

## Religion and conflict - Agenda

- 9:00am **Welcome and introduction**  
Introduce the aims and agenda for the day and address any housekeeping issues. It is also a good idea to establish ground rules.
- 9:30am **Outside speaker: Personal experiences of conflict**  
Invite a guest speaker to talk to the group about their personal experiences of living or working in a conflict situation, either overseas or within the UK.
- 10:00am **Warm up activities: introducing peace and conflict**  
These activities introduce the idea of peace and conflict in a safe/non-threatening way which is conducive to people getting to know each other.
- 10:45am **Break**
- 11:05am **Group activities: What is conflict?**  
These group activities help participants think about definitions of conflict and peace, and understand that these are difficult concepts that mean different things to different people.
- 11:45am **Small group discussion: Talking about local conflict**  
These activities encourage participants to think about conflicts close to home and to understand that conflicts have many underlying causes.
- 12:45pm **Lunch**
- 1:45pm **Group discussion: Talking about local and global conflict**  
This discussion should help young people think about the knock on effects that global conflicts have on local community relations.
- 2:25pm **Energiser: 4 up**
- 2:35pm **Learning to act for peace**  
These activities close the day on a positive note with participants recognising their role as peacemakers.
- 3:30pm **Finish**

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- Ask participants to sit in a circle.
  - One participant or the leader should stand in the middle and say 'I have something in common with...' and insert a statement about themselves that is true and visible, for example, "I have something in common with people who are wearing jeans."
  - All those wearing jeans should swap places while the person in the middle dashes for a chair. This should leave someone different in the middle and the game continues.
  - After a few turns the game can progress to statements that are true but invisible, for example, "I have something in common with people who like to read."
  - After a few more turns change the subject to statements about conflict, for example, "I have something in common with people who enjoy a good argument" or "I have something in common with people who hate seeing fights".
- **Activity two: Agree/ Disagree**

Time: 15 minutes

Equipment: None, but a large room is helpful with space cleared

- Tell all of the participants that one end of the room means 'agree' and the other end means 'disagree'. The space in the middle means 'not sure'.
- Explain that you are going to read out a number of statements (see examples below).
- The participants should position themselves in the room according to whether or not they agree or disagree with the statement. After each statement they should discuss with someone near to them why they said what they did. Anyone confident enough can explain their choices to the whole group.

Example statements

- I would rather put up with someone annoying me than say something
- I sometimes enjoy arguing with my family
- It is really easy to get into arguments
- Sometimes I apologise even if something isn't my fault just to make peace
- I would always defend someone who was being picked on
- I try to break up fights I see
- If I see a fight I run away
- The main cause of conflict is people not understanding each other
- If we all mixed better there would be fewer conflicts
- Sometimes religions cause conflict
- Religion never causes conflict, people just use it as an excuse

If you are working with a group with mobility issues, or your space is not sufficiently flexible to carry out this activity you could try an alternative version. Divide participants into small groups and using flipchart paper map out a scale with 'agree', 'not sure' and 'disagree'. When you read out the statements ask participants to mark on the line whether they agree or disagree (this could be done with pens or stickers). They could then discuss their opinions in small groups and the most interesting questions or those with the most disagreement could be discussed as a larger group.

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- All three quotes below are from religious people. How do they fit with what is portrayed in the media about religions being a *cause* of conflict?

*"Peace, in the sense of the absence of war, is of little value to someone who is dying of hunger or cold. It will not remove the pain of torture inflicted on a prisoner of conscience. It does not comfort those who have lost their loved ones in floods caused by senseless deforestation in a neighbouring country. Peace can only last where human rights are respected, where the people are fed."*

The Dalai Lama

*"When we have inner peace, we can be at peace with those around us."*

The Dalai Lama

*"True peace is not merely the absence of tension: it is the presence of justice."*

Martin Luther King Jr

## 5. Small group discussion: Talking about local conflict (1 hour)

- Divide the participants into groups of four.
- Activity one: Why, why, why is it happening?

Time: 40 minutes

Equipment: post-it notes in several different colours / index cards, pens, flipchart paper

- Ask the groups to think of a local conflict. This could be two gangs in school, or bullying in school or perhaps something less threatening, such as groups of people who do not mix. As the participants are thinking about experience of conflict in their own lives, it may be worth reminding participants of the group's ground rules so that all are able to participate.
- Explain that sometimes people try to solve conflicts without looking at the root of the problem. For example, police seeing young people hanging around at a bus station might move them on, but this will move the potential conflict rather than addressing the cause, which might be having nowhere for young people to hang out.
- Explain to the participants that they can do better than this and that they can investigate the real underlying causes of the conflicts in their area. Give each group a piece of flipchart paper and ask them to write the conflict that they have identified at the top.
- Ask them to think about why this conflict has arisen and get them to write their answers on post-it notes. They should then look at the post-it notes and ask why this happens and write it underneath.
- They should continue trying to find reasons and try to break the causes down as far as possible.
- An example of this process is set out below.
- Getting to the root of the problem may involve facing quite difficult issues. Remind participants of the ground rules, ask them not to blame individuals (or name names) and challenge them to be as fair as possible.
- Participants move round and look at the work of the other groups.

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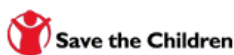
- Bring the groups back together for brief feedback and ask the following questions:
  - Was it easy to break the problems down?
  - Did they agree over causes?
  - Were they surprised to see how deep the problems went?
  - If the local/small conflicts have that many levels how easy would it be to find the causes of bigger conflicts, such as the war in Iraq or the conflict in the Middle East?
- **Activity two: Concentric circles**

Time: 20 minutes

Equipment: none

- Bring the groups back together and then divide the whole group into two. Ask them to stand in two circles, an inner circle and an outer circle.
- Members of the outer circle should face in, and members of the inner circle should face out, so that each participant is facing someone else.
- Read out one of the problems from the previous exercise. The participants should discuss with their partner a potential solution to this problem.
- After two minutes ask the people in the inner circle to each move one step to the right so that they have a new partner.
- Read out the next problem and ask them to discuss solutions.
- Repeat until all of the problems have been solved!!

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## 6. Group discussion: Talking about local and global conflict (50 minutes)

- Divide participants into groups of 10-12.
- **Activity one: World conflicts**

Time: 10 minutes

Equipment: a world map, wrapped sweets/tokens

You may want to prepare some factsheets in advance on some of the conflicts happening at the current time. BBC online has some good factual summaries.

- Place sweets on areas of the world map where there are conflicts.
- The first participant to tell you where the conflict is and something about it gets to eat the sweet.
- **Activity two: What's that got to do with me?**

Time: 20 minutes

Equipment: worksheets (see below) cut up into sets, enough for one per group

Stage one (10 minutes)

- Ask participants if they think there are connections between what happens in conflicts overseas and conflicts here in the UK.
- Divide participants into groups, giving each group one of two envelopes with a question on it. Ask participants if they can guess the answer to the question. If not, they should open the envelopes and piece the connections together (see worksheets).

Stage two (10 minutes)

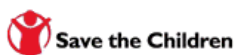
- Bring the group back together.
- Ask the following questions:
  - Do you think there are links between conflicts abroad and conflict in the UK?
  - We saw that there were connections between the two events in each example. But does this mean that one event caused the other? (If they have difficulty understanding the difference, ask if the execution of the prisoner led to every mosque being threatened).
  - What are other factors that caused the local conflict?
  - Can they think of other examples, eg, trouble in Kashmir; desecration of cemeteries.
- **Activity three: Debate**

Time: 20 minutes

Equipment: none

- Explain to participants that though there may be connections between events these are not necessarily the causes of events. Explain that sometimes global issues can have a negative effect on communities here, but sometimes they have no effect at all, and sometimes they may even have positive effects, (for example, the war in Iraq has

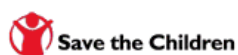
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caused tensions, but some communities have been brought closer in joint non-violent protest).

- Divide participants into two groups. Give them 10 minutes to prepare a debate. One side should argue that global conflicts cause conflicts here in the UK. The other side should argue that conflicts in Britain are caused by local issues, for example gang rivalries or poverty.
- Facilitate the debate, referring participants back to ground rules if necessary. If some participants are reluctant to speak they could be involved by recording key points on the whiteboard.
- Conclude by saying that if negative events can have an effect on community relations, so can positive ones, and that in the next session you will be exploring ways of promoting a more peaceful society.

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## Activity two: What's that got to do with me?

### WORKSHEET 1

- Cut up these statements, shuffle them and put them in an envelope. Write the question on the front of the envelope.

What's the connection between Iraqis being held in US/UK prisons in Baghdad and a mosque being threatened in Bradford?

*Worried about increasing violence, soldiers from the UK and US army put some Iraqis in prison, they believe this will make Baghdad safer.*

*A group of young men in Baghdad are very angry that some of their friends are in prison, especially because they are being held by white soldiers.*

*The young men see that there are some white workers on a building site. They think that if they take some of them prisoner, then they will be able to make a deal to get their friends released.*

*The group of young Iraqis kidnap one of the white workers.*

*They hold him for many days saying that they will kill him unless their friends are released.*

*Many videos are made, showing the white worker pleading for his life, and the kidnappers talking about being good Muslims. These videos are shown around the world and people in England know the story very well. They hope that the kidnappers will release the white worker.*

*The videos become increasingly violent and the worker looks more desperate. People in England become extremely angry about the situation.*

*After several months the young men realise that their friends are not going to be released and murder the white worker.*

*The news of the murder makes the front pages of newspapers all over the world.*

*Some men in Bradford are angry about the murder. On their way back from the pub they phone a mosque, they say that as Muslims have killed "one of them" they will get revenge and kill "one of you". As they pass the mosque they throw a brick through the window.*

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## WORKSHEET 2

- Cut up these statements, shuffle them and put them in an envelope. Write the question on the front of the envelope.

What's the connection between a debate about a cartoon in Denmark and threats of violence in London?

*A Danish newspaper published a page of cartoons, depicting the Muslim Prophet Muhammad, published on page 3 of the paper's second section.*

*The drawings caused offence to some Muslims, as Islam forbids images of the prophet and some of the images linked the Prophet with images of terrorism.*

*There were some complaints and protests in Denmark, but these quickly died down.*

*The cartoons were reprinted in a newspaper in Norway. Libya and Saudi Arabia recalled their ambassadors from Copenhagen, and a boycott of Danish goods began.*

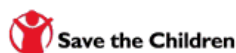
*The story suddenly became big news, and four months after the publication of the original cartoons many European newspapers reprinted them. Some of them showed the Prophet with a bomb on their front page. No British newspaper printed the cartoons.*

*Angry protests started around the Muslim world. Demonstrations turned to violence in Syria, Lebanon and Indonesia, where the Danish embassies were destroyed by mobs. In Nigeria, 11 churches were burnt down and 16 people died.*

*Images of violent protests in Muslim countries now filled the media.*

*Protesters in London carried placards carrying violent slogans including "Butcher those who mock Islam", and "Europe you'll pay, Bin Laden is on his way".*

### PARTNER ORGANISATIONS:





# DIVERSITY AND DIALOGUE.

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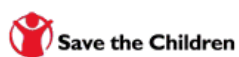
- Activity three: Next steps

Time: 10 minutes

Equipment: sticker dots, blu tac

- Stick all of the grids up around the room and give each participant three sticker dots.
- Ask them to vote for the actions they think they should take forward as a group by sticking their dots next to these suggestions.
- This can provide a framework for future work.

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## Activity one: Making peace grid

What do you think are the biggest causes of conflict?	
What would you like to see change?	
What can we do as a group ?	
When should we do this?	
What help do we need?	
Who can help us?	
What are the next steps?	

### PARTNER ORGANISATIONS:

