

My Motivation to Work for Nuclear Disarmament

Speech by Inga Blum, Coordinator of the Nuclear Weapons Inheritance Project
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I am not an expert on nuclear weapons yet but what I can contribute to this round are experiences of work for the last two years with young people for nuclear disarmament.

I start with talking about how I found the motivation to engage against nuclear weapons myself because this process is typical for many of the students I met.

3 years ago I hardly cared about nuclear weapons because I was neither aware of the real danger that they pose nor of the big role that their existence plays in world politics.

I was much concerned with social aspects of medicine, I worked in an orphanage in Africa for some time and organized evenings on related issues at my university.

But I was not really satisfied with this because I felt that it did not change things and that it was not the way towards a solution.

It was very vague to me what a solution could be of course and how I could move into the right direction.

On my first IPPNW students meeting I was convinced to attend a workshop of the Nuclear Weapons Inheritance Project.

First we were provided with basic facts on nuclear weapons

Then Caecilie Buhmann, Cofounder of the project, asked us:

What does security mean to you personally?

And we came up with three major points:

Health, Economic safety and social networks.

So, if the major argument of nuclear weapon states is that they need nuclear weapons for their security do nuclear weapons protect us from disease? Do they make us safe or help us find new friends in the world ?

Another question we discussed was: What would the world look like without nuclear weapons?

And I realized that it could be much like the world I was dreaming of:

- Freed of the danger to be completely destroyed in war or even accidentally
- Having multilateral institutions and cooperation to provide security instead of untouchable powers scaring others off

- resources would be freed for security needs like health, economic safety and social networks

After the workshop I kept thinking and was fast involved into the project.

The first dialogue that I joined took place with a group of 30 Chinese students on the last World Conference in Beijing.

In the beginning all of them thought that China should have nuclear weapons, two hours later they were ready to found an IPPNW group (which we have here with us on this conference now) and one of the students said:

„...before this meeting I thought that the other countries are hostile towards china, now I know that this is not the case. If we here were all the politicians the world would look much different.“

The strongest impressions that I took from that dialogue was what a powerful tool dialogue method is and how important it is to have students from other nuclear weapon states on the team.

If one side says we have nuclear weapons just to protect ourselves against a nuclear attack from you but we will never be first to use them and the others say, hey we are having nuclear weapons to protect ourselves from you but we would never be first to use them then the argument does not work anymore. It seemed to me that the Chinese students were surprised and happy to realize that.

Half a year later I went on a delegation to Russia. There the major reaction that we got from students was:

„Nuclear Weapons is not our problem.. We don't care. We have many other problems (to most part social problems“

So we learned from them how difficult it is for young doctors in Russia, to find work ,to even pay a health insurance and how they are for example concerned about the spread of HIV in Russia.

This was very interesting for us.

Later we talked about the immense costs that Russia had and has to build and store nuclear weapons. The interest for the issue rose strongly and we were able to give all the information we had prepared and initiated a lively debate.

Since the world conference in Beijing we have had dialogues with students not only in Russia but also in other nuclear weapon states, in India, Pakistan, the United states, France and the United Kingdom.

Workshops have taken place in many home countries of project members , like Australia, Canada, Nepal, Sweden, Germany...

Of course the outcome of these dialogues was not always as overwhelming as in Beijing, but it was each time so exciting to discover how people from different countries react differently on the issue and to find out the argument that they can most strongly identify with.

If it is the direct fear of a nuclear attack, the economic costs of nuclear weapons or the role that nuclear deterrence plays in world politics.

I will now conclude with the three most important things that I have learned during these two years:

- Structure of a good project
- Dialogue Method
- Motivation

I have always felt that our greatest strength are the activists and therefore it is important to have a structured project that invites everybody who is inspired to immediately join and to do small tasks , being mentored by the more experienced ones.

The nuclear weapons inheritance project which was created by Caecilie Buhmann and initiated by Hans Levander has such a structure. But I have experienced this often in IPPNW.

It is so important to me to know people who have achieved much and kept working against nuclear weapons for a long time. This gives me the feeling that I can do something in my life too.

Another important thing I learned is the dialogue method.

It seems natural that we understand each others objections against nuclear weapons but I have experienced that often this is not the case.

The dialogue method which aims to achieve understanding can be powerful and I feel that I want to practise it to get better.

Most important is of course the motivation. The turning point in our dialogues with students who were pro nuclear weapons in the beginning has always been when they started to realize that proliferation is inevitable if nuclear disarmament does not succeed.

For me personally equally important is my believe that as long as nuclear weapons are not abolished the world can not come to a healthy balance.

My greatest motivation is the conviction that we can achieve something.

We have one goal which is so obviously bad and so many reasons to work for it.

Nuclear Weapons are a global problem which causes many different security problems.

Therefor IPPNW as a global organisation of doctors who are concerned about the security of their patients should have answers.

The linking of the different concerns of concerns from doctors all around the world gives us credibility and the focus on a concrete goal strength.