

Mindanao
Peacebuilding
Institute
Foundation,
Incorporated
PHILIPPINES



Becoming an online resource for peacebuilders: A report on MPI's Virtual Peacebuilding Training – 2020 to 2022



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MPI's Virtual
Peacebuilding
Training Program
2020 -2022 at a
glance

11 unique courses



206 participants
from 21 countries



From 5 faiths



15 facilitators from 10
countries



98 organizations
from 7 sectors
represented



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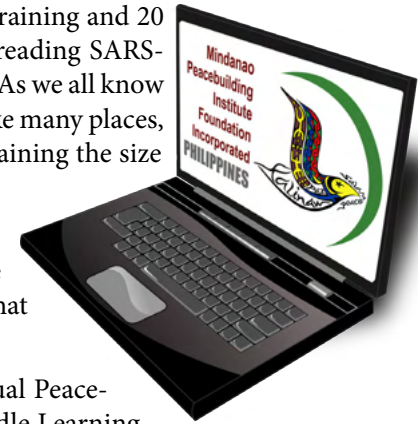
Introduction

As 2020 began, MPI was in the midst of preparing for its 21st Annual Peacebuilding Training and 20 years as a peacebuilding institute. All this came to an abrupt halt with the quickly spreading SARS-CoV-2 virus. Initially, we thought we could postpone the training until the virus passed. As we all know now, the virus would take hold and last longer than anyone had expected. Davao City, like many places, went into “lock-down” and imposed strict measures that would make any in-person training the size and extent of MPI’s Annual Peacebuilding Training impossible to organize.

Faced with this challenge, MPI quickly began to explore what alternatives it could offer so that it could continue its core education and training program and to be a resource for peacebuilders in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. In this digital age, it was clear that our first option was to offer online courses.

Within just a few months, MPI staff took up the challenge of developing its first Virtual Peacebuilding Training Program. We learned the ins and outs of Zoom and set up the Moodle Learning Management System (LMS) through MPI’s website host. Most important of all, MPI was blessed to have facilitators from our regular courses step up and take on the challenge with us, some of whom already had experience teaching on line, and others who had no experience whatsoever. Not only were they willing to take their courses on line, but some of them did so in the first series of online courses with no compensation, helping MPI during one of its most difficult moments in its history.

While going on line was initially a response to the COVID pandemic, it quickly became clear that there were some real advantages to online courses, chief among these being that many people who would not be able to attend an in-person training for various reasons could now benefit from our Virtual Peacebuilding Training Program. As such, MPI plans to continue to offer online courses as a supplement to our Annual Peacebuilding Training and as a way to reach people who would otherwise not be able to join us for an in-person training.



MPI Virtual Peacebuilding Training Courses and Facilitators

As MPI moved from in-person to online courses, the institute held fast to its goal to develop courses that respond to the changes in peacebuilding approaches in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. The biggest challenge was to ensure that MPI courses would be elicitive in nature. How do you keep the participants engaged and assure that the learning is as participatory as possible? The other challenge that MPI and the facilitators faced was ensuring that the virtual classrooms would be a safe space for a respectful discourse among the facilitators and the participants coming from diverse backgrounds and cultures.

Between August of 2020 and May of 2022, MPI offered a total of 17 online courses as part of its Virtual Peacebuilding Training Program,



Dessa Quesada Palm



Paulo Baleinakorodawa

two in collaboration with Canadian Mennonite University. The courses were a combination of those that had been offered previously as in-person courses, modified for the Virtual Peacebuilding Training Program, and courses MPI never offered before.

Similarly, the courses were facilitated by veteran facilitators, some of whom have been with MPI since the beginning days, and new facilitators joining with MPI to facilitate courses on themes never offered before. Over the 22 months, 15 facilitators shared their skills and talents to bring the Virtual Peacebuilding Training Program to fruition. They connected through Zoom from all over the world, some waking up in the early hours of the morning or staying up until late at night to be with their class.

Courses Overview 2020 – 2022

August to December 2020

Arts Building Peace: Creative Approaches in Conflict Transformation (ABP)

Babu Ayindo (Kenya) and Kyoko Okumoto (Japan) with Rosanna “Dessa” Quesada Palm (Philippines) as a resource person

Conflict Sensitivity and Do No Harm: Theory, Method, and Application (CSDNH)

Balázs Áron Kovács (Hungary) and Joan McGregor (South Africa)

Cultures of Violence, Cultures of Peace (CVCN) in collaboration with Canadian Mennonite University

Wendy Kroeker (Canada) and Michael “Mike” Frank A. Alar (Philippines)

Peace Education: Designing Pedagogies for Change (PE)

Jonathan “Jon” E. Rudy (United States)

March to May 2021

Arts Building Peace: Creative Approaches in Conflict Transformation (ABP)

Kyoko Okumoto (Japan) and Rosanna “Dessa” Quesada Palm (Philippines) with Babu Ayindo (Kenya) as a resource person

Conflict Sensitivity and Do No Harm: Theory, Method, and Application (CSDNH)

Balázs Áron Kovács (Hungary) and Joan McGregor (South Africa)

Peace Education: Designing Pedagogies for Change (PE)

Jonathan “Jon” E. Rudy (United States)

The Praxis of Conflict Transformation (PCT)

Wendy Kroeker (Canada) and Michael “Mike” Frank A. Alar (Philippines)

Trauma Awareness and Healing (TAH)

Gladston “Ashok” Xavier (India) and Florina Xavier (India)

August to December 2021

Introduction to Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning for Peacebuilding Practitioners (MELPP)

Joan McGregor (South Africa)

Introduction to Peacebuilding Theory and Practice (IPTP)

Paulo Baleinakorodawa (Fiji) and Maria Ida “Deng” Giguinto (Philippines)

Models for Peace and Conflict Transformation (MPCT) in collaboration with Canadian Mennonite University

Wendy Kroeker (Canada) and Michael “Mike” Frank A. Alar (Philippines)

Peace Education: Designing Pedagogies for Change (PE)

Jonathan “Jon” E. Rudy (United States) and Maria Ida “Deng” Giguinto (Philippines)

March to May 2022

Introduction to Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning for Peacebuilding Practitioners (MELPP)

Joan McGregor (South Africa), Rhea V. Silvosa (Philippines), and Mohaledin Ross “Bobet” Dimaukom (Philippines)

Introduction to Peacebuilding Theory and Practice (IPTP)

Paulo Baleinakorodawa (Fiji) and Maria Ida “Deng” Giguinto (Philippines)

Understanding Grassroots Environmental Peace (UGEP)

Vanessa “Ned” Bible (Australia)

Why Peace Needs the Arts: Exploring Creative Resources for Peacebuilding (ECRP)

Kyoko Okumoto (Japan) and Rosanna “Dessa” Quesada Palm (Philippines)

Who were the facilitators?



Michael “Mike” Frank A. Alar is an Independent Consultant on Conflict Transformation, Dialogue, and Peace Processes. For more than 20 years, Mike has worked, studied, and volunteered in the peace field. He has been a consultant for the United Nations Population Fund on Youth, Peace, and Security and has worked at the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue Philippines Office as Project Manager where he provided capacity building and technical support to the Mindanao Peace Process stakeholders.

Babu Ayindo is a storyteller, teacher, facilitator, researcher and writer. He has been involved in arts and peacebuilding work in various contexts. He has led community-based creative and dialogical peacebuilding processes that have drawn from Indigenous African arts, Theatre of the Oppressed and Playback Theatre. Babu draws from Indigenous arts and Forum Theatre in his community-based healing and peacebuilding work.



Paulo Baleinakorodawa is a Co-Founder and Director of Programs at Transcend Oceania, a justpeace and development regional non-governmental organization based in Fiji in the South Pacific. Paulo has served in many roles as a peacebuilding specialist in various peacebuilding and development organizations and institutions and has worked as an independent peacebuilding consultant across the Pacific. He has championed initiatives on engaging men and boys to transforming toxic notions of masculinity for gender equality and has also done extensive work in facilitating trainings in conflict transformation, trauma healing, and dialogue in Asia-Pacific and Canada.

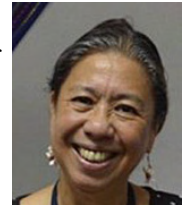
Vanessa “Ned” Bible is a Lecturer in Peace Studies and History at the University of New England, Australia. She has been involved in grassroots peace, environmental, and social justice organizations for 20 years. Vanessa has helped establish a number of local groups in her community, and she is currently the Convenor of People for Peace, an action group of Sustainable Living Armidale in Australia.





Mohaledin Ross “Bobet” Dimaukom served as a Project Manager for Forum Civil Peace Service (forumZFD), a German international non-governmental organization that promotes peace using the framework of nonviolent conflict transformation. He has 14 years of combined experience in the fields of ceasefire implementation, nonviolent conflict transformation, nonviolent communication, and project management. Bobet led a team and works closely with local civil society organizations and the youth sector in supporting a peaceful, transparent, inclusive, and accountable transition process of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

Maria Ida “Deng” Giguinto is one of the two recipients of the 2015 Tanenbaum Peacemaker In Action Award. Her past experiences included being the Peacebuilding Training Coordinator for Catholic Relief Services (CRS)-Philippines and a member of the Project Reference Group for a curriculum development project involving best practices of civil society working with security forces to improve human security. Deng has dedicated nearly three decades using the conflict transformation paradigm in working with partners in Mindanao and post-independent Timor-Leste.



Balázs Áron Kovács was the Philippines country director of forumZFD, a German NGO working in the field of conflict transformation. He combines an interest in the scholarly study of peacebuilding with its practice. Earlier he taught international relations at Webster University in Thailand, and peace and conflict studies at the UN-mandated University for Peace in Costa Rica. He has published books on peacebuilding, peace infrastructures, and democratization. As a practitioner, he is concerned primarily with local-level peace formation.

Wendy Kroeker is the Director of the Canadian School of Peacebuilding and an Assistant Professor in the Peace and Conflict Transformation Studies Department of Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg, Canada. Wendy has over 20 years of experience as a community mediator, conflict transformation trainer, peace program manager, and program manager for international development projects.





Joan McGregor has been working in the field of conflict transformation for more than 40 years. Her engagement in conflict transformation started with work against apartheid in her home country of South Africa. Joan's expertise covers participatory approaches to conflict analysis, strategic planning, mediation and negotiation, conflict sensitivity tools and methodologies, monitoring and appraisal, lesson learning, training of trainers, and counseling. In 2017, Joan was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by the University of Birmingham in recognition of her contribution to conflict transformation internationally.

Kyoko Okumoto is a Professor of Peace and Conflict Studies, Conflict Transformation, and the Arts-Based Approaches in Peacework at Osaka Jogakuin University, a women's university in Osaka, Japan. She has facilitated numerous peace training workshops at various places and at all levels. With NGOs/CSOs and academic organizations, Kyoko tries to explore ways to connect with other Asian communities, and beyond, to build more peaceful societies based on trust and solidarity where people can have creative dialogues among themselves and with their neighbors and communities.



Rosanna "Dessa" Quesada Palm has more than 40 years of performing experience and theater practice as an artist-teacher-organizer-leader, conducting workshops locally and internationally. Dessa spent many years with the Philippine Educational Theater Association (PETA), pioneering theater for development and in education. She teaches at Silliman University and is the founder/artistic director of the Youth Advocates Through Theater Arts. She has facilitated training on the nexus of arts and peacebuilding.

Jonathan "Jon" E. Rudy is a global educator on the topics of human security, peacebuilding, conflict transformation, and nonviolence. With more than 35 years of work in 30 countries in Asia and Africa, Jon's recent training energies have gone toward human security and civil society. Jon served as Peacemaker-in-Residence at Elizabethtown College's Center for Global Understanding and Peacemaking from 2012-2019 and is a core member of the Global Partners for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) Improving Practices Working Group.





Rhea V. Silvosa has over eight years of experience in community development, international peacebuilding, and conflict transformation. She holds an MA in Global Affairs with a concentration in International Peace Studies from the Keough School of Global Affairs of the University of Notre Dame, Indiana, USA. Rhea supported the Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute in various roles, first, as the Annual Peacebuilding Training Program Officer, and recently as the Peacebuilding Programs' Coordinator. Rhea has been actively involved in civil society groups that advocate for indigenous and human rights, and restorative and transitional justice in the region.

Florina Xavier has worked with Act for Peace as their Regional Return and Reintegration Advisor taking care of India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Thailand. She conducts workshops on topics that include psychosocial support, arts-based approaches to peacebuilding, sustainable development, strategic planning and management. She also works closely with community-based organizations and has conducted workshops in peacebuilding in several Asian countries.



Gladston "Ashok" Xavier is an Associate Professor in the Social Work Department of Loyola College in Chennai, India, and has served as the Head of Department and Dean of the Arts Faculties of the same college. He is an expert in the field of conflict and peacebuilding, and has done substantive work providing training on trauma awareness and recovery, arts-based approaches to peacebuilding, sustainable development, strategic planning and management, and restorative justice as well as working with community-based organizations.

What were the courses?

Arts Building Peace: Creative Approaches in Conflict Transformation (ABP) – 2020 and 2021

A total of 22 participants took this course over the two years it was offered. This course built on the experiences and lessons of the in-person Arts Approaches to Community-Based Peacebuilding course offered by MPI over the last two decades.

Despite being on line, Babu Ayindo, Dessa Quesada Palm, and Kyoko Okumoto relied on their creativity to involve the participants in hands-on and participatory art activities. The facilitators had the participants create art work in their own physical space or gather in breakout rooms where they could discuss and plan their own presentations.

What did the participants say?

All of the lessons are interesting, what really caught my interest is the Design, Implementation, and Evaluation of Arts-Based Programs and also the Resource mobilization for our community initiatives.

My mentors supported me in crafting my initiatives by giving feedback and sharing their pieces of knowledge and experiences that I could apply to my project to make it more successful.

The sharing of talent is great. Now we know the other participants' talent and it gave me ideas to do something similar.



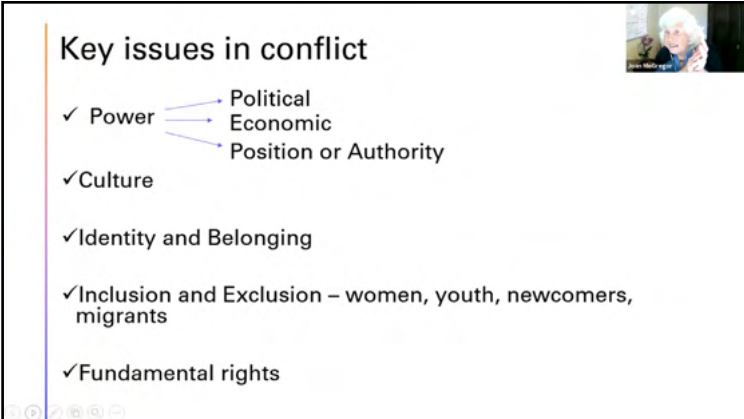
Facilitating in tandem, Joan McGregor and Balázs Áron Kovács introduced the participants to the frameworks and approaches of Conflict Sensitivity and Do No Harm. Based on her years of practical experience, Joan guided the participants in the use of a number of tools used to help develop conflict sensitivity, including actor mapping, participatory analysis, and the ABC Triangle, among many others.

In the second half of the course, Balázs came in to facilitate the discussion on Do No Harm. Participants spent time on specific case studies in order to deepen their understanding of the concepts of Do No Harm and try to simulate as much as possible what it means in real-life situations.

What did the participants say?

As a youth formator, I am always in need of ways and tools that I can integrate into formation modules. My work to design in-depth immersion experiences of students made learning all these tools very relevant. Having ways and tools that I can use to aid the students in their process of social transformation is always welcome. The whole course also helped me in my own journey to develop skills and reflect on ways I can improve as an advocate and a peacebuilder in my profession.

I appreciate the whole tool (DNH). I learned that it could be a progressive tool that can be used all throughout any project. It is relevant for me to learn an assessment tool and also a tool that I can tailor fit to help in my work.



The slide, titled "Key issues in conflict", features a list of five issues, each preceded by a checkmark. The first issue, "Power", is further detailed with three sub-points: "Political", "Economic", and "Position or Authority". The other issues are "Culture", "Identity and Belonging", "Inclusion and Exclusion – women, youth, newcomers, migrants", and "Fundamental rights". A small video inset in the top right corner shows a woman, identified as Joan McGregor, speaking. At the bottom left of the slide, there are navigation icons for a presentation.

- ✓ Power
 - Political
 - Economic
 - Position or Authority
- ✓ Culture
- ✓ Identity and Belonging
- ✓ Inclusion and Exclusion – women, youth, newcomers, migrants
- ✓ Fundamental rights

Cultures of Violence, Cultures of Peace (CVCP) – 2020 and Models for Peace and Conflict Transformation (MPCT) – 2021

Cultures of Violence, Cultures of Peace and Models of Peace and Conflict Transformation were two courses held in collaboration with [Canadian Mennonite University](#) (CMU) as part of a Memorandum of Understanding between MPI and CMU. Wendy Kroeker and Mike Alar, who have facilitated many times together at MPI's Annual Peacebuilding Training, partnered once again for these two courses.

These courses provided an opportunity for students in CMU's Peace and Conflict Transformation Studies program to interact virtually with participants from the Philippines that joined the course through MPI. In the CVCP course, those from the Philippines were able to share about their reality in a "cultural showcase" and through a presentation on images of peace and violence (see photo).

In Models for Peace and Conflict Transformation, participants examined integrative models of social change, which hold together peace, development, justice and identity issues. They learned critical analysis of structural violence and direct violence; proactive building of dynamic peace cultures; and an ability to respond to crisis in ways that build on local cultural and faith traditions and witness to a sustainable and peaceful future.



What did the participants say?

What I learned in this course will be reechoed at the staff level and with key community leaders. Some tools might be used in our community engagements that will help us work better at promoting conflict transformation and peacebuilding.

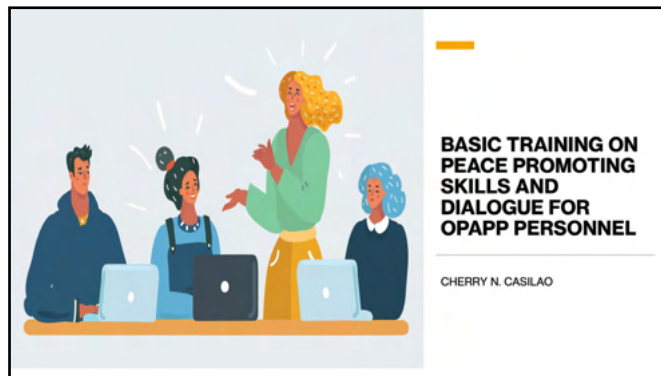
Initially facilitated alone, Jon Rudy was joined by Deng Giguinto in the latter part of 2021 for this ever-popular course. Jon and Deng not only brought into the online space the basics of peace education, but also integrated online tools and learning platforms so that the participants could learn how to facilitate in-person and virtual courses.

Jon and Deng put a strong emphasis on participants developing a curriculum appropriate for their culture and setting. By the end of the training, participants were able to give a presentation and demonstration on a course or workshop they had developed individually or in groups.

What did the participants say?

I find the lectures of Sir Jon very enlightening. I like the strategies and the technological tools he used to emphasize his topics. Likewise, the processing skills of Ma'am Deng are remarkable. She was able to stir our thoughts and emotions. She worked efficiently and complements well with Sir Jon.

I really appreciated the support given by the facilitators, specially the comments of Ate Deng which guided me in revising some of the parts in my final project. Sir Rudy and Ate Deng from the start when they presented to us the final project assignment had kept on reminding on how to go about it, and they presented examples for us to follow, indeed I was guided along while drafting my final project and it turned out to be successful.



The Praxis of Conflict Transformation – 2021

Wendy Kroeker and Mike Alar teamed up once again to facilitate this online course designed to advance the conflict transformation skills of the participants. This was an advanced course geared toward those who had already taken Wendy and Mike's Introduction to Conflict Transformation or a similar course or had comparable experience.

The course explored five central dynamics in which conflict impacts situations as developed by John Paul Lederach: the personal, the relational, the structural, the cultural, and the spiritual. Wendy and Mike pushed the participants to be active both inside and outside the classroom. The participants worked on their own *Conflict Style Questionnaire*, interviewed workplace colleagues, and created photo essays of what connects and what divides people.

What did the participants say?

I have learned many new things from this course and both facilitators have very rich experiences and are knowledgeable.

The discussions between participants and the sharing of experiences and coping mechanisms were the most interesting and inspirational parts of the course.

Wendy and Mike did a great job in designing the course for an online set-up. Activities and topics were very appropriate for an online setting. The activities and sharing were easy to follow.



Trauma Awareness and Healing – 2021

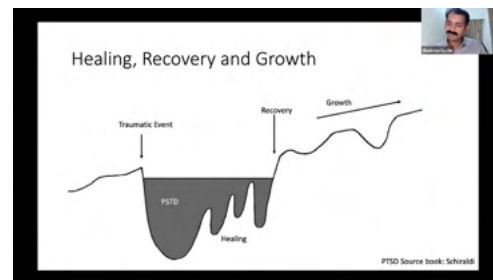
There was probably not a more-needed course during the pandemic than Trauma Awareness and Healing facilitated by Ashok and Florina Xavier. As the course objective stated, “the program is to introduce ways to identify trauma and deal with it using simple techniques to support those affected by trauma in the COVID/Post-COVID situation.”

Adapting to the “online world,” Ashok and Florina still utilized such activities as group discussions, a “power walk,” circle process, and a talk show to help the participants explore the causes and reactions to trauma. The course dealt with ways to talk about trauma, victim introspection and revealing one’s self, and looking at the way forward.

What did the participants say?

The following parts of the course are what I found interesting: First, the commitment and willingness of fellow learners and facilitators and MPI team to stretch themselves and meet in the agreed time. Second, the design of the program which cut across and hits on theories and concepts with context and life experiences of those taking the course. Third, the superb facilitation and partnership of Florina and Ashok. It is always amazing to have two unique individuals whose facilitation techniques, expertise and approach blend so well.

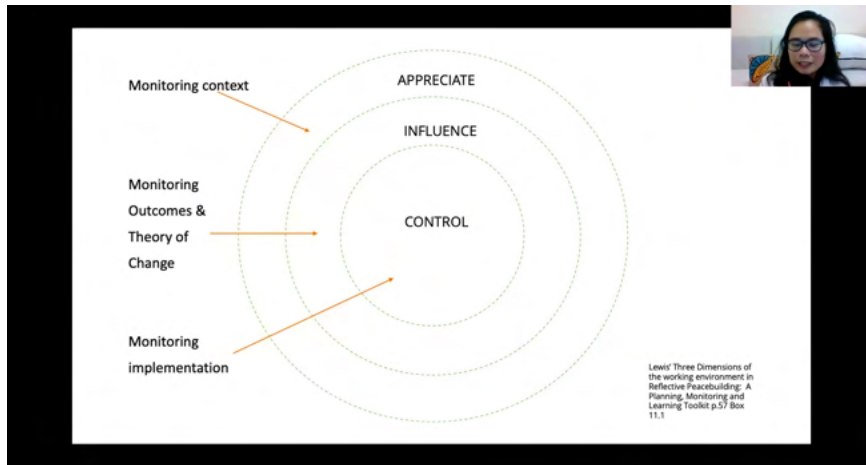
Thank you, Ashok and Florina and MPI team and most especially to the few people who not only became classmates but have become friends from across the world, even amidst this challenging times because of COVID-19. The course goes beyond simple discussions and learning of theories and concepts but has become a way of life, a culture of healing, forgiveness and self-love and self-care, and journeying with fellow survivors, a living space of people that sends out support and loans out strength to others to keep pressing onwards.



Introduction to Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning for Peacebuilding Practitioners – 2021 and 2022

After facilitating the course Introduction to Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning for Peacebuilding Practitioners alone in 2021, Joan McGregor was joined by Rhea Silvosa and Bobet Dimaukom in 2022. In this introductory course, Joan, Rhea, and Bobet gave a solid foundation to the participants in both theory and practice, enabling the participants to establish or strengthen existing monitoring, evaluation, and learning practices in their organization.

The participants learned to apply the tools for monitoring, evaluation, and learning in real life situations. They surfaced particular projects or activities in which they were involved and from which they selected just a few on which they would focus. They then formed teams around what was selected and applied the tools to these projects. There was no expectation that they would have a finished product, but they learned much in the process.



What did the participants say?

The training was quite helpful in understanding the basic concepts of monitoring and evaluation. It built my confidence, knowledge and capacity so that I can identify the gaps where monitoring and evaluation would fit into the project cycle and what type of tools I should use for better impact assessment. The training enhanced my analytical skills and developed a sense of critical thinking towards the process of monitoring and evaluation.

Introduction to Peacebuilding Theory and Practice – 2021 and 2022

Having facilitated together in MPI's Annual Peacebuilding Training, Paulo Baleinakorodawa and Deng Giguinto brought their collaborative facilitation skills to the online Introduction to Peacebuilding Theory and Practice course. In both 2021 and 2022, it was offered as a two-week intensive course so that those who never had an introductory course would be prepared for other courses as well as having a grounding in peacebuilding theory and practice for their work.

The course covered a broad range of topics related to peacebuilding, from the basic understanding of the terms and definitions to an introduction to the skills needed for conflict analysis, communication, negotiation, mediation and dialogue, and trauma healing. As with some other courses, guest speakers who had years of practicing their peacebuilding skills shared their experiences with the participants.

What did the participants say?

The inputs from the facilitators and invited practitioners, the structured learning exercises, the breakout sessions, and the exchanges with co-participants made sure that peacebuilding theory is linked to practice.

The two weeks virtual session is really a great opportunity to learn new knowledge and skills from other participants though some of the participants experienced weak internet connections, but still the session is so fruitful.



Understanding Grassroots Environmental Peace – 2022

This first-time course could not be more relevant to the present reality in which we are living, and Vanessa “Ned” Bible, also a first-time facilitator for MPI, brought all the knowledge and skills to make it a successful course. The first half of the course was spent looking at the reality of the earth’s environmental crisis and the resulting or exacerbated conflicts. The second half presented a more hopeful view, with the participants learning what can be done to address threats to the environment and promote caring for the environment at the grassroots level.

Ned balanced input with small-group and plenary discussions, video presentations, and outside resource persons. Most sessions ended with a challenging question for the participants to address in between classes in the Virtual Classroom. Participants were even able to participate in a role play on line, taking on the identity of corporations, communities, the government and other stakeholders to get a feel for how people might react in light of conflicts around environmental concerns.

What did the participants say?

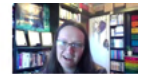
This training on Understanding Grassroots situation and Environmental Peacebuilding course really went well and gives us a very helpful and fruitful discussion on environmental peacebuilding that benefits not only ourselves as peace advocates but our environment as well. The training gives me new knowledge and/or ideas, the strategies, methods, such peacebuilding toolkits which is our guide on applying it in the community.



THE SITUATION:

There is a conflict over rainforest logging.

- **Local Indigenous people** have a spiritual connection to the forest, and their livelihoods are dependent on using the forest resources in a sustainable way.
- **Conservation groups** are concerned about the clearing of forests - particularly the destruction of the habitat of orangutans, which are critically endangered, and the loss of forests, which they say drives climate change.
- **The logging company** says that they are improving the lives of local people, because the plantations that will be established on the cleared forest will provide jobs and livelihoods for local families.
- **The local community** really wants these jobs because there are few other work opportunities available.
- **The government** is torn – protection of the rights of Indigenous peoples features in their own policy, but they also feel that improving the socioeconomic wellbeing of the community will improve their chances of re-election.



Why Peace Needs the Arts: Exploring Creative Resources for Peacebuilding – 2022

Kyoko Okumoto and Dessa Quesada Palm were back to facilitate this advanced arts course, Why Peace Needs the Arts: Exploring Creative Resources for Peacebuilding. Once again, Kyoko and Dessa developed activities and exercises in this online space that made the participants feel they were present to one another, with one participant saying, “Even though the class is via Zoom, it was like an in-person class.”

Each day, the sessions began with some kind of movement or exercise, whether the participants were in their chairs or standing up for full-body involvement. As with Arts Building Peace, the participants created artistic pieces during or between classes that developed their creativity in understanding and transforming conflict and shared them with one another. The course culminated in the presentation of two musical performances prepared by the participants that had been divided into two groups.

What did the participants say?

Usually, the word “class” brings to mind tedious discussion and loathsome course work. However, in this class there were none of that. It was always enjoyable and colorful. Lessons were meaningful. Assignments were something one happily did.



My classmates, their stories are humbling and the persons they are, inspiring. Our facilitators and the rest of the team were just awesome in how they wove the activities and brought out all that creativity and curiousness in us. This class made me so happy.

MPI Virtual Peacebuilding Training Staff and Volunteers



Unlike MPI's Annual Peacebuilding Training where MPI staff are not often seen in the classroom, during the Virtual Peacebuilding Training, at least one member of the MPI staff is present for the entire session. They served as the Zoom hosts, providing technical assistance and supported the facilitators and participants as needed. In between classes, they were also responsible to ensure everything was set up and available in MPI's Virtual Classroom as needed.

enabled MPI to continue strengthening its Education and Training direction by providing avenues for young professionals, development workers and fresh graduates to further develop their skills and learn new peacebuilding theories and concepts.

There were three class assistants that joined the MPI team to support the facilitators and participants during MPI's Virtual Peacebuilding Training from 2020 to 2022. One was from Indonesia, one from the Philippines, and one from the United States. MPI deeply appreciates their commitment for the time they spent on line and involved in the course, sometimes at inconvenient hours for them.



MPI Virtual Peacebuilding Training Participants

If there is one advantage to online courses, individuals from all over the world may join, unconstrained by travel costs and sometimes the difficulty of being away from work for an extended period. That was surely the case with MPI's Virtual Peacebuilding Training as 206 peacebuilders from 21 countries participated in at least one online course between 2020 and 2022. Out of that number, 16 were alumni and 190 were newcomers to MPI, taking their first courses with MPI virtually.

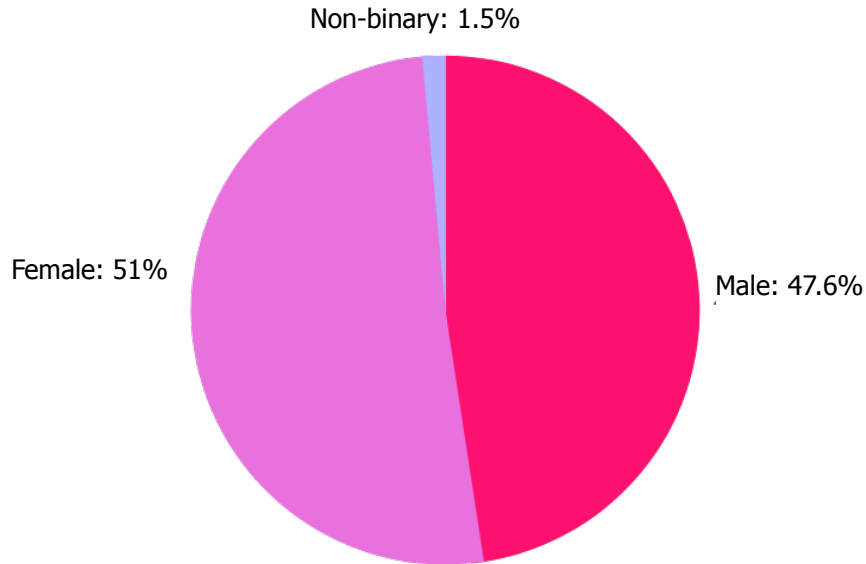
MPI is grateful to the organizations for sending their staff members to the training, and, in some cases, for directly shouldering the course fees. MPI also wishes to thank the sponsoring organizations that offered scholarships to staff and partners to take courses. These include: Bread for the World, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ)/ Civil Peace Service, forumZFD, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), Mensen met en Missie, MISEREOR, and United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia (United Board).



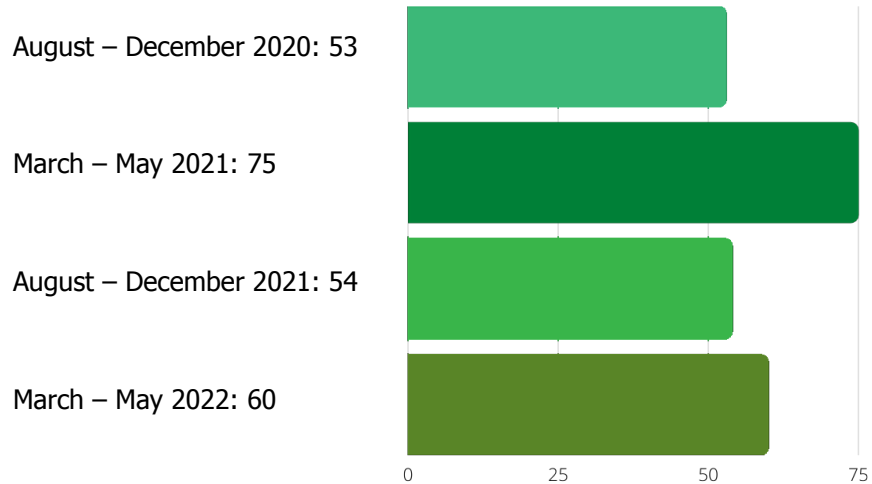
Gender Distribution

Female: 105
Male: 98
Non-binary: 3

Female participants slightly exceeded male participants 51% to 47.6%. Three individuals, or 1.5%, identified themselves as non-binary.



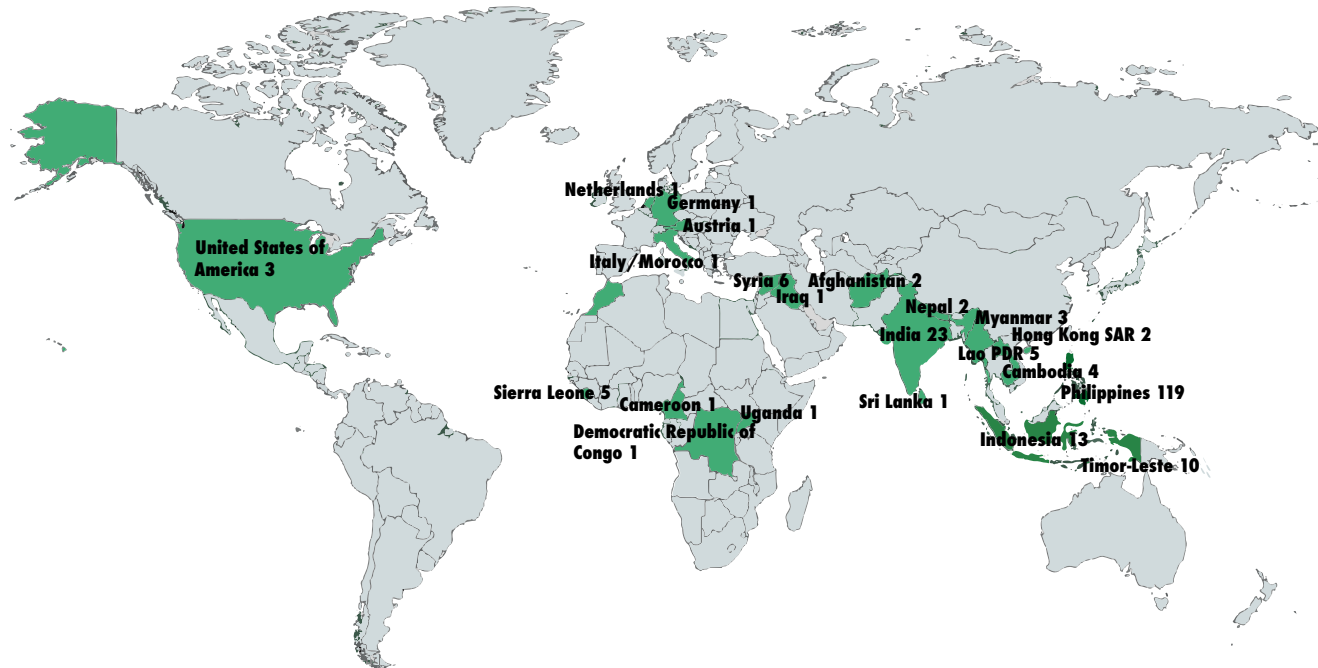
Participants per Training Cycle



Of the total number of participants, 53 participated from August to December 2020, 75 from March to May 2021, 54 from August to December 2021, and 60 from March to May 2022. This shows a relatively balanced level of participation. There were more participants from March to May 2021 than other years because MPI offered five courses rather than the four that were offered in other cycles. As can be seen from the totals, a number of people participated in more than one course/cycle.

Participants by Country

Participants for MPI's Virtual Peacebuilding Training from 2020 to 2022 came from 23 different countries/nationalities. Similar to MPI's Annual Peacebuilding Training, the majority of the participants came from Southeast Asia, with the greatest number from the Philippines. Others came from Africa, Europe, the Middle East, North America, and South Asia.



Sectors Represented

NGOs – 45



Academe – 24



INGOs – 14



Government Organizations – 8



Religious Institutions – 4



Intergovernmental Organizations – 2



Security Sector – 1



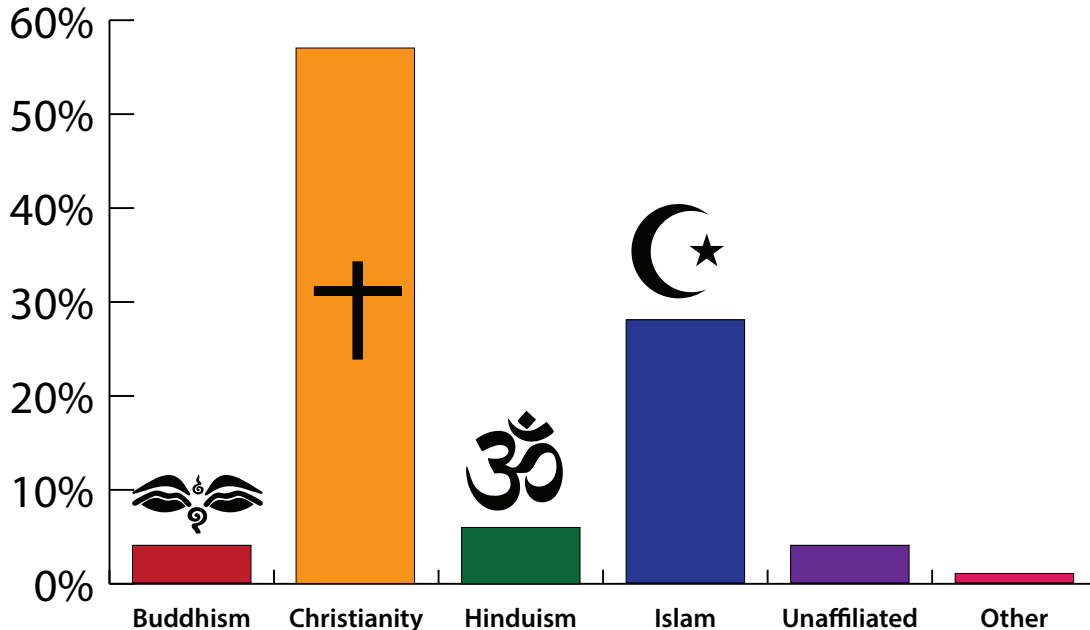
Other – 1

Of the sectors from which the participants came, 45 were from Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), by far the majority of the participants. This is in contrast to the most recent Annual Peacebuilding Trainings, where the majority of the participants were from International NGOs (INGOs).

This is likely a combination of the support received from sponsoring organizations for local partners and the ability of those working with NGOs to take an online course rather than in-person.

Participants by Religion

Participants in MPI's Virtual Peacebuilding Training from 2020 to 2022 came from somewhat diverse religious backgrounds, though the majority were Christians at 57%, similar to MPI's Annual Peacebuilding Training. Muslims made up 28% of the participants. A smaller portion of the participants was made up of Buddhists at 4% and Hindus at 6%. The remaining participants indicated they were "unaffiliated" or "other."



MPI's Virtual Classrooms

To supplement the sessions that took place on Zoom, MPI set up Virtual Classrooms using the free and open-source Learning Management System (LMS) [Moodle](#). Each course had its own virtual classroom where the facilitators, class assistants or MPI staff could post announcements, handouts and other materials. Several classes set up discussion boards where the participants could share ideas with one another, respond to questions from the facilitators, and work in small groups in between sessions.

Other activities in the virtual classroom included media collections to post photos and feedback questionnaires, especially for the final assessment and evaluation of the courses. All sessions were recorded, and the participants could go to the Virtual Classrooms to watch the videos from a class they may have missed or to review parts of a class, especially if they were having connection difficulties.

In addition to the individual virtual classrooms for each course, MPI maintains a glossary of peacebuilding and conflict transformation terms. This glossary is available to all participants and may be accessed by the general public at:

<https://mpiasia.net/mpivc/mod/glossary/view.php?id=472>



Assessing MPI's Virtual Peacebuilding Training Program

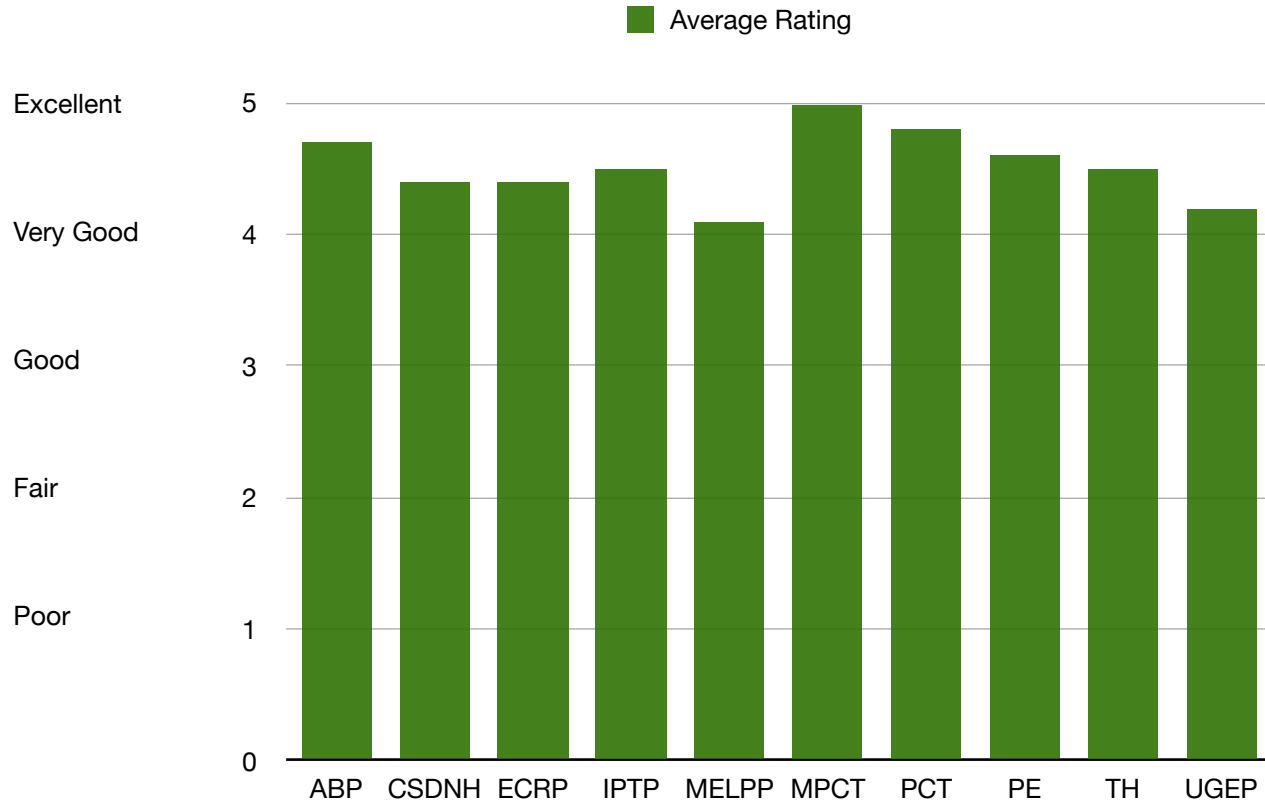
As with MPI's Annual Peacebuilding Training Program, we assess and evaluate each and every course. Both participants and facilitators are given an opportunity to provide feedback so that we can improve individual courses and our overall education and training programs. Even though much of the feedback related to in-person training being a better option, we were pleased with the very positive feedback we received for all the courses and the program in general.

The charts on the following pages give a quick glance at the positive responses to the courses, the extent to which the courses met the needs of the participants, and the ratings of the facilitators. The average ratings for the courses were very high, all exceeding four points on the scale of one to five. The results were the same for the level to which the participants felt the courses met their needs. Finally, feedback on the facilitators was overwhelmingly positive, with participants on average rating them between very good and excellent.

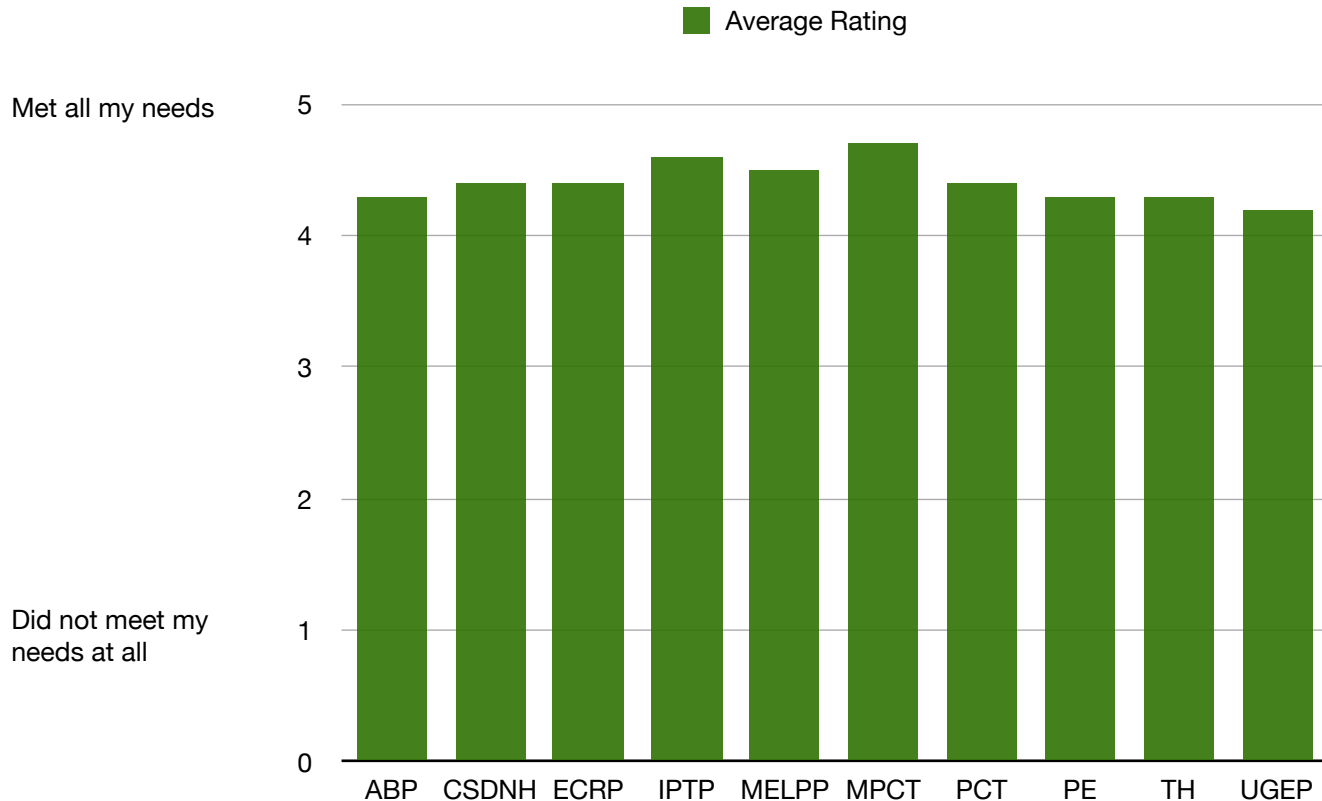
Course Legend:

ABP:	Arts Building Peace: Creative Approaches in Conflict Transformation
CSDNH:	Conflict Sensitivity and Do No Harm: Theory, Method, and Application
CVCP:	Cultures of Violence, Cultures of Peace
ECRP:	Why Peace Needs the Arts: Exploring Creative Resources for Peacebuilding
IPTP:	Introduction to Peacebuilding Theory and Practice
MELPP:	Introduction to Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning for Peacebuilding Practitioners
MPCT:	Models for Peace and Conflict Transformation
PCT:	The Praxis of Conflict Transformation
PE:	Peace Education: Designing Pedagogies for Change
TAH:	Trauma Awareness and Healing
UGEP:	Understanding Grassroots Environmental Peace

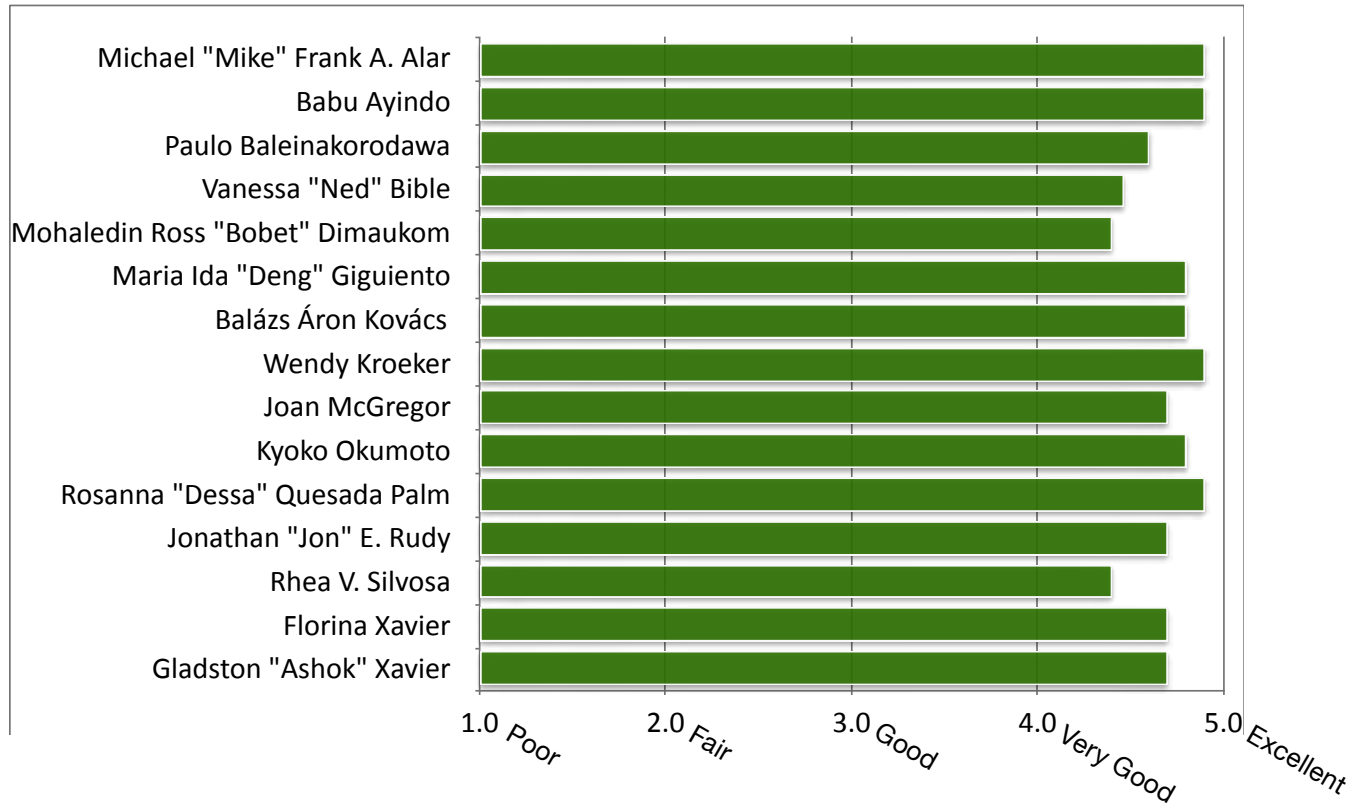
How participants rated the overall training



How participants rated the extent to which the training met their needs



How participants rated the facilitators



Other feedback

There were a number of other questions to which the participants responded, some of which applied to the particular courses. Aside from multiple choice questions, participants were given the opportunity to provide longer responses. Below are just some of the highlights from their responses.

What was particularly helpful about the training?

- The expertise in the strategies adopted by the facilitators were superb! It made learning fun.
- The wealth of academic interventions made by the facilitator were some of the standout aspects for me.
- The posting of downloadable lectures/sessions on MPI Virtual Classroom we could read and review those topics again.
- Breakout sessions/Small group discussions.
- Exchanges with co-participants/camaraderie among my peers because I learned about the different cultures from their countries.
- The group work was very helpful as there was rich input from participants belonging to different countries and different contexts.
- Real-life experiences shared by the participants and the facilitators.
- Thoroughly knowing about the attractive method to engage with others especially for peacebuilding
- There were different methods and activities done which were engaging to the participant. The warm, friendly environment boosted one's confidence to participate and contribute to discussions.
- Having enough space for every participant to creatively share their stories and opinions was helpful in letting us feel close to each other.
- Even though the class is via zoom, it was like an in-person class.

What would you recommend changing about the training?

- The training should be face-to-face .
- Use class time with an instructor attending large project group work for clarification.
- Increased time for breakout sessions/group work.
- Break us into groups to both test our learnings as well as contribute our knowledge in the small groups during sharing or drawing up our plans/projects.
- I think at least one reading material per topic, as a form of assignment, would be helpful.
- A group of students could present how they think about certain readings, or share what's the takeaway from the readings, how could they possibly apply it to their work/community.
- Providing academic resources and historical resources.
- Facilitator needs to guide participants for focusing specific points in every session.
- I think I would recommend that there shall be presentations or guests coming from the context of the students.
- Best practices from serious conflicts.
- Provide more tools, technical support, and strategies.
- It might be good to arrange one chit-chat session, where people can freely express how they think/feel about what they have learned, and not sure/don't understand about. So the students might be able to help/support each other in the process. Sometimes the comments and questions would steer further thoughts and echoing.

Conclusions

Like what many individuals, institutions, and organizations did during the peak of the pandemic, MPI tried to make the best of a very difficult situation and find ways to create positive outcomes from this experience. The development of the Virtual Peacebuilding Training Program was one such outcome for MPI.

We were so pleased to be able to reconnect with alumni and be joined by many new participants over the past four training cycles. As mentioned in the introduction, there were those who took our training that may never have been able to do so otherwise. In particular, we were joined by those living and working in critical situations, such as those participants from Afghanistan and Myanmar. Several indicated that the online courses were not only an educational opportunity, but also served as a support to them during traumatic crises.

Even though MPI is now planning to return to in-person trainings, we still see great opportunities with online courses. We have learned many lessons and developed the skills to run such a program. However, what it will look like in the future still needs to be determined. As we also stated in the introduction, we see our Virtual Peacebuilding Training Program complementing the in-person training. Online courses not only allow us to reach those who would not be able to join us otherwise, but it also creates opportunities for having facilitators from around the globe as well.

Courses may be introductory in nature, preparing people for more advanced courses that will be offered during in-person trainings, or they could just be the opposite, building on those offered during in-person trainings. While participants are still working and engaged on a daily basis with their commitments, virtual trainings can provide them the opportunity to bring their immediate needs to the virtual class and be a place where they can process what is happening in real life.

In whatever direction MPI takes the Virtual Peacebuilding Training Program, we are excited about the opportunities and possibilities, and the new ways that MPI will be able to connect and expand its reach to peacebuilders around the world. In this digital age where violence and hate are amplified on the Internet, MPI can play a small role in making it a place for peacebuilding and building solidarity among all peoples seeking justice and peace, and a compassionate and loving world.

Acknowledgments

MPI would like to thank and acknowledge the following institutions and partner organizations for their support and contributions to MPI's Virtual Peacebuilding Training Program from 2020 to 2022.

Brot
für die Welt



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