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## Community Without Frontiers

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PROGRAMA UNIVERSITARIO DE ESTUDIOS DE GENERO U N A M

### Life Without Violence - The school as pioneer

#### Meta-Aim

To bring about change in social behaviour towards a society which is harmonious, just and caring, whose citizens know and aware of their rights and duties, and who are equipped with alternative habits for active involvement.

The specific proposed programmes: "Life Without Violence – the School as Pioneer" is one of the projects of a comprehensive plan for the enhancement of this change which CWF has initiated and developed: "Democratizing Democracy: Awareness & Action".

#### Rationale

We believe that life without violence is possible.

Violence poses a serious problem for all of us, be it as victims, as those who cause harm or simply as witnesses. Expressions of stress, fear, depression, despair, cynicism – with their immediate, sometimes violent results - are widespread. This alarming picture demonstrates a quality of life many young people may be leading.

Violence is on the increase. It has become a vicious circle from which it seems difficult to exit. The problem may be ignored by students, denied, or even dismissed – but it is there to affect them now and later on, with possible dire consequences difficult to envisage, in terms of both their individual lives and of society at large.

We all understand that something should be done about violence at school and within communities, and done so urgently. A "simple" solution based on re-introducing strict discipline, as in the "good old days", is virtually impossible and can even be counterproductive. Given that we live in a more open society where we demand transparency and accountability, we must seek innovative ways to address the problem of violence.

Creative Cooperation and collaboration of all participants are indeed crucial. Therefore, we believe that young students themselves should be given full range of imaginative responsibilities in order that they take an active part in all stages of dealing with this problem. It may enrich us all with perhaps new thinking, opening new avenues that we, adults, have not yet considered.

1- Educacion  
2- Violencia  
3- Escuelas

## Aims

- To increase the awareness of violence and its implications in all areas of life, in society at large and in schools in particular.
- To equip students with effective skills to enable them to deal with conflicts in a non-violent ways, and even prevent such situations from arising.
- To encourage students to come up with creative ideas for the uprooting of violence.
- To increase and focus the support of the leaders and members of the community in the pioneering efforts of the school in building up “Life Without Violence”.
- To develop creative relationships and co-operative activities between the school, the community and the police towards the uprooting of violence within the community.
- To develop constructive contacts with different bodies in and outside the community working for similar goals on local, national and international levels.

## Means

- Training for teachers: their active role in the process of change
- An anonymous questionnaire on Violence.  
This questionnaire covers varied aspects of violence. It helps to clarify the students’ thoughts and feelings by giving them a more organised picture of the problem. Sensitive though direct, the questionnaire enables them to be open and honest about their answers. Moreover, it encourages them to draw on their resourcefulness and imagination and come up with their own ideas and strategies for possible solutions.
- Creating a Charter for the whole school, detailing “Life Without Violence”.
- Creating a yearlong project for schools based on the results of the questionnaire and using Community Without Frontiers’ (CWF) educational projects for schools (See background to the questionnaire).
- Involving, step by step, the whole community, including the police, in the process, through a variety of meetings and workshops. Participants will get to know each other: students will visit police stations, public institutions, NGOs, etc.; police and other people from the community will visit in classes; the school will initiate public debates on relevant topics, etc. – culminating in celebrations.
- At the end of this unique learning experience and as its organic continuation, the students will create bodies for their own social and cultural initiatives – locally, nationally and internationally – to deal with violence and with other social problems.

*Students, teachers and parents  
will be involved in all stages of the process*

### **The targeted population**

- a. Junior schools and highschools – students, teachers and parents – will be involved throughout the project.
- b. Teachers, directors and administrators will be involved in specific parts of the project.
- c. Members of the community, including the police, will gradually and organically become involved in the process of the implementation.
- d. Other communities and the wider society – as a larger targeted population.

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## **“Life Without Violence” Project**

### **Steps of Implementation**

The work will be carried out in schools, in the community and with the police, the goal being to raise awareness of the urgency of solving the problem of violence. We will acquaint the participants with our project and equip them with the tools for attentive dialogue and creative cooperation.

1. An intensive course of two weeks, three days a week of eight hour session for the school teachers, led by two counselors from the staff of the two charities, Community Without Frontiers (CWF) and MIFGASH, will prepare the teachers for this project. The course will include workshops on racism, stereotypes, communal working and guidelines on the questionnaire.

2. The students (12-18 years old) will study and debate the questionnaire on Violence (See rationale) in class, to make sure everything is completely understood, and only then will they answer it anonymously. A group of adults - experts in statistics or in other relevant disciplines - volunteer parents and other members of the community, together with a number of students, representatives of all the classes, will go over the questionnaires and write the results.

3. Based on the results and using CWF's educational model of its other school projects, CWF, together with the students and their teachers, will create a yearlong project for the whole school - three hours a week in class, and beyond the confines of the classroom - a variety of connected tasks. (See background to the questionnaire for suggested topics for this project and for the learning modalities and skills which are part of it.)

[We may decide to use one of the already developed topics, all relevant to the problem. (See document which describes our educational philosophy - Multidimensional Interactive Education - MIE and other projects.)]

4. The students, their teachers, the administrative staff and all the other school personnel will take part in creating a Charter, detailing the goals and rules of Life Without Violence. A chosen committee will be in charge of supervising the implementation of the rules and will function as a tribunal.

5. CWF's or Mifgash's representatives will work at school for a number of weeks, helping with the implementation of the project and occasionally supervising until the end of the school year.

6. Three workshops on specific skills of ten hours each will be given to the students and their teachers as well as to parents who wish to participate:
  - a) the art/technique of interviewing;
  - b) Critical reading of any text, written or multi-media;
  - c) Non violent communication. These will be led by experts in their field.
7. The students' work on their topics will naturally bring them into close contact with their families, with members of their community, public authorities, the media and the police. Eventually these encounters will lead to a structured cooperation between them and their community (See below).
8. Step by step the whole community, including the police, will be involved in the process, through a variety of meetings and workshops. Participants will get to know each other: students will visit police stations, public institutions, NGOs, etc.; police and other people from the community will visit in classes; the school will initiate public debates on relevant topics, etc.
9. We will initiate a number of public meetings with the general community to explain our project and the ways we could collaborate. We will establish working committees for this purpose.
10. The designated committees will meet on a fortnightly basis with the students and the teachers, to create, devise and evaluate the activities and events during the seven months (the school year) and beyond.
11. We will offer the police a questionnaire on racism and violence based on the same model to be used for students. The results will be incorporated in a series of workshops for the police on relevant subjects, e.g. prejudice, racism, multiculturalism, living in a fast changing world, Non Violent Communication, etc. A special workshop will be given to acquaint them with our project and create together ways for fruitful collaboration.
12. We will use a similar questionnaire for the community at large and the parents in particular. Similar workshops as designed for the police will be given to this population.
13. Encouraged – and by now equipped and experienced –, the students will decide how to carry on their initiatives in dealing with social, economic and cultural problems, either by joining existing bodies (charities, NGO, etc.) or by establishing their own bodies, locally, nationally or globally.
14. This yearlong work will culminate with celebrations for all the participants.
15. At the end of the school year we will organise a two day conference for all participants, including objective professionals, to evaluate the work.
16. CWF and MIFGASH will publish the evaluation and other useful documents and distribute it to other educational organisations.