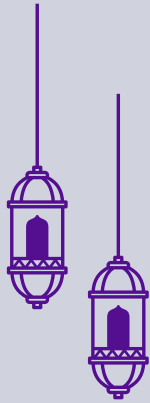
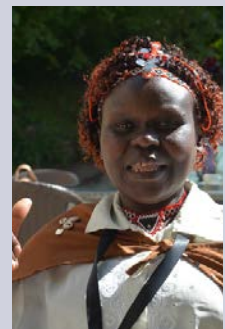


# CoPdate

VOL III.2 APRIL 2023



20th  
Anniversary  
Special



## The Story of Creators of Peace Circles

*Peace, not as an arrival but as a dynamic; not  
as a destination, but as a way of life.*

-- Jean Brown

# ABOUT

**Creators of Peace Circles (CoPC) are a methodology of Creators of Peace (CoP) that brings together small groups to address 10 'Gathering Points' on subjects such as 'What is Peace Anyway', 'Qualities of a Peace Creator' and 'Inner Peace'.**

**They invite participants to share their life journeys, exchange experiences, and perspectives and reflect deeply through 'Inner Listening', all leading to a fresh understanding of the possibility of transformation, healing, practicing acceptance, and forgiveness.**

**The Peace Circles explore what it means to create peace in the heart, home, and community; awareness of its ripple effect on those we associate with.**

**Designed with a format adaptable to each community's cultural and social needs, the Peace Circle participants and dedicated facilitators discover that peace is a way of life.**

**The spirit of Creators of Peace awakened from the deep and honest conversations, is upheld by the friendships, gratitude, and resilience experienced.**

**This CoPdate, the bi-monthly newsletter, April 2023 is an Anniversary special celebrating 20 years of Creators of Peace Circles that have spread around the world effecting the lives of thousands of women and men.**

**Sharing our joy with you!**

**--- CoPdate Editorial Team**

thank you



**We have come a long way**



Jean Brown

**In 1999, Creators of Peace, India hosted the third global CoP conference. I went ahead to help with the preparations. Our host, Vijayalakshmi Subrahmanyam, asked me to provide some material to be used in workshops during the conference.**

**I had long been pondering the question, "What is peace anyway?" I had begun to appreciate peace, not as an arrival but as a dynamic; not as a destination, but as a way of life.**

**I thought that this would be a valuable conversation subject, and I added a second conversation on 'What destroys and what creates peace?' Through this, I hoped for a conclusion that the behaviour and attitudes of each one of us contribute directly to both problem and solution.**

**I kept my photocopied notes. Back in Australia, in 2003, I developed them with a small, ethnically diverse group of women in my hometown of Adelaide over several weeks.**

**It proved thought-provoking and bonding. Friends in Melbourne and Sydney picked it up. I continued to develop what we were starting to call 'Creators of Peace Circles'; designed around ten conversation pieces we call 'gathering points'. These were interspersed with each participant being given space to share their personal life journeys, highlighting the significant turning points they had experienced.**



At the next international conference for CoP in Uganda in 2005, we again used this material as content for our workshops.

Now in manual form, the first edition was printed in 2006 in India and distributed worldwide.

In 2007, with two colleagues, one Kenyan, and one Indian, we introduced Creators of Peace Circles in Africa.

In 2009 we reprinted the manual with new material, including a new gathering point, 'Circles of Concern'.

From there it has spread to 50 countries, all carried by volunteers. A formal facilitator training was introduced.

In 2022 a third edition of the manual has been produced by an international team, including myself.

These Circles have various intentions.

- To enable women to meet together in an intimate and confidential space, to know and appreciate each other across the divides of ethnicity, religion, and culture.
- To introduce participants to reflective living, taking time in silence to practice inner listening as a wisdom source for connection, correction, and direction.
- To empower participants through greater self-awareness leading to liberation from the causes of unpeace in their own lives.
- To transform attitudes and behaviours leading to more hospitable communities. This transformation is guided by suggested values of honesty, purity, unselfishness, and love.
- To encourage participants to engage in peace-creating activities in the world around them, to address the many needs of people, whether physical, social, or spiritual.
- To advocate for our shared humanity as participants reach out through prejudice to heal the hurts of history.
- To enlist people as 'creators of peace'; authentic listening, living with integrity and compassion.

**1999**  
**The third global CoP conference, India**

**Around 2003**  
**CoPC started in Australia**

**2005**  
**CoPC in Uganda**

**2006**  
**The first manual printed in India**

**2007**  
**CoPC introduced in Kenya and other parts of Africa**

**2009**  
**CoPC manual updated**

**2022**  
**CoPC had spread to over 50 countries**

**2022**  
**CoPC manual updated**

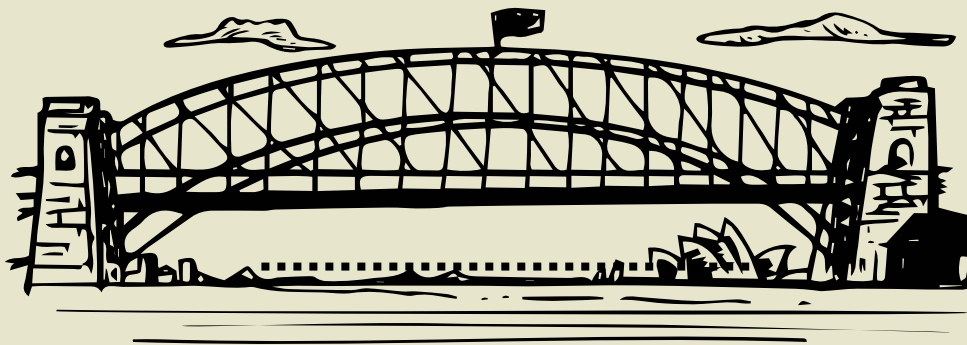
# Over The Years

A compilation of CoP Circle reports  
through these years

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2008 Australia

## Crossing the Bridge



I met S, an Australian/Lebanese woman on a national breakfast TV show for a discussion between Christians and Muslims in Sydney. I was moved when she shared with me about the death of one of her sons.

S lives on the South side of the Harbour Bridge - a significant divide in Sydney. The next day she invited me for lunch to her home in the heart of the Lebanese Muslim community - where I had never been before, although we have lived in Sydney for 31 years. A lunch in my home followed sometime later. S joined CoPC in her area.

After some weeks, I invited S and her cousin N to meet my North Shore friends over a cup of tea in our leafy, affluent suburb. I asked them to share any of their stories they would like to. There was an enthusiastic response from the seventeen women in my sitting room. S and N amazed us with their honesty and shared about their lives as Muslim women.

A North Shore Peace Circle developed from that tea party, facilitated by S and myself. A great bond of friendship ensued, and after meeting regularly, this group of women travelled three times across the Bridge to meet in the homes of S and N and to experience their environment. ( As told by Rosemary Thwaites)

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she invited  
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## The Courage to Forgive



Women gathering for Peace Circle and facilitator training.

**I**n March 2011, Solomon Islander Susan Kukiti led a group of women, on a six-hour canoe and four-hour truck trip to the Weathercoast for a three-day Creators of Peace Circle. Some walked for four hours through the mountains to join the Circle.

The participants included those who were suffering the presence of those who had inflicted violence on them and continued to roam freely in the village. Throughout the Peace Circle, Susan often repeated her conviction that, "Peace starts within, peace comes from the heart".

She was from the island of Guadalcanal, the daughter of a Paramount Chief of the remote region of the Weathercast. She was a church pastor in a country where women leaders are few, and her courage knew no bounds, whether visiting a notorious warlord in his mountain hideout or going on preaching when threatened by a group of militants.

She shared, "At the beginning of the tensions, my brother was beheaded and his body was thrown in the marketplace. He was an innocent man." The leader of the meeting invited the members of the killer's community to join him in a heartfelt apology and prayer. About a dozen did so. It was a defining moment for all.

From that moment, Susan spoke frequently on forgiveness in every workshop, with ex-militants and with the victims of the violence. Susan died in May due to a combination of diabetes, pneumonia, and malaria. She was an eager advocate and facilitator, of Creators of Peace Circles as a healing tool for her country.

**Susan Kukiti was the daughter of a Paramount Chief of the remote region of the Weathercast. She was a church pastor in a country where women leaders are few. Her courage knew no bounds, whether visiting a notorious warlord in his mountain hideout or going on preaching when threatened by a group of militants.**



Photo Credits: Mbindyo Kimanthi & Sam Mwaura

### Please Forgive Us : Pokot Community Women



**I want God to be a witness to what we shall say today. The Creators of Peace Circles training that we went through is now bearing fruits. Today, I stand here as a Pokot woman and speak on behalf of the Pokotmen.**

**We are very sorry for all the pain that our sons have caused your people. Please forgive us. We are sorry for all the deaths caused by our sons - sons that gave birth to - please forgive us. We are sorry for all the people who have been displaced by violence caused by our people - please forgive us. You are widows because of us. Your children are not going to school because of us. You are living in the forest because of us. You are dying of hunger because we took all that you had - please forgive us. We are also tired of violence and killings. We want peace and we are working hard to bring peace. Please forgive us. I realise that we have different ethnic communities, but all of us fall under one community called 'the women community'. If we as women hold hands together, we will make a difference in this county."**

**These words above are just some of those given by Mary Kuketi, a woman from the Pokot community. She spoke on behalf of women from her region to women from the Ilchamus, Tugen, and Endorois communities who have suffered a lot due to the actions of some people from the Pokot Community. The reconciliation meeting was a result of Creators of Peace Circles which took place in Marigat town, Baringo County on 27 May 2015, witnessed by 75 people.**

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**She spoke on behalf of women from her region to women from the Ilchamus, Tugen, and Endorois communities....**

**The reconciliation meeting was a result of Creators of Peace Circles which took place in Marigat town, Baringo County.**

2019 Nepal



CoP gathering in Nepal

## Peace Circle for Armed Conflict Victims

**A Peace Circle was organised with a local partner organisation, World Education, in November 2019, with twelve enthusiastic young girls and boys of age 13-19 years.**

**The young participants belonged to six districts of province number 6, 600-800 kilometers west of the capital, and had suffered the most during the decade-long armed conflict in Nepal.**

**The stories shared in this CoPC were intense and real, often about poverty, alcoholism, and abuse. Every participant could resonate with one another's experiences.**

**They developed action plans for themselves such as: forming Peace Circles in schools to discuss Circles of Concern, and develop solutions for the problems relating to school. They approached the principal for proper action and ensured that there was no influence of political parties.**

**They raised funds through different events to make toilets for girls. They also shared their Peace Circle experience with friends and this created a ripple effect.**

**Towards the end of the Circle, one of the children said, "Problems in our society do not end but what we can do as individuals is help to create peace by looking for solutions."**

**Another one shared, "This is for the first time that I am learning so much outside my classroom and in an informal setting. I would recommend my friends to be a part of such Circles."**



**They developed action plans such as Circles of Concern and sought solutions for each problem, relating to school. They approached the principal for action and ensured that there was no influence of political parties.**



# Africa

## PEACE BUILDING

**Creators of Peace (CoP) International has been recognised for its incredible contribution of Peace Circles in the initiatives in peacebuilding in Burundi, Congo, Kenya, Mali, and its neighbouring countries - Niger, Mauritania, and Burkina Faso.**

### **Burundi: 166 Peace Circles**

CoP Burundi gets a place of honour with its partnership with Geneva International Peace Research Institute (GIPRI). Today, the country has celebrated about 166 Peace Circles and works on initiatives for peace and development that are instrumental in transforming the future of Burundi.



### **Congo: Peace Circles extend to the West of DR**

This year began with Peace Circles' expansion to the West of DR Congo, almost a decade after their initiatives in the East. CoP International is hopeful that the joint effort of the facilitators will bring peace to the nation.



The project is supported by the Federal Government of Germany through 'Hallo Kongo', an NGO based in Germany and chaired by Nicole Thieke, and ASSEAC, an NGO in DR Congo led by Lucienne Munon



### **Mali: 50 Peace Circles**

Women in Law & Development in Africa (WiLDAF), chaired by Bouaré Bintou Founé Samaké, has worked closely with CoP in organising a training program of national facilitators; an activity of the four-year project, 'Gender and Conflict Resolution' by scaling up Creators of Peace Circles in Mali 2020-2024, with the financial support of the Swiss Cooperation.



Malian CoP sisters have been helping the population as a whole to overcome the trauma and wounds inflicted on them during the conflict. Their hard work has led to about 56 Peace Circles in Mali and neighbouring countries of Niger, Mauritania, and Burkina Faso!

### Red Cross Volunteers Practiced Peace

Chairman, Ann Gitu, and the local Co-ordinator, Elizabeth Achieng, of the Nakuru branch of the Red Cross, Kenya, organised Creators of Peace Circles over three days for their volunteers.

In August 2021, at the Red Cross centre in Nakuru, two groups, with 23 in each group, explored the personal practice of peacemaking. The meeting started with a prayer from Islam and Christianity.

Insights gained by participants through the Peace Circles included: the importance of listening to others; the freedom from bitterness that a participant found after forgiving her uncle.

A man with a Sudanese background spoke of his decision to care for a



countryman in prison, and to start celebrating special occasions, helping to stop the conflicts between the tribes.

One participant said, "The power of inner peace inside me has brought healing, and more importantly, to live mindfully."

Another participant added, "After this training, I have learned that we should give God time when praying. I shouldn't be rushing about."



### Peace Circles for Harmony

'Peace Circles for Harmony' during the national elections 2022 in Kenya, were efforts undertaken by women to promote peace and cohesion in their communities.

The positive impact of the Peace Circle led to a Peace in Practice project, where the women addressed community concerns in environmental conservation as well as recycling of waste materials and value addition ----

making charcoal with sawdust, cow dung, charcoal dust as well as old newspapers. This would save trees from being cut down for fuel.



# SNIPPETS

CoP South Africa

## Peace Circle for Men

Creators of Peace delivered a Peace Circle for 19 men aged 22 to 65 years, challenged by poverty and substance abuse at Thembelihle, south of Johannesburg.

The aim was to have a dialogue on anger, gender-based violence and inner healing. The men came with certain expectations: learning how to communicate better and how to forgive, improving self-love and self-care, understanding depression and becoming better listeners.

A participant said he was now going to change how he treated his children and use conflict resolution to resolve issues instead of shouting.



"I realise now that I need to take care of myself first so I can be a good community leader. Self-care is important," another participant said.

One of the facilitators, Gladys Mabe added, "It was heart-warming to see men being able to trust the space we'd created together, open up, and begin their inner healing journey."

CoP India

## Kolkata Sanved Retreat at Asia Plateau

CoP India joined Kolkata Sanved and organised a retreat for the latter's staff at Asia Plateau, Initiatives of Change center at Panchgani, Maharashtra.

Kolkata Sanved is a women-led pioneer in the field of Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) for trauma healing and empowerment of marginalised populations. The organisation uses DMT for promoting holistic well-being for survivors of sex trafficking and other forms of gender-based violence.

Kolkata Sanved's founder director, Sohini Chakraborty, experienced her first CoP Circle in April 2022.



She requested a Peace Circle for her entire staff.

The 26 participants included 24 females, one male, and one transgender person. It included team members holding diverse roles in the organisation: founder members, senior facilitators, programme team, admin and accounts team, cook, and driver.



## Fundraising for Peace with a Personal Touch



**A** laden apricot tree in Helen Mills' back garden propelled her into jam-making over 20 years ago. Before long she had so many appreciative takers that it became an easy way to raise money.

Over the years this little cottage industry has grown. Creators of Peace too have grown during this time and it became a natural place to direct the proceeds, jar by jar.

Helen has lost count of how many jars, how many varieties of jams and chutneys, and how many

satisfied customers there have been, but as the requests come in and the fruit is donated she keeps stirring and setting each batch.

"My target," Helen says, "is to raise each year is \$400 – last year it topped \$500."

An unexpected bonus has been that, because of CoP extra donations are often offered!

## CoP Middle East

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### First Peace Circle in Arabic

**T**he first Peace Circle was held in Arabic to unite women in the Arab region by focusing on peace rather than divisive politics.

The aim was to facilitate a conversation in their first language about the problems which split the region and to seek common ground and peaceful connections, rather than being angry and critical of each other.

Six facilitators – Iman Al Ghafari, Omnia Marzouk, Marie Chaftari, Lina Hamade, Taghrid Ahmed, and Sabah Nahas – divided the



the responsibility of delivering the gathering points to seven participants representing Tunisia, Palestine, Egypt, and Lebanon. They persisted despite challenges like slow internet connections and lack of electricity.

A participant said, "The Creators of Peace Circle allowed me to know more women from the Middle East. I will put more effort to reach out to people, there is a lot to offer."



## CoP New Zealand

### Hearing Disability not a Hurdle

Tania wished to join the Creators of Peace Circle scheduled to be held in Aotearoa, New Zealand. CoP team was glad to have her. But this posed a logistic challenge. Tania is deaf. How would she understand the conversation and participate? The team was keen to work out a way.

Fortunately, they could find a NZ sign language interpreter who was available for most sessions via Skype.

Initially they felt a little odd sharing their thoughts and stories in front of one who is not a part of the circle. Soon they were comfortable in his presence and the sessions flowed smoothly.

A team member took notes for Tania and spoke for her when this service was not available. Allowing enough time for the translation was another



challenge, and they often went over time. It was worth it.

Hearing Tania's story in her own words was a learning experience for all. In October 2021, CoP NZ had an online reunion. They were delighted to have Tania, who joined them with an interpreter.

## CoP Latin America

### Peace Circle of Spanish-speaking Women

CoP Latin America organised its first online Peace Circle with Spanish-speaking Women.

The online circle focused on peace and personal healing.



The participants were grateful for an environment of trust.

They felt a close connection despite joining in from different parts of America.

# PHOTO FEATURE



**Romania 2014**



**Guatemala 2012**



**South Sudan  
2013**







**UK 2023**



**Tunisia 2022**



**Delhi 2015**

### **Afghanistan**



### **Well Done !**

**In 2022, Creators of Peace (CoP) ran at least 66 Creators of Peace Circles, with 841 participants. These Peace Circles took place in 12 countries and involved, at least, 46 CoP Facilitators.**

**And of course, we have done far more than this, by being creators of peace in our everyday lives.**



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**This newsletter is produced every two months. It carries brief updates of Creators of Peace news, Peace Circles, and other CoP initiatives from around the world.**

**With gratitude,  
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