

## **Peace Education and Conflict Resolution Education Working Group Summary**

The Peace Education (PE) and Conflict Resolution Education (CRE) working group was comprised of 47 participants representing 25 nations from across all global regions identified by GPPAC. The stated objectives of the working group were: 1) to become informed about the current state of practice in PE and CRE and the level of collaboration between governments and NGOs/CSOs among the attending nations; 2) to identify best practices for advancing the use of PE and CRE in the prevention of violent conflict and the challenges to implementing those best practices; and 3) to develop recommendations to overcome these challenges and encourage CSO/government collaboration with specific action plans and assignment of responsibility where possible.

During session I, representatives from several countries, including but not limited to Columbia, Canada, Germany, Lebanon, Northern Ireland, Norway, Sierra Leone, and Thailand, shared information on the CRE and PE work underway in their countries. Following this structured sharing, participants worked in small groups to continue discussion regarding current practice and to identify themes across their individual contexts to provide a structure for work in the remaining working group sessions. The small group interaction provided everyone the opportunity to share what is happening in their country, exchange ideas and lessons learned, and ask questions of one another. The community building aspect of this first session made it possible for the PE and CRE working group to engage in direct and in-depth conversation and develop clear and concise recommendations by the end of the working group process. At the end of session I, the small groups had identified four main interest areas for session II: Higher Education/Adult Training; Conflict Resolution in K-12, including Peer Mediation; Policy; and Violent Conflict.

In session II, participants self-selected small groups based on the areas of interest identified the previous day. Each group discussed the same three questions:

1. What are the challenges you face in doing PE and CRE work?
2. What has worked to overcome these challenges?
3. What else needs to be done/can be done to overcome these challenges?

A summary statement of challenges from across all areas of interest includes:

- Acknowledgement of the role of PE and CRE in the prevention of violent conflict by stakeholders at all levels including international organizations, governments, education administrators, teachers, and faculty, parents, students and members of the local community;
- Need for policies or mandates to encourage support of PE and CRE and hold necessary actors accountable;
- Difficulty in obtaining necessary financial and resource support;
- Recognition of the challenges of dealing with interethnic conflict and how it impacts a regional or global approach to PE and CRE; and

- Determining how best to provide PE and CRE training to stakeholders, both adults and children.

The groups discussed strategies they have employed to address these challenges such as finding groups of committed champions, employing creative approaches to education and training, conducting research to illustrate the effectiveness of PE and CRE, networking across stakeholder groups including government, NGOs/CSOs and educational institutions, leveraging legislation or policy mandates where possible, and conducting conferences. Beginning the work of developing recommendations, the group also identified new approaches to addressing challenges.

At the end of session II, the working group reached consensus on the challenges to the advancement of PE and CRE in the prevention of violent conflict on which they would focus the following day. Participants indicated interest in discussing recommendations to address each challenge to set the stage for the final working group session.

Session III focused on developing recommendations and workable action plans for 11 challenge areas. The session was conducted in two rounds of small group discussion, offering participants the opportunity to address two challenges of relevance to their work. Small groups answered three questions: 1) what do we recommend to address this challenge? 2) what can we do to implement this recommendation? And 3) who will do it? While a variety of recommendations were discussed, two seem of particular relevance to the goals of GPPAC.

In discussion of nearly every challenge, the value of an international network and clearinghouse on CRE and PE was raised. Functions of the network included creating an inventory of resources such as curriculum and training materials, providing opportunities to share knowledge and expertise, offering a clearinghouse of existing legislation and policies related to PE and CRE, conducting/supporting forums and conferences, providing samples of best practices, and supplying access to existing research and evaluation. The groups also recommended encouraging regional conferences to bring together stakeholders with similar needs and concerns to learn from and share with one another. A full report on the challenges, recommendations and action plans developed in session III is available from the working group coordinators.

Twenty five participants representing 15 of the countries participating in the GPPAC working group attended a follow-up meeting at Hunter College, City University of New York on Friday July 22, 2005 to continue the momentum established at the Global Conference. This meeting was designed to begin conversation regarding the development of an International Network on Conflict Resolution in Education and Peace Education. The four topics discussed were: 1) understanding the definition and scope of CRE and PE; 2) identifying elements of a mission statement for the international network; 3) goals of the international center; and 4) creating initial infrastructure via working groups. The group will reconvene to continue development of the network in late September in conjunction with the Ohio Commission on Conflict Management and Dispute Resolution's national conference on conflict resolution education.