

Peace Gang

Sri Lanka

Profile

The world we have created is a product of our way of thinking.

- Albert Einstein

The need for Peace Education in Sri Lanka

Generations repeat the mistakes of former generations and conflict and violence become permanent facets of human societies. Therefore it is time for educators to educate children and youth, their parents, teachers and leaders in the principles of peace so that it will become an inter-disciplinary exercise in order to integrate into our attitude and daily behavior.

Peace begins within ourselves - personal calm in mind and body and then extends to racial equality rather than racial discrimination, equality among all people rather than social and economic hierarchy, equality between the sexes rather than male dominance over females, co-operation rather than competition, sharing our food and other world resources rather than wasting and hoarding, preserving nature rather than exploiting her, self-mastery and self-understanding rather than control and power over others and the use of the skills and the talents of every human being for the love and care of all things.

Broadly, Peace Education can be defined as teaching individuals the information, attitudes, values and behavioural competencies needed to resolve conflicts without violence and build and maintain mutually beneficial, harmonious relationships. The ultimate goal of Peace Education is for individuals to be able to maintain peace among aspects of themselves (intrapersonal peace), groups (inter-group peace) and countries, societies and cultures (international peace).

And to achieve this goal, where is a better place to begin than with the children who occupy a nation's schools ?

The very first of the schools in Sri Lanka that embraced the Peace Education are **La Petite Fleur Schools**, including their sister school - Bridge2Peace Montessori House of Children, in Lunugamwehera in the deep down south of Sri Lanka.

Bridge2Peace, is a non-profit charitable organization, which was set up to build up the holistic development of Sri Lanka's deprived, excluded and vulnerable children most of whom were affected by decades of a brutal civil war.

Taking a step further, a volunteer group of parents and children from La Petite Fleur schools, under the able guidance of **Mrs Bernadine Anderson**, a renowned educationist and the Head of La Petite Fleur Schools, formed the '**Peace Gang**' in April 2008, to work towards sowing the seed of peace in Sri Lanka.

Averting war is the work of politicians; establishing peace is the work of Education.

- Dr Maria Montessori

The Peace Gang in Sri Lanka

This non-profit volunteer group from La Petite Fleur schools comprised of concerned citizens & their children – all of whom have a common vision that could be a powerful catalyst for promoting peace in Sri Lanka.

The group is committed to building peace based on the following **beliefs**:

- We believe in human dignity.
- We believe in the right to freedom.
- We believe that everyone has the right to live in peace.
- We believe in compassionate acceptance and understanding of our multicultural society.
- We believe in maintaining the integrity of our welcoming Sri Lankan society.

The **purpose** of the Peace Gang is:

- To inculcate the values of peace in children, beginning from a tender age of 4 years and above
- To focus our efforts on awareness and education of peace building directed to children as well as adults. We focus on creating a peaceful mind in the child by instilling qualities of equality, tolerance, peaceful conflict resolution and the like.
- To explore ways and collaborate in building peace together in the community.
- To create and organize forums that will reach not just those who are already convinced of the need to build peace in our community, but to reach a broader community.

The Peace Gang meets once a month on the first Saturday.

Through the peace materials, techniques and lessons the children are guided to develop a common language of peace and a way of keeping in touch with their own internal peaceful centres. Children as well as adults who participate in this program, work on their own communication, peace making and peace keeping skills, knowing that their example has much more impact than the words. By nurturing their own peaceful possibilities along with assisting the children in developing their own, Peace Gang participates in the evolution of a science of peace and a positive direction for humanity. As Dr Maria Montessori stated in “Education for Peace”.

Margaret Mead once said “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed it is the only thing that ever has”.

Noteworthy Peace Gang activities for the 2nd half of 2008

World Peace Day Celebrations - 21st September, 2008

Peace Gang hopes to create a mini 'world', celebrating the diversity of vibrant cultures that we have whilst highlighting the importance of peace for a just and sustainable world. The event will take the form of an international fair, where each continent will be represented by a group of children from the Peace Gang, assisted and guided by their parents and the Peace Gang Coordinators. National costumes, food, facts & figures and other souvenirs from the countries chosen will be on display. Hand crafted items and food unique to each continent will also be on sale at this fair in order to raise funds for the Peace Gang.

Visit to Lunugamwehera, Bridge2Peace (B2P) Montessori House of Children - November, 2008

A day visit to B2P, La Petite Fleur sister school in Lunugamwehera, is in the Peace Gang calendar for 2008. The aim behind this four hour long journey from Colombo is to give an opportunity for the Peace Gang members to interact with these under privileged children, create awareness and a link between them. Most of the children studying at B2P, where the education is free of charge, have lost either both parents or one, due to the civil war or tsunami. It is encouraging to see that these children, the teachers, parent community and other volunteer groups in the remote village of Lunugamwehera embracing our work with the Peace Curriculum. Peace Gang plans to do activities such as craft work and role play with B2P children. Helping others also has the direct effect of increasing one's own personal peace and well-being, the foundation to promote peace in our communities and in the world.

Christmas Party - December, 2008

In an effort to bring joy to those for whom life's rough edges are generally reserved, Peace Gang intends inviting children from an orphanage to celebrate Christmas with them in December. In addition, the members are making plans to visit a Children's ward of a hospital to have a Christmas party for them. Peace Gang children are encouraged to set aside some of their pocket money for charitable purposes. Using these funds they are advised to make their own Christmas cards and gift boxes for these children sharing love and compassion all around.

Christmas Card Project - 2008

A fund raising project during Christmas to inspire Peace Gang children to use their talents in our peace building efforts is in progress. The Peace Gang children's Christmas related drawings will be used for these season's greetings cards, which will be sold to our friends in the community. Art itself will bring inner peace, an oasis of healing and joy, which is the foundation of a sustained and progressive culture of peace.

Help Build Sustainable Partnerships : Support Our Peace Building Efforts