



Peace Bridges



Newsletter of Peace Education
Centers (issue #9, 2007)



*Mkrtchyan Lusine, school #26
13 years old*

“Creating Peaceful School Together”

It was a festive day for the pupils of school # 29. In the frames of peer-to-peer education, on 18th December the members of Peace Education Center had prepared a summarizing lesson aiming to establish peaceful environment in the school. The activity was the continuation of the pre-announced “Peace Month” during which the pupils of Peace Center performed as teachers and conducted some lessons for more than 160 pupils of 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th forms. The teachers of same classes also participated.

The lessons were of much interest for the pupils; they were excited to listen to the members of the center with surprise, asked some questions, brought examples of the conflicts from the life and even suggested different ways for conflict resolution.

The pupils also participated in the competition of posters entitled “Peace to the World”. They presented various conflict situations and ways of conflict resolution using the famous examples of foreign authors and Armenian tales. Based on the fables such as “Peasant and Bear”, “Wolf and Goats”, “Peasant and his Sons”, “How the Dove was Knitting the Nest”, “Elephant and Ants”, “Dog and Cat” the pupils made up beautiful and colorful posters and left them to the decision of the jury.

Principal, Vice-Principals, teachers, parents, pupils, as well as the members of “Women for Development” NGO took part in the activity. The president of the organization A. Mikayelyan handed in certificates and gifts to all classes for the active participation in the “Peace Month”.

The jury decided to give the prize of the poster competition to the pupils of the 4th grade. The event itself was very substantial and was highlighted by the local mass media. Summarizing lesson gave us an opportunity to find out one important thing – the fact that members of “Peace Education” center of school # 29 are truly devoted to their work.



Karine Baghiyan
Teacher, School #29
Responsible for the
Peace Education Center

“If I am an Ambassador of Peace”



Below are short extracts from essays on the topic of “If I am an Ambassador of Peace” written by the members of Peace Education center.

We hope that children’s dreams will come true and the day will come when only peace and kindness will rule on our planet, no bombs will exploit and the Earth will turn into a Planet of Peace built by its little ambassadors.

Let the Peace prevail in the whole world...

If I am an ambassador of peace, I would invite the presidents of all countries to sign an agreement, according to which there would be no borders between the countries, and in this case all nations would be together and the world would be just one country. This would allow for all nations to be together, and peace and tolerance would prevail.

Marine Avetisyan, School # 29

...First of all I would eliminate envy. It provokes conflicts, and conflicts provoke arguments. I do not understand when people say “good or bad envy”; envy is envy and it cannot be good. And if the sky belonged to me, I would never let dark clouds appear on it and cover the blue sky. I also wish Western Armenia is united to our country again and peace is established between Armenia and Turkey...

Arpine Israyelyan, school # 29



**Maria Militosyan,
school #26**



**Aregnaz Sargsyan,
Meghrashat village school**

If I am an ambassador of peace, I would first of all wish that world leaders never repeat their mistakes in the future. I would eliminate racial discrimination. I would encourage everyone on the planet to live their lives as if it is their last day...

Narek Drmeyan, school # 29

... First of all I would travel to the US, because this country is in war with Iraq and there is no concept of peace there. I would meet George Bush and explain the consequences of wars, and would request to stop the war immediately. Then I would start to promote peace in the world and to establish Peace Centers not only for the children, but also for the adults.

Hripsime Torosyan, school # 2



**Artur Hovhannisyan
school #20.**

...I will try to decrease the number of people belonging to socially vulnerable groups in my town so that everyone lives under equal conditions and only kindness and justice rule. If I am able to implement this in my town, I would also be able to do it in other cities as well and then I would be able to claim that I had my small contribution to the process of making the world peaceful.

Ani Barseghyan, school # 40

If I had a magic wand, I would eliminate poverty, wars, terrorism and natural disasters which cause human mortality. I wish there is peace all over the world.

Grigor Ajapahyan, school # 9

...There have always been lies, mistrust and other bad things taking place in our lives instead of peace and kindness. I hope that one day only love, kindness and tolerance dominate in the world.

Michele Yeghiazaryan, school # 20

... We must be peaceful and friendly, always respect elder people and foreigners, we must treat each other with love and respect because peace starts with us.

Arthur Hovhannisyan, school # 20

Let there be plenty of peace, because it is comprised of small peaceful actions. If powerful countries do not care about peace, small countries like ours must start spreading peace and make powerful countries become peaceful as well. Let's promote the ideas of peace together!

Koryun Tarakhchyan, school # 9



**Vachagan Azatyan,
school #9**



Hovhannes Mkrtchyan, school #26

In order for the world to be peaceful, everybody should be peaceful. Little peace creates large peace. If I had a magic wand, I would make all the people kind and peaceful in order for them to respect each other and reduce the number of conflicts and wars...

Lusine Soghomonyan, school #40

If I am a fairy of the peace, I would never let bad thoughts come into peoples' mind so that everyone thinks only about kind actions and peace...

Mariam Grigoryan, school # 9

If I had a magic wand, I would turn all bad people to good ones. I would spread health, happiness and justice instead of wars, arguments and conflicts. Let peace prevail in the world.

Galya Hovhannisyan, school # 40

...Innocent people and children become victims of violence and terrorism. I would eliminate all weapons and wars.

Aytsemmik Sukiasyan, school # 30

If I am an ambassador of peace, I would make all the soldiers give up their arms and go back to their homes. Let peace become mother and father of the planet Earth.

Suren Khachatryan, school # 30



Rouzanna Gevorgyan, school #9

...People can live and survive only because of peace. When one is peaceful, kind and friendly, he/she is respected and loved by everyone. Let us then treat each other with love and kindness and let there be peace in all peoples' souls.

Anjela Jaloyan, school #20

...I would establish Peace Centers in all the countries so that all the pupils of the world know what peace is and apply their knowledge when they grow up and occupy high positions to be able to eliminate all wars and conflicts.

Trdat Sargsyan, school # 2

Open Lesson on the Topic of Child Rights and Conflicts

Arevik Hakobyan and Armine Hakobyan, 4th year students of the Faculty of Psychology of Gyumri State Pedagogical Institute after M. Nalbandyan and members of the Institute's Peace Education Center, conducted their internship in the 8th B form of school # 26. Pupils of this class are also members of the Peace Center. According to the students, the fact that everybody was member of the Peace Center contributed to strengthening ties between them so that they better understand and trust each other.

Lesson on the topic of child rights and their role in the process of conflict management, which took place in school # 26 on November 21st finalized practical activities lasting for approximately 2 months.

Children drew parallels between their rights and conflict and showed what could happen as the result of unawareness on rights. They also staged the story of shepherd Petros's son, who went to the dentist and the latter denied to provide himself with a treatment as far as Petros's son did not have money to pay him. However, he informed the doctor that he was aware of his right for free-of-charge medical aid, according to which he had to receive free medical treatment. The doctor could do nothing else but heal the patient.

Upon the end of the event, children responded to the questions raised by the principal, head of the internship and teachers and listened to their opinions. Pupils asked Principal H. Yeghiazaryan to hire a psychologist because they thought that the school really needed it, and that they wished Armine and Arevik could become psychologists working at their school. In turn, Armine and Arevik expressed their gratefulness to the school administration and "Women for Development" NGO for their support. They also emphasized the fact that they were able to establish friendships with the pupils very quickly and that their friendship reached the level when children started to trust them their "very personal secrets".



Peer-to-peer Education



School #26

During this semester a special attention was given to the peer-to-peer education methodology, according to which members of Peace Centers of all schools form a group of teaching pupils who spread skills and knowledge gained in the center among both their schoolmates and pupils from neighboring schools.

During the months of November and December more than 550 pupils from 25 classes of 4 target schools (# 4, 26, 29 and Meghrashat Secondary School) participated in the trainings on “Skills and Principles of Conflict Resolution” topic.

Opinions of already trained pupils received as the result of filling out the evaluation forms prove the innovation and efficiency of the methodology:

- The lesson was very interesting. We have learnt the techniques of conflict resolution, for example, I don't make quick decisions any more and I try not to judge my friends /Karine Mkrtchyan, 9 A form, school # 26/.

- ...This lesson gave me plenty of new knowledge and I have shown training materials to all

my friends and family members. I am keeping materials so that I can use those throughout my lifetime /Haykuhi Igityan, 9 A form, School # 26/.

- ...I want to become a member of the Peace Center because it gave me positive emotions and it was very useful for me /Haykuhi Igityan, School # 26/.

- I have already applied the skills acquired from you. Once my friend asked me to replace her for the class duty and I didn't refuse, despite she had done it once. I would probably refuse to help her if I didn't pass the peace classes. /Ani Atashyan, 9 B form, School # 26/.

- ...When I argue with someone, I try to hide my feelings. I count until seven in my mind, calm down and then respond /Emma Khachatryan, School # 26/.

Conducted surveys proved that trainers are also proud with their new role, they become more self-confident and serious about the classes taught at the center, more respectful towards the teachers; they start to realize the difficulties of teachers' work. According to the pupils, this experience helps them manage teacher-pupil conflicts more easily. In practice, they better understand conflict resolution skills and use those in interrelations with their peers:

Being a teacher was very interesting and responsible at the same time. I was very excited prior to entering the classroom, but we managed to teach all the pre-planned material to the children and everything went very well because children were very active and were bringing many interesting examples /Silva Khoranyan, School # 29/.

- Before I started to attend the Center, I could not even imagine that one day I will have a chance to act as a teacher. It was wonderful: by becoming a trainer I gained deeper understanding of the knowledge acquired at the center /Alisa Mkhitarian, School # 29/.



School #29

- Prior to teaching we did not realize how difficult the work of the teacher was; now we understand and highly appreciate the efforts of our teachers. /Julieta Mikayelyan, School # 26/.

- Classes were extremely interesting. We were able to spread our knowledge to our peers and I am very proud when pupils at school greet us as their “teachers”. Thank you for providing us with such opportunity. /Emma Hovhannisyany, School # 26/.

- After acting as a trainer I felt like a very important person because of the responsibility of sharing my knowledge and skills with my peers. I am proud for taking part in the lessons of Peace Center /Seda Khachatryan, School # 26/.

- After becoming a trainer I am more responsible with regard to the Center’s activities and I try to apply what I have learnt in my everyday life /Zina Madoyan, School # 4/.

- Peer-to-peer education was very important for me because it made me more self-confident /Emma Hovhannisyany, School # 4/.

- After taking the classes of Peace Center I become engaged in different conflicts less, and in case I am involved in a conflict, I recall the classes of the Center and try to apply the gained skills /Greta Karapetyan, School # 4/.

The fact that boys were also very active in not only ongoing classes of the Centers but also during the “peer-to-peer” education was very valuable for the teachers and specialists of the organization’s Educational Department. Such activity of boys especially at this age, their willingness to study and to teach is considered a great achievement by project managers.

Of course, at the initial stage there was certain concern about receiving positive feedback from the teachers on the pupils’ “new role”. However, surveys proved that teachers also value new skills of their pupils – skills of acting as trainees, and they are getting more and more convinced that children’s opinions must be taken into consideration, pedagogical skills should be shared with them and that teacher’s image will only benefit from such activities.



School #29

Teachers, who were present during “peer-to-peer” education process, were frequently surprised how the pupils managed to actively participate in the discussion of the topics unfamiliar for them, to answer to the questions, make suggestions, etc. They started to give more importance to the role of peace education at



School #4

school after seeing the pupils’ conflict resolution skills, their inspiration and sense of responsibility:

- I think that with their speeches and short performances pupils succeeded to convince their peers to know the rights of each other, to respect their opinions and values and to try to find ways



School #4

of peaceful conflict resolution in any situation. /Zaruhi Stepanyan, teacher, school #26/

- Words of their peers are convincing for the pupils, therefore, I think that “trainers” succeeded to implement their duties in the best possible way /Gayane Yeghiazaryan, teacher, school # 26/

- To my opinion, such education is necessary, because there are many discrepancies among the pupils, and peace education will assist in the process of conflict prevention. It would be great to involve larger number of pupils in the classes. /Armenuhi Mirijanyan, school # 4/.

By the end of peer-to-peer education, members of the peace centers were distributing special leaflets addressed to the parents of the pupils, which contained major skills and ways of conflict resolution. Monitoring conducted after the training showed that the majority of parents became familiar with the content of the leaflets and suggested to place it in an accessible place in their houses so that the children could use it regularly.

Many parents expressed desire for their children to also become involved in activities of the center, and for receiving such type of training organized especially for parents. As one of Meghrashat village school’s pupil’s mother wholeheartedly said: “...very often we – the parents become the trigger for occurring parents-children conflicts by getting angry for even very minor reasons, by being intolerant and we need this training very much...”.

Sometimes parents express their willingness to participate in the classes together with their children in order for having a better understanding of what their children learn and how they behave themselves during such “non-formal” classes.

- I wasn't thinking that the children could be so courageous and able to express their ideas so freely..., - said Derenik Tosunyan's (school # 40 peace Center member) mother.

- My son very actively participates in the activities of the Center. He became more clever and responsible and he spreads his knowledge among the members of our family, particularly to his brother /Karine Zakaryan, school # 4/.

- I myself participated in one of the classes organized by the center. You are doing a very valuable and educational job. My daughter strives to incorporate into her speech and behavior what she has learnt at the Center and she waits for each class impassionedly /Tsovinar, school # 4/.

- My son attends the classes with love and he speaks about the activities of the Center after each class /Narine Drmeyan, school # 29/.

- After these classes my daughter became more compliant, understanding and calm and she transfers all the abovementioned to her environment /Saida Avetisyan, school # 29/

- My child tries to help her friends and to resolve conflicts occurring at home with the methods learnt at the Peace Center. She has gained independence /Lilit Petrosyan, school # 26/.

- These classes are having a positive impact on my son Hovhannes. His sister is also aware of these lessons. We talk at home, analyze and use the skills and knowledge obtained at the Center /Armenuhi Mkrtychyan, school # 26/.



Meghrashat village school

Peer-to-peer education will continue in the next semester, which will assist in spreading knowledge on peace education and conflict resolution among as many pupils, teachers and parents as possible, which in turn will serve as a base for creating peaceful classes and peaceful communities in the future.



Meghrashat village school

Our Cooperation with “Education For Sustainable Development Foundation”



On October 13, 2006 Armine Mikayelyan, President of “Women for Development” NGO, Susanna Ghazaryan, Officer of NGO’s Educational Department and Julia Chaloyan, Specialist of Educational Department visited “Education for Sustainable Development” Foundation’s community resource center located in school # 4 of Sevan town; the organization has been in cooperation with the Foundation for several years.

Members of the organization also took part in the event organized by “Education for Sustainable Development” Foundation, which was aimed at adding to the budget of the Community Foundation. The event was attended by the members of community, school teachers, parents, alumni, representatives of local public administration body. The slogan of the fundraising event was “Let’s Strengthen our Community”.

Pupils’ handmade works were presented, and the profit gained from selling those was also to be added to the budget of the Community Foundation.

Pupils of Sevan House of Culture made performances at the event. Mayor of Sevan, Director of local “HayRusGazard” branch, Director of Bread Factory and others made their financial contributions. It should be mentioned that each person present at the event made his/her contribution to the budget of the foundation. WFD NGO also contributed to the fundraising event.

Received funds will be used for obtaining newsletter and magazine subscriptions for the resource center operating at school, for establishing a computer center and resolving other issues.

Members of the WFD NGO had the opportunity for becoming familiar with the activities of the resource-center, which are specified in the following directions: healthy lifestyle, university for parents, youth club, women’s club, etc. Members of WFD NGO presented issues of “Peace Bridges” newsletter and organization’s informational bulletin to the community center.



On November 13th, members of school # 29 Peace Center hosted Mark Eshkroft, expert from the British Council and representatives of “Education for Sustainable Development” Foundation. Guests spoke with the pupils, became familiar with the activities of the Center, etc. Mark Eshkroft familiarized schoolchildren with the activities of the British Council and its mission in Armenia, specific projects they carry out in the direction of promoting and maintaining peace in the countries where British Council operates, etc. In the end, he answered all the questions raised by the pupils.



The goal of the meeting was also to present “Ten Stories to Make You Think...” – collection of the best stories written in frames of the English Language essay competition, which was announced by the British Council and “Education for Sustainable Development” Foundation in March 2006. Guests presented a copy of the brochure to Lilit Ghazaryan, member of school # 20 Peace Center and the author of one of the best ten stories.

In the previous issue of “Peace Bridges” newsletter we have already written about the results of this contest and published Lilit Ghazaryan’s essay.

Cooperation with “Education for Sustainable Development” Foundation does not end here. Pen pals have already been established between pupils of school # 26 Peace Center and Sevan School # 4. Children have already exchanged letters for several times and written about themselves, their schools, towns and their activities in the Centers. The goal of the pen pals is spreading ideas of peace among larger number of schoolchildren.



The Operation

One cool spring morning Vahram was studying for his exams in his room. He was a student at a medical college. The radio was on and he was listening to music. Suddenly the announcer interrupted the music and said, “ Help ten year old Helen from Greece! Urgent bone marrow transplant is needed! We’re sending the information to all the clinics of the world. Volunteers we need your help!”

Vahram was shocked by the announcement. He called the nearest clinic. The doctors carried out a lot of tests. The results of the tests showed that Vahram could be a donor for Helen. Vahram didn’t hesitate even for a moment and told the doctors that he was ready to leave for Greece. His decision surprised his parents. His father talked to him:

“ Oh, Vahram, come on, I think you’re joking. How could you be a donor for a person of another nationality?”.

“Yes, dad, it’s hard to believe. But it’s true”.

“I don’t want you to go so far and risk your life”.

“Dad, don’t try to stop me! Just remember the people who came to Armenia after the earthquake. Did they worry about their lives or how far away it was?”.

“Yes, but that was quite different”.

“No, I don’t see any difference. And don’t forget, please, I’m going to be a doctor”.

“And what about your exams?”, asked his mother.

“Don’t worry, mum. I’ll manage to catch up later”.

“Then we wish you good luck. Come back safe and sound. We’ll be thinking of you”, said his parents.

As soon as Vahram landed in Athens, he went to the hospital where the girl was. The doctors did some more tests to be sure that Vahram was the perfect donor for the girl. Everybody looked at him respectfully and wondered if he was afraid.

Helen’s father came close to Vahram and tried to say something but he couldn’t. They just hugged each other. Then they went into Helen’s room. She was lying there and looked very pale. She was a nice girl with pretty eyes. She smiled at Vahram and took his hand. She tried to say something but Vahram couldn’t understand what she was saying. The look in her face was full of hope.



Soon the doctors carried out the operation. They said that they needed a week to find out if the operation had worked. They were fighting to save the girl’s life. The first days were the most important ones. They had to wait.

Vahram went back to Yerevan. He did very well in his exams. Two weeks later the telephone rang. Vahram and his friends were at home. Vahram answered the phone.

“ Vahram, this is Helen. How are you?”

“ I’m fine thanks. I can’t believe it is really you. Helen? I’m glad to hear you. Do you feel well?”

“ Yes I’m getting better day after day. Thank you so much. I’m out of danger. My family is very grateful to you”.

“There is really no need to thank me. I’m pleased to know that you’re well”.

“Hope to see you some time”.

“Get well soon! Hope to see you and your parents in Armenia some day”.

Vahram went back to his friends.

“ Well, Vahram, now tell us everything. You are a real hero”, said one of his friends.

“Nonsense. There is nothing to talk about”, said Vahram. “By the way, Helen’s father has been to Armenia. He was in the rescue party after the earthquake”.

“ Oh, really? History has repeated itself”, said another friend, “ You have helped that Greek girl in the same way that her father helped us”.



Pupils of Meghrashat Village School Tell About “Peace Center”



Meghrasht village occupies a very small area. It is located very close to the Turkish border. Our village is rich with crops, production of honey and animal breeding. Agriculture is becoming more and more developed. Our school’s Peace Education Center is unique among the rest of Shirak region’s village schools and I am very proud to be its’ member.

Our classes are conducted once a week by Haykush Mkhoyan who is responsible for the activities of the Center. These classes very much differ from our regular classes – we don’t have homework and do not receive any grades, and the most important thing is that we actively participate in the classes and freely express our views.

I wish these classes continue to be taught and that there is peace in the world.

Anjela Kostanyan

... By attending the classes I have learnt what the conflict is, how it develops and how it can be solved in a peaceful way. Peer-to-peer education was also very interesting, since we were given the opportunity to deliver training to the pupils of our school, and we have planned to conduct training for the schoolchildren of the neighboring villages next semester.

I hope that further knowledge which I will gain in the Center will be very useful for me and that I will certainly apply it.

Hovhannes Ghazaryan

...At Peace Center we became familiar with conflict resolution methods; we found out that in some way conflicts are necessary, but should be managed in such a way that none of the conflicting sides feels defeated. The positive impact of these classes is that when we get engaged in conflicts, we try to resolve those by using important skills we gained. I am very proud that we are sharing our knowledge with other pupils.

Aregnaz Sargsyan

Peace Education was very useful for us. In the Center we have learnt what the conflict is, what causes conflicts and how it develops. We have learnt skills and principles of conflict resolution, which we then shared with the pupils of our school using peer-to-peer education methodology. Peace Center is a place where pupils can speak freely and express their views.

I am very thankful to Armine Mikayelyan, President of “Women for Development” NGO, who provided us with the opportunity of taking part in the “Peace Education” training.

Anna Mkrtchyan

...Before the establishment of Peace Education Center in our school, members of “Women for Development” NGO visited our village, told us the story of Sadako and taught how to prepare paper cranes. We hung the cranes on the tree and named it “Peace Tree”. That day was very remarkable for me and I was very happy to find out that a Peace Center was going to be established in our school. It has been several years already that I am attending the Center with great pleasure; I take part in all the classes because they are very interesting and different from our regular lessons. We have learnt what the conflict is, the stages of its development, how it can be prevented or suspended. We have also learnt about the concepts of mediation and negotiation and many other interesting topics.

I wish such centers are established all over the world, so that only peace prevails everywhere.

Tatev Petrosyan



admirer's corner



Celebrating the International Day of Peace worldwide

The UN International Day of Peace, celebrated globally on 21 September, presents a unique opportunity to raise awareness on conflict prevention and peacebuilding. We would like to take this opportunity to highlight some of the many inspirational activities undertaken by GPPAC members (Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict) members around the world.

Fiji



Women's Action for Change (WAC) arranged a pancake breakfast which was enjoyed by 30-40 diverse Fiji Police Force staff, including Divisional Commanders, and WAC management, staff, volunteers and local university radio station. WAC are sometimes confronted with the disinterested, biased or violent side of the police in their social justice and human right work.

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management, staff, volunteers and local university radio station. WAC are sometimes confronted with the disinterested, biased or violent side of the police in their social justice and human right work.

However, on the International Day of Peace, WAC wanted to affirm the gradual changes that are occurring in the Fiji Police force. The breakfast was accompanied with presentations from both sides and the premiere performance of WAC's new community play, which over the next two years will be performed all over the country in rural, remote and urban centers to create increased awareness on prevention of all forms of violence against children. Also in Fiji, the Citizens' Constitutional Forum (CCF) went on a Peace March at sunrise along the sea wall. For the occasion a special t-shirt was printed, which read "You can't shake hands with a clenched fist". The march was followed by a Peace breakfast in the garden of CCF, which was even attended by members of the Fiji Parliament.

Netherlands



A coalition of Dutch organizations, People Building Peace Netherlands, held a big event at Scheveningen, a seaside suburb of the Hague. The Scheveningen prison wall was painted with artistic graffiti, and some 250 schoolchildren formed a peace sign and had a video link via satellite with children in the DR Congo doing the same, national and international hip hop and reggae artists performed, a beach pavilion was filled with debates, theatre, music, arts, interviews, dance and drinks, and much more.

Taipei

A protest was held to promote human rights, attended by a number of human rights and other organizations in a little Chinese town Taipei. This was followed by the event *Rejecting Wars, Praying for Peace*. Photographs from wars and armed conflicts were displayed, and representatives from different religious groups and civil society organizations expressed their united front against wars and violence. For the activities in Taipei special wristbands were made which read symbolic words "Peace".



Tokyo



GPPAC Northeast Asia and Peace Boat held a candle event appealing for peace in Lebanon, Palestine, Israel and Iraq. Hundreds of participants came to Meji Park to hear testimonies from Lebanese and Palestinian activists, presenting their ideas of what can be done for peace and enjoy a lively and emotional performance by musical duo Kotobuki. Candles were lit that formed the word *heiwa*, meaning *peace* in Japanese, to display solidarity and hope for a peaceful future, for both the critical situation in Northeast Asia, the Middle East, and all.

Children's Reflections on the Visit to Shirak Diocese

On December 12, 2006 Shirak Diocese hosted the meeting of school # 40 and 4 Peace Education Centers' members with Bishop Michael Ajapahyan. The meeting was also attended by school teachers, parents and members of "Women for Development" NGO.

At the beginning of the meeting Bishop Michael questioned the children about the successes in their studies and their interests. Then he spoke about the role and importance of the Church in the process of peace building. He asked what activities of Peace Education Centers the children were engaged in, what questions and topics they discussed, how they projected their participation in the process of strengthening and promoting peace.

Children spoke about their interests, knowledge gained in the Peace Education Center, discussed classes and topics.

Afterwards, the children raised questions themselves. The questions mainly related to the traditions and history of Armenian Apostolic Church as well as the differences between Apostolic and Catholic Churches. By the end of the meeting children were a bit excited. Many of them confessed that they had never met a Bishop before.

Children emphasized the fact, that the meeting at Diocese took place in frames of the Peace Education Center's activities and they expressed their wish for such meetings to take place more often.

Members of Peace Education Centers shared their impressions in the following short stories:

...On that day I learnt many new things about churches, religion and their role. I received answers to many questions of my concern. It was very interesting to see the Diocese. Before that I was imagining the Diocese in form of a Church, and I thought that the life of Bishops and religious people in general was very different from ours. However, to my great surprise, everything was very casual there and similar to what I was used to.

I was very happy to meet with the religious leader of Shirak Diocese. He very well explained to us what role the church has in the process of peace building, that despite the Church discourages wars, it still tries to find ways for making peace when they happen.

*Ani Barseghyan
School # 40*

I had many impressions from the meeting with Bishop Michael Ajapahyan. It was a pleasure to listen to him and to ask questions. Before that meeting I have never been to Diocese, it was a very beautiful building especially from inside. Its silence was very calming and everybody was respectful towards each other. If such silence and calmness existed everywhere in the world, everybody would respect each other and wars would never again occur. My expectations came to life and I would like to participate in another meeting with the Bishop of Shirak Diocese.

Tamara Hovhannisyan
School # 40

Our meeting with Bishop Michael Ajapahyan was very interesting for me. I have never met him before and it was a great event for me. We spoke about peace, which is tightly connected with church because it is the major promoter of peace during wars. I have learnt many interesting and important things from that meeting and I hope that I will use those in the future.

Marianna Matevosyan
School # 40

I am delighted with the speech of Bishop Michael Ajapahyan. He was a very interesting and at the same time mystic person; he spoke to us in a very simple and clear manner. I was imagining a Diocese as a place very similar to a church, where people can light candles, however it was very different.

Michael Ajapahyan spoke mainly about the role of the churches in the process of peace building. He answered to many questions of our concern. I was very impressed from that meeting and I would very much like to see him again.



Derenik Tosunyan
School # 40



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*Anna Karapetyan, School #26
12 years old*