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**LEARNING TO LIVE TOGETHER**

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**EXPLORING HUMANITARIAN LAW:**

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**ARMED CONFLICT AND**

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**EDUCATION FOR SOCIAL COHESION<sup>1</sup>**

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In the 1945 United Nations Charter, the international community expressed its determination to 'save succeeding generations from the scourge of war'. Over half a century later, the continued outbreak and spread of armed conflict around the world makes the 1945 promise of peace seem ever more elusive. Far from confirming the early optimism generated by the end of the bipolar world order and the consequent acceleration of globalization, the last decade of the twentieth century saw no significant reallocation of resources away from destruction toward the satisfaction of human needs such as basic education. On the contrary, the end of the Cold War appears to have brought with it a continuation, if not an accentuation, of the trend toward greater political instability, violence and armed conflict. Thus suffering caused by armed conflict continues unabated and represents one of the most tragic shared experiences of human society.

It is this continuing reality that explains the emergence of the issue of armed conflict as a major concern in facing the challenges of providing basic education to all people, as outlined at the 1990 World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA) held in Jomtien. While by the time of the conference a connection had already been made between declining primary school enrolments and armed conflict (Berstecher & Carr-Hill, 1990), the Jomtien Declaration and Framework for Action made only limited reference to armed conflict. But the issue has progressively emerged as a key concern over the past decade. The inter-agency mid-decade review of international achievement toward the goal of education for all, held in

Amman from 16-19 June 1996, devoted one of its round table sessions to Education in Emergencies and identified 'escalating violence caused by growing ethnic tensions and other sources of conflict' as an 'emerging challenge' for education. More recently, the strategic parallel session on Education in Situations of Emergency and Crisis at the World Education Forum, held in Dakar from 26-28 April, 2000, introduced into the Dakar Framework for Action that Education for All initiatives 'must take into account the needs of [. . .] children and adults affected by armed conflict'. In addition to the importance of the continued provision of education during emergencies, it is increasingly accepted that education is an essential component of early emergency relief assistance (cf. Retamal & Aedo-Richmond, 1998).

Such considerations have important implications for the ways in which we conceptualize the inter-relations between formal education and armed conflict. If one of the principal functions of education is to ensure social cohesion, what do violent breakdowns of social cohesion tell us about the content and function of formal education? How does formal education contribute to the breakdown of social cohesion and the outbreak of internal conflict? Conversely, in what ways can formal education contribute to the reinforcement or rebuilding of social cohesion? Curricular innovation in the area of citizenship education is one important, albeit limited, means of promoting social cohesion. (Others include reducing inequities in access to basic education and encouraging contact between members of divided communities.) Recent focus on citizenship education points to the original and central function of public schooling—enhancing citizenship and ensuring social cohesion (Heynemann & Todoric-Bebic, 2000, p. 161).

This paper begins by briefly reviewing the ways in which schooling may act as a catalyst for armed conflict, even if in unintended ways. Next, it focuses on the ways in which the experience of armed conflict and an understanding of humanitarian law may contribute to the core content of basic education. The argument is made here that the exploration of ethical issues related to human behaviour in times of armed conflict and war can make an important contribution to global citizenship education and to the strengthening of social cohesion in the twenty-first century. The next section presents data collected as part of the development and pilot testing of the Exploring Humanitarian Law (EHL) project in a number of very different settings around the world. The last section pinpoints some of the more fundamental considerations related to definitions and design of both content and methodology of educational programmes

### **The affect of education on social cohesion**

One of the principal functions of mass schooling since its inception during the industrial revolution in Europe has been to ensure social cohesion and a sense of belonging. Indeed, compulsory, standardized, public schooling played a crucial part in the emergence, construction and consolidation of the nation-state. But schooling sometimes fails in this essential function, reflecting and even exacerbating existing social and political divisions and conflicts. Only recently have scholars begun seriously to explore the role of education as a possible catalyst or precipitating factor in the process of social and political disintegration and in the outbreak of violence and armed conflict (cf. Tawil, 1997).

Determining how education relates to this process means identifying the causal factors that contribute to the general breakdown of social cohesion. While the devastating consequences of armed conflict on families, communities and nations are clearly identifiable, the combination of precipitating factors and evolving causes of these conflicts (declared and undeclared) are not always easy to disentangle. Cultural factors that are easy to politicize, such as ethnicity, language and religion, are often intertwined with socio-economic factors related to disparities in income distribution and exclusion. Important catalysts include the declining legitimacy of nation-states, the lack of good citizenship behaviours and the absence of a collective identity (Bigo, 1998). Changes in the nature of armed conflicts are also relevant. Since the end of the Cold War, violent conflicts have increasingly taken place within, rather than between, states (a trend that can be traced back to at least the mid-1970s). Indeed, only two of the twenty-seven major armed conflicts observed throughout the world in 1999 were international (SIPRI, 2000, p. 15). The diverse range of relevant factors must be considered in the process of educational reform.

#### *Conflicting processes of socialization*

In its most general sense, education can be understood as the process of socialization that results in the transfer of knowledge, norms, values, beliefs and myths from one generation to the next. As an instrument in the process of nation-building, schooling destroys the traditional social bonds of the extended family, the clan or the group and institutes a direct relationship between individuals as citizens and the nation-state. Tension between the local culture and the

national culture being imposed through schooling often leads to conflict. The collapse and reformulation of what Benedict Anderson calls ‘imagined communities’ (1983) lie at the heart of numerous current internal armed conflicts; this fact highlights the crucial issue of the breakdown and reconstruction of social cohesion. The increasingly competitive and contradictory values, attitudes, beliefs and world views transmitted by schools and other agents of socialization—families, peer groups, the media, and religious organizations—threaten social cohesion even further, especially as the relevance of the nation-state model of organization to the lives of individuals and communities deteriorates.

### *Schooling as an instrument of political domination*

Schooling functions as an ideological vehicle for political socialization. This socialization can occur as authoritarian structures act as media of repression, apartheid and discrimination, or as dominant groups impose official languages of instruction in multilingual settings. Sometimes the catalysis of increased inequality, discrimination or domination is inadvertent, stemming from unscrutinized textbook content or teacher attitudes.

Political socialization is significantly shaped by what is transmitted through official curricula—particularly in courses in civics, history, geography, and religion. The content of textbooks in Sri Lanka, for example, has clearly contributed to civil conflict (cf. Heynemann & Todoric-Bebic, 2000, p. 155). There has thus been an increasing emphasis in educational research on the ways in which textbooks portray *in* and *out* group identity and to the other ways in which they may contribute indirectly to conflict and communal strife.

The hidden curriculum—the informal transmission of values, attitudes and beliefs to students through the everyday behaviour of teachers—plays as significant a role in political socialization as the explicit curriculum. Teacher attitudes, easily transmitted to students, may conflict with content of curricula and official views of the histories of diverse co-existing groups.

### *Social exclusion*

‘Social exclusion’ is multidimensional. It may be economic (concerned with, e.g., employment, the means of production or land), socio-political (related to, e.g., the denial of security, representation, citizenship or rights) or social (involving, e.g., exclusion from

education, health services or housing). In many contexts, formal education may contribute to the multiple processes that lead to social exclusion. The widespread and increasing failure of schooling to ensure the socio-economic integration of individuals and groups, for example, calls into question the efficiency of formal education as an instrument of upward mobility. Formal education may actually threaten social cohesion. A 'structure of inequality gives rise to differential identities, posing a challenge to a unified sense of national identity' (Heynemann & Todoric-Bebic, 2000). The failure of formal education in its nation-building and distributive functions undermines the legitimacy of existing power structures and exacerbates political and social tensions. Moreover, educational exclusion is often accompanied by the creation of false expectations and frustrations that may fuel existing social tensions and conflicts and lead to violence (Wright, 1997).

### *Curricular reform*

Political change and armed conflict are dialectically linked to processes of educational transformation. These reforms are often undertaken in times of relative stability to update curricula by incorporating new knowledge, skills and attitudes. With the goal of adapting to the accelerated pace and scale of global change at the turn of the twenty-first century, many countries around the world 'are undertaking reforms of schools and curriculum, . . .' (Kerr, 1999, p. 2). These processes of educational transformation may contribute to wider and more radical political attempts to redefine educational systems following political upheavals and post-conflict social reconstruction. Recognizing the potential role of education as a catalyst for civil strife paves the way for new thinking about education during emergencies and in post-conflict situations (Tawil, 1997).

### **Education in humanitarian law as a contribution to social cohesion**

Whatever the causes of violent conflict, formal education has an important part to play in strengthening or rebuilding social cohesion in the wake of violence. A wide spectrum of educational initiatives, often grouped under the heading of 'peace education', contribute to the strengthening or rebuilding of social cohesion. These initiatives range from education for mutual understanding to environmental and citizenship education. Generally speaking, peace education works to promote 'knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about

change' at the 'intrapersonal, inter-group, national or international level'. These changes encompass (i) the prevention of conflict; (ii) the peaceful resolution of conflict; and (iii) the creation of the 'conditions conducive to peace' (UNICEF, 1999, p. 1).

Education in humanitarian law aims to develop informed and responsible citizens with:

- a deepened understanding of the multiple perspectives and the potential complexity of applying humanitarian norms in times of war;
- an increased interest in international current events and humanitarian action;
- a capacity to view conflict situations at home and abroad from a humanitarian perspective; and
- a disposition to become involved in community service or other forms of mobilization to protect and promote humanitarian attitudes.

The potential role of humanitarian law education within the context of peace education is clear. While humanitarian law is not explicitly about conflict prevention or resolution, by reinforcing the need to respect and protect life and human dignity at all times, even in times of violent conflict, it can contribute to the creation of conditions conducive to peace.

Education in humanitarian law has clear links to human rights education and citizenship education programmes. The development of international humanitarian norms relative to situations of armed conflict constitutes an emerging 'civic megatrend' (Kennedy, 1997, *in*: Kerr, 1999, p. 7), holding a central place in the preparation of people for informed citizenship world-wide. Such basic precepts as the right to life, the right to be protected from torture or inhumane treatment or to be brought into slavery or servitude, and the right to a fair trial, constitute what is often referred to as the 'hard core' of human rights. These are international laws that must be respected under all circumstances, including during armed conflicts. International humanitarian law and human rights law are thus complementary in that they have the common goal of protecting the individual, albeit in different ways and not always in the same circumstances.

The 1990 World Conference on Education for All defined basic education as providing the

. . . essential learning tools (such as literacy, oral expression, numeracy and problem-solving) and basic learning content (such as knowledge, skills, values and attitudes) required by human beings to be able to survive, to develop their full capacities to live and work in dignity, to participate fully in development, to improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decisions, [and] to continue learning. (WCEFA, 1990)

Humanitarian law education does not explore violent conflict in the same way as conventional history or current events courses. It encourages the examination of war from a humanitarian perspective and the exploration of the fundamental ethical issues war raises. By emphasizing the commonalities between all human groups—focusing on the shared experience of violence, suffering and the devastation from war, and the need for minimal protections of life and human dignity—education in humanitarian law can help rebuild or strengthen social cohesion. It can exert an indirect pacifying effect in situations of acute social and political tension and help to cultivate individual responsibility and solidarity.

One of the principal arguments often advanced to explain and justify the widespread absence of humanitarian law in basic education is the claim that it is irrelevant to students in non-conflict settings. Preliminary results from the Exploring Humanitarian Law project (to be discussed below) suggest that adolescents are eager to explore the ethical issues related to humanitarian law and armed conflict. When, during exploratory discussion groups, researchers asked young people why they should learn about humanitarian law, they responded by pointing out that war involves young people, by affirming the need to become more aware of issues related war and by asserting the importance of knowing about individual rights and responsibilities. One respondent answered that humanitarian law education ‘could help us teenagers in our small wars in life’, and another that ‘it activates the spirit of peace and reduces that of war within the human being’.

A 1999 UNICEF/*Le Monde* survey of 1,300 French adults and children in the 12-15-year-old age range, conducted on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, further substantiates the relevance to young people of studying humanitarian law. The survey indicated that French young people viewed war as a major preoccupation more frequently than did their parents (Kramer, 1999). This is partly a consequence of the fact that young people in non-conflict settings are increasingly exposed to greater media coverage of armed conflict. And the changing nature of violence makes it increasingly difficult to differentiate between conflict and non-conflict settings. Indeed, every community is likely to be affected by violence of one sort or another: if not riots or armed conflict, then inter-group violence related to social unrest or school-based or street-based violence. Thus, issues related to violence and to respect for and protection of life, dignity and justice in times of armed conflict will be relevant to the lives of students in a variety of settings. Exploring these issues can help students who do not live in areas ravaged by large-

scale conflict deal constructively with a range of challenges related to the use or threat of physical force and the endangerment of life and health.

### **The Exploring Humanitarian Law project**

The Exploring Humanitarian Law (EHL) project, initiated by the International Committee of the Red Cross, aims at designing learning modules focused on humanitarian law and related ethical issues and introducing them into existing educational programmes for 13-18-year-olds around the world. During the second half of 2001, these modules will be adapted and progressively integrated either into secondary school curricula in the areas of citizenship or ethics education and/or into non-formal education programmes. Those involved in the implementation of these programmes include ministries of education, national Red Cross/Red Crescent organizations and other educational partners. EHL project development work began with the establishment of a network of some fifteen sites around the world to identify interest in humanitarian law education and create informal contact groups. Once established, the groups provided the research and curriculum development process with input and critical feedback from the viewpoint of those in local learning environments. The first step included conducting some thirty-five exploratory focus group discussions with 13-18 year olds in ten countries in order to probe perceptions of war, humanitarian limits on armed conflict, human dignity and the perceived relevance of humanitarian law education.

Researchers used the qualitative data collected through this consultation to design learning modules. These modules focused on topics including democratic citizenship in divided societies; the role of citizenship in post-war social reconstruction and the need to demilitarize youth and reverse a culture of violence. Examples from countries participating in research and development work on the EHL modules may serve to illustrate participant countries' sense of the importance of education in humanitarian law.

#### *Djibouti: education and the threat of armed conflict*

A recent report by the Djibouti Ministry of Education described the multidimensional crisis afflicting Djibouti's educational system, including its general failure to promote cultural and socio-economic development. Djibouti has experienced extremely low levels of basic education development; in first grade, the enrolment ratio is only 31.8 % and the Secondary

Gross Enrolment Ratio was only 15.4 % for the 1998–99 school year. These educational indicators, much like those of neighbouring Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia and Yemen, are among the lowest in Africa. Moreover, the economy has suffered from conflicts in the Horn of Africa in the 1980s (and the resulting refugee influx from Ethiopia and Somalia), from natural disasters such as drought and famine, and from extreme poverty. Life expectancy at birth, among the lowest in the world, is estimated at 48 % (UNICEF, 1998). Finally, internal conflict between 1991 and 1994 in the northern part of the country has inflated the defence budget at the expense of allocations for education and other social sectors. Public resources for education have continued to decrease as a result of the introduction of structural adjustment programs during the 1995–96 school year.

Given this generally dismal picture of pressing social and economic priorities, education in humanitarian law might appear to be low on the country's list of priorities. However, the Djibouti Ministry of Education has strongly supported the EHL project. Educational authorities point to the experience of internal conflict and the conflict-ridden history of the Horn of Africa as arguments for the relevance of an educational project for youth, parents, and communities that seeks to develop greater awareness of humanitarian issues and a sense of responsibility relative to situations of armed conflict. They describe the EHL project as one with 'human dimension and humanitarian implications'.

*Northern Ireland: global versus parochial socialization in divided societies*

The current process of curricular review in Northern Ireland involves a 'values education' component connected with the introduction of what is now being provisionally called 'Educating for Democratic Citizenship' in the core curricula for 14-16-year-olds for the 2001–2002 school year. The twenty-four-month-old review is being conducted under the auspices of the Council for Curriculum Examinations and Assessments (CCEA) in Belfast; its role is to advise the Northern Ireland Department of Education on curricular reform (CCEA, 1999). The EHL project is seen as offering a positive contribution to education for democratic citizenship, in particular through the Social, Civic and Political Education pilot project (Arlow, 1999), one of the main pilot projects shaping the current review process. Education about the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a broad international context appears to respond to specific educational concerns in Northern Ireland. Humanitarian law education could have an indirect pacifying effect while heightening awareness of international current

events, thus lifting the small communities of Northern Ireland out of their insular parochialism and opening them to the world.

*Lebanon: curricular reform and post-war social reconstruction*

Curricular reform, particularly in the area of citizenship education, provides an important opportunity for educational transformation in post-conflict societies such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Burundi or Lebanon. Consider the current reform of civic education being undertaken by the Educational Center for Research and Development in Lebanon. After a complete absence from Lebanese curricula since the outbreak of the civil war in 1975, civic education is being redefined and reintroduced in the official curricula at all grade levels<sup>2</sup>. The new civic education program, with its four crosscutting strands of social, civic, national and humanitarian education, is intended to shape a new generation of informed and responsible citizens who can contribute to post-war social reconstruction. EHL has an obvious contribution to make to this programme. In the words of a pilot teacher in Beirut: 'The more young people have the opportunity to discuss these issues, the more they become aware that they have a shared destiny.'

*South Africa: political strife, education and culture of violence*

Since the early 1990s, educational development in South Africa has been marked by a context of extreme political upheaval. The initial source of this upheaval was the institutional violence resulting from over 300 laws of physical separation that constituted the legal framework of the apartheid-era regime. Resistance to apartheid in the context of education sparked off the Soweto student uprisings of 1976, marking the beginning of a process of large-scale 'militarization of youth' (Marks, 1995). Young people growing up in the 1970s and '80s were regularly exposed to violence by police and security forces, until they themselves 'moved to the forefront of resistance'. Youth who found themselves in direct contact with the repressive forces of the National Party regime became 'perpetrators of violence themselves in the name of resistance' (Downall, 1994, p. 77-78). Daniel Nina observes that 'a great deal of the "people's revolution" that took place between 1976 and 1990, was led by or involved children under 18' and took place in battlefields that 'included the streets of many urban and rural communities, where the involvement of children,

fundamentally students, was crucial to destabilize the regime' (Nina, 1999). This '[r]evolutionary and political violence [exerted] a significant influence in the lives of huge numbers of children' (Downall, 1994, p. 77-78). Inevitably, it distorted 'normal' processes of socialization, as many young people were killed, maimed, or otherwise traumatized, in addition to being deprived of normal schooling.

The culture of violence continues to shape life in the post-apartheid era. It has led to 'ongoing violence between groups with different affiliations' (Downall, 1994, p. 77-78). It has fostered antisocial behaviour, a lack of discipline, and a refusal to accept the legitimacy of authority. One of the main challenges for education is to restore young people's confidence in authority, currently at a record low.

Noel Chabani Manganyi explains that one difficulty in dealing with South Africa's current educational problems is that some scholars are reluctant even to acknowledge that 'there is a war out there in the township schools'. In this context, according to Kader Asmal, South Africa's Minister of Education, EHL can serve as a 'peg to deal with violence' within the framework of the urgent need to 'demilitarize' South African youth.

#### *Morocco: political transformation and human rights education*

The EHL pilot tests organized and conducted by the Ministry of Education in the two Moroccan provinces of Al-Hoceima and Khouribga in October 2000, provided a provocative and immediately relevant learning opportunity. The test took place at the time of the second Intifada in the West Bank and Gaza. Throughout the test period, Moroccan high school students, exposed daily through the media to the violent confrontation between Palestinians and Israelis, were staging demonstrations in support of the Palestinian uprising. The open nature of the EHL pilot-test discussions and debates around the experience of the violence of armed conflict seemed to help students to perceive war differently. In the words of one student: 'Before, I thought war was just killing and destruction, but now I know about the rights of prisoners to be treated in a dignified manner and to have contact with their families. Now I think of the victims and their plight.' Moreover, exposure to the multiple perspectives of people involved in armed conflict as combatants, victims, civilians, or humanitarian workers affected their perception of the reality and limits of violent conflict. One student, for instance, reported having learned to see even enemies as human beings.

In the context of national educational reform efforts, the National Charter for Education and Training includes the objective of progressively introducing human rights education into all levels of the school system. Pilot testing of draft EHL modules provided the Ministry of Education with an opportunity to enrich its own experience with human rights education by introducing humanitarian law as a curricular theme. Preliminary evaluations of these pilot tests have been positive.

Education in humanitarian law sensitises young learners to the complex issues relative to relations between individuals and groups. If war can probably not be completely prevented, young learners have to become aware of their possibility of interacting more positively and humanely in situations of conflict. That is perhaps the necessary condition to prevent and limit the devastation of war. (BenMaiza, 2000, p. 28).

### **Considerations for educational reform**

In order to undertake this important educational reform worldwide, it is necessary to address several key issues related to content and methodology.

#### *Defining violence*

The definition of ‘violence’ ranges widely—the term can refer to anything from the threat or use of force to such denials of human dignity as extreme poverty and deprivation. It is important to distinguish both between the overt violence of crime, riots and war and the covert violence of symbolic or structural oppression and between interpersonal, social and political levels of violence. Peace education initiatives often focus on interpersonal behaviour, while violent conflict is typically generated at the group level. Finally, it is important to establish perspective. What may be termed the ‘humanitarian perspective’, in which violence is construed ‘as essentially a matter of violating a person[,] requires a substantial shift in one’s perspective [. . .] [I]t requires a shift of attention from the perpetrator to the victim of violence’ (Litke, 1992, p. 174). This translates into a focus on the wounded, sick and detained combatants, as well as on the civilian population affected by conflict through lack of security, displacement, separation and so forth.

#### *Avoiding value-judgements*

Unlike the term ‘force’, ‘violence’ has carried a negative and condemnatory connotation in much recent discourse. It is just this condemnatory sense of the term ‘violence’ that explains its ever-expanding application. While on the descriptive level ‘violence’ may simply refer to physical force used to damage, on the moral level it denotes the unacceptable use of physical force to harm another person. This moral sense confers on the term ‘violence’ ‘an emotive aura as well as a prescriptive function’ (Platt, 1992, p. 186). This is important because international humanitarian law takes no position on the legitimacy of the recourse to violence in situations of armed conflict. Rather, international humanitarian norms aim to regulate the conduct of hostilities once armed conflict has broken out. Such a perspective allows for a more neutral and less judgmental examination of human behaviour in armed conflict and to transpose these considerations to one’s own immediate reality of violence.

#### *Shared learning experiences*

Method and content in the area of values education are inseparable. What should be taught cannot be separated from how it must be transmitted. Active, participatory, dialogical learning methods appear to be central to the development of the critical thinking, communication skills, and behavioural patterns associated with respect for human rights, tolerance, mutual understanding and peaceful co-existence. This fact has important implications for the global adaptability of any curriculum, particularly in authoritarian, hierarchical educational contexts. In addition, overcrowded classrooms with limited teaching periods, a focus on the transmission and memorization of factual knowledge, and a climate of competition and selective evaluation are not conducive to the kind of active, participatory and shared learning associated with peace education.

#### *Global versus local issues*

A curriculum focusing on global rather than local issues helps to transcend divisions between communities and societies and strengthens social cohesion by contributing to a global “civic

consciousness”, [marked by unifying] common ideals . . . to which all citizens ascribe’ (Heynemann & Todoric-Bebic, 2000, p. 148). A focus on the minimal international norms contained, for example, in humanitarian and human rights law, and the introduction of content that provides primary source materials from different areas of the world and different historical periods, can help to foster a global focus. A global focus helps learners become aware that, regardless of the historical or political specificity of any one situation of armed conflict, individuals and communities, suffer in the same way and require the same minimal protections during armed conflict.

*Focusing on the consequences rather than causes*

Non-politicized exploration of sensitive ethical issues related to human behaviour during armed conflict is possible only when the consequences, rather than the causes, of armed conflict occupy centre-stage. Though it is necessary to identify, understand and address the causes of conflict to prevent or to resolve conflict, discussing the causes of conflict may easily cloud humanitarian concerns by leading to disputes over varying political and ideological interpretations of specific historical struggles. Focusing on the suffering and destruction caused by armed conflict in a variety of historical and geographical settings is much less contentious and helps learners come to terms with the common experiences and needs of those affected by large-scale violence.

*Learning and mobilization*

The knowledge, values and attitudes transmitted by means of humanitarian law education initiatives must lead to action—to some form of participation in the protection of life, health and human dignity. The consensual values, attitudes and perceptions fostered by peace education may sometimes challenge norms endorsed by particular subcultures, societies, and governments. Learning to respond to this potential limitation discovering how to mobilize in support of peace.

**Conclusion**

Preliminary evidence from a variety of settings around the world indicates that a focus on the shared human experiences of people affected by armed conflict appears to respond to diverse educational needs in very different social and political settings. Education in humanitarian law fosters increased awareness of humanitarian issues in the face of the threat of armed conflict, encourages a shared sense of citizenship in post-conflict settings through the exploration of minimal international humanitarian norms, and heightens awareness of less contentious means of addressing social and political violence through the examination of various issues of global concern. In post-conflict and divided societies, education based on the exploration of humanitarian issues highlights the common human concerns that arise in times of armed conflict, concerns that are often obscured by politically and ideologically driven analyses. By developing a sense of shared destiny, education in humanitarian law can contribute to strengthening and rebuilding social cohesion.

## Notes

1. Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations (26 June 1945).
2. The rewriting of history textbooks is much more controversial, given the difficulty in reaching any consensus among the various components of Lebanese society regarding what has actually taken place over the last quarter of a century since the outbreak of the civil war.

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