



Peace Education Programmes

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Millions of people in Africa have been killed, many others wounded or maimed for life. Property has been destroyed, children have been orphaned, abducted and raped. Many have watched in horror as their parents, relatives, sisters and brothers, friends and neighbours are butchered in cold blood. The trauma is unfathomable. The number of African countries at war continues to rise over the years. There is need for a lasting solution; an end to this act of madness.

In 1996, over one million refugees from Rwanda poured into Goma, in the former Zaire. They were running away from the genocide in their country. But whilst Goma offered refuge from the murderous soldier's weapons, it soon turned into a death trap; congested and with inadequate water, food and shelter. The efforts of foreign workers could not match the needs of the swelling numbers. Soon people began to die in their thousands from hunger and a cholera outbreak. Gilbert, a Scout leader was also a refugee in Goma. Seeing what was happening, he refused to be a spectator. He assembled fifteen young people from his rover crew and using loudspeakers, they invited all Scouts to come together. Within weeks, 1,300 Scouts and former Scouts heeded his call and formed an active group of volunteers. They buried dead bodies, distributed food and clothing to the refugees. In short, they were the backbone of the relief operations managed by international NGOs. Gilbert's mission did not end there; he wanted to prevent it from happening again. Soon he and his Scout colleagues from the region were holding secret camps together; Hutus, Tutsis, Congolese, Rwandese and Burundians. They built homes for those who lost theirs in the conflict, leaders were trained as peace educators and non violent conflict resolution. They helped rebuild communities, and through peace education, they built hope for a peaceful future. Gilbert and his team with their own resources, and limited support from the Africa Regional Office and other charities, have kept their programme alive since 1996. More than 50,000 Scouts and 4,000 leaders have been touched by the programme.

They saw Scouts do outstanding things during the war and after and Gilbert intends to help Scouts make a difference to the communities they live in. Scouts from the volatile Great Lakes Region have continued spreading the message of peace across their borders. They hold camps together, and send joint delegations to Scouting events. The Regional Office wants to build on this foundation and take the programme broader throughout the Africa region. A Peace Education Project, has been designed with the aim of integrating Peace education into the Scout Youth Programme to reach all the Scouts in the region. As Gilbert says: "the time for peace education is not when the butchering starts. We ignored the warning signs last time and left it too late, next time we will be prepared."

Scouting is playing an important healing role in Africa. By inculcating peace and reconciliation in young people, we are assured of stable and tranquil societies now and in the future. Through peace education to the youth, we will be bringing up a generation immune to ethnic hatred and religious animosity.

Scouts want to breed a culture of peace in Africa and beyond.