

Peace education: why and how?

by Pamela Baxter and Vick Ikobwa

Pamela Baxter discusses why peace education programmes are so important and Vick Ikobwa presents the methodology and lessons learned from the UNHCR/ INEE Peace Education Programme in East Africa and the Horn.

Why?

Why conduct peace education programmes when there is so much else that needs to be accomplished? The reason is because a good peace education programme can enable people to think constructively about issues, both physical and social, that need solutions and to develop constructive attitudes of living in community.

The term 'peace education' can cover many areas, from advocacy to law reform, from basic education to social justice. It is generally agreed that there is a difference between peace education and peace building. Peace education is an attempt to change people's behaviours; peace building incorporates social and economic justice (and legal reform where necessary). Both try to make a reality of human rights.

Many initiatives that are widely available concentrate on advocacy – either to leaders or to the general community. These programmes are usually described as 'rights-based' as they invoke the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a rationale for changes that need to be made. Although these programmes often explain the constructive elements needed for peace, they do not usually create a learning environment in which to explore these elements.

There are some outstanding theatre, art and music groups that provide thoughtful, inter-active programmes but essentially these are still advocacy programmes. They create an awareness of the concepts usually included in peace education but do not teach communities **how** to achieve constructive behaviour.

Many of those programmes that do offer a curriculum or curriculum

support (either for formal or non-formal education) rely on the teacher being able to internalise the skills and attitudes required without a support structure to do this. The teacher is then required to transfer these new skills and attitudes to the learners. This teacher internalisation is a vital process. Unlike teaching a traditional subject (where it is enough to know the content), peace education programmes, if they are to be successful, require the teacher to truly internalise all the skills, knowledge, values and attitudes associated with peace education.

However, in a situation of emergency or reconstruction, teacher internalisation is not enough. In such situations it would be surprising if the majority of teachers were fully trained and able to implement an open and flexible learning programme. In addition, the learners in these circumstances have special needs. The most effective response to this situation is specific programming and training.

A programme that responds to the parameters of under-trained teachers, rigid syllabus and the special needs of learners requires a formal curriculum structure where concepts are gradually built on one another and where the human rights-based learning is the key principle. This is where the principles of human rights are translated into the methodology of how a programme is taught. This is often referred to 'activity-based learning' or 'discovery learning'. Evaluation must consider not just what has been learnt but also the materials and the methodology of rights-based learning.

This type of peace education intervention will teach the skills and values associated with peace educa-

tion. It allows the learners to practise these skills and helps them discover the benefits for themselves so that they psychologically 'own' the skills and behaviours. To ensure that it is a viable programme it is essential that it is not a 'one-off' initiative but rather one that is both structured and sustained. None of us learns these behaviours instantly and if programmes to change or develop behaviours are to succeed they must be both activity-based and sustained.

How?

The Peace Education Programme (PEP) jointly implemented by the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE – see pp8-10) is a rights-based approach for both formal and non-formal (community) learning, designed to promote skills that build positive and constructive behaviours for peace and conflict prevention and minimisation. In East Africa and the Horn PEP operates at both the school and the community level.

The curriculum structure within the **formal school programme**, focusing on the first eight years of schooling, is designed to respond to the psychological and ethical development of the child. It is activity-centred and participatory, based on games and activities and the resulting discussions. Most of the activities are based on a "what happens when/ if..." exploratory learning approach. These activities enable children to 'do peace' through tangible indoor and outdoor classroom experiences. Peace Education is allocated one lesson per class per week. In Kakuma and Dadaab refugee camps (in Kenya), higher-grade lessons are also used in school years 8-10. In some refugee settlements in Uganda, PEP is also implemented in after-school activities. The materials provide detailed lessons and structures so that the teacher can concentrate on understanding the point and structure of the lesson and ensuring that the methodology reflects the activity format of rights-based learning.

The **community programme** is implemented through community workshops for adults and out-of-school youth in refugee and returnee areas. Peace education workshops are structured and have 12 sessions of three hours each. It is important that the community programme be approached in the same structured way as the formal education programme as the skills and concepts complement and build on each other.

Peace is everyone's responsibility

As with the school programme, the methodology is rights-based and it is essential that the facilitators understand the principles of rights-based learning and that they incorporate them into their own methodology. Because the programme draws on the life skills of the participating adults, it is primarily discussion-oriented and the workshops serve as an important vehicle for getting the discussions on peace and allied behaviour into public discourse. The workshops are open to all members of the community; each workshop group is made up of 25 participants. PEP assumes that if each participant recruits ten people s/he knows then at least 20% of the community population in areas of implementation will become involved.

The programme is being implemented in more than 13 countries (but not all with UNHCR funding). In Dadaab and Kakuma, nearly 35,000 boys and 14,000 girls in primary schools receive weekly lessons. More than 2,700 secondary students also receive weekly lessons (although only 340 are girls). In Uganda, 63 schools implement the programme with over 11,000 boys and over 5,000 girls receiving regular weekly lessons. In DRC more than 9,000 children receive lessons. Teachers have been trained in Kenya, Uganda, DRC, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia and, recently, South Sudan. In the non-formal (community) programme up to June 2004, Kenya has more than 2,600 graduates with gender equity for the first time. In the other East Africa and Horn countries more than 13,000 community members have graduated from the programme with teacher and facilitator training being implemented throughout the year.

A number of lessons have been learned:

- The success of a process-oriented programme such as peace education requires the skills, attitudes and values that the children learn in school to be reinforced by adults within their own community. Links between the school and community programmes need to be reinforced through joint meetings and training sessions.
- Peace is everyone's responsibility within any given community. Instead of focusing training on a select group of individuals (those considered opinion leaders), it is preferable to target all school children and to involve self-selected participants in the community programme (thus enabling a 'bottom up' approach).
- Training of teachers and facilitators is key. The programme cannot be effective if materials are simply handed over to teachers without appropriate training.
- The capacity of experienced refugees to take up training roles within the programme must be developed to ensure that local knowledge and experience are tapped and community ownership of the programme promoted. Many graduates of the programme have developed 'peace committees' to minimise and resolve conflicts within and between communities (now incorporated into the general camp security programmes) and have set up youth groups to promote constructive peace through sporting and cultural events. PEP provides graduate 'refresher courses' on an *ad hoc* basis; resources do not allow, however, for more structured follow-up.
- Inter-agency partnerships can facilitate broader programme outreach - particularly to reach refugee communities and communities from their country of origin where restrictions due to mandate would have presented a problem. This is true of the UNHCR/Catholic Relief Services partnership which has made it possible to deliver peace education in Kenyan refugee camps as well as in selected areas of South Sudan (where CRS operates).

External evaluations of the programme in Kenya have contributed constructive comments about the management and implementation of the programme. The management problems have not really been resolved; the programme is increasingly under-funded despite, paradoxically, being extremely successful within the communities. The content and training suggestions made in the evaluation are being incorporated in the revised materials and in increased training activities in the field.

In 2004, UNHCR and UNESCO developed a working partnership to help respond to the content suggestions and to expand the programme to ensure its suitability in post-conflict and developing country situations. This partnership should - funding permitting - ensure that the programme (not just the materials) can be replicated in the least developed countries. Already there have been requests for it to be adapted for situations in the Middle East, Afghanistan, the Pacific Islands (Indonesia, Solomon Islands and Fiji) and South-East Asia. Unfortunately, this can only be done with the commitment of donors to a programme which, by its very nature, is labour-intensive and relatively slow to grow and implement.

If only a fraction of the money spent worldwide on conflict could be spent on peace programmes like the INEE/UNHCR Peace Education Programme we could achieve a future of peace and hope in refugee communities and post-conflict countries around the world.

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See Marc Sommers 'Peace education and refugee youth', online at www.hri.ca/children/refugees/unhcr_peaced.pdf and INEE's *Good Practice Guide* on peace education at www.ineesite.org/edcon/peace.asp