

**DEAR FRIENDS AND MEMBERS OF COEXISTENCES,
FROM THE VISIT OF WOMEN IN MOVEMENT TO THE GALA EVENING, WITH A DETOUR
BY SIERRE AND OLFAT'S VISIT, SPRING LIVED UP TO OUR "GREAT" EXPECTATIONS!
AS FOR THE PARTICIPANTS OF BREAKING THE ICE, THEY ARE IN THE THROES OF
CHECKING THE SOLIDITY OF THEIR LACES FOR THE MID-SUMMER TREK.**

WOMEN IN MOVEMENT – A SUCCESS

From their small villages in the Galilee, Jewish, Christian, Muslim and Druze, twenty three "Women in Movement" came for a stay from 24 to 31 March in Switzerland under the leadership of Zahava Neuberger, an orthodox Jew and initiator of dialogue groups since the second Intifada at the beginning of 2000.

Between Lausanne, Geneva, Moudon and Charmey en Gruyère, where they spent the second part of their stay in a chalet provided by Coexistences, they were able to intensify their exchanges and get to know each other in depth. The result of this Swiss visit is also gratifying for Coexistences, as Danielle Bloch, responsible for the group organising the visit: «Everything went well in conformity to plan. Everybody agreed that the climax of the stay was the day in Moudon, with an interreligious dialogue group led by Geneviève de Haas and the visit to the Turkish Centre and the St-Etienne Temple.»

FOR THE GROUPS AND FOR COEXISTENCES, EVERY MEETING IN SWITZERLAND REPRESENTS NEW CHALLENGES. WHAT WERE THOSE CHALLENGES THIS TIME?

As for all the experiences, there were many positive points. On the whole, communication was very good between the Arab/Druze and Jewish pairs in the host families. These families expressed their pleasure at receiving in their homes the members of this group. However, we must admit that this stay brought to light certain difficulties probably due to the large number of participants, led by just one person. In the future, it would be preferable to reduce the size of the group and have more moderators, on both sides, able to express themselves in the respective languages of each community, to play the role of facilitators.



Sara Bireboim, Yehudit Eraz / Hawla Qatishia, Simone Konvalina / Yael Mahanaimy, Bushra Bahous

COEXISTENCES FACED A NEW CHALLENGE?

An additional difficulty arose this time, principally for the host families: the respect of culinary constraints for the Jewish orthodox women. But this complication, somewhat uncommon for Coexistences, was finally resolved quite easily. I also think that the visit of such people should be encouraged. Coexistences will most certainly in the future be more attentive, in similar cases, to these specificities, in particular by better informing the host families about hallal and kosher culinary rules.

Thanks to the visit organisation team: Béatrice, Danielle, Dominique, Eric, Halina and Roger.

The press articles of the Women in Movement visit are available on our site.

HES-SO SIERRE : PRESENTATION OF COEXISTENCES AND BREAKING THE ICE

The sixth edition of the « International Week » of the Haute Ecole de Travail Social du Valais (HES-SO) (*Valais College of Social Work*) in Sierre was a beautiful event to which we were invited.

On 7 May 2014, Fiuna Seylan-Ongen presented the activities of Coexistences in front of approximately 200 people. Olfat Haider and Asaf Ron, the Director, remarkably translated by Daniella Hersh, explained the actions of Beit HaGefen, a social centre which encourages the development of mutual activities for the different populations from the town and region of Haifa. To illustrate their outreach between Israeli and Palestinian Jews and Arabs, they evoked the concrete example of dialogue in the Breaking The Ice project. The complementarity of the two presentations was good. The projection of the film « Where are the borders » by Félix Sandri (ascension of the Mont Blanc in the summer of 2010), gave the audience an idea of the implementation of this specific project, an insight of its stakes and an appreciation of its emotional charge.

The public were interested in the context in Israel confronting the participants more than the project itself. There were many questions: How is participation in the programme perceived by family and friends? What is the impact once the participants go back home? What is the common language adopted during the stay? How many facilitators are there and what is their nationality? This curiosity continued right to the end and the participants took away with them the documents about Coexistences provided by Fiuna.

People said they were happy to hear positive news – the fact that some choose dialogue - so rare in our media.

Finally, an interesting project in sight: an HES student intends to spend six months in the University of Haifa devoting his research project to Breaking The Ice 2015!

For information, the HES-SO forms social workers throughout Switzerland. In its endeavour to lay stress on courses relating to actions in the domain of interculturality, it has initiated numerous international exchange programmes, in particular with Israel. Collaboration has been established with the Beit HaGefen Institute, partner of our association in Haifa for the Breaking The Ice project.

GALA EVENING ON 25 MAY



Douglas Parsons

The fundraising dinner organised at the Refuge des 4 Vents in Pully assembled approximately fifty members and friends greeted in the doorway by the tandem Béatrice and Alexis. The aperitif starters were a promise of what awaited them with the feast concocted and served by Dominique, Juliette and Tatiana. No-one was disappointed!

But before dinner, fittingly, place for the music. So – gloomy spirits please abstain – a band of adorable children erupted on the floor. Barefoot or with tap-shoes and a black hat drawn over one eye, ten girls and boys ranging from eight to eleven, showered us with their energy to the sound of “travel” tunes, punctuated by a few dance steps.

Ever since that evening, thanks to the Ministrings ensemble conducted by Tina Strinning from the Lausanne Conservatory, the word has gone round that a merry wind blew over the 4 vents de Pully ((vents = winds)... We had only our bare hands to thank them with a standing ovation, enchanted and stupefied by their talent. A pity for those who weren't there? No, all is not lost since they can catch up by surfing on www.ministrings.jonglor.net.

Then it was time for dinner. Table conversations flowed freely, regularly interrupted by a profound meditation on the food of the earth, a spice detected here, a hot sauce there, an unknown dessert. For this evening imagined and orchestrated in the shadows for months, our warm thanks to all of the Events team, rewarded by the hearty appetite of the guests to whom we pay tribute for their loyalty and commitment.

Finally, once again our gratitude goes to Liën Bruge, Director of Lausanne Conservatory, as well as to Tina Strinning and her little musicians, genuine « seeds of peace » who not only created and performed this show especially for our evening, but furthermore offered it free of charge to mark their support for the action of Coexistences.

POST-SCRIPTUM

Offstage observations...

How wonderful, what a miracle, these children! After many preparatory e-mails a meeting took place at the Conservatory, warmly advocated by Tina Strinning, to present Coexistences and the goals of the concert - dear Tina who does an admirable job. Wednesday 21 May, studio 124, ten children take place, laugh, chatter, and suddenly, silence reigns, they become attentive. They react to certain questions: « Who has heard of Israel and Palestine? » Replies, exchanges, and the word « war » crops up. To think that the media puts the accent on everything negative and violent but that there so many people, youngsters and adults, who are working together for peace. Explanation of what Coexistences offers here to these dialogue groups. Through small steps. And what does « to coexist » mean? Moving ideas in return. And what does music represent, and this concert that they are preparing and are going to rehearse for us? Answers come from all sides: the pleasure of playing together – enjoyment - listening - love - peace- sharing. Yes, sharing! Then we talked about these droplets of love, that each droplet, each note counts, that music is a universal language. And several days later, our ten Ministrings played, in full awareness, complicit and generous, attentive to each other, and they didn't want to stop... Thank you Alexis, Arthur, Clara, Emile, Eva, Giulietta, Jacob, Jeanne, Mila, Sarah, for having given us this moment of happiness and sharing. Several of us, awesome, simply said: « a moment of grace ».

BREAKING THE ICE / 26 AUGUST - 9 SEPTEMBER 2014

As already announced in the April newsletter, a new group of students from the University of Haifa will embark on an Alpine trek this summer. It has now been formed and comprises twelve participants, equally distributed between Jews and Arabs, men and women. They are presently training in Israel, under the direction of Olfat Haider, the Palestinian leader of the project.

The voyage will take place on 26 August (arrival in Switzerland) to 9 September (return flight). After two days preparation in Fouly (once again lodged in the Kohler's chalet!), the group will be transported to Chamonix from where the trek will begin and, ten days later, back to Fouly in the hope, towards the end, of climbing a summit (Haute Cime, 3200m). Olfat's Israeli partner this year will be Asaf Ron, Director of Beit HaGefen. Mountain conduct will be ensured by the Chamonix guide Denis Ducroz, a long-time partner of the project.

The farewell evening will take place on Monday 8 September, in Lausanne. Put it down in you agendas!

The communication group and all the work groups of the association wish you a wonderful summer and look forward to seeing you after for the season 2014/2015.