

Mid-Term Report 2005 of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010)

Name

Life-Link Friendship-Schools Programme

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I:1 ACTIVITIES

Objectives

The Life-Link programme promotes an easy and concrete peace and health curriculum useful for youth preferably age 12-19 at schools world-wide. A summary of the Life-Link programme is enclosed/attached.

Beneficiaries

By performing proposed Life-Link “2-hours” peace actions at a school, benefits on the following levels will be achieved:

Youth – Teachers – School – Community – State – the Earth

Location of Activities

Peace actions today take place at and around 400 schools in more than 60 countries, often in interaction with the nearby community and involving parents.

Resources

Life-Link has during the 1990 formulated a peace ethics that must be considered as a resource: *Care for Myself (Health) --Care for Others (Conflict solving and Constructive Collaboration) – Care for Nature (Sustainability, Environment).*

Life-Link provides a manual (English is the basic language, but the manual is today also translated into Russian, Spanish and Arabic languages).

A special chapter on Project Management within the Life-Link manual helps youth and teachers to run good planning – performance – follow up when performing short duration peace actions at/around their schools. (*Failing to Plan, is Planning to Fail!*)

The Life-Link website is an important resource. www.life-link.org . More than 2000 actions are reported and can be used as an inspiration for other schools interested to start.

Life-Link launches campaigns that focus on some of the proposed peace actions (Water, Reduce-Reuse-Recycle, Sport & Peace – Get on the Move” .)

The Life-Link programme works in a decentralised manner, with an international office in Uppsala Sweden, and activities taking place at schools world-wide.

The office works mainly with voluntary 1-2 people staff, plus one paid part time secretary.

The schools do not receive any financial support from Life-Link Sweden, but performs the peace actions either as part of their school curriculum, or fundraising locally for extracurricular actions.

Information Technology such as Internet with E-mail very much facilitates this programme. Still we stress that ordinary letter mailing can be used, and is used by schools under financial constraints.

International Life-Link annual conferences is a resource for participating schools and for the continuous re-evaluation of the Life-Link programme, and low administration burden.

Results

Peace Curriculum. The Life-Link programme shows that it is possible to influence on youth and schools peace curriculum by use of an attractive ethics as well as proposed concrete peace actions.

Recognitions. The Life-Link programme has gained informal and formal acceptance at ministries of education. Life-Link has received a reward from the Council of Europe North South Centre, and positive reactions at several international peace conferences.

Since year 2000, nearly 400 schools in more than 60 countries have reported on performed peace actions, introduced on www.life-link.org "Schools & Actions". The number of schools are increasing.

Probably most important result is that youth and teachers seem to develop a spirit of hope for the future and joy when they perform proposed peace actions at their schools, and when they know that such peace actions are also performed at other schools world-wide!

(Act Locally and Think Globally!).

More than 2000 actions within the themes of Care for Myself /Others/Nature plus Lets Get Organised have been reported. We understand that there have been many more peace activities performed but not reported.

Life-Style. Be reading the action reports from classes at schools world-wide, and by listening to youth and educators at international meetings, Life-Link understands that there is an increasing awareness on the importance of forming a responsible life-style in favour of Care for Myself / Others / Nature. We could also state that as a result of the Life-Link programme youth understands that taking individual responsibility is a prerequisite for discussions on human rights.

I - 2 KEY DIFFICULTIES

Teachers time and credits for working with schools' international programmes.

Teachers that are in contact with the Life-Link programme have told us that they have little time within their official working hours to work for peace and in international programmes. Nor have they much official credit and attraction to engage in such work. On the contrary, they feel that there is little interest from the other teachers at their schools to know and to learn about peace education experiences like the Life-Link campaigns or the Life-Link conferences.

Language training. The Life-Link programme was initially limited to English language in order to inspire language training and cross curricular collaboration within participating schools. We have learnt that certain cultures still need their own language in order to make the Life-Link programme available for the big majority of schools. The Life-Link manual with peace actions guidelines is now in collaboration with educational institutes translated into Russian, Spanish and Arabic languages.

The young Life-Link webmaster from Romania has also constructed a programme available on the Life-Link website, making it possible to produce more translations.

Financing & Budgets Life-Link, as most voluntary NGO peace programmes, works with financial restrictions, and on a "year to year" budget. It is today not possible to ask

participating schools for any compulsory fees, such a demand would exclude most of participating schools and youth. Each participating school pays for their own expenditures in connection with locally performed peace actions or travel expenditures to Life-Link conferences.

Information Technology and communication facilities Access to computers and Internet is still an obstacle, even though we experience progress during the recent years.

Need of Project Management skills Life-Link stresses the importance of good Project Management skills during planning and performance of proposed short "peace actions" at and around schools. Life-Link offers a special chapter within the Manual Guidelines and on the website on this topic. Specially proposed peace actions in favour of Project Management training are introduced within the Life-Link fourth theme: Lets Get Organised. Life-Link still recognizes a need for project management training at many participating schools. Working for peace and within specifically designed international programmes makes this point obvious.

Lack of "Peace Ambassadors" who could visit schools and to educational institutes and politicians.

I - 3. PRIORITY AREAS OF ACTION

The Life-Link programme is a Peace Education Programme influencing participating youth-educators-parents through the themes of Care for Myself, Care for Others and Care for Nature. We define "peace" as a life-style characterised by Care/Share. The Life-Link programme has as a starting point the perspective of an individual human being: What can I do in order to be more peaceful and caring with myself-others-natur? How can I learn to organise my life and my actions?

Through such an approach and by performing concrete actions (learning by doing) the Life-Link programme will benefit all eight action-areas listed in the UN Programme of Action. Such as: Gender perspectives, Democracy, Sustainable biology and social structures, Human Rights (the Rights of the Child), Intercultural understanding and solidarity, Flow of information and free searching of knowledge, International Peace and Security = Common security, "New security thinking". Another domains that Life-Link promotes is Human Responsibilities - Global Citizenship, and Health concerns.

II – 4. PROGRESS TOWARDS A CULTURE OF PEACE

Yes. Youth (more than 250 000) and teachers (20 000?) and parents at 400 schools in more than 60 countries have during the period 2000-2004 performed peace activities with help of the Life-Link ethics and guidelines.

International networking. Life-Link is in contact with several other networks and resources for building peace.

Confidence Building Measures is today a well recognized part of international and global security thinking. CBM is part of the Life-Link programme as well as other international school-networks.

II – 5. MAJOR OBSTACLES

Partly discussed under I – 2.

Other important issues are well know factors as Poverty, Short term thinking, Difficulties in performing changes in life-style and social structures, Acceptance of weaponry production and exportation, Lack of ”peace institutes” for training, Greed and Power thinking/feeling,

One obstacle might be that we try with logical approaches to influence on emotional problems!

Lack of Leadership on several levels.

II –6. MEASURING MEDIUM – OR LONG-TERM PROGRESS.

Medium-term progress. Life-Link continuously report on www.life-link.org on performed peace actions at schools world-wide, several reports also with photos. We understand that youth, teachers and schools will continue to work on the problems that they face when they start to look at the water situation at their school, the gender situation, the orphanages that they visit, the bullying taking place at the school etc.

Long-term progress; Several schools have introduced the Life-Link ethics and the Life-Link guidelines into their basic school curriculum! An increased awareness at the level of politicians that youth and schools in international peace curriculum programmes are one of the core pillars for shaping common security.

III – 7. PARTNERSHIPS

Yes. With several international NGOs, and also with a total of around 25 national ministries of Education and national UNESCO commissions.

III – 8. UNESCO Website

Life-Link cannot evaluate to what extend participating schools world-wide have used this website. Life-Link office in Sweden has reported performed actions and projects.

IV – 9. PLANNED PROJECTS

Life-Link will make highest priority to consolidate achieved programme and to inspire participating schools.

The programme 2005 includes a conference in Alexandria where the Arabic Life-Link Manual will be launched.

Year 2006 Life-Link plans for a conference in Jordan, in order to make the Life-Link programme more know at schools in Arabic culture countries.

Life-Link now is looking for a partner that can bring the programme to more schools, and to bring the Life-Link programme to certain countries of high priority 2006-2010.

IV – 10. PRIORITY DOMAIN

Education, and to offer resources for schools to appoint educators and to support international communication and programmes!

Business people. What adjustments to the current “economy” are needed.

IV – 11. PROMOTION 2006-2010 GENERAL PROPOSALS

There is a need for concrete pictures (visions) on a Culture of Peace that will counteract the devastating life-style of “developed” countries, a life-style that dominates media and business.

Invite the most influential computer companies to compete for the best computer-programmes in favour of a culture of peace, programmes with action that are still attractive for teenagers! We need alternatives to “war and fighting games”.

Initiate a process to evaluate the best peace education programmes – programmes that give the most concrete proposals and also shape positive pictures and visions in the minds. Youth must be part of such a process. (UNESCO programmes, Hague Appeal for Peace programme, Peace Child programmes, Educating Cities, Conflict Resolution Programme Australia, etc etc – UNESCO surely has an international overview on such programmes available today)

Invite well known sportsmen/women, artists, musicians etc to promote the best peace programmes at schools and in communities. Culture of Peace ambassadors for some years.

Invite influential business people to discuss Culture of Peace and how to keep the Earth at good health for future generations. What are the experience from the Davos financial meetings?

Sport events. How can a Culture of Peace in clear and concrete terms be part of all bigger sport events 2006-2010?

How and When and Why will I change my mind? During the years 2006-2010, how can we advance our knowledge and skills in the process of changing my mind, my cognitions, my concepts, my attitudes, my behaviour. In summary: the process of change in human behaviour. What can we learn from history and successful propaganda, and from WHO in health care campaigns. Why have facts such a limited efficiency in comparison to the strong influence of symbolic actions aiming emotions!

School-Networks. UNESCO could initiate a conference, bringing delegates from many internationally active School-Networks together. Exchange of experiences from the ASP-network, The International Baccalaureate schools, the United World Colleges, Life-Link Network, etc etc. I guess that there can be 15-20? influential international school-networks ongoing.

Bring some people together representing successful Culture of Peace activities 2001-2005, in order to brainstorm on recommendations for 2006-2010.

Peace and Care x 3 !
Hans Levander
14 March 2005