

## **Disarming Our Mindsets**

Niger, located in West Africa, has experienced many years of political and social instability. Armed conflict remains a problem between two ethnic groups and the government. Two minority groups, the Tuareg and the Tubu, have been vying for attention from their government over the lack of vital resources. Exclusion from political agendas pushed these ethnic groups into an armed rebellion from 1990 to 1995.

The Tubu and Tuareg are desert dwellers, herders and nomads of Niger's Sahara desert. Land that can be cultivated in the Sahara desert is rare and there are no permanent water sources, but a host of scattered oases that make life barely possible. Food scarcity and terrible droughts such as those experienced in 1973 and 1983 endanger the lives of people and cattle. In addition to environmental hardship, social issues such as cattle thievery, jealousy over women, adultery, and water ownership add to existing tensions. Moreover, Tubu tradition holds that when one of their people is lost in battle, the family of the deceased will take revenge.

Armed rebellion that included the use of spears, knives and guns by the Tuaregs and the Tubus against the government caused death and destruction, with most of the victims being youth. In 1991, a national conference failed to resolve certain social concerns among the Tuareg communities and tensions remained. Today, hundreds of families live in mourning and national unity is undermined.

The Peace and Disarmament Education project in schools sponsored by the Hague Appeal for Peace in partnership with the UN Department for Disarmament Affairs, started in February 2003 in the town of N'guigmi, located in the southeastern part of Niger, where some Tubu reside. The purpose of this project is to help sustain the collection of light weapons and small arms and to positively change mindsets of the younger generations not to resort to violence as a means to resolve conflict. In order to prevent the perpetuation of the cycle of violence and reduce the desire for revenge, these lessons demonstrate some of the ways in which time and space is provided for individuals to express themselves, to be heard and to become empowered in resolving conflict peacefully.

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**Age Range:** Elementary and secondary school students

**Subject:** Language Arts, Foreign Language Class, Social Studies

**Materials:** Blackboard or large piece of paper, list of at least 10 peace related words or phrases (may be in a handout for students), and copies of the provided summary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

**Duration:** 80 minutes (2 sessions of 40 minutes)

**Learning Objectives:**

- To build awareness about the basic needs and rights of the child
- To listen and interact respectfully for positive group dynamics
- To build peace-related vocabulary by practicing it in the classroom
- To reflect on the meaning of human rights in our own lives

**Procedure:** Active Listening, Participatory Learning, Cooperative Group Work

**Part I: Basic Needs of the Child** (20 minutes)

*Step One:* Individually or in groups of 4, ask students to unscramble the words and write the correct words in the spaces provided. Handouts of the scrambled words may be given or scrambled words may be written in front of the class on a blackboard or large piece of paper.

Note: scrambled words #1-10 are intended for students respectively 7-11 years of age and scrambled words #11-20 are intended for older students respectively 12-16 years of age.

Words designated for secondary school levels are taken from the language used in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. They are intentionally challenging to reflect the jargon used within the Convention, to expand student vocabulary and to increase understanding about the purpose of the Convention.

*Instructions: Put these letters in order to form words so as to find out what some of the needs children have and must enjoy. The letter in bold type is the beginning of the word.*

<b>WORDS</b> (ages 7-11)	<b>WORDS</b> (secondary students)	<b>ANSWERS</b>
<b>Example:</b> EHMO		<b>HOME</b>
1. DOFO	11. EIUJSCT	
2. UNCEADOIT	12. NOEPTTAILIOX	
3. SHECRETA	13. DCIHL ROBLA	
4. DEMEINIC	14. RITANERCOE	
5. AECEP	15. <b>TH</b> ALHE	
6. KOSBO	16. STANDINORICIMI	
7. <b>S</b> LEHRET	17. TRIBLEY	
8. VOEL	18. ATRAIPESNO	
9. PRETCES	19. NTVRSRPEEAIO <b>FO</b> TIDYTENI	
10. COLGTIHN	20. NRO <b>P</b> TCEITO	

**ANSWERS**

**Elementary level:** 1. FOOD, 2. EDUCATION, 3. TEACHERS, 4. MEDICINE, 5. PEACE, 6. BOOKS, 7. SHELTER, 8. LOVE 9. RESPECT, 10. CLOTHING

**Secondary level:** 11. JUSTICE, 12. EXPLOITATION, 13. CHILD LABOR, 14. RECREATION, 15. HEALTH, 16. DISCRIMINATION, 17. LIBERTY, 18. SEPARATION, 19. PRESERVATION OF IDENTITY, 20. PROTECTION

*Step Two:* After students (aged 7-11) have unscrambled the words, ask them:

- *Why are these called basic needs? Why do children need these things?*
- *How are these basic needs met and protected?*
- *Are there other needs you would add to the list? Explain your answer.*

After older students (aged 12-16) have unscrambled the words, engage them in a discussion about the meaning of the words. Ask students:

- *How are these words related to basic needs?*
- *Under which words category does each word fall, “protect basic rights” or “do not protect basic rights?”*

## **Part II: Peace Speaking Circle** (20 minutes)

*Step One:* Using the list of unscrambled words from the previous activity or, in small groups, ask students to list any peace-related words (or phrases) they recall. Groups write their word list on the board or on a large sheet of paper that everyone can see.

*Step Two:* The class forms a “peace speaking” circle. The teacher explains the activity: take a word or phrase from the list of peace related words and create a sentence. The person to your right either builds on the sentence (to create a story, for example), or makes her/ his own statement using a different word from the list.

Students can choose to pass. Any other languages can be used; the teacher translates or has someone translate what was said.

A variation to the peace speaking circle is for teachers or students to choose a different focus for example, a “health speaking” circle, an “environmentally conscious speaking” circle, a “current events” circle, etc.

*Evaluation:* After such practice, Idi Cheffou has noticed that students use this vocabulary on their own in the classroom and in their written work. The activity not only reinforces peace related vocabulary, but their meaning, purpose and intent. Once students are familiar with this activity, it is sufficient to say “Circle Time” and they know the rules.

### **Part III: Rights of the Child** (40 minutes)

Before conducting this activity, teachers may want to acquaint students with the Convention on the Rights of the Child by providing a copy of the document. This activity can also serve as an introduction to the Convention for students.

*Step One:* Divide the Convention by individual Articles, fold them and mix them up. Form groups of 4-5. Ask each student to pick *at least* one of the folded Articles and ask each group to come up with 3-4 rights of the child that stand out for them. (Depending on the size of the class, students may pick more than one folded piece of paper).

*Step Two:* Ask each group to read their rights aloud, while a “scribe” writes them on the board or large piece of paper.

*Step Four:* Ask each student to choose 5 Rights of the Child from the list on the blackboard or large piece of paper to make a “We...” written statement in their own words to express each right. For example, “We the children, have the right to life.” Ask students to share their statements with the class as well as to share and discuss them with their mother, father, brothers and/ or sisters.

**Going Further:** In the community of N’guigmi, 10% of the population is literate and radio is a primary method of educating about peace and nonviolence. Programs focus on such concepts as forgiveness and nonviolent conflict resolution to promote healing, reconciliation and resolution in a community traumatized by Tubu armed rebellion. They help educate youth about the scourge of war in order to shift consciousness about resorting to violence and its consequences. Programs are aired in the local languages including Hausa, Kanuri, Fulfulde, Tubu, and Arabic giving all individuals the opportunity to speak out, to listen to one another and to be exposed to new ways of thinking.

Twenty people were selected from N’guigmi to go to capital city of Niamey to learn how to operate a radio program. The team included ex-combatants, village chiefs, representatives from local government, teachers, widows of armed rebellion, representatives from the Women Educator’s Association and the Women Homemakers’

Association, and student “Peace Messengers” from a secondary school. In their radio programs, the team utilizes techniques such as interviews, roundtables and storytelling to promote sensitization campaigns in N’guigmi. Programs reflect real social concerns and use both indigenous and modern conflict prevention and resolution methods to analyze them. Since radio waves reach do not extend all across N’guigmi, the team travels to local markets to conduct further outreach.

Schools may have radio programs to implement similar campaigns on peace, human rights and conflict resolution. A radio program, however, is only one way to raise awareness and promote discussion about these topics in schools: teachers and students can make announcements over a loud speaker or in class at the beginning and/ or end of each day. Announcements could include stories and/ or quotes to which the entire student body could listen and/ or include quizzes in which they could participate.

**Connection:** See *Imaging the Desirable* in Strand Four on Disarmament and Human Security.

### **Summary of *The Convention on the Rights of the Child*<sup>1</sup>**

United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), July 1999

#### **Children’s Rights to Basic Health and Welfare**

*Every child has the right to:*

- Survival and development;
- An adequate standard of living;
- The highest attainable standard of health and effective health services;
- Special care, if he or she is disabled, that ensures dignity, promotes self-reliance and facilitates active participation in the community; and
- Social security and child care services and facilities.

#### **The Rights of Children and Their Families**

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<sup>1</sup> For the full text of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, see: <http://www.unicef.org/crc/fulltext.htm>



*Every child has the right to:*

- Live with his or her parents or to maintain contact if separated from either one;
- Cross national borders to be reunified with his or her parents;
- Receive alternative care when a family environment cannot be maintained;
- A safe adoption system;
- Protection from kidnapping;
- Protection from abuse and neglect by parents or care givers; and
- Regular review of any placements that might be necessary for care, protection or treatment.

*The Convention requires that governments will ensure the rights of parents and families to:*

- Provide guidance to their child;
- Receive assistance in child-raising;
- Have responsibilities shared equally by both parents;
- Receive material assistance and support programmes especially with regard to nutrition, clothing and housing; and
- Cross national borders to be reunified with their children.

### **Children's Rights to Education, Leisure and Culture Activities**

*Every child has the right to:*

- Free primary education;
- Access to secondary education and vocational training;
- An education that develops his or her personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities to their fullest;
- An education that prepares him or her for an active adult life in a free society;
- An education that fosters respect for his or her own family, cultural identity, and languages; for his or her country; and for the natural environment;
- An education in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance and equality;
- Leisure, play and the opportunity to participate in cultural and artistic activities; and
- The opportunity to enjoy his or her culture, profess and practice his or her religion, use his or her language.

### **Children's Rights to Special Protection**

*Every child has the right to special protection:*

- In emergency situations such as armed conflict, or when children are separated from family or home;
- When he or she is in conflict with the law;
- In situations of exploitation such as child labour, drug abuse, sexual exploitation or sexual abuse, sale, trafficking and abduction; and
- From discrimination of any kind.

### **The Civil Rights and Freedoms of Children**

*Every child has the right to:*

- A name and nationality;
- Protection from being deprived of his or her identity;
- Freedom of expression;
- Freedom of thought, conscience and religion;
- Freedom of association and peaceful assembly;
- Information from a diversity of sources;
- Privacy;
- Protection from torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; and
- Protection against unlawful arrest and unjustified deprivation of liberty.