

Alternatives to Violence Project International Gathering Schedule of Each Block

The 2008 Alternative to Violence Programme (AVP) International Gathering was held in Kakamega (Western part of Kenya) from the 14th to 20th September. The overall goal of the AVP International Gathering was to promote conflict resolution in the African continent through the sharing of skills of non-violence and good human relationships. The following specific objectives were all met.

- a) Sharing skills, knowledge and best practices between diverse AVP facilitators enabling all individuals to be more effective in their work.
- b) Increase the sustainability of AVP in addressing problems of violence.
- c) Broadening of AVP in its reach within the wider peace building community.
- d) Develop the structural capacity of AVPI as a global resource centre for training and development of peace builders.

One hundred and fifteen (115) participants arrived at the venue on Sunday 14 and a total of 24 countries were represented namely;

- | | |
|---------------|-------------------|
| 1. Angola | 14. Namibia |
| 2. Australia | 15. New Zealand |
| 3. Burundi | 16. Nigeria |
| 4. Brazil | 17. Russia |
| 5. Britain | 18. Rwanda |
| 6. Canada | 19. South Africa |
| 7. Costa Rica | 20. Sudan |
| 8. DRC Congo | 21. United States |
| 9. Guatemala | 22. Uganda |
| 10. Hong Kong | 23. Nepal |
| 11. India | 24. Zimbabwe |
| 12. Ireland | |
| 13. Kenya | |

The gathering was officially opened on Monday 15, by the Deputy Provincial Commissioner for Western province of Kenya. He emphasized the Kenyan Government's commitment to non violent means of conflict resolution and stressed that the gathering was taking place at an opportune time just when Kenya was in need of healing after the country was plunged into violence after the disputed December 2007 elections. The gathering would therefore contribute to national healing.

The gathering proceedings were structured in plenary, workshops/interest groups and home groups. Participants gathered in the plenary every morning and every evening after dinner. A number of workshops/interest groups were conducted through out the period of the gathering. Below is a description of the workshops:

Monday 10:30 – 12:00

Workshop 1A: Overview of the Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities (HROC) training Workshops –

HROC is the adaptation of AVP methodology in Rwanda and Burundi. During the HROC workshops, participants were introduced to the history and development of HROC after the genocide in Rwanda and Burundi. They then covered the scope and sequence of the HROC training such as Johari's window, and the general understanding of trauma (including the causes, symptoms and effects of trauma). They learned about the stages of healing from grief, skills of good listening and dealing constructively with anger. They saw also how to build trust in a broken community.

Role Plays

This group was centered on the following areas concerning role-plays: Debriefing in a Role Play, Grounding characters, Strengths and weaknesses of role plays, Challenges and possible changes, What if Transforming Power does not work?

The group established that it was a better skill to let participants brain storm and choose their own role play. Also, little preparation time for the role play prevented drama creating genuine emotions that permits participants to experience transforming power. A lot of skill sharing on role plays was exhibited and the conclusion was that brainstorming is well illustrated by role plays in AVP workshops.

Transforming Power

In this workshop, participants shared their understanding and presentation of Transforming Power. Discussion followed.

Integrating the Arts into AVP - Steven Hawkins – Costa Rica facilitator

This group explored the benefits and possibilities for integrating the arts into AVP programs. Music, dance, theater and graphic arts were all discussed and experiences shared.

Monday 2:00 – 5:30

Bias Awareness – John Shufford - USA

This workshop presents an agenda for a full three day workshop. It begins with exercises to build common ground across stereotypical divisions. It then explores the many areas of our lives distorted by stereotypes for example sexism, racism and ethnic bias. Participants brainstormed ways these biases keep individuals from achieving their full potential.

The Kenyan Response to the Post-Election Violence – Kenyan Team

After the Kenyan elections in December 2007, violence broke out in conjunction with the disputed outcome. Kenyan Friends and several related organizations came together quickly and provided a wide range of relief including both material aids, trauma work and reconciliation workshops. The violence shocked many and greatly increased the interest in Alternatives to Violence Project workshops. There was a lot sharing and learning by participants.

Organizational Structures Needed for Successful Fundraising – David Zaremka – USA/Kenya

Participants described the AVP organizational structure in their home countries. This exhibited great diversity from use of personal accounts to a program of a larger NGO or university, to independent AVP organizations. This implies rather different strategies for fund raising. Participants then discussed the procedures needed from developing the organization with planning to deciding upon and writing proposals, implementing them, reporting on them financially and programmatically, and building on to the next proposal cycle.

AVP in Prisons – Jean Pierre Mfuni – DRC and P. Prathapan – India Facilitators

This workshop explored the specific challenges of doing AVP in prisons and how to establish a prison program. There was a lot of sharing of prison work in the US, India, South Africa, Ireland, and Uganda.

AVP with Youth – Hannington Muchere

Participants shared experiences working with youth. Some points were:

- For youth to prosper they need to be involved.
- In some areas youth are not serious about training.
- Participating in activities such as poetry or art helps.
- Accept the situation of youth – attending to their problems. Listen
- Focus and increase awareness that cause problems such as AIDS.

- The group shared best practices and problem solved situations.

Handling Organizational Tensions – Nancy Shippen – USA Facilitator

In AVP we strive to apply our principles of care and respect in all our lives. When tensions arise within the facilitation teams we are called to apply our skills, even though it is difficult and can be quite destructive if not handled well. Difficulties involving facilitators include new facilitators who want to change the program, facilitators with skills that need further development, facilitators who have personal difficulties that result in other facilitators refusing to work with them. Organizational issues include inappropriate use of power by lead facilitators and coordinator; lack of empowerment of women, minority or inmate facilitators;

Monday 4:00 – 5:30

Xenophobia in South Africa – Webster Zambara – South Africa

Twenty five participants from 9 countries attended the workshop. Discussions were mainly on what people from all over the world heard and saw (through the media) about the xenophobic violence that rocked South Africa in March and April, 2008. The participant's input was generally a true reflection of what actually happened as narrated by the facilitator, a victim and a peace worker based in South Africa.

The problems of South Africa are common throughout the world, where, as a result of growing poverty levels, foreigners are usually targeted. What made South Africa's case unique is that of

the 62 recorded deaths, 21 were actually South African's. And as positively reflected by the wider South Africa, the attacks are not a true reflection of the people of South Africa towards foreign nationals.

In conclusion, the participants viewed the causes of the violence in the wider spectrum of world-wide struggles of the poor and marginalized. Unless the world deals with issues of poverty and inequality in a responsible manner, and urgently, what happened in South Africa will continue to happen around the world.

Light and Livelies – Sally Herzfeld – Australia

Participants were invited to lead the group in a L&L that is not in the manual:

1. Rhythm: divide the group into 3. The first group sets the rhythm saying, "To, to, to," The second group joins in by saying, "To whom to?" and also keeping the rhythm, the third group says, "To whom does this belong to?"

2. I have a ball: All the participants are in a circle with one in the center saying, "I have a ball, I have a ball. I bounce the ball, I bounce the ball etc. (kick, roll, head) and when they have done about 3 or 4 actions they kick, pass or throw the ball to someone else.

3. Fishers of Men: All dancing in a circle and singing, "I will make you fishers of men (4 times) If you follow me." Men stand or sit for every word starting with m. Women stand or sit for every word starting with f.

4. The Salute: Put left fist out on outstretched arm while saluting with right hand. Then change hands and repeat quickly.

5. Blinkety Blink: All sitting in a circle with the extra person in the middle. People on the outside make eye contact with someone and give an exaggerated blink then change places. The person in the middle tries to get a seat. Many pairs can be changing places the once, this can be very active and rough.

Tuesday 10:30 – 5:30 Mini-workshops :

Men's Awareness – John Shufford - USA

Almost all societies perpetuate stereotypes about men which limit their full human development. After facilitators had brought the group together by finding their (participants) commonalities, participants looked at these stereotypes and identified the ways that these also contribute to violence. To move beyond the limiting, and dangerous stereotypes participants recollected times of strength, and shared out experiences of being men. This led to gathering participants' strengths in the areas of emotional maturity, spiritual growth and social responsibility. The final session was held together with the Women's Awareness group. All participants affirmed all their strengths and felt support for all to be able to grow to their fullest potential instead of being limited by society's roles.

HROC – Florence Ntakarutimana – Rwanda

In the mini- workshops, participants learned some of the lessons such as Johari's window, the general understanding of trauma (including the causes, symptoms and effects of trauma). They learned about the stages of healing from grief, skills of good listening and dealing constructively with anger. They saw also how to build trust in a broken community. We have had a time of sharing about our losses of past times, and we did some exercises and light and livelies.

Woman's Awareness – Nancy Shippen - USA

Almost all societies perpetuate stereotypes about women which limit their full human development. After bringing the group together by finding our commonalities, we looked at these stereotypes and identified the ways that these also contribute to violence against women. To move beyond the limiting, and dangerous stereotypes we recollected times of strength, and shared out experiences of being women. This led to gathering our strengths in the areas of emotional maturity, spiritual growth and social responsibility. Our final session was held together with the Men's Awareness group. We affirmed all our strengths and felt support for all to be able to grow to our fullest potential instead of being limited by society's roles.

HIPP (Youth) Neo Chaka – South Africa and Kotsani John Matereke – Zimbabwe

This workshop presented a model session of a full HIP workshop and explored the ways it is similar to AVP and how it has been modified for youth. The South African experience of establishing HIP clubs was also shared.

Wednesday 8:30 – 12:00:

Theater Based Exercises – Steven Hawkins – Costa Rica

This was a lively, experiential exploration of ways theatre exercises can be used to examine conflicts and problems in our lives and make changes. Participants did brainstorming and image making exercises to look at issues of communication, social exclusion, interpersonal relationships, and racism. A short play was created by small groups about each issue. The play showed the problem as it is, without resolution. Of the four plays, one was chosen and formed. When a presentation was made to the whole IG, the racism play was chosen. The workshop exposed the IG to creative ways theatre can help people think about choices and change.

Wednesday 8:30 – 10:00

AVP with Correctional Officers – John Shufford – USA

This workshop presented the agenda used with correctional officers and police. This work makes these organizations much more effective since it helps them work together as a cooperative, respectful community. That in turn helps them carry the skills of Transforming Power into their direct contact with prisoners in community situations.

AVP and Development Work Interest Group–

A discussion defining development was followed by dynamic contributions about the importance of development to AVP and vice-versa. They cannot be separated because:

- Peace is not sustainable if the people have no food.
- It has been proven that violence is more prevalent in areas of poverty
- In the past NGOs have given houses, goats, etc. and soon after, the house is sold and the goat died because the conflict's spiritual problem was not solved.

It is therefore best to give AVP and development projects or income generating skills together.

Development needs should be identified by AVP facilitators; When NGOs study communities for needs, the people may get expectations that will be disappointing. Ideas and cooperation from the community is vital. An example of lack of community involvement: water was a long distance from the community. This was recognized by a NGO who built a borehole within the

village. Shortly after this, conflict and fighting became frequent within the village. The reason for this problem was that the Christians and Muslims in the village no longer walked and talked together on their way to collect water. They no longer solved differences as they came up because of this. The African mentality of expecting jobs after any workshop of AVP or skill training was seen to be a challenge for progress and development.

Identifying Best Practices in AVP – Nancy Shippen - USA

As AVP spreads around the world, each program develops organizational practices, facilitating styles and modifications, and ways to continue to develop the program and the skills of the facilitators. Some of these adaptations are culture specific but many are universal to building a community based on respect and caring. In two 90 minute sessions, participants identified some of these basic principles and shared many suggestions which will help to make International AVP more powerful and more consistent even in very different cultures.

Core principles stressed the importance of being role models in all we do as well as in what we teach. Valuing of diversity, empowerment, equality, compassion, truth and respect were all identified. Our organizational structures will work best if they are transparent, equalitarian and inclusive. The experiential nature of AVP was seen as very important and several participants were worried that new facilitators often think that they have good ideas to change the program which usually involve more teaching.

During the second session, there were several distinct themes discussed. The importance of empathy was stressed. Participants identified ways to encourage someone to deeply experience another's feelings before offering advice. They also worked to understand the difference between following AVP rituals of support and a response based on true empathy. With empathy common practices of material support, skill development, and prayer become much more effective. It was noted that there needs to be a respect for time in the healing process and it is good to affirm the current feelings instead of trying to move the person beyond the pain.

The discussion of empathy led to a process of communication. Participants talked about increasing awareness of the problem such as grief with all its stages, then developing sensitivity to the particular event and finding a way to become involved, geared towards this particular event (What does this person need now, from me?)

Another area discussed was the need for follow up to workshops. Suggestions included ongoing mentoring, encouraging ongoing relationships between participants who live near each other., having reunions and/or celebrations including many workshops, handing out contact details of participants, and extra Advanced workshops (1 evening a week for 8 weeks).

The final area discussed was difficulty with hierarchy. A core idea of AVP is respect for all which means that all need to have opportunities to develop as far as they are able. Ways to do this include encouraging all to take what exercises they feel ready to try and provide mentoring for their efforts, ongoing self-evaluation by facilitators to identify learning edges to work on, having two facilitators work together on more complicated exercises with one being less experienced. It was also noted how powerfully a man and woman facilitating together models the respectful relationship we would hope to encourage.

AVP with Youth – Hannington Muchere – Kenya

In this workshop participants explored their experiences working with youth and the challenges they have faced.

Experiences included:

- Participating in activities such as poetry, drama and art help to open the level of engagement
- Youths show commitment and want to work in their communities
- A constant running HIP program will add consistence and build participation.

Challenges included:

- The biggest is when youth ask “What next? Is AVP just training us and dumping us? Wasting our time?” AVP needs ongoing work and identity.
- The Attitude of the youth
- Illiteracy
- Motivation around issues such as AIDS
- Facilitators need to exhibit flexibility and creativity.

AVP – Volunteer? Stipend? Salary? – David Zarembka – USA/Kenya

This interest group was to share how countries do or do not support their facilitators financially. Although AVP has a strong volunteer base in the USA, many developing countries do not have an ethos of volunteerism and earning a living and family responsibilities often consumes all of individual’s energies.

Several countries shared their practices. New Zealand has an office and an administrator paid 30 hours a week for administration, promotion, and developing relationships with outside groups. They also do volunteer hours each week. Participants pay to join (the equivalent of (US \$28). Many volunteers go out to promote AVP. Lead facilitators are paid for their team building time. Apprentices are not paid. Child care is provided and the childcare supervisor is paid. Transportation is provided and van drivers are paid \$12 an hour. Cooks are also paid \$12 an hour. Other volunteers clean, but aren’t paid.

In Namibia facilitators are paid \$50 after they have successfully facilitated a workshop. If participants are brought in from the rural areas, transportation and housing are provided. They don’t have an office. They are under a peace center. There are 11 active facilitators. All but two of them have other full time work.

AVP Hong Kong does not have an office. In the past, some money was raised for administration and some money was raised for administration and some people were paid for administration work. Currently, there is no money for this. Facilitators have been paid when funds are available. Transport and meals are paid for. Participants are sometimes asked to pay to attend the workshops. There are currently 5 or 6 active volunteer facilitators.

In Kenya transportation is provided. After a workshop, facilitators receive a token of appreciation (about 250 shillings). Participants do not pay and are not paid but are given meals. There are about 15 active facilitators who are generally always available to facilitate. It is seen as a problem that staff and facilitators are not paid. In the NGO culture of Kenya participants expect to be paid. Workshops are conducted when there are funds. In West Africa, workshops sponsored by AGLI provide lunch and facilitators are paid about \$10 a day for facilitation.

Other points considered included:

- Paying people and even just providing them with a meal can be problematic with others questioning the motivation for participant attendance
- AGLI will not pay participants with money no matter how poor they are. Meals are provided.
- NGOism has destroyed volunteerism because NGOs pay people, sometimes outrageous amounts, to attend workshops, especially in Rwanda.
- Groups providing workshops in Rwanda are under great pressure to pay facilitators a stipend. The government is trying to professionalise NGO work but this disparity is causing pressure.

Wednesday 10:30 – 12:00 Block 5

“I” Messages – Deb Wood – USA

This workshop explored the often difficult teaching of “I” Messages. It was felt that cultural differences in hierarchy can make these difficult. This was discussed by the group. The group discussed the use of “You” Messages followed by “I” Messages which makes it easier to deal with the resistance in some cultures. It was also suggested that it is best to avoid the use of always and never in “I” Messages. It was suggested that if you follow the process through to the “because” stage, you may find that there is actually no reason to be angry.

AVP with Ex-combatants – Felizardo Ortigas Epalanga – Angola and Mary Edgar – Canada

Participants interested in ex-combatants discussed in depth the background of ex-combatants and their demobilization. The difficulties that they must deal with were explored and explained. How to help ex-combatants is more than AVP can deal with by ourselves. The whole community, women and children must also be involved in reorientation and reintegration. Many problems related to reintegration of ex-combatants involve the identity lost by the ex-combatants and this must be addressed.

Handling Organizational Tensions – Nancy Shippen – USA

AVP programs are susceptible to all the pressures and personal dynamics of any community. All participants agreed that like all people, they are often hesitant to address issues for fear of the confrontation or hurting another’s feelings. They looked at organizational problems such as bias and power inequalities, poor communication, and lack of clearly assigned responsibilities. They also looked at interpersonal dynamics which can negatively impact our program such as facilitators who want to change the program without discernment, facilitators with limited skills

and facilitators with personal characteristics which make others avoid working with them. Participants saw the strength of using AVP principles to deal with these issues and brainstormed ways to overcome their reluctance to confront issues. It was clear to all that addressing problems with respect and concern for the growth of all parties makes it worth using AVP skills to address issues.

Forgiveness – Rose Allender

This workshop presents a full agenda for an Advanced Workshop on Forgiveness. The group brainstormed what forgiveness is then there was a sharing about the learning process and presentation of an agenda on forgiveness developed and used in Hong Kong. Two important aspects of the agenda were presented, a totaling brainstorm on the themes of:

- Benefits of not forgiving
- Consequences of not forgiving
- What we gain from forgiving
- The general consensus seemed to be that forgiveness is about oneself – a way of freeing oneself from bitterness. Forgiveness is a process, and the four questions help us to move through it.

The second process is a worksheet with the following questions:

1. How I felt at that time... How I still feel now.
2. What I would have expected in that situation
3. When I have/had that expectation (I need.... I believe...)
4. We cannot change what happened in the past. In order to move forward, what must now happen in order to forgive?

If we get stuck between questions 3 and 4, one question to seriously ponder could be, “What benefits am I getting from not forgiving?”

Thursday 10:30 – 5:30 Mini-workshops : HROC and HIP

Interest group: Tree of Life

This activity was developed in South Africa and Uganda by Ncazelo Neube in collaboration with the Dulwich Center, Australia. In a one day workshop, participants draw a picture of a tree and map different aspects of their lives onto it – from roots (ancestry, birthplace, culture) to branches (hopes, and dreams for the future). Stories are shared in the group deepening each participant’s sense of identity and connection to others. This provides a platform for safety from which to identify and map the effects of storms of life’s problems and challenges. This allows participants to collectively identify solutions and strategies to deal with the storms. This was developed with children but works well with adults.

Participants described the activity as healing, reminding them of positive aspects of themselves, deepening their knowledge and understanding of others. It is a powerful tool to heal trauma.

Friday 10:30 – 12:00

Workshop 6A: One Day Listening Workshops – Friends In Peace and Community Development Team

This workshop presented the modified AVP agenda that was developed to deal with the immediate aftermath of the post-election violence in Kenya. It is proposed as a method of providing a base to reestablish community connections, identify areas of need, and to begin to find ways to move forward on emergency needs.

Interest Group:

I. 6A. Reentry of Prisoners – Mark Graham - USA

This workshop presented several aspects of work with prisoners returning to the community after years of incarceration. Redemption House provides transitional housing for men and women based on AVP principles and providing workshops as part of the program. This program starts to work while inmates are still incarcerated so relationships can be built. Landing Strip, a weekly support group for formerly incarcerated meets at Redemption House regularly. Support for finding employment is also provided.

Friday 2:00 – 5:30 Block 7&8

Workshop 7A: Anger Management - John Shufford – USA

In this workshop participants shared their perceptions and experiences of anger, the connections of anger and violence, and positive ways to deal with the situations that make us angry.

Workshop 8A: Mastering the Mysteries of Love: Building for Families – Maryhelen Snyder – USA

This workshop focused on relationship skills for couples and families. The concept of deep relationship as an experience in which difference and conflict is transformed into co-creative dialogue was explored and practiced. AVP insights and practices were integrated with other useful relationship practices.

Two specific tools for deepening dialogue were introduced: “the Ladder of Vulnerability” and “Becoming the other person.” Detailed information about the latter method of deep listening can be obtained at mel33@cox.net

Friday 2:00 – 3:30 Block 7

Interest Group:

I 7A: S. A. S. S. Y. – Sexual Assault Survivors Say Yes – Teresa Tyson – Brazil/USA

S. A. S. S. Y. is the core of a proposed organization to help rape survivors regain their sense of personal dignity and to confront the negative stigma associated with rape. This model rejects the idea of prolonged victimization and instead builds an assertive response which takes rape out of

its hidden and shameful status and asks society to explore and remove the causes of rape. The healing power of forgiveness is to be explored as well.

I. 7C. AVP with Disabled Participants – Ekai Dephine Mupota

The different types of disabilities were discussed and the problems encountered by the people and the community as a whole. AVP would benefit people with disabilities and help them to deal with feelings of inferiority.

Challenges with respect to running the workshops are many. Few participants should be in a workshop or there should be more facilitators. Mobilizing participants would be relatively easy as these are associations where the disabled gather. The activities in the workshop would need to be adapted a little and sensitive facilitators necessary to make the participants at ease. Inclusiveness in all the workshops was stressed. All participants found the workshop interesting.

I. 7D Mahatma Gandhi's Views on Prisons and Prisoners – P. Prathapan - India

This workshop made use of a PowerPoint presentation about Mahatma Gandhi. Slides relating to prisons and prisoners were extracted for discussion from a longer program.

PLENARY PROCEEDINGS

On the Monday during the opening sessions, there were introductions from all the countries represented. Gifts were exchanged between various countries more notably were the décor (paintings) gifts from inmates in South Africa and the USA for Kenyan inmates.

During the following days, countries reported on progress made since the last international gathering held in South Africa in 2006. New facilitators were also introduced and individual participants shared their best or most challenging moments as facilitators.

There were also deliberations on the future of AVP; The following were discussed:

1. Organisational structure
2. Money matters
3. Committees
4. other matters etc
5. Next host of IG in 2010