



Social Issues

War and Conflict



Definitions:

War is an armed conflict between countries or groups that involves killing and destruction.

Conflict is a continued struggle, or battle, such as open warfare between opposing forces.

Civil war is a war between opposing groups within a country.

Examples:

- The Iran-Iraq war (1980 - 1988)
- The Second World War (1939-1945)
- Civil war in Sierra Leone

Why the situation occurs?

War and conflict occur for a great number of reasons - political, economical and social. War may result because people are unhappy with a situation and react with violence - they may even feel that their only option is violence. Perhaps they have already tried all non-violent means and so war is the last resort.

A country or groups can go to war in order to stand up for someone, or something, which is under threat. For example, a country may declare war on another country that has invaded a third country - such as the United Kingdom declaring war on Germany in 1939 when Hitler invaded Poland.

A country may be reduced to civil war when a part of the government breaks away from the country's leader or an opposing group attack the government or institutions of a country. The two sides may turn to violence in order to try and win power, and will reduce the country to war.

War has many serious and devastating effects - soldiers and civilians are maimed and die, families are separated, people become refugees or are internally displaced. Supplies of water, food, electricity can be cut off, epidemics can spread, natural resources are destroyed - the list is endless.

How you can make a difference:

Tackle the issue - learn about the different conflicts that are taking place in numerous locations across the world today. Why do wars start and how can conflicts be solved? How can war victims be helped? Why do people turn to violence and what other options could they chose?

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:

See the following sections for more information:

- Child Soldiers
- Conflict in Communities
- Democracy
- Discrimination
- Ethnic Hatred
- Gangs and Street Violence
- Landmines
- Racism
- Refugees and Internally Displaced People
- Religious Intolerance
- War toys

A World Organization of the Scout Movement circular noting Baden-Powell's thoughts on War and Peace and the position of the Movement regarding peace in the twenty-first century:

http://www.scout.org/front/docs/peace_bp_e.pdf (English)

http://www.scout.org/front/docs/peace_bp_f.pdf (French)

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

www.scout.org/wsrc/II/docs/scoutspeace_e.pdf (English)

www.scout.org/wsrc/II/docs/scoutspeace_f.pdf (French)

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

www.scout.org/wsrc/peaceworkshops/workshop9_e.pdf (English)