



Peace and Conflict Resolution Education in schools of Armenia

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“Women for Development “ NGO

Women for Development (WFD) is a local-based, women-led, grass root organization based in Gyumri, Armenia since 1997. Its mission is to minimize the difference of social-economic condition between cities and remote communities in Armenia and to promote peace in the region.

WFD was founded when Armenia had to face lots of difficulties. Among them was the collapse of the Soviet Union, the ongoing Karabakh-conflict, the existing social-economic inequalities following the disastrous earthquake of 1988, the consequent poverty and the high unemployment, the polarization of the society and the increasing migration.

The main questions and topics

- q Why we came up with the idea to implement peace and conflict resolution education project?
- q When and how was “Peace Education in Schools” project launched?
- q The main approach and ideology of the project
- q The main activities
- q The main principles of conflict resolution education
- q The main skills and capacities of conflict resolution education
- q The main phases of conflict resolution education project
- q The main Strategy of the Peace Education program
- q Evaluation of the project progress
- q The process of institutionalization
- q Difficulties and challenges etc.

Why we came up with the idea to implement peace and conflict management education project?

One of the challenging issues our country had been faced during those years was: poverty, unemployment, social-economic difficulties, high level of migration, Kharabakh conflict, etc.

Those were issues that had their immediate impact on the society in general and on school and school environment as a part of this society.

A kid from poor, unemployed family “brings” his/her inner family conflict into school with him/her.

Frequently, conflict situations arise in student-student and student-teacher relationships, that can't be resolved by the students themselves.

This is the reason why we came up with the idea to teach children appropriate skills and knowledge through peace education that will enable them to manage their everyday conflicts.

When and how was “Peace Education in Schools” project launched?

PE project was launched in 2002 with the aim:

- To form peace culture and conflict resolution ideas among teachers and schoolchildren.
- To decrease the number of violation cases, to contribute to peaceful conflict resolution within schools and communities while creating a peaceful environment in our schools.



The main approach of conflict resolution education

- Each role-player in the process of education- the student, teacher, head of administration, parents should have similar knowledge and skills on conflict management and conflict resolution.
- ***None of them could reserve the right to resolve conflicts through application of power, physical or psychological violence and excessive authority.***
- Only in this case, we will be able to create an environment of peace in schools, decrease the number of conflicts between students, between students and teachers, teachers and parents, children and parents, and to reduce the number of violations in schools.

The main ideology of peace and conflict resolution education

Not to offer “ready solutions” for possible conflicts, it is rather to promote the development of students’ creative and independent thinking in order to find solutions for various conflicts and to manage conflicts avoiding violation.

The main principles and provisions of conflict resolution education

- Conflicts are an inseparable part of our lives.
- Conflicts are typical for all aspects of our lives.
- Conflicts have a great influence on each person, family, organization and on humanity in general.
- Conflicts have not only negative but also positive impact. While being involved in conflicts, we learn, we obtain new knowledge and skills, and enrich our personal experience.
- Violations in schools are possible to prevent.

The main skills and capacities in Peace and Conflict Resolution Education



Analyzing conflicts and discovering their roots

Developing practical skills for conflict resolution

The main skills and capacities in Peace and Conflict Resolution Education



Developing communication skills

Developing practical skills for conflict resolution

Developing an ability to listen

Main Strategy of the Peace Education program

Developing
the first Peace
education
training
course

Launching
peace
education
pilot project
in separate
schools

Evaluating the
impact of
Peace
Education at
schools

Integrating
parents, in-
service and
pre-service
teachers in the
learning
process

Cooperating
with the
National
Institute of
Education

Institution
alizing
Peace
Education

First Peace Education training course for the Armenian students

Based on the international experience and gained skills, the first Peace Education training course was designed in 2002.

Training courses for the team members

- ❑ CONTACT Peace Building and Conflict Transformation International School in the USA
- ❑ “Human Rights and Peace Education in Europe” teacher training course
- ❑ Etc.

The training course includes the following topics

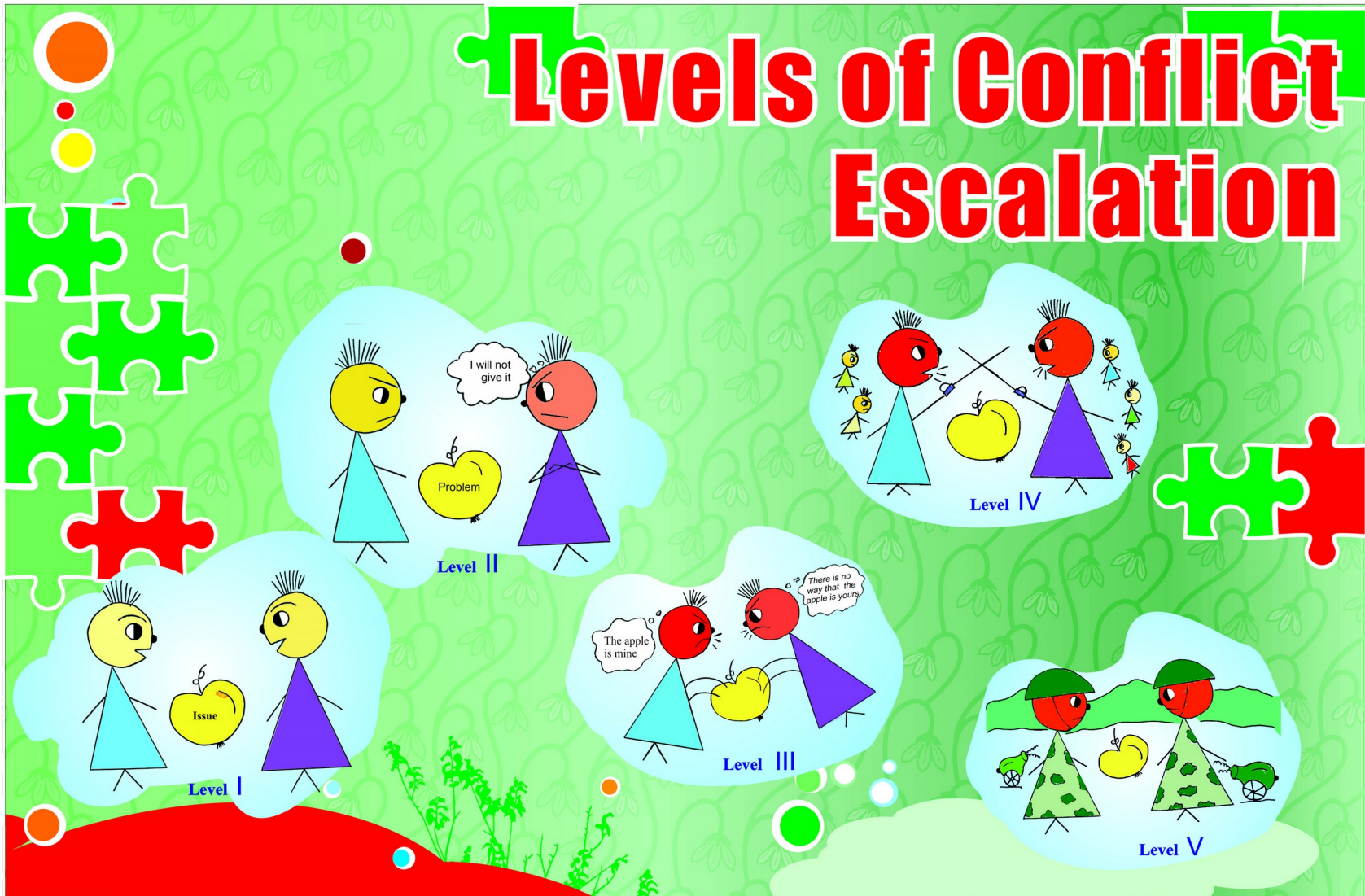
1. Conflict Management

- Definition of Conflicts and their Causes
- Conflict Escalation
- Conflict Management
- Possible Outcomes of Conflict
- Conflict Analysis and Mapping
- Skills for Peaceful Conflict Resolution
- Ways of Peaceful Conflict Resolution
- Negotiation and mediation, etc.

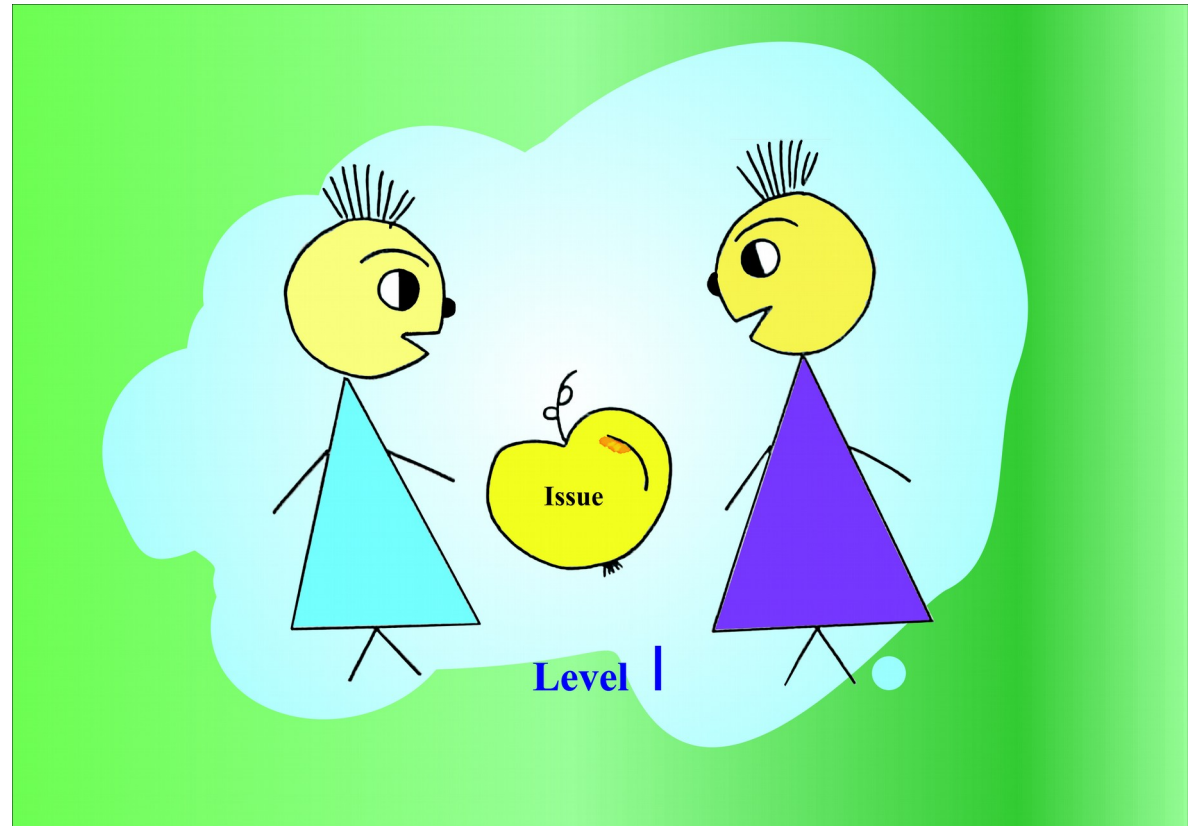
2. Peace Lessons

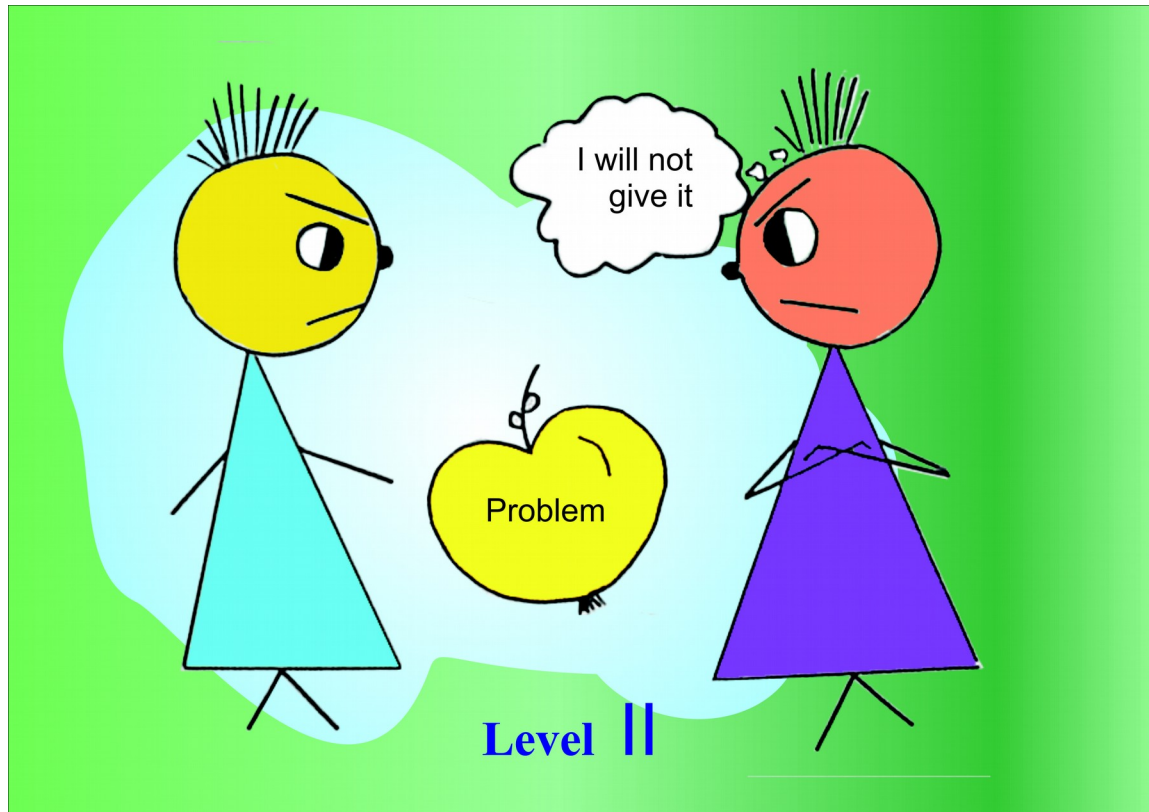
- Peace and Human Rights
- Gender and Conflict
- Health, Personal Hygiene and Conflict
- Unemployment, Social Problems and Conflicts, etc

Levels of Conflict Escalation



A problem came up and it needs a solution. We assume and hope that we can resolve this problem, and are ready to talk about it.



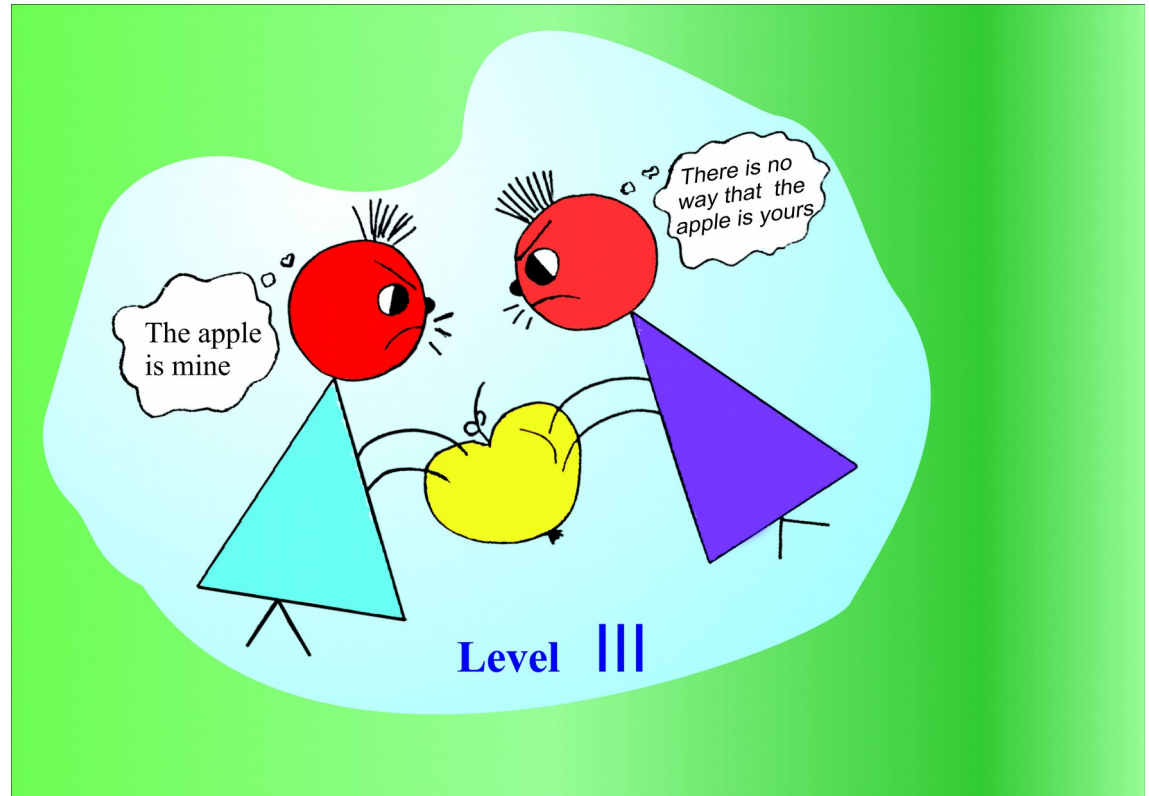


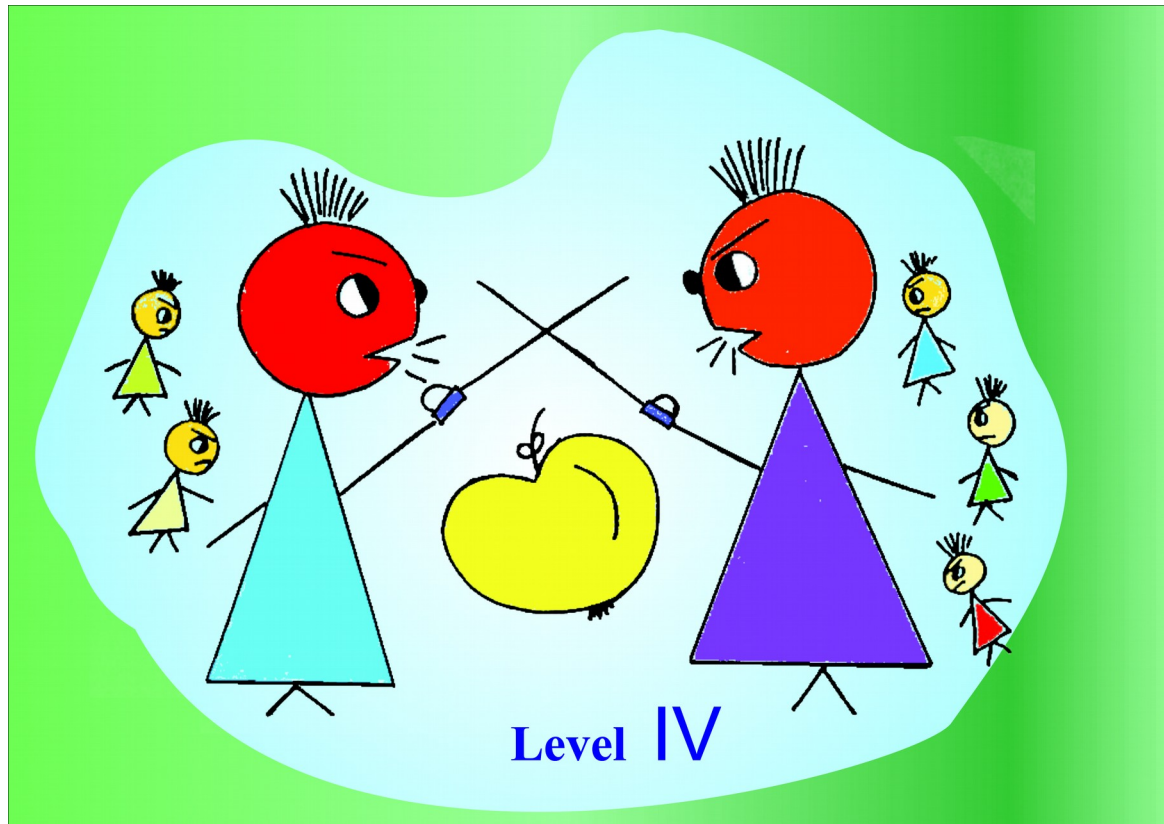
There is a disagreement between two sides.

Conflicting sides think that it is necessary to reach compromise, but it is difficult for them to reach an agreement and to communicate.

Competition already exists,
both sides have a desire to
reach the victory and they get
angry and emotional.

Neither of the sides wishes to
change their attitude.



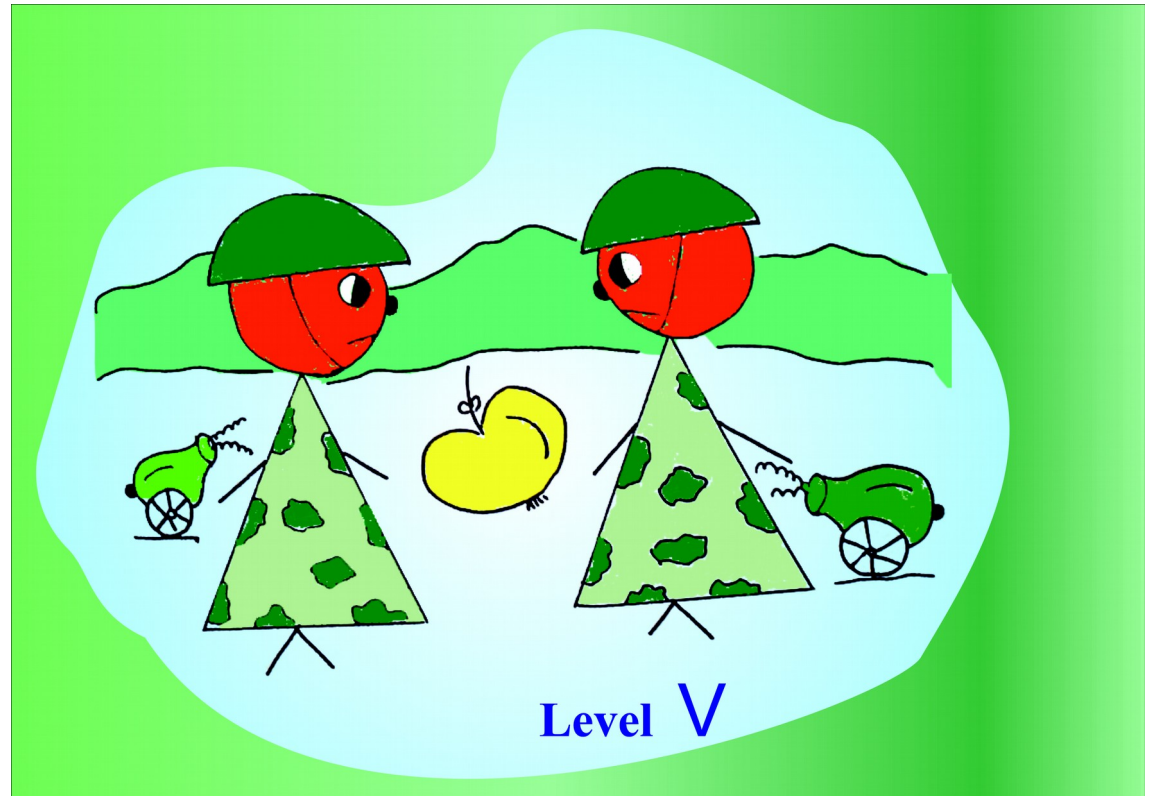


Open fight with the goal of offending each other.

The conflict sides become enemies, and both are seeking for supporters.

Open war with the goal of destroying the enemy.

Both sides are seeking for revenge, and there is zero communication between them.



CONFLICT PEACEFUL RESOLUTION SKILLS

Carry responsibility for your behavior, thoughts and feelings

Do not expand around the disputed issue, speak about concrete problem.

Do not "label" other people

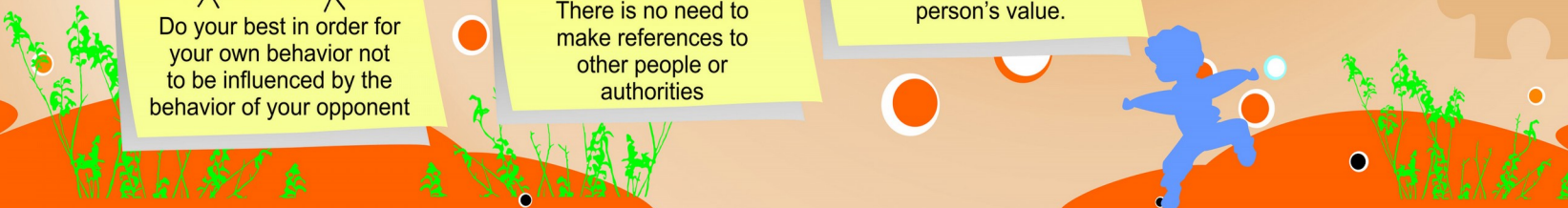
Do not make decisions under the impact of emotions, wait until you calm down.

Do your best in order for your own behavior not to be influenced by the behavior of your opponent

There is no need to make references to other people or authorities

Every person has a right to choose. You must respect the other person's value.

Express your feelings without threats.



PRINCIPLES OF CONFLICT PEACEFUL RESOLUTION



1

Try to analyze the situation

2

Try to understand your opponent

3

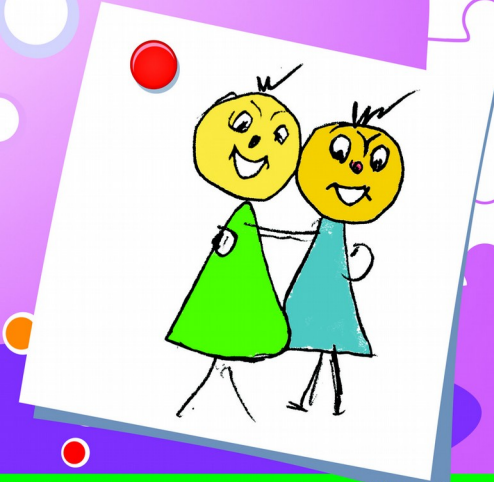
Be able to listen attentively

4

Ask questions

5

Try to find the best solution



The first stage of the project /2002-2004/

“Peace and Conflict Resolution Education” training was piloted in 5 schools of Armenia

- 150 schoolchildren
- 15 teachers
- 450 pupils (through peer-to-peer education methodology)

The second stage of the project /2005-2010/

Within this timeframe:

- The educational materials were revised
- The first methodological handbook for teachers was designed and published
- The organization started to actively collaborate with the National Institute of Education of Armenia.

Memorandum of Understanding signed with the National Institute of Education of the Ministry of Education and Science

In 2005 and 2007 Memorandums of Understanding were signed with the National Institute of Education of RA Ministry of Education and Science to support the implementation of “Peace and Conflict Resolution Education in Schools of Armenia” and the development of a methodological handbook for teachers.

The second stage of the project /2005-2010/

Establishment of Peace Education Centers in schools, organization of in-service and pre-service teachers trainings, seminars for parents and Peace education lessons for pupils

- 16 Peace Education Centers in schools
- 1000 pupils
- 550 in-service and 150 pre-service teachers
- 1200 parents



Evaluation of the project :

“Impact of Peace and Conflict Resolution Education on the students a few years after the studies” (2009)

<https://wfd.am/archives/380>

One of the major and follow-up strategic steps was the evaluation of the project outcomes, evaluation of the impact of peace education on schools based on the decrease of violence cases, the changes visible in the behavior of individual schoolchildren.

Evaluation was conducted in 2009. A survey was held in separate schools eight years later after integrating peace education, which made it possible to evaluate impact of peace and conflict resolution education on the students several years after the studies.

Evaluation of the project /2008-2009/

450 students and teachers from 10 schools and 120 parents were surveyed.

The results showed that due to the peace education course students gained skills and values like:

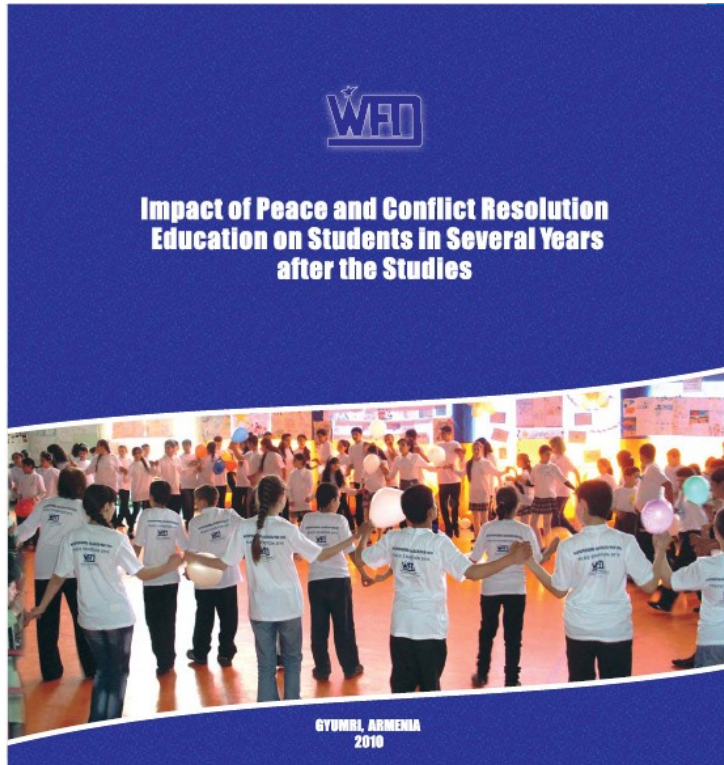
- Respect towards the history and cultures of various nations
- Self-confidence
- Ability to resolve everyday conflicts in non-violent ways, to protect own rights and understand responsibilities, etc.

Impact of Peace Education on the schoolchildren in several years after the studies

According to the teachers and parents, schoolchildren who participated in the project:

- Have changed their attitude towards conflict resolution and became more tolerant in inter-personal relations,
- The number of conflict situations decreased,
- Project participants are doing their best to avoid conflict situations arising from the so-called “little things”,
- Conflicts are mainly being resolved peacefully, without offending human dignity,
- They are trying to propose their own solutions for more serious political conflicts in the region, etc.

Conclusion



Summarizing the results of the conducted survey and the recommendations provided by all target groups, as well as based on our 8 years' past experience, personal observations and research, it was concluded that there was a real need for integrating peace education into the educational system.

Phase 4 (2011-2013)

During this period “Peace and Conflict Resolution Education in Schools” project was implemented in 360 schools of Armenia’s 11 provinces, reaching out to more than 2100 teachers/class heads and approximately 40000 pupils of 5-9th grades.

The main goal of the project was to create peaceful environment in schools of Armenia, to decrease the number of conflict situations with violent outcomes.

Three handbooks and a practical guidebook for teachers, posters and video materials were developed and published.

PHASE 4: CREATING PEACEFUL ENVIRONMENT IN SCHOOLS

2011-2013

360

SCHOOLS
in Armenia

- 11 marzes/provinces/
included in the project

2100

TEACHERS
in Armenia

- teachers/class heads
prepared to adapt the
peace education
programme

40000

PUPILS
in Armenia

- from the 5-9th grade
reached in the attempt
to decrease the number
of conflict situations with
violent outcomes

Evaluating the project progress/ 2013

With the goal of evaluating the project progress, we analyzed and compared the results of pre and post tests conducted among about 4000 schoolchildren from 70 schools.

The results of this research proved that the cases of school conflicts with violent outcomes decreased by 72%, cases of verbal violence decreased by 67%.

Teachers involved in project mention:

- The class head's hours became the most awaited and most pleasant classes for the pupils.
- Conflict resolution topics initiated high interest especially among the schoolchildren with low grades and those with "bad behavior".
- Pupils who usually did not participate in class discussions, started to take part in them, expressed their own opinions, made comments and recommendations.
- The course helped to develop analytical thinking among children.
- Positive changes were being observed not only in terms of the pupils' behavior, but also in their academic progress.
- Apologizing became easier even for the most conflicting children.
- The project contributes to the improvement of pupil-parent-teacher relationships.
- The pupils were able to manage and resolve everyday conflicts, without intervention of their teachers, parents or friends, etc.

Phase 5- Peace and Conflict Resolution Education in Schools 2014-2016

It has been planned to teach peace education in almost 60% of Armenian schools or in more than 850 schools by the end of 2016.

850 schools

6000

teachers!

70 000

Schoolchildren

The process of institutionalization

In September 2015 the National Institute of Education of Armenia sent an official letter to all schools in Armenia. The letter highlighted the importance of conflict management education and suggested schools to include those themes in the topics covered during class heads' hours.

The letter particularly said:

”One of the main functions of the class heads is to teach their pupils skills of collaboration, communication, “non-conflict” relations and conflict management. The “Conflict Management Education in Schools” methodical handbook designed for teachers is a practical tool for teaching those skills during their classes.

The handbook is available on the official website of RA National Institute of Education.

Challenges faced during the project implementation

Peace education was a completely new area for Armenia. There were no educational handbooks or training materials to use for designing the lessons, so it was necessary to start the process by attending to various trainings, studying international experience and finally localizing this experience in schools.

Challenges faced during the project implementation

- Another challenge was to have the permission of the Ministry of Education to implement this project in schools. In order to organize teacher trainings, and run any type of activity in schools, it was necessary to get special permission from the Ministry of Education and the National Institute of Education (NIE), which turned out to be a lengthy process for a local NGO.
- To address this challenge, we tried to earn trust at local level by engaging the local education department. The local education department gave us permission to implement the project in a pilot school. After the completion of this pilot, we submitted a report on the outcomes of the project, the draft educational materials, and a video film to the local educational department, and later to the National Institute of Education and the Ministry of Education.

Challenges faced during the project implementation

We held several meetings with the National Institute of Education and the Ministry of Education. The discussions started with a focus on integrating peace education in one province and later in all schools of Armenia.

Finally, we were granted the permission from both the National Institute of Education and the Ministry of Education.

The key to success

We are sure that the success we recorded in this project was largely due to "bottom to top" and "top to bottom" approach.



Thank you!!!