

# Getting Ready for a Future Without War

## Implementation of a Peace Education Programme with Liberian Refugees

Friederike Feuchte, Andreas Beelmann

University of Jena, Germany

*“Sometime they'll give a war and nobody will come” (Carl Sandburg, 1878-1967)*

### **Abstract**

*When a society has experienced civil war, there is a long way to go towards reconciliation and peaceful co-existence of former warring parties. In this context peace building needs to take place not only about the political and economical structure, but also simultaneously in the communities reaching the individuals. Peace education aims to help people gain skills, knowledge and values that promote peace. This paper examines how the community workshops of the Inter-Agency Peace Education Programme (INEE, 2005) were implemented in a refugee camp in Ghana with refugees from Liberia. Data from observations and interviews showed that participants were very active, highly appreciated the workshops and often transferred what they learned into their daily life. Reality constraints, important target groups and the role of culture for peace education are discussed to outline challenges and chances of peace education in the process of reconciliation and peace building after a civil war.*

### **1 Introduction: Can peace be learned?**

In 2008 there have been 134 violent political conflicts in the world, including 39 using a massive amount of violence, nine of them being considered as wars (Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, 2008). Whether the fighting is for resources, territory, autonomy, power, ideology or other reasons, in all of these conflicts individuals fight for the interests of their group. Various factors in society, community and individuals make people committed to risk their personal life and kill other human beings.

After a war people need to come to terms with the past and adopt again the norms, values and behaviour necessary in a peaceful society. In a post-war society efforts are needed on the political and sociological level to implement structures and institutions supporting social justice and the fulfilment of basic human needs and rights. However, as any society consists of individuals, the additional consideration of the psychological perspective on peace building can help to support people to be(come) responsible citizens promoting peace in spite of their experience of war.

This paper examines the concept of peace education and how it can be fruitful for people who have experienced war, using the example of an implementation of the Inter-Agency Peace Education Programme (INEE, 2005)<sup>1</sup> in a Liberian refugee camp in Ghana. First, it is important to take a closer look of the concept of peace building and psychological mechanisms that contribute to conflict and cooperation between social groups in the context of a society which has gone through a civil war. Then the idea and different approaches of peace education are introduced. After giving an overview over the Liberian wars and the situation of Liberian refugees in Ghana, the PEP (INEE, 2005) is outlined followed by the examination how this programme was implemented in the Liberian refugee camp in Ghana. Drawing on this experience, challenges for peace education will be discussed, namely reality constraints in a refugee camp, important target groups, and the role of culture and context-specific traditions.

## **2 Peace building and peace education**

### **Peace building and reconciliation after a civil war**

Peace building can be understood as “comprehensive efforts to identify and support structures which will tend to consolidate peace and advance a sense of confidence and well-being among people.” (Boutros-Ghali, 1992, §55). It includes a variety of activities at different organizational levels of a society. On the macro level of the society a democratic system can be set up, on the meso-level of communities institutions for constructive conflict resolution can be installed. On the micro-level individuals can be trained to be agents of change. However, there is large agreement that all levels should be involved to complement each other and mutually reinforce the

---

<sup>1</sup> UNHCR founded the programme, the more elaborated version after an evaluation was done as cooperation between the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), UNHCR and UNESCO. To enhance the flow of reading this programme will further on be referred to as PEP (INEE, 2005).

process towards a peaceful and stable society (Llamazares, 2005). Different factors contributing to reconciliation on the different levels are shown in figure 1.

When there has been a civil war, there is a high risk for a new outbreak of violent conflict, especially if the economic situation is poor (Sørli, Gleditsch, & Strand, 2005). Besides rebuilding the economy, political institutions need to be established. However, installing a form of democracy in a divided society without strengthening institutions for peaceful conflict resolution and an active civil society can be dangerous and could lead to new outbreaks of violence (Sambanis, 2002; Knight, 2003). The society needs to come to terms with the past and agree on just structures and institutions of governance while finding a way for peaceful co-existence. This can be done by using a community-based approach with interventions differentiated and sensitized to the specific geohistorical context (Christie et al., 2008).

Individuals who have experienced violent conflict have changed their behaviour in this state of emergency and need to re-adapt to peaceful living conditions. To cope and survive in a

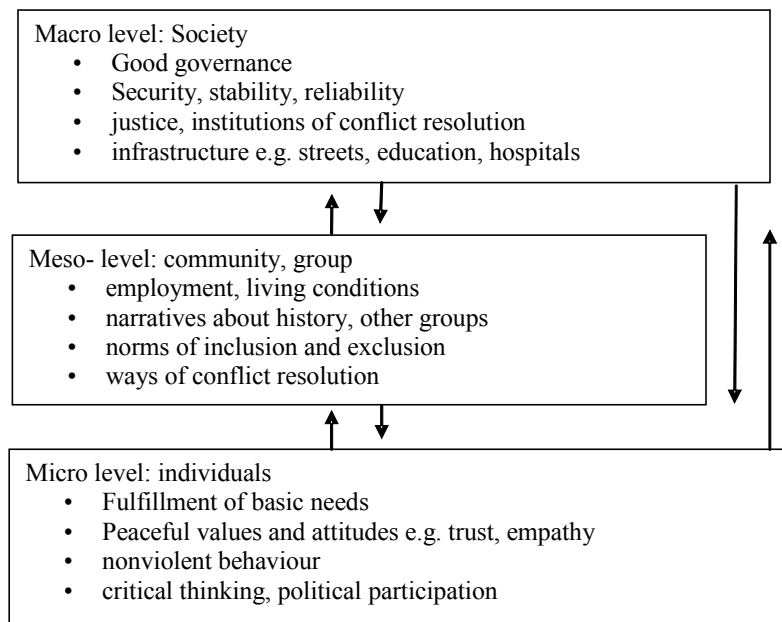


Figure 1: Factors promoting reconciliation on the different levels of society.

context of threat, danger and fear, people dehumanize the opponent, they tend to rely on a forceful leader and perceive themselves as victims and the opponent as perpetrator. Violence and mobilization for struggle increases pressures for conformity and unity, dissenters are sanctioned and criticism is rejected (Bar-Tal, 2004). When violence, fear, mistrust and hate have affected people it is difficult for them to build peaceful relations (De la Rey, 2001). Victimized people

feel diminished and vulnerable. They perceive the world and members of groups other than their own as dangerous (Staub, 1999). This might lead them to new violence which they see as justified defence. To prevent a cycle of violence, all groups need to engage in processes of reconciliation (Staub, Pearlman, Barbanel, & Sternberg, 2006). In the context of a recent civil war reconciliation is an important element for sustainable peace. Whereas other aspects of peace are important for people living in stable Western democracies, reconciliation can be considered as one main aim on the way toward peace for people in a society that has recently gone through war.

There are different definitions of reconciliation. It can be understood as “coming to accept one another and developing mutual trust.” (Staub & Pearlman, 2003:433). This conception of reconciliation requires forgiving and seeing the humanity of former enemies. The factual past needs to be accepted by both perpetrators and victims to acknowledge the pain and suffering of the victims. However, the past should not be used for defining the future with similar conflicts (Staub & Pearlman, 2003). Reconciliation can be viewed as a process or as a state. Different elements can be included: the transformation towards a harmonious relationship, an agreement on a set of historical events, the capacity to live with one another (De la Rey, 2001). Furthermore, spiritual aspects (changed attitude including atonement and forgiveness) and secular aspects (restoration of justice, prosecution of perpetrators, and acknowledgement of governments’ wrongdoing) can be distinguished (McKay & Mazurna, 2001). Nadler and Shnabel (2008) distinguish instrumental reconciliation overcoming distrust by repeated cooperation, and socioemotional reconciliation overcoming feelings that emanate from threat to the sense of one’s worthy identity by admission of past wrong doings and subsequent forgiveness. Kelman (2008) stresses the element that each party accommodates the identity of the other into the identity of the own group so that new attitudes are established and categories of victim or victimizer are ruled out. For true reconciliation and prevention of future violence, people need to develop social skills such as empathy or trust, and gain skills for peaceful conflict resolution (Staub, 2003). That is what peace education aims to enhance.

### **What is peace education?**

In 1945 when the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was founded, the importance of interventions on the micro-level of individuals was stressed: “Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must

be constructed“ (UNESCO, 1945). In the UN resolutions that proclaim the period 2001-2010 as the “International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World”, education is the core element identified to reach this “set of values, attitudes, modes of behaviour and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation among individuals, groups and nations” (UNESCO, 1999).

Peace education serves as an umbrella term for “the process of teaching people about the threats of violence and strategies for peace.” (Harris, 2008: 15). Many peace educators agree that peace education should be “feet first” rather than “head first” (McCauley, 2002), thus coming from practical behaviours to more profound understanding instead of abstract ideas with the vague hope that the leaned constructs might lead to appropriate behaviours (McCauley, 2002). Or as Perkins put it: “For peace education to do its job, learners need to do more than master ideas conceptually. They need to become civil and ethical activists, at least within their immediate contexts.” (Perkins, 2002: 52). The learners should be getting active to reduce direct interpersonal violence as well as structural violence, defined as “the institutionalization of inequality of opportunity and its implementation against a particular group.” (Mukarubuga, 2002: 231).

There are many different programmes of peace education addressing issues of all ranges and levels. Every society has its own agenda, so peace education around the world has a spectrum of focal themes, including anti-nuclearism, international understanding, environmental responsibility, communication skills, non-violence, conflict resolution techniques, democracy, human rights awareness, tolerance of diversity, coexistence and gender equality, spiritual dimensions of inner harmony, or world citizenship (Clarke-Habibi, 2005).

Whereas the topics vary, there is a broad consensus among peace educators that much emphasis should be put on teaching methods. The way peace education is taught should mirror the idea of peace and structural non-violence (e.g. Haavelsrud, 2008, Galtung, 2008). The teaching and learning process should be participatory and interactive (Haavelsrud, 2008). Some even argue that the organizational structure e.g. in a school context must be changed (Haavelsrud, 2008) as the aim of peace education can be understood to transform not only the structures of consciousness but also the structures of society (Snauwaert, 2008).

In the context of societies that have been through civil war or are still facing a deeply rooted conflict, peace education is of special importance. For traumatized people it can contribute to the process of healing. If peace education is carried out in a context in which participants from

different parties in the conflict are mixed, the intergroup contact situation can under certain conditions improve the attitudes towards the other group (e.g. Allport, 1954; Stephan & Vogt, 2004). For societies with intractable conflicts Salomon expects that peace education yields “four kinds of highly interrelated, dispositional outcomes: accepting as legitimate the other’s narrative and its specific implications; being willing to critically examine one’s own group’s actions toward the other group; being ready to experience and show empathy and trust toward the other; and being disposed to engage in non-violent activities.” (Salomon, 2002: 9).

### **3 Peace education for Liberian refugees in a refugee camp**

#### **History of Liberia and situation of refugees in the camp in Ghana**

Liberia has a unique history in Africa. Founded in 1821 by an US-organisation to free former slaves, Liberia became independent in 1847. For more than a century the descendants of the former slaves (the so-called Americo-Liberians ruled the country and oppressed the rest of the population that belonged to 15 different ethnic groups. In 1980 Samuel Doe overthrew the government and became the first president belonging to a local ethnic group, the Krahn. He gained the support of the USA although he obviously faked an election in 1985. Doe gave all key positions in society and army to Krahn people, his own ethnic group. After a failed coup, army forces killed 3000 civilians because they belonged to the ethnic groups of Gio and Mano (Cain, 1999). In 1989 Charles Taylor started a rebellion against Doe and the Krahn people with 150 soldiers trained in Libya and thousands of civilian Gio and Mano, including many child soldiers (Ellis, 2007). After years of cruel war with many different rebel factions and involvement of the Economic Community of West African States, a peace agreement ended the first civil war in 1996. In 1997 Charles Taylor won the election and became president. In 1999 a new rebel group started the second civil war and succeeded in forcing Taylor out of office in 2003. In 2005 Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf became president of Liberia.

The war was extremely brutal with many incidents of torture, looting, and killing of civilians. Estimates state that 168,000 people were raped (Cain, 1999). According to an estimation of the UN around 200 000 people died during the war (Brownwell, 2007). 750 000 people fled, 1.2 million were internally displaced. Of the approximately 2.5 million people who lived in Liberia before the war, 85% were killed, internally displaced or became refugees. (Cain, 1999).

In July 2007 there were still some 80,000 Liberian refugees in West Africa. More than 23,000 of them lived in Ghana (Brownell, 2007). Most of them stayed in the refugee camp Buduburam that is located 35 km west of the capital city, Accra, and was set up in 1990. The camp was designed for 5000 people, but for most of the time the camp sheltered more than 40,000 refugees. In 2006 around 38,000 Liberians were estimated to still live in the camp (UNHCR/WFP, 2006). The official support for refugees had stopped early, only few refugees are classified as vulnerable and still receive food aid. Most Liberians try to survive by small trading businesses such as selling oranges, yams or drinks. The second biggest income is help from friends or relatives, many of them being resettled on another continent. In 2006 more than half of the Liberian population fell below the poverty line (Bürgler, 2006).

In Buduburam Liberians from many different ethnic groups live together. In the early years of the refugee camp there were high tensions along the ethnic lines in Buduburam. This was addressed by several programmes from international organisations. Since then, the relations among the groups on the camp have ameliorated. Some people have already started the process of reconciliation, other rather try not to think about the violent past. Most refugees understand or agree that all ethnic groups have to live peacefully together in Liberia, and that they should approach others rather as individuals than as members of another ethnic group. However, prejudice and suspicions still prevail in the camp.

### **The Inter-Agency Peace education programme (PEP)**

The Inter-Agency Peace Education Programme (INEE, 2005) was developed by UNHCR-workers in cooperation with refugees of refugee camps in Kenya. The first PEP was constructed in 1997 originated by Margret Sinclair and started to be used in 1998, in two camps in Kenya. After an external evaluation by Anna Obura (2002) the programme was reviewed, extended and improved with the help of contributions by many people already involved in the programme (INEE, 2005). The new revised version was published as a cooperation of UNHCR, UNESCO, and INEE (Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies) in 2005, freely available on the internet<sup>2</sup>. In the foreword fourteen countries are listed in which the programme had been implemented, eleven of which are in Africa, two in Asia, and one in Europe.

The programme consists of a formal component and a non-formal component and comprises detailed manuals both for peace educators and for trainers of peace educators. The

---

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ineesite.org/page.asp?pid=1062>

formal component is designed for peace education lessons at schools; it contains a teacher activity book that provides detailed descriptions for all lessons in grades from 1<sup>st</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade, a story book, and a booklet for secondary modules. The non-formal part is a 36 hours' community workshop for adults with 12 sessions. The training for peace educators consists of three workshops with 3-5 days each. Separate manuals are provided for training the teachers for the formal part and the facilitators for the non-formal part.

Both the formal and the non-formal part are learner-centred and skill-based with many interactive elements and cooperative learning situations. Different methods are included such as role playing, activities, small group work, and discussions. The lessons or sessions are designed to be cross-cultural, that is participants are to bring in their own views and experience whereas the teacher or facilitator is mainly there to support and structure the learning process.

The Peace Education Programme (INEE, 2005) aims to transmit skills, knowledge and values. The objectives listed in the manuals are skills such as communication, assertiveness, cooperation, critical thinking, and empathy. Furthermore there are objectives concerning knowledge about peace and conflict, justice, interdependence, gender issues, human rights and responsibilities. Finally, values and attitudes are to be transmitted such as self-respect, respect of others, social responsibility, open-mindedness, tolerance, trust. The idea behind these objectives is to support people on their way towards reconciliation and provide tools for peaceful conflict resolution in their daily life.

The programme covers a broad range of topics, with social skills and conflict resolution skills as core elements. Participants in the community workshops learn about internal and external conflict and the impact of different ways to deal with conflict as depicted in the conflict management continuum (figure 2). After sessions about trust, emotions and communication follow sessions of problem solving, negotiation and mediation with conflicts that come from their own context. In the sessions about human rights and reconciliation participants are invited to talk about their views and are guided to come to terms with their past. The topics of all sessions as well as example exercises can be seen in Table 1.

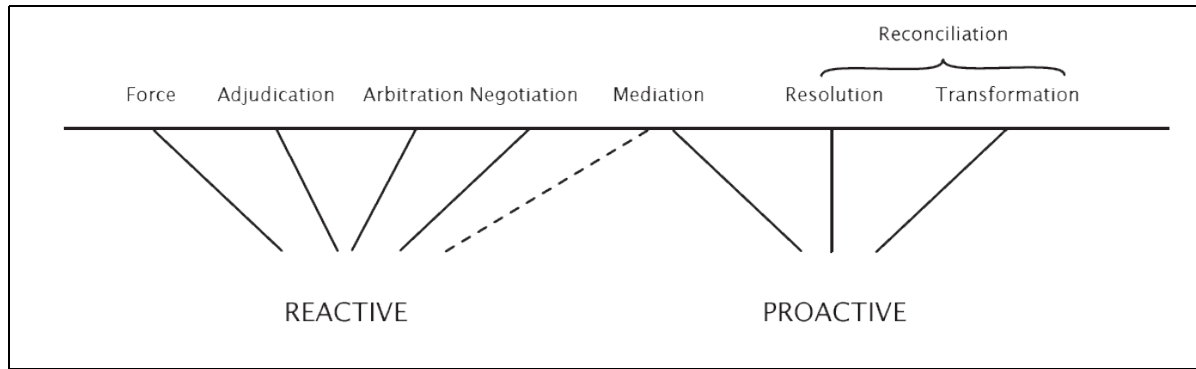


Figure 2: The conflict management continuum (source: INEE, 2005)

When the pilot phase of PEP was evaluated in two refugee camps in Kenya, Obura (2002) found that the implementation of the programme had had several positive effects. There were examples of conflict prevention and resolution of small problems, quarrels and fights as well as conflict escalation prevention. Refugees started initiatives to follow up and spread PEP; During the four years in which more than 10% of the camp population participated in the programme, the safety levels increased, less crimes were reported and more or better inter-group interaction and integration (Obura, 2002).

### **Implementation of PEP in the refugee camp Buduburam**

PEP (INEE, 2005) was implemented in the refugee camp Buduburam by a camp-based organisation of Liberian refugees in 2007. The Center for Youth Empowerment (CYE) is an organisation that had already been offering peace education at schools and occasionally gathered adults for a so-called peace forum to discuss issues concerning steps towards reconciliation and peace. The first author introduced the programme to the organisation, trained the facilitators and supervised the programme relying on the clear structure inherent in PEP (INEE, 2005), assisted by a volunteer from the US who was the second supervisor.

The community peace education workshops were facilitated by trained Liberian refugees. 12 volunteers from CYE were introduced to PEP (INEE, 2005) and trained as facilitators for peace education community workshops. For this four days' intensive training the manual for training of facilitators provided in the PEP-material package was used. One main topic in the workshop was the introduction and practise of interactive methods and principles of adult learning that was new to the facilitators-to-be who were used to a teaching in the style of lecturing. In the training they started to facilitate the sessions, got feedback, and anything which

*Table 1:* Schedule of the PEP-workshop as implemented in Buduburam. Every day had one session in the morning (9am-12pm) and one session in the afternoon (1pm-4pm).

<b>Session</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Example exercise</b>
<b>First week</b>		
1	Introduction, Background, conflict management theory	Participants stand in a circle; one is outside and tries to enter the circle. Afterwards all reflect their feelings and talk about what exclusion means.
2	Similarities and differences, inclusion and exclusion	
3	Trust, communication, active listening	A participant directs another one to draw a geometric figure. First they use one-way-communication, then another pair uses two-way-communication. The differences are discussed.
4	one-way and two-way communication, perceptions	
5	Bias, Stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination	A story is told about a family in a refugee camp asking an officer for one more blanket. The participants discuss why the different characters in the story behave the way they do and what empathy means.
6	Emotions, Empathy, cooperation, Assertiveness	
<b>Second week</b>		
7	emotional honesty, problem-solving	Participants perform different situations (e.g. unwanted pregnancy in a school girl) as role plays, trying to apply the six steps to problem-solving they have learned.
8	problem-solving, negotiation	
9	Mediation, Reconciliation	Participants brainstorm in small groups what is necessary for reconciliation. Then they all discuss what reconciliation means for them.
10	Human rights	
11	Real-life problems, conflict resolution	Small groups work on real-problems out of their own lives, analyzing the causes, looking for solutions and discussing what of all they have learned can help for this situation.
12	Evaluation, final discussion	

remained unclear was discussed. After the training four teams were formed that facilitated four workshops under supervision.

The information about the upcoming peace education workshops was spread on the “local radio” (a loudspeaker at a central place), and by word of mouth. Some local NGOs were separately invited to send their volunteers. Only 13% of all participants came after hearing the public announcement, 9% came because of the invitation letter. 78% of all participants had been told by somebody about the workshop, often by participants of a former workshop.

The workshops covered two 3-hours-sessions a day, three days a week for two weeks in a row. Table 1 shows the schedule of the workshop with the sessions as designed in the programme. Always two workshops were run in parallel in two neighbouring rooms of the CYE-school. Participants received breakfast and lunch before and after the first session of the day. In

the beginning participants received a folder, a pen and sheets of paper. At the end of the course they received a handout. In a ceremony some days later, a certificate of participation was given to them.

101 Liberians and one Ghanaian participated altogether in the workshops. 73% were male, 27% female, the age ranged from 15 to 53 years with a means of 32 years. 91% were Christian, 3% Muslims. The Liberians belonged to all ethnic tribes with 36% Krahn being the largest group. Most of them had between 5 - 20 years of education. 70% had no job. Most of them had been living in the camp for many years, on average 9 years. Table 2 shows the distribution of gender and ethnicity in the four different workshops.

*Table 2: number of facilitators and participants and different ethnicities present in the four workshops*

Workshop	Facilitators		Participants		ethnicities
	male	female	male	female	
1	2	1	19	5	10
2	2	1	15	8	11
3	1	2	21	6	7
4	2	-	22	5	9

### **Observations from the workshop**

During the workshops the two supervisors filled in observation sheets to record the activities carried out within intervals of 10 minutes. They also documented delays and rated closeness to manual, participants' activity and overall methodological interactivity of the session.

All topics from the manual of the programme were covered. As can be seen in table 2, methodological interactivity as rated by the supervisors varied widely. Facilitator spent more time lecturing to the group than engaging the group in interactive activities such as exercises, role plays and small group work. A large share of the time was spent with group discussion in which many – but not all – participants were actively involved.

Most participants came regular and punctual to all sessions. In the context of refugee camps people often do not take workshops seriously and are distracted by other activities. However, at the PEP workshops by CYE only three participants dropped out of the programme, two of them because they fell ill.

When working in small groups or performing role plays almost all participants were very active. In group discussions many participants were contributing, others were rather listening or debating with their neighbours. Participants often brought in their own experience. Before talking about sensitive topics, they sometimes asked “Am I protected to speak?” and started only after the group confirmed the safe environment. The overall atmosphere in the workshops was warm and friendly.

*Table 2:* observations of supervisors on the observation sheets filled in during the PEP workshops. Observation intervals consist of 10 minutes

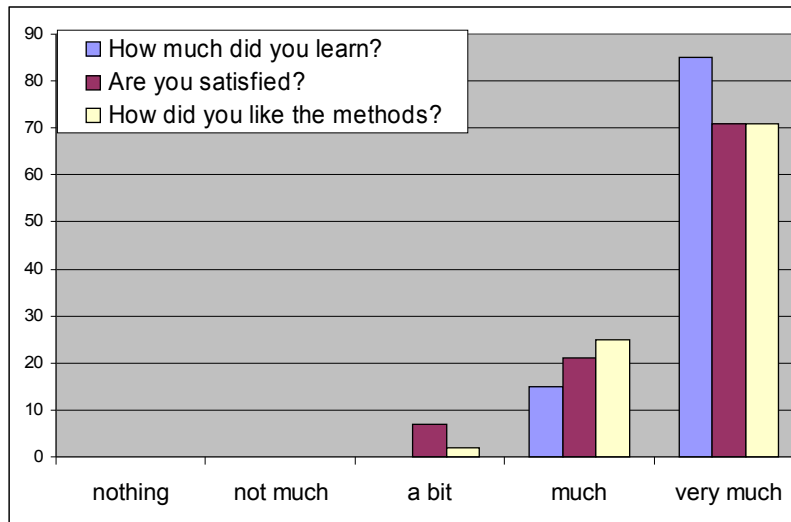
	minimum	maximum	mean	SD
Closeness to manual (rating)	2	4	3.56	.62
Participants' activity (rating)	2	5	4.09	.75
Interactivity (rating)	1	5	3.46	1.06
Interactivity (intervals)	2	14	6.19	3.07
Lecture (intervals)	1	15	7.06	3.30
Group discussion (intervals)	1	13	5.94	3.73
Missing Participants	0	5	1.46	1.98
Delayed participants	0	9	1.88	2.42
Minutes of delayed start	-20	30	3.93	12.70

In the workshops participants could train their skills with examples of their own context. In one group there was a conflict between most of the male participants and the international female volunteer from USA who was not only supervising the workshops but also helping with serving food during the lunch break. She felt not respected and treated like a servant by the men. When she was getting angry the men became very upset. As the group had just learned different techniques to resolve conflict, the facilitators were encouraged to have participants mediate this intercultural conflict about perceptions of the role of women. Although the mediation was not easy, the conflict finally was resolved successfully which made the whole group very enthusiastic about their newly acquired skills.

### **Acceptance and transfer**

The peace education workshops were highly appreciated by facilitators and participants. In the questionnaire after the workshop, almost all participants were highly satisfied and liked the methods of the workshops (cf figure 3).

84% of participants thought that they would certainly or probably change some of their behaviours because of the workshop. To the question whether they already applied anything learnt in the workshop 77 % answered positively. 57 followed up on the request to specify how they applied what they had learned. Some of these examples were rather vague, others were quite detailed. More than half of the people gave examples about how they solved a conflict, either one they were involved in (4 people) or one between other people in their community (26 people). Even weeks after conclusion participants approached facilitators or supervisors and told examples of how they used their new knowledge e.g. to solve a conflict in their neighbourhood.



*Figure 3: number of participants giving different answers to questions of subjective evaluation of the workshop*

Figure 3 shows that participants were convinced that they learned much or very much in the workshops, that most of them were very much satisfied and liked the methods of the workshop. Many participants had already applied their new skills as can be seen in table 3. Eleven months after their workshops 29 participants were asked again about their memories of the workshop. Many could list the main topics and all. All of them would recommend participation in such a workshop and all were convinced that they would use what they had learned when they will return to Liberia. 22 of them reported that they had found friends in the workshop.

The facilitators and CYE as implementing organisation were convinced by their experience with the programme. Because of lack of funding they searched for a way to continue

with the workshops in another way and started collaboration with another local NGO on the camp to

*Table 3: Categories and examples of answers to the question “Did you already apply anything you have learned?” with amount of people answering in each category of answers.*

Category	amount	Example
Not specified	7	-
no convincing example	9	“I say because of what I learned and was demonstrated in the class”
not specified	10	“Because I apply it at home when I leave from class”
general understanding	2	“I was only able to tell that the conflict was internal. I never knew before.”
gains for own personality	5	“Never to be submissive but assertive always. Never to be stereotyping and thinking for others.”
applied in personal conflicts	5	“I have negotiated btw my little sister and I. We had stopped to speak for 2 years, now everything is resolved”
applied in conflicts among other people	26	“In my community there was a dispute between neighbours. She wasted water behind her friend’s house which caused serious conflict and I was able to intervene and settle the matter between the both parties.”
Total	64	

develop a course of peace education with one session a day and no food for participants. This development is remarkable not only to show how people involved took over the ownership of the programme, but also because this cooperation was one of the rare attempts in the camp to overcome high competition between the local NGOs that was sometimes referred to as “NGO-tribalism”.

## **4 Chances and challenges for peace education with refugees**

### **Reality constraints in a refugee camp**

When implementing a peace education programme the conditions of the environment have to be taken into consideration. In the refugee camp, the conditions were basic. Many people have not enough money to feed themselves or their family. Providing breakfast and lunch during the workshop was thus necessary to avoid people dropping out because of hunger.

Many refugees participating in the workshops were traumatized during the war and had no job. Nevertheless, the work load of daily chores is high as there is no tap water and often no electricity. Some participants complained that six hours per day were too much, and especially on

Saturdays they needed the time for their house work. So in the second week one workshop day was changed to adapt to the wishes of the participants.

A key factor for good peace education workshops are the local facilitators. The programme is designed that refugees themselves can be thoroughly trained to gain knowledge, skills and experience both in the contents of the programme and the interactive teaching methods. The facilitators need to be confident and sure about their teaching points so that they can facilitate discussions even in groups with people who are more influential in the community than the facilitators such as elders or local chiefs. Although in their preparation the facilitators were trained the interactive methods, during the workshops they often fell into their old pattern of lecturing or story telling which was tiring for the participants. Hierarchy among facilitators turned out to be a problem for team teaching in one group when the executive director carried out many activities without leaving much time for the other facilitators. In the feedback rounds with the supervisors after each day, these points were addressed and the cooperation improved slightly during the course.

There was no broader “official” environmental support for the programme’s goals, intention and execution, neither was there any opposition. The UNHCR staff and staff from the welfare council (administration of the settlement) were informed about the programme and were positive about it, but they didn’t show any official consent or support. Some other camp based organisations and churches were invited to send participants and did so. Some participants worked closely together with tribal chiefs. As they are traditionally involved in settlement of conflicts they consented in the goals and intentions of the programme and were grateful to learn some new techniques of settlement.

Peace education should reach a large proportion of the community to have high impact in the community. Obura (2002) suggests a target of 20% of the population. The costs of the workshops, mainly the meals and materials, are relatively low.

### **Target group of peace education community workshops**

Peace education community workshops targets individuals (micro-level) situated in a group of participants (meso-level) assuming an impact for the whole society (macro-level). It is sometimes argued that the main targets of peace education should be those in power rather than refugees who have been marginalized by the conflict. However, in the case of Liberian refugees, many of the participants can well get an influential position in their home country. As the camp is in the

process of closing down, the vast majority of peace education participants has already returned to Liberia or will do so soon. Most of them are young and committed people; their level of education is far above the average of people in Liberia. In exile they have gathered a lot of experience, and as the majority of the Liberian population has been refugees or internally displaced, it is not to be expected that their status as former refugees could be negatively perceived. In the peace education workshops they got a feeling of being empowered, being important, having the chance to actively shape their environment. Wherever they will be in their society, they can be agents of change and work towards reconciliation and peaceful co-existence.

Peace education should reach the people who need it most. As participation in workshops is inevitably voluntary, this self-selection can lead to the effect of “preaching to the converted”. Indeed, 25% of the Liberian participants had already participated in any form of peace education before. Obura (2002) stresses in her evaluation of PEP that more efforts should be made to reach marginalized, violent young men. However, they can be difficult to include in a class and need skilful facilitators to cope with their opinions or behaviour which might challenge the teaching points. Nevertheless, if they are motivated, their participation can be very useful not only for themselves, but for other participants and their environment as well. But the violence often has structural reasons, e.g. if the men cannot find any job and don't have any means to found a family. So while peace education can support individuals to change their own behaviour, it should be embedded in a larger context of peace building activities in which these individual can get a chance for surviving and being accepted with their more peaceful behaviour.

Another group that is often underrepresented and should be included more are women. “If you educate a man you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman you educate a family (nation).” says a famous African proverb attributed to the Ghanaian Kwegyir-Aggrey. Indeed, women play a major role in every society concerning the transmission of values, skills, and behaviours to the next generation. However, as in many other contexts, also in a refugee camp the women bear the brunt of the entire work load. As there are hardly any jobs, women are often creative in starting their own small businesses to feed their family beside doing the chores in the house and taking care of the children in households that – for the participants of the workshops - comprised an average of 8 persons. When talking about gender stereotypes, in one workshop it was mentioned that every man is supported by a woman. This feeling of dependency makes men even more disposed to aggressive and violent behaviour. Often they have nothing to do, no chance to feel needed, no money to buy alcohol or anything to distract them. This creates

frustration. When in March 2008 Liberian refugees in Buduburam demonstrated for resettlement or supported repatriation, it was started by a women organisation that allowed only women and children to participate on the sit-in on the soccer field, to avoid violence and escalation with the police which would be more probable if men were demonstrating as well. So it seems that women don't need peace education as urgently as men. Nevertheless, their participation in workshops is highly important since they can bring in their points of view and are empowered to become agents of change.

### **The role of culture for peace education**

Peace education cannot ignore culture as it aims to change values, beliefs and behaviour patterns, which are all deeply rooted in culture. It seems good for ownership, acceptance and effectiveness, if the local culture is integrated in peace education and the local actors take a major role in peace building efforts. However, in this approach lies the danger of strengthening local unjust power structures (Llamazares, 2005). Especially inequalities between men and women are often cemented if women and their views are not specifically involved (McKay & Mazurana, 2001). So while culture is highly important for people providing security and a sense of belonging, it can at the same time bear elements that contradict the philosophy and practice of peace. However, culture is not a fixed and static set of norms and practices constraining the individuals, but it is rather a heterogeneous and dynamic construction of reality with a broad variance of views, values and practices even within one culture (Davidheiser, 2005; Worchel, 2005). So "culture" can be seen as "both a source of the conflict and the means for its resolution". (Marsella, 2005: 653) People will not learn anything that cannot somehow fit in their belief system and be combined with their culture and traditions. Thus it can be argued that peace education should be contextualized and situated instead of an idealistic or intellectual "one-size-fits-all approach" (Bajaj, 2008).

The Inter-Agency Peace Education Programme is designed to be cross-cultural in that it can be used in different contexts. Culture does not explicitly appear as a topic. Nevertheless, due to the participative character of the program, participants can and will bring in cultural aspects and traditions as they need to integrate what they learn into their world view in order to transfer the knowledge and skills in their daily life. It is up to the facilitators to stress and reflect controversial cultural issues and guide the discussions towards an integration of peaceful attitudes.

Conflict, reconciliation and peace always occur in the framework of cultural and religious beliefs. The Liberian War can hardly be understood without considering the role of secret societies and traditional world views (Ellis, 2007). The belief in a powerful invisible world merged with Christianity and apparently even evolved among Liberian refugees in exile (Dick, 2002). Symbols, traditions and religious rituals can have a high importance for strengthening certain values, attitudes and behaviours. In some of the workshops with Liberian refugees facilitators or participants included cultural traditions such as prayers at the beginning and ending or a common song.

Facilitators need to be cultural sensitive and aware of differences among participants. As the groups were ethnically mixed, topics such as culture, history and personal experiences were sensitive issues. Participants showed their awareness by asking the group for protection to speak to ensure that neither they themselves nor anyone in the group should be hurt by their statement. One example of the power of culture for learning can be seen when human rights and gender equality are treated in peace education. Human rights are dynamic, complex, and sometimes contradictory and in their presentation still bear the bias from Western cultures putting individual rights over collective rights (Bajaj, 2008). Moreover, many traditions and cultural practices contradict human rights, often especially the right of women and children. This has to be discussed in the workshops. Some Liberians started to become highly emotional and defended their traditions. One participant put it “If it is a human right that children are allowed to yell at their parents, we don’t want to have that” and even started to defend traditional views and cultural practices such as dominance of men over women or female genital mutilation. In such a case the facilitator needs to be highly sensitive and skilful to lead the discussion in a way that people understand that they don’t lose their culture if they change certain traditions and start to incorporate the essence of human rights for their own reality rather than seeing them as a concept imposed on them from the Western world.

## **5 Conclusion: peace education as one step to “peace”**

Peace education can be one element of peace building for a war-torn and conflict-prone society. All different programmes have the common aim to provide skills, knowledge, values, and attitudes that promote peaceful interaction among individuals, in the community and maybe even

for the whole society. This paper examined the Inter-Agency Peace Education Programme and how community workshops of this programme were run in a Liberian refugee camp in Ghana.

The programme was easily implemented and highly appreciated by facilitators and participants. In the peace education community workshops people from different ethnic groups were learning and discussing together. According to the evaluation of participants, PEP is a good example how people can learn conflict resolution techniques and be empowered to promote peace in communities and the society. Besides being education, the programme provides participants with a positive intergroup contact experience. By getting to know individuals from other groups, attitudes towards their groups can become more positive.

A third dimension of peace education in this context can be healing of past trauma. Self-disclosures and reflections about the past and the future help to reconstruct narratives and can lead to reconciliation.

Peace education aims to create change both at the micro-level and at the meso-level. As groups of individuals come together they are supported in changing their own behaviour as well as finding means to change their living together as a community. To increase the programme's impact at the level of individual behaviour, those persons should be included who have a tendency to violent behaviour e.g. ex-combatants or "aggressive youth". To increase the programme's impact at the level of the community, peace education should reach people who (will) hold key positions or have influence in their community and bring them together with other community members to find solutions for conflicts among them and to enhance the process of reconciliation. Women are an important target group as they transmit values, skills and behaviours to the following generation. Crucial for the success of peace education are the local facilitators. They need a thorough training to be competent with contents and methods and to be sensitive to practical as well as cultural issues in order to help participants to transfer what they learn into their daily life.

However, peace education can only be one step in the process of reconciliation. Good governance, security and good living conditions are crucial to prevent violence. When the refugees return to their home country they need to find a way to fulfil their basic needs before they can promote peace and constructive conflict resolution. Moreover, the skills of peace making need to be practiced and there should be a source of continuous support for local peace workers in order to produce long-lasting change.

Peace education targets individuals within their specific community and has the ambitious aim to contribute towards cooperative intergroup relations, non-violent conflict resolution, fulfilment of basic human needs and rights as well as just structures or institutions in a society. The multitude of objectives makes it close to impossible to measure and evaluate the “real” impact of peace education especially if such community workshops are embedded in a range of other peace building strategies such as establishing good governance and improving the economical infrastructure of the society.

Nevertheless, the results from the implementation of the Peace Education Programme (INEE, 2005) with Liberian refugees reported here give reason to hope. In the self-perception of the Liberian refugees involved in the programme there was a clear attitudinal change. They felt empowered and optimistic, referring to themselves as “peace makers.” Many participants of the peace education community workshops in the refugee camp expressed that they gained confidence to be agents of change towards peace and reconciliation. At the end of a peace education workshop one participant enthusiastically articulated this belief for the whole group: “We can make a difference tomorrow!”

#### **Author notes**

The research reported in this article was supported by the three-years-funding of the first author as doctoral student in the International Research Training Group (GRK 622) "Conflict and Cooperation between Social Groups" granted by the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft).

## References

- Allport, G. W. (1954). *The nature of prejudice*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Bajaj, M. (2008). "Critical" Peace education. In M. Bajaj (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Peace Education*. Charlotte: Information Age Publishing. 135-146
- Bar-Tal, D. (2004). The necessity of observing real life situations: Palestinian-Israeli violence as a laboratory for learning about social behaviour. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 34, 677-701.
- Boutros-Ghali, B. (1992). *An Agenda for Peace. Preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peace-keeping*. New York: United Nations. Available at <http://www.un.org/Docs/SG/agpeace.html>
- Bürgler, Brigitte R. (2006). *Buduburam Socioeconomic Survey Report Assessment for the Phase-out 2007*. UNHCR Ghana.
- Brownell, S. F. (2007): UNHCR ends Liberian operation after helping more than 100,000 go home. 9<sup>th</sup> July 2007 <http://www.unhcr.org/news/NEWS/4689259d2.html>
- Cain, Kenneth L. (1999) "The Rape of Dinah: Human Rights, Civil War in Liberia, and Evil Triumphant." *Human Rights Quarterly* 21.2 (1999): 265-307.
- Clarke-Habibi, S. (2005) "Transforming Worldviews: The Case of Education for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina". *Journal of Transformative Education*, Vol. 3 No. 1, pp. 33-56
- Christie, D. J., Tint, B. S., Wagner, R. V., & Winter, D. D. (2008). Peace psychology for a peaceful world. *American Psychologist*, 63, pp. 540-552.
- Davidheiser, M. (2005). Culture and mediation: A contemporary processual analysis from southwestern Gambia. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 29, 713-738
- De la Rey, C. (2001). *Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. In D.J. Christie, R.V. Wagner & D. A. Winter (Eds.). *Peace, Conflict, and Violence: Peace Psychology for the 21st Century*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall. 251-261

- Dick, Shelly (2002). Liberians in Ghana: living without humanitarian assistance. *New Issues in Refugee Research Working Paper no. 57*. Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/publ/RESEARCH/3c8398f24.pdf>
- Dovidio, J.F., Gaertner, S. L., Stewart, T.L., Esses, V.M., ten Vergert, M., Hodson, G. (2004). From Intervention to Outcome: Processes in the Reduction of Bias. In: W. G. Stephan & W. P. Vogt (eds), *Education programs for improving Intergroup relations. Theory, Research and Practice*. (pp. 243-265) Teachers College Press: New York.
- Ellis, Stephen (2007) *The mask of Anarchy the destruction of Liberia and the religious dimension of an African Civil War*. New York University Press
- Galtung, J. (2008). Form and Content of Peace Education. In M. Bajaj (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Peace Education*. Charlotte: Information Age Publishing. 49-58.
- Hamburg, D.A. & Hamburg, B. A. (2004). *Learning to live I Preventing hatred and violence in child and adolescent development*. Oxford: University press.
- Hammer, M. R. (2005) The intercultural Conflict Style Inventory: A conceptual framework and measure of intercultural conflict resolution approaches. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 29, 675-695.
- Harris, I. (2008). History of peace education. In M. Bajaj (ed) *Encyclopedia of Peace Education*. Charlotte: Information Age Publishing. 15-24
- Haavelsrud (2008). Conceptual Perspectives in Peace Education. In M. Bajaj (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Peace Education*. Charlotte: Information Age Publishing. 59-66.
- Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research. (2008). *Conflict barometer 2008 Crises-Wars-Coups d'Etat Negotiations – Mediations – Peace Settlements 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Conflict Analysis..* Heidelberg. Retrieved January 29, 2009, from [http://www.hiik.de/de/konfliktbarometer/pdf/ConflictBarometer\\_2008.pdf](http://www.hiik.de/de/konfliktbarometer/pdf/ConflictBarometer_2008.pdf)
- Inter-Agency Network of Education in Emergencies (INEE). (2005). Peace education programme. Retrieved on <http://www.ineesite.org/page.asp?pid=1062>

- Kelman, H.C. (2003). Interactive problem solving: Informal mediation by the scholar-practitioner. In J. Bercovitch (Ed.), *Studies in international mediation: Essays in honor of Jeffrey Z. Rubin* (pp. 167-193). New York: Palgrave Macmillan
- Kelman, H.C. (2008). Reconciliation from a social-psychological perspective. In A. Nadler, T.E. Malloy & J.D. Fisher (Eds), *The social psychology of Intergroup reconciliation*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press. 15-32.
- Knight, W.A. (2003). Evaluating recent trends in peace building research. In *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 3, 241-265.
- Llamazares, M. (2005). Post-War Peace building reviewd. A critical Exploration of Generic approaches to Post-War Reconstruction. Working paper 14 of Centre for Conflict Resolution. Department of Peace studies: Bradford.
- Marsella, A. J.(2005). Culture and conflict: Understanding, negotiating and reconciling conflicting constructions of reality. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 29, 651-673.
- McCauley, Clark (2002). Head First versus Feet First in Peace Education. In G. Salomon & B. Nevo (Eds.), *Peace education: The concept, principles, and practices around the world* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. 247- 259.
- McKay, S. & Mazurana, D. (2001). Gendering Peace building. In D.J. Christie, R.V. Wagner & D. A. Winter (Eds.). *Peace, Conflict, and Violence: Peace Psychology for the 21st Century*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey:Prentice-Hall. 341-349.
- Mukarubuga, C. (2002). Rwanda: Attaining and sustaining peace. In G Salomon & B. Nevo (Eds.), *Peace education: The concept, principles, and practices around the world* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. 229-236.
- Nadler, A. & Shnabel, N. (2008). Instrumental and Socioemotional Paths to Intergroup Reconciliation and the Needs-Based Model of Socioemotional Reconciliation. In A. Nadler, T.E. Malloy & J.D. Fisher (Eds), *The social psychology of Intergroup reconciliation*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.37-56.
- Obura, Anna P. (2002) *Peace Education Programme in Dadaab and Kakuma, Kenya Evaluation*

*Summary*. Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/publ/RESEARCH/3e1a9fd0b.pdf>

- Perkins, David (2001) Paradoxes of Peace and the Prospects of Peace Education. In G. Salomon & B. Nevo (Eds.), *Peace education: The concept, principles, and practices around the world* (pp. 229-236). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Pp. 37- 54.
- Pettigrew, T. F. (1998). Applying social psychology to international social issues. *Journal of Social Issues*, 54, 663-675.
- Salomon, G., 2002, The nature of peace education: not all programs are created equal. In G. Salomon & B. Nevo (Eds.), *Peace education: The concept, principles, and practices around the world* (pp. 229-236). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Sambanis, N. 2002. A review of recent advances and future directions in the quantitative literature on civil war. *Defence and Peace Economics*: 215-243.
- Snauwaert, D.T. (2008).The Morale and Spiritual Foundations of Peace education. In M. Bajaj (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Peace Education*. Charlotte: Information Age Publishing. 67-74.
- Sørli, M. E., Gleditsch, N. P. & Strand, H. (2005). Why Is There So Much Conflict in the Middle East? *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Feb 2005; vol. 49: pp. 141 - 165.
- Staub, E. & Pearlman, L. A. (2003). Healing, reconciliation, and forgiving after Genocide and other collective violence. In E. Staub: *The psychology of good and evil Why children, adults, and groups help and harm others*. Cambridge University Press
- Staub, E. (2003). The psychology of good and evil Why children, adults, and groups help and harm others. Cambridge University Press
- Staub, E. (1999). The origins and prevention of genocide, mass killing, and other collective violence. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 5(4), 303-336.
- Staub, E., Pearlman, L. A., Barbanel, L., & Sternberg, R. J. (2006). Advancing Healing and Reconciliation. In *Psychological interventions in times of crisis*. (pp. 213-243). New York, NY, US: Springer Publishing Co.

- Stephan, W. G. & Vogt, W. P. (eds), *Education programs for improving Intergroup relations. Theory, Research and Practice*. (pp. 243-265) Teachers College Press: New York.
- UNESCO. (1945). Constitution Of The United Nations Educational, Scientific, And Cultural Organization. Retrieved from [http://www.icomos.org/unesco/unesco\\_constitution.html](http://www.icomos.org/unesco/unesco_constitution.html)
- UNHCR/WFP (2006). *Joint Assesment Mission Ghana: Buduburam and Krisan camps Final report*. <http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/ena/wfp105272.pdf>
- UN (1999). Resolutions A/RES/52/13 and [A/RES/53/243](#): Culture of Peace, Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace [http://www3.unesco.org/iycp/uk/uk\\_sum\\_cp.htm](http://www3.unesco.org/iycp/uk/uk_sum_cp.htm)
- Winter, D. D., & Cava, (2006). The psycho-ecology of armed conflict. *Journal of Social Issues*, 62, 19-40.
- Worchel, S. (2005). Culture's role in conflict and conflict management: Some suggestions, many questions. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 29, 739-757.