

# 11. PEACE

*A culture of peace will be achieved when citizens of the world understand global problems, have the skills to resolve conflicts and struggle for justice non-violently, live by international standards of human rights and equity, appreciate cultural diversity, and respect the Earth and each other. Such learning can only be achieved with systematic education for peace.*

Hague Appeal for Peace Global Campaign for Peace Education



Building such a culture of human rights is a pre-condition to achieving a state of peace. War and violence inevitably result in the denial of human rights, and sustainable, lasting peace and security can only be attained only when all human rights are fulfilled.

Europe in the twenty-first century may be relatively free of war, but it is not free of conflict that directly affects children. Armed conflict threatens some regions of the Balkans and in the Caucasus region. Because the world is interconnected, armed conflict in distant places such as Afghanistan or Iraq has effects in places in Europe such as Madrid and London. Non-military threats to peace and security are also growing: drought, disease, poverty, famine, racism and intolerance are all both sources and consequences of conflict.

In absolute terms the twentieth century was the most violent period in history, with more casualties than all the preceding centuries combined. Some conflicts such as the First and Second World Wars involved the whole planet and left much of Europe in ruins. Others were regional conflicts (e.g. internal conflicts in Spain, Cyprus, Greece and Ireland). In Europe, the twentieth century ended with wars in the former Yugoslavia and the Caucasus.

In our increasingly high-tech, globalised world, the nature of conflict has changed drastically, but still there are too many casualties among civilians, including children. Most of the world refugees are children, many of them are fleeing armed conflict in their home countries. Furthermore, at least half a million girls and boys under 18 have been exploited as participants in war worldwide, either by directly fighting, laying mines or explosives, or by providing support services. The effect of war on children is devastating and total, wounding their bodies and spirits and destroying their families and communities.



## What is human security?

Human security is a relatively new concept that recognizes the interrelation between violence and deprivation of all kinds. It concerns the protection of individuals and communities from both the direct threat of physical violence and the indirect threats that result from poverty and other forms of social, economic or political inequalities, as well as natural disasters and disease. A country may not be under threat of external attack or internal conflict but still be insecure if, for example, it lacks the capacity to maintain the rule of law, if large populations are displaced by famine or decimated by disease or if its people lack the basic necessities of survival.

Human security furthers human rights because it addresses situations that gravely threaten human rights and supports the development of systems that give people the building blocks of survival, dignity and essential freedoms: freedom from want, freedom from fear and freedom to take action on one's own behalf. It uses two general strategies to accomplish this: protection and empowerment. Protection shields people from direct dangers, but also seeks to develop norms, processes and institutions that maintain security. Empowerment enables people to develop their potential and become full participants in decision making. Protection and empowerment are mutually reinforcing, and both are required in most situations.

In 2003 a special UN Commission on Human Security issued *Human Security Now*, a report outlining major areas of concern for establishing and maintaining human security:

- Protecting people in violent conflict, including the proliferation of arms
- Protecting and empowering people on the move, both those migrating to improve their livelihood and those forced to flee to protect themselves from conflicts or serious human rights violations
- Protecting and empowering people in post-conflict situations, including the complex rebuilding of war-torn societies
- Promoting economic security by providing minimum living standards everywhere and enabling people to move out of poverty
- Promoting universal access to basic health care, especially addressing global infections and diseases, poverty-related threats and health problems arising from violence
- Empowering all people with universal basic education
- Clarifying the need for a global human identity while respecting the freedom of individuals to have diverse identities and affiliations.

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**QUESTION:** *What factors threaten the security of your community? How do they destabilise society? How does this insecurity affect the children with whom you work?*

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## Peace as a human right

Peace is not just the absence of conflict and violence, however: it is a way of living together so that all members of society can accomplish their human rights. Although not formally codified as a human right, peace is recognized as an essential element to the realisation of human rights and belongs to the **third generation** of human rights or so-called **solidarity rights**. These are rights that affect whole societies or groups of people rather than just individuals, such as the right to a healthy environment, to sustainable development, to communication or to share in the common heritage of humankind. Peace is also a product of human rights: the more a society promotes, protects and fulfils the human rights of its people, the greater its chances for curbing violence and resolving conflict peacefully.



Following the lead of UNESCO, in 1999 the UN General Assembly adopted The Declaration on a Culture of Peace. It acknowledges that the responsibility to promote a culture of peace rests with all members of the community, including parents, teachers, politicians, journalists, religious bodies, intellectuals, institutions of civil society, those engaged in scientific, philosophical and creative and artistic activities, health workers, social workers, managers at various levels and non-governmental organisations.

## Intercultural and inter-religious dialogue

*Dialogue between cultures, the oldest and most fundamental mode of democratic conversation, is an antidote to rejection and violence. Its objective is to enable us to live together peacefully and constructively in a multicultural world, to develop a sense of community and belonging.*

Intercultural dialogue and the Council of Europe:  
[www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/default\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/default_en.asp)

Growing migration, the effects of globalisation and the advancement of information and communication technologies have made people today increasingly mobile. As a result, cultural diversity has become a main feature of every country in Europe. While this diversity is a rich asset for our societies, it also introduces new social and political challenges. As identity questions become more critical, “stereotyping, racism, xenophobia, intolerance, discrimination and violence can threaten peace and the fabric of national and local communities”<sup>1</sup>. The negative consequences of such phenomena vary from social exclusion in communities to international conflicts.

Intercultural dialogue is a vital tool to combat these developments, learn to live together and develop a sense of community and belonging. “Intercultural dialogue is an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups belonging to different cultures that leads to a deeper understanding of the other’s world perception.”<sup>2</sup> It is especially important to acknowledge the role religious communities play in this process of developing identity and to stimulate interreligious dialogue to overcome religious-based stereotypes and discrimination at every level of society.

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**QUESTION:** *In your community are there different religious communities that effect how people live together? Do conflicts arising from religious difference affect the children you work with?*

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## Peace education

Originally focused on eliminating the possibility of global extinction through nuclear war, peace education today addresses the broader objective of building a culture of peace. It seeks to understand and eliminate the causes of conflict such as poverty and all forms of discrimination, as well as to teach the skills of conflict management. Peaceful resolution of conflict is not an innate human quality but a skill that must be learned and practised from childhood. As Mahatma Gandhi observed, “If we are going to bring about peace in the world, we have to begin with the children.”<sup>3</sup>

*...education of the child should be directed to ... the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin.*

Article 29.d of the Convention on the Rights of the Child



Typically a child experiences conflict with other children, parents, teachers and other adults. Conflict is not inherently negative or damaging; it can usually be minimized and resolved. By contrast, violence, the aggressive use of force or abusive exercise of power, always results in injury and destruction. For this reason society has developed many ways of handling conflict using non-violent methods such as negotiations and other cooperative approaches that lead to mutually beneficial agreement ('win-win' solutions) and compromises. Learning to deal with conflict and refrain from violence is an important socialization of every child.

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**QUESTION:** *How do the children you work with usually react to conflicts? Are there ways you can help them learn to manage and resolve conflict better?*

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Peace education teaches the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behavioural change that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural, to resolve conflict peacefully, and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an interpersonal, inter-group, national or international level. Peace education improves children's self-esteem, develops their problem solving skills and avoids unsafe behaviours.

Among UN agencies, UNICEF and UNESCO in particular promote peace education. Unicef describes peace education as schooling and other educational initiatives that:

- Function as 'zones of peace', where children are safe from violent conflict
- Uphold children's basic rights as outlined in the CRC
- Develop a climate that models peaceful and respectful behaviour among all members of the learning community
- Demonstrate the principles of equality and non-discrimination in administrative policies and practises
- Draw on the knowledge of peace-building that exists in the community, including means of dealing with conflict that are effective, non-violent, and rooted in the local culture
- Handle conflicts in ways that respect the rights and dignity of all involved
- Integrate an understanding of peace, human rights, social justice and global issues throughout the curriculum whenever possible
- Provide a forum for the explicit discussion of values of peace and social justice
- Use teaching and learning methods that stress participation, problem solving and respect for differences
- Enable children to put peace-making into practise in the educational setting as well as in the wider community
- Generate opportunities for continuous reflection and professional development of all educators in relation to issues of peace, justice and rights.<sup>4</sup>

Much of the work of UNESCO focuses on promoting education for peace, human rights, and democracy. Since the early 1990s UNESCO has advanced the concept of education for a 'culture of peace' with the aim to "construct a new vision of peace by developing a peace culture based on the universal values of respect for life, liberty, justice, solidarity, tolerance, human rights and equality between women and men" as well as to promote education and research for this vision".<sup>5</sup>

Peace education is an important part of the different educational fields that promote human rights and the culture of peace and democracy. See CHAPTER II., P. 25.



## Relevant human rights instruments

### Council of Europe

The Preamble to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) affirms the essential relationship between peace and human rights, stating that fundamental freedoms are

*...the foundation of justice and peace in the world and are best maintained on the one hand by an effective political democracy and on the other by a common understanding and observance of the Human Rights upon which they depend.*

Article 5 of the ECHR guarantees everyone security of person, especially against intrusion by the state in the form of arrest and imprisonment.

The Council of Europe has various activities to promote tolerance, peace and mutual understanding among people, including human rights education, education for democratic citizenship, intercultural and interreligious dialogue. In 2007 the Council of Europe published a 'White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue', a coherent policy for the promotion of intercultural dialogue within Europe and between Europe and its neighbouring regions.

### United Nations

The United Nations was established in 1945 to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war", "to reaffirm faith in the ...dignity and worth of the human person [and] in the equal rights of men and women", "to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained", and "to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom..."<sup>6</sup>

Peace education has developed as a means to achieve these goals. It is education that reflects Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which includes not simply the right to education but specifies an education "directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms". It promotes "understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups" and furthers "the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace".

Articles 38 and 39 of the Convention on the Right of the Child concern the rights of children in conditions of armed conflict. Article 38 calls for "all feasible measures to ensure protection and care of children who are affected by an armed conflict". Article 39 calls for the "physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration" of children who have suffered many kinds of abuse, including war. Of particular concern is the protection of the child from service in armed forces. Article 38 bans children under fifteen from participation in direct hostilities, but in 2000 the General Assembly adopted the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, which raises the minimum age to eighteen.

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### Useful resources

- Fountain, Susan, *Peace Education in UNICEF*: UNICEF, 1999: [www.unicef.org/girlseducation/files/PeaceEducation.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/girlseducation/files/PeaceEducation.pdf)
- Myers-Walls, Judith A., *Talking to Children about Terrorism and Armed Conflict*: Vol.7, No.1, 2002: North Carolina State Forum for Family and Consumer Issues: [www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/fcs/pub/2002w/myers-wall.html](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/fcs/pub/2002w/myers-wall.html)



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### Useful websites

- Charter of the United Nations: [www.unhcr.ch/html/menu3/b/ch-pream.htm](http://www.unhcr.ch/html/menu3/b/ch-pream.htm)
- Children in armed conflicts: [www.crin.org/themes/ViewTheme.asp?id=11](http://www.crin.org/themes/ViewTheme.asp?id=11)
- A Declaration on a Culture of Peace: UNESCO, 2000:  
[www.unesco.org/cpp/uk/declarations/2000.htm](http://www.unesco.org/cpp/uk/declarations/2000.htm)
- European Charter for Media Literacy: [www.euromedialiteracy.eu/index.php](http://www.euromedialiteracy.eu/index.php)
- The History Guide, Revolutionizing education in the spirit of Socratic wisdom:  
[www.historyguide.org](http://www.historyguide.org)
- Council of Europe White Paper on Intercultural dialogue:  
[www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/default\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/default_en.asp)
- Manifesto 2000 for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence, International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World, 2001 – 2010: UNESCO, 2000:  
[www3.unesco.org/manifesto2000/uk/uk\\_manifeste.htm](http://www3.unesco.org/manifesto2000/uk/uk_manifeste.htm)
- United Nations Cyberschoolbus: [www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/peace/home.asp](http://www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/peace/home.asp)

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### References

- 1 Preparing the 'White paper on intercultural dialogue' of the Council of Europe, Consultation document p.3. [www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int)
- 2 Ibid., p.6.
- 3 See Inspiring Quotations: [www.peace.ca/inspiringquotations.htm](http://www.peace.ca/inspiringquotations.htm)
- 4 Fountain, Susan, *Peace Education in UNICEF*, 1999. p. 6.
- 5 *UNESCO and a Culture of Peace*, UNESCO Publishing, 1995.
- 6 See Charter of the United Nations: [www.unhcr.ch/html/menu3/b/ch-pream.htm](http://www.unhcr.ch/html/menu3/b/ch-pream.htm)

