



## **Social Issues**

### **Gangs**



#### **Definition:**

A gang is a group of people who spend time together for social reasons or work together and may engage in delinquent or violent behaviour for a criminal or antisocial purpose.

#### **Examples:**

- Street gangs in Los Angeles
- Gangs in the townships of South Africa
- Gangs in El Salvador

#### **Why the situation occurs?**

Young people in particular are affected by the culture of violence. They may respond by organising themselves into 'gangs'. These gangs are an expression of their self-identity and self-esteem but they also instil a desire to control certain areas and situations, establishing their own territory and fighting against opposing gangs.

Street fights, rape and murder can be part of gang violence. The local community in which the gangs are situated can become a dangerous area for all. Often authorities will react with more violence, but this does not provide a solution to the problem. Gang members are looking for something to identify with, to belong to. An alternative solution has to be found for the young people involved so that they do not have to resort to joining a gang and spreading the violence.

#### **How you can make a difference?**

Tackle the issue - learn about why young people join gangs, what are they searching for? And what do they get in return when they join? What are the alternatives and how can these be made available? Why do people turn to violence and what other options could they chose? How can young people be dissuaded from joining a gang, and how could gang members get out of the cycle?

Use the materials and tools provided to follow the process of:

1. Identifying the problem
2. Developing Awareness and Empathy
3. Taking action
4. Measuring the change

### **Resources and Links:**

World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM) Strategy Promising Practice Documents (English and Spanish) on the programme set up in El Salvador to help young people affected by the culture of violence; offering them the option to choose "Solidarity Brigades" instead of gangs, using the Scout Method of working in small groups and giving young people responsibilities.

<http://www.scout.org/strat/pplist.shtml>

A WOSM publication, "Scouting and Peace", which addresses the question "What is Scouting's contribution to peace?" (In English and French):

[http://www.scout.org/wsrc/ll/docs/scoutspeace\\_e.pdf](http://www.scout.org/wsrc/ll/docs/scoutspeace_e.pdf) (English)

Workshop 9: "It's not always easy - managing our conflicts" from the booklet "Building Peace Together" (A WOSM publication)

[http://www.scout.org/wsrc/peaceworkshops/workshop9\\_e.pdf](http://www.scout.org/wsrc/peaceworkshops/workshop9_e.pdf)

World Scout Conference Resolution 16/90 on the Convention of the Rights of the Child

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