



Regional Network News

...the eNewsletter of the Regional Networks of
the Association for Conflict Resolution's
International Section

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1. Greetings from ACR's Regional Networks

Welcome to the inaugural issue of *Regional Network News*, the eNewsletter of the Regional Network Committee of the Association of Conflict Resolution's International Section. The International Section established the Regional Networks with the goals of supporting diversity within ACR and expanding membership across the globe. ACR's Regional Networks will offer dispute resolution practitioners and organizations the mechanisms to encourage networking, support the exchange of ideas and experience, and promote a culture of conflict resolution in specific geographic regions.

Currently there are eight networks covering the following geographic regions, based on the interests and initiative of ACR International Section members: Central America, the Caribbean, Eastern Europe & Russia, Iberian Peninsula, India, the Middle East, South America and Southern Africa. Other Networks may emerge, depending upon member interest. This year, the Regional Networks are working to:

- ✓ identify the key organizations and individuals working in the field of conflict resolution in specific regions;
- ✓ create mechanisms and opportunities for participants to be in conversation with and learn from colleagues and organizations in each network; and

- ✓ implement initiatives that support the development of the field in each region through conferences, newsletters or other exchanges.

We hope you will join us in this exciting effort to more closely link conflict resolution professionals and practices from around the world – for the advancement and improvement of our shared profession.

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2. Meet the Network Coordinators

Each Network is organized by one or two Network Coordinators (NCs) who are members of ACR's Regional Networks Committee. Here's a look at the backgrounds of the NCs for each region, and a brief description of each Regional Network:

Central America

The ***Central American Network (CAN)*** includes Guatemala, Nicaragua, Belize, Honduras, Costa Rica and Panama. ACR's CAN will integrate a broad cross-section of conflict resolution professionals and organizations working throughout the region. Interest areas include community-based mediation, conflict resolution training and capacity-building, and education. CAN's key objectives are to: 1) build connections between locally, regionally and internationally based conflict resolution professionals; 2) develop a user-friendly database of professionals and organizations which encourages the exchange and integration of resources important to the field; and 3) strengthen conflict resolution practice through information sharing, regional conferences, relationship development and global connection.

Sam Slosberg, samslosberg@yahoo.com, has nearly 10 years experience working in the fields of community development, civil rights and conflict resolution at a national and international level. He recently relocated to San Jose, Costa Rica to pursue conflict resolution training and capacity-building opportunities in the region. Prior to this move, Sam served as the Director of the Brooklyn Mediation Center in Brooklyn, NY.

Caribbean

Kvmar Hathiramani, adr_bgi@yahoo.com, holds a B.S. in Business Administration, M.A. in Conflict Resolution and a Diploma in Paralegal studies. In April 2005, he was appointed as a Justice of the Peace in Barbados.

A certified mediator, Kumar is one of the founding members and first president of the ADR Association of Barbados, Inc. This NGO has trained members in conflict resolution skills in an effort to introduce mediation as a primary method of resolving disputes. The Association seeks to preserve the highest standards of integrity, competence, honour and professionalism amongst those engaged in mediation practices and training.

Eastern Europe & Russia

The *Eastern Europe & Russia Network* focuses on emerging conflict resolution practices and mechanisms in civil matters in Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, as well as the Balkan region. Since the practice of mediation and arbitration is new throughout the region, in addition to practitioners, the network may also include institutions or other organizations involved in conflict resolution theory and research.

Kyra Buchko, kyrabuchko@gmail.com, is a mediator and attorney who has worked in the international legal reform arena since 1991. Currently based in Chisinau, Moldova, she is working to introduce new conflict resolution practices and establish community mediation centers throughout the country. Since 2000, Kyra has provided project management, training and business development services to organizations strengthening the rule of law in emerging democracies. She previously directed rule of law reform programs for the ABA's Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative (ABA-CEELI) in Washington, DC.

Iberian Peninsula

The *Iberian Peninsula Network* focuses on establishing links and relationships at two levels: between conflict resolution practitioners in Portugal and Spain, and among practitioners within each country. The field of conflict resolution is burgeoning in the Iberian Peninsula, and there is a great need for networks and other mechanisms which will allow practitioners to share experiences.

Ramon Alzate, Ramon.alzate@ehu.es, is Professor of Conflict Analysis and Resolution at the University of The Basque Country, Spain. He also serves as Scientific Director of the Center on Conflict Transformation at the University of The Basque Country (GEUZ). He is currently conducting research at Stanford University, where he is a Visiting Professor through July 2007.

India

The *India Network* includes conflict resolution specialists in India as well as Indian national professionals living in other regions of the world. The field of mediation is expanding quickly throughout India resulting in a demand to share expertise across national and international boundaries. The India Network seeks to: 1) build connections between local, regional, and international conflict resolution professionals; 2) develop a database of professionals and organizations to encourage the exchange and integration of resources important to the field; and 3) strengthen conflict resolution practice through information sharing, relationship development, and global connection and exchange.

Lisa Singh, lisa.j.singh@gmail.com, is an experienced mediator and an intercultural communication specialist and trainer. With a background in restorative justice, public policy and community mediation, she has developed and delivered training that includes instruction in intercultural communication and conflict resolution. Now based in Ohio, USA, Lisa has lived and worked in Indonesia and India and has served as a virtual team member with programs in Nigeria and Kenya. She is currently working on a project to study indigenous

methods of conflict resolution in India to determine how such methods may be integrated into modern conflict resolution models.

Usha Devajaran, usha_dev51@yahoo.com, is a consultant mediator and trainer, currently providing training on conflict management skills to business schools and other organizations. She also mediates family and community disputes in Bangalore, India. Usha completed a study of Tribal Mediation practiced in India and frequently facilitates discussions at the community level to raise awareness about mediation in family disputes.

Middle East

The **Middle East Network** includes Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Lebanon, Libya, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. The network includes trained mediators representing almost all of the region's members who are working to identify other individuals and organizations involved in mediation and arbitration in their respective countries. The network plans quarterly conference calls, and is currently gathering information on the status of conflict resolution practice throughout the region. The group is also creating a blog where all of the members can post thoughts, plans and news.

Lynn Cole is a dispute resolution specialist with experience in all aspects of ADR, including mediation and arbitration. Currently based in Tampa, Florida, USA, She has served as a Mediation and ADR Specialist with USAID in Bulgaria and Jordan, where she assisted the respective Ministries of Justice in setting up court-related mediation programs. Harvard-trained and Florida-certified in mediation, she brings to the conflict resolution process over 25 years as a federal trial attorney in complex commercial and labor and employment litigation.

South America

The **South America Network** focuses on conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Peru and Uruguay. By engaging in research and analyzing South America's extensive experience in conflict resolution, the network can further efforts to build sustainable peace and conflict transformation based on a variety of approaches and methodologies best suited to the unique needs and interests of South America's countries. The network invites practitioners and organizations from the region to share their knowledge and experiences in order to enrich activities among network members and between the South American network and colleagues around the world.

Margarita Canal, itacanal@gmail.com, is an Assistant Professor at the School of Management of Los Andes University in Bogotá, Colombia. She received her degree in psychology from Javeriana University, where she specialized in Conflict Resolution. She is affiliated with the International Psychoanalytical Association (IPA), and is a founding member of Peacebuilders International. Margarita has more than twelve years' experience in project design and evaluation in the areas of peacebuilding and conflict resolution. Currently, she is the main researcher in a project that analyzes the factors that influence the

empowerment of communities who benefit from various Peace and Development programs in Colombia.

Southern Africa

Gina Barbieri, gina@mediate.org.za, is the Executive Director of the African Initiative for Mediation (AIM), which promotes mediation as a conflict resolution mechanism through research, training, and networking with public and private agencies in Southern Africa. Gina has also run her own employment law practice for the past 8 years, and serves on the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA). As an accredited trainer and assessor, she worked with the CCMA to develop a program on Conflict Management in the Workplace to be piloted in 2007.

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3. Spotlight on Southern Africa

The vibrant, culturally diverse and spiritually rich African continent seems trapped in a cycle of local and regional conflicts. Reactive peace brokering initiatives often fail to address the underlying social, economic and cultural dynamics which may fuel a conflict situation.

Once, mediation of disputes by appointed or hereditary authorities was a central feature of public life in much of Africa. But as historical forms of dispute resolution disappear through urbanisation and the dissolution of traditional structures, communities form which are ignorant of alternatives to litigation, or skeptical of the efficacy of mediation.

To remedy this, legislative mechanisms may be adopted to compel people to embrace mediation as a first step in conflict resolution. However, in emerging democracies, such as South Africa, legislation mandating mediation is slow to take root and justice is sought through traditional court structures.

It is this paradigm which the African Initiative for Mediation (AIM) seeks to shift, taking a multi-pronged approach to bring mediation back to dispute resolution in Southern Africa. Through advocacy, AIM will seek to popularise mediation in public and corporate structures. Through communication campaigns and mediated interventions, we hope to bring it into the public consciousness.

In South Africa, one of the features of post-apartheid legislation has been a preference for specifying dispute resolution mechanisms, particularly conciliation, followed by arbitration. Starting with the Constitution, the Public Protector is given the power to resolve disputes by mediation, conciliation or negotiation. The Human Rights Commission may similarly by mediation, conciliation or negotiation endeavour to resolve any dispute involving a violation of human rights. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, similarly, was empowered to utilize mediation to facilitate reconciliation and redress for victims. Other legislation – relating to diverse areas such as labour, environmental, divorce, maritime and land – provides for the resolution of disputes by conciliation and arbitration. Despite this clear

policy, and the existence of sympathetic traditions such as indigenous law and the processes of democratic institutions, a mediation culture has failed to take root in South Africa. The reasons are complex and varied and include a lack of systematic training of mediators, professional endorsement and allocation of resources.

-- Gina Barbieri, *ACR Network Coordinator, Southern Africa*

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4. Conflict Resolution in Costa Rica

I am relatively new to the Central American region and am discovering *poco a poco* -- literally, "little by little" -- the field of conflict resolution in not only Costa Rica, but Central America as well. I look forward to contributing to the development of the Central American Network and to strengthening the channels for the meaningful exchange of ideas, resources, and networking opportunities across the globe.

Costa Rica is a country steeped richly in non-violent philosophy and practice, a tradition *ticos* proudly carry on today. In 1948, the then-president of Costa Rica, Pepe Figueres, abolished the military, establishing Costa Rica as the first country in the world to constitutionally abolish their military. In 1980, the United Nations selected Costa Rica as the host country for the U.N.-sponsored and supported University for Peace, offering Master's programs in peace studies. In addition, the current president of Costa Rica, Oscar Arias, was awarded a Nobel Peace prize in 1986 for his efforts in addressing the conflict that engulfed Central America during the 1980's.

Costa Rica is home to a wide range of organizations, from larger scope international organizations to grassroots conflict resolution centers. At the international level, two of the organizations based in Costa Rica but working throughout Central America, are the Arias Foundation and The Foundation for Peace and Democracy. The Arias Foundation works to build a sustainable foundation for peace throughout the America's in the areas of public participation, advocacy, research, democratization, and education, among others. The Foundation for Peace and Democracy (FUNPADEM) is another organization dedicated to building a sustainable culture of peace and democracy throughout Central America. Currently, they are working to develop workplace-based mediation centers throughout Central America.

At the local level, Costa Rica enacted the Law on Alternative Dispute Resolution and Promotion of Social Peace, which served as the impetus for the development of *Casas de Justicia* throughout Costa Rica. There are 18 such Justice Houses which serve as local resources for individuals seeking mediation and additional alternative processes such as conciliation and arbitration for resolving their disputes rather than pursuing formal legal proceedings.

In addition to the community-based *Casas de Justicia*, Costa Rica is also home to peace-based organizations which take a creative approach to conflict resolution and building understanding. Two such efforts include the Peace Army of Costa Rica and CEPPA (Center

for Peace Studies). Both organizations work primarily in the school environment. The Peace Army uses a combination of Non- Violent Communication (NVC) and Heart Math as its foundation for teaching peace. CEPPA has been involved with peace education programs, training over 16,000 professionals and students since 1990 in schools, government, and prisons throughout Central America.

In the coming months, I hope to report on different organizations and initiatives, as well as sharing information on the many conflict resolution professionals and organizations throughout Central America.

-- *Sam Slosberg, ACR Network Coordinator, Central America*

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5. Get Involved

Any ACR member is welcome to join one or more Networks. The Section also encourages non-member practitioners from across the globe to participate in the Networks to help build our community of professionals committed to exchanging information and experiences, and to support the growth of the field internationally.

Interested in a region not listed above? Consider forming an ACR Network in your region of interest. Please contact Regional Networks Committee Chair Kyra Buchko for advice and information on what to do and how to get there.

6. Spread the News

Please forward this eNewsletter to interested colleagues and friends. To learn more about the work of the Regional Networks Committee, please contact Kyra Buchko at kyrabuchko@gmail.com or any Network Coordinator. For information about ACR membership, please visit www.acrnet.org/membership/benefits.htm.

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