Gender equality

SÍ A LA PAZ
JÓVENES POR LA PAZ SOSTENIBLE
Y LA CIUDADANÍA GLOBAL

Index

Gender equality

I. Introduction

This manual is part of the project "YES TO PEACE. Youth for sustainable peace and global citizenship", funded by the Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo (Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation, AECID) and implemented in collaboration with the Movimiento por la Paz, el Desarme y la Libertad (Movement for Peace, Disarmament and Liberty, MPDL) and the Instituto NOVACT de Noviolencia (NOVACT Institute for Nonviolence).

It is part of a set of five guides designed to provide answers and raise new questions for education professionals who would like to learn about the concerns and interests of young people with regard to current threats to peace, as well as their understanding of the different elements of peace and how they engage. It outlines the ways in which education can be used to promote values, attitudes, knowledge and skills among young people so that they become global citizens who are motivated to act locally as leaders and promoters of a Culture of Peace (CP).

This collection of manuals, prepared by Fundación Cultura de Paz with the contribution and supervision of MPDL and NOVACT, addresses different key themes that are essential for nonviolent conflict resolution: gender equality, intercultural coexistence, the eradication of poverty, sustainable development and environmental justice, and the defense of human rights in the broadest sense of the term. The topics they address are based on the educational needs, interests and concerns of young people between the ages of 11 and 25 (with some participation from people up to the age of 39), from both formal and informal education settings in five regions of Spain – Cantabria, Catalonia, the Community of Valencia, the Community of Madrid and Extremadura – which were identified in a previous diagnostic report. The results were compiled in a report produced by the Fundación Cultura de Paz, and are available at the following link: https://www.mpdl.org/sialapaz/06_Informe%20de%20diagn%C3%B3stico%20final.pdf.

The manual is organised into several sections that guide the reader from general topics to more specific ones. Following the description of the central theme of a Culture of Peace, we will present the realities and challenges identified in the aforementioned diagnostic report concerning the advancement of gender equality and ending violence against women. In the following section, examples of good practices aimed at promoting youth involvement in peacebuilding processes developed by various international delegations of the MPDL and NOVACT are presented. Some of these are described in the form of group activities, with the aim of inspiring and providing specific methodological resources. Following this, pedagogical recommendations and general strategies are presented which can facilitate educational work on this topic in various contexts. Lastly, a glossary of key terms is provided to assist with understanding and using the manual.

In short, this handbook is not only a guiding framework, but a practical and accessible tool that aims to accompany educators in building sustainable and equitable alternatives. We intend for it to be a living resource, inspiring collective processes of learning, action, and hope in the certainty that other futures are possible.

4 | Gender equality

Yes to peace. Youth for sustainable peace and global citizenship | 5

II. Description of the themes

Gender equality is an essential pillar for building a Culture of Peace. Far from being fulfilled, it remains a key global challenge that cuts across all areas of social, political and economic life. As the United Nations reminds us, equality between women and men is not only a fundamental human right, but a basic condition for achieving a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. Advancing gender equality is inherent to achieving positive peace: there can be no lasting peace while there is still gender-based violence, wage inequality, the constant risk of setbacks in sexual and reproductive rights, or the erasure of contributions that women and nonconforming individuals have made to our societies. **Guaranteeing this right means ensuring that all women and girls can feel safe, exercise their rights on equal terms and be free from direct, cultural or structural violence.** Equality, or rather gender justice, is a transformative tool for dismantling patriarchal structures, constructively questioning learned gender norms, dismantling gender stereotypes, and implementing relational strategies that ensure fair treatment as well as personal and collective wellbeing. However, this stems from the belief that feminist peace is only possible if these rights are guaranteed, if the harm suffered by women and girls around the world is acknowledged and rectified, and if, as societies, we commit to ensuring that such harm is not repeated.

This equality also **implies acknowledging the diversity that exists between women and men, promoting equitable treatment that responds to the specific needs of each person,** without it becoming a source of discrimination.

It also means **understanding that discrimination against women and girls on the basis of their gender intersects with other factors** such as their ethnicity, origin, or socioeconomic status. The intersectional feminist approach addresses how gender is intertwined with these other systems of oppression, such as racism, homophobia, transphobia, or exclusion based on class or disabilities. In turn, an intersectional feminist approach promotes the creation of safe, inclusive spaces that are free from sexist and LGBTQ-phobic violence, recognising the fundamental role of feminist and gender-diverse movements in building fairer societies.

Moreover, is it our strong conviction that **we will only achieve this equality if the full participation of women and girls in all areas of decision-making in society is supported, taking into account all their diversity.** In this regard, we understand that women's active participation and leadership role in peacebuilding processes - with their own voice - is not only a right, but also highlights their inherent tendency to resist the use of violence to resolve conflicts, which is characteristic of female socialisation. Hopefully, this shared ability will lead to lasting peace in our societies.

This call for action requires a commitment to **the practice of providing care as part of society,** recognising it as a shared responsibility that must be made equitable, as well as being a fundamental part of life. It calls for ensuring dignity for those who provide care, and the collective benefit of knowing how to care for others and recognising our mutual dependence on such care.

On the other hand, it should be noted that **the feminist peace to which we aspire is internationally-minded and global in its approach,** based on universal solidarity and sisterhood as core principles. This also leads us to consider that **we cannot educate about feminism from a single perspective, as each community faces a different path towards equality from a different starting point, as they come from different cultural and social contexts.** As described in *Feminismos en interseccionalidad en las aulas: Guía para una sensibilización feminista para todos y todas, libre de racismo y xenofobia* (Feminisms in Intersectionality in the Classroom: A guide to feminist awareness-raising for all, free from racism and xenophobia, Movimiento por la Paz - MPDL, 2024), it entails that "Western feminism is liberal, individualistic, and focused on matters that are not central to other feminisms because they have different issues to deal with, defined by ethnicity or socioeconomic status, among other factors, which add new elements to their subordination." It states that "this hegemonic feminism, if it is to avoid causing further oppression to women who do not belong to the dominant groups, must abandon any attempt to generalise its analyses or consider itself superior to any other." Thus, by providing information on the different schools of thought within the feminist movement, their perspectives and demands, we trust that this will contribute to an exercise in "social justice that helps to break the single narrative that we are usually told" and "may help students to find their place within the context in which they feel most represented".

6 | Gender equality

Yes to peace. Youth for sustainable peace and global citizenship | 7

III. Issues and challenges in working with youth on this topic, as identified in our diagnostic report

Prior to the detailed presentation of the educational experiences that we hope will inspire our work as youth educators, we would like to share some of the main conclusions identified in the above-mentioned diagnostic report.

By focusing on identifying the participants' understanding, interests and concerns regarding gender equality, this pillar of the Culture of Peace has revealed the most pressing challenges. Although the vast majority of respondents understand the concept of 'gender equality', which coincides with the understanding of the organisations responsible for the project that this manual is part of (associating gender equality with the achievement of equal rights and opportunities), it has become clear that **certain sexist myths** have taken root among young people (even among young women and adolescents).

→ More than a third of respondents believe that there are many **false reports** of gender-based violence (this is the most frequently chosen answer, as opposed to disagreeing with this statement or not knowing how to respond). This leads us to consider, as an initial challenge, the **need to refute this belief with hard data (this is included in the glossary) and to encourage showing empathy, rather than suspicion, towards women who decide to report abuse.** We must emphasize how difficult and painful the process is, and the fact that the justice system does not make it easy.

→ In addition, the **lack of awareness about the extent of gender-based violence, who the main victims are, and who is responsible for the harm** is alarming. Seven out of ten people surveyed not only believe that men also suffer violence at the hands of their female partners, but also exaggerate the arguments supporting this claim.

→ On the other hand, there is an **ambivalent animosity towards feminism,** as almost half of those surveyed believe that it **has gone too far.** In view of this, it would be useful to explore this idea in greater depth and to find out what this perception is based on, or perhaps whether we should focus on the meaning of feminism; why the women's rights movement exists and the social transformation it seeks to bring about. Statements such as this indicate that there are important gaps in education and information that are being filled by falsehoods, propaganda and hate speech, which are leading today's youth to believe these types of erroneous judgements.

Against this backdrop, in which misinformation about feminism and its meaning or about gender-based violence has become so widespread, there is **encouraging data** that can serve as a jumping-off point for raising awareness, while avoiding any potential hostility that may arise within our groups.

→ On the one hand, a majority (six out of ten people) believe that **gender equality has not yet been achieved** in Spain and that further progress is needed.

→ In addition, more than six out of ten respondents confessed to being **concerned about existing violence against women.**

→ **Nearly** three out of four also understand that **gender-based violence is not only physical aggression.**

→ On the other hand, it is worth noting that more than half of those surveyed **rejected attitudes that blame women who have been victims or survivors of gender-based violence,** and they believe that a woman's choice of clothing does not make her responsible for any aggression or attacks towards her.

→ Furthermore, this view of feminism is shared by almost two-thirds of those surveyed, who believe that **feminism can help us to be who we want to be by breaking down gender stereotypes.**

⟩ Educational challenges identified

Taking these conclusions as a reference, the challenges we have identified in the educational efforts to boost young people's motivation and abilities to get involved in ending gender-based violence and achieving gender equality are as follows:

1 **Promote media literacy with a gender perspective,** so that young people learn to identify and refute sexist propaganda on social media and in the media, with an emphasis on the misinformation and myths that circulate, false allegations or distortions of how gender-based violence is portrayed, its magnitude and nature. In this regard, we can see that many of the false claims do not reflect reality and that sexism is perpetuated through manipulation, ignorance, and fear.

2 In relation to claims made, we should **promote empathy towards victims and survivors of gender-based violence who report such incidents,** raising awareness about the difficulty of the reporting and recovery process, and the obstacles posed by a patriarchal justice system.

3 **Listen to the opinions of young people regarding feminism, its meaning, origin and purpose.** To this end, we propose creating a safe space for dialogue, encouraging the participation of the entire group by asking them to challenge their beliefs about feminism. This space should allow everyone to express their doubts, resistance or fears without causing harm. Similarly, given the diversity of today's society, and as reflected in the classrooms themselves, we must avoid adopting a single perspective on feminism; instead offering the opportunity to learn about other causes and approaches in different parts of the world.

4 **Highlight the achievements of women leaders and global feminist movements** in securing rights and freedoms for all people, showcasing real experiences from both near and far that exemplify the power of feminism to transform complex realities in various contexts. At the same time, **promote the active involvement of men in this shared struggle,** recognising their role as allies in the construction of a more just and egalitarian society, and fostering their understanding that the advances driven by women have expanded rights and opportunities for them as well.

8 | Gender equality

Yes to peace. Youth for sustainable peace and global citizenship | 9

This will help us promote collaboration with feminist organisations, the LGBTQIA+ community, and **groups of both men and women committed to equality,** in order to create spaces for reflection and joint action. We also suggest **identifying the existing global threats that are preventing us from achieving our goals,** so that group members can have accurate information to help them reconsider whether 'feminism has gone too far' or whether, on the contrary, **there is still a long way to go to achieve full and shared equality.**

5 **Discuss sexism and patriarchy within the system of intersectional oppression** which, as the respondents themselves acknowledged, harms society as a whole and prevents us from being who we want to be. Bring attention to how the patriarchal system imposes limitations on us and harms all people, to varying degrees and in different ways, while exerting control and pressure from different fronts and through different strategies and forums.

6 **Raise awareness of and discuss the model of new masculinities,** specifically regarding the idea that macho attitudes also prevent men from being who they want to be. This will involve acknowledging the discomfort caused by the pressure on each person to conform to narrow gender-based social roles that perpetuate relationships of power and submission. We can also put a face and name to some of the men who advocate for this model of new masculinities, who can serve as **positive role models and lessen people's fear of the unknown.** This will involve promoting shared responsibility with men to achieve gender equality, **inviting young men to challenge privilege and become involved in eradicating gender-based violence and inequalities. To this end, it is equally necessary to convey the idea that we cannot remain neutral in the face of such inequality and violence, encouraging reflection on the role and responsibility of each individual in eradicating these issues.**

7 Raise awareness of and empathise with different gender identities, understanding that the unknown can lead to fear or rejection. Gender is a social construct, which is a key factor to understand to dismantle patriarchal arguments and promote the pursuit of true equality, regardless of the gender identity of individuals within our society.

IV. Good Practices

The following experiences promote youth participation in peacebuilding processes, focusing on gender equality and the prevention of gender-based violence. These experiences have been highlighted by teams from some of the international delegations of the MPDL and NOVACT, and will hopefully serve as inspiration for readers of this manual.

In some areas where good practices have been implemented, men and women are often separated in the spaces where they work, making it challenging to carry out a joint project among them (such as the circus in Palestine, in which physical expression and body language are fundamental elements in a courageous space where difficult issues are addressed). Another notable aspect of these experiences is the prominence given to women's organisations (for example, in Kurdish-inhabited areas) in combating hate messages against feminism, even reaching out to women who have a more traditional role; connecting them with women's organisations and feminists in order to raise awareness of their rights.

Name of the activity:
Circus school and role-playing games

📍 Palestine

Theme(s)

CP theme(s) involved

◉ Gender equality and violence prevention
◯ Care for the environment
◯ Defense of human rights
◯ Interculturalism and anti-discrimination
◯ Poverty reduction
◉ Nonviolence/ peaceful conflict resolution/ other specific contents

Other topics addressed

Emotional management, stress management, mental health, body movement, different models of physical interaction, safe ways of socialising, and creating not just safe spaces but courageous ways to address difficult issues.

10 | Gender equality

Yes to peace. Youth for sustainable peace and global citizenship | 11

Objective/s

To develop the emotional resilience and empowerment of young people through creative tools.

Detailed target population

The initiative is primarily aimed at young people living in refugee camps who actively participate in the Circus School as an educational, artistic and personal development space.

Indirectly, the project also benefits their families and the surrounding communities, which are positively impacted by the processes of social transformation that the young people themselves lead.

Location or area of intervention

West Bank, in refugee camps.

Key information that would allow us to better understand the progress made on the Culture of Peace theme in this context.

The context in which this experience took place is one of growing despair and frustration among a large part of the population living in the aforementioned refugee camps, as a result of the prolonged violence that has forced them to leave their homes and live in precarious conditions with limited prospects for the future. This has also increased mistrust of the possibility for any recognition and redress for the damage suffered.

Reflection on the concept of nonviolence and its implications in this territory has been an open debate in NOVACT since 2023, in a context of genocide and structural violence. The concept of nonviolence and resilience can be discouraging, as it seems to suggest that we should simply endure situations of systematic injustice. For this reason, there has been intense debate within the organisation aimed at finding working tools that truly empower the groups involved rather than demotivating them. The tools found in this context support human rights organisations such as Al Haq or Addameer, which are committed to the notion that there can be no peace without justice. These organisations aim to carry out fieldwork with youth because the majority of individuals who wish to join the armed struggle are young people, and there are no opportunities for personal or collective development for them in the refugee camps. For this reason, the appointed members work on nonviolence without mentioning it explicitly, since the concept can lead to mistrust, and there is a risk of it being perceived as an expression of ideological colonialism.

On the other hand, it should be noted that South Africa has now reached out to support Palestinian organisations and their activities, including this circus activity. With South Africa's support, progress has been made in revisiting the power dynamics and dependency of cooperation itself. This activity was not dependent on the Global North. Even with a small budget, 50 shows were originally planned, but 300 were produced.

Duration

Circus: Recommendation to work with the group for one year.
LARB methodology: Two intensive days.

Intervention strategy and/or methodology

The intervention strategy is based on the social circus methodology as an educational, artistic and therapeutic tool, designed to promote the comprehensive development of young people in contexts of prolonged displacement. Through the circus, young people acquire social, expressive and emotional skills, strengthening their self-esteem, teamwork and the ability to resolve conflicts in a creative and nonviolent manner. Moreover, these meeting spaces, which promote equal participation of men and women and raise awareness of the additional oppression faced by women, provide a setting for modifying the dynamics of gender-based discrimination within the context. They also allow for exploring the use of nonviolent strategies to address conflicts, including those related to gender.

In addition, the LARB methodology is applied, which allows us to identify and support those individuals with the greatest potential to become multipliers of the initiative.

The activities are carried out through thematic workshops and body movement exercises, in which circus dynamics and games are combined with reflections on coexistence, citizenship and the peaceful transformation of conflicts. This comprehensive approach incorporates an important component of mental health and stress relief, offering participants a safe space to channel emotions, strengthen collective wellbeing, and rebuild social bonds in an environment affected by violence and hardship.

The project also seeks to reclaim public space as a legitimate venue for artistic expression and nonviolent action. In a context where the younger generations have grown up without knowing a Palestine without refugee camps and violence, this methodology has become a form of symbolic and everyday resistance. Through the circus, new models of action and alternatives for change are promoted, moving away from the dynamics of armed conflict and instead offering a hopeful alternative based on creativity, cooperation, and peace.

Overall, the circus allows people to experience risk in a safe, controlled environment. This is in stark contrast with the reality of the young people involved, where there is considerable danger and no control.

Materials required

The implementation of the activities requires a variety of specific materials that enable both the circus practice and the educational activities associated with the LARB methodology. To begin with, there are social circus materials, which are essential for the workshops and training sessions: juggling balls, hoops, ribbons, ropes, balancing equipment, mats and other resources that help the young participants work on coordination, confidence and body movement.

In addition, scripts and materials adapted to role-playing games are used for game activities and simulation exercises. These serve as a teaching tool to explore everyday situations, promote dialogue, and experiment with nonviolent conflict resolution strategies. These re-

sources are carefully designed to connect with young people's experiences and facilitate critical reflection through artistic expression and body movement.

Together, the materials not only serve a technical purpose, but also a symbolic and educational one: they provide tangible support for creativity, learning and cooperation, while contributing to the construction of safe spaces where young people can express themselves freely and transform their reality through art and collective action.

Guides, manuals and further details about the initiative can be found at the following sites:
https://palcircus.ps/en/policies-publications/
https://www.instagram.com/baitbyout.pal/

Implementation of the activity

The activity combines the social circus with the gradual implementation of the LARB methodology; forming a comprehensive process of training, practice and community outreach.

The first stage involves promoting the circus through regular workshops aimed at young people in refugee camps. In these spaces, circus disciplines such as balancing, acrobatics and juggling are worked on, along with group dynamics and cooperative games that foster confidence, empathy and expression through body movement. Through these activities, participants see themselves as part of a group, strengthening their self-esteem and socio-emotional skills, while learning to manage their bodies and emotions in a safe and creative environment.

In parallel, the LARB methodology is introduced, centred on identifying and supporting young people who have the potential to act as multipliers of the experience. Through a process of observation and mentoring, participants who show commitment, leadership and social awareness are selected and begin to take on an active role in the facilitation of workshops and activities. This second phase involves a process of specific training in the values of coexistence, nonviolent communication and participatory learning, thus strengthening their ability to replicate and adapt the methodology in other areas of the camp.

The activity culminates in a community activity, in which the young people chosen as leaders give presentations and lead workshops and activities in public spaces. These interventions not only showcase the talent and creativity of the participants, but also champion the circus as a tool for social transformation; enabling new narratives of hope, coexistence, and resilience to emerge in a context historically marked by violence and exclusion.

Analysis of risks, difficulties and achievements.
If there were relevant difficulties, indicate the mechanisms to overcome them.

RISKS:
That the occupation and apartheid system operating in this context, which has been constant and intensified in recent times, does not cease its systematic use of violence, which would jeopardise the work carried out in the refugee camps. There is a constant possibility that participation in this programme may be disrupted by various forms of violence directed towards the young people, their families or the broader community (e.g., their father being imprisoned, their brother being murdered or arrested, etc.).

Another risk is the lack of a vision of the future, of a political solution, since the situation is getting worse day by day.

In addition, there are physical risks, such as killings, internal displacement and the destruction of northern cities such as Tulkarem, which has been razed to the ground and left without infrastructure.

DIFFICULTIES:
There is no political solution, which hinders the long-term viability and relevance of many of the actions on the ground.

Work in Palestine depends on international cooperation.

In the context of the area, it is complicated but necessary to challenge gender segregation.

ACHIEVEMENTS:
Certain methodologies were seen as taboo, especially if they were related to the body, but now they are highly valued and have attracted a wide audience. This success is conditioned by the complete lack of alternatives for people living in these camps.

What changes or transformations has this experience brought about or contributed to?

The theory of change at the heart of this intervention aims to drive individual and collective change under the tent, which contradicts the reality of this society, such as gender segregation or the normalisation of violent strategies for dealing with conflict. In this respect, the initiative has encouraged the formation of some groups with both boys and girls. The use of art or sport as a nonviolent methodology has been achieved.

Lessons learned, recommendations for the future and adapting to working with youth

It is necessary to ensure that the activities are truly empowering, and that the political objective and potential of the intervention are taken seriously. It is for this reason that we have stopped referring to the concept of resilience, which is closely linked to the idea of learning to endure difficulties and can be so discouraging. Instead, we aim to move towards promoting change in a peaceful way.

Using artistic tools promotes accessibility and therefore fosters the participation of people with disabilities.

These activities are empowering because they give a great deal of responsibility to people who are not usually recognised for their abilities due to their gender, social class, etc. It is a patriarchal society where young people do not have leadership roles. In our intervention, however, the rotation of roles and responsibilities is encouraged.

The young people involved in the intervention have chosen to engage in processes of facilitator training and collective decision-making that are not imposed from the top down.

Spaces are created to discuss uncomfortable things. A trainer had lost his brother to murder and the expression of his desire for revenge and justice was respected, and together as a group they were able to talk about justice.

14 | Gender equality

Yes to peace. Youth for sustainable peace and global citizenship | 15

Name of the activity:
Building trust and promoting mutual recognition

📍 Colombia

✳ Theme(s)

CP theme(s) involved

- ⦿ Gender equality and violence prevention
- ○ Care for the environment
- ○ Defense of human rights
- ○ Interculturalism and anti-discrimination
- ○ Poverty reduction
- ⦿ Nonviolence/ peaceful conflict resolution/ other specific contents

Other topics addressed

- Interculturalism and anti-discrimination.
- Defense of human rights.
- Recovery of historical memory.
- Community participation and strengthening of the social fabric.

🎯 Objective/s

To help communities affected by violence to rebuild trust and open up spaces for mutual recognition between victims and perpetrators, promoting peaceful coexistence and collective healing through dialogue.

👥 Detailed target population

- Victims of the Colombian armed conflict, mostly women (victims of sexual violence; many of them Afro-descendants, Indigenous and small farmers),
- Former combatants responsible for acts of violence. The process seeks to leave aside the labels that divide people in order to focus on recognising the damage, repairing what happened, and guaranteeing that it will not be repeated.

📍 Location or area of intervention

The Montes de María region, comprising 15 municipalities in the departments of Bolívar and Sucre on the Colombian Caribbean coast.

Work is carried out in both formal spaces and informal community settings

✥ Key information that would allow us to better understand the progress made on the Culture of Peace theme in this context

Montes de María was one of the areas hardest hit by the armed conflict, with serious consequences for small farmers, Afro-descendant communities and, in particular, for women. Reports such as *Cicatrices de la guerra en las colombianas* (Scars of war in Colombian women) highlight the devastating effects of sexual violence in the region, as well as the barriers faced by victims in accessing justice and reparations.

References:

- *'Cicatrices de la guerra'* reports. *Cicatrices de la guerra en las colombianas* (Scars of war among Colombian women) analyses the impact of sexual violence in the conflict in Montes de María (Colombia): https://www.mpdl.org/sites/default/files/004.%20violencia-sexual-mujer-colombia.pdf

- Country profile of Colombia, Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation: https://www.exteriores.gob.es/documents/fichaspais/colombia_ficha%20pais.pdf

⏱ Duration of the intervention plan

The process is expected to take between **12 and 18 months,** allowing time to work separately with victims and former combatants, prepare talks and support the community in the next steps. The actual duration depends on security conditions and the respective pace of each community.

💡 Intervention strategy and/or methodology

The strategy is based on a psychosocial and socio-affective approach (feeling-thinking-acting), which places the participants at the forefront. The methodology is carried out in three phases: working separately with victims and perpetrators, joint preparation, and lastly, a safe meeting for mutual recognition (only with victims). Identification of the violence that has occurred in the area of intervention, based on the accounts of its victims, as well as recognition of the issues related to this violence that are of interest to these individuals in order to move towards building peaceful coexistence in their environment.

The process follows a series of steps that include moments of separate work with victims and with those responsible for the violence, and a final safe meeting between them, only if both parties agree and are prepared:

- **(Only with victims)** Identification of violence that occurred in the area of intervention based on their accounts, as well as recognition of related issues that they consider necessary to move towards peaceful coexistence.

- **(Only with victims)** Specification of needs related to recognition of the harm suffered, reparation measures and guarantees to prevent further harm.

- **(Only with the perpetrators)** Facilitating the acknowledgement of these acts of violence by the perpetrators.

16 | Gender equality

Yes to peace. Youth for sustainable peace and global citizenship | 17

• **(With both parties)** Creation of opportunities for safe encounters aimed at rebuilding trust and peaceful coexistence in the community.

The methodology is based on a **psychosocial approach** and the **socio-affective framework (feeling-thinking-acting).** It is centered on the premise that building trust and intercultural coexistence must be defined by the people involved and not previously designed by the facilitators.

The process incorporates techniques that facilitate emotional engagement, critical reflection on harm suffered or inflicted, and the implementation of actions to respond to emerging needs. All of this is done while respecting the slow and gradual pace that allows for deeper exploration of the process, creating safe spaces for dialogue and ensuring that participation is always voluntary.

As part of the care process, it is recommended to have water and food available during the meetings and to begin each session with activities that facilitate mindfulness and the release of tensions. To this end, we suggest the following:

• **Energy centres:** At the beginning of each meeting, a collection of natural elements symbolising gratitude towards the territory are placed in the centre of the room. Each person is invited to contribute an object, a desire, or a personal intention regarding the shared space. We recommend placing water in the centre and using aromatic oils to create peaceful moments, channel energy and reduce tension. A symbolic exercise consists of placing a few drops in the palms of your hands, rubbing them together and feeling the energy that is generated, encouraging each person to bring those drops to the place on their body where they feel fear or tension; to recognise and acknowledge that wounded emotion.

• **Circle of chairs without a table:** Chairs are arranged in a circle, with the centre left free for the 'energy centre'. This allows all members to look each other in the eye and feel that they are on equal terms. The facilitators join the circle at different points, avoiding standing next to one another in order to reinforce the sense of equality in the process.

• **Flower drawing:** Each participant receives a figure of a flower with several petals. They write down their names in the center of the flower, their dreams in the lower petal, and what has had the greatest impact on their lives, positive or negative, in the upper petal. The flowers are then used to decorate the space, celebrating the uniqueness of each person.

At the end, participants place their flowers in front of them and walk around the room looking at one another's flowers. All the flowers are then placed on the floor and stepped on, symbolising the violence suffered: "When someone is subjected to violence or commits violence, it is as if their life is being trampled on".

Afterwards, in small groups, new flowers are put back together with the pieces; showing hope, the chance to fix the damage, and the collective building of a sense of purpose.

These new creations can be placed on the wall as a reminder and as recognition. This moment also symbolises breaking away from stereotypes like 'helpless victim' or 'heartless perpetrator,' allowing for a more human and complex understanding of oneself.

Materials required

Basic stationery: sheets of paper, poster board, markers, coloured pencils, scissors and glue.

Flower shapes or other visual resources for the activities.

Natural elements such as seeds, water, flowers, stones and candles.

Aromatic oils or other aids for relaxation and stress relief exercises.

Portable chairs to organise circles and face-to-face meetings.

Notebooks or recording devices (with informed consent) to document the process.

Basic audio-visual equipment.

Basic refreshments for the meeting spaces.

Implementation of the activity

Rather than a series of isolated activities, this is a carefully designed process that moves from listening to victims to safely meeting with the perpetrators, always incorporating emotional support, voluntary participation and active involvement from all sides. Each phase has a specific purpose which, when combined with the others, contributes to building trust, mutual recognition and reconciliation.

· **Characterisation of violence with victims or survivors**
The primary acts of violence are documented and categorised based on the victims' accounts. This makes it possible to define the issues of greatest interest to them on the road to peaceful coexistence. In educational contexts, emphasis is placed on identifying violence towards girls and boys in schools.

This allows us to build a legitimate and shared understanding of what happened, based on the victims' accounts, which will guide all subsequent stages.

· **Identification of needs for truth and reparations**
From a psychosocial perspective, we explore what victims need in order to feel a sense of closure and the questions they would ask of their perpetrators. Placing the ethical, political and emotional needs of victims at the center allows us to set out a roadmap for the process.

· **Empathetic listening with the perpetrators**
Those responsible reflect on the violence, acknowledge the acts they have committed and their impact, and are confronted with the previously developed characterisation of the violence. They also consider the violence they may have suffered in their own lives. Encouraging sincere acknowledgement of responsibilities contributes to the listening exercise, along with dismantling narratives that justify violence and establishing common ground for dialogue.

· **Review and response to victims' demands**
The perpetrators respond to victims' questions and needs, with support and care facilitated to prevent further harm. This action represents a step towards initial symbolic reparations and builds trust in the willingness of the perpetrators to respond respectfully.

18 | Gender equality

Yes to peace. Youth for sustainable peace and global citizenship | 19

· **Transfer and validation with the victims**
The responses of the perpetrators are shared with the victims, verifying whether they are acceptable to them. Both parties are prepared for a possible joint meeting. This ensures that the victims retain control of the process and feel safe to continue, reaffirming their central role.

· **Meeting between victims and perpetrators**
In reconciliation meetings, victims and perpetrators meet face to face. They arrange themselves in rows facing each other, with a symbolic energy center. Questions are asked and answered in an atmosphere regulated by rules of care. Forgiveness, if it occurs, must be genuine and accompanied by guarantees that it will not happen again. This activity enables a collective act of recognition, symbolic reparation and establishing commitments towards peaceful coexistence.

· **Institutional and community coordination**
The process is coordinated together with regional platforms (Dialogue and Coordination Roundtable, Regional Peacebuilding Space, Roundtable on Guarantees for Women Leaders and Defenders) and with state institutions (JEP, UBPD, CEV). This makes it possible to document cases, prepare reports and guarantee follow-up, and helps lend political and social viability to the process; broadening its impact beyond the immediate group and strengthening the local peace agenda.

Each phase was designed as part of a progressive path that made it possible to move beyond the memory of harm to the building of trust and reconciliation. On the whole, these phases ensured that victims were heard and placed at the center of the process, that those held accountable sincerely acknowledged responsibility for their actions, and that safe conditions were created for an encounter based on mutual respect and care. At the same time, continuous feedback from victims ensured that they retained control over every decision, preventing further victimisation and in turn empowering them. The final meeting not only provided a space for recognition and symbolic reparations, but also laid the foundation for commitments to prevent such events from happening again. Lastly, coordination with community institutions and platforms ensured the long-term viability of the process and made it possible for the lessons learned to reach beyond the territory and political sphere, broadening the impact beyond the groups directly involved.

Reflection

This process showed that reconciliation does not happen overnight, but requires a lengthy and cautious journey, in which each step has its own significant meaning and paves the way for the next. Listening to the victims and acknowledging their needs allowed us to place human dignity at the center, giving them a voice as the main guides on their own journeys. At the same time, providing spaces for the former combatants to be heard provided an opportunity for them to accept responsibility, break their silence, and humanise those who they had previously only considered as victims. The final meeting, rather than a means of closure, marked a starting point for new ways of coexisting, where recognition of the damage done and commitments to prevent its recurrence laid the foundation for establishing trust. Coordination with community and institutional actors ensured that the experience lasted beyond the intervention, reinforcing the idea that peace is grounded in everyday life, shared memory, and the collective will to avoid repeating violence. In short, this process involved learning that peace is not only the absence of war, but the construction of more humane relationships based on respect, truth and shared hope.

Analysis of risks, difficulties and achievements.
If there were relevant difficulties, indicate the mechanisms to overcome them.

RISKS:
Presence of armed actors in the area.

Possibility of further victimisation if spaces for dialogue are not managed carefully.

Social stigmatisation of victims or former combatants participating.

Risk of interruption due to lack of institutional support or continued funding.

DIFFICULTIES:
Continued presence of armed actors in the territory.

Threats against former combatants who participate in the process.

Resistance of some participants to see themselves as victims or perpetrators.

ACHIEVEMENTS:
· Incorporation of cultural and artistic tools as mediators in the process, integrating historical memory into activities.

· Multiple opportunities for dialogue were created, involving both victims and former combatants.

· Development of joint agendas to build trust and peaceful coexistence in the region, including the initiative *'Defendamos la Vida y la Paz en Montes de María'* ('Defend Life and Peace in Montes de María').

· Identification of 30 cases of sexual violence and forced disappearance within the comprehensive reparation processes.

· Preparation of a detailed report with recommendations for advancing a territory-based approach in peace talks.

· Contribution to the development of the Montes de María Travelling Museum of Memory, including a thematic room dealing with sexual violence.

· Active integration of women and youth in the processes of political advocacy and territorial peacebuilding.

Key achievements:

· Creation of spaces based on trust and respect among participants.

· Constant technical and psychosocial support, guided by a deeply empathetic approach towards victims and perpetrators.

· Establishment of strategic alliances with state institutions and local organisations, which strengthened and ensured the long-term viability of the process.

20 | Gender equality

Yes to peace. Youth for sustainable peace and global citizenship | 21

What changes or transformations has this experience brought about or contributed to?

- Strengthening trust between victims and former combatants responsible for major acts of violence.

- A humanised and non-stigmatised view of former combatants.

- Progress in the public acknowledgement of responsibility by former combatants.

- Promotion of common agendas for reconciliation and rural development in the region, contributing to the implementation of territorial development plans.

- Reduction of community tensions.

- Strengthening women's participation in transitional justice processes.

- Promotion of a culture of peace and prevention of the recurrence of violence.

Lessons learned, recommendations for the future and adapting to working with youth

- It is essential to apply a **psychosocial and empathetic approach** to both victims and perpetrators. This involves recognising how social, cultural, economic and political contexts influence individual development, behaviour and wellbeing. It also means understanding that the use of violence as a coping mechanism is learned in a system that encourages it, and that it can be challenged, unlearned, and replaced by peaceful ways of dealing with conflict.

- **Reconciliation processes take time** and must go through several stages gradually: acknowledgement of the harm by the perpetrators, the establishment of mutually satisfactory agreements for reparations, and a commitment to ensuring that it will not happen again. To achieve this, continuous funding and institutional support are needed to ensure the long-term viability and expansion of the initiative.

- It is essential to integrate **differentiated approaches** that acknowledge the particular violence suffered by women and ethnic communities.

- Peace is only possible with the **active participation of all parties** involved.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADAPTING THIS TO YOUTH IN SPAIN

To work with these methodologies with young people, it is essential to use activities based on **movement and interaction,** which facilitate mutual understanding, relaxation and attention to the activity. Following Belinda Hopkins' Circle Time, it is recommended to:

- Begin each single-sex meeting with a **round of introductions** (name, something they like, something they are good at).

- Propose an **activity that reinforces existing ties.** Example: standing in a circle, those who have something in common must swap places.

To prevent moments of dialogue from leading to tensions, it is advisable to establish a **basic code of conduct** at the beginning of each session and to offer the group an object that determines who speaks:

- Only those who have the object in their hands may speak, while the rest listen.

- Speaking is always voluntary.

- Everyone must be respectful of one another.

In the **process of identifying violence,** if you face some resistance, you can begin by exploring what participants understand by 'violence' in a broad sense, without using concepts that may be polarising today (such as feminism). To this end, techniques from the Theatre of the Oppressed can be applied, such as **image theatre,** in which each person uses their body to represent what they understand by violence, while the group observes, interprets and discusses the meanings.

Other techniques can also be used:

- **Concentric circles,** where young people rotate from partner to partner to answer questions on the topic.

- **Progressive group exercises (of 2, 4 and 8 people),** who must agree on three key words related to 'violence' in each round, until they reach a common agreement.

When the **collectively defined categorisation of violence** is presented to the groups, it should be emphasised that these are real experiences, close to their own circumstances. Instead of focusing on examples from another place, you can ask how they identify such violence among themselves, in their schools and in their communities, then emphasize its global scale with accurate data.

If violence is not visibly apparent in the context, it is useful to focus on **more subtle or symbolic expressions,** helping to identify any situation that causes discomfort or prevents human needs from being met as violence. With men who are responsible for violence against women, it is advisable to begin by identifying the violence they themselves have suffered, and then to recognise whether they have ever committed violence against others.

In groups not familiar with these concepts, visual aids such as **illustrated cards** (e.g., www.culturarestaurativa.com) can be used to help associate emotions with needs. It is also useful to explore discomfort with the social order that imposes strict gender roles and restrictive expectations, using activities such as **"The box of traditional masculinity and femininity",** adapted to the diversity of the group.

If the idea of **energy circles** seems culturally unfamiliar, cards with symbols can be handed out so that each person can choose the one that best represents their gratitude or their wish for the process.

To promote **respectful dialogue,** each conversation can be structured according to Belinda Hopkins' **Talking Circles** (see resource: https://www.encercle.cat/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/PRACTICAS-RESTAURATIVAS_2020.pdf).

If **victim-blaming** occurs, it is recommended to stop the dialogue, remind them of the rules of respect and facilitate a tension-releasing activity, such as using the aromatic oils to relax. You can also hold a talking circle on fears and assumptions, or try the **"Fears and Hopes"** activity, where each participant reflects on what they need to feel safe in the space.

22 | Gender equality

Yes to peace. Youth for sustainable peace and global citizenship | 23

Recommendations for adapting good practices to the scope of the 'Yes to Peace' project

〉 Palestine Circus and Role-playing School

The performing arts and social circus are ideal mediums for boosting confidence, discipline and cooperation among vulnerable young people. Incorporating role-playing games allows them to experience different perspectives and learn to put themselves in someone else's shoes, developing empathy and nonviolent conflict resolution skills. These practices allow emotions that are normally repressed or criticized to be expressed (such as the desire for revenge for the murder of one of the facilitator's brothers), providing a degree of safety in extremely violent and disheartening contexts. They also promote joint thinking about alternatives, restoring a sense of agency (the ability to do something), making joint decisions about how they want this space to work, caring for the community, and allowing themselves to collectively discuss uncomfortable topics; overcoming the prevailing narratives. The participation and collaboration of girls and boys on equal terms, in environments where gender segregation is so prevalent, makes it possible to challenge and break with traditional gender roles in an almost natural and non-forced way.

〉 Building trust and promoting mutual recognition in Colombia

Creating dynamics that strengthen trust and mutual recognition between young people from different cultural backgrounds is essential to prevent tensions and exclusion in diverse neighbourhoods in Spain. Spaces are provided for coexistence, collaborative projects, or storytelling workshops that **set common goals and cooperative activities, and can help break down prejudices and create bonds of empathy.**

In these processes, it is essential to highlight both the differences and similarities within the group, in order to **build a collective identity based on respect, diversity and shared belonging, while recognising the diversity of the different social identities in the group.** The aim is to encourage each member of the group to recognise their multiple identities; those stemming from their family or community heritage and those derived from this intercultural encounter.

When a group includes members from communities with a history of oppression, both those who repressed and those who were oppressed, it is essential to **create a safe space to acknowledge that legacy.** Recognising past violence and its lingering effects allows the group to challenge dominant narratives, acknowledge harm, and commit collectively to preventing its repetition. It also helps members **understand how inherited power dynamics continue to play out today and how they may, often unintentionally, contribute to them.**

It is also important to **openly and carefully address any natural tensions that may have come from these intercultural encounters.** This includes fears or doubts, limited understanding of other groups, or false information spread by those promoting hate.

〉 Other possible practices

In addition to these recommendations, the team of educators from MPDL and NOVACT involved in this project offer a series of activity guides that may inspire the educational work proposed below:

Activity:
My Silhouette (starter activity)

Objective

1. To encourage self-awareness and collective reflection on how people have been shaped by their gender, identifying norms, beliefs, emotions, and thoughts that influence how they relate to others.

2. The activity aims to create an initial opportunity for emotional connection and openness, before moving on to work on gender justice and peacebuilding.

Materials

Large paper or poster board (A2 or similar) per person, markers, coloured pencils, pens. Optional: Adhesive tape or wall space to place the silhouettes.

Materials

20-30 mins

The activity

Each participant draws their silhouette.

They are given a list of sentences or questions to answer inside the silhouette, writing on different parts of the body:

- Head: What am I usually thinking about?
- Heart: What excites me or makes me feel alive?
- Hands: What am I good at doing?
- Shoulders: What things do I carry that weigh me down?
- Mouth: What would I like to say but sometimes hesitate to?
- Feet: Where do I want to go or what would I like to change?

When finished, the silhouettes are placed on the wall or on the floor. Encourage them to walk around, look and observe what other people have written.

In a circle, start a conversation based on these observations:

- What are some things we have in common?
- Which parts show emotions or thoughts that we tend to hide?
- What expectations or norms appear without us realising it?
- What do we need to feel freer or at peace with who we are?

24 | Gender equality

Yes to peace. Youth for sustainable peace and global citizenship | 25

Reflection

- What have I discovered about myself by drawing my silhouette?

- What phrases have made me think about how I have been raised or what is expected of me?

- What would I like to change in order to feel freer and in harmony with others?

- What did we discover about how gender norms can influence what we feel or who we think we should be?

- How can we support each other to build more equal and caring relationships?

Activity:
Listening to Feminism

Objective

1. To empower young people by enabling them to express their experiences and beliefs.

2. To create a non-judgemental space to discuss different beliefs about feminism.

3. To encourage active listening in a deliberate manner, learning to listen to arguments that both support and contradict one's own beliefs.

4. To create a space for reflection and critical thinking.

Materials

Chairs. Optional: sheets of paper and markers

Duration

40- 60 mins

The activity

We will use the fishbowl technique, in which the group is divided into two subgroups - one of speakers and one of listeners - who will take turns. The aim is for them to alternately present different beliefs and experiences of feminism, creating a common space to discuss disagreements and build shared knowledge.

AT THE START:
Two subgroups are formed. These subgroups may be composed of both boys and girls, however in this case, it is preferable to have one subgroup of boys and another of girls.

This enhances the sense of identification within the group and fosters dialogue. One will be Subgroup A and the other Subgroup B. The rules are explained:

- Subgroup A will stand in the center in a circle.

- Subgroup B will be placed in a circle around the circle of Subgroup A, forming two concentric circles.

- Subgroup A has 20 minutes to talk about what they think and feel about the different topics to be discussed. Let them know that there are no good or bad arguments; only sharing what they believe and feel. They can draw from their own experiences.

- Subgroup B should remain silent and listen.

- After 20 minutes they switch places; Subgroup B will speak and Subgroup A will listen.

THE ACTIVITY:

Fishbowl Groups 20-25 minutes:

Both boys' and girls' subgroups can start. The group leader, who is outside the group, never inside it, will propose different topics or statements about feminism, and the group will freely discuss them.

- The topics / statements may be prepared in advance, but it is important to adapt them to the content presented by the group.

- When an interesting topic comes up in the group or their energy levels drop, it is time to introduce the next statement.

- Alternative: a different option is to write some sentences and leave them face down in the middle of the room. The participants pick them up one by one and discuss them. This is more of a guided method, but at the risk of losing the natural flow of the group's brainstorming. Afterwards, the second group participates. They can begin with the same topic as the previous group, or by revisiting a previously discussed topic. However, the group should not solely focus on discussing the other group's topics, and instead put forth their own ideas.

REFLECTION 40-60 MINUTES:

Providing time for reflection is very important and requires the ability to lead the group. It should be guided by the following principles:

- Content that has been expressed: differences and similarities. - Provide verified information and data to refute certain beliefs that have come up.

- Counter beliefs with facts. Connect the discussions with their own situations (family, school, etc.) by asking for examples.

- Experience during the activity: discuss how they felt and why; were they threatened, afraid, or rejected? Who spoke more and who spoke less, and who felt judged?

CLOSING:

At the end, more structured guidance will be necessary. Conclude with a psycho-educational session providing information and key points on what has emerged during the session: experiences, beliefs and feelings regarding feminism. And thank everyone for their honesty. Close with a round of 'valuable lessons learned in this activity.'

26 | Gender equality

Yes to peace. Youth for sustainable peace and global citizenship | 27

Activity:
Role model competition

Objective

1. To raise awareness of the inequality in the status of women and non-binary people in different public spheres (sports, science, culture, politics, media, etc.).

2. To reflect on how gender biases influence how we view role models, and the limited space and visibility they are given.

Materials

Slides, projector or blackboard, poster board, markers, post-its

Duration

40-60 mins

The activity

Groups are formed according to the number of students. Each group receives a poster board with a table or diagram featuring different categories:

- Sports
- Science / technology
- Politics / power
- Culture (cinema, literature, art, music, video games)
- Media and influencers
- Activism / social movements

As a competition, and within a set time, they must **write down the names of powerful or well-known figures** in each field (those that actually come to mind, without checking online), from the local, national or international sphere. They then classify the names using coloured post-its according to gender or identity. When they have finished, they can place all the cards on the wall or blackboard and see which gender has the most names.

Reflection

- Which ones did you have the hardest time thinking of? Why?

- What do you understand by power?

- Which fields are more male-dominated or female-dominated?

- Who occupies public space?

- Which female or non-binary role models could we incorporate into our spaces (classrooms, networks, media, etc.)?

- What are the implications of one gender or the other not being positively represented in any of these areas? Is it important to feel that someone like you has already made a positive social impact in a given area, so that you may dream of achieving the same?

Show a short presentation or video with examples of relevant women and non-binary people in the same fields (to fight bias and provide new role models).

Activity:
Emotions from the masculinity box

Objective

To reflect on how traditional masculinities limit emotional expression and how this influences coexistence, relationships, and the aim of fostering a culture of peace and equality.

Materials

A box (material or symbolic), cards with names of emotions (joy, sadness, fear, anger, tenderness, pride, shame, guilt, etc.).

Duration

60 mins

The activity

1. INTRODUCTION:

The concept of the "masculinity box" is explained: the social norms imposed on men to repress certain emotions that are considered "non-masculine".

2. MAIN ACTIVITY:

In small groups, cards with emotions are handed out. They have to decide which ones are "allowed" inside the box (socially accepted emotions for men) and which ones are left outside (emotions that are usually repressed). The cards are physically placed inside or outside the box. You can also use cards or pieces of paper with statements (for example, 'I once felt afraid of who I was', 'I have been judged for the way I dress', 'I have seen someone treated unfairly because of their gender', 'I feel free being myself' etc.), so that those in the group who identify with this personal experience, or with people of the same gender identity or sexual orientation, can decide where to place that statement.

3. SHARING:

Each group shares which emotions they left in or out, and why. The results are compared among the group.

4. CLOSING:

The box is opened and the repressed emotions are "released". Each participant chooses an emotion and completes a sentence such as "I wish men could express more (emotion) without fear."

Reflection

- Which emotions were left out of the box and why? How do our emotions relate to social gender norms?

- What are the consequences for men and for society of repressing certain emotions?

- What is the relationship between emotional repression and violence (self-inflicted or towards others)?

• How can we build a freer, more empathetic and peaceful masculinity?

• Which "feminine" emotions or practices do the men in this group see as beneficial for them? (e.g. asking for help, being vulnerable, sharing a concern without fear of ridicule, knowing how to take better care of the people you love, etc.). To this end, we can refer to the experience in Nicaragua's from the Caring for the Environment manual.

• How could it benefit us personally and collectively if men knew how to take better care of themselves, their families, their social circles and the communities in which they live?

• Do you know of other ways of being a man, other models of masculinity, which are practiced around you or in other parts of the world?

• Can recognising and expressing emotions, identifying ourselves as men, women or non-binary, contribute to peace and equality?

3. GROUP SHARING:

Each group presents their city, explaining their main ideas. The designs can be placed on the wall as a collective exhibition.

4. CLOSING:

Reflection on which aspects we can incorporate into our communities and environments.

Reflection

• What would a city that prioritises care and equality look like?

• Which places or habits lead to inequalities or exclusion?

• What small actions could make us feel safer and freer in our everyday spaces?

• What is the relationship between feminist urbanism and societal peace?

Activity:
Feminist Cities

Objective

To reflect on how public space influences the equality and safety of people, especially women and vulnerable groups. To collectively imagine a more inclusive, safe, accessible and care-based city or community.

Materials

• Large paper or poster board
• Markers, coloured pencils, magazines to cut out, glue, and scissors
• Simple maps of a city or neighbourhood

Duration

60 mins

The activity

1. INTRODUCTION:

Open with a brief guided reflection: "Who owns the city, the neighbourhood or the village? Do we feel safe and comfortable in all spaces?" Some basic concepts of feminist urbanism (safety, accessibility, care, participation, diversity) are then explained.

2. GROUP WORK:

Ask them the question: "What should my community or neighbourhood have so that we all feel more involved, safe and comfortable?" Work is then done in groups to design their own feminist city on a poster or map. They can draw, cut out images or write down ideas. Think about how public transport, care facilities (nurseries, lighting, toilets), cultural and leisure environments, etc., should be redesigned.

Activity:
Stop False Rumours

Objective

To understand first-hand how false allegations around feminism are created, spread and perpetuated, analysing the emotions, interests and narratives that drive them. To encourage critical thinking and empathy towards the victims.

Materials

Cards with real or adapted phrases from social media, the press or everyday conversations (for example: "Some women make accusations just to cause trouble", "You can't say anything anymore", "If it were that serious, they would drop it", etc.), along with paper, markers and a blackboard or wall.

Duration

60 mins

The activity

1. INTRODUCTION:

Present the idea that such rumours not only carry false information, but also collective emotions and fears.

2. PHASE 1: LISTENING TO THE FALSEHOOD:

Each group receives a card with a false phrase. They should read it and reflect: What emotion does this sentence convey or trigger? (fear, anger, mistrust, frustration, shame, etc.). Have them write it down.

3. PHASE 2: BEHIND THE FEAR:

The group discusses the following: What is behind this emotion? What kind of story, experience, or context could cause someone to believe or repeat this idea? (for example; insecurity, loss of privileges, lack of knowledge, unmanaged pain, etc.).

4. PHASE 3: REWRITE THE STORY:

Each group transforms their initial sentence into an alternative message that retains the underlying emotion but expresses it in a constructive or empathetic way.

For example:

- 'Women report incidents just to cause trouble' → 'It is sometimes difficult to understand the pain of someone who reports an incident; we should listen before judging.'
- 'You can't say anything anymore' → 'We are learning how to avoid causing harm when we speak.'

5. SHARING AND CLOSING:

The alternative messages are read aloud and hung up on the wall. The group then reflects on how the meaning of this language changes when we move from reaction to understanding.

Reflection

- What emotions cause people to spread falsehoods?
- Why do we prefer to believe some stories rather than others?
- What happens to us when we hear an unfair statement? How can we respond calmly and empathetically?
- What kind of society can we build when we choose to believe and care rather than distrust?

V. General final recommendations

The following suggestions for adapting the work experiences outlined in this manual are aimed at promoting youth participation in peacebuilding, with a focus on strengthening their transformative potential.

1. Adapting to the local context

〉 Connect the local and the global:

Help identify the different forms of social injustice or violence (direct, cultural and structural) in the area of intervention, linked to the thematic focus on peacebuilding, as well as their connection to similar occurrences in other parts of the world. In doing so, we can address global issues such as the lack of job security among youth, structural racism, violence against women, violence on social media or hate speech; emphasizing both commonalities and differences, while continuing to highlight intersectionality.

〉 Listen from the beginning:

Young people should be co-creators from the start of the educational processes, not just beneficiaries. In this regard, the subtopics addressed in the intervention and the activities or methodologies will be more relevant to them, and the insights will be more meaningful. In the consultative process prior to the design of these manuals, it became clear that 'feeling listened to and being able to discuss matters' was one of their main concerns. In addition to exploratory talking circles on topics of interest, such as those recommended in restorative educational practices, the following references can be consulted for initial insights into the issues that seem to be most relevant for youth in Spain, in relation to each of the pillars of the Culture of Peace addressed in these manuals:

- Diagnostic Report "YES TO PEACE": https://www.mpdl.org/sialapaz/06_Informe%20de%20diagn%C3%B3stico%20final.pdf

- Informe Juventud en España 2024: entre la emergencia y la resiliencia, Ministerio de Juventud e Infancia, INJUVE (2024 Youth Report in Spain: Between emergency and resilience, Ministry of Youth and Children, INJUVE).

⟩ Use accessible and culturally relevant language:

Avoid technical jargon in our approaches and engage with youth culture (music, social media, sport, urban art).

⟩ Value the internal diversity of groups:

Acknowledge cultural backgrounds, migration journeys and diverse gender identities, ensuring that all voices are heard. Apply an intersectional approach in order to analyse how gender, class, ethnicity, age and other factors are interconnected and can lead to inequalities.

2. Conditions for a safe space

⟩ Develop coexistence agreements together with young people:

Respect, confidentiality and active listening. For the talking circles approach, such as those recommended in restorative educational practices, the following basic agreements are suggested: only the person holding the talking stick may speak while the rest should listen, speaking is voluntary, and all members must respect one another.

⟩ Include protocols for mutual support or care in case of discomfort:

Some topics (violence, racism, poverty) may be personal triggers.

⟩ Recognising young people as key players:

We should make it clear to students that they are not passive recipients of information. This means avoiding one-way communication, encouraging participation from everyone, and moving away from adult-centered perspectives. By showing genuine interest in what students know and think, we help them see that knowledge is built together. This way, we avoid the old cliché that 'teacher knows best', recognizing that students' minds are not just blank spaces to be filled in by adults.

⟩ Promoting courageous spaces:

Based on the experience gained in Palestine and presented in the Gender Equality Manual, the aim is to go beyond creating a safe space to address uncomfortable issues in order to produce alternative perspectives, moving away from the prevailing attitudes that glorify violence. To find inspiration when initiating these conversations between individuals and groups in polarised or tense contexts, with the aim of developing a common strategy to achieve transformations that guarantee long-term coexistence, we can refer to John Paul Lederach's "Improbable Dialogues", or *Discrepancia bienvenida: guía pedagógica para el diálogo controvertido en el aula* (Welcome Disagreement: Educational guide for dialogue on controversial issues in the classroom) from the Escola de Cultura de Pau (School for a Culture of Peace).

3. Suggested methodologies

⟩ Art and culture:

'Theatre of the oppressed', mural painting, music, photography or community circus as creative tools that foster emotional engagement, as well as critical personal and collective reflection based on the experience of real or realistic situations that are motivational.

⟩ Sport and play:

Promote cooperation, respect and the prevention of violence.

⟩ Community dialogues and forums:

Reinforce social cohesion, especially in intergenerational and intercultural spaces. For the design of these talking circles, we suggest referring to examples of restorative educational practices, such as those of Belinda Hopkins and Circle Time or Talking Circles.

⟩ Digital technologies:

Offer an opportunity to design youth campaigns on social media around any topic of interest, based on nonviolence. As an inspirational resource for this work, we suggest the "Digital Organising" programme developed by NOVACT, an online training resource to design impact campaigns that promote a global Culture of Peace through the use of new information and communication technologies: https://novact.org/es/formacio/.

4. Key factors for long-term viability

⟩ Continuous processes:

Avoid isolated one-off activities and pursue educational processes based on a planned medium-to long-term approach that allows for project-based work, and which integrates common content across different subjects.

⟩ Youth leadership groups:

To foster young people's motivation and abilities so that they are drawn to and able to get involved in their communities, and raise awareness or promote social mobilization in others, helping to scale up processes.

⟩ Work in networks:

Coordinate with community associations, educational centres, social services, and youth groups to connect insights gained with real opportunities for participation.

34 | Gender equality

Yes to peace. Youth for sustainable peace and global citizenship | 35

〉Intergenerational shared responsibility:

Get educators, families and youth centre staff involved as reliable role models.

〉Involvement of local authorities:

Key to ensuring long-term and financial viability.

〉Participatory evaluation:

Include opportunities for young people to evaluate what they have learned and suggest improvements, strengthening their role as co-creators in the processes.

In short, these recommendations do not provide a definitive solution, but rather a set of open guidelines that each group and each educator can adapt to their own circumstances. It is essential to maintain the conviction that young people play a leading role in peacebuilding and environmental justice, and that our educational mission is to support, facilitate and empower them. With this in mind, each experience can become a seed of change, an opportunity for shared learning and a firm step towards a more just, sustainable and peaceful future.

VI. Glossary

• **Consent:**
A voluntary "yes" or the absence of "no", free from coercion, intentional, verbal or non-verbal, which can be withdrawn at any time. Lack of consent occurs in circumstances of intimidation, when the victim is in a vulnerable situation that negates or subjugates their will. It is understood depending on the context, which means that, in certain situations of power inequality, expressing non-consent may not be possible or may be very difficult for women to do. Given these conditions of domination, some authors consider that consenting may be an expression of yielding to the other person's power. In a context where rape is prevalent, the boundaries between consensual sex and sexual assault are blurred.

• **Feminism:**
A political, social and theoretical movement that seeks equal rights and opportunities for women and men, as well as the elimination of any form of discrimination or violence faced by women because of their gender. To this end, it is necessary to acknowledge these acts of violence, seek justice, and commit to preventing them from happening again. Instead, we must follow a path towards establishing relationships based on fair treatment, collective wellbeing, and social justice. Within this movement, there are various approaches to achieving social justice, as the discrimination that affects women based on their gender intersects with other conditions such as their ethnicity, origin or socio-economic status. For this reason, each community faces a different path towards equality, each with their own respective background and within a particular cultural and social context. For this reason, we understand that it is essential to pay attention to the specific analyses of the problem and liberation strategies of the different feminist movements around the world, such as liberal feminism (which seeks to integrate women into the system without questioning it), radical feminism (which analyses and seeks to eradicate the roots of women's oppression), black feminism (which highlights the intersectionality between sexism, racism and classism), Marxist feminism (which identifies capitalism as the source of women's oppression) and eco-feminism (which links the oppression suffered by women to the destruction of the natural environment and seeks alternative models that empower women and care for the planet). Currently, there is a divide within the feminist movement between trans-exclusionary feminists, who claim that feminism should not concern itself with ending the oppression suffered by transgender women, and transfeminists, who extend the scope of feminism to include transgender women and other gender-nonconforming individuals.

• **Gender vs. sex. Gender nonconformity.**
'Sex' refers to the anatomy of the reproductive system and secondary sexual characteristics (it is therefore a biological-physiological concept), while 'gender' is a social construct used to differentiate between traditional binary social roles and expectations that are culturally taught and learned based on biological sex differences. As it is a social and cultural construct, it is a flexible form of categorisation that is influenced by the historical context, social setting and society where it exists, which means it is susceptible to change. The current re-thinking of gender identity offers an opportunity to broaden the traditional perspective to include a diverse range of gender identities and expressions, moving beyond the imposition of traditional gender roles.

- **Gender equality:**

"Not only is it a fundamental human right, but it is also one of the essential foundations for building a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world" (UN). "It is the recognition of diversity between men and women and equal treatment according to their respective needs and characteristics, without these being the cause of any discrimination" (MPDL). "In NOVACT, rather than the concept of gender equality, we use the concept of **gender justice,** because our objective is not only to guarantee formal equality, but to transform all the power dynamics that perpetuate structural discrimination. This transformation involves adopting an intersectional feminist perspective that takes into account how gender is interconnected with other forms of oppression (…) We believe that only through the active participation of feminist and LGBTQIA+ movements, as well as the recognition of the invisible work done by women and gender non-conforming individuals in contexts of resistance, will it be possible to dismantle patriarchal and authoritarian systems, build more just, equitable and violence-free societies, and ultimately contribute to positive peace".

- **Intersectionality:**

"The phenomenon in which individuals experience oppression or privilege on the basis of belonging to multiple social categories", as defined by author Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw. It is a framework for analysing how different factors that shape people's identities intersect and interact with each other to create distinct and particular systems of oppression and inequality. These different factors of oppression can include gender, ethnicity, race, social class, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity, among others. They do not operate independently but intersect to create various levels of social injustice, inequality and discrimination.

- **Machismo / sexism:**

It is a form of discrimination and oppression, to the detriment of women and to the benefit of men, which assumes the superiority of men over women and is expressed through a system of widely held and deeply rooted beliefs, norms and social practices that take the form of various expressions of direct, cultural or symbolic violence.

- **Gender-based violence:**

"Women experience violence simply because of their sex, and the victims are women from any social, educational, cultural or economic background. The aggressor's aim is to cause harm and gain control over the woman" (Instituto de la Mujer). When we talk about gender-based violence, we are not only referring to direct violence (physical assault), but also psychological violence (manipulation, invalidation, verbal abuse), sexual violence (sexual harassment and assault), digital violence (all types of attacks or discrimination online) and economic violence (deliberate control and restriction of economic resources to encourage dependence and subordination).