trainings ......................................... 22
From Caucasus to Africa ............................................................... 28
Restructuring of the Network ....................................................... 36
African Students’ Conference: Building Peace in Africa ............ 42
Youth Advocacy for Peace.............................................................. 46
Culture of Peace and International Day of Peace ....................... 53
The Gender Programme............................................................... 55
Growth of the Network ................................................................. 58
What makes UNOY so Unique? .................................................. 70
Meet the Publication Team........................................................... 81
Thanks to our Donors .................................................................. 83
Twenty years... and counting!

What an achievement it is, to successfully build and maintain a global network of young people over the past two decades; a network of young people, by young people, with the collective vision and shared commitment to building together a world in which peace, justice, solidarity, human dignity and respect for nature prevail.

Our mission - to link up young people’s initiatives for peace in a global network of young peacebuilders, to empower their capacities and increase the effectiveness of their actions - is as relevant as ever. Increasingly, the practical actions of young people are seen as critical for transformative solutions in conflict affected and violence prone communities. Moreover, the voice of young people is heard more often in platforms where decisions are made that affect the lives of young people and the environments in which they live.

But more needs to be done. Young people should not just occasionally be part of discussions impacting on their lives. Their interests and perspectives should always be taken into consideration as a matter of principle. The participation of young people has to be mainstreamed and institutionalized throughout society. For this to become reality two things must happen at least: 1- The spaces where decisions are made and taken should be opened up for young people to participate in and influence the process, and 2- Young people should be sufficiently capacitated and enabled to make effective use of these opportunities.

UNOY Peacebuilders has been instrumental in realizing these changes for a considerable number of young people and their organizations and initiatives. This anniversary is an appropriate moment to celebrate these achievements. However, much remains to be done to increase the impact of peacebuilding efforts by young people worldwide. It is a grateful, but challenging, responsibility to guide UNOY Peacebuilders into the next phase of its existence and to prepare ourselves for many more successful UNOY Peacebuilders years to come!

Wout Visser,
Chairperson since 2008
1989
- UNOY founded in the Netherlands
- 1st International Working group meeting

1990
- Dalai Lama become patron
- 1st UNOY International Youth Assembly, India

1992
- “UNOY Alliance International Conference: Our Environment Our Responsibility” a youth response the outcome of UNICEF, Minsk, Belarus

1993
- 1st International Peace Conference/ training seminar, held in the Peace Palace, The Hague
- 1st International Executive Council meeting
- UNOY moves to Purmerend

1994-1996
- 1st and 2nd Peacebuilding in Caucasus Training seminars, the Netherlands and Crimea, Ukraine

1997
- Youth Leaders of Crimea Conference/Training seminar: “Seeking ways of conflict prevention, Peacebuilding and Reconciliation”, Yalta, Crimea

1999
- 2nd Global Peace Conference/Training seminar and participation in Hague Appeal for Peace-99, The Hague
2000

- Global Campaign in Support of the UN International Year for a Culture of Peace

2001

- All African Conference/Training Seminar: African Youth for a Culture of Peace
- Creation of the UNOY African network of Young Peacebuilders

2002

- UNOY organises annual African students Conference organised in collaboration with TAC for the first time
- African regional and national training seminars in Benin and Sierra Leone

2003

- The organisation changed its name from United Nations of Youth Foundation to United Network of Youth Peacebuilders (UNOY Peacebuilders)

2004

- International Online and Face to Face West African Training seminar, Sierra Leone
- UNOY published its first research booklet, *What is Good Youth Peace Work?*

2005

- UNOY moved its office to The Hague upon the invitation of The Hague Municipality
- UNOY Peacebuilders was invited to participate in and contribute to the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) global conference, held at the UN in New York, USA
- 1st Youth Advocacy Team visit to United Nations in New York
- 1st Dutch Building Peace Skills Training
- 1st celebration of the International Day of Peace
2006

- Training Building Peace Skills II and III in the Netherlands
- 1st European Training Building Peace Skills in Crimea, Ukraine for European participants
- PSO research in view of restructuring the organisational structure
- Research and coordination of the Youth Solidarity Fund Report in the context of the Alliance of Civilisations (a global survey on youths and culture of peace)
- 2nd Youth Advocacy Team visit to United Nations in New York

2007

- Implementing the restructuring of its organisation from a loose Network to a membership based Network
- The First International Steering Group meeting, The Netherlands

2008

- UNOY Gender Programme begins development
- 10th ASC anniversary
- ‘African Youth in Motion for Peace’ Training in Nairobi, Kenya
- Publication of *Youth Advocacy for a Culture of Peace*
- Violence against Children and Youth Campaign
- COE Study Session on ‘Applicability of Peacebuilding in Youth Work’ in Budapest, Hungary

2009

- 20th anniversary
- COE Study Session on ‘Gender Equility in Youth Peacebuilding Projects’
- Two gender trainings in the Netherlands
- Publication of *Partners for Peace*
- ‘Promoting a culture of non-violence’ with Arun Gandhi, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi.
INTRODUCTION

UNOY was created in 1989, based on an initiative of a Russian UN diplomat who acted on a dream he had on his birthday. His idea gained the support of members of the Universal Education Foundation, volunteers and advisers in the Netherlands. From this small core group of people, the idea quickly spread. The first inaugural International Working Group for the creation of the UNOY took place in the summer of 1989. 34 enthusiastic young people from a total of 13 countries and 4 continents took part, with the objective of discussing the vision and founding of the United Nations of Youth. The idea quickly spread, with various country branches set up. A few months later, UNOY was officially set up on 15 September.

In the first years, a number of working group meetings, international executive council meetings, conferences and youth assemblies were held in a number of countries, including India, Belarus, Belgium and the Netherlands.

The first major event was the first International Youth Assembly, which took place in the foothills of the Himalaya Mountains of India, a year after UNOY was founded. 60 participants from five continents took part and a flair of idealism surrounded the meeting. The assembly met to address a number of constitutional and organisational issues, but they also wanted to address genuine concerns. Hence, the issue of street children was chosen. In collaboration with UNICEF, 20 street children, mainly from the area around the Northern Railway Station in New Delhi, participated in the conference for 2 days.

The first assembly was followed by a number of meetings in which constitutional and organisational matters were considered. Leadership, structure and focus of the organisation were re-visited and structures and a charter were set up. It was also discussed whether UNOY should be a network, an organisation, or a movement, as well as where the organisation should be based. The youth wanted to create something brand new and with a democratic structure. In the beginning, the group avoided traditional words like Chairperson, and opted instead for titles like Unifier, Beautifier, and Communicator to describe the roles and responsibilities of the members of the new organisation: titles which reflected the originality and enthusiasm of the participants.

The enthusiasm was always great during these meetings, despite the various contentious organisational issues. In order to discuss more than technical issues, UNOY added a capacity building element to its events and conferences as the organisers wanted to not only bring young people together, but also give people concrete skills and tools that they could use after the events.
The people involved were also very ambitious, and sometimes projects were difficult to realise financially or logistically. The ambitious mandate, many promises, no budget and international communication was very difficult and extremely costly. In the first years, UNOY was financed on project basis. The office was run from a private home and running expenses were minimum and largely covered by private resources of the office bearers. In addition, donors became more sceptical and showed an increasing unwillingness to finance conferences, general assemblies or other democratic youth structures. This meant that planned projects and meetings were postponed indefinitely and it was difficult to meet the expectations of members.

The challenges with finding a suitable organisational structure for the organisation as well as fundraising proved difficult. Finally, the initial structure set up was dismantled and the UNOY Foundation continued as a loose, global network of young peacebuilders. Except for a short period of time, UNOY was based in the Netherlands. Furthermore, UNOY had been involved in issues ranging from street children to environment issues in the first years; UNOY realised that, as an action based organisation, it had to specialise and find its niche and added value in the broad spectrum of international youth organisations. So, after the success of the peace conference in 1993, UNOY became a peace organisation.

UNOY then became a servicing organisation, aiming to link up young peacebuilders and peacebuilding initiatives around the world into a global network. Its core business became local capacity building: training young peacebuilders in peacebuilding skills and how to run their organisations. It adopted a more regional approach to peacebuilding and aimed to focus more on sustaining the seminar commitments of its participants.
1989   First International Working Group and founding meeting in Handel, NL
        Establishment of UNOY as a Foundation
        PrepCom meeting held in the Netherlands and Belgium

1990   The Dalai Lama becomes patron of the organisation
        First UNOY International Youth Assembly in Nainital, India

1991   Second UNOY International Working Group meeting in Schoorl, NL

1992   UNOY Alliance International Conference: “Our Environment Our Responsibility” in Minsk, Belarus

1993   First International Executive Council meeting in Apeldoorn, the Netherlands
        UNOY Office moved from Ilpendam to Purmerend, the Netherlands
        Second International Executive Council (IEC) meeting. Apeldoorn, the Netherlands
The dream that became UNOY

It was a beautiful early morning, that Saturday in July, in Geneva on the eve of my 50th anniversary. A few days before, in flagrant but very joyful violation of the ‘Rules of the Soviet Citizens working abroad’ I became a member of The Ski Club International. That was my first ever personal secret rebellion against the Communist Party and the KGB; an act of free will and for the first time in my life, I felt really free and full of joy...

Around six in the morning, I was at Gare Cornavin in Geneva, and boarded the train to Martigny, not suspecting that this simple act would radically change my life and make me a happy and an accomplished human being.

As an ignorant beginner “trekker” I made the generous mistake to carry a rather heavy backpack filled with two bottles of champagne, coca-cola, cans of food etc., which I took to celebrate my birthday party in the Alpine Club in Champex. The path to "Fenêtre d’Arpette", the summit of the mountain was very steep, long and tiresome. Because of my heavy backpack, I reached Fenêtre three hours behind schedule and was gently reprimanded by our Leader - a very nice Scottish man and a nuclear scientist from the Center for Nuclear Research (CERN) at Geneva. As the rest of the group was preparing the descent, he gave me permission to walk alone down to Champex on the other side of the mountain. “You will easily reach the hotel restaurant ‘Relais d’Arpette’ down in Champex by ten p.m. latest. Just strictly follow the arrows, indicating the directions of the descent, painted white on big stones and rocks. Loosing your trail from your sight is very dangerous,” he said. Wishing me to come down in one piece, he left with the rest of the group.

So, I was all by myself on the mountain top to look through the Fenêtre d’Arpette (the window on the glacier Arpette) at the breathtaking panorama of the snow covered mountain peaks, made brilliant by the rays of sun. Whistle melodies, performed by five blue-black craws, amazed me. I made a hypothesis that craws of d’Arpette learned the ‘whistle language’ from Swiss peasants living in the surrounding mountain villages.

I started the descent by five in the afternoon. I safely went through the clefts of the glacier, enjoying walking for an hour under the comfortable afternoon sun and blue sky, until it was covered by dark clouds, heavily pregnant with rain. The first few drops were soon followed by a strong wind, torrential rainfall, thunder and lightning. If I close my eyes, even today, I still have the picture of the valley on my right; a broad ravine, dark and mysterious under the heavy rainfall and beautiful lightening across the valley, helping me to see the trail on my way.

As by a miracle, I made it all the way down safely, without loosing sight of the path or falling on slippery grounds. Around one o’clock in the morning, July 24th, exhausted and very thirsty, I opened the door of restaurant Relais d’Arpette and went immediately to the bar to ask for a glass of tap water. The barmen took some time to silently stare at the stranger in the night, soaking wet, with raincoat dripping water on the shiny parquet floor. Before giving me the glass, he asked me in French "Mais vous n’avait pas assez d’eau déjà…? (but did you not have enough water already…?) He gave me a fine glass, filled with delicious tap water, followed by the hugs of our Leader, who was happy and relieved to see me ‘in one piece’. Without further questions he took me by car to the Alpine Club in Champex, where I finally celebrated my 50th birthday at a noisy party attended by my very nice and kind fellow trekkers...
But the night was very short, and I slept not more than two, maybe three hours. After breakfast at half past six, I asked permission from the Leader to spend the day in Champex as we had to climb another mountain before returning back to Geneva. He kindly allowed me to stay for the reason of my birthday. I was very happy as I wanted to reflect on the dream which I had during that short night. In my dream I saw a large hall filled with young people with different ethnic backgrounds and having different skin colors. They were gathered together for some serious purpose. They were listening to an old man, who vaguely looked like a self portrait of Dr. Svetoslav Roerich. I was very surprised that I even remembered my dream - for the first time in my life. The old man said something like: “We brought you here to help save the world and preserve Peace on earth....”

Before taking the bus back to Martigny station, I spent a few hours on a bench of a small island in the middle of Lake Champex, in an attempt to understand the meaning of this dream, until I suddenly got a vision of a United Nations of Juniors (UNOJ) which appeared in my mind...

The week thereafter, I was looking for the address of Dr. Svetoslav Roerich in India. Quite unexpectedly, I was invited for a 5 o’clock tea by my colleague from Moscow who came for a private visit to Geneva. He helped me to contact Dr. Roerich. Soon after, I wrote a letter to Dr. Roerich about my dream and asked for an appointment in Bangalore to talk about it. In his reply he supported my UNOJ vision and agreed to meet me in India. On the 2nd December, I left Geneva for Bangalore and on December 4th, I met Svetoslav Roerich for the first time in his office in Bangalore. That day, I talked with him for several hours about the dream. Hence, this was the beginning of the beginning of the UNOY. (During the first UNOY meeting in Handel, the Netherlands in May 1989, the youth participants renamed UNOJ ‘United Nations Of Youth’ (UNOY - you know why)).

Finally I wish to share some precious gifts, presented to me generously by dear friends:

”Can dreams become visions? Can visions become programmes for action? It is a sad day when a person ceases to be an idealist... There always have been men and women who have dedicated themselves to great causes.” (“To be a Pilgrim A Spiritual Notebook, by Basil Hume OSB Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, St Paul Publications, p.160

“We all face series of great opportunities, brilliantly disguised as impossible situations”

This phrase was a gift from Mr. Barry Childers, a Quaker and Peace activist, my dear friend, in his past life an American fighter plane pilot who refused to fight in the Korean War.

“Always support enthusiasm!”

This gift I received from my special British Quaker friend, late Mr. Mervin Taggart.

Nikolai Firjubin,
Founder, former Chair person, presently Honorary Chair Person
Looking back at 20 years of UNOY Peacebuilders, many, too many impressions, memories, wonderful experiences, profound challenges come to my mind: amazing young and very promising youth, peaceful activists searching for inspiration, hungry for knowledge and skills, eager to meet with other young fellow Peacebuilders. I am overwhelmed by the memory of the commitments, sincerity and dedication of all my colleagues whom I had the honour to work with, to learn from, and to be inspired by and to whom I felt committed. Equally, I am deeply impressed by the skills, enthusiasm and commitments of those wonderful young people who have courageously committed themselves to carry UNOY Peacebuilders forward after my withdrawal. Yes, to me, UNOY is special. In spite of all the changes during these 20 years, there is an almost magical but very powerful constant. And that is, in my view, besides its powerful vision, its youthfulness, enthusiasm, inclusiveness and dynamism. For me, UNOY is not just a social political movement but a secular spiritual movement, advancing a culture of peace and non-violence.

I am grateful for this invitation to contribute to this 20th anniversary publication, but find it difficult to choose and focus on a particular event or time period or to focus on a particular person or persons. A feeling of gratefulness overwhelms me.

I remember like it was yesterday, the first international working group meeting in 1989, which was the UNOY founding meeting. 1989 was a very interesting year, historically especially remembered by the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War. As Shakespeare said, ‘the future forecasts its shadow’. Change was in the air! Peacebuilders, activists and New Agers were exited and optimistic. The 20th century was drawing to a close and a new millennium about to begin. Just one decade left for making the big choices, changes, and commitments, necessary for cleaning up the mess of the 20th century in order to have the next generation inherit a clean, green and safe planet, free from nuclear threats. All hands on deck! Children and youth became organised and active. If elders can’t keep their promises and take their responsibilities, children and youth have to take action or remind them. Youth’s resourcefulness was discovered. They were the Millennials. Many new organisations were founded, and many events and international conferences for children and youth were held. Such was also the context in which the UNOY was born and the UNOY dream came into being.

It was April 1989. At that time, I worked for Universal Education and its magazine Educare, promoting holistic and inclusive approaches and methods in education and child rearing. I was approached by Nikolai Firjubin (at that time a UN civil servant/ diplomat) who shared his dream and requested me to assist in organising the 1st International Working Group for the UNOY. The whole staff of Universal Education also became involved. In 6 weeks time, all was arranged and set for the participants to arrive in Handel, the Netherlands at De Weyst, a conference centre based on Ghandian principles. The event became a great success. It was a revealing and overpowering experience to see how youth from around the world bonded together as true friends and took the concept of UNOY utterly serious and as a great challenge.
They committed themselves to carry the newly created organisation forward. It was during this meeting that the young people asked me to run their secretariat. I had agreed to organise the first meeting but it was far from my intention to commit myself to a follow up. I was preparing for my masters and had a few months left to complete my master’s thesis and could not spare a minute more. Besides, office and secretariat work was the last thing on earth I wanted to do. On the other hand, how could I refuse these committed young people? Indeed, it would be extremely interesting to work with youth for a ‘new world order’. So, I agreed. Little did I know how that promise would change my life and draw me in, to work for the UNOY for almost 20 years.

The meeting was over; youth went back home. Some returned, and their commitments may have appeared as if made in a dream; others adjusted their commitments to the realities back home and again others managed to set up UNOY local branches and activities and stayed in touch to develop the organisation. But it is safe to say that for all, it was a life changing experience, including for me. I had realized the potential power of youth meetings and youth bonding across dividing lines, cultures, belief systems, transforming them in true world citizens. (This transformative potential proved to work not only at the global but also at the continental, regional, national and local levels.) UNOY was a reality and it grew and developed. But not everything went so smooth and easy. We had to define and redefine our mission and vision, our concepts and values, develop the organisational structure, find our niche within the world of youth structures; develop relations with other NGO’s and the UN, build partnerships and last but not least, raise money. We had to learn by doing. As for me, I had no prior experience in this field, and our members were also new to this international NGO arena. We climbed steep mountains and walked through thick forests as it were. But for me, there was always something; some good reasons, some wonderful active members, some great young people for whose sake I did not want to give up. Pioneering is indeed exiting, but not easy.

And then of course, there were the UNOY successful meetings; youth bonding together and networking, creating friendships, building peace across the dividing lines of war. I remember the UNOY Peace Palace meeting in 1993. The youth from former Yugoslavia, representing the conflicting sides (Serbia, Kosovo, Bosnia, Croatia) were inseparably bonded, listening to hear what was happening in the land of the other, building bridges of friendship and developing peace projects. Likewise the youth from Azerbaijan and Nagorny Karabagh in 1994, during a moving closing ceremony, handing each other a candle of peace. Likewise 1999, the participants of the Middle East….

Then there were all these members implementing their successful peace projects, sometime under very severe and risky circumstances. I remember Frimi, running a street children project in Lima and Vandy and his child soldiers project in Sierra Leone, or Michael and his Peacebuilding efforts in North Uganda... just to name a few. Other members shared how their lives were changed by the training, internships or contact with the network or how they took up peace studies and/ or had achieved great things or careers in life...

And then, there was the youth, telling their stories: Stories which often were very sad and painful (and some even had sad endings). The story of Ann from Northern Uganda comes to my mind. Her father was killed by the governmental troops during a military operation, while the simple man just returned home from his field. Shortly after, her mother and youngest brother were killed by the Lords Resistance Army (LRA) in the presence of Ann. It was only six weeks thereafter that Ann participated in the UNOY Franschhoek training seminar. The seminar helped her to deal with the grief and great loss and to find consolation in working for peace. How shocked I was when recently I heard that Ann had died. Indeed, Ann is part of me, and I carry her memory with me.
So also the story of the promising Peacebuilder and orphan girl, Mamatheka, 15 years old, bold, beautiful, very intelligent and a charismatic speaker. She participated in the UNOY 1999 Vught training seminar and in the subsequent Hague Appeal for Peace-99 conference (attended 10,000 people). As a youth representative, she was chosen to speak at the HAP during its opening ceremony. Frequently, she wrote to us and asked for assistance to immigrate to the Netherlands, preventing her from being forced into marriage. On principle and practice, we could be of no assistance to her. As an orphan at 18 she was married off. Not long after, she wrote that her husband was killed, leaving her with her child behind, unprotected...

All this (meetings, projects and success and personal stories of members) kept the UNOY’s light burning and its ideals alive.

Finally, I like to thank a few very dear colleagues. First of thank you Nikolai for your dedication and courage to pursue your dream and vision and readiness to always help out; and thank you Ute Roehl because your help and wisdom, profound concern for, and faith in the organisation was always a beacon and a source of strength to me. Then, all the young people with whom it was such a joy to work with and who have served in the office and developed the organisation with so much enthusiasm, dynamism and commitment - to make it into what it became today: Ameeta, Douglas, Eric, Joyce, Juan, Eric, Celina and Hilary to mention only a few. A very big thanks to all those not mentioned: former members, board members and interns, trainers, partners, donors and to all those –team and board- who are presently shouldering the secretariat right now. Special congratulations to you, Menno and Wout!

Finally, I thank UNOY for it offered me an opportunity to feel connected with the rest of the world, to serve humanity and it offered me an opportunity to make a difference and live a meaningful life. UNOY Peacebuilders, I wish you all a great future ahead!

Maria Kooijman
I participated in the first United Nations of Youth conference, which took place in 1989, in Handel, the Netherlands. We pronounced UNOY as ‘you know why’ as an allusion to the importance of the inclusion of young people in peace building and leadership by young people. The conference was held in a cloister with a beautiful lush garden and a nearby lake. At the founding conference, I met a diverse group of young men and women. They came from many different countries and from different backgrounds but they found each other in a shared vision. I have to admit that, at the time, much of what transpired there I couldn’t really conceptualize. I guess I was still a bit too young. I remember young people, quite a few older than I, debating intensely with the UN charter in hand like a bible. I remember there being quite some argument at the conference but also a lot of unbridled optimism and energetic excitement. It was also a historical period when the very events that led to the end of the cold war were reaching their climax, imparting, I think, the world at that time, with a sense of optimism about the future.

Ten years later, in the summer of 1999, I made my own modest contribution to the organisation of the 2nd Global Youth Peace Conference, which was held in Vught, the Netherlands. The optimism at the end of the Cold War had made way for cynicism. The Balkan War was still fresh in our minds, NATO was bombing Serbia – at the time of the conference – and Sierra Leone was going through a long and protracted conflict. This conference made a big and lasting impact on me. The contrast between the news footage and the young people gathered in Vught couldn’t have been stronger. I also realized that for most of the participants gathered there peace building was not a matter of idealism – as it may have been to me, being from a stable country – but to them peace building efforts were a necessity, firmly rooted in reality. This conference, the people I met and their convictions, has made a deep impression on me. Only one year later I joined the UN mission in Kosovo, after a short stay in Albania. Again one year later, I joined the UN peace keeping mission in Sierra Leone, where I arrived on 11 April 2001 and left only 5 years later on 30 April 2006. The day of my departure from Sierra Leone was the same day I saw – from the veranda at the back of my house – Charles Taylor flown in by UN helicopter to the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Everywhere I traveled I met with UNOY peace builders. For instance, surprisingly, at the Conakry airport in West Africa, I met by pure coincidence with a Dutch girl whom I recognized from that founding conference in 1989. I think this is testament to how widespread the UNOY network is and how inspirational the UNOY can be to young people.

Were it not for the UNOY, I do not think I would have decided to travel to Kosovo and onwards to Sierra Leone. The UNOY inspired me to take that decision.

I am grateful to the UNOY for this.

Merlijn van Waas, the Netherlands,
Conference participant in 1989 and project team member in 1999
For many years UNOY Peacebuilders played a tough but very special role in my life, an excellent tool for the training of my commitment in acting for a better world. Through those years I learned to understand the importance of positive behaviour, and that we have to see to the constant training and implementation of our positive personal qualities, wherever we can. So doing through our practical life situations and our sincere, selfless and continuous evaluation of such we then can grow further by that very learning process; doing so, slowly and by the help of all of us, we begin to contribute to the so much needed social change in our world.

The Butterflies project was set up by Rita Panicker, from New Delhi. The project taught street children reading and writing and provided them with a personal card that identified them as being part of the project and having the right for a lawyer in case they would be accused of involvement in difficulties.

In 1990, youth from different countries were invited to come for a UNOY conference in New Delhi, India, where they met at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. Some of the Butterflies were also invited. They went from there to Nainital, the conference place at the foothills of the Himalayas. The children prepared a stage play for the conference participants showing why they had decided to live in the streets, which was received with tears.

Every day toward sunset those who wanted to could share in a Moment of Meditation. I remember that very day like it was yesterday. I was late so when I entered the room it was already dark. I leaned against the wall next to the door while quietly trying to settle on the floor when I felt a hard piece of wood. I tried to move it aside when I realised I held a small hand in mine, so tiny but so hard for a child! I held the hand carefully, to see if it was wanted or to give it the chance to free itself. Once used to the darkened room, out of the corner of my eyes I recognized the lean body of one of our street children.

Towards the end of that meditation hour Ameeta Meera, UNOY’s Chairperson, would sing; all of us deeply enjoyed that moment. I will never forget how the child next to me reacted to the emotions of the sweet singing. This child’s pain even after all those years makes me cry. Not sure what would feel best for the child, I lessened its hand to be free if it wished so. So it was: Before the room was lightened no child was there anymore.

During dinners, when possible, I sat next to the street children. This was the most important place you could be. Some of them knew a few words of English. You would learn about the importance of freedom, their freedom.

The children had been told that during the meals they could take for themselves whatever their plates would bare. You hardly can imagine!

That very evening I suddenly felt a boy not far from me looking at me, food already piled up. For a moment our eyes met. Looking at him I thought: this could be him. A short silence and then, pointing with his fingers to me he said: You? Then pointing to himself he continued: Me? Hesitatingly, again pointing to me he said: Mother?

Having said this he did not want, or dare, to sit down next to those who had witnessed his words but with his plate went somewhere else.
Not too long after this first contact with the children we heard that they run a Snack Bar and a Bakery, next to the bus station at Delhi’s Railway Station, one of its tables saying ‘Reserved for Streetchildren’.

Gratefully I look back on those years of my involvement in UNOY Peacebuilders as a co-founder, member of the board and co-organizer of events and gratefully I greet those who also were or got involved, became friends or are now reading this booklet!

Ute Roehl, Germany
Co-founder, member of the board, and co-organiser 1989-2006

My association with the UNOY has made a lifelong impact on my personal and professional life. I distinctly recall my first participation in the UNOY international conference in a beautiful Dutch village called Schoorl way back in 1990 and making friendship with youth from various parts of the world. The commitment, sincerity and tireless efforts of its founder Mr Nikolai Firjubin, International Secretary, Ms Maria Kooijman and Treasurer Ms Ute Roehl are deeply ingrained in me. Had it not been for UNOY, I would not have been able to travel to the Netherlands and start an international career as soon as I finished my graduation. I learnt basic and advance skills on organisational management, networking, etc. during my association with the UNOY. I learnt the problems which international non-governmental organisations face in their efforts to contribute to the world peace and stability.

Although being unable to physically remain associated with the UNOY, I promise to live through the values and ethics which I learnt in early years from the UNOY and its dedicated team members.

Dr. Bimal Patel, India Participated in the UNOY 2nd IWG meeting in Schoorl, 1991, and intern and co-coordinator of the UNOY 1992 Belarus conference. Member and participant of International Executive Council 1992-3. UNOY Board member 2005-6. Bimal has become a well known scholar, author and is presently Director (Vice-Chancellor) of the Gujarat National Law University (GNLU)

UNOY fostered my interest in peace studies and energized my search for peaceful solutions. I enjoyed meeting the young participants and the facilitators. Additionally, UNOY enabled me to participate at the Hague Appeal for Peace (HAP) conference. During a visit to the HAP office in New York, I discovered that they wanted to develop a peace education project in Albania. I ended up developing and running that peace and disarmament project for three years.

Elton Skendaj, Albania, USA
UNOY Conference participant, Vught, 1999
The first time I heard about UNOY was in 1990. I just turned twenty two and I already had two years travelling with various youth organisations, working for ecology and social change. I got an invitation from UNOY Secretariat to the Nainital Meeting in 1990, but due to short notice I couldn’t make it that time. I kept communicating with the Secretariat in Ilpendam, which kept me informed via a regular newsletter about the different activities of the Network and its members, and the decision to organise something in Schoorl, the Netherlands in Summer 1991.

The week I spent in Schoorl with other participants from all over the world, gave me the opportunity to be co-opted and appointed African Youth Assembly Coordinator. I continued my involvement with UNOY and Youth for Development Cooperation (YDC) in the Netherlands, and was appointed in November 1991 as UNCED Youth Ambassador for Europe and Africa. This extraordinary job was marvellous in the sense that I learnt so much, met so many incredible people, was involved directly with the UN and travelled to several countries: Costa-Rica, USA, Kenya, Egypt, France, Germany, Canada while keeping the links with UNOY and connecting between the networks.

I was consulted by the Secretariat in advising names of potential participants to the Minsk Conference in Autumn 1993. At that time a great number of high quality participants were selected and the "contribution of Youth to the UNCED" was instrumental to the follow up in Youth activism around the scope of Sustainable Development.

I was among the elected (with Eric, Douglas, Bimal and others) as International Youth Executive Council member in Belarus and kept in close contact until now with some members or friend of friends like Daniela Zunnec, whom I met later in San Francisco.

I learnt so much in the contact with UNOY. I improved my secretariat skills drastically. Maria was so into the technology in the early nineties that I couldn’t not benefit from her great sense of professionalism and the infinite friendship we always share. I am also very conscious that because of UNOY and the label this organisation had at that time to the world leaders, I could go so deep in the UN system and learn so much on sustainability and how to implement it. Today I have been to more than 50 countries, and have been working closely with many hundreds of international organisations worldwide.”

Mustapha Chouikha, Tunisia

On behalf of the UN Secretary General, Mr. E. Wyzner, Under-Sec-General, Dep. of Public Information: 

"...highly commend the United Nations Of Youth Foundation for its vigorous efforts to coordinate activities among individual youth and youth organizations at all levels to build a global youth and youth organizations at all levels to build a global youth movement, a youth alliance for peace and cooperation."

Message received for the "UNOY Alliance International Conference: Our Environment Our Responsibility" in Belarus in 1992

Our first post to the new world
Our first station towards the future
Our first struggle with our old selves
Our first failure, our first success.

But we learned of our potential here
And we felt a yearning near
Our wounds bore the blood of delight
Our pain healed with the grace of light.

Extract from “The Journey”, by Ameeta Mehra (1990), UNOY Unifier/ chairperson, reflecting her experiences at the First International Youth Assembly in India.

"UNOY wants to be a ray of hope in a world where war and destruction are accepted values. We wish to show that we can live in this world in a joyous way with peace and justice for all and in harmony with nature.

.....we firmly believe that the old way of thinking and living must come to an end.... We, the youth and youthful in heart are trying to create a platform on which to realize and live this dream, this vision.”

Extract from the introduction to titled “The World Tree of UNOY”, a 1990 booklet about UNOY.
Early Regional Peacebuilding Trainings

From early on, UNOY included skills workshops in its conference programme, offering concrete skills to the participants in order to enable them to implement their conference commitments.

In 1993, in partnership with Independent Peace Service from Moscow, the UNOY held its first international Peace Conference/ Training seminar, bringing youth from axis of conflict from around the world together. The success of this conference was crucial in UNOY becoming a peacebuilding youth organisation.

In November 1994, UNOY organised in partnership with the Ural State Pedagogical University of Ekaterinburg a regional cross-conflict conference and training seminar entitled “Peacebuilding in Caucasia” in Nunspeet, the Netherlands. The participants included a mixed group of 41 youth from all over the Caucasian region, and gave training in non-violent conflict resolution and reconciliation, the cartography of conflict, communication and other peacebuilding skills. For some participants, it was the first time they heard about non-violent conflict resolution. One participant said the conference, “taught me that it is possible to remove that hatred which was a burning fire in my own heart.”

Inspired by the success of the first training seminar for the Caucasus, and upon the recommendation of its participants, UNOY organised seminars in May 1996 and October 1997 in Yalta, Ukraine.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>“UNOY International Conference of Young Peacebuilders”, Peace Palace, The Hague, the Netherlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>“Peacebuilding in Caucasia”, Nunspeet, the Netherlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>“Peacebuilding in Caucasia II”, Yalta, Crimea, Ukraine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>“Seeking Ways of Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding and Reconciliation” Youth Leaders of Crimea Conference/ Training, Yalta, Crimea, Ukraine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>“UNOY 2nd Global Youth Peace Conference” Vught &amp; The Hague, the Netherlands</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EARLY REGIONAL PEACEBUILDING TRAININGS

...The basis of my understanding of the need to approach evil with good and war with peace was given to me by my family. But the thoughts and the feelings, and deep understanding of the global character of the above concepts I discovered in the process of my active cooperation with UNOY. There I could meet and make friends with wonderful Peacebuilders from different countries with different political and religious views. But the mutual understanding of the need for peace on earth erased all boundaries.

Working for several years, and interaction with the UNOY helped me to build a career on the principles of peace building, i.e. create peace - peace in the thoughts, feelings and actions.

Being a Deputy and a teacher of the Academy, Chief of the Rescue Corps and a simple citizen of my country ... I have always taken, and continue to take different decisions, basing myself on the need to promote good and Peace, preach tolerance and peace building, respect for human beings and love.

(Excerpt of an essay) Dmitriy Chislov, Yekaterinburg, Russia,
Partner and participant to the Peace to Caucasus Conference/ training seminar, Nunspeet, 1994

RUSLAN

Ruslan was a refugee from Abkazia. During the war, he lost both his legs and his two brothers. He participated in the UNOY Peacebuilders conference in the Peace Palace in 1993. Upon his arrival in the hotel, Ruslan told the organisers he would refuse to share his room with a Georgian. However, the conference made such an impact on the conference that afterwards he changed his studies at the Moscow University and took a degree in conflict studies. During a subsequent UNOY training seminar, Ruslan developed profound peacebuilding relations with the Georgian participants. He became a member of the Abkhazian Parliament and a staunch peace-builder. He addressed large crowds and spoke for Georgian students, advocating that peace is a matter of the heart: “Unless we forgive each other, we cannot build sustainable peace.”

LIZA

Liza was forced to flee away from the war in the Pregorodny District—a disputed area in North Ossetia—to Ingushetia. She was asked by Mr. Hans van den Broek, former Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs and speaker at this meeting: “What was the most important thing you learnt at this training conference”. Liza replied: “That I do not have to live my whole live with hatred in my heart for what the ‘enemy’ has done to me; I can learn to forgive, I can free myself and live in peace again.”
IZVAN / MUSLIM

Izvan and Muslim from Chechnya, both working for the Red Crescent Society in Grozny were two participants in the Nunspeet event. Shortly after their return to Chechnya, the war started. Maria Kooijman went on a mission to Grozny in the summer of 1995 and visited both young men who were in their early twenties. Both were deeply involved in providing first aid to the victims in the devastated capital. Muslim told Maria: “If it was not for the training conference in Nunspeet, I could not have done this work. The conference helps me remind myself that the world is larger than what is happening here on a day to day base…” Izvan and his family were survivors of the market bombing which killed over 100 people. Seeing Maria, he was for two days speechless. It meant so much to him. He could not imagine that people in the outside world took the trouble to search for him in the destroyed capital.

OLEG

Mr. Oleg Kousov, journalist, after participating in the UNOY Training conference, 1996, wrote: “I have known all along that restoration of Peace in the Caucasus requires negotiations and informal contacts between the parties of the conflicts. During the Peace-building in Caucasus II conference, I learnt how we can have a frank exchange of views and achieve positive results at the negotiations in a faster and more effective way.” Oleg learned to understand the powerful role of the media and made a deep commitment to use journalism for the sake of peacebuilding. He is presently a well known journalist for Radio Svoboda, reporting on the Caucasus, with a courageous commitment to bring out the true stories.

ALAN

Alan was a journalist for the local radio and TV from North Ossetia. Upon his return, Alan contacted a journalist in Ingushetia, whom he met at the seminar. They agreed to work for peace and check with one another information, related to reported offences, committed by the other side of the conflict, in order to expose the truth and de-construct enemy images about each other in and through the radio and their local TV programs at the Universities.
The UNOY conference of 1999 was the first amazing and unforgettable experience of the international gathering for me that became possible thanks to Maria Kooijman, UNOY secretary.

As a 26 year old girl from the southern province of Russia, which appeared as a “hot spot” on the international agenda in 1994 and since then had become the place where human pain and hope were concentrated, I was struck by the spiritual unity of people from different parts of the world and their commitment to work hard towards preserving global peace. They came together to share their unique experiences and to learn from each other, and to find common ways of building peace. It felt as if the conference participants were members of one large family who came home to solve urgent problems. I left impressed and empowered.

When in autumn 1999 the new phase of the armed confrontation started in Chechnya I received so many letters of support from the conference participants. I still keep them, empathetic words, so precious to me, helped me go through the war ordeals. I made numerous acquaintances at the conference and it is lovely to hear their “Hello!” many years afterwards. I still cherish my memories and share them with my children now.

Fatima Abdoulkhadjieva (Gudieva), Chechnya/Ingushetia
Programme Director DENAL, Chechnya/Ingushetia.
Participant UNOY Peace conference/training seminar, Vught/The Hague 1999
The UNOY Peace in Caucasia II conference in Yalta in April 1996 was a landmark event in the early development of the humanitarian work that my colleagues and I have been involved in, mainly in the North Caucasus, from 1995 to the present day. At the time of that conference, the North Caucasus was still in a state of great chaos and turmoil following 18 months of brutal warfare in Chechnya and a huge exodus of internally displaced people into neighbouring republics. Those of us engaged in the work of civil society were responding as best we could to this emergency situation, by providing humanitarian support to people affected, raising awareness of the human rights violations occurring and calling for leaders to bring an end to the widespread suffering of civilians. The UNOY peacebuilding conference in Yalta enabled a large number of mainly local but also some international civil society leaders to reflect on the best strategies for dealing with this crisis, and practical ways of taking this work forward. It was essential for us at this time to come away from the region to reflect, share experiences and strategise. As a result, my colleagues and I founded two major projects that are still functioning today: firstly, the Little Star psychosocial rehabilitation that has offered psychosocial assistance to tens of thousands of children and young people dealing with the psychological trauma of war in Chechnya, and secondly the North Caucasus Youth Peacebuilding Network, which has conducted numerous conflict resolution and reconciliation projects throughout the North Caucasus and Russia, including international youth camps, trainings in conflict prevention and resolution for students, teachers, local government employees, traffic police and many others. Many of those who worked with us are still doing this work, some have started their own NGOs or helped international agencies to establish programmes in the region.

I have also been involved in UNOY conferences in the Crimea and the Netherlands as a trainer and partner. For me the most outstanding success of these events was the way that the theory and “talk” that went on there managed so often to follow through into practical action and projects, making a difference to the lives of many thousands of people. Thank you UNOY for your courage and persistence in bringing young people together at such critical moments and in difficult circumstances to build peace together and make such an important constructive difference to the lives of people living with the effects of armed conflict.

Chris Hunter, UK, Programmes Coordinator, Peacebuilding UK
UNOY partner Peacebuilding in Caucasia I & II and trainer/facilitator UNOY training seminars from ’96–’99

I remember the UNOY conference as a stunning event. Now being a U.S. citizen I enjoy a great deal of knowledge about peoples cultures around the globe; however, at that time it was a new idea that peace isn’t just a final destination, but it is a way of life that you were teaching us.

Constatin Kousmin, Russia/USA
Participant 1994 “Building Peace in the Caucasia, Nunspeet and 19996 Building Peace in the Caucasia II
I want to say big thanks to Maria and all the organisers of the conference Peace to Caucasus. At the time of its holding, the situation in the entire Caucasus was very tense. Many conflicts have been in full swing; people were perplexed and with anxiety and pain awaited the next day. Because of the ethnic conflicts everywhere, it seemed that all peoples are divided and can do nothing.

It is at this moment the conference organisers were able to invite young active representatives of the republics and the Caucasus and create conditions and an atmosphere for the safe and confidential conversation between them. They succeeded to empower them to believe that it is the youth representatives who can contribute to resolving the situation. They offered them an opportunity to feel the force of cohesion, and trained them in non-conflict communication and created a basis for drafting peacekeeping projects, and inspired confidence in themselves and the victory of peace.

After the conference, the overwhelming majority of participants maintained friendly relations. Corresponded and supported each other (until to day). Many projects have found support among the sponsors and have been successfully implemented. For example, at the conference the idea of a peacekeeping network organization was launched. The "Center for Peacemaking and Community Development" (headed by Chris Hunter) not only developed this idea but secured funding for many years of its activities. This idea was given life in the Republics of the Caucasus by the conference participants Adlan and Shaman Adaev (Chechnya), Akhmedov Gulya (Dagestan), Aliyev Azhay (Dagestan), Irina Kishukova, Natasha Zaitseva (Kabardino Balkarya).

Since 1997, large-scale projects in the North Caucasus have been implemented: “Children’s Friendship Camp” (three consecutive years, children of six Republics North Caucasus took part in the activities of the camps in the Republic of Dagestan), Children’s Center "Little Star", Omega School, Educational Program on Conflictology “Youth Peace Building Network” and much more. All this time, members of the youth network in the North Caucasus were the best trainers on conflictology and tolerance. They are invited to work in the well-known organisations.

The above named conference participants are constantly invited by various organizations and foundations as experts. They actively participate in various conferences and events, and their opinions are listened to. To this day the spirit of the Conference is present in their relationships and work.

Many good and successful peace projects were conducted in the Caucasus by the Conference participants for all these years. Many people were helped by these projects and - I will not be afraid loudly to say - lives were saved. With full confidence it is possible to claim that this event has inspired confidence and helped to choose the path of peacebuilding. And therefore it influenced the settlement of the situation in the Caucasus.

Many big thanks to all who prepared and conducted this conference for their positive influence, inspiration of self-confidence and belief in a peaceful future that they have given to the participants.

Irina Kishukova, Kabardino Balkarya, Nalchik, North Caucasus
Participant of the 2nd Peace to Caucasus conference/ training seminar, Yalta, 1996
From Caucasus to Africa

By the turn of the century, UNOY had organised a number of successful trainings in the Caucasus region and was finally ready to focus on Africa. The first African conference organised in collaboration with the Quakers Peace Centre and The Centre for Conflict Resolution, Cape Town, South Africa, was held in Franschhoek, South Africa in 2001, and was attended by 97 participants and trainers from 50 different countries.

In 2002, UNOY Peacebuilders collaborated on two separate training seminars in Africa, one with Africa Peace for West African young peacebuilders held in Benin, and one a national level, with UNOY Sierra Leone network, held in Sierra Leone. Both were very successful. Following this, UNOY worked on a unique pilot project in partnership with The Network University of Amsterdam, which developed a 2 week online course followed by an 11-day face-to-face course in Sierra Leone. 38 participants from 18 West African countries took part. The course and the formula of the training proved very successful.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June – July 2001</td>
<td>All African Youth Peace Conference for a Culture of Peace in Franschhoek, South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2001</td>
<td>UNOY African Network of Young Peacebuilders created</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2002</td>
<td>West African Training Seminar for Young Peacebuilders in Cotonou, Benin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2002</td>
<td>1st National Youth Conference on a Culture of Peace, Networking and Youth NGO/Project Management in Freetown, Sierra Leone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February - April 2004</td>
<td>International online Training Course for Youth on Conflict Transformation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2004</td>
<td>2nd West African Training Seminar, Sierra Leone</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“... Gatherings, such as those of the United Nations of Youth Foundation, help to create a culture of peace by addressing its requirements in an open, honest, and sensitive manner. Only by approaching the demands of peace in this way can we ever hope to overcome the many challenges of achieving a peaceful world and, ultimately, secure for ourselves a lasting, global peace...”

Quote from a message by Former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan to the UNOY All African Youth Peace Conference for a Culture of Peace in Franschhoek, South Africa.

Do You Know Why

... it is a great pleasure to work with UNOY? Why? Because of the absolute enthusiasm and involvement of the young Peacebuilders involved in the conferences, seminars, workshops and other training activities. From my very first performance at the UNOY platform at The Hague ‘Peace Conference’ in the Peace Palace - some fifteen years ago – till my last gig on top of Mangup Kale in the Crimea in 2006, I have been fascinated by the drive of UNOY’ers to overcome abysses created by their ancestors.

When I entered the UNOY room at the Peace Palace it was chaos all around. A happy turmoil... I invited people: if you are interested in bargaining as a tool in conflict resolution, join my one-hour workshop. And they came, and they stayed, for two-and-a-half hours. From that moment onwards I became and remained ‘the’ UNOY trainer (at least in negotiation processes) for the coming twelve years. Thereafter, I lectured and trained in interesting meetings in the Netherlands, South Africa, Benin and twice in Crimea, in Yalta and later at Mangup...

Dr. Paul Meerts, UNOY trainer from 1993.

Staff member of the Netherlands Institute of International Affairs ‘Clingendael’, The Hague
Six years and ten months ago, I received an email from a member of the United Network of Young Peace Builders (UNOY) in the Netherlands, informing me that, my application for the West African Youth Training Seminar, that was slated to be held in Abomey Calavi, Benin in November 2002, had been accepted. I cannot remember the exact dates but I surely remember that I quickly left the internet café and went home to inform my family of the good news.

I had earlier applied for the programme in October 2002 and had to write an essay on the topic: “My vision to build peace in West Africa” as part of the requirement. Receiving such an email to attend an advanced training was therefore a source of joy for me as I had previously struggled to effectively design innovative programmes for the West African Youth Network, an organization that I helped launch in 2001, and was serving as the time as its Programme Coordinator. However, in spite of the joy, I was faced with the task of procuring for myself a round trip ticket to enable me to attend the seminar, as the organizers had stated that they would have refunded the cost of the ticket.

After a few days of intense arrangements, luck was not only on my side, but also on the sides of the other two selected applicants from Liberia, Michael and Maryann, as I succeeded in getting a travel agency in Liberia to loan us three round trip tickets from Monrovia, Liberia to Accra, Ghana. The trip to Ghana was excited and after sometime we landed in Accra. From the airport, we made our way to car depot and boarded a vehicle for Lome, Togo.

After few anxious moments in Togo, we boarded another vehicle for the last leg of our trip, Benin. We arrived late in the night and due to the language barrier (We are from an English speaking country, and the people of Benin are French speaking), we had to settle for a nearby hotel. In the morning, we made a number of calls, and after twenty minutes, a tall fellow walked up to us and introduced himself as Daniel Edah, the coordinator of the seminar. We were then taken to the venue of the seminar in Calivi, where we were introduced to the rest of the participants.

We immediately got down to business and for the next six days received lectures from our facilitators on issues relating to human rights, conflict resolution, project management and advocacy. As this was my first major regional training seminar, I initially struggle to adjust to different methods of training as well as the multi cultural environment. I particularly recalled that I was fascinated by the one of the trainers, Dr. Paul Meerts from the Netherlands.

During the seminar, I also came across a number of potential leaders from different youth organizations across the region and was able to start what I consider life time relationships with some of them. I am still in contact with Mame and Yaye from Senegal, Adeola from Nigeria, Daniel from Benin, Florence from Sierra Leone and my roommate, Emmanuel Roberts from Sierra Leone. Interestingly, Emmanuel and I teamed up together in 2003 to organize the MRU Youth Training Seminar on Peace Building and Human Rights in July 2003, a seminar that was a direct outcome of the training in Benin. Emmanuel also provided safe haven for me and my family during the same period when we had to escape the conflict in Liberia.
At the end of the training, I left Benin with a renewed sense of commitment and dedication to my work as a peace builder. What did I take back with me? The results are clearly written for posterity. My organisation has grown in stature and has now been able to captivate the attention of donors and other relevant stakeholders in the region. I have been able to successfully organise seven major regional activities on Peace Building and Non Violent Conflict Resolution. I have also been invited to serve as facilitator and panelist at leading international and regional peacebuilding initiatives. I have gone on to become a Rotary Peace Fellow. I have seen my colleagues from Benin grow from strength to strength and now playing leading roles as peacebuilders in the sub region.

What more could I have hoped for? Six year and ten months after Benin, indeed the dreams live on and I am proud that I went through the programme and am equally happy to be associated with the success of UNOY.

Richilieu Allison, Liberia. Regional Programme Manager at West African Youth Network. Participant at West African Training Seminars 2002-2004

My meeting with UNOY was in June 2001 at Franschhoek - Cape Town (South Africa) during the first African Youth Training Conference for Peace Culture. In the follow up of that, I became one of the coordinators of the advocacy working group within the African Network of Young Peace Builders and created an NGO by the name of Africa Peace. I also represented UNOY during the 4th World Youth Forum in Dakar, Senegal, in August 2001 and the workshop on Digital Divide held in Rome, Italy, in December 2002.

The first major project, West African Youth Training Seminar for Peace-building, realised by Africa Peace (www.africa-peace.org) in November 2002 was possible thanks to the support and the partnership of UNOY.

Many participants of this regional event are still thankful to both Africa Peace & UNOY for the opportunity they were given to strengthen their capacities and to network.

I am thankful to UNOY for my capacity building, for its contribution to who I am today, and to the rapid growth of Africa Peace between 2001 and 2002.

I salute the self-giving of Maria K. and her husband for building youth capacities for peace in general and for UNOY specifically. Congratulations to all the UNOY staff for the good job! Bon anniversaire!

Daniel Edah, of Benin
Member from 2001-2004.
My experience with UNOY began in 2001, when I attended the "African Youth for a Culture of Peace Conference" in Franschhoek, Cape Town. We had a diverse group of young people from all over Africa. There was great learning experience sharing, and educational interaction. This conference changed my life.

Upon return to my country, Zambia, I made a stop in the capital. I was bubbling with confidence and knowledge, with a lot of ideas on building a culture of peace among people in my community. I took my ideas to the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Child Development, looking for donors. After three months I finally returned to my home town with a grant for youth activities.

I began what had not been done before, bringing together young people from different political parties, who were usually fighting against each other during political campaigns, to a non-violence workshop. This was the beginning of many successful events.

They brought their issues face to face in the workshop, diffusing their energies in dialogue rather than fighting. They engaged in radio debates rather than throwing stones at one another. I experienced transformation within myself after Franschhoek, and started sharing that transformation, which made me a Peacebuilder, and my life has never been the same again.

UNOY Peacebuilders provided me with many more opportunities to attend conferences, such as two conferences organised by the African Child Policy Forum in Ethiopia, the UNOY "Youth Transforming Conflict" training conference in Sierra Leone; a 2006 restructuring workshop in the Netherlands; and the 2008 Biennial Conference of Nations on Small Arms in New York. These were great learning and networking experiences. In 2007 I volunteered at the UNOY secretariat in The Hague, where I participated on the youth panel for two African Student Conferences. After the conference in New York, I organised a further workshop for members of peacebuilding organisations, which landed me a consultant job with Volunteer in Florida USA.

Thanks to UNOY! Let more great works flourish from UNOY!

Charles Bwembya, of Zambia.
Involved in UNOY since 2001.
After the 2001 and 2002 trainings I got involved in a number of issues in the community resolving conflicts and advocating for nonviolent conflict resolution. Some of the specific events which we got involved in with our team of Youth Network for Peace – Uganda, which I founded, were:

In 2003 we resolved one of the major conflicts in my area where my sister was killed by her husband and my clan wanted to take revenge by killing any of the brothers of the husband of my sister. When our clan discovered that they had all runaway, clan members started looking for any member of their clan. They were carrying their spears, axes, bows and arrows and any of the traditional weapons they could use to fight that clan. I came in and first talked to my clan members and they listen to me and my team. They told me that they can only forgive and have peace and reconciliation with them if they can compensate for the daughter they have killed. I promised to take care of the children of my sister. I then called the elders from the other clan and selected a few from my clan and we sat for two consecutive days until they accepted not to fight but to pay compensation of 7 cattle and 3 goats; one of them was killed and eaten by both clans as a way of reconciliation and the blood of the goat was poured on both clans. Up to now, both clans are peaceful and they have started marrying again among the clan, something they had stopped completely.

In 2004 again we mediated the conflict between the major cattle rustling Karimojong tribe who are pastoralist and their lives depend on their cattle. They do not cultivate and as they move from one place to the other, they keep on stealing and disturbing other districts bordering them. With this tribe, if you are a youth and you want to marry, you have to steal cattle to marry. 90% of them have not gone to school. The price for the dowry is about 100 heads of cattle. So in an attempt to marry, most youth have to steal.

A major cattle raid took place between the Karimojong youth and Lango the bordering district where hundreds of cattle were taken away by the youth who are raiders. Some of these animals were recovered after a very hot battle and that created a very serious conflict where any of the tribe would kill each other on sight. This time, it was difficult, we had to involve the Catholics Peace and Justice Team together with my youth team. Politicians wanted war, not peace. Government troops were deployed at the borders. The Catholic mission on Karimojong called all the Elders and talked to them and they accepted to talk to their youths and also the Catholic mission in Lango sub-region called the traditional clan leaders and talked to them to consider having Peace with the Karimojong. Both Elders accepted to sit and negotiate. Then the meeting was organised in a free zone and we managed to bring these Elders together. The negotiations took three days and finally they resolved that each tribe must go and talk to their youth and they all began to eat on one table which they did not do before the conflict was resolved. No compensations were asked for. Now there is free border movement and trade and friendship created.

Through the Youth for Peace Network, which I set up, we have been able to carry out some training in schools especially for the prefects or student leaders and we have initiated Peace Clubs and theses clubs have been able to control strikes in school and the rate of strikes have gone down. There is now peace and harmony among the students and teachers. Students now know how to settle conflicts among themselves and handle administrative matters with their teachers without striking, which brings distraction of school properties and even burning of schools. Especially in Layebi College and so many other school where students had kept paraffin in the hostel to burn the school but these Clubs reported them and the school was rescued.
In 2003 and 2004, through the network of UNOY, we were able to lobby for funds from ACTS Netherlands to resettle the displaced community in the IDP Camps due to war of the LRA in Northern Uganda. The Youth team carried out the distribution of the basic households items and the distributed some food items to the community during the emergency and that created hope and peace in the community in Lira District.

In 2003 at Standard High School we have been training the war affected youth, child soldiers, and war returnees who are youth with various vocational trade skills for self reliance and for sustainability, and through the UNOY network, we have been able to lobby for tools and funds to carry these youth projects forward and work for psycho-social and reintegration of the war returnees into the community.

From 2002-2006 through the UNOY network, we advocated against child abduction, recruiting child soldiers by LRA army, mass killing and bringing attention of the international bodies to condemn and end the war in Northern Uganda and advocated for non-violent conflict resolution to end the Kony war in Northern Uganda. We are happy that Peace is now prevailing in the Northern part of Uganda and that our peace network and advocacy could contribute to that.

These are some of the benefits from our training, affiliation and support received from the UNOY Peacebuilders.

Michael Okello, Youth for Peace Network, Uganda,
UNOY and I

I got in touch with UNOY in 2001 on the occasion of UNOY Franschhoek training in South Africa. Unfortunately, I was not able to attend the event, but I was receiving information and stayed in touch closely with the UNOY team and youth participants via internet.

After the South Africa meeting, I kept in touch with UNOY members and office. I would say that I have gained a lot by being a member of the UNOY network because through it, I have become connected to other networks working in peace, human rights, sustainable development, youth and women issues and other related matters.

Fruits of connection

It is my pleasure and privilege to say that UNOY, through its e-group and information sharing, I was able to get some information regarding the trainings in peace and conflict transformation in South Africa (2002), in Austria (2004) and so many other important trainings and seminars, some times as a trainee or trainer or facilitator. Then, as a young peacebuilder, I gained skills through those trainings, and I used those skills and knowledge to my continuous training through my organisation (www.glpn.org). The last but not least thing that is linked to UNOY, is that I gained a lot of experience from UNOY publications, trainings, and now I am on PhD level. That is why I am, and still will be, a good ambassador of UNOY wherever I will be.

Peace for all.

Claude Shema-Rutagengwa, Rwanda, now residing in Norway.

Founder of Great Lakes Peace Initiative, Rwanda. Participant UNOY training seminar, Sierra Leone 2004
Restructuring of the network

UNOY grew and developed over the years into a global network of young peacebuilders with a focus on young peacebuilders living in areas of conflict. In 2003, the organisation therefore changed its name from United Nations Of Youth Foundation into United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY Peacebuilders). The statutes and mission statement were reformulated and the name changed to better reflect the nature, work and scope of the UNOY Foundation.

In the year leading up to 2005, UNOY had been steadily growing in reputation and expanding the number of activities and opportunities. At the same time the organisation underwent serious restructuring.

In 2004, UNOY contacted a consultant for advice on how to professionalise the organisation. This sparked a whole process of restructuring, lasting for several years. The development of the African Network in particular and the Global Network in general, brought with it its own challenges related to questions about ownership, democracy, accountability, transparency, as well as identity and youth leadership. By 2005 it became clear that the UNOY Peacebuilders’ loose organisational structure with over 300 contacts with individuals, organisations and other networks made it difficult to make an effective stance on any issue or be able to work coordinated and with long-term effect in capacity building of youth-led peace organisations. This led to the initiation of the Network Capacity Development Project. The project consisted of several activities, including meetings and interviews with members and NGO representatives in Kenya, Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Ukraine as well as desk research and phone interviews.

In 2005, UNOY moved its office from Purmerend to a larger office space at Javastraat in The Hague upon the invitation and with moral and financial support of The Hague Municipality. It allowed for new investments. Its central position in the International City of Peace and Justice made internships more attractive for international students. It was that year that a new board was installed, which assisted in the professionalisation of the organisation.

In 2006, the Board approved the restructuring of the UNOY Peacebuilders network after a year-long research and consultation process. The new network structure allowed more adequate cooperation and possibilities of exchange among members of the network and the International Secretariat, increased capacity to organise more activities around the world and especially increased the sense of ownership of the youth participating in the network. In 2007 the restructuring of the UNOY Peacebuilders network came into effect. The UNOY secretariat in The Hague was able to identify 32 youth-led peace organisations committed to further developing the network and supporting youth active for peace in their regions. The main aspects covered by this restructuring were the division between member organisations and affiliates, calls for membership and the introduction of ‘peace tokens’ as a way for members to actively contribute to the network through an annual membership fee.
UNOY: International focal point for peace

To enhance peace without a young and strong human component is not a sustainable way to secure peace in our time or in the next decades. In a government city like The Hague, young and dynamic organisations like UNOY are a scarce phenomenon. It immediately underlines why UNOY - as an international youth-led peace organisation - is right at its place in The Hague: also The Hague is constantly in vibrant motion in the field of youth, education and peace. But someone has to bring them together.... The last decades we have been able to add a considerable number of governmental and non-governmental organisations and knowledge institutes. But the young and dynamic component was lacking behind in “The Hague Legal Capital”, as former UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali called it. The Hague, city of Peace and Justice as we like to call it as well.

About four years ago we started the discussion with Maria Kooijman about the developments in The Hague and the possibility that UNOY Purmerend might fit perfectly well in those developments. Attracting new international organisations and legal institutions is one of our responsibilities at City Hall. Maria Kooijman was convinced of the added value of a transfer to The Hague, however, there is a time for everything and a step like that takes time and also necessitates discussions with major stakeholders, to start with the UNOY staff. In the next period we kept close contact. We gladly continued the discussions with her and intensified them. And in the summer of 2005 it really happened!

The City of The Hague is proud to be host to an important youth organisation like UNOY. The added value of UNOY - nowadays in our NGO building on the Laan van Meerdervoort 70 - to The Hague is obvious. When we visited Menno Ettema in the new office earlier this year, we saw the best reason we could imagine to justify the move to The Hague. The kitchen was crowded with young peacebuilders and various visitors. That is exactly one of the arguments we always use when we are talking to possible prospects: The Hague is an international network city where the various groups - governmental organisations, non-governmental organisations, knowledge institutes, embassies and Dutch governmental bodies - know where to find each other in order to do the right thing for peace and justice. That is what The Hague, city of Peace and Justice is about.

UNOY, You Know Why in The Hague....

Geert Dijkstra
City of The Hague
At the same time as undergoing important organisational changes, UNOY Peacebuilders continued to grow steadily in scope and implemented a number of projects, with increased attention to research, advocacy and capacity building projects both in the Netherlands and abroad. All these trainings aimed to build the capacities of young peacebuilders. These trainings are increasingly organised in partnership with other organisations, particularly members of the UNOY network.

These trainings have often had a lasting impact on young people. UNOY has tried to give the vision to potential young peacebuilders. A lot of former participants started studying peacebuilding, or setting up peacebuilding projects in their community. These people went on to make careers in the peacebuilding field and made long-lasting friendships across religious and political divides. Even trainers shared that the trainings UNOY implemented were unique. The honest and incredible stories of young people changed some trainers and touched their soul. The Building Peace Skills seminars have been held annually since 2005 and the aim is to deepen knowledge and experience of peacebuilding, and build new relationships and networks. The training seminars also included a strong emphasis on attitudes and skills. The first seminar took place in The Hague and was attended by 20 young people, mainly Dutch, as well as the UK and Columbia, residing in The Netherlands. It was followed by three seminars in 2006: two for participants residing in the Netherlands and one at a European level in Crimea, Ukraine, which brought together 30 youth leaders from West and Eastern Europe and Caucasia. In 2007, another successful European Building Peace Skills seminar was held in Schoorl, the Netherlands.

UNOY Peacebuilders has worked also with the University of Utrecht on the annual Summer School since 2007. The Summer School on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Justice comprises of two weeks of workshops, seminars and day trips and attracts 20-30 students of many nationalities.

On two occasions, in 2008 and 2009, UNOY Peacebuilders has organised study sessions at the Council of Europe’s European Youth Centre in Budapest, Hungary. This has been an opportunity to gather members of UNOY Peacebuilders as well as to discuss further issues pertinent to youth peacebuilding.
I was introduced to UNOY Peacebuilders through Marthe Hesselmans who told me about the Building Peace Skills Training at the end of June 2008. At that point I was writing my proposal for field research in Lebanon on Peace Education and the funding process of the European Commission in Beirut. Being in a very critical mindset through my literature review of critical theory and peace education, I approached the training by UNOY with enthusiasm, but also a good deal of apprehension. To my surprise I found that all my criticisms were answered and met by the staff and participants taking part in the training. Through the evaluation process and the open minded approach of UNOY, the training became a really valuable learning experience for me, and encouraged me to consider work in the field of peace building with more hope and without letting go of a constructively critical mindset.

Chiara Gerlich, Austria
UNOY volunteer 2009

Chiara Gerlich
You know why UNOY?

When I first tried to answer this question, I stumbled upon doubts and scepticism. Having just returned from the summer 2006 war in Beirut, I hoped to find some salvation in UNOY’s Building Peace Skills Training in The Hague. Upon arrival though, I could not help but scorn. “Yeah, right,” I thought, “as if youth can do anything to build peace. One push on the button and our efforts are bombed away.” I had seen it all, I thought. How cautious dialogue efforts among Palestinians and Lebanese, mediation with Israelis, reconciliation at the grassroots were halted, crushed as flies underneath this gigantic broom, called ‘politics’. So why even bother?

“Exactly because of this.” These were the simple words that surfaced in my mind throughout the training. Hearing stories from youth who have been facing conflicts all their lives without losing hope for peace. I felt embarrassed. Who was I to give up so easily? Skepticisms are the easy way. To just don’t bother and let leaders do their job. It is not my way.

Soon after the training I returned to the Middle East, Ramallah this time, to work on conflict resolution among Palestinians. Five months later, I found myself back in The Hague, working with the organization that brought me back my motivation. Now I know why, UNOY!

Marthe Hesselmans, Netherlands,
UNOY Projects and Communications Coordinator 2007-2008

The training in Nairobi has been a unique opportunity for our African members to meet each other and realise how much they have in common as young people working for peace in Africa.

It hasn’t been easy to organise an event in Kenya from the Netherlands, and it has been crucial to count on the knowledge of our local partners in setting up the event. The best memories I have are about all the amazing people I met during this experience: not only the participants, but also the facilitators, the guys from the slum of Mathare and Kibera who welcomed our group to visit their projects and, lastly, the wonderful group of young local volunteers who offered us their friendly support throughout the whole training.

Cristiana Conte, Italy
UNOY Projects and Network Coordinator 2008-2009
My story with UNOY Peacebuilders started in 2003 when I participated as a delegate to the first African Youth Parliament in Nairobi, Kenya in 2003. At that time, I was completely ignorant of UNOY’s existence. Once back in my country, a call for focal point in each country to serve the interest of UNOY was launched. I applied and was selected as the Benin Focal Point. Thus I got involved with UNOY. It was an inspiring and unique experience because we were asked to have our say on particular decisions and we were urged to disseminate any information that came from the International Secretariat.

At that point an online training on Youth Transforming Conflict was organised by UNOY and the Network University of Amsterdam, followed by a face to face training on the same theme organised in Freetown, Sierra Leone. This was also a unique opportunity for the youth we were to know more about UNOY, the notion of peace, conflict resolution, and the role youth can play as a hope for the future. We also got an opportunity to share Peace It Together Campaign ideas and mapped out a business plan for action in our respective countries.

Once back in Benin some of those activities have been undertaken. That was a peace caravan (that can be repeated with support) on the campus of Abomey-Calavi University in 2005.

Take note that a data bank from UNOY at that time had recorded different activities from different countries in order to know activities that were planned for the future. Thus in Benin, we organised some activities such as an annual public conference, the sensitization of youth in High School on the notion of Peace building and Conflict, and developing an advocacy toolkit campaign by working closely with Jessica van der Kamp.

We also wrote some articles on the UN Decade for Culture of Peace which has been published in a newspaper here in Benin. Needless to say, we write articles for the UNOY Newsletter, and ensure the translation of some official UNOY documents and of the newsletter.

As I am drawing to a close of my personal experience with UNOY, I can simply say that my experience as bilingual is unique and very inspiring and motivating. I acquired knowledge, reinforced my capacity building and met some nice people that enabled me to exchange ideas and share experiences.

I do hope this will continue for the benefit of Peace prevailing in Africa and the World.

Spero Hector Ackey, Benin
UNOY training seminar participants 2003-2004 and member
African Students’ Conference: Building Peace in Africa

The annual African Students Conference (ASC) in The Hague has been organised by UNOY Peacebuilders and The African Committee since 2002, and is one of the highlights on the UNOY calendar.

The first African Students Conference actually took place in 1999, as a side activity to the Hague Appeal for Peace (HAP). Due to its success, the HAP office in The Hague made it an annual activity, organised in collaboration with The African Committee (TAC), and supported by the Global Coalition for Africa at the Institute of Social Studies. When the HAP office in The Hague closed down in 2002 they requested UNOY to take over.

These ‘Building Peace in Africa’ conferences deal with critical issues of major concern in the field of advancing peace, justice and democracy. They aim to raise awareness and to promote interdisciplinary dialogue, research and action, stressing the role of culture, youth and civil societies. About 250 participants come together and create bonds of friendship and stimulate networking during the one-day conference. Students are encouraged to bridge the gap between their studies, to work together to build peace in Africa and to link up with the Diaspora youth in the Netherlands.

These conferences draw experienced speakers, many of whom are from Africa. Afternoon workshops are normally followed by a reception offered by the Municipality of The Hague, the International City of Peace and Justice, in order to give the participants the opportunity to get further acquainted, to network and to have fun.

The African Committee (TAC) is an association of African students studying in various institutes of higher education in the Netherlands. Its main objective is to meet regularly and highlight factual issues affecting the continent of Africa.
The African Students Conference is an event for African Diaspora and students living in the Netherlands. The 2008 event was important because it was the tenth anniversary of the ASC. As UNOY Peacebuilders is very active in the African continent with the existing youth peace builders organisations, this event participates in giving information and opening dialogue between different target groups. The awareness that can be raised and is trying to be raised during this event can maybe someday mean a great change in the African continent, as we youth are the future.

The main factors that made this event a success was the good organisation of the event. I have to say that the support of the team and their help made this event a success. Also because of the great network UNOY Peacebuilders has, I could contact different persons to ask for help or other.

This event brought together everyone with an interest in the African continent, in the issues the continent is facing. But to me it also achieved to raise awareness among youth, not only African but also youth from other countries. I think this event made the issues Africa is facing more realistic, which led to a more active attitude, a stand towards the issues and willingness to do something useful.

As it was the 10th anniversary of the ASC we (UNOY and TAC) organised a social evening therefore my strongest memory of the event is the social evening because of the social blending of everyone during these couple of hours. We were all enjoying the traditional African music, food and dances of different African countries.

Michaela Almeida, Cape Verde/ Netherlands
UNOY intern, ASC coordinator 2008
My sincere congratulations with your 20th anniversary. Throughout the years I have met a number of volunteers associated with the United Network of Young Peacebuilders. I am quite impressed by their capabilities as advocates for peace, however young they may be. Youth should play a role in the struggle for peace. Peace volunteers that I have met, both in the framework of UNOY and outside, are dedicated as well as skilled. They know: “It is also our peace we are fighting for and we can make a difference”.

For many people the world is a dangerous place. For even more people the future is quite bleak: poverty, bad health, unemployment and violence are no exceptions. On the contrary, for millions and millions this is day to day normalcy.

This will not change overnight. But it is important to change the perspective. We can boost the perspective that life can be made better for all people, irrespective of their background and despite their present circumstances. We can show our understanding that this would require not only hard work, but also solidarity. We can commit ourselves not to betray such expectations but to do our utmost to change present inequitable realities.

My generation has not done a very good job. In a decade or so there will be a new generation taking over. This will consist of people that presently are still young. Many of those are eager to show solidarity and commitment. My contacts with young people have given me hope that change is possible: a sustainable earth, more peaceful and equitable than today.”

Prof. Dr. Jan Pronk,
Speaker ASC 2003. Chair in the Theory and Practice of International Development at the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague. Former Dutch Minister of Development and former UN special representative for Sudan
Having been affiliated with UNOY Peacebuilders for the last four years, it is difficult to pick out a specific memorable event because there have been several. From the first time I visited the secretariat in Purmerend, the move to the new offices in The Hague, conferences, house warming parties for our interns, reports, etc. all provide special moments of joy and a sense of community. I first heard of UNOY Peacebuilders when I was invited to the African Students Conference in 2004. It didn’t take another year until I decided to volunteer in organizing the African Students Conference in 2005 and started to work at the International Secretariat in May 2005, shortly before the secretariat moved to The Hague in the summer of 2005.

Working with Maria, Celina and Hilary in those early years was a real thrill, especially as it was my first real experience working for a non-governmental organization in the Netherlands. It was also my first experience working in a multicultural environment and thus gave me a greater sense of the commonality of global problems. It somewhat taught me the valuable lessons that the problems we face in my home country, Cameroon, are not unique to the country, its people or the continent. The one thing that struck me as significant working in the organisation during the last few years is the commitment of young people to the ideals of peace and conflict prevention around the world. In 2005, 2006 and 2007, I assisted in organising the African Students Conference; was an intern in the summer of 2006, a coordinator of the YCP (a global survey on youths and culture of peace) project in the summer of 2006 and board member in late 2007/2008.

During the last four years as a member of UNOY Peacebuilders, I have attended several training workshops, seminars and conferences but one I found remarkable was the expert meeting held in Schoorl (Netherlands) in October 2006. The meeting provided a unique opportunity for representatives from several countries and continents to study the organisation’s past, present and propose a renewed vision for the future. For me personally, it provided a good glimpse of the extent and reach of the work of the organisation globally – led for/and youths. It is easy to work at the international secretariat in the Netherlands and feel completely detached from the reality of the day-to-day life of young people in other parts of the world, especially in fragile states and states in conflict. Listening to youths from other parts of the world truly gave me a different outlook on the work of the organization. But the work of UNOY Peacebuilders is not done yet! In fact, the first 20 years we celebrate this year is only a foundation offering windows of possibilities for young people to act as agents of change in their communities.

Bruno Cho Fon
UNOY Intern 2004-2007 and board member 2007-08
Youth Advocacy for Peace

By mid-2005, UNOY Peacebuilders realised that it was not enough just to train young Peacebuilders to become active, but that policy makers worldwide should be made aware of the positive contributions young people could make. UNOY Peacebuilders decided to put energy into advocacy, which was then done both at a local, national and international level in the years to come, ranging from formal lobby visits with politicians and policy makers to speaking up on the role of young people in conferences and events.

UNOY Peacebuilders launched their first advocacy activity in October of 2005, when 7 members of UNOY went to the UN to promote the Decade for a Culture of Peace cooperation with David Adams and Fundación Cultura de Paz, which is a foundation started by former UNESCO Director Federico Mayor Zaragoza. This was followed up by a related campaign in 2006 in New York and two campaigns in 2007 at a national and European level.

In addition to engaging in advocacy at various levels and in various forums, UNOY Peacebuilders gives trainings, workshops and simulation games on advocacy. In the last few years, advocacy workshops have been a central component of the trainings given. In addition, UNOY Peacebuilders wrote a toolkit on youth advocacy for a Culture of Peace in 2008 and is currently developing a toolkit manual on advocacy for African Peacebuilders.
2009
Development of African advocacy toolkit
Advocacy Team meet with a Child Rights Watch representative and MP Samira Bouchibti at Plein Twee to discuss Child Rights and development issues
UNOY Peacebuilders part of panel debate on role of young in intercultural dialogue during the United Nations’ Alliance of Civilization meeting in Istanbul
Publication of article on Violence against Children and Youth campaign in Council of Europe’s Coyote magazine

2008
Advocacy toolkit published, titled “Youth Advocacy for a Culture of Peace: A Reflective Guide for Action in Europe”

2007
The European Youth Advocacy team met with the European Commissioner of Education, Training, Culture and Youth, Ján Figel to discuss the important role of youth peace organisations
UNOY Peacebuilders part of youth panel at the conference ‘Stop Violence against Children’,

2007
UNOY launched the Violence Against Children and Youth Campaign

2006
Advocacy Team return to the UN to lobby for increased commitment to the Decade for a Cultural of Peace

2005
Advocacy Team go to the UN to promote the World Civil Society Midterm Report on the Decade for a Culture of Peace and lobby countries to support that year’s Culture of Peace resolution.

In the General Assembly plenary debate on 20 October 2005, dedicated to the “International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World”, the British delegate Adam Thomson speaking on behalf of the 25 member countries of the European Union stated: “The European Union pays particular tribute to The United Network of Young Peacebuilders, a global network of young people and youth organisations active in the field of peace building. Their work is an example to us all, and evidence of the significant role that civil society can play in advancing a culture of peace”.

Youth Advocacy for a Culture of Peace Toolkit
One of my strongest memories is when, off the back of a way-out-there idea, we headed to New York in 2005 with 7 other youth to lobby the UN and the 60th General Assembly. The idea was to promote the Civil Society Mid-Decade Report on the Decade of a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence as well as to have discussions with the UN Member States about ways they could show their commitment towards the realization of a culture of peace and actions for the next 5 years of the decade.

We stayed at friends’ houses on the floor or on the couch and for two weeks worked out of the small office of the Hague Appeal for Peace. We had no real funding, so we used all the available resources we could, the free phones in the UN basement to phone delegations to arrange meetings, the generosity of the Church Centre to hold our conference there, the generosity of the Hague Appeal for Peace and individuals who gave us trainings on how to lobby the UN and we got into the basement of the UN by signing up to UN youth week!

I believe we achieved excellent results for youth who had not done much lobbying before or been to the UN before or done anything else like this.

This activity paved the way for a subsequent year of lobbying during the UN General Assembly, a little more professionally, with a little more funding and a little more knowledge of what we wanted and how to do it! Now UNOY has staff for advocacy, advocacy strategy, tools and huge experience behind it. Advocacy within UNOY Peacebuilders can only go from strength to strength.

Hilary Jeune, Jersey, Channel Islands
UNOY Intern and Advocacy Coordinator 2003 - 2006; Chairperson 2006-2007
Advocacy. Never have I realized how important a term that is in the non-profit world until my internship with UNOY. Intrinsic to the lifeblood of every non-profit organisation is a mission to change something, or to push a cause, mostly in order to make a positive contribution to individuals, the community, or for the most ambitious of us – human kind.

UNOY gave me the opportunity to take on a project that brought together youth leaders throughout Europe to share their experiences advocating for causes important to them. I heard stories about youth advocates working to bridge divided communities, struggling to achieve legal resolutions and representation for victims of conflicts, and educating people about the importance of peaceful dialogue; all of these efforts are linked to the greater mission of building a culture of peace. We drew from these experiences to successfully publish a tool-guide for advocacy that would share what we know, how we did it, how we would have done it better, and hopefully, create the sense that other youth can take on advocacy too.

There was something truly substantial about my internship with UNOY. In a mere six months time, I went from understanding advocacy only to the point of conjuring up a couple of words describing what I think it could be, to explaining to others how advocacy is done. Equally as important, I’ve not only gained all this knowledge about advocacy, but I have established connections with youth from all parts of the world and all walks of life.

From making calls to finding participants for the project, to having lunch with my UNOY colleagues, UNOY has given me the opportunity to build bridges and in many cases, lasting friendships. Near the finalisation of the toolkit project and the end of my internship, I recall a teambuilding session where we were all encouraged to speak up about how our supposed cultural differences impact our relationships in the work environment. It was truly meaningful to have heard how everyone felt about working together, while exposing some of our own misperceptions and misunderstandings. There was some laughter involved, and even a few tears. In the end, many, if not all of us, felt closer to one another. Perhaps there was already a sense deep within ourselves that we wanted to feel closer to one another.

And that was UNOY Peacebuilders for me - building peace by building relationships.

Angelique Been, United States/the Netherlands
Former Advocacy Program Intern, August 2007 – January 2008
UNOY Peacebuilders is one of the few networks that really actively operates and makes its members be more active. I am telling this according to my experience: YERITAC is a member of different networks, but UNOY is apparently different because of its quality of being dynamic and alive. I myself benefitted much form the motivation of UNOY’s International Secretariat, seeing how these guys believe in what they do. I was really motivated to become a part of what is being done by UNOY, being more engaged in regional peacebuilding issues. Secondly, it is worth mentioning that our first advocacy experience is connected with our membership in UNOY. We started our first advocacy campaign according to the skills gained at UNOY trainings and consulting from UNOY Peacebuilders.

Aleksandr Hakobyan, member of YERITAC, and participant to UNOY’s European Building Peace Skills Training in 2007 and the COE Study Session in 2008

Greetings to the new culture of peace generation. Yours is the second, as the culture of peace was developed during the 90’s and the first decade of the 21st century by the previous generation. At first we worked at the level of the United Nations and the Member States, but once the projects became successful, we found that the resistance was too great at that level and we could only continue to make progress at the level of the civil society and local authorities. But there, too, the progress was limited by the habits of my generation that was used to thinking that historical transformations are made at the level of state power.

The real progress has come from your generation, those of you who began your activity for peace in the 21st Century. You are coming to realize that this new century will see profound changes that will come not from state power but rather from people's movements linked to local democracy. The transition to a culture of peace is "in your hands" which was one of the slogans for the International Year for the Culture of Peace (2000) which was the last year of the 20th Century, and looking toward a new century. The other slogan was “cultivons la paix” or “Cultivemos la paz,” realizing that peace is not something that is constructed once and for all, but rather a process of cultivation, with advances and setbacks, a process of planting seeds and reaping harvests, of seasons and generations.

UNOY, from its very beginning has taken this approach and has involved hundreds, perhaps thousands of young people from around the world in this process of cultivating peace. I have been fortunate to work with you, first with Maria Kooijman back in the 90’s, then with the new teams of the 21st Century on the 2005 World Report on the Culture of Peace, the 2006 Report on Youth and a Culture of Peace and the Peace Advocacy teams that presented these reports to UN diplomats in 2005 and 2006. Now I am looking forward to working with you again, as a new generation of youth has taken up the challenge of making the 2010 World Report on a Culture of Peace.

Peace,

David Adams
Former Director of the United Nations International Year for the Culture of Peace (2000).
It was in the beginning of 2005 when I first heard, or better read about UNOY Peacebuilders. At the time I was studying at the ISHSS/University of Amsterdam and I noticed an advertisement by a youth peacebuilding organisation on the announcement board of the school, wherein they called people to start working as volunteers or to apply for an internship. Throughout my first semester as a Master student of International Development Studies I had found a keen interest in peace and conflict issues. This announcement sounded interesting and appeared to me as the perfect opportunity to gain some practical work experience in the field I had just decided to specialise in. At the time, obviously, I could not yet foresee that this would be the beginning of a long, still ongoing relationship of cooperation and learning.

I started working for UNOY as a volunteer, first one day per week, later more, depending on the assigned tasks and the time slots left by my studies. Over the following two years of voluntary engagement I was involved in numerous activities, from the maintenance of the online resource centre, to UNOY’s representation at various events to the involvement in advocacy and lobby activities on a national and international level. The peak point of my time working for UNOY was certainly the participation in the two Youth Advocacy Teams that lobbied the United Nations in New York on the Decade of a Culture of Peace in 2005 and 2006. I will never forget the hundreds of phone calls we made from the telephone booths in the lobby of the UN building, getting on the nerves of the Permanent Representatives until we finally got invited and heard. A mentioning of our efforts in the UN General Assembly was the best reward for our work that we could possibly dream of.

Now, several years later, looking back on some work experience as a professional in peace and conflict organisations, and being a lecturer in peace and conflict studies at my former university, I feel deeply grateful towards UNOY. I had the chance to benefit from unique learning experiences, and I am pretty sure that my two years of volunteer work experience greatly contributed to the subsequent steps of my still young professional career. In every job interview that I had so far I could refer to what I have learned during my time with UNOY. Every semester, I hold at least one lecture wherein I tell my students about the many opportunities for civil society in peacebuilding, and present UNOY as an example for how to make a change.

Over the years, I have seen UNOY itself growing and changing, emerging from a small organisation squeezed in a tiny office space in Purmerend, now functioning as a professional peacebuilding organisation, running various programmes, at any time employing numerous volunteers, interns and professionals from various countries and backgrounds. But the spirit within the office, of every single project remains the same as ever. Young, enthusiastic and hard working people contribute to a shared vision of a world wherein youth play an important role in building and maintaining peace and function as respected and powerful agents of change on virtually all levels of society.

Though I am not directly involved in the work of UNOY anymore, I feel still very connected to the network. Serving as a board member is the least thing I can do to give something back for all the opportunities that I have received from UNOY. Happy birthday, and thank you for everything!

Anika May, Germany
UNOY Intern 2005 – 2006, presently UNOY Board member
Advocacy promotes positive change, educates the public and informs people about different issues relevant to them. Advocacy is important to any cause, especially in the present system of democracy and policy making. Advocacy pushes more people to be aware and supportive of a cause - which in turn, puts more pressure upon legislators and leaders. It shows that voices can be heard, and the more people that are aware - the louder message it reflects.”

Meghann Aurea V. Villanueva, Youth Advocacy Team 2006
Culture of Peace and the International Day of Peace

From the onset of the introduction of the concept of a Culture of Peace by UNESCO, UNOY Peacebuilders supported the initiative. A proposal was drafted in 1994 which stated “The challenge of this generation is on the one hand to abolish war and prohibit the use of violence for settling disputes, and on the other hand to create a Culture of Peace, a new consciousness, and appropriate structures and institutions to protect, sustain and foster its continuous growth.” UNOY’s role in achieving this was mainly through education, providing resources and building the capacity of its network. To mark the UN International Year for a Culture of Peace (2000), a global Campaign in support of the Year was organised through the E-group. Then in 2000, UNOY Peacebuilders organised various actions in support of the UN International Year for a Culture of Peace and was acknowledged by UNESCO as Messenger of the Manifesto 2000. In the period 1998 till 2006 UNOY Peacebuilders actively promoted the Hague Appeal for Peace and the Earth Charter.

Following on the success of the International Year for a Culture of Peace, the UN declared 2001-2010 the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World. In response, UNOY launched their Global Campaign, “PEACE IT TOGETHER: a youth campaign for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence”. After UNOY Peacebuilders organised its successful youth training/conference in Africa in 2001 the organisation started to promote activities that promote a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence at local levels, and from 2003 onwards, within its overall framework of the Peace It Together Campaign that UNOY set up. A big part of this is the UN declared International Day of Peace on 21 September. UNOY Peacebuilders has officially supported this day since 2005.
21st of September—the International Day of Peace

2009 UNOY Peacebuilders, in cooperation with several other NGOs, organised the Hip-day festival in The Hague

2008 UNOY Peacebuilders attended the Seeds of Change Festival in Rotterdam and gave youth the opportunity to have their voice heard by leaving a ‘Message of Peace’

2007 UNOY Peacebuilders, with the help of Youth Service Initiative and No Kidding, organised the kick-off of the international campaign on Violence against Children and Youth. On this day, a small wall was erected on which children left a symbolic handprint to give peace a helping hand

2006 An exhibition was put up and a video presented at an event organised by the Dutch Platform “People Building Peace”.

2005 UNOY gathered at the Peace Palace and made large collective peace paintings. Thereafter, these were brought to the UNOY office which was officially opened that day.

UNOY Team Members at 21 September 2009 celebrations

Culture of Peace rally in Somalia organised by SOYDA in support of the Peace It Together Campaign in 2005
The United Network of Young Peacebuilders has been working on gender issues for a number of years. However, the concrete idea for a UNOY Peacebuilders’ Gender Programme was first initiated after several of UNOY Peacebuilders members indicated a desire to implement gender mainstreaming in their work and in the UNOY network. UNOY Peacebuilders took up this challenge, and in 2008 the first activities were planned.

The Gender Working Group was set up to provide a forum for UNOY Peacebuilders’ international secretariat and its members to discuss gender and peace related issues. The input from the gender working group will be used to formulate a gender policy with the aims and objectives of the gender programme in the years to come. The Gender Working Group consists of representatives from one third of UNOY Peacebuilders’ members, including countries like Pakistan (CRY), Nepal (MODE Nepal), Palestine (AEI), Colombia (Escuelas de Paz), Burundi, Ghana (Young Peace Brigades), Somalia (SOYDA), DRC (PEREX-C), Eritrea (NUEYS), South Africa (COPA Southern), Kenya (KYF), Benin (AYRO), Burundi (Amahoro Youth Club) and Armenia (HCAV and Peace Dialogue).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Gender Training in the Netherlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Gender Working Group established</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Gender Training in the Netherlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Gender Mainstreaming Study Session in Budapest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Development of Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit (to be published 2010)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Our organisation CRY (Coalition on Rights and Responsibilities of Youth) joined UNOY a few years back. Joining UNOY was like achieving a milestone in our efforts of building “PEACE”. Being part of UNOY, we realised the relation of peace, democracy and Human Rights. UNOY strengthened our capacity to understand the complex realities behind conflicts and to contribute towards channeling energies of youth in promoting peace and preventing them from falling prey to extremist and terrorist organizations. It strengthened our commitment towards achieving “Global Peace” and towards youth empowerment.

UNOY is always a source of inspiration and motivation for me; I always wished to join the network individually. Recently, in March 2009, I joined the network as member of the “Gender Working Group”. Our role is to develop a “Gender Action Plan” which will lead to a compilation of an operative Gender Policy for the UNOY network. Initiating the Gender Working Group is a marvellous step of UNOY because UNOY believes that Peace is inextricably linked to equality between men and women. A sustainable peace can only be established with the active and full participation of women in formulating political, economic, social policy and the inclusion of gender perspectives in the peace building and conflict resolution process. Without women’s full participation and integration of gender perspective in peace processes, justice and development can’t be ensured in the reforming and reconstruction of conflict-affected areas.

Being part of UNOY, we believe that women are not only victims of conflict; they are also important actors in building peace. I have recently joined UNOY and have high hopes, I believe UNOY will enable me to effectively gender mainstream our efforts of peacebuilding, to address the different needs of men and women effectively, and to promote non-violence, tolerance and Global Peace.

Gulalai Ismail, Pakistan.
Member of CRY and member of the Gender Working Group since March 2009.
I decided to start public work in a human rights non-governmental organisation (HCA Vanadzor, Armenia), when I realised that I can make a change. From the very start, I was involved in peace-building activities of the organisation and I personally got acquainted with people who suffered from conflicts (relatives of missing persons, refugees, former prisoners of war) in some way. Moreover, working with these people I fully realised the need for world peace. Being involved in the activities of such organizations and networks like UNOY helped me to enrich my knowledge and get skills of working in this field.

We cooperated with UNOY in different ways: we exchanged information, we applied the evaluation tools in our organisation developed by UNOY, we participated in UNOY publications, and then I became an ISG member, which was a great chance for me to learn, share my experience, realise myself and make efforts for joint initiatives. Finally I saw how great a job UNOY is doing for peace by linking up young people’s initiatives by helping to empower their capacities and to increase the effectiveness of their actions.

All the contacts and meetings made me understand that UNOY and its role in communicating with young people from all over the world, bringing together people with different cultural and social backgrounds, makes a real international atmosphere for meeting, discussing and deciding on peacebuilding activities and issues.

I think that UNOY also helped us to realise the importance of gender mainstreaming in our organisations and initiated the working group, which I very much hope will be successful.

We should keep in mind that peacebuilding is a long process demanding courage, knowledge and patience, which UNOY can develop in each of us. I hope that UNOY will live several more decades continuing its successful work on the way to World Peace.

Thanks to the whole UNOY Team and Happy 20th anniversary!!!

Armine Sadikyan, Armenia.

Member of Helsinki Citizens’ Assembly-Vanadzor, former ISG member (2007-2009) and member of the Gender Working Group since March 2009
Growth of the Network

UNOY Peacebuilders began as an international organisation with branches, called “nets”, all around the world. Over time, UNOY Peacebuilders slowly developed into a loose network of member organisations and individual peacebuilders from around the world, a structure that allowed international members to keep their autonomy and individual identity.

In 2006, the new structure was formally organised, so that UNOY Peacebuilders became a two tiered network with Members and Affiliates. A call for Members is issued once every year and Members are considered according to their work and relevance to the network. Affiliates are individuals and organisations with a looser connection to the International Secretariat.
UNOY Peacebuilders members

Africa

- African Youth Relief Organisation (AYRO), Benin
- Amahoro Youth Club (AYC), Burundi
- Action des jeunes pour le Développement Communautaire et la Paix (ADECOP), Congo Democratic Republic
- Groupement de Promotion Integrale, Congo Democratic Republic
- Programme d’Encadrement et de Reinsertion des Jeunes ex Combattants et en Difficultes (Perex-C), Congo Democratic Republic
- The National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students (NUEYS), Eritrea
- Young Peace Brigades (YPB), Ghana
- Kenya Youth Foundation (KYF), Kenya
- Kibera Youth Programme for Peace and Development, Kenya
- Movement for Peace and Reconciliation in Liberia, Liberia
- African Child Peace Initiative (ACPI), Liberia
- Peacelinks, Sierra Leone
- Young Leaders Sierra Leone (YLSL), Sierra Leone
- Somaliland Youth Development Association, Somalia
- Coalition for Peace in Africa (COPA), South Africa
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Europe</th>
<th>Asia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• YERITAC, Armenia</td>
<td>• International Friends Youth Society (IFYS), Bangladesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Helsinki Citizens’ Assembly-Vanadzor (HCAV), Armenia</td>
<td>• National Federation of Youth Organisations in Bangladesh (NFYOB), Bangladesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• SCAF Youth Center, Belarus</td>
<td>• Idea Action, Nepal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Service Civil International, Belgium</td>
<td>• Coalition of Rights and Responsibilities of Youth (CRY), Pakistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• U Move 4 Peace, Pax Christi Flanders Youth Movement, Belgium</td>
<td>• Arab Education Institute (AEI), Palestine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• European-Mediterranean Youth Bridge e.V. (EMYB e.V.), Germany</td>
<td>• International Palestinian Youth League (IPYL), Palestine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• NGO Initiative for Peace, UNMIK/Kosovo</td>
<td>• GZO Peace Institute, Phillipines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Life Youth Foundation, Romania</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The Peace Action Training and Research Institute of Romania (PATRIR), Romania</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Youth Diplomacy for Democracy, Ukraine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Forum of Youth Advocacy (FOYA), United Kingdom.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latin America</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Argentine Youth Organization for the United Nations, Argentina</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fundación Escuelas de Paz, Colombia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Corporación Foro de la Juventud de Guayaquil, Ecuador</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Dinamismo Juvenil A.C., Mexico</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Brigada de Voluntarios Bolivarianos del Peru (BVBP), Peru.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Representatives from U Move Peace, AEI, PATIR, CRY, YDD and YERITAC during a UNOY study session
The International Steering Group

The International Steering Group (ISG) is comprised of six individuals selected from member organisations, two representatives of the International Secretariat (IS), and one member of the Board. The ISG has principally a strategic advisory role. It deliberates on matters of policy and acts as a selection panel for new members.

UNOY hosted the first International Steering Group (ISG) meeting in 2007. The secretariat was able to set up a policy paper capturing shared principles of the members and engaged in an extensive mapping of the needs of the new members. The ISG members worked on outlining the future focus of the network, based on all these available sources of information, and set the project outlines for the coming years for UNOY Peacebuilders. During the meeting in 2008, new members were selected and the gender programme outlined. In 2009, the ISG discussed amongst other, the branding and marketing strategy of UNOY Peacebuilders.

List of ISG members from 2007 to 2009

- Ana Estefania Carballo, Argentina
- Hovhannes Jonas Grigoryan, Armenia
- Majd Hisham Beltaji, Palestine
- Nikki Al Ben Santos Delfin, The Philippines
- Roynet Banda, South Africa
- Armine Sadikyan, Armenia
- Shakti Ghimire, Nepal
- Fred Barlue, Liberia

Shakti during the ISG Meeting 2008
I am the one among PerexC who discovered UNOY for the first time. In 2007, I was invited by Pax Christi Flanders in a project titled ‘Youth Choose Peace’. There I discovered Menno Ettema, the International Coordinator, when he was moderating a workshop on peacebuilding, advocacy and lobbying. These topics interested me a lot, and seeing someone running them who was really well skilled, I learned many important things from him.

One evening he was talking to our colleagues from Burundi about the network and the probable training that could take place in Africa. Because it was very interesting for my organisation, I appeared in the conversation and I took contact details of the network. Once at home in a refugee camp, I wrote to the International Coordinator who put us immediately in touch with the network.

We cannot make a balance sheet of benefits that we have received from the network but there is a proverb that says, “instead of giving me a fish, please teach me how to fish.” The Nairobi training was a success for the whole network, especially for African members. It means that many things have been done positively.

Congratulations. Also we must do our best to improve something like the organisation of the network itself, like increasing networking awareness. Let’s celebrate the anniversary. Our gratitude is addressed to all of those who are working day and night for the growth of the network, to all the sponsors of the network, and to all our organisation members for supporting the network. Twenty candles in my heart, we celebrate. Que tous soient un, That all may be one, Wote wawe moja

Ilot Muthaka Alphonse, Democratic Republic of Congo
Member of PerexC. Participant during the African Youth in Motion for Peace training in Kenya in 2008

Agency of Rehabilitation and Development (ARD) was established in July 1995 with the active support of UNOY. The UNOY Secretariat has supported ARD from the very beginning of its creation. It assisted it to establish contacts with donor organisations, taught fundraising, NGO Management, carried out translations and ensured representation of ARD in the Netherlands and throughout the world. With this support of UNOY, we were able to successfully develop and work productively for the benefit of the needy.

Happy birthday UNOY! We express our sincere gratitude to all UNOY members. Keep up the good work UNOY!

I would like to mention separately Maria Kooijman who has taken us to her home, which became to us our home. She “kept her hand on the pulse of our organisation”. Good luck and long live!

Luba Archakova, Director of ARD / Denal, Chechnya, Ingushetia
I am an affiliate member of United Network of Young Peacebuilders from Lagos Nigeria.

As an affiliate I have learnt too much to mention it all, but the one I will not forget today is I have been able to preach peace in Nigeria and other African countries. This I didn’t do before. Equally, I really have to thank UNOY for your wonderful work and the attention which you have given to humanity. May God continue to bless you and any other things you may wish to do. Keep your faith up for a great Africa, and for the world. We need to work hard for the achievement of peace in Africa. When you have peace in Africa, the world will be a better place for all of us to live.

We need to show that this world can be a better place for all with peace. In Nigeria, like most other countries in West Africa, the youths are a marginalised set of the population struggling to gain prominence not only in their localities but also at national level in such matters as decision-making. Consequently, it has been extremely difficult for governments of Africa and other states to give ears to the calls of the young people regarding issues of poverty, rape, suffering, hunger, seeds soils, water, markets, agricultural, education, African farmer knowledge, policies, monitoring, evaluation and HIV/AIDS etc. Young people should be given platforms to participate in decision making processes at all levels. The Nigerian government and other African leaders should give youths a choice.

With you we can make a change.

Prince Godwin C. Korieocha, Affiliate Member, Nigeria

Resources from the UNOY Website, the Newsletter and the Peaceful Digest have all given us more opportunities as an organisation to be more understanding about our activities and our existence to many people in the world. All this has had a positive impact on our organisation.

Yussuf Kalib, Somaliland
I met the UNOY through Douglas Campos during the summit "Youth 92", of Costa Rica, and a second meeting in Rio de Janeiro for the Earth Summit 92. Projects and projections intrigued me, as I was a youth activist.

I soon met young people who quickly captured my attention on the principles of building a better and sustainable world by youth integration and practice of non-violence, seeking to be instruments of Peace. I worked together with the entire structure of the UNOY Foundation and the organization of young UNOY, which came to constitute an International Executive Committee elected in Minsk, Belarus.

With the experience gained in UNOY, I founded in my country, the so-called Peace Brigades (to act and to prevent social conflicts) and Green Brigade (for environmental projects), made up of young volunteers.

For the generation of Bolivian leaders of that time the experience was transcendent. They were used to fighting the traditional way, and slowly discovered the virtues and power of non-violence and conflict prevention. This attitude did help later in the magazine business, where the struggle for democracy and autonomy of people managed to save my life. Thanks to a team of youth and ex-dirigentes the Peace Brigades were founded in the framework of UNOY in 1990’s.

These practices were transmitted to new generations and still are, So when my people were mobilized in search of autonomy, at masses up to one million people, we had teams trained and experienced in peaceful methods of struggle.

Today as an adult, I continue on the same path, supporting the new generation in their desires and projects.

Nino Gandarilla Guardia, Santa Cruz, Bolivia

Participant UNOY Conferences/ Training seminar, meeting 1992-1993, Affiliate Member
My name is Qaisar Ismail, and I have been involved in youth organisational work since 1998. When I was in 8th class, my teacher punished me because I was talking to my friend and was not concentrating on the class. When I came back home from my school my father took me to the hospital. I got 4 stitches because of the punishment. I realised that I faced a problem that exists in our society. My father took me to the Non-Governmental organisations who were working on corporal punishment and child rights. I started as a youth activist; I was selected to represent my country in UNGASS-United Nationals General Assembly special session on children. In UNGASS I came to know about youth organisations and works, and when I came back, I established a youth organisation by the name of CRY (Coalition on Rights and Responsibilities of Youth). I live in a conflict zone and believe that there is a need for change and have committed myself to defend Human Rights and working for youth peace building. After the Youth Leadership training in Islamabad in 2005, I came to know that if you really believe in change you should start from yourself. I grew up in a society where there are always internal conflicts, violation of Human Rights, Discrimination based on Gender, injustice and Military rule. I grew up in a family committed to activism and the promotion of Human Rights and Democracy in the region. My father was a believer of Non-Violent conflict of “Khan Abdul Ghafar Khan-Bahca Khan” and he also transferred his knowledge to us. I realised through my organisation and activities that you can bring real change in the society. We developed contacts with Government and other agencies. We organised youth groups all grass root levels of the society in 10 districts of the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan. During my studies and work I was looking for the opportunities to share my learning and work with other people and to learn from the experiences of other like minded people. Since 2000 Pakistan was ruled by a military dictator and after the 9/11 attacks in the United States, Pakistan support in the Coalition forces created internal conflicts. Young people were attracted towards the Militancy and JIHAD (War in the name of religion). Our organisation worked on the role of youth in peace building for many years. I believe that there is a need for change at the local level and international level. I was interested in UNOY’s work and believe there is a need for a global network of young people and youth organisations active in the field of peacebuilding through networking, training, empowerment of youth projects and advocacy as my organisation was focusing our work mainly in advocacy. My thoughts are non-political, non-religious and non-governmental and I have developed an organisation with the same ideas regardless of gender, ethnicity, social class and religion. I applied for UNOY membership and was selected. I believe that UNOY is a network of organisations where they can exchange their learning, information and experience through the working groups, training and other actions. Being a part of UNOY Peacebuilders for me is a way of getting involved in peacebuilding processes though networking and collaboration. My organisation and UNOY believe that the promotion of Human Rights will resolve the issues of conflict in many regions of the world. Conflict transformation can only take place if Human Rights are ensured for all the peoples of the society regardless of Gender and religion. UNOY Peacebuilders is a great team of young people and organizations who put together all of their efforts in promoting the involvement of youth in peacebuilding. UNOY believes in strengthening the role of youth for the promotion of Human Rights and conflict transformation.
As a young person from Pakistan where Human Rights are violated and facing internal conflicts and the new war on terrorism, it is really important for me to be a member of UNOY and its process of peacebuilding. I think youth in Pakistan need a change and empowerment as they are the target of the militants.

UNOY gave me an opportunity to share and learn skills and gain new experiences during a week on youth in Peacebuilding, containing valuable information and strategies, providing me with an opportunity to collaborate in the network, and a chance to present my country. I gained knowledge as a moderator, on organisation management, peace building projects, planning, training, advocacy, monitoring and evaluations. I built my capacities and applied it in my organization. UNOY is unique because of its structure, the operations and organisational issues.

I wish UNOY a Happy 20th Anniversary with peace.

Qaisar Ismail, Pakistan.
Member of CRY, participant at the COE Study Session in 2008

I wish the network a Happy 20th anniversary full of success, hope, love, achievements, until we reach the global Peace we are all looking for.

Majd Beltaji, Palestine
Member of International Palestinian Youth League and International Steering Group Member 2008-2010.

With this message I and all the staff of Peace Dialogue would like to congratulate the UNOY staff on its 20th anniversary. We greatly appreciate all the efforts done by the UNOY staff towards the creation of a new peace movement in the world. For us UNOY is one of the most unique networks achieving real, tangible results in the involvement of youth in the hard work of peace building. Wishing you continued long years of success and peace to everybody.

Edgar Khachatryan, Armenia, on behalf of Peace Dialogue
Part of implementation team of ‘Gender equality in youth peacebuilding projects’ 2009
For me, UNOY has helped in opening a world of thought and ideas and the ability to open and maintain a real dialogue with those who are different from me. I have cherished that skill and have used it since as I developed a career as an activist and a reporter in the Middle East.

Nir Boms, Israel

Kapayapaan! (Peace in Filipino)

The world is a chaotic place,
Full of violence and hate,
But to those that believe,
Those that perceived,
And worked, and toiled, and cried and bled
With all of humanity...
To the young people that have worked,
and are working to be peaceful and free...
Continue to believe,
Peace can be achieved.
Happy 20th!

Nikki Al Ben Santos Delfin, The Philippines
ISG member since 2009 and member of GenPeace/ GZO Peace Institute

Thanks to the virtual and face-to-face exchanges that I have had through UNOY, I have further developed a sense of receptivity to other people’s opinion and to new ideas in the field of peacebuilding.

Guelord Mbaenda Adecop, DRC, PEREX C.
The age of Methuselah (969 years – the oldest man in the holy bible) has nothing to do with the Wisdom of Solomon goes a wise saying. This is to say that in a span of less than 19 years, the United Nations of Youth Network Nigeria (UNOY Nigeria) has benefited multi-dimensionally from UNOY Peacebuilders as if the achievements of UNOY Peacebuilders were recorded for a period of 1000 years. It is not how far but how well! Due to time and space, we cannot catalogue all the monumental benefits and measurable breakthroughs recorded by UNOY Nigeria as an affiliate of UNOY Peacebuilders from inception in August 1991, but however, we shall try to articulate some of these benefits in few paragraphs.

International/UN Connections

Enjoying the good will and reputation of UNOY Peacebuilders, UNOY Nigeria was endorsed and accredited by the United Nations to attend various major UN summits. The skills, knowledge and technical know-how acquired in the above forums has helped our members in their individual working places and impacted collectively in the upliftment of UNOY Nigeria as the delegates replicate the skills to other members whenever they are back from the conference.

Establishment of Africa Network of Young Peace Builders 2001:

The establishment of this network at that time was a genuine initiative in the right direction. This feat was unprecedented in the history of African youths in relation to Peace. For the first time in history, selected African youth leaders from all the regions came together (via email, website, list serve, conference) to network, collaborate, and share skills and knowledge by way of best practices in peace and related issues. UNOY Nigeria members and Nigerian youths in general have gained tremendously in getting sponsorship by UNOY Peacebuilders to participate in training conferences on peace and related matters. Some of these countries include, but are not limited to Cape Town, in South Africa (2001), Calavi, Benin (2002), and Freetown, in Sierra Leone (2004). The exposure and contacts in these forums has empowered us immensely in building our capacity hence enabling us to take the peace challenges confronting us squarely.

Decade – for Peace Culture of Peace and Non-Violence:

Were it not for UNOY Peacebuilders, African contributions to the decade for Peace and Nonviolence would have been very insignificant. With the invitation from UNOY Peacebuilders, UNOY Nigeria mobilized Civil Society Entities in Nigeria to make their submission to the organisers’ website. (See UNOY Nigeria’s contribution: http://www.decade-culture-of-peace.org/)

Recently United Nations applauded the UNOY Nigeria in publishing its event in celebrating the International Youth Day in August 12th 2009. (See: http://unic.un.org/imu/recentActivities/category/Lagos.aspx)

UNOY Nigeria dedicated this particular achievement to UNOY Peacebuilders, because without UNOY Peacebuilders bringing forth UNOY Nigeria, the achievement would have been a Mirage.
Like the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, Time and Space fail us to outline the other numerous benefits of UNOY Nigeria from UNOY Peacebuilders, but however, we must not fail to call for a befitting Alumni to be setup with the celebration of the 20\textsuperscript{th} Anniversary where the Alumni will have periodic meetings and discussion forum and try to give back to UNOY Peacebuilders a part from so many gained over the years. After all to whom much is given, much is expected. Bravo to UNOY.

Prince Goodluck Obi
National Executive President of United Nation Of Youth Network Nigeria (UNOY)

I share with UNOY Peacebuilders the vision of a world in which every young person is actively engaged in achieving a peaceful society. Being a member of the ISG was a great experience for me to empower myself and my organisation. I am glad that the restructuring project of the network in 2006 has contributed to a more innovative structure of UNOY Peacebuilders, where the member organisations have had the opportunity to contribute more actively at the decision making level of the network."

Fred Barlue, Liberia

The 2007 UNOY Team
What makes UNOY so unique?

UNOY has always had the ability to attract motivated people and to create a vibrant team with each new round of secretariat team members. Whole teams have been renewed, but somehow the people manage to continue the work and create a new team spirit in a short amount of time. Common for all of those who have spent time at the International Secretariat is dedication, commitment and energy. The organisation has always been able to count on motivated young peacebuilders to deliver successful projects. Many of them got their first professional experience through UNOY, and it also changed and influenced their career. Many have continued working for other international organisations or even set up their own peace projects.

It is therefore appropriate to thank all the volunteers, interns, staff and board members who have committed endless days and nights the last twenty years to create a better world.

Working at UNOY Peacebuilders is an amazing opportunity for me. I get to see all the great work that organisations like ours are achieving. Every little accomplishment shows that Peace is possible, and it’s a great feeling to be a part of it.

Lee Bremner, New Zealand
Intern 2009
What Makes UNOY So Unique?

UNOY Peacebuilders first arrived in my life in 2005 while working in the Middle East, in Bethlehem. A friend of mine, Anne-Claire (past board member UNOY), sent me an email asking if I would have a look at a manual that was being developed for young Peacebuilders. It struck me then, the open approach that the organisation was taking towards including the thoughts and opinions of young people from around the world.

Then a year past I heard again from UNOY, this time it was for a job interview as International Coordinator. It started with a phone interview in the middle of a busy bus terminal in Jerusalem with Maria Kooijman. It ended with me passing the office for a second interview while visiting the Netherlands for a wedding. Straight from the plane I arrived at Javastraat welcomed in a typical UNOY manner: warm, inviting, open, and with a group lunch. The official interview was difficult, but good enough as it seems, I’m still the International Coordinator at UNOY now.

For me UNOY is still this youth organisation where there is a place for energy, thoughts and enthusiasm from young Peacebuilders from all walks of life. The lunch table always seems to be set for the colourful and dynamic team of volunteers and interns that make the work of UNOY possible but also for the lost stranger just arriving from a night flight from a troubled oriental land. It is the mixture of social engagement and professionalism, with a great trust that young people can take up big challenges, that make UNOY special and a joy to work for. I enjoy all the emails I receive and meetings I have with UNOY Youth from around the world. Although confronted with difficult times hope is never lost among us.

UNOY Peacebuilders was in a turbulent process of change in the last 2.5 years, changing from a lose network of individual contacts to a membership based network. Developing multi year programs, new bodies of governance like the ISG and relying more on team work between members. It is turbulent but like the young Peacebuilders that build up the network, UNOY has always been, and will always be, up for the great challenges it meets.

Menno Ettema, the Netherlands,
UNOY Peacebuilders’ International Coordinator since 2006

I feel that working with UNOY allows me to harness the potential of young people across the world. By connecting youth organisations together, we can stand as one and make our voices heard. Only this way can we hope to make violent conflict a thing of the past and move towards a more peaceful and inclusive world.

Roderick Besseling, the Netherlands
Intern 2009
UNOY is one of the few organisations which seem to have a real understanding of issues in Peacebuilding and Conflict Transformation. Interning at UNOY at the International Secretariat level provided me with an opportunity for each day to be a learning process - adding value to what I am doing at UNOY is something noble.

Nebil Ahmed Kusmallah, Eritrea
Intern 2009

In the past years I have been (on and off) involved with UNOY Peacebuilders in different positions. Every time coming back feels like coming home... I have been involved with the network in Africa and strongly involved with the Secretariat and the former Interim Board. In addition, I have attended several trainings. The people I have met through UNOY share certain characteristics. These people are all proactive, ambitious and full of potential. I feel that I have learned so much from UNOY related people from different backgrounds and continents. I also remember the fun we had with other interns, volunteers and training participants: singing songs, dancing in the office of the Secretariat, chatting about dreams and new projects, heated discussions and working very hard on the advocacy simulation game.

I feel that the people involved with UNOY Peacebuilders have created a dynamic network with a positive spirit. And every time I came back, this environment hasn’t changed and for me it is easy to feel at home in the network again. This is perhaps in contradiction to what has happened to the network throughout the years. The network has undergone drastic changes, especially the big restructuring. I would like to congratulate UNOY Peacebuilders for keeping up the spirit, even under necessary changing circumstances.

As the network is becoming more mature, I hope the network will grow in quality and focus. Sharing of experiences and mutual capacity building among members will be increasingly important in that. I would encourage everyone to contribute to the network with his or her own skills and knowledge whether face to face, through facebook, the e-groups, email or sms. And I can tell you: every contact with a UNOY relative will feel like coming home... There is no better way of building peace!

Liesbeth-Marije Hoogland, the Netherlands
Intern 2007, Chair of the Interim Board 2008
UNOY is here to stay,
Shining out of Den Haag like a big sun ray.

This organization is so very cool,
We get interns from all types of schools!

But when I decided to volunteer,
I didn’t know it would last 2+ years!

But lo and behold, the first Financial Coordinator is me,
And it definitely has made me see,

The goodness in my team,
It’s like a beautiful flowing stream.

At UNOY,
We really do try.

Because we want peace,
To give everyone relief.

So ‘jippie’ for the brilliant inspiration,
This UNOY creation!

Nikolai had the dream,
And amazing accomplishments have been seen.

Maria held it all together,
Because she knew it could create something better.

I’m wishing UNOY many years more,
With a fabulous team from shore to shore.

Jayne Falugo, USA
UNOY Peacebuilders’ Financial Coordinator since 2009.
UNOY Peacebuilders has been a space where I could do something concrete for the greater good in the world place but at the same time a place for me to grow, explore, learn and develop. Thanks!

Lillian Solheim, Norway
UNOY Peacebuilders’ Advocacy Coordinator since 2007

UNOY Peacebuilders is a great place to work! It’s fantastic to work with so many great young people and show how much we can achieve!

Fiona Burgess, Canada/UK
Intern 2009

Making coffee and photocopying are two things a lot of people associate with an internship. Perhaps if one is very lucky one gets to sort through the mail or do some other mundane task. This is not the life of a UNOY intern. From the very start I have been able to work on my own things and see a project through from the proposal to the evaluation stages. I have been fortunate enough to be involved in some great projects, not just as the gender officer, but also through attending events or trainings organized by other people in the office. In fact, the only time I’ve had to photocopy something it has been for my own work….and most of the time the coordinators make the coffee for us.

Sarah Brun, Norway
Intern 2009
An announcement in the weekly newspaper of my university in 1998 informed me about an internship at UNOY, to organise a global youth peace conference. The moment I read it I knew I wanted to do it. It was about peace, and it was for youth, around the globe! In the end it made a huge impact on me.

A year later, May 1999, UNOY’s 2nd global youth peace conference took place; with 70 young people from 35 conflict regions. We started 5 days in the beautiful surroundings of Vught, in the south of the Netherlands, and then connected to the Hague Appeal for Peace, in The Hague; a conference to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the first Peace Conference in The Hague in 1899.

Working at the office of UNOY, back then still in the attic of an office in Purmerend, a city just outside of Amsterdam, was my first work experience in an office. It was also a rather different approach to international issues, such as conflict and peace, than I had learned in university, studying history/international relations. And I learned about conflicts in regions that I had not picked up yet through the Western media.

The conference itself made the biggest impact in me: finally meeting the people we had talked about during the preparations was fantastic. Getting to know them, hearing their stories, from their point of views. For the first time in my life I realized how different parties in a conflict can have strong good-bad-views of the situation, not realizing that the other party also looks for peace.

I was the most impressed by the energy these people had to find a way out, to look for a solution, working on grass root level, bottom-up. At the beginning of my studies I had dreamt of becoming a diplomat. After this internship I started to feel much more connected to these local or grassroots-approaches, because it’s much closer to the people.

I stayed connected to UNOY and was often invited to parties on special occasions. Going to a UNOY happening always meant meeting very special and inspiring people from all over the world. It gave me each time so much energy and faith in our future.

Anne-Claire Frank, the Netherlands
Intern/Volunteer 1998-1999
Joining hands across social divides is in South Africa also referred to as ‘ubuntu’ (literally: “I am what I am because of who we all are”). What inspired me when I first entered the office of UNOY Peacebuilders in April 2008 is that a very dynamic group of young people from different nations were joining hands to work on social justice and peace building at the global level. I am very grateful to have been introduced to this international network of moved young people and to materialize the meaning of ‘ubuntu’.

Let the hand print and life philosophy of Mandela always be visible in the work of the United Network of Young Peacebuilders.

Marloes van Houten, the Netherlands
UNOY Projects Coordinator since 2009

UNOY means for me the perfect platform to learn not just about peace but about the world, about the potential of young people and the importance of understanding each other’s differences, and to accept them in order to create a sustainable world.

Adriana Salazar, Columbia
Intern 2009

Young, passionate and committed individuals who care about the bigger picture - it has been an honour to work with the team so far.

Arosha Epa, Australia
Volunteer 2009
UNOY Peacebuilders

light,
hope,
dreams.

You know why?
cause it opens eyes
it opens doors
it opens wings

UNOY?
path-builders
bridge-builders
net-builders

UNOY Peacebuilders
a vision
a mission
the sceptics, bewildered..

UNOY Peacebuilders
"them" is no longer "them"
it's us
it's you and me
my sister, my brother, my friend
it's her and it's him
a seed for a new world
to begin.

Celina Del Felice, Argentina
UNOY member (2000-2003) and staff (2003-2007)
Congratulations to UNOY Peacebuilders’ 20th Anniversary! During my internship, UNOY Peacebuilders has become like a family to me. Yet I am always extremely impressed by everyone’s professional way of working. I am so grateful to have gotten the chance to be part of such an amazing team and to learn from everyone involved in UNOY Peacebuilders. The way young people from all over the world are coming together in the UNOY network in order to work towards positive change is very inspiring and gives me a lot of hope. Thank you to UNOY Peacebuilders and keep up the good work!

Kathrin Gottwald, Germany
Intern 2009

Know Why? - UNOY

U know why today you smile
U know why it makes you happy
U know why this cheerful sign
U Know why it’s so catchy?

U Know why? Because it builds
Awareness around the issues
It makes you really value PEACE
And understand – we’re all God’s creatures.

We are appealed to create
The world that free of evil anger
With our deeds we demonstrate
Good will to change this world for better.

The world - might lose beliefs in wars
And see in battles no profits
And it will call for peace to all
And no kidding: that’s no gossips.

With all these thoughts and friendly smile
I hug all dear friends of mine
U know why we’re loving UNOY?
Because it’s us, and we are – UNOY!

Dimitri Vasylev
### List of Staff and Interns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adriana Salazar</th>
<th>Dana Azouri</th>
<th>Inge Ortelee</th>
<th>Nathaniel Holmes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aga Staruch</td>
<td>Dave Taylor</td>
<td>Iris Falkensteiner</td>
<td>Nebil Kusmallah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alessandra Casano</td>
<td>Diana Gaidelyte</td>
<td>Itziar Aparicio</td>
<td>Nina Ackerle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alessia Tosi</td>
<td>Diana Puentes</td>
<td>Iveta Cherneva</td>
<td>Nina Koevoets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ama van Dantzig</td>
<td>Dimitry Chislov</td>
<td>Jayne Falugo</td>
<td>Nina Maqami</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anca Sandescu</td>
<td>Dimitry Vasylev</td>
<td>Jessica van der Kamp</td>
<td>Patrick Effibolely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrea Auxt</td>
<td>Dinasas Abdurashid Abdell</td>
<td>Jonahh Baron</td>
<td>Paul Huber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew Beares</td>
<td>Dinu Abdella</td>
<td>Joyce Gabeler</td>
<td>Paulien Beet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angélique Been</td>
<td>Donata Cassini</td>
<td>Juan Salgado</td>
<td>Persefoni Neophytou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angie Lai</td>
<td>Edyta Kalinowska</td>
<td>Julia Gierse</td>
<td>Phillip Barry Phiri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anika May</td>
<td>Emine Dalyan</td>
<td>Karen Wakkers</td>
<td>Rachel Eichholz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anjala Ward</td>
<td>Eric Ansah</td>
<td>Katharina Block</td>
<td>Ranna Abbawi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ann Zuendorf</td>
<td>Eric Gbeassor</td>
<td>Katherine Davison</td>
<td>Rebeca Cenalmor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anne-Claire Frank</td>
<td>Erin Melnick</td>
<td>Kathrin Gottwald</td>
<td>Rob Huysmans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antoniya Stoyanova</td>
<td>Ernest Mason</td>
<td>Lea Gibert</td>
<td>Roderick Besseling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amira Paripurna</td>
<td>Esther de Witte</td>
<td>Lee Bremner</td>
<td>Roufai Ahamadou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aparajita Dutta</td>
<td>Esther Lever</td>
<td>Lenka Antalkova</td>
<td>Sahro M. Ahmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arosha Epa</td>
<td>Fabiola Rodriguez</td>
<td>Lenka Chludova</td>
<td>Sarah Brun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avgi Kaisi</td>
<td>Frans van Dalsum</td>
<td>Liesbeth-Marije Hoogland</td>
<td>Saori Kumano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bea Stolte</td>
<td>Farrel Elliot</td>
<td>Lillian Solheim</td>
<td>Saskia van der Kooy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benjamin Bureau</td>
<td>Fiona Burgess</td>
<td>Maria Alejandra Pineda</td>
<td>Shoshana Iten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bimal Patela</td>
<td>Franny Parren</td>
<td>Maria Chempalova</td>
<td>Sihle Dube Winther</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodil Dronkers</td>
<td>Freed Schmitter</td>
<td>Maria Kooijman</td>
<td>Silvia Silvozzi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brandi Rose</td>
<td>Gabriela Westen</td>
<td>Marjolein Kok</td>
<td>Umar Ahmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruno Cho Fon</td>
<td>Gemma Sou</td>
<td>Marloes van Houten</td>
<td>Ute Roehl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carolien van den Berg</td>
<td>Gerald Kweri</td>
<td>Marthe Hesselman</td>
<td>Vera Silva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caroline de Bruin</td>
<td>Gerda Dummerholt</td>
<td>Martijn Dalhuijsen</td>
<td>Viola Janbroers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cees Bouwmeester</td>
<td>Gina Donoso</td>
<td>Menno Ettema</td>
<td>Wim Kranendonk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celina Del Felice</td>
<td>Graziella Guimaraes</td>
<td>Merlijn van Waas</td>
<td>Wout Visser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte Kerihuel</td>
<td>Hans Ola Haavelsrud</td>
<td>Michaela Almeida</td>
<td>Zaneta Danihelova</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Bwembya</td>
<td>Henry Wasung</td>
<td>Michiel van Ingen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte Meyer</td>
<td>Hilary Jeune</td>
<td>Milena Zarate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiara Gerlich</td>
<td>Ilona Vinogradova</td>
<td>Myrthe Struiksma</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collins Imoh</td>
<td>Inge Blom</td>
<td>Nancy Chen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cristiana Conte</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Board Members

Throughout the last two decades, UNOY Peacebuilders’ board has supported the International Secretariat through strategic decisions, advice and even hands-on support. Over the years, UNOY has had many dedicated and passionate board members, many of whom committed themselves for long stretches of time, and many others who worked with UNOY in many different roles.

Ama van Dantzig
Ameeta Mehra
Anika May
Anne Claire Frank
Aparajita Dutta
Bea Stolte-van Empelen
Bimal Patel
Bruno Cho Fon
David Del Re
Dinu Abdella
Edzo Tonkis
Eric Gbeassor

Frans van Dalsum
Gerda Dommerholt
Hilary Jeune
Jan Ruyssenaars
Juan Salgado
Liesbeth-Marije Hoogland
Lilian Peters
Maria Kooijman
Marloes van Houten
Manoj Dana
Nikolai Firjubin
Peter Davidse

Pieternel de Bie
Rana Abbawi
Sahro M. Ahmed
Sajeev Chakkalakal
Sihle Dube Winther
Tjienta van Pelt
Ute Roehl
Wim Kranendonk
Wout Visser

The Board, ISG and International Secretariat 2008
Meet the publication team

**Lillian Solheim, Editor**, started working as the Advocacy Coordinator at the UNOY Peacebuilders in October 2007. Lillian is from Norway but lived for 5 years in Brussels, where she completed her MA in International Relations and Peacebuilding. After her studies she worked for Search For Common Ground where she was involved in the gender programme. In 2005, she worked at the Nordic Desk at the United Nations Regional Information Centre as an intern. She was also working as an election observer during the presidential election in Sri Lanka. Before moving to the Netherlands she worked as a community coordinator for an association management company while volunteering for a charity called Children are the Future. In 2009, she was assistant national leader of the Norwegian delegation during the Ship for World Youth Programme.

**Lee Bremner, Editor**, is from New Zealand. She graduated from Victoria University of Wellington with a BA in English Literature, Linguistics and Philosophy, with an interest in applied ethics, and is currently studying with the London School of Journalism. Her previous work experience is in marketing and communications and she has been working at UNOY as the Advocacy and Communications Officer since July 2009.

**Clara Cendrós, Graphic Designer**, is from Spain. Clara has worked as a volunteer with UNOY Peacebuilders since the summer of 2009 and she has previously designed the publication Partners for Peace for UNOY Peacebuilders.
Thanks to our donors

None of the projects would have been possible without the support of our donors and financial supporters. We are very grateful to them for believing in our vision and enabling us to realise our projects.¹

Finally, thanks to all those individuals who supported us financially or in-kind, some of who are mentioned below

Evert Huisman
Bertus Jonkers (artist)
Family Lambrechtsen – Ter Horst

¹ For a complete list of donors and which projects they supported, please visit [http://www.unoy.org/sponsors.html](http://www.unoy.org/sponsors.html)