



e-PULSE

Quarterly Web-magazine of IPPNW Students

**Volume 1, Issue 2,
August-September, 2005**

E-Pulse

E-Pulse is an allegory of what students are and what students do to spread the message of peace and health throughout the world.

Current Issue

This issue of e-Pulse tries to summarize what IPPNW students have been doing in last few months and plan to do in immediate future.

Message

Hi, NSRs, RSRs, and Coordinators of different IPPNW student projects, we know many of you have been doing great jobs in different parts of the world. But, you have one more responsibility added; that is to inform your colleagues from around the world about your activities and plans.

Contribute

This is your magazine. Comment, suggest or contribute articles or anything you like.

Contact us:

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Editors Speak on...

... Hiroshima and Nagasaki: 60 Years

After almost a month's work, the second issue of e-Pulse is ready to knock at your door. It has been themed "Hiroshima and Nagasaki: 60 years" as we had informed you before. Last August we observed the 60th anniversary of horrible Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings worldwide and again refreshed our firm determination to abolish nuclear weapons from the world.

Having bravely faced the worst insanity in the history of humanity, Hiroshima and Nagasaki continue to encourage us to work for a world of peace, love and humanity. They constantly teach us the lessons of coexistence, cooperation and courage. This issue is, hence, dedicated to Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

We must thank all those who helped us by sending us the activities which were organized to commemorate the 60th anniversary. We also would like to extend our warm acknowledgement to all those who supported us with the necessary advice and comments.

The next issue is going to be themed on "IPPNW Students: Present and Future" which would provide a general insight on the present energy and the future prospects of the student activism in IPPNW. We heartily welcome articles and comments from you on this regard.

Finally please read e-Pulse and write to us anything you like to share with us and with the readers. They are certainly welcome.

Signing off,

*the Editorial Team
Khagendra Dahal
Sandip Adhikari
Alex Rosen*

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Full circle -The Epic return to Trinity

by Dr. Gunnar Westberg, IPPNW Co-President

The flame from Hiroshima has now been returned to its place of origin and extinguished. A flame was lit in 1945 from the embers of the fires in Hiroshima that the atomic bomb started. The flame has been kept in a temple close to Nagasaki. Every year monks have walked from Hiroshima to Nagasaki, and there walked in circles to symbolize that this should be the last bomb.

Now the monks have brought the flame across to California and walked through the desert to the place of the first atomic bomb explosion, called Trinity, near Alamogordo in New Mexico. There they were joined by people working for a nuclear weapon free world. There was a moving ceremony in complete silence. The torch with the flame was passed from monk to monk and to us and then used to ignite a large paper with a prayer written in Japanese. The paper had been folded around paper-cranes from Hiroshima and ropes from the sandals the monks had carried on their walk. When the fire had died away the ashes and sand was collected and partitioned between four lacquer boxes, which fitted inside a larger box. The very beautiful boxes were crafted by the foremost master in Japan. The four boxes are going to be given to the White Sands museum close to the site, to Hiroshima and to Nagasaki and the content in the fourth box is going to be divided into four boxes that will be given to the leaders of the eight states who have nuclear weapons.

Sixty years is an important time period for Buddhists. The energy from the primeval forces of the universe was unleashed by man for the first time at this site and is now returned. The circle is completed. Now is the time to begin a sixty year period not dominated by the threat of extinction by nuclear weapons but by finding ways to remove the threat. Never again Hiroshima and Nagasaki!

The monk's walk and ceremonies have been filmed by a team financed and inspired by Steve Seagal who is going to make it into documentary. The ceremony at Trinity was sent out to all major TV media.

The Global Nuclear Disarmament Fund, founded by IPPNW, "Active Music and others, were among the organizers. Matt Taylor and his volunteers, in particular Cindy McClure had done great work to prepare this solemn and profound ceremony. From IPPNW participated Ira Helfand and Gunnar Westberg. Delegates were also the Downwinders Claudia Peterson and Michelle Thomas and the legendary singer and activist Peter Yarrow.

Rainy, Sunny, in Hiroshima

By Qiu Jing Jun (IPPNW-China)

In four days in Hiroshima, I have experienced the sunny day, rainy day and the followed warm sunshine. Then I found that is in common with the history of Hiroshima. A tranquil city turned to dust after the blast in one day; filled with crying, sorrow, pain, homelessness, diseases and death. But now, this beautiful serene city has already become one important industrial city in Japan. Thousands of cranes which stand for peace are flying in the sky upon the city, I know, they want to fly higher and further.

I come from Beijing, China's capital city. I am proud to be a Chinese for China crackles with the dynamics of change, and am appreciating to be chosen as one representative of China to attend the meeting hold in Hiroshima. As a freshman of this big family, I got to know much more information about IPPNW this time, such as what are the aftereffects of atomic bomb; what are the mainly missions of IPPNW; what kind of activities have been organized and so forth. I have taken part in the discussion and made a presentation to express who I am, what I know and what I want to do. I have mentioned two significant points in the end: "love" and "perseverance". "Love" is the source of life. Without love, we couldn't do anything. And, "Perseverance" is the only way can we get the ultimate goal. So, we'd better hold them with our heart in every minute of our life. I am now preparing to organize some activities in my university- Capital University of Medical Sciences, and hope to hand in a satisfied answer sheet at next meeting.

Many scenes touched my heart at this meeting; and the most impressive one is that a very old citizen with a crutch went into the meeting hall helped by another man, then listened to the report very seriously, and discussed with others sometimes. Of course, there are still many citizens, physicians and medical students made some valuable notes earnestly.

I have made many friends which are all very warm-hearted there. We opened our hearts so that we could share our daily lives, experiences, responsibility, duties and decision-making and forge the human bonds of friendship because we know the best way to accomplish a task in some situation is through teamwork. I know everyone of us look for a peaceful world free from nuclear disasters from the bottom of our hearts, by sharing the acknowledgement of "nuclear" threat focused on human misery. As the saying goes: shiki no kokoro (hearts of four seasons). The point of this Japanese proverb is as follows: When you meet someone, greet them with a warm, spring-like heart; when you work, do your best ardently like the heat of summer; when you think, make your heart as lucid as a clear autumn day; when you admonish yourself, be as severe as winter cold. I believe we will try our best to make a better world for you, for me and the entire human race.

I remember Khagendra have told us: he comes from a country where people don't think nuclear weapons are their priority to fight against. They have poverty, lack of health and food, insecurity and injustice as their enemies at the forefront. They always ask him, "Do you think there is the real threat of nuclear weapons' being used in the current world?" Here is the same situation in China. I won't persuade others to join us but try to introduce the idea, the spirit of IPPNW to them and leave them the right of choice. I know we could learn much from discourse and debate with those whose ideas are different from us as well as learn something from those whose ideas are in accord with our own. If some of them are interested in it, they will say: "Hey, that's what I thought about! That's very important for us! May I take part in IPPNW? We don't want to live in the shadow of the bomb any more....." I know there would be many students who are love for peace want to struggle with us, and the dream will come true one day.

Finally, I want to point out the function of learning history. We are part of history just as the history is part of us. The study of history benefits us not only in our daily lives, but also in our effort to understand the present world or construct the future. That's why history is often compared to a "mirror" in Chinese culture. On the other hand, the study of world history would contribute greatly to the mutual understanding and cooperation of world nations. So I need to spend some more time on studying history and the present situations of nuclear weapons, small arms, landmines, love and peace, and so on so forth.

And, it is the belief in a brighter future that gives us confidence and optimism.

Weeds by the Roadside

by Katsuyoshi Yoshimura

My mother was sitting on the edge of the veranda, shelling peas, and I was sitting in the middle of the room with the skylight, having out the question of school with her. One of our neighbours came by with potatoes and onions and seated herself on the veranda to chat with my mother. I was half-listening to their conversation when through the skylight I noticed two planes, small in the clear summer sky. As I watched, fascinated, I saw something white fall from one of them and then was blinded by a brilliant flash. About five second passed. Then a great noise exploded, as if to shake the ground itself.

"Katsu, it's a bomb!" cried my mother and flew in from the veranda to where I was sitting. She threw herself on top of me just as the blast hit us. The house collapsed around us, and we were buried under the debris. The ceiling and the furniture from the second floor fell around us. It seemed like a long time but was probably only ten or fifteen minutes before things stopped falling and everything grew quiet. We were enveloped in dark-ness.

It seems strange to think of it now, but my mother, pulling me with her, unerringly burrowed out into the open. It is a complete mystery to me how she managed to do it, but it was our one piece of good fortune in all the terrors by the fires from the neighbouring houses and would have been burned alive. There had been someone else with us at the time of the blast, the woman with the vegetables, but in the ensuing chaos both my mother and I had completely forgotten about her.

As soon as we got outside, we saw my brother, then four years old. He had been sitting by the roadside at the time of the blast, watching the umbrella mender work. He told us later that the blast had thrown the man four or five meters into the air before he crashed to the ground. He had not moved again. Though my brother had been sitting beside the umbrella mender, he had not been blown into the air but had just continued to sit there alone. He was burned on the right side of his head and on his right arm and still bears the keloids, although he is in perfect health.

Three of us waited for my father and sisters to come home, and we rejoiced when we found that we were all safe and sound. Perhaps it was about two hours after the blast that my mother remembered the neighbour and told my father. He immediately in to the ruins of the house to look for her. He finally discovered her trapped under the lintel of the back door, unable to move. Using all his strength, he pulled it off her. If my mother had remembered even a little later, the woman would probably have been burned alive, since the fires were moving faster now. After that the woman always referred to my father as her saviour. What has happened to her, where she is now, I do not know.

There were seven of us living in Hiroshima at the time. My older brother, fourteen years older my senior, was serving in the army in China, while an older sister had been sent to our aunt's in Kumamoto, on the southern island of Kyushu. Still in Hiroshima were my parents, my grandmother, two older sisters, my younger brother, and I. The only one who had not come back home was my eighty-year-old grandmother. That morning she had taken her year-old great-granddaughter, my cousin's child, to nearby Hijiyama Park to play.

When noon had come and there was still no sign of my grandmother, my father went to the park to look for her. He found her crouching over the dead baby. Since she was exhausted, he put her on his back and sadly returned home. She dies two days later.

Whenever I think of what happened next, I can hardly write for emotion. The landscape around me looked like a scene from a medieval painting of hell. There was a woman, her entire body burned and almost completely naked, whose skin was hanging her face in strips. A woman was fleeing, still clutching her dead child to her breast. Children were crying for their mothers. A person had toppled over dead while crying for water. I can still see the scene vividly, so deeply was it burned into my seven-year-old eyes.

That evening a soldier came by and distributed rice balls to the people in the neighbourhood. Although they were only sprinkled with salt, at the time they were more delicious than the most extravagant banquet fare. My house had already burned down and was now smouldering. Our valuables, which had been placed in a neighbour's storehouse for safekeeping, were also lost, since neither the owner nor the key could be found before the fire took hold and burned our possessions before our eyes. This was a matter of lasting regret to my mother. We had been unable to rescue many of our household effects before our house up either. I spent the night sleeplessly, looking vacantly out over the ruins.

The next day my father made a rough shelter for us. He was very clever at that sort of thing. In a day he had a shack built for us, a crude affair not much bigger than nine square meters. When I look back on it, I feel that to have been able to do such a thing in that wasteland was quite extraordinary. The six of us lived there for about two months.

Those two months seemed unending to me. Day in, day out, I would sit by the road selling household goods—cups, plates, and bowls—that father had dug up from the garden where he had buried them for safety. It seems stupid, thinking about it now, to have set up shop in such conditions, but at the time it was the one thing that I could do. All day I would sit by the road, but many days I would sell nothing or just one thing. But because my father told me to, I would sit there in the blazing heat every day. I have very little recollection of how my parents and sisters found the food that we ate. Nevertheless, the difficult days went by. The people around us kept dying, and every day the cremation fires burned on the other side of the river. Each evening we could hear the bugles blown by the soldiers and smell of the indescribable odour of burning flesh.

Even now I remember the stench of the dead bodies decaying as they remained uncollected for the days in the scorching heat. The body of an unidentified man was lying near our house. He had been calling for water repeatedly, and after he died he was just left lying where he had fallen, face upward, with bubbles breaking from his nose and mouth. Why he was just left there I do not know.

In October we went to live with my aunt in Kumanoto. Both my parents died the next year and after a year in Kumanoto my older brother took us back to Hiroshima, where we lived in a house he had built on the ruins of the previous one.

Being orphans, we did not have an easy life. I was eight and my younger brother was five. My oldest sister soon married, and my older brother too. My other sisters helped with the family finances by working as housemaids. In this way the six of us grew up together in poverty on Hiroshima's tainted soil, hardy weeds in the wasteland.

*Courtesy: Hibakusha, Survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki
Kosei Publishing co. Tokyo*

World Appeal on the 60th Anniversary of the Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki

The people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki experienced the massive, profound, long-lasting horror and trauma of atomic bombing on August 6 and 9, 1945, respectively. On our behalf, they tasted the hellish end of the world that nuclear weapons hold in store, and for sixty years the survivors have done everything in their power to communicate a single message: it must never happen again. Will they succeed in awakening the world from its insane nuclear trance? Or will the past be forgotten, and repeated.

Incredibly, some in the United States, Russia, Britain, France, China, Israel, India, Pakistan and North Korea still believe that nuclear weapons have a legitimate purpose and can be used to their benefit. They fail to understand that any use of even a single nuclear weapon for whatever purpose will benefit only warmongers seeking to increase violence and terrorists seeking to destroy civilization. Any use of nuclear weapons will overwhelm any meaningful medical response.

The day of deterrence is done. The great majority of people and nations on Earth want nuclear weapons permanently gone. It is technically feasible to be safely rid of these expensive, heinous, and absurdly dangerous weapons by the year 2020. All that is needed is the political will, and we are the majority. The time has come to liberate ourselves, our children, and their children from the intolerable, unconscionable threat of annihilation. Please let your leaders know that you will accept nothing less.

Morality is at the core of the nuclear issue: are we going to base our world on a culture of peace or on a culture of violence? Nuclear weapons are fundamentally immoral: their action is indiscriminate, killing people alive now and generations as yet unborn. And the consequence of their use might be to bring the human race to an end. We do not believe that the people of the world would accept a policy that is inherently immoral and likely to end in catastrophe.

We all have a common interest: survival. We have to move forward from a now outdated security system based on nuclear deterrence and alliances, to one based on cooperation and allegiance to humankind. In the words of the Russell-Einstein Manifesto, signed by Albert Einstein as one of the last acts of his life: "We appeal, as human beings to human beings: Remember your humanity and forget the rest. If you can do so, the way lies open to a new Paradise; if you can't, there lies before you the risk of universal death."

Above all: Remember your humanity.

Tadatoshi Akiba
Mayor of Hiroshima

Ichiro Itoh
Mayor of Nagasaki

Sir Joseph Rotblat
Nobel Peace Laureate

Dr Ronald McCoy and Dr Gunnar Westberg
Co-Presidents, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War

Hiroshima Day 2005 across the Globe...

Australia

Over Saturday 6 and Sunday 7 August we held our national conference which was designed to emphasize the issues of nuclear weapons and to show the links between the horrific events in Hiroshima and Nagasaki 60 years ago and the current threats by these weapons. The conference was a resounding success in the content and the interest and response of the participants, but of course we would have liked a larger audience (as always of late). However many positive links have been made for MAPW(Medical Association for Prevention of War) with both our IPPNW colleagues but also many wonderful non-medical people who attended, particularly those in our region (three of the international speakers we had were from our region) The regional issues raised have also reinvigorated many within MAPW to strengthen our focus on the Asia-Pacific (perhaps our Regional Vice President Daniele Viliunas will expand on this at a future date).

At all these meetings we brought up the issues of the need for a NWC(Nuclear Weapons Convention), dealing with, NSA's, the reprocessing project at SILEX, the problem of safeguarding Australian uranium exported, particularly to nuclear weapons states (this in particular caused some stir as the Australian government is about to start exporting uranium to China) and many other things. No doubt more will come from these meetings in coming weeks. Most importantly perhaps, we put them all on notice that a push towards a NWC would be seen from us and others and many were interested in this idea and will be receiving further briefings from us about it (too few people knew that the draft text for the NWC actually exists).

Germany

Students from Berlin and Düsseldorf joined up and organized Target Berlin on the German capital's most famous public square - Alexanderplatz. There was also a bell-ringing ceremony in the Japanese peace park and in the evening, IPPNW Germany organized a concert in the Gedächtniskirche, a church that was destroyed in WWII and has been left a ruin to remind people of the horrors of war. Public reaction to the street action on Alexanderplatz was very positive and more information can be found on the [Target Website](#).

India

On August 9, 2005, the Department of community medicine, Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, organized an impressive exhibition of photos and posters to observe the 60th anniversary of Bombing at Hiroshima & Nagasaki (Japan). The Exhibition, which was arranged by Dr. M. Ather Ansari, lecturer at the above department and inaugurated by the Dean Faculty of Medicine, Prof. Usha Singhal, was primarily an important attempt to educate the public about the consequences of the creation of atomic energy. It was designed to encourage medical students to think about the bomb and its connection to health aspects. Most of the posters were brought from the Indian Institute of Nuclear Disarmament and Peace, Nagpur, India, while, rests of the posters were made by undergraduate and post-graduate students working in the department of community medicine.

The posters and photos were based on World War II, the history of the Enola Gay and the devastation at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The exhibition, which has survivor accounts, photographic panels, artifacts and messages of peace. It also weaves personal stories, information and images to communicate the depth of these atrocities and the people victimized by the A-bombings.

Nepal

The heavy drizzle that welcomed the beautiful morning on August 6, 2005 was not that strong a factor to discourage the participation of many medics under Physicians for Social Responsibility, Nepal for gathering to observe the day which would go down as the most heinous act of inhumanity.

The program began with Dr. Basanta Pant making a presentation on how it led to the bombing of the A-bombs and how the people in those towns were affected. The program was graced by many human right activists who condemned the inhumane scientific malpractice and called for the solidarity for banning nuclear nukes.

The pleasant aspect of this day was the vivid poster display on part of Ms. Midori who used to be an inhabitant of Hiroshima. Many participants shared their opinions on nuclear hazards and their proliferation.

The rain metaphorically reminded us the black rain that drizzled in the tranquil mornings of the two Japanese cities. However; it stopped only with the gatherings sharing a consensus of banning the nuclear bombs and the indiscrete proliferation policies.

Norway

On the occasion of the 60 years commemoration of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, IPPNW Norway has together with the Norwegian Pugwash Committee, translated the World appeal into Norwegian and distributed it to our web site, several newspapers, the Norwegian members of Mayors for peace, and to those (a bishop, politicians etc.) who addressed a meeting outside the Parliament in Oslo on August 6 arranged by the Norwegian grass root movement No to nuclear weapons. Our affiliate also distributed handouts of the appeal on the same occasion.

Sweden

We had IPPNW speakers at two ceremonies in the Cathedral of Stockholm. We also had one speaker in a commemorating mess in a neighboring countryside church, Värmdö. There was a manifestation at a central square in Stockholm with speeches, an exhibition, lanterns sold and booklets etc. IPPNW was one of several peace/antinuclear organizations arranging the manifestation.

In Uppsala city of Sweden the local peace alliance FRED SAM had an ecumenical) meeting in the Cathedral of Uppsala, a demonstration with speeches at central square of Uppsala and a seminar at the University Institute for Peace and Conflict resolution research: How do we achieve a world free from Nuclear Weapons? At this seminar Swedish IPPNW representatives discussed the IPPNW programme including the students NWIP. There also was a lantern ceremony at the Fyris River in central Uppsala, with Cathedral church bells ringing. An appeal list will be sent to all states in possession of Nuclear Weapons + NATO HQ in Brussels. Media covered all this with a big article with photos in the main Uppsala daily newspaper

Turkey

On 6 August 2005 IPPNW-Turkey organized a press conference under the umbrella of "antinuclear platform" with leading NGOs such as Chamber of Environmental Engineers and Consumer's Rights Association hosted by Ankara Cankaya Mayor Prof. Dr. Muzaffer Eryilmaz (NUSED member) at the municipality headquarters meeting room. Press release themed "No to nuclear weapons and no to nuclear plants at the 60th Anniversary of Hiroshima" followed the conference.

Besides the press release, the Rhodes Appeal will be open for public signatures. Istanbul Antinuclear Platform the author of the press release text also conducts the same press conference with two days' more comprehensive anniversary activities including Rhodes Appeal public signature.

The National Conference of Indian IPPNW

The national conference themed "Prevention of nuclear war and its effects – role of medical fraternity" was jointly organized by IIPDEP and IPPNW-Central India at Nagpur, India on 23rd - 24th July 2005. The aim was to spread awareness of IPPNW activities in the medical fraternity and discuss various issues of IPPNW and what role medical doctors and students can play in all these activities. Many Professors from different medical colleges from all over India attended the conference. Admiral Ramdas, Chief of Indian Navy (Retd) and the President of India Pakistan Peoples' Forum were keynote speaker.

Admiral Ramdas said why the person like me serving Indian navy for 44 years and 9 months is propagating Nuclear disarmament? India Pakistan fought 3 wars but we could not solve our problem. By possessing nuclear weapons we could not solve our problem. The vehicle of change is ultimately with people. Nuclear wars may start due to misunderstanding between India and Pakistan. It takes only 8 to 10 minutes for missile to reach its targets in India and Pakistan and it has only 3 minutes to decide the missile is carrying nuclear war heads or conventional weapons. Nuclear weapons are not military weapons but are political weapons. Nuclear weapons are economical burden; economical disaster; completely inefficient and ethically and morally it is not acceptable. He praised the efforts of Dr. Nalini Kurvey who is working to spread the message of IPPNW in India and urged the medical fraternity to join IPPNW. Admiral Ramdas concluded his speech quoting Mahatma Gandhi After bombing of Hiroshima Gandhi said, "No weapons can be destroyed by counter weapons".

Mr. Saini, Director of Civil Defense was the chief guest, who spoke on the occasion about civil defense in case of nuclear war. Dr Krishna Kamble deliberating on effects of nuclear war.

During the conference, the students organized elocution contest for which students from different medical colleges in the region as well as students from engineering colleges and school students were invited. Next activity was about the slogan competition and some of which were very catchy.

Ujjwal Ramtekkar (National student representative) talked about various students activities throughout world and their importance in detail. Abhijit Pakhare commented on Bombing Bombay. Bombay being known to every Indian, it creates impact on the listeners.

Professors, Dr. Narlawar, Dr. Jalgaonkar and Dr. Mrs.Thakre from medical colleges were the judges and carry the program very well, which was received with great enthusiasm by all students.

Manish Pande and Rahul Arora, two medical students had been to Germany in this year's students exchange program, narrated their experiences, they were all praise for IPPNW Germany doctors and students who are working for local as well as global causes.

Prizes were distributed to the first three students from elocution and slogan contest. One landmine victim was specially called, who narrated the incidence and pathetic stories of the victims and how we built the raising the voices campaign in India.

The conference was concluded by passing resolution. Dr Nalini Kurvey asked the participants to work for IPPNW's Programs in their region. She insisted about the program on 6th to 9th August during Hiroshima, Nagasaki days to be arranged in medical colleges. She gave the guide lines about the medical college program. After thanks giving by Dr Kurvey with her organizing committee members assured the participants about the help in arranging the programs for Prevention of nuclear war and to make the medical fraternity aware of hazardous effects of nuclear weapons.

IPPNW International Student Projects Updates

MedEx -Nepal on way to become a new host

Since its rejuvenation and proud achievements in the international fraternity, the IPPNW Students Chapter Nepal has been receiving a great deal of interest from students abroad to visit the Himalayan Kingdom as part of the exchange program. Keeping the overwhelming interest of our international friends in mind, we have begun to work for hosting students for the exchange program which we plan to implement in near future. We welcome all interested and promise to intimate you all with the developments on that regard.

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NWIP delegation to India and Pakistan

In August of 2005 a group of NWIP students, Jenny Immerstrand, Camilla Mattsson, Thomas Silfverberg and Gard Jørgensen, undertook the journey to visit India, one of the world's newest nuclear powers in order to engage in dialogues with medical students from Nagpur and Patna. In addition, they attended the South Asia Regional Conference in Patna where they arranged a role-play where Pakistani and Indian students acted as the other countries decision makers with Nepalese students as negotiators. During our delegation, they also had the possibility to visit Sevagram, where Mahatma Gandhi lived for 12 years, and Bodh Gaya, where Buddha got his enlightenment, making this delegation a true mission of peace.

The NWIP delegation next visited Pakistan to hold a dialogue with the medical students in Karachi and Islamabad. The Program was coordinated by Dr Ali Afridi. With over 60 students attending the dialogue and interesting arguments being waged, the event both helped the new members of the delegation and changed the mindset of the Pakistani students.

More information and pictures can be found on the website www.ippnw-students.org/NWIP

Tête-à-tête with Caecilie Buhmann

A promising IPPNW student leader and founding coordinator of NWIP (Nuclear Weapons Inheritance Project), Caecilie Buhmann speaks to e-Pulse about NWIP and IPPNW.

1. How did NWIP come into existence?

Dr Hans Levander, an active IPPNW physician in Sweden presented the idea to us - Ernesto Guevera and me while we were the international medical student representatives to IPPNW in 2000.

Initial group was started at European student meeting in Sweden in 2001 and consisted of around 10 students. Some of the members including me went to Russia soon after the meeting as part of the Dialogues with Decision-Makers project, where we had our first dialogue. Soon, though, we were only 4 left in the group and over the next year until the spring 2002 when we went to France, the UK and India and Pakistan.

We had a lot of problems in the beginning; we had no contacts and our ideas of how to undertake the project were changing all the time as we gained more experience. This made it hard to motivate people to join our group. Looking back into the first year – we were really horrible! We basically had very little clues what we were doing.... But, that doesn't mean that it wasn't worth doing. It was completely a novel idea to apply the dialogue method developed by the Oxford Research Group to large scale dialogues with students and only as we tried it we were able to improve it. Meanwhile, we also gradually gained more knowledge and became better at using the dialogue method.

In 2002, we felt the trial period was over and we had to make a big decision of whether to continue the project. At that point we felt that we were doing something valuable and therefore Richard Fristedt from Sweden and I decided to continue. One major change was made though – we felt we could have used some training and help in the beginning, and introduced the idea of trainings as an integral part of the project and as a means to motivate and empower new project members and students in general. The first training was in Copenhagen for a weekend in December 2002 when a new project group was formed. Since then the project has expanded, improved and changed to what it is today. Very importantly, however, it's not a stationary project. NWIP today is very different from what it was 4 years ago and as a new generation of international coordinators have taken over the project we are certain that it will keep changing and improving.

2. Why do you think medical students should be concerned with nuclear weapons?

According to WHO, Nuclear weapons continue to be the greatest immediate threat to human health, because no other weapon is so powerful and can result in so long-term effects on health continuing for many future generations to come. In addition to the horrible health effects of nuclear weapons production, testing, handling and use, nukes are part of a larger system of power that shapes the world order today. The same power relations and life philosophy underlies the widespread inequality, poverty, conflict and disease that affects a majority of the world's population. Nuclear weapons are the logical tool in a strategy of military defence, deterrence and short-term solutions that characterises the "security" concepts of today. We need to change these if we want the world to be a better place. We need to overcome the threat to human development, security and health that nuclear weapons pose and as medical students subscribing to a medical ethic, we cannot sit on the periphery and wait for others to do it.

3. What has NWIP achieved until now?

This is the first truly international IPPNW student project connecting several regions. And, this is the only project that has fostered true cooperation between students and doctors. We have helped facilitate the start of new student groups in several countries and many existing groups, that were not traditionally working on disarmament have taken on disarmament work as part of the NWIP or as separate projects. It has also tried to make the issue of disarmament relevant to post-cold war students.

Besides, it has been able to create a model for projects on other topics. This is mainly because the model of 'students training students' with interactive methods has proved to be very empowering and many new ideas regarding NWIP and other areas have developed from our trainings. I think it also makes the project sustainable, which is a big challenge for its members and provides a living proof of the capacity of students to address complicated topics. It has been successful to incorporate knowledge from traditionally different areas such as economics, peace through health, globalization theories and human development. It has successfully managed to grow from 4 persons to 4 regions, and to hand it over to the new generation of student leaders.

4. Do you think nuclear war is a real threat today compared to during the cold war? Why?

The Cold War had a balance of powers which the post-Cold War world does not. In today's world, the power relations are compounded by the upsurge of HIV, inequality, poverty, war on terror, extremism and numerous violent conflicts. These have increased the risk of a nuclear weapon being used. Possible nuclear terrorism and unbridled proliferation are the worst facets of nuclear threats in the present world.

5. Which regions are especially threatened by nuclear weapons?

All! The Middle–East and South Asia probably suffer the most immediate threat of a nuclear war, but with the risk of nuclear terrorism and the new development of mini-nukes and bunker busters any country could be attacked by a conventional or an improvised nuclear device. The recent failure of progress in the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the work of countries like Iran to get nuclear weapons make the hopes for nuclear disarmament seem even more dim than we had hoped in our optimism after the Cold War.

6. What special features can students bring to the global peace and disarmament movement?

Students bring energy and new ways of thinking. The young students have the real potential of addressing youth and reaching across borders. Students and young doctors will inherit the world, and have a powerful voice that in the past has made a great impression on decision-makers. We are able to express our thoughts and carry out our work in a way that is relevant to other members of the young generation. Physicians can learn from us and be inspired – and vice versa. We should use our incredible network of resource persons in IPPNW and in other abolition movements more than we are doing now.

7. What challenges did you face during your time as NWIP coordinator?

My biggest challenge was how to make disarmament look relevant to my peers. All writings on nuclear issues tend to be complicated, technical and boring, which is not true. Besides I had to motivate students towards volunteerism despite the lack of time, money and chances to meet face-to-face. Finally, it was a challenge to make the project sustainable and recognized, by informing about it widely and, motivating students and constantly communicating with physicians and staff about the potentials of the project. I am proud to see that we actually managed!

8. What do you think should be the way ahead for NWIP and the IPPNW student movement?

NWIP needs to renew itself thinking broadly on its priorities and structure as it grows, in the background of limited human resources but so many possibilities. It has to continue to work closely with physicians. A new generation of dedicated students has taken over; they need to shape the project according to their own beliefs and goals based on the truly international and diverse character of project.

IPPNW needs thinking in the broader context. IPPNW members have to share a vision for the future to be able to achieve its goals. We have to focus on advocacy, research and education. We need to be interactive, and take responsibility for reaching out to peers, academics, decision-makers and most importantly the next generation. We must seek to understand the world around us, integrate different topics of interest and relevance and finally build bridges to fill the gaps between aspirations and achievements, young and old generations and so on. In the mean time we have to inspire, empower, respect and understand each other.

9. Do you have any messages to the medical students who are yet to get involved in IPPNW?

If we don't take responsibility, who will? In a global world all actions have impact on each other. The students need to be an example to follow. Remember, we can make a change if we really want to.

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