

REVIEW OF WANEP'S PEACE EDUCATION PROGRAMME

At the end of March 2004, the implementation of the pilot phase of the Active non-violence and Peace Education programme officially came to an end. After three years of setting out an ambitious programme to promote a culture of non-violence among young people as a preventive measure against violent conflicts, the programme went through various phases within the three years.

Below is a brief overview of the major activities and achievements of the entire programme

Phase 1

The first phase of the programme seemed to run parallel to the first year of the programme (April 2001 – March 2002). This year was a period of consultations and consolidation of the concept and building partnerships. Within this period, the following were key activities that took place;

1. Research -
2. Consultation process
 - ✚ Experts' meetings
 - ✚ Review of concept on the programme
 - ✚ Visits to Ministries of education and other institutions of education
 - ✚ Consultative and training workshops with teachers and ministry of education officials
3. Development of materials
 - Development of draft curriculum and teacher's guide for primary and junior secondary schools in English and French

Phase 2

The second phase of the pilot process was the strengthening of capacity in peace education with a broad objective of institutionalizing peace education in selected schools in seven countries in West Africa. This was an opportunity for WANEP to test the various peace education materials that had been developed. During this period, a number of activities that were not in the initial design of the programme were added on. From April 2002 to December 2003, the major activities carried out within the programme were as follows;

- Redesign of concept and strategy for the programme – Informed by the consultative process and challenges encountered in the first year, the programme was redesigned to ensure its efficient and effective implementation at both the regional and especially national level. The concept of introducing country teams which was not in the original plan was introduced to ensure ownership of the process at the national level and an effective monitoring and accompanying plan. Another major

change was in response to the huge challenges posed by the pedagogic differences between Anglophone and francophone cultures. This necessitated a change in strategy to focus on developing further the programme for Anglophone countries and using that experience to adapt to the francophone context.

- Development of draft peer mediation handbook in English and French
- TOT workshops for Anglophone and francophone country teams
- Training of teachers in theory and practice of teaching for peace and in peer mediation
- Training of peer mediators

Phase 3

- ✚ Setting up of peace clubs
- ✚ Practice of peer mediation
- ✚ Conducting in-school peace programmes
- ✚ Monitoring visits by WANEP and country teams
- ✚ Evaluation of the collaborative peacebuilding programme of which the Active Non-violence and Peace Education programme is a key part of

Strategy/ Process

- 1) Embarking on a peace education programme can be an expensive venture. There's therefore the need to be innovative and creative in finding ways to reduce cost. In response to this financial challenge, WANEP introduced the idea of forming country teams which was not in the initial design of the programme. The purpose of having the country teams was;
 - To provide a pull of trainers per country on issues relating to non-violence and peace education.
 - To ensure appropriate contextualisation of WANEP's non-violence and Peace Education programme
 - To ensure continuity and facilitate follow-up processes
 - To provide bridge between WANEP and relevant national institutions/organisations relating to education
- 2) The programme began with the formal sector of education to gather experience from a more structured setting (the school) and this we believe should facilitate future initiatives of adapting the materials developed into appropriate forms for use in non-formal settings.
- 3) The development of the materials states clearly that there is the need to introduce and lay emphasis on a new methodology that is a learner-centred approach. Nonetheless we believe that this can best be attained if the teachers who are to train the learners have a good knowledge and understanding of the issues to be taught and the methodology for teaching which promotes creativity and critical thinking. The first phases of the programme therefore focused immensely on the teacher and providing the teacher with tools that will hopefully provide the requisite knowledge,

skills and attitudes that will facilitate the process of challenging an old culture and creating a new one that promotes non-violence.

- 4) Once the teacher has this basic foundation, the attention shifts to the learner who will now have to be provided with the opportunity and space to put into practice the knowledge and skills acquired to facilitate the development of new attitudes. Here, two key things that we believe will help this happen is
 - i) The design and development of learner's handbook by the learners themselves with support from teachers and members of the country teams
 - ii) Formation of peace clubs where learners have the opportunity to put their mediation and other conflict resolution knowledge and skills into practice.

After these initial phases of designing peace education materials, training teachers and students and establishing peer mediation programmes in schools, the very last quarter of the programme cycle was dedicated entirely to monitoring the programme in schools and reflecting on the entire pilot phase and designing ways forward. The monitoring was conducted at both the national and regional levels of WANEP. At the national level, country team members in each of the project countries undertook visits to all the schools involved in the programme. In some instances, they were accompanied by the WANEP national network coordinators in the respective countries and some officials from the ministry of education. Staff from the regional secretariat accompanied the visits to schools in Ghana, Togo and Nigeria.

Objectives of monitoring visits

The monitoring visits were to serve the following objectives

- To assess the impact of the programme at the individual, school and community level
- To identify challenges to effective implementation of the programme
- To motivate students and teachers involved in the programme
- To discuss potential strategies for sustaining the programme at school level

Impact of the programme

The introduction of the peer mediation programme in the schools has made a great impact as the school authorities, teachers and members of the Peace Clubs have all acknowledged that:

- The peer mediators themselves have experienced changes in their own lives since they took up that challenge. They have become more disciplined both in school and at home; they have experienced improvement in their academic work
- A number of the mediators have been elected into leadership positions within their respective schools. In two schools in Ghana for instance all the mediators trained have been elected and in some cases nominated to be leaders in the schools
- The Peace Clubs have helped a lot of students deal with their conflicts in non-violent ways
- The student-teacher relationship has been enhanced
- Discipline is gradually gaining grounds in the schools
- The level of aggressiveness and bullying has greatly subsided
- A number of the schools are gradually and generally experiencing an atmosphere of peace and discipline
- The students have practiced mediation not only in school but have also introduced it in their respective homes. Some parents have even taken interest by reading the peer mediation manual that was handed out to them.
- The peer mediation programme has gained recognition not only in the school setting but has also been accepted in some communities and social institutions
- An appreciation by the ministries of education of the feasibility of carrying out and value of learning to live together programmes. The Ghana Education service, using the experience of WANEP and the materials developed, is now in the process of revising the syllabus for five subjects to incorporate key aspects of peace education. This initiative is being supported by UNICEF Ghana and the first drafts of the revised syllabuses are currently being tested in 7 UNICEF schools in Ghana.

Challenges

As could be noticed from the chart above, the situation in Liberia posed a huge challenge to the programme. Following the eruption of violence in early 2003 and the direct effect that had on the closing down of schools around the country, the peace education programme had to be suspended and resumed in late 2003 with a re-orientation of the programme to respond to the needs of the country at the time. Given the high levels of trauma among a lot of people especially children, the programme focused on developing informal programmes within the non-formal sector while waiting for schools to re-open. In the first quarter of the year therefore, the programme carried out a number of peace camps for young people in displaced camps with support from Actionaid Liberia and the German Agro Action. These camps were both training and recreational sessions. Once schools re-opened, trauma-healing sessions were conducted for both teachers and

students in preparation for the training of teachers and peer mediation programme.

- Lack of materials required for effective peer mediation
- Tensions between the use of mediation to resolve problems and the use of other punitive measures preferred by some teachers and schools authorities
- The influence of acts of violence by youth groups within the non-formal sector

- Sustaining the process has been extremely challenging at various levels. First of all, the programme has faced challenges raising funds to continue the various initiatives on the ground and to monitor the impact of the programme so far. At another level, the transfer of teachers and changing of schools of students involved in the programme also affects the programme.
- Lack of motivation of teachers has rendered coordination of the programme at school level very difficult
- Though students and school authorities are doing their best to provide alternative non-violent solutions to problems through mediation, adequate and appropriate space for mediation continues to be an issue. In most schools, mediation sessions are held out doors somewhere on the compounds of the schools. Obviously with no space, keeping of records of mediation sessions becomes another challenge in itself and this has consequences on the effectiveness of the mediation programme.
- At the school level, tensions between the use of mediation to resolve problems and the use of other punitive measures preferred by some teachers and schools authorities
- The influence of acts of violence by youth groups within the non-formal sector continues to pose a huge challenge to development of personal non-violent skills
- With the exception of Liberia that has paid staff for the peace education programme, follow-up on the programme at the national level is challenging due to the fact that there are no desk officers for the programme at the level.

Sustaining the process

Though the pilot phase has ended, the programme lives on in different forms at both national and regional levels. Monitoring visits have continued throughout the year, different in-school activities such as peace posters competition, peace march by children in Cote d'Ivoire, peace day celebrations in Togo were carried out and follow-up trainings sessions with teachers and students were conducted. In some schools in all the countries, teachers continue to devote part of their teaching time to topics developed in the peace education materials from

WANEP. Peace clubs in the various schools continue to hold their weekly meetings and conduct sensitization sessions on issues of peaceful living.

New Initiatives

Perhaps one of the greatest achievements of the year was the integration of peace education into the syllabus of five subject areas within the curriculum of the Ghana Education Service. This initiative of the ministry of education was supported by UNICEF Ghana. Another area of achievement has been with the programme in Liberia. The hard work of WANEP Liberia has rejuvenated the programme that was beset with serious challenges following the eruption of violence in March 2003 and has earned it a well developed peace education programme supported by the German Agroaction. An entire team of five persons has been appointed to run the various aspects of the programme which include conducting peace camps and training sessions for teachers and students and promoting peace through theatre. The programme is being implemented in 30 schools and four communities in Montserrado County in Liberia