

Children and Armed Conflict

This module will explore the issue of armed conflict in relation to identity and the impact that this has on children. The materials in this module are more suitable for older children.

Introducing Armed Conflict – Where does the problem lie?

Objectives

To allow students to discover the root causes of various conflicts and to reflect upon their own involvement in conflict.

Previous Preparation

Copies of 'The Cause of Conflict – What do you think?'

Copies of Rwanda conflict resources sheet. If you do not feel that these resources are appropriate for your group you may wish to find similar examples. A history of the conflict between Israel and Palestine, for example, can be found here: http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/in_depth/world/2001/israel_and_palestinians/timeline/

Introduction (50%)

Individual and Pair Work

Ask the students to read the Rwandan case study and ask them to think about where the root cause of the conflict lies. Present them with a list of questions.

How do the different factions identify themselves? – with their national identity or with an ideology?

What has fuelled the creation of these conflicting identities? (students can refer to the printout of different causes of conflict to see which they agree with)

What do they imagine prevents each side from listening and cooperating with each other?

Ask the students reflect on their answers individually. Following a short period of reflection, have students share their response with a partner and let them know that they need to be prepared to share their partner's response with the class. This holds all students accountable, reduces stress and gives them an opportunity to respond and rehearse before sharing publicly with the class.

Development (35%)

Pair Work – *Discussion in pairs and then feedback to the whole group*

Ask the students to individually think of their own experience of a conflict closer to their own home.

What kind of ideas was each side attached to in this conflict?

What identity did each side take on?

What do they imagine prevented each side from listening and cooperating with each other?

To what extent do students believe that war is a spectacular exaggeration of the conflicts we partake in, in our every day lives?

Conclusion (15%)

Whole Group – *Discussion led by teacher*

Ask students whether they feel they better understand the causes of conflict among people and ask them to share some of their observations with the class.

Explain to the class that conflict often has serious impacts on children and it is therefore important to tackle the root causes of conflict

Resource Sheet: Causes of Conflict – Which do You Agree With?

A. Retaliation/Escalation An action or situation is interpreted as an "attack" or "wrong" against an individual, group or state. Action is then taken to right the "wrong" through counterattack. This creates an escalating cycle of conflict. E.g. an ongoing conflict between two groups of students erupts into a large fight in the parking lot because it is believed that a member of one of the groups trashed the car of the other group's "leader" - the build up of armies and of dreadnought battleships by Germany and Britain contributed to the start of World War I.

B. Resources Competition for limited resources (land, oil, water, gold, diamonds, etc.) may lead to conflict, or the desire of one group to have the resources of another may include the use of violence as a means to acquire them. E.g. a student is swarmed in a mall and his cell phone, CD player and leather jacket are taken from him - India and Pakistan fight over disputed land in the Kashmir region.

C. Class Conflict - Conflict arises between rich and poor, between groups that have resources, represent the norms of a culture or hold power and those that have very little of the resources, are outside the norms of the culture or hold little or no power. E.g. passers-by curse under their breath or ignore homeless people panhandling in big cities - indigenous societies wishing to maintain control of their land.

D. Power-Hungry Leadership Authoritarian law and rule by militant groups can take people into war against their wishes E.g. - the leader of a gang orders members to fight another gang - Christian kings led their people against Islam during the Crusades.

E. Fundamentalism/Extremism People who believe in extreme forms of religion or nationalism stir up hatred against other groups, which can spill over into violent behaviour E.g. crowds boo the national anthem of opposing teams during sports events - the Ku Klux Klan uses Christianity to justify violence against Blacks and Jews.

F. Learned Behaviour Violence and war are part of the structure of a society and become acceptable or even valued options within a culture. Male-centred structures and a military economy "teach" violence and war as reasonable options. This is then reinforced through public institutions, media and parenting. E.g. the film industry in many countries produces movies showing war as honourable and glorious - countries/cultures that have a history of conflict with another country or group "teach" the next generation to continue the hatred and aggression.

G. Racism The lives and property of one race or cultural group are seen as superior to those of another group. Violence is used to reduce others' power, convert them to a better way of life or get rid of the other group altogether. E.g. gangs of kids from one cultural group fight with gangs from different cultural groups - as settlement spread across North America, Aboriginal people were confined to reserves with few rights.

H. Socio-cultural Differences - Differences between people, groups or cultures result in mistrust and potential conflict. E.g. students who are different in their clothing, skin colour, religious practices, sexual orientation, physical appearance, ability level or behaviours are often subjected to bullying by others - the Nazis targeted Jews, Gypsies, Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexuals, socialists and people with disabilities.

I. Human Nature - War is rooted in human nature itself, while the triggering mechanisms for violence are many and varied. Human beings are somehow "wired" to be violent and aggressive.

E.g. people claim that fighting is inevitable in children - leaders claim that war is inevitable between nations causes of war and violence.

World Vision - Information Zone

Case Study: Rwanda - Part 1

The three Stages of Conflict illustrated using examples from the Rwanda conflict.

Phase 1 - Separation - focus on difference

The Hutu and Tutsi make up the two main ethnic groups in Rwanda. They appear to have co-existed relatively peacefully until the Belgian colonists arrived in 1916. The colonists chose to ignore the similarities of a common language and traditions between the Hutu and Tutsi. Instead they focused on differences, particularly of economic status, and produced identity cards classifying people according to their ethnic group. The Belgians considered the

Tutsis superior to the Hutus. Not surprisingly, the Tutsis welcomed this idea. For the next 20 years they enjoyed better jobs and educational opportunities than their neighbours, aggravating the differences between the two groups.

This favouring of the Tutsi led to increasing resentment among the Hutus culminating in a series of violent riots in 1959 demanding equal rights. More than 20,000 Tutsis were killed, and many more fled to the neighbouring countries of Burundi, Tanzania and Uganda.

When Belgium relinquished power and granted Rwanda independence in 1962, the Hutus took their place. Over subsequent decades, the Tutsis were portrayed as a danger and the scapegoats for every crisis.

Phase 2 - Divergence - focus on position

Leopold, a 32 year old Hutu man, describes how the Hutu position was presented as propaganda and eventually led to genocide.

'The previous government started mobilising us in 1992, holding meetings, training groups of young men like me to kill when the time came. They called us the Interahamwe (which means those who attack together). But the most important thing was that they planted fear and hatred in our hearts. Ever since I was a small boy, they had told us on the radio, even at school, that the Tutsis weren't real Rwandans, that they had come originally from Ethiopia and we Hutus were the real Rwandans, the superior people.

They told us we were under attack. That the RPF cockroaches were coming to kill us all, that we must fight and push them back, or die. And that we must finish them all off, every last Tutsi, because they were devils and if we did not wipe them out, the threat would always remain.

On 10 April 1994, they told us the time had finally come. The enemy was attacking. They reminded us that all Tutsis were our enemies, all now were cockroaches, including our neighbours - which was the message we had been hearing more and more in previous months on the government radio. There were about 400 of us at the meeting, all young and strong. From the meeting, we went to our homes, collected our pangas (machetes), regrouped and then we set out and started cutting people.'

Source: 'Could you share a pint with a man who killed your family?' by John Carlin, New Statesman, Sept 15 2003.

Phase 3 - Destruction - focus on damage

The 1994 genocide was planned and executed by the then Government of Rwanda. The goal was to exterminate all Tutsis and any Hutus or foreigners who opposed this goal. Everyone killed in the Rwandan genocide was on a list. Under orders from central Government in Kigali, the local authorities in each village and town, had gone through birth certificates and other official papers to create a census of the people condemned to die - meaning every Tutsi in the country. The planning was meticulous. Part of it was to denounce as collaborators - and therefore also to condemn to death - those Hutus unwilling to participate in the slaughter.

Teacher Evaluation:

Comments on the class:

Pupil specific comments:

Observation

and evaluation of the class:

Some of the issues outlined below, while important are controversial and therefore difficult to teach a guide to teaching controversial issues can be found here:

<http://www.citizenship-global.org.uk/controversial.html>

<http://www.globaldimension.org.uk/> - DFID site consists of a searchable database of resources for teaching and learning about global citizenship by key stage, subject and themes. Also includes UK curricula guidance and links to useful websites.

<http://www.socialstudies.org/resources/moments/> - Teaching ideas, resources and articles on contemporary global issues and concerns published on the US National Council for Social Studies website.

Citizenship

The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children – The main impacts of conflict on children are: Refugees, Child soldiers, Birth registration/loss of identity, Sexual Exploitation, Health and nutrition and Death/injury/landmines. The class could explore one or more of these impacts

<http://www.unicef.org/graca/> - A general introduction to the issues

http://www.unicef.org/protection/index_armedconflict.html - Unicef facts and figures on the impact of armed conflict on children.

<http://www.un.org/Pubs/CyberSchoolBus/childsoldiers/whatsgoingon/> - Students can read the story of 'Marie: In the Shadow of the Lion,' (on child soldiers) and follow the lesson plans provided by the United Nations CyberSchoolBus.

<http://www.unicef.org/emerg/iraq/index.html> - Information and real life stories on how the conflict is affecting Iraqi children and their families.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2children/index.shtml> - BBC resource on children in WWII.

<http://www.redcross.org.uk/children/> - Red 'Cross Children in Conflict' teaching resources.

http://www.developments.org.uk/data/03/wv_1.htm - Developments article on Rwandan orphans and armed conflict

<http://www.unhcr.org.uk/info/resources/teachtools.html> - UNHCR teaching resources on refugees.

<http://www.itvs.org/beyondthefire/> - A website on teen experiences of war.

Some testimonies of child soldiers can be found at:

<http://www.hrw.org/campaigns/crp/voices.htm>

<http://www.childsoldiers.org/ourwritings/>

<http://www.childsoldiers.org/ourimages/>

<http://www.liberia-leaf.org/reports/trials/childsoldiers/index.htm>

<http://www.refugeesinternational.org/content/article/detail/1234/>

<http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/eyetoeye/teachers/index.html> - Classroom activities enabling children to explore experiences, learn about issues, and consider social and moral dilemmas related to the lives of young Palestinians.

<http://www.un.org/rights/concerns.htm> - UN source on impacts including identity loss.

Peace Begins with Me – Students can look at the root causes of conflict and how to avoid it.

<http://www0.un.org/cyberschoolbus/peace/index.asp> - These are some good lesson plans on peace building.

<http://www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet/teachers/resources/peace.htm> - Oxfam teaching resources on peace and conflict.

<http://www.peacecorps.gov/wws/bridges/index.html> - Peace Corps lesson plans on cross cultural understanding.

http://www.ppu.org.uk/learn/peaceed/index_pe.html - teaching resources on peace building.

<http://www.salsa.net/peace/teach/teachers.html> - Peace tools for teachers.

Geography

The Geography of Armed Conflict – the class can look at the geography of conflict using maps, statistics and social studies.

<http://www.rethinkingschools.org/war/> - US educational materials on teaching about the war in Iraq. Includes maps, statistics, facts about Islam, definitions and discussions of terrorism.

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/iraq/> - Teaching resources and links. Guides to the Middle East, Afghanistan, Iraq history and culture, photos and useful printable maps.

<http://www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet/teachers/resources/countries.htm> - Oxfams countries and continents teaching resources.

<http://www.emulateme.com/> - Comprehensive country files on each country in the world.

Conflict and Forced Migration - The group may also wish to link the results of conflict, such as refugees to their study on migration.

<http://www.blss.portsmouth.sch.uk/resources/citiz.shtml> - teaching resources on refugees and asylum seekers

http://www.unhcr.org.uk/info/resources/lesson_plans.html#geography - UNHCR geography lesson plans on refugees.

<http://www.refugeeweek.org.uk/> - teaching materials for schools.

<http://www.forcedmigration.org/> - information website on human displacement.

<http://www.movinghere.org.uk/> - website dedicated to 200 years of migration to England.

History

The History of Conflict – students can look at the history of conflict, by choosing a particular conflict and finding out as much as they can about it.

http://school.discovery.com/lessonplans/programs/ispal_peace/ - Discovery lesson plans on the conflict between Palestine and Israel including links to further reading

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2children/index.shtml> - BBC resource on children in WWII.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/worldwarone/> - BBC resource on world war one.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/static/in_depth/world/2001/israel_and_palestinians/timeline/ - A history of the conflict between Israel and Palestine.

<http://www.cnduk.org/pages/ed/edpack.html> - Lesson plans on the history of nuclear warfare.

<http://www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet/teachers/iraq/> - Oxfam teaching resources on the war in Iraq.

<http://web.amnesty.org/pages/irq-index-eng> - A comprehensive look at the history of conflict and human rights abuses in Iraq.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_depth/middle_east/2002/conflict_with_iraq/default.stm - News, analysis, views, information and images about the on-going crisis and reports about the lives of Iraqis living in a post Saddam occupied Iraq.

<http://www.teachingforchange.org/history/index3.html> - history and analysis of September 11th and the response.

English

Words in the News – The class can examine how conflict is presented in the news.

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/teachers/lessonplans/general/general_allen.html - News hour extra teaching resources on world at conflict in the news.

<http://www.spiked-online.com/Sections/Politics/LondonBombs/Index.htm> - Contains articles and discussion about terrorism and the London bombings

<http://www.teachingforchange.org/news/index2.html> - news items on September 11th.

http://www.iwpr.net/home_index_new.html - The institute for war and peace reporting.

<http://www.dep.org.uk/globalexpress/index.htm> - An up-to-the-minute magazine resource for teaching 8 to 14 year olds about world events and global issues in the news. Each issue contains photocopiable classroom activities, background information and analysis for pupils and teachers.

<http://www.globalnews.org.uk/> - A media awareness project with a teaching programme and classroom activities designed to encourage critical thinking about international news and how it is reported.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/people/features/childrensrights/teaching/index.shtml> - BBC World Service activities on the Convention of the Rights of the Child and the role of the media.

ICT – Students can evaluate some of the above resources or create a PowerPoint presentation or a poster on a chosen subject from above.

Whole School Activities

<http://www.redcross.org.uk/standard.asp?id=47816> - Provides material for supporting school assemblies, informal education and Citizenship education/ PSHE lessons with young people to address practical and emotional issues around the London bombings

<http://www.teachersunion.org.uk/Templates/Internal.asp?NodeID=71934> - suggestions for world peace day 2006.

<http://www.refugeeweek.org.uk/> - suggestions for school activities for refugee week.

Taking Action

Students can Write Letters

Send letters to countries that have no signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. <http://www.humanrightswatch.org/campaigns/crp/action/index.htm>

Stop the abduction and enslavement of Ugandan children by the Lord's Resistance Army. Write letters to the leadership of Sudan and Uganda, and to the Secretary General of the United Nations. <http://www.hrw.org/reports97/uganda/lra.htm>

Students can also check the Amnesty site for new campaigns <http://web.amnesty.org/pages/childsoldiers-index-eng>

Students can raise awareness in the media

Write a letter to the editor, or an article for your newspaper to express your concern about child soldiers, and voice your support for stronger international efforts to prevent the recruitment of children into armed groups, and their use in armed conflict.

Students can start a war child club in their school

<http://www.nowarzone.org/wcclubs/view.aspx>

Fundraising

Choose an organisation which supports and rehabilitates children who have been affected by conflict. You can refer to the Voting and Taking Action module for great ideas on fundraising.

<http://www.nowarzone.org/projects/fundraise.aspx>

<http://www.warchild.org.uk/schools.asp>

<http://www.nowarzone.org/icc.aspx>

<http://www.controlarms.org/>

<http://www.child-soldiers.org/links/>

<http://unoy.org/>