



## Gangs and Street Violence

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*Managing conflict without violence: 11-14*

### Identifying the problems:

Your project should respond to a specific need in your community. It is important to involve Scouts in this part of the project using participative and dynamic methods. Here are some creative ways of exploring the issue of gangs and street violence with Scouts aged 11-14.

### Activity 1: What's our experience?

Undertake a survey of young people to find out what their experiences are of gangs and street violence - where gangs meet, where violence has happened etc. The survey should be prepared and undertaken by the Scouts themselves - see Activity Treasure Chest.

### Activity 2: Here's the results!

Ask the patrols to develop role-plays to act out some of their results. Encourage them to include some of the reasons why they think young people act in this way.

### Activity 3: What's happening nationally?

Using newspapers or web-sites, ask the Scouts to find out what the situation is in the rest of your country and share their results with the rest of the Troop. Ask them to find out if their locality is safer or more dangerous than other parts of your country, area or town. Invite a policeman to come to talk about violence, where it occurs in your locality, why young people act violently, the impact on the rest of the community and how Scouts can keep themselves safe.

# Developing awareness and empathy:

After actively participating in identifying the problem, Scouts need to be helped to develop their awareness of the issues, many of which are complex. Here are some activities which will help Scouts to explore the issue of gangs and street violence and develop skills and empathy. These activities use the Scout method of active participation and exploration. The project in the community should help the Scouts use the skills that they have developed.

## Activity 1: What happens next?

Put situation cards around the walls and ask the Scouts to play 'What Happens Next' - see Activity Treasure Chest. Read the responses and each Scout can then vote for the best solution to the problem. A variety of situations should be provided and the different solutions should be discussed with the Scouts.

## Activity 2: From the other side

Using the activity 'Opinion Line' - see Activity Chest, the Scouts should explore the situation in relation to members of gangs. Some statements should be developed and read out which focus on the aggressors and the Scouts indicate their response. It is helpful if the leader can encourage some of the Scouts to say why they have responded in the particular way so that young people have the opportunity to express their views and compare their thoughts and feelings with others. Here are some sample statements:

### Possible statements for the Opinion Line.

One end of the line represents 'Yes - I agree' and the other represents 'No - I disagree'. The statement is read out and the Scouts stand at a place on the line which represents their opinion.

- ? I have been violent to solve a problem.
- ? Boredom is a key factor for young people joining gangs.
- ? Once a young person joins a gang they are forced to stay.
- ? Sometimes violence can make a situation worse.
- ? Sometimes violence can make a situation better.
- ? Gang leaders are often talented young people.
- ? Being part of a gang is a natural part of a young person's life.

Leaders may wish to ask promote discussion and ask the young people the reasons for their opinions as the game is being

played.

## Activity 3: What can we do?

Violence is a problem in communities and often young men are particularly affected. It is important that both boys and girls and young men and women know how to keep themselves safe as they become more independent. Ask the Scouts to come up with a code of conduct for themselves when they are in the community. They should identify the risks, from the experiences identified earlier, and the actions they need to take to overcome the risks. If the troop is mixed it may be useful for the boys and girls to work in different groups. The results should be written up and could be shared with a community policeman for comment before being adopted by the Troop. Make a display to show other young people that Scouting is young people having fun and doing exciting activities with their friends. Display these posters/leaflets in the community.

## Activity 4: A community problem?

Violence in communities is often a result of young peoples' boredom, dissatisfaction and exclusion from society. The aggressors are victims of their circumstances. It is important that Scouts see gangs and street violence as a problem for the community. Using the results of the survey and a large map of your area or town, identify where gangs meet, where violence occurs, where there are facilities for young people and where there is support e.g. Police stations etc. Identify the problem areas and ask the Scouts to come up with solutions. These results can be shared with your local community.

## Taking action:

Your project should make a difference in the community. Actions need to be developed which are appropriate to the community and are challenging and fun for the Scouts involved. Here are some projects which may be appropriate for Scouts to respond to the subject of gangs and street violence in your community.

## Project 1: Hear our views!

Present the work of the Troop to local community leaders and policemen. Discuss the problems with the leaders and ask them to help the Scouts to develop some action plans. Send these ideas to the local decision-makers.

## Project 2: Safety first!

Ask the Scouts to share their code of conducts in the community with their friends and families. Invite them all to use the code of conduct over a period of time and record the results.

## **Project 3: Welcoming others**

Have a recruitment campaign asking Scouts to invite their friends, particularly those who are not involved in regular activities to a Scout activity. The activity should be developed to meet the needs of the young people who are not Scouts. Get some feedback at the end and based on the results offer further activities to this group of young people as a Troop or as a Scout District.

### **Measuring change:**

The project is designed to help young people to develop their capabilities, attitudes and values in response to situations where there is conflict, and then apply these to a project in their community. Scouts can make a difference in their communities and develop capabilities and empathies related to peace education. Two dimensions of change should be measured - change in the communities and change in the Scouts themselves. Measuring change should be built into the design of the project in a fun, participative way. Here are some activities which will help to measure change.

### **Activity 1: The situation now**

After a period of time, re-draw the map of your community, identifying the same information as before, gangs, incidents of violence, recreation facilities for young people. The information could be collected from friends, family, local news stories etc. Compare the results with the initial situation and share your findings.

### **Activity 2: Keeping ourselves safe**

At the end of a given period the Scouts should undertake another survey to see if the situation for themselves and their friends has improved. The Scouts should be encouraged to undertake this exercise regularly, discussing the situation with their family and friends. Their freedom will increase and their situations will change as they get older, become more independent and develop new friends.

Case study:

Here is an example from El Salvador where Scouts have been working with the local community to successfully reduce the violence from gang warfare.

The Scout Association in El Salvador has been helping students turn their back on violence and join 'solidarity brigades' rather than become members of gangs. The solidarity brigades use the Scout method; encouraging young people to work together and take on responsibility for themselves and others. This has helped them to develop self-respect and self-esteem. The young people then recruit others to join their brigade and more young people are helped to develop the values of Scouting.

The adults who help deliver the programme receive special training and support in conflict resolution. El Salvador has a history of conflict, following many years of civil war. The project has contributed to an 80% reduction in student violence since 2001.



*The Solidarity Brigades in action in El Salvador*