

Adolescents and peacebuilding

The Adolescent Kit supports adolescents to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes that can help them to promote peace and transform conflict.

Adolescents can play an important role in building peace and contributing to positive social change during humanitarian situations. They can introduce peaceful behaviours to their communities, change negative social attitudes or practices, and help to disrupt cycles of conflict and violence that pass from one generation to the next. As the next generation of adults, they are in a unique position to contribute to real changes in their lives, their families and their communities.¹

Adolescents have much to offer peacebuilding

During times of conflict and instability, adolescents are not just victims or drivers of violence. They can also act as ‘agents of peace,’ – condemning violence, and urging that it be replaced by peaceful and caring ways of resolving conflict. Despite adversity, and often against the odds, adolescents find ways to contribute to their families, to address problems and to overcome difficulties. They bring energy and enthusiasm to rebuilding their communities, and contribute to humanitarian relief efforts.

Engaging adolescents as peacebuilders with the Adolescent Kit

The activities in the Adolescent Kit empower adolescents to develop **key competencies** – knowledge, skills and attitudes – that can help them to become peacebuilders. The idea is to support adolescents to think, behave and relate to others in ways that promote peace within their immediate lives, friends and family, and to encourage them to build on this foundation to contribute to broader social change in their communities.

The Adolescent Kit provides adolescent girls and boys with space to practise building peace within their Adolescent Circles as well as in their interactions with the wider community. This includes supporting adolescents to:

- ▶ See themselves as active citizens, peacebuilders or leaders, who can and do make positive changes in their lives and their communities, rather than as victims;

Engaging adolescents as peacebuilders goes beyond just creating peaceful adolescent girls and boys. It is about supporting adolescents to actively promote peace and transform conflict in their own lives, and through interactions with their family, friends and community.

- ▶ Overcome stereotypes and prejudices through group work with adolescents from different cultures, backgrounds and ethnic groups and opportunities to share stories and perspectives;
- ▶ Resolve conflicts in constructive and non-violent ways, compromise, negotiate and engage with others to make decisions;
- ▶ Practice teamwork and cooperation, build positive relationships and demonstrate respect, empathy and tolerance for others; and
- ▶ Develop hope for a peaceful future for their families and communities and set goals for achieving it.

Activities in the Adolescent Kit can also provide adolescents with more direct opportunities to explore and understand the conflicts that affect them, and to find ways to contribute to peace in their communities. Engaging adults and working to overcome sometimes negative perceptions of adolescents as troublemakers or burdens are critical to these efforts.

Activities for adolescents could include:

- ▶ Participating in conflict analysis exercises to explore the causes, consequences and impacts of conflict, and to identify opportunities for building peace;
- ▶ Conducting inter-generational dialogues with adults to discuss ways of jointly promoting peace and resolving violence;
- ▶ Collaborating with adults on joint cultural events, interfaith dialogues, community development projects or relief efforts, as a way to break down negative perceptions or distrust;
- ▶ Forming peace or mediation clubs, and promoting peace through drama, art and music performances; and
- ▶ Conducting projects to examine the perspectives of different community members and exploring different paths toward peace.

¹ Source: United Nations Children’s Fund, Engaging Adolescents in Conflict Analysis: A guidance note, UNICEF, New York, 2013.

² Adolescents may be actively involved in fighting and violence during conflicts, both within and outside of armed forces and armed groups.

It is important to remember that there are large forces that drive conflicts – poverty, inequality, exploitation, marginalisation – which adolescents can't be expected to overcome on their own. However, by supporting adolescent girls and boys to change the ways they relate to others, by modelling participatory, inclusive ways of working together, and by fostering positive connections with adults, the Adolescent Kit can help adolescents to take a first step toward building more stable and peaceful communities.

Link to the **Peacebuilding section of Resources** for more information and support in this area.