

The IPCR Initiative

Interfaith Peacebuilding and Community Revitalization

A Four Page Summary of The IPCR Initiative

[Note: All of the documents, resources, etc at the website of The Interfaith Peacebuilding and Community Revitalization (IPCR) Initiative (www.ipcri.net) are accessible for free. The IPCR Journal/Newsletter (Winter 2010-2011 issue, 58 pages) is referenced in this “Four Page Summary of The IPCR Initiative” because it is the most comprehensive short introduction to The IPCR Initiative yet created in the almost six years The IPCR Initiative has been on the Internet.]

Many Difficult Challenges Ahead

We now live in very complex world. There are many difficult challenges ahead. These challenges include, but are not limited to:

- a) global warming and reducing carbon emissions
- b) peak oil and reducing dependence on petroleum based products
- c) global inequities and the tragic cycles of malnutrition, disease, and death
- d) an increasing world population requiring more resources when many resources are becoming more scarce (*with a special emphasis on the increasing number of people who are consuming resources and ecological services indiscriminately*)
- e) cultures of violence, greed, corruption, and overindulgence—which have become so common that many of us accept such as inevitable; which are a significant part of the current crises of confidence in financial markets; and which are in many ways slowing the restructuring of investment priorities needed to respond *to an increasing number of other critical challenges*
- f) a marginalization of the wisdom associated with religious, spiritual, and moral traditions

More and more people are coming to the realization that overcoming the challenges of our times will require problem solving on a scale most of us have never known before—and that there is an urgent need to restructure our economic systems and our education systems to respond to these challenges.

How can we get more “on track” with the problem solving we so urgently need to do?

Gaining a Deeper Appreciation for How Comprehensive Peacebuilding Efforts Can Be

There are many propositions which are explored in depth by The IPCR Initiative--for their potential to provide solutions. Here are three which are at the center of The IPCR peacebuilding approach:

- a) There are countless numbers of “things people can do in the everyday circumstances of their lives” which will contribute to peacebuilding, community revitalization, and ecological sustainability efforts, in their own communities and regions—and in other parts of the world.
- b) Everyone is involved when it comes to determining the markets which supply the “ways of earning a living”. (The ways we “invest” our time, energy, and money have a direct impact on the “ways of earning a living” that are available).

(more)

c) People can, one by one, decide to deliberately channel the way they “invest” their time, energy, and money so that these “investments” are *in many ways* supportive of solution-oriented activity. (All of us have important responsibilities associated with resolving a significant number of very serious challenges in the months and years ahead.)

The feature article in The IPCR Journal/Newsletter (Winter 2010-2011 issue) is “The IPCR Initiative: Creating a Multiplier Effect of a Positive Nature”. From this article, and other supporting pieces in the 58 page issue, an IPCR peacebuilding approach emerges which may be summarized as follows:

1. A central focus of The IPCR Initiative is its advocacy for a combination Community Visioning Initiatives, "Community Teaching and Learning Centers" with ongoing workshops, and "sister community" relationships as a way of generating an exponential increase in our collective capacity to overcome the challenges of our times.
2. Community Visioning Initiatives can be described as a series of community meetings designed to facilitate the process of brainstorming ideas, organizing the ideas into goals, prioritizing the goals, and identifying doable steps. One of the main goals of Community Visioning Initiatives is to maximize citizen participation in identifying challenges, and in solution-oriented activity.
3. The concept of “Community Teaching and Learning Centers” (created by the “Teachers Without Borders” organization) (modified and expanded by the The IPCR Initiative) is about creating many local community points of entry which function as information and resource centers, locations for workshops, and locations for the training of “teacher-leaders”.
4. Results from well thought out preliminary surveys (circulated to at least 150 key leaders from a significant variety of fields of activity in the community) can help residents appreciate the need for a Community Visioning Initiative, and for “Community Teaching and Learning Centers” (CTLCs)—and help determine the topics to be covered by workshops in the CTLCs. The IPCR Initiative advocates for Community Visioning Initiatives—supported by many “Community Teaching and Learning Centers” — which are time-intensive, lasting even as much as 1½ years (18 months), so as to give as much importance to developing a close-knit community as it does to
 - a) accumulating and integrating the knowledge and skill sets necessary for the highest percentage of people to act wisely in response to challenges identified as priority challenges
 - b) helping people to deliberately channel their time, energy, and money into the creation of “ways of earning a living” which are directly related to resolving high priority challenges
 - c) assisting with outreach, partnership formation, and development of service capacity for a significant number of already existing (or forming) organizations, businesses, institutions, and government agencies
 - d) helping to build a high level of consensus for specific action plans, which will help inspire additional support from people, businesses, organizations, institutions, and government agencies with significant resources
5. Sister community relationships: communities with the resources to do so matching up with communities in other countries where there has been well documented calls for assistance with basic human needs. These “sister community” relationships can create service work capable of uniting diverse communities of people, and a variety of opportunities for person-to-person peacebuilding.
6. Specific evidence for Proposition a) above (of the countless numbers of “things people can do...”) is provided by the “Links” section at The IPCR Initiative website, which a) identifies 117 fields of activity related to peacebuilding, community revitalization, and ecological sustainability b) provides

comprehensive, detailed, and practical starting points for becoming involved—or increasing involvement—in these fields of activity.

7. In addition, one very important feature of the Community Visioning Initiatives the IPCR Initiative advocates for is the job fairs which come at the end of the Community Visioning Initiative process. Such job fairs provide opportunities for all key stakeholders in the community (businesses, organizations, institutions, government, etc) *to demonstrate their upgraded awareness—and their interest in the welfare of the community*—by offering and facilitating new employment opportunities... and *thus assisting with a just transition from patterns of investment which in only limited ways represent solutions to prioritized challenges to patterns of investment which in many ways represent solutions to prioritized challenges*.

8. This approach to maximizing citizen participation in solution-oriented activity also provides many opportunities for local newspapers to contribute very valuable community services (for example: making preliminary survey results accessible; carrying out ongoing community specific surveys; highlighting inspirational role models and initiatives associated with the 117 related fields of activity; describing workshop activity in the “Community Teaching and Learning Centers”; reporting on the planning, implementation, evaluation, and follow up stages associated with Community Visioning Initiatives; etc).

This writer feels it is critical for people in every variety of circumstances to gain a deep appreciation for how comprehensive peacebuilding efforts can be—how every person in communities around the world can do something to contribute to the greater good of the whole. And yet...even with all the potential associated with the Internet, and even with community building processes like the ones outlined above, we can still fail to overcome the challenges of our times... if we are not completely honest with ourselves about our shortcomings... and if we fail to access—and apply—the treasured wisdom of religious, spiritual, and moral traditions (the accumulated storehouses of wisdom on how to cultivate compassion and forgiveness—for our fellow human beings... and for ourselves).

We Must Help Each Other—and Restore Confidence in the Higher Values of Life

We must be honest with ourselves about what is going on: *people who are not sufficiently informed about critical issues are everywhere, and they are investing their time, energy, and money—voting—all the time... and yet...an exponential increase in compassion for our fellow human beings is not, currently, widely recognized as an essential and critical element of truly comprehensive response to the challenges of our times*. (One of the most persistent ironies in life is that with so many opportunities to provide real assistance to fellow human beings—and with the potential for such assistance to result in happiness “to those who extend help as well as to those who receive it”—there are still many, many people in this world who cannot find a “way to earn a living” providing such assistance.) This writer believes that there are many serious challenges before us now, and that we will need to invest our time, energy, and money very wisely to overcome these challenges. How can we do it? We must help each other.

There may be many people in our communities who use irresponsible and disrespectful language in ways which do not suggest that their motive is to respectfully provide good service to their fellow human beings, and contribute to the greater good of the whole. And there may be people in our communities who—regardless of the difficulties and urgencies associated with resolving multiple crises—choose to focus their attention of trying to make money by preying of people’s fears, manipulating people’s trust, and/or encouraging people to abandon hope in higher aspirations, and indulge in unhealthy, or immoral behavior. The IPCR Initiative recognizes that such behavior is clearly counterproductive to the building of caring communities; it can be very dangerous for community morale; and it can become a crippling obstacle in times of crises.

Many people may think it is naïve to imagine that people from so many diverse religious, spiritual, moral, and cultural traditions can decide to come together in such a way as to not only encourage, but participate in, a high percentage of constructive thinking and constructive action in response to the difficult challenges ahead (as in the high levels of participation encouraged by comprehensive Community Visioning Initiatives). From this writer's point of view, such skepticism and cynicism depend for their existence on doubts as to whether it is possible for people to achieve highly advanced forms of wisdom and compassion through genuine instruction and sincere effort. *Thus it is that there is a great responsibility on those people who are in any way representatives of religious, spiritual, and/or moral traditions—to demonstrate what is possible along the lines of wisdom and compassion, to provide genuine instruction when sincere efforts are being made, to contribute to the greater good of the whole, and to help restore confidence in the higher values of life.*

The IPCR Initiative is developing tools and resources with the belief that *it must somehow be possible* for people from many diverse religious, spiritual, moral, and cultural traditions to come together in such a way as to not only encourage, but participate in, a high percentage of constructive thinking and constructive action in response to the difficult challenges ahead... and that—as a result of *that* being possible—it will also be possible for many people to achieve highly advanced forms of wisdom and compassion through genuine instruction and sincere effort.

The IPCR Journal/Newsletter (Winter 2010-2011 issue; 58 pages) includes:

- a) an 11 page introduction to The IPCR Initiative (“Creating a Multiplier Effect of a Positive Nature”)
- b) a 15 step outline for Community Visioning Initiatives
- c) 8 sample questions for a preliminary survey
- d) a list of 117 related fields of activity
- e) an introduction to the concept “Peace Returned on Resources Invested”
- f) a 9 page section titled “A Call to Women’s Organizations Associated with Peacebuilding and Philanthropy”
- g) a section describing opportunities for local newspapers to contribute valuable community service

—and thus contains enough detail associated with the IPCR peacebuilding approach outlined above to be a valuable starting point for brainstorming sessions, exploratory meetings, and workshops associated with planning and implementing a Community Visioning Initiative.

I invite readers of this message to access The IPCR Journal/Newsletter (Winter 2010-2011 issue) for free, at the website of The IPCR Initiative (www.ipcri.net).

We have the resources necessary to overcome the challenges of our times... and--

--as a result of the unprecedented opportunities created by the expansion of the Internet, we have now arrived at a very auspicious moment in time... for at no other time in the course of history has so many people had access to so much in the way of time-tested guidelines, inspiring role models, and service-oriented initiatives relevant to peace, prosperity, and happiness.

Never before has a generation of human beings had such opportunities as are accessible to this generation of human beings. *Thousands of years of human efforts in every field of activity has now culminated in opportunities to discover how much of this potential can be fulfilled.* This writer urges every one of the readers of this message to make the sacrifices necessary to discover how much of the potential can be fulfilled.

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