



Gang Behaviour and lasting peace

action: reach out

In many countries, young people (12-17 year olds) are drawn into or pressured into gangs. In the gang, they find a sense of belonging, a source of protection, of income (often from illegal activities) and most importantly, a sense of dignity. At the same time, those gangs are mostly violent and criminal, leading to jail or death. Can you investigate a country for which violence and gang culture is prevalent (e.g. El Salvador, Colombia, Brazil)? Can you identify factors that draw or push young people to be part of a gang and make it so hard to leave? Have any other solutions or projects been successful in encouraging and supporting young people to move away from gangs?

Could you apply your findings? Are there any group dynamics (negative behaviours of a group, exclusion of individuals) for which some of the thinking that you have done around gangs could provide a solution?

What do you think might tempt or push people to take up more negative behaviours in the school community? What might help them to resist or step back from these? Can you suggest ways to help include individuals who are part of the school community yet who do not identify with the 'norm'?

GLOBAL CHALLENGE

We have investigated gangs and gang violence happening around the world. We found out many interesting facts on how gangs can affect everyone surrounding them and the cities where gangs are situated.

While larger cities and suburban counties expectedly report higher numbers of gangs, there is also considerable variation within each area type. More than half of suburban counties and 45 percent of larger cities report 10 or fewer active gangs in their jurisdictions. A majority of agencies in smaller cities and rural counties report fewer than five gangs.

We also found out that the problem of gangs is reaching a critical point in many communities today. Communities are affected as they struggle to pay for the costs of law enforce-

ment strategies to combat the operation and spread of gang violence. No one can place a dollar amount on the loss of life and the physical and emotional suffering experienced by victims and neighborhoods under gang siege. Thousands of our youth are irreparably harmed by the violent and criminal activity that is condoned and encouraged by gang membership. Most disturbing is the increasing trend for gangs to recruit children as young as seven or eight years of age.

LOCAL ACTION

We will source a person that was in a situation where they joined a gang or were going to and get them to help these people from a familiar point of view. We want the young people in some of the poorer communities that are often joining gangs to understand what they can do and that they have a purpose in life.

EXPERT CONSULTED



Catherine Barnett,
Unicef (UNHCR).

Our goal is to get them to see that joining a gang will not help and that there are other things in life. The "expert" that has experience should then be able to see it from the same point of view and understand these people. Our final goal would be to help them and to stop them from joining these gangs and ruining their lives.

THE TEAM



Nubia
Mpondo

A. Debellegarde



Chloe Larsen



Matteo
Chenal



Benjamin
Hess



Theodor
Sommer