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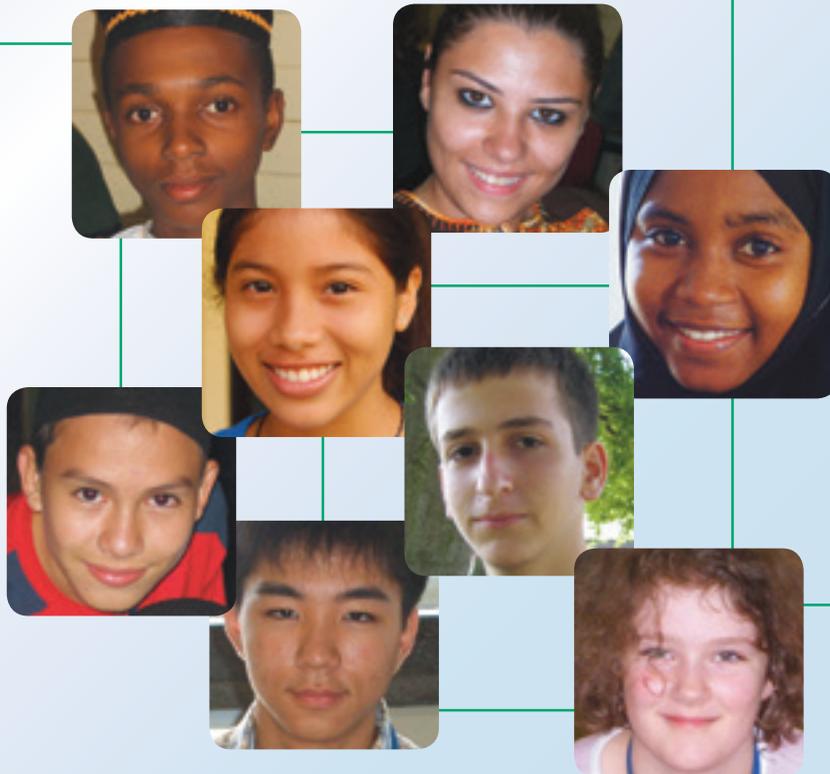


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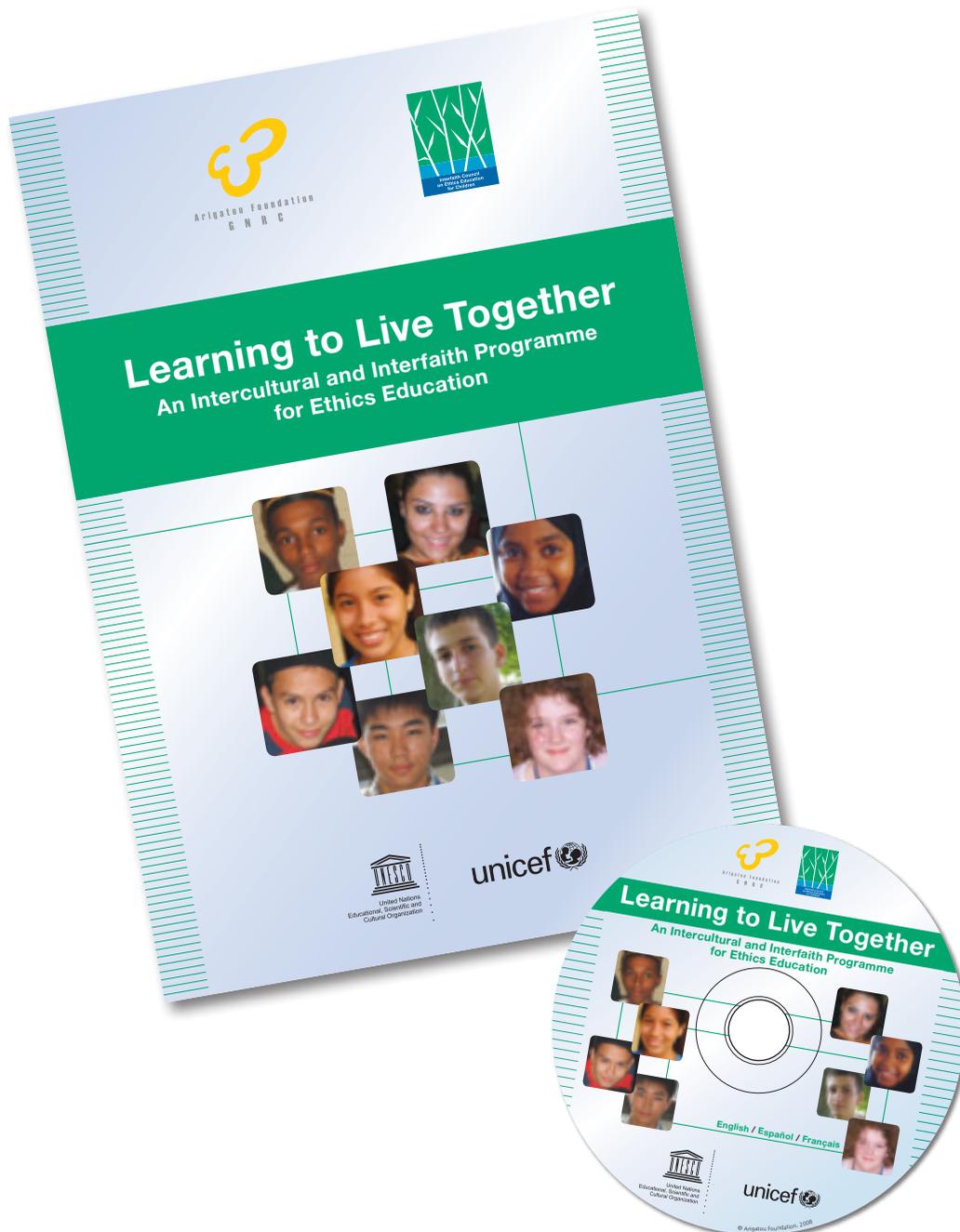
# Learning to Live Together

An Intercultural and Interfaith Programme  
for Ethics Education

Good Practices Series N° 2 | Learning to *Play* Together



*Learning to Live Together* was developed  
in cooperation with and endorsed by UNESCO and UNICEF



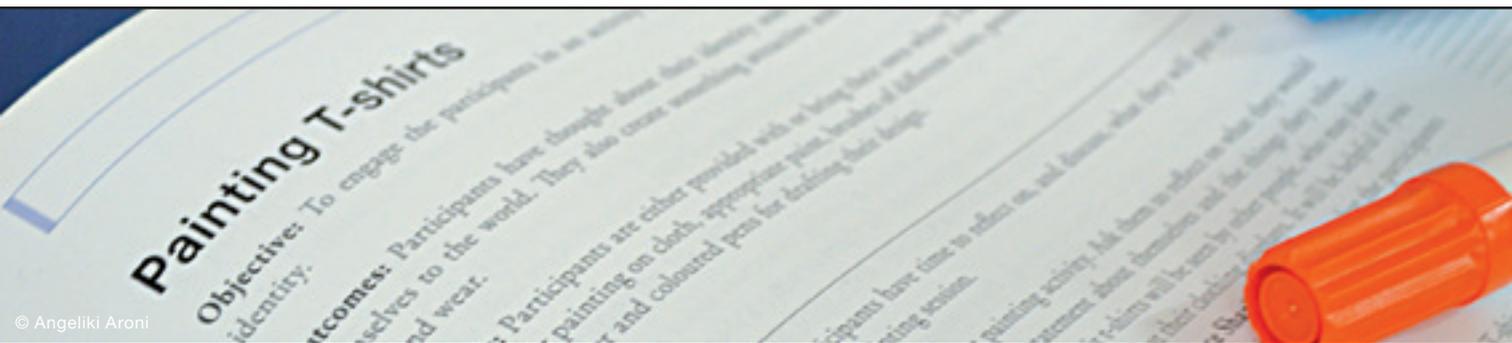
The Good Practices Series provides sound implementation examples of *Learning to Live Together: An Intercultural and Interfaith Programme for Ethics Education*.

This booklet was written by Dr. Angeliki Aroni, International Trainer of the Learning to Live Together Programme and expert on Intercultural Education.

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## Foreword

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, in Article 31, states that every child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts. Play and recreation help children to grow up with confidence, encourage their creativity and imagination, and foster their physical, social, emotional and cognitive development. When play and recreational activities are intentionally designed to nurture positive values and promote intercultural learning, they can also contribute to broader social cohesion and more peaceful societies.

Physical education and other spaces for play and recreation can provide children and youth with opportunities to learn about themselves in relation to others, practice non-violent conflict resolution, empathize with one another and reconcile their differences in a peaceful manner.

*Learning to Play Together*, the initiative featured in this booklet, sought to introduce ethics and intercultural learning into physical education using Arigatou International's *Learning to Live Together* programme as a foundation. It was launched in Greece in 2011 by Dr. Angeliki Aroni, a physical education teacher, with fifth-grade students from the Elementary School of Intercultural Education in Faliro, Athens. *Learning to Play Together* provides alternatives to the often use of competitive games and sports in physical education and helps to promote mutual understanding and respect among youth living in multicultural societies.

In contexts of exclusion and discrimination that affect many immigrant and refugee children around the world, initiatives like *Learning to Play Together* can provide quality, inclusive, relevant and safe education for all.

This booklet is the second in our “Good Practices” series, which aims to share success stories of the implementation of *Learning to Live Together* ethics education programmes in various contexts and educational settings. The *Learning to Live Together* programme emerged from the initiative for ethics education for children and it was launched by Arigatou International and the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC). The Learning to Live Together Programme was developed in close cooperation with, and with the endorsement of, UNESCO and UNICEF.

It is our hope that this booklet will inspire more educators around the world to incorporate ethics and values into physical education and other recreational activities for the enhancement of intercultural and interfaith learning.



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# Learning to Live Together

## Learning to *Play* Together

### Introduction: The Multicultural Context in Greece



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During the last thirty years Greece has undergone radical changes, many of which have brought new challenges to the socioeconomic and political environment. For the largest part of its modern history, Greece has been a country of emigration, with a large number of people leaving for Western Europe, Australia and the United States of America after the Second World War. The situation was reversed when the communist regimes of Central and Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union collapsed at the end of the 1980s, bringing an unexpected influx of economic immigrants to Greece. During the 1990s and 2000s, Greece also became host to economic migrants and political refugees from Asian and African countries, many of whom did not have proper legal documentation.

This situation occurred in a country that “was considered largely mono-ethnic, mono-cultural and mono-religious, where the dominant nation, notably people of ethnic Greek descent and Christian Orthodox religion, accounted for approximately 98% of the total population. The dominant definition of the nation was ethno-cultural and religious, while civic and territorial elements were of secondary importance in defining who is Greek.”<sup>1</sup> The unprecedented influx of immigrants caught both the government and society off guard, raising issues ranging from the redefinition of cultural and national identity, to coping with xenophobia and racism, to the need to legislate a proper immigration policy. As in several other European countries where fear and distrust of immigrants triggered the creation of anti-immigrant political parties, Greece also developed political parties that take an aggressive anti-immigration stance, blaming immigration for societal ills like unemployment and crime.

In its attempt to address cultural, ethnic and religious diversity, “the main concept and perspective Greece adopted is that of integration, while notions such as tolerance, acceptance, respect or recognition are more or less absent from the relevant debates. Yet, integration is used rather loosely to refer, more often than not, to assimilation and, much more rarely, to a mutual engagement of the different groups to form a cohesive society.”<sup>2</sup>

1 Triandafyllidou, 2011-2012.

2 Triandafyllidou, 2011-2012.

## Intercultural Education in Greece

Similar behaviours of intolerance, disrespect and distrust of immigrants are often exhibited in the school environment. The measures taken in education particularly during the last few decades – when the institutional and legislative systems incorporated an intercultural dimension in Greek education – were part of an implicit assimilationist approach.<sup>3</sup> This was partly because the primary intention when intercultural education was first developed in the 1970s and 1980s was to integrate the children of repatriates by establishing transitional re-entry and tutorial/support classes. The former were later incorporated in the mainstream public school system and focused on Greek language, culture and history courses for students who did not have Greek as their mother tongue.

The ever-growing ethno-cultural and religious diversity in Greek classrooms pose a pedagogical and social challenge to educators, increasing the need for intercultural and interfaith learning. Intercultural and interfaith education needs to be redefined within the context of the current reality in schools. Its objective ought not only be to integrate foreign students, but equally to expose majority students to other cultures and beliefs. This is the prerequisite for substantial intercultural and interfaith dialogue and exchange, and for the understanding of diversity and personal identity. This is an approach, not just a kind of course content, and it should pervade the Greek education system from pre-school to secondary education, embracing all schools, curricula, school programming, disciplines, strategies and materials.<sup>4</sup>

8

The optimal intercultural and interfaith learning approach is based on dialogue and actual engagement with other individuals and other cultures. In this context, the role of the school is twofold: it is an arena of intercultural practice, and an educational institution that prepares children to live in a multicultural society. Students in intercultural settings get to know one another's culture and ways of thinking; they exchange views and learn to respect and appreciate each other's uniqueness. They also learn to live in a society based on mutual understanding, respect and communication among the various groups and communities within it.

Additional value is provided by the current model for intercultural education from the Council of Europe, as it incorporates the religious dimension in an effort to nurture responsible, democratic citizens that respect the diversity of beliefs and values based on religious or faith affiliations. The optimal, contemporary approach to intercultural education seeks to promote dialogue, mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence in a time when the approach found in several European curricula is still mono-religious and mono-cultural.<sup>5</sup>

3 Triandafyllidou & Gropas, 2007.

4 Triandafyllidou & Gropas, 2007.

5 Council of Europe, 2006.

## 1. What is Learning to Play Together?

*Learning to Play Together* is a programme that aims to promote ethical values and intercultural learning through physical education classes. It is based on *Learning to Live Together: An Intercultural and Interfaith Programme for Ethics Education*, developed by Arigatou International, and has been implemented with fifth-grade students from the Elementary School of Intercultural Education in Faliro, Athens, Greece since 2011. This school was established in 1996 with the 2413/96 Law Concerning the Organization and Function of Intercultural Schools and has about 100 students from about 30 different countries, representing 4 continents.



Due to the ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity of the student population, special educational measures and pedagogical approaches are required to achieve an environment of respect, as well as to promote empathic and non-violent communication, individual and collective responsibility, and reconciliation. This is the reason why *Learning to Live Together* was chosen for implementation during the “Flexible Zone” hours of the curriculum. “The Flexible Zone is a two-hour curricular innovation introduced with the Cross-Curriculum approach where students and teachers can design, develop and implement projects using cooperative, problem-solving and synergistic methodologies with themes, issues and problems of everyday life that interest them.”<sup>6</sup>

*Learning to Play Together* has been facilitated by the school’s physical education teacher, Dr. Angeliki Aroni, since September 2011, when she started to use several activities and techniques from the *Learning to Live Together* manual. Gradually, an adaptation of the manual’s basic concepts and methodological approach was proven feasible and applicable to the physical education curriculum, and then a pilot implementation programme was initiated. Based on the experience gathered, the teacher used *Learning to Play Together* with the school’s two fifth-grade classes for seven consecutive months, from November 2012 to May 2013. Each class has two physical education hours per week, which gave the students a total of four hours every week in the project.

6 Spinthourakis, Karatzia-Stavlioti, & Lempesi, 2007.



Participating in the programme were 18 students (5 girls and 13 boys) from 10 countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, Georgia, Romania, Russia, South Africa, Syria, Ukraine, USA).

### Objectives of *Learning to Play Together*

**Foster self-esteem and empowerment** – Through inclusive and cooperative physical games and activities, students acquire a sense of accomplishment, master physical, emotional and social skills, and improve their self-perception and self-efficacy. This is particularly important for children whose limited linguistic skills often create feelings of inadequacy and inferiority in other school subjects.

**Facilitate interethnic contact and social cohesion** – By engaging in common physical tasks in cooperative games, children who come from diverse ethno-cultural backgrounds develop better intergroup understanding and are able to build relationships and friendships across social, economic, and cultural divides. They acquire a sense of belonging, of a shared identity. According to Schulenkorf (2010) sport projects have the potential to create a “dual identity status”. Children are able to express their identities in a complementary way that does not impose one over the other.

**Promote respect by challenging gender and ethnic stereotypes** – Sport is sometimes seen as a venue for perpetuating both gender and ethnic biases and as a vehicle for discrimination in the forms of sexism and racism. The tacit influence of biological determinism remains strong, inhibiting certain ethnicities’ and girls’ participation in physical education and sports. Among other things, biological determinism assumes that women are physically and physiologically inferior to men and thus incapable of participating in certain physical activities (e.g., long-distance running; contact sports like football) (Kirk, 2012). Carefully designed inclusive physical education lessons can challenge such gender and ethnic stereotypes and create space for further understanding, thus enabling students to alter their own and others’ perceptions about their capabilities and societal roles.

**Promote a culture of peace and coexistence** – Research has shown that well-designed physical activities that incorporate the best values of sport – respect for one’s opponent, fair play, teamwork, individual and collective responsibilities, adherence to mutually agreed upon rules, and reconciliation – can help individuals to develop the values and skills necessary to prevent and resolve conflict in their lives outside of sports. In addition, they can defuse tensions among opposing ethnic groups by helping them to adopt a more critical perspective on involvement in conflict and enabling them to envision more peaceful ways to play a valued social role.<sup>7</sup>

### How was *Learning to Play Together* developed?

Dr. Angeliki Aroni was introduced to *Learning to Live Together* at the Annual Conference of the International Association for Intercultural Education in Athens in 2009. Its approach and methodologies were clearly appropriate for her students, aligned with her existing efforts to promote mutual understanding and respect, and a good fit for the needs and challenges of an intercultural school. After using some of the activities in the manual with her students, Dr. Aroni participated in the International Train the Trainers Course organized by Arigatou International in Switzerland in December 2010, which led to the idea of using the programme more systematically with students during the “Flexible Zone” part of the weekly curriculum.



At the Elementary School of Intercultural Education in Faliro, students are divided into classes according to their proficiency in the Greek language. There were two fifth-grade classes: E1 and E2. The former consisted of students who had been at

school for several years and spoke Greek well, whereas the later had students who had recently come to Greece and spoke very little, if any, Greek. There had been conflict between the two classes. After discussing the issue with the two fifth-grade teachers, Dr. Aroni suggested the use of *Learning to Live Together* in joint sessions to promote respect and cohesion among the students. The teachers unanimously agreed to implement the programme.

It was then that the idea of combining *Learning to Live Together* and physical education was born, and it began to become clear that for children to learn to *live* together, they first have to learn to *play* together.

<sup>7</sup> Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group, 2008.

## Why apply *Learning to Live Together* to physical education?

The objectives of physical education are directly connected with the general aims of most countries' educational systems, and they are also influenced by the cultural and social environment. In Greece, according to the 1566/85 Law, the purpose of primary and secondary education is to contribute to the all-round and harmonious development of the mental and psychomotor potential of children, so that all of them, regardless of gender or ethnic background, may develop sound personalities and live peacefully with each other. As a consequence, physical education in Greece addresses the three main domains of a student's personality – the psychomotor, the emotional, and the cognitive – in an effort to develop the student's knowledge, skills and attitudes.

This aim is consistent with the approach of the *Learning to Live Together*, which corresponds with the Convention on the Rights of the Child in general, and more specifically to Article 29, which states that the education of the child shall be directed to the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.

In the physical education curriculum in Greece, the particular objectives under each domain are as shown in the following table.<sup>8</sup>

### **Psychomotor-physical domain**

- > Development of perceptual abilities through sense organs (kinesthesia, vision, listening, touch, balance...)
- > Development of coordination skills
- > Development of motor skills
- > Development of expressive and creative movement
- > Development of rhythm
- > Development of physical abilities (strength, speed, stamina, flexibility)
- > Promotion of health and well being

### **Emotional domain**

- > Development of emotional and social skills (communication skills, cooperation, team spirit, equal participation, self-discipline, responsibility, positive self-perception, etc.)
- > Nurture and development of ethical standards (honesty, fair play, acceptance of diversity, respect for the rules, respect for the opponents, positive response to both victory and defeat, etc.)

8 Ντάνης, 2011.

### **Cognitive domain**

- > Understanding of basic concepts of physical education
- > Knowledge about physical education and sports
- > Knowledge about regulations of different sports and athletic events
- > Knowledge about Olympic ideals
- > Knowledge about traditional dance, music and song at the local and national level
- > Knowledge about basic hygiene rules and first aid
- > Development of imagination and creativity
- > Acquisition of exercise habits
- > Development of positive attitude towards lifelong exercise through understanding of its health benefits

Obviously, it is no easy task for physical educators to achieve all these objectives in the two hours per week they have with students from each class). As a result, the National Curriculum Guidelines state that the priority of school physical education lies in the development of students' physical skills and the enhancement of their health. It is within the educator's scope to carefully plan the lessons in order to achieve multiple objectives through motor activities if he/she wishes to do so. The institutionalized School Sports Policy also responds to this issue by allocating extra time at the end of every school year for school districts to organize sport tournaments and events.

This policy helps to increase the number of hours children practice physical activities, but only for those with the skills to qualify for the teams that participate. It can also increase competitiveness among schools and students, and places a burden on physical educators to practice particular sports during class time to improve their school's performance at the events. There is, therefore, a need to provide spaces to go beyond this approach, allowing teachers to use physical education classes to foster not only the psychomotor-physical domain, but also, in parallel and intrinsically, the emotional and cognitive domains.

One answer came from the national introduction of an "interdisciplinary approach" to teaching which allowed physical education teachers to incorporate in their lessons several topics that promote personal or general interest in the individual, the environment, and social relationships. Such topics include awareness of human rights, immigration issues, and injustice, as well as reflection on problematic situations such as the consequences of a sedentary lifestyle, chemical addictions, etc. This "interdisciplinary approach" provided the legal framework for the idea of combining *Learning to Live Together* and physical education.

### What makes the *Learning to Play Together* programme unique?

Both teacher and students report that designing and working on *Learning to Play Together* has been a unique learning experience, which transformed the way they perceive school physical education. Although sports' potential for peace-building was not a new concept, most similar projects in Greece have been implemented in non-formal and informal educational settings. This makes *Learning to Play Together* a pioneering programme, one of the first of its kind. The following components make this physical education programme unique.

**Physical education is combined with ethics education to promote intercultural understanding** – Physical education in a formal educational setting was given a broader learning and methodological perspective to incorporate ethics education. Ethics education helps to develop critical thinking, reflection and action, and encourages seeing the “other” not as a competitor but as someone to learn from. By emphasizing reflection about values and activities that promote collaboration and non-violent conflict resolution, physical education becomes a powerful tool for learning to live together with others.



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**The student group is very diverse** – Students came from 10 different countries, and did not have a common spoken and written language or a similar socio-economic background. Among them, there were children from war-afflicted regions, whose parents were either dead or unemployed; children who were living in orphanages and shelters, and have been suffering discrimination in society; and children for whom immigration was not a personal choice but a decision forced upon them. Most of them were suspicious and hesitant to open up and form close relationships with either the teachers or their classmates. In some cases, Greece was not the first country they had immigrated to, nor did they expect it to be the last.

**Play is used to create engagement with others and facilitate healing** – The programme offered these children play as a way to relate to and bond with others. Taking a step back from competitive sports and using the *Learning to Live Together* approach, the programme gave the students space and time to play, as it is play that connects children to the joy of life. Particularly with children that bring with them the trauma of armed conflict and war, play is a necessity rather than a luxury – they need it to achieve healthy cognitive, social, emotional and physical development.

## Methodologies and techniques

The *Learning to Live Together* manual recommends five main methodologies, drawing on Janusz Korczak's pedagogical approaches, and allows the facilitator to select the most appropriate ones for the needs of his/her group. They are experience, introspection, discussion, problem solving and cooperation.

All of them promote active participation, involvement and connection with others and can employ various learning techniques – games, sports, talking about personal experience, role-playing, problem solving, case studies, dilemmas and debates. Even in this physical education programme, introspection-based learning was included when, after games or certain activities, students were asked to reflect in silence before sharing their feelings and thoughts.

### Cooperation-based and problem-solving-based learning

Cooperative learning was the main methodology used for the implementation of this programme, as the physical education lessons were based on cooperative physical games and activities where students worked and played together in small teams. The cooperative physical activities were inclusive and student-centred, treating the students as primary decision makers. Adding a problem-solving element, the teacher also provided a physical challenge, a problem that required the teams of students to decide on the best strategies together. They had to interact both verbally and physically, using their creativity and critical thinking to solve the problem. In the process, the cooperative games enhanced team building, which in turn put the focus on the relationships among teammates – what counts is not whether the team solves the challenge, but how the team works together.



### Discussion-based learning

Some of the discussion based-activities in *Learning to Live Together* were adapted for the physical education context in order to create meaningful dialogues among students, allowing them to discuss issues related to child rights, sports and gender. The lack of indoor sports facilities in the school made rainy or cold days ideal for this; after some initial reluctance, the students found themselves deeply involved in the discussions that were initiated. Many strongly held assumptions and prejudices were challenged and analysed as the diverse ethno-cultural background of the students provided a wealth of different worldviews.

## Experience-based learning

Experienced-based learning was mainly used when students from the intercultural school visited neighbouring schools with non-immigrant student populations to play and socialize, but also at the end of the school year when they had to plan and implement a project. The implementation of the latter helped them to incorporate and further internalize the concepts and values they had been working on during the year and to actively contribute to the culture of peace in their community. The project they designed helped children from different countries to play together, not for the purpose of winning, but for the pure fun and joy of participating in the game.

## Monitoring progress



*Learning to Live Together* uses five evaluation models designed to help participants assess their own learning and the changes they are experiencing due to the programme. The method used in *Learning to Play Together* was the group sharing model. The rest of the proposed models were not feasible, mainly due to the inadequacy of the language skills of the students.

One of the other models, the learning log, was adapted as an observation log for the teacher to complete. Whereas the learning log is a private diary for every participant to complete after each session in order to interact with his/her own self and acknowledge what they know, learn, perceive and experience, the observation log was a diary kept by the teacher who facilitated the project. The teacher filled it after each session with her observations, comments, and thoughts, and also recorded students' input from the group sharing that took place once every week. Rather than writing, it was easier for the students to orally discuss and elaborate on the suggested questions – such as “What did you think was the most valuable part of this week’s sessions?” and “What importance do you think it had?” – as there was always at least one more student who spoke his/her language to serve as an interpreter. Since students could not easily keep their own learning logs, the teacher registered their thoughts in her observation log.

The observation log proved to be a valuable tool during the implementation of the programme, as it served both formative and summative evaluation purposes. The teacher’s regular entries provided information about both the process and the activities facilitated, and served as an on-going assessment tool which allowed her to make adjustments and changes “on the fly” to help achieve programme objectives. At the same time, it provided a summative evaluation at the end of the programme, giving an overall description of the implementation and of its effectiveness.

The notes and observations in the log gave a clear picture of the gradual changes in the group’s behaviour and shared sense of belonging. Small things that could have gone unnoticed found their place and value there: students that stubbornly refused to play with some of their classmates at the beginning of the program were later seen to do so with less objections; boys who never wanted to pair up with girls ended up choosing them first over their male friends; conflicts were reduced in frequency and severity; language became less harsh and offensive. These represent significant changes that testify to the impact of the programme.

## 2. How are the *Learning to Live Together* modules used in *Learning to Play Together*?

The modules and kiosks of *Learning to Live Together* were customized for the particular traits and needs of the programme in Greece, carefully selecting activities most appropriate for the context of physical education and its specific kinetic nature. The main intent was to design and implement inclusive physical activities and games which help to foster the four *Learning to Live Together* values (respect, responsibility, empathy and reconciliation) in order to build a common platform for peaceful coexistence. *Learning to Play Together* also seeks to provide socialization opportunities for the intercultural school students with the more homogenous student bodies of neighbouring schools, and to enhance cross-cultural relationships, thereby enhancing awareness and understanding of other cultures so that respect, responsibility, empathy and reconciliation are practiced more often.

From **Module 1: Understanding Self and Others**, the following kiosks were selected: “Acknowledge myself in relation to others,” “Can we just get along?” and “Putting myself in another’s shoes.” During this stage of the programme, reflections about identity, especially about the bicultural identity of immigrant students, were explored to enable children to become aware of and identify with both their own ethnic identity and the dominant ethnic identity of the larger society of which they are a part. From **Module 2: Transforming the World Together**, these kiosks were chosen: “Understanding the conflicts, violence and injustices around me,” “Building bridges of trust,” and “Working together to transform the world.” This part of the programme motivated children to discuss and reflect on the issues of conflicts and violence around them and to develop strategies for reconciliation in order to foster coexistence, collaboration and embrace their individual and collective responsibilities. They had to become aware of their own and their culture’s prejudices and stereotypes, and they worked together to modify distorted perceptions of others.

### Module 1 – Understanding Self and Others

Acknowledge myself  
in relation to others

Can we just  
get along?

Putting myself  
in another’s shoes

### Module 2 – Transforming the World Together

Understanding  
the conflicts,  
injustices and  
violence around me

Building bridges  
of trust

Transforming  
the world together

The material that follows describes how each module was customised for the programme, how the kiosks were adapted, and what specific activities were used within each module and kiosk. The objectives of the kiosks were adapted for the nature of physical education, while maintaining the basic approach of *Learning to Live Together*.

### Multicultural games, cooperative games and *Learning to Live Together* activities adapted for physical education

Three main categories of games and activities were used:

1. Multicultural games, which, after being played as usually done in their culture of origin, in several cases were then played in a cooperative form;
2. Cooperative games; and
3. Activities from the *Learning to Live Together* manual adapted for physical education.

All three types of games and activities were matched to and used within the modules and kiosks selected from *Learning to Live Together*, as detailed beginning on page 21 below.

In order for a society to gain knowledge and witness changes in attitudes about culture, changes in educational approaches must occur. Schools in particular need to reflect on the wealth that ethnic and cultural diversity offer, and touch upon each student's background through course work and lesson activities. Children need to learn about, experience and appreciate their own and others' cultures in order to be able to coexist in modern multicultural societies. A good way to achieve this is through play. The **multicultural games** provide students a useful tool in their quest for both self and ethnic identity but also an understanding of how this individual identity fits and complements the mosaic of the society of which they are a part.<sup>9</sup> The students who participated in *Learning to Play Together* provided traditional games and activities played in their countries of origin and the teacher taught them some traditional Greek ones.



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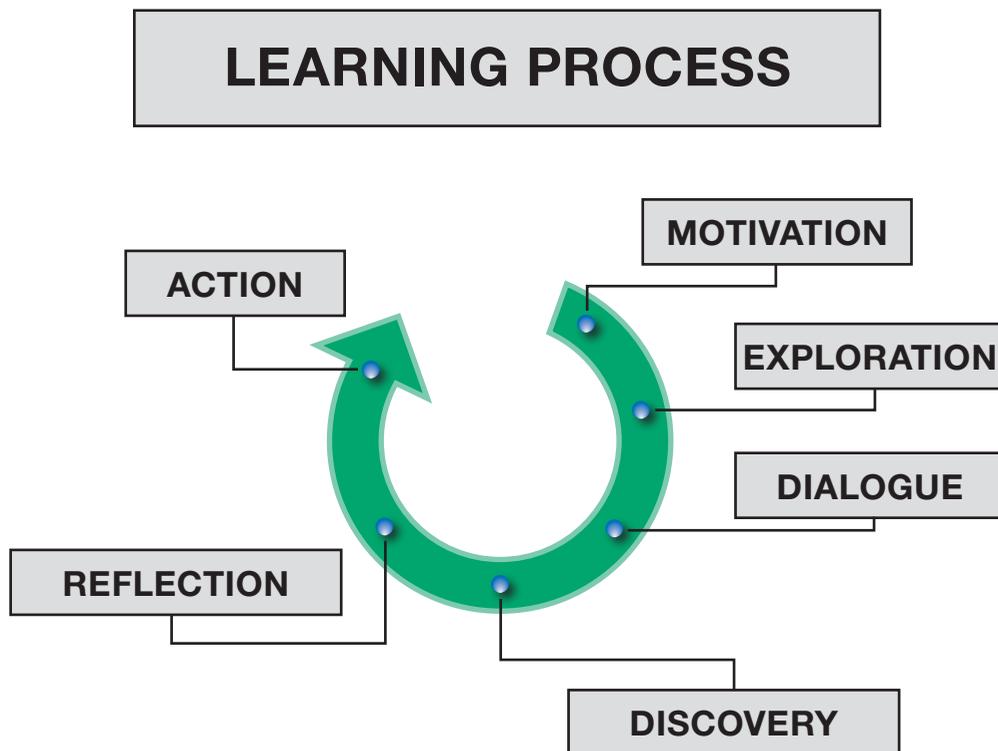
The second type of games used were **cooperative games** specifically designed to present the students with a challenge they had to decide together how to solve, thus promoting group interaction and communication, problem solving skills and team building. The cooperative games focus on participation, challenge and entertainment, rather than defeating others. They also demonstrate a process of thinking about experiences that helps students learn and practice responsibility. There may be a competitive element in some games, but the outcome is not sitting out or losing. Instead, it might involve switching teams so that everyone ends up on the winning team.

9 Barbarash, 1997.

The cooperative games also help set the tone for action. As social change is often hard-driving and energy-consuming, many people find that cooperative games offer a brisk, friendly way to couple passionate task-oriented goals with driven, group-minded teambuilding. In other words, fun and games help propel social change. Another objective of the cooperative games is to encourage students to think collectively, as a team, so that everyone in the group has his/her own individual input and shares ideas. When students have input, they feel ownership, and the more people have ownership, the more success there is.<sup>10</sup>

The third category of activities were **activities from the *Learning to Live Together* manual adapted for physical education**, specifically: “My life tree,” “Compare it,” “What I stand for,” “Ball in the air,” “Your silhouette is mine,” “Movie time,” and “Six-step problem solving.”

### Using the learning process from *Learning to Live Together* in physical education



The learning process described in *Learning to Live Together* was used to design and prepare all the activities, games or sports played during the lessons. This learning process engaged participants fully in the experience, helped to make sessions more interesting and meaningful, provided challenges and tasks for exploration, offered opportunities for dialogue and discovery, and allowed time for reflection and action.

10 Fletcher & Kunst, 2006.



The *reflection phase* of the learning process was probably the most difficult to incorporate and practice, as it represents an innovative addition to a physical education class. Reflection is an essential part of the learning process, however, because it provides students the opportunity to think about what they have done, why they did it, and how games and activities serve purposes and goals that relate to their daily reality. It provides time and space for students to see that what might have felt like just another fun, entertaining game is actually a student-driven activity that promotes dialogue and gives them the opportunity to work together, struggle, deal with failure and master challenges, while building better relationships and team cohesion. For example, when reflecting upon games, children had the chance to further explore any feelings of anger, frustration, or shame that followed a defeat or to become more aware of the value of cooperative games.

Several types of questions were used to invite reflection:

- > **Open-ended questions:** What do you think was the purpose of the game? What did you learn about yourself? What did you learn about a classmate of yours?
- > **Questions about feelings:** How did it feel when you lost the game? When you won? When you couldn't decide on the way to implement the task?
- > **Assessment questions:** Which was the best part of the lesson for you? Which one was not so good? Why?
- > **Summary questions:** What is one thing that you learned today? Was there something that you would have done differently? How?

## Module 1 – Understanding Self and Others

### **Kiosk: Acknowledge myself in relation to others**

The issue of identity is explored at this kiosk. Especially for students who have been exposed to a number of cultures, cultural and personal identities can be a blurry and sensitive concept. Through the activities at this kiosk, students have the opportunity to acknowledge their own identities, learn to respect the identities of others, and understand the interconnectedness among them.



### Activities

#### “My life tree”<sup>11</sup>



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This activity from the manual was used as an introductory session at the beginning of the school year in order to provide children the opportunity to reflect on their lives and identities and also to acknowledge the unique identities of others. The activity used the prompts provided in the manual plus two more:

- > Languages I speak
- > Favourite game/sport

Children found the activity not only very interesting but also an excellent way to get to know a little about each other before starting their school year together. It gave them space to talk about themselves and discover similarities with their classmates: even if they spoke different languages and came from different countries, they liked the same games and sports. It served as an effective ice-breaker but also as a motivator for the sessions to come – several students wrote about their favourite traditional games, making others curious to learn more about how to play them.

11 *Learning to Live Together*, p. 65.

**“Compare it”<sup>12</sup>**

“Compare it” was adapted from the version in the manual and customized to enable students to explore the differences and similarities of traditional games or sports practiced in their respective cultures.

Instead of focusing on learning about beliefs and religious practices in the world, the students were asked to prepare a presentation on a traditional game or a sport from their country of origin. They were told that they could use material from the Internet, books, or magazines but could also draw on their own or their family’s experiences. The main objective here was for the children to explore, discover, identify, and appreciate their own culture by focusing on their culture’s sport and game practices. Acknowledging their own distinct cultural practices first made students more likely to comprehend and accept their differences and similarities with others’ cultures.

Some of the questions students were asked to examine while writing about their game or sport are listed in the following table:

**Analysing the Game or Sport**

- > Does the name of the game/sport have any meaning?
- > Does the game/sport require any equipment? If yes, what kind, and was/is the equipment easily accessible?
- > Does the game/sport promote cooperation or competition?
- > Does the game/sport promote any other values that are not as direct?
- > What motor skills, such as eye-hand or eye-foot coordination, agility, strength etc., were required?
- > Is motor skill ability a critical element to successfully participate in this game/sport?
- > Is the focus of the game/sport to get individuals physically active or more for social interaction and entertainment?
- > Was/is the game/sport accessible to both genders? (Were/are boys and girls allowed to play together?)

After the individual presentation of the games, the students were divided into small groups and asked to identify the similarities and differences among the different games and sports. They had to find out if their own game or sport was played in any of the countries where other students were from, and if so, if it was similar or the same and if it had the same meaning. Special attention was paid to the values, such as competitiveness and cooperation – but also fair play and respect – which might be embedded in the nature of games or sports popular within a given culture.

Back together in one big group, students then reflected on the richness and diversity of the world and the importance of learning and respecting others’ practices in order to better understand them. A list of the games was made up

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p. 82.

and put on the wall and, with the help of Internet and books on games from around the world, most of them were given the name used in the game's country of origin. Others whose names were forgotten or could not be found were given names by the students who presented them.

All of the games on the list were played during the year, and the student who originally presented the game was responsible to teach it to the rest of the class with the help of the teacher. This is how the multicultural games category was developed.

### **“Musical chairs”**

One game that was well known in almost all the countries the children came from was “musical chairs.” It was first played in its traditional form, where participants have to run around a circle of chairs while music plays and find a chair to sit in when the music stops. With tradition, the teacher removed one chair every round so students who could not find a chair fast enough were disqualified until only one remained, the victor. Immediately after the first game, a second, inclusive version of musical chairs was introduced. This time, as chairs were removed, students had to find a chair and share it with someone, until they all had to cooperate to find a way for all of them to sit in only two chairs.

Right after the two games, the teacher engaged the students in a guided reflection on the experience, debriefing on the advantages of cooperative games. Students appreciated how cooperative games are more entertaining for all players – not just for the fast and those who manage to remain until the end – and how they emphasize collective challenge, participation and teambuilding.

### **“Infinity ball – volleyball”<sup>13</sup>**

This game is set up as a standard volleyball game. It can be used to practice virtually any skill associated with volleyball. Students were divided in four teams for each game of infinity ball. Two games were played at once so all students were participating. The game was played with volleyballs (balloons or beach balls can also be used), but the objective of this game is the opposite of volleyball. In conventional volleyball, the objective is to make the opposing team miss the ball, but in this game, the two teams work together to score more points.

The purpose of the game is to see how many times the teams can volley back and forth over the net without letting the ball hit the ground. Each proper volley is counted starting with one. Teams count points aloud each time the ball goes over the net: 1, 2, 3.... Once the ball hits the ground, scoring stops and the teams try again to beat their all-time record. With two games going at once, there may emerge some friendly competition between pairs of teams, but the main purpose of running two games is not to see who wins but to allow all students to participate at the same time.

13 Adapted from <http://www.mrgym.com/Cooperatives/InfinityBall.htm> Last access on 2 September 2013

**Kiosk: Can we just get along?**

The purpose of the activities in this kiosk is to help students learn and value what it means to respect others. They challenge their attitudes, perceptions and possible stereotypes and are motivated to look beyond them.

**Activities****“What I stand for”<sup>14</sup>**

The “What I stand for” activity from the *Learning to Live Together* manual was used with the following sport-related statements:

1. Boys are better than girls in sports
2. Boys and girls should be taught different sports
3. Black athletes are more gifted in certain sports
4. The goal of sports is winning
5. Respecting the rules of the game is more important than winning
6. I respect only those who respect me



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14 Learning to Live Together, p. 78.

The group did the activity with all six of the above statements, and the students enjoyed and were challenged by the thought-provoking discussion as they reflected on and argued for what they stood for. When convincing arguments were presented, the students considered them carefully and, on several occasions, moved physically in the room to show they had changed their mind, offering a visible assessment of change to previous misconceptions and stereotypes. The last statements were on the topic of respect in order to serve as an introduction to the physical game that would follow this activity.

### “RESPECT” relay game<sup>15</sup>

The students were divided in six groups of three to give them the maximum participation time. For this game, six cards of six different fruits are needed, for instance: six apples, six bananas, six oranges, six peaches, six watermelons, and six strawberries. At the back of each card there is a letter from the word **respect**. For example, one apple has an R, two have E's (there are two E's in respect) and so on. Each card also has a sentence describing the letter as follows:

**R** – Rules: Learn the rules and follow them!

**E** – Enthusiasm: Always bring a good attitude to class!

**S** – Safety/Sneakers: Stay inside the black lines in the gym, no jewellery, and sneakers are required to participate!

**P** – Purpose: Every lesson has a purpose!

**E** – Effort: Always try your best!

**C** – Challenge: Set goals and achieve them!

**T** – Team: Together Everyone Achieves More!

The cards are placed face down at one end of the gym. The students are divided into the six various fruits as they came in, and placed in six relay lines, which are designated with cones at the opposite end of the yard. The students are told that this is a fun relay game and they would be trying to find their six apples, or whatever fruit they were, and then spelling a word as a team and placing it in front of their group. The game is also a memory game, as they need to watch closely to avoid, on their turn, flipping over a card that one of their teammates already flipped.

On the teacher's signal, the first person from each team runs to a card and turns it over. If it is their fruit, they bring it back to their team and tag the next student's hand. If it is not their fruit, they turn it over and still come back and tag the next student's hand. They may only turn over one card per turn. When their six fruits are found they sit down with their team and try to spell a word. Then they cheer on the other teams. At the end of the relay, students read each letter and the class talks about what each one means.

Students can be verbally quizzed during the year on the sentences that go with the letters. For example: “What does the S stand for in our respect word?” This is a great thing to do as they line up after class is over or when warming up or cooling down.

<sup>15</sup> Adapted from <http://www.pecentral.org/lessonideas/ViewLesson.asp?ID=4686#.Uf0ay9KxXR4> Last access on 2 September 2013

## Compliment tag<sup>16</sup>

Two students are chosen to be the taggers. Anyone tagged must stay frozen in place. Another student has to approach the frozen player and give them a compliment. When they hear the compliment, the frozen player is unfrozen and can re-join the game. This game allows students to play while acknowledging and verbally expressing what they like and respect in others. An added rule was introduced to avoid the same compliment being used twice.

### Kiosk: Putting myself in another's shoes

Activities in this kiosk help students tune themselves to the needs and feelings of others, helping them develop their empathy skills.



## Activities

### “Your silhouette is mine”<sup>17</sup>

Adapted from the *Learning to Live Together* manual, this activity was used with two main changes. First, street chalk in the yard was used instead of wallpaper and coloured markers inside a room. Second, the following information in the silhouette had to be related to the physical education lesson:

- On the head: a thought (about the lessons)
- On the heart: a feeling (about the lessons)
- On the stomach: a need (from the lessons)
- On the hands: a desire to do something (a physical drill, a game, an activity)
- On the legs: an activity you like or enjoy (a game or sport)



16 Adapted from [http://www.aaps.k12.mi.us/northside.dekeon/northside.dekeon\\_skills/tag\\_games](http://www.aaps.k12.mi.us/northside.dekeon/northside.dekeon_skills/tag_games) Last access on 2 September 2013

17 Learning to Live Together, p. 69.

The reflection was again very interesting, as by placing themselves in other people's silhouettes, the students empathised with their classmates and began to understand that not everyone feels the same way about the lessons (for example, the less skilful had negative feelings about some games, and different needs and wishes than the more talented, sporty ones). The same went for boys and girls: on several occasions, their input was completely different.

*"I used to think that all children enjoy playing. I now understand that when you are not that good at it, sometimes you may feel embarrassed and uncomfortable."*

*"I used to think that all my classmates preferred playing over lessons. After all, how could someone not want to play? I now know that this is not true and people sometimes want to do what they are best at doing. For some, this is gym, but for others, it can be maths. This doesn't mean that one is smarter than the other, just different."*

### **Basketball with the strong/dominant hand tied behind the back**

A game of basketball was played with students' strong hand (writing hand) tied behind their backs. They found it extremely hard to play the game, but it served as a good starting point for the discussion that followed on different skills, strengths and weaknesses, and also disabilities.

In everyday life, everyone engages in tasks using their dominant hand without paying conscious attention to it. People write, draw, cut, sew, cook, serve, carry, etc., using mainly – if not exclusively – our dominant hand. In physical education classes too, children do exercises, drills and tasks with their dominant hand, rarely having equal time to strengthen and use the other one. This is why playing basketball with the "weak" hand was so challenging for the students, who said it felt awkward, uncomfortable and difficult. They could not exert good control of the ball, nor aim accurately for the basket. At the end of the activity, several noted that they had never thought that something as simple as playing basketball could become so difficult just by a simple change of the hand used. For many, it was the first time they realized how people with difficulties or disabilities might actually feel when they cannot perform a physical task considered easy by most people.

## Module 2 – Transforming the World Together

### Kiosk: Understanding the conflicts, violence and injustices around me

Students in this kiosk explore the issues of conflicts, injustices and the violence that many times accompany them. It is important for them to become aware and realize the human capacity to create and transform but also to destroy, in order to be able to make conscious, ethical decisions about their actions.



**Movie time**<sup>18</sup>: “Bend it like Beckham,” a 2002 British comedy-drama film



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The story is about Jess Bhamra, the 18-year-old daughter of Punjabi Sikhs from West London, and her infatuation with football, which becomes a source of conflict with her traditional parents. Even though they do not allow her to play due to her gender and ethnicity, Jess not only secretly joins a team but also becomes romantically attracted to her coach Joe, a *gora* (a South Asian adjective for a yellow-skinned or light-brown person, whether from India, Pakistan or other regions; the word literally means “white” or “fair-skinned” in Indo-Aryan languages like Hindi and Punjabi).

In a light, humorous way, the film deals with discrimination in the form of both sexism as well as racism. Jess’s father refuses to let his daughter play because he wants to protect her from suffering the way he did when he was kicked out of a cricket club because of his race in his childhood. The conflicts between Jess and her parents, Jess and her sister and coach, as well as the injustice she feels when denied access to something she loves and is good at, simply due to her gender and race, provided an excellent opportunity for the students in the programme to discuss and explore the characters’ individual actions, while also thinking about the ways they themselves would react in a similar situation.

*"Wow!!! I never knew that girls could play football so well. I will never make fun of them again!"!*

*"When you love something very much and you put all your heart into it, you might make it against all odds."*

*"Could we show this film to my parents, also"?*

### Game with unjust refereeing and unfair play



To further enhance empathy for people facing injustice, a volleyball game was played where the teacher, who served as referee, deliberately made bad calls, treating only one of the teams unfairly. The players on that team soon became angry, started complaining about the unjust calls and unfair play, getting into conflict with both the teacher and their opponents. As a result, their concentration dropped and, even when the referee started calling the game fairly, they played poorly and lost the game.

In the discussion that followed, the students reflected on the cause of their anger, and on the appropriateness of their reaction. They saw how losing their composure and concentration due to an unjust situation can result in further losses. They realized how important it is to remain calm and focused, in cases of injustice and conflict and brainstormed possible reactions to similar future situations.

Some students said that it would have been better to express their feelings and complaints to the teacher earlier – after just the first couple of bad calls – in case she hadn't noticed. But even if the situation had continued, they felt that they could have tried to stay focused on their goal, not allowing external factors to affect their performance. One student noted that this would be a very useful skill to master as, in many cases when sports are played, even if the referee is fair, the spectators deliberately create distractions. It is noteworthy that when a similar activity was implemented months later in another game, the students, without consciously realizing it, were not carried away by the bad refereeing but actually used it as an incentive to play even better in order to overcome the obstacle. They put into practice what they had learned by reflecting on the earlier activity.

### “Bully tag”<sup>19</sup>

Before this game was introduced, the issue of bullying had already been discussed and explored with the students earlier in the programme. Bullying had also been addressed with other teachers and through events on the Greek Day against Bullying and School Violence (March 6<sup>th</sup>). For the latter event, the *Learning to Live Together* activity, “Unjust situations,” was used. Photos representing a variety of bullying and school violence situations were put on the wall. Participants were given time to look at them carefully, then sat in a circle and discussed the topic. They were asked to talk about the picture that most caught their attention, explaining why it did, describing the scenario they thought was behind it, and sharing how they felt when looking at it and contemplating it.

The teachers also used the images to speak about the different types of bullying, consequences for victims, and profiles of bullies, but focused mostly on the role of bystanders. Following the suggestion in the manual, “not to leave the students feeling helpless and powerless,” the event was drawn to a close with a discussion about the ways students can intervene when bullying incidents do occur, while also preventing bullying in their own school community. The students realized the importance of changing their behaviour from “by-standing” to “standing by.”



Having participated on the aforementioned activity, the students were more familiar with the issue, so it was easier for the teacher to introduce the following tag game. Two students are chosen to be the “bullies.” Their job is to chase students anywhere in the yard. When a student gets tagged, they have to freeze and cup their hands around their mouth as if yelling “help!” Another student has to stop in front of them and ask them if they need help. The frozen student nods “yes,” and the assisting student has to find another two students to form a circle of “solidarity” by holding hands around the frozen “victim.” The “victim” has to pass under their hands to be rescued and can then run around the yard again.

Several issues emerged in the ensuing discussion, including the great sense of support and security the circle provided for the tagged students, as well as the challenge of cooperation and constant communication needed among the “rescuers,” who had to be in trios in order to free a “victim.” The “bully” students reported feelings of desperation at some point when, even though they were doing a great job tagging people, their “victims” kept escaping because there were so many “rescuers.” The teacher commented on this last thought, inviting the students to reflect on the power that comes when people decide to work together and unite against a bully. She also brought attention to the fact that most of the students at some point in the game passed through all three roles – “victim,” “rescuer,” and “bully” – and asked them to reflect about situations in their lives where roles change and how this makes them feel.

<sup>19</sup> Adapted from [http://www.aaps.k12.mi.us/northside.dekeon/northside.dekeon\\_skills/tag\\_games](http://www.aaps.k12.mi.us/northside.dekeon/northside.dekeon_skills/tag_games) Last access on 2 September 2013

### Kiosk: Building bridges of trust

At this kiosk students work to build bridges of trust and reconcile differences. The activities help them improve their communication as well as their listening and cooperative skills. They need to find ways to work together to reach common goals.



### Activities

#### “Ball in the air”<sup>20</sup>

This activity, adapted from the *Learning to Live Together* manual, promotes cooperation among students and improves communication skills. As used in the *Learning to Play Together* programme, once students find a way to cooperate and handle the two balls in the air, the teacher adds a third and a fourth ball to provide the students a further physical challenge of coordination, concentration and collaboration.

The activity, which is often used by physical educators to practice throw and catching skills, is a big challenge for almost all students. For the stronger, more skilled students, the challenge is to adapt their throwing skills to make it possible for the others to catch the ball. For those who are afraid of a thrown ball, the challenge is simply to be able to catch it and throw it back without failing and “ruining” the activity. It is only after all the students understand that for the activity to succeed they need to communicate and cooperate that they adjust their respective skills



and start keeping the ball in the air. They explore possible ways to throw it and alternative students to throw it to and gradually discover the most efficient way to do it. Nothing compares to their feeling of satisfaction when they manage not only the first one but also a second and a third. During the reflection phase, one element discussed was the adaptation to real life situations that require individual strengths to be applied and adapted to collective goals.

20 *Learning to Live Together*, p. 115.

### “Alphabet relay”

This activity adds a cognitive challenge to a physical one by asking students to create and correctly spell English words. It requires them to communicate and decide on the best technique to achieve their goal, assigning different roles to players depending on their skills (physical speed, spelling skills, ability to form words fast, language proficiency, etc.).

The students line up behind each other in four groups at one end of a defined area behind a clothesline rope for hanging letters and pegs in front of them. On the other end, paper letters of the English alphabet are spread out on a table. On the teacher’s signal, each team sends their first player to the table to retrieve a letter and returns to hang it on their part of the rope. The first player then tags the next runner on his/her team who goes to the table and retrieves another letter until one of the teams creates an English word with their letters. This was the first of four challenges provided, as the teacher wanted to introduce the principle of *sequencing*: gradually increasing the level of challenge from simple, easy tasks to more difficult, challenging ones. The second challenge was for teams to create a four-letter word. The third was to create a five-letter word, and the last was to create a word with as many points as possible, with each letter of the alphabet at a certain point value as in the game of Scrabble.

### “Six-step problem solving”<sup>21</sup> (deciding what games to play)



On several occasions in earlier years, the teacher, wanting to actively involve the students in decision-making, had asked them to decide for themselves what games they wanted to play for that particular lesson. More often than not students found it impossible to agree on the games and the teacher had to intervene as a mediator and give a solution. This time, during the programme the teacher presented the six-step problem solving technique of resolving issues from

*Learning to Live Together*. She asked students to use it in four small groups of four/five participants in order to find the solution to the problem. Each group had to come up with one game and the four games that were chosen became the ones played in the next lesson.

21 Ibid, p. 91.

### “The bus”<sup>22</sup>

In this game, students are told that they would need to cooperate in order to implement the activity. Their purpose would be to work together to move a large mat around the yard. They are reminded of the importance of **safety concerns** involved with this activity. They especially need to remember that they are to move at the same speed as everyone else in their group. If they go too fast, they could cause other people – and the mat – to fall, and people might get hurt. They need to think of others and not “horse play,” as others again could get hurt. Also, they are reminded that they need to lift and put the mat down together. The teacher can suggest that each group designates one person as “**captain**,” who would lead (by counting) when the mat should be picked up and put down.

The students are divided into groups of four/five around one big mat each. The following challenges are presented (mats were on the ground while explaining all challenges), and students try them afterwards, asking questions if needed.



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*Challenge 1) Lifting the mat:* Students lift the mat together, and then bring it back down to the floor (quietly) at the same time. The teacher may decide to verbally “count” to cue students to lift it the first time, and then allow the “captain” to count after that. Students should be reminded to lift the mat only to a point where they are still able to see over it.

*Challenge 2) The drop:* Students lift the mat. At the teacher’s signal, they drop it at the same time. The teacher reminds them to move backward out of the way when they drop it! When they all do it at the same time, it makes a big boom, much to their delight. Again, the teacher may give the first cue, with the captain giving it after that.

*Challenge 3) The drive around:* Students lift the mat and walk around the yard while holding it up (again, not higher than they can see over it). Students are given directions: go straight, turn left, turn right, U-turn, backward, etc.

*Challenge 4) The pick up:* A few students spread around the yard. A group with a mat comes over to “pick up” each child. The group drops the mat, the student lays on it, and the group must pick the mat back up. The teacher should stress safety. It is important that the student on the mat lies without moving, and that the group brings the mat to the floor safely without dropping it. Be sure not to pick up more than two students at a time.

<sup>22</sup> Adapted from <http://www.pecentral.org/lessonideas/searchresults.asp?subcategory=cooperative+learning> Last access 2 September 2013

*Challenge 5) The 360 turn:* Students turn the mat 360 in one try, then in the other direction.

*Challenge 6) The tow truck:* While half the class lifts the mat up, the other half gets under the mat on their hands and knees, all facing the same direction. The mat is gently brought down onto the students' backs, and then they move the mat to the "garage" (sideline) without dropping it.

To reflect on the activity, the students were asked to review and identify behaviours that fostered positive cooperation and those that hindered teamwork.

#### **Kiosk: Working together to transform the world**

After completing the activities in the previous kiosks as well as this one, students are motivated and equipped to start thinking of ways to take action and start transforming their immediate world. They are ready to work with others within the broader community in order to bring about peace around them.



### Activities

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#### **Student-led development of school-wide and inter-school projects**



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At the end of the year, the students developed two projects, one within their school and a second one with a neighbouring school. For the former, in 2012, they designed with their physical education teacher an "End of the School Year Games Day." Their task was to organise and plan a Games' Day for all the grades that would incorporate the values and philosophy of *Learning to Play Together*, which they had been implementing throughout the year. They had to think about games and activities that would be fun to play for students ages 6 to 12 but also have the element of respect, cooperation and fair play. They did a great job working in three groups, each focused on planning games and activities for two grades: 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> with 6<sup>th</sup>. Working in the big group, they had to make sure all the activities were coherent, no activity was repeated, all provided the same play time, and all children had the opportunity to enjoy participating.

For the second project they developed a “Sports Day” in the yard of a neighbouring elementary school where most students are from the dominant Greek culture. Since the Intercultural School’s yard does not have any sports facilities, the students asked whether they could plan the Sports Day at another school so they could design football, basketball and volleyball matches using the equipment in that yard. Their objective for the Sports Day was to promote acceptance of diversity, assist in peace building within their broader community, and provide an opportunity for dominant and marginalized groups to socialize. The day created an opportunity for local children, immigrants and refugees to play for the first time together in the spirit of solidarity and respect. The students made up co-ed teams from both schools and enjoyed a whole morning playing sports and making friends.

*“Before this day all my friends were Greek. Now I have friends from all over the world”!*

*“Before today I used to think that Greek students didn’t want to play with us. Now I think that they just didn’t know us.”*

*“Before today I didn’t want to play with foreign children I met at the park. Now I will invite them to play with me.”*

*“I never knew that it would be such fun to have girls in my team. I used to think that they were not as good as boys in sports.”*

*“Can we come and play at their school every week”?*

*“Can we invite them to our school, also? I want to show them more things about us. They want to learn now.”*

### 3. Challenges

*Learning to Play Together* faced three main challenges in the preparation and implementation phases.

**Lack of adequate resources to draw information and examples from** – Most sport initiatives in the context of peace and social cohesion are implemented in non-formal and informal settings and processes, using mainstream sports like football for their purposes. As a consequence, preparing and designing activities and games for this programme was not only a long, time-consuming process, but also an “insecure” and “risky” journey, as most of them had not been used in formal education and so their efficiency was not a given. Nor was it easy to always find ways to integrate the programme into the Greek formal curriculum for physical education in elementary schools.

**Language** – The students came from 10 different countries speaking 7 different languages. Their level of both Greek and English also varied significantly, with some of them speaking fluently, some moderately well, and some not at all. The problem was not so evident during the physical games and activities as all of them were demonstrated physically, but rather with the theoretical parts –discussions, reflections and the writing of the learning log. The solution found was to ask students who spoke Greek and English to interpret for their classmates of the same mother tongue. On several occasions, the teacher also used the help of an online translation tool to prepare the main concepts of the session in all the students’ languages, as many of the words were unknown to most of them, for example words like reconciliation or empathy. Clearly, using interpretation slowed the process, and more often than not, more time than planned for an activity was needed. It is worth noting that on those occasions students did not mind spending their usual breaks to finish the activity, which gave them an extra 20 minutes.

As time passed, both their Greek and English improved due to the school lessons and the efforts of the teachers, so communication became easier and more direct. The participatory methods of *Learning to Live Together* provided students an additional incentive for the students to work on their language skills, as they really wanted to be able to contribute their ideas, thoughts and feelings.

**Initial reluctance and resistance from the students** – The students who participated in the project were very reluctant at first, with some of them being quite negative. Physical education – their favourite and most entertaining school subject – was for them a time when they could actually take a break from “too much thinking” and just play and have fun in games, activities, or competitive sports. At first, they couldn’t understand why they had to change this for more “thinking” and “reflecting” on things. Games and play are simply games and play, after all, aren’t they? Why do we have to reflect about losing a game? Why do we have to pay attention to the anger, inferiority, and inadequacy we feel about losing? Why further explore fair play and respecting the rules of the game, as well as the opponent?

This initial reluctance was overcome with time and persistence with the “new” approach to physical education, which gradually made them reconsider their attitudes and behaviour. Their exposure to this different and unique method—not only playing the game but also deepening and exploring its meanings and hidden values—as well as their experience of the pleasure of cooperation and acceptance brought them to a new understanding and acceptance. Initial resistance was replaced by enthusiasm and joy, inner motivation and satisfaction.

## 4. Impact assessment



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Toward the end of the initial year of the programme, Dr. Aroni asked the students to develop a sport-related project that would contribute to the promotion of peace and justice in their community. The students worked together with her to organize a football tournament with a neighbouring elementary school. The prominent feature of the tournament was that the teams were designed to be mixed, consisting not only of students from both schools but also from both genders. The objectives were for students from the dominant culture to get to know, socialize and play with immigrant and refugee students – many of whom didn't speak their language – and for boys and girls to play on co-ed teams in a sport that had traditionally been male oriented.

Interestingly, unlike the students who had been participating in *Learning to Play Together* at the intercultural school, the students from the dominant culture school were not happy with the composition of the tournament's teams. Used to competitive sports, they wanted their school to play *against* the intercultural school, as their sole objective was to win, and for boys and girls to take part in different matches. But the conditions of the tournament were not negotiable for the students of the intercultural school, as their intent for the project was to incorporate the values and philosophy of *Learning to Live Together*. As a consequence, the tournament was held as originally designed. In the end, it turned out to be one of the greatest experiences for all the students involved. They even made future plans to implement similar games in different sports. Similar results were seen on the Sports Day that took place later.

Due to the linguistic challenges mentioned above as well as the age of the children participating in the programme, its impact could only be directly measured through group sharing and through the records kept in the teacher's observation log. Reviewing the teacher's personal observations, comments, and thoughts as well as the students' input from group sharing sessions, impacts were noted in the following areas.

**Knowledge** – The students were able to gain further knowledge about their own culture and heritage when asked to work on traditional games from their countries of origin. In addition, they learned about other countries not only by playing those traditional games, but also by listening to other students explain and compare the elements of their cultures transferred by the games. Gender role issues as well as values like competitiveness or cooperation were evident in many games and activities. Students also explored the issues of injustice and violence, gaining a better understanding of them and their causes.

**Skills** – The students developed their communication skills, both verbally and bodily, while explaining or listening to instructions and also while cooperating in games and activities in order to cope with the task presented. As there was no common linguistic background, special attention was paid and cultivated to body language, postures, eye contact, and facial expressions.

Conflict resolution skills were also developed through the whole programme, and progress was observed not only during physical education classes but also in break time. Violent incidents decreased, and students who participated in the project were seen mediating younger children's conflicts. Students also developed skills for solving problems and making decisions together.

**Attitudes** – The initial reluctance and even objection to play and reflect, have fun and think about the game and activity were gradually replaced with an attitude of openness, a willingness to explore, and an eagerness to contribute with comments, feelings and thoughts. Teachers reported that the project gave the students further incentive to work on their language skills; on several occasions children asked their teacher's help to prepare things they wanted to say in group sharing discussions. Toward the end of the project, most of the students became more accepting and willing to play with children they did not originally want to play with, whether they belonged to conflicting ethnic groups or were of the opposite sex.

*"I used to think that fighting was the only way to resolve a conflict. I now think that words are a much better way to do it. You can use them even if the other person is stronger and taller than you".."*

*"I used to think that physical education was just for fun. I now think that you can learn a lot of things in this lesson. Not only about games and sports but about your classmates also".."*

*"I used to make fun of the children who were not as fast and strong as me. I know now that they have other "good things" (qualities) and I am sorry for what I did".."*

## 5. Lessons learned – Recommendations for the future

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***Learning to Live Together can be used in several school subjects*** – The main lesson learned from implementing the programme is that *Learning to Live Together* can be a powerful approach for incorporation into several subjects of the school curriculum. Its learning process is not limited in application to social, ethics or religious classes but can be implemented in an interdisciplinary manner into various school subjects. It is important that the adaptation takes into account the objectives of the school subject and carefully introduces the approach of *Learning to Live Together* to meet the specific context.

***Language matters, but doesn't divide us*** – A great lesson learned was that even though language does matter and the absence of a common linguistic background can make the learning process difficult at times, it does not divide us. There are several other kinds of interaction – in this particular case, *play* was the one – that can become a bridge to communication and cooperation. Play can be the *lingua franca* for all children regardless of their ethnic origins and mother tongues.

***Children affected by violence and war need special attention*** – Special attention should be paid when planning activities, as intercultural environments often include children who have immigrated from extremely difficult circumstances; the psychosocial traumas they carry can be severe. Games and activities should, first and foremost, make them feel safe, protected, reassured and included.

***Creativity is the key*** – Creativity is of vital importance also. Since there are not many similar examples in formal physical education, teachers must be willing to use their imagination and creative skills not only to design activities that fit and serve the purpose but also to overcome possible deficiencies in the resources and material available. Poor infrastructure should not be an obstacle to creating and providing a high quality programme, just a challenge to overcome.

It should be noted, however, that it is highly recommended that facilitators who wish to replicate this programme in their physical education classes or other school subject are familiar with – ideally, trained in using – *Learning to Live Together*. In particular, it is vital that they be knowledgeable about its key concepts and principles, as well as its learning process, suggested methodologies, techniques and assessment models.

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## How to get involved

There are various ways you can get involved with *Learning to Live Together*.

### Visit our website

On the ethics education for children website, you can read the latest news on how and where the programme is being implemented. You can also find updates about new translations and training events. Free electronic versions of the *Learning to Live Together* manual are ready to download.

### Subscribe to the newsletter

A newsletter is sent periodically with updates on the latest workshops, training events, translations of the manual, etc. You can subscribe at the website (see back cover).

### Start using the manual

Do you feel inspired by the *Learning to Live Together* programme and its approach to intercultural and interfaith learning? Explore with your colleagues and friends how you can implement it in your context. Feel free to contact Arigatou International Geneva to share and discuss your ideas.

### Call for a training

If you feel your community, school, institution or network could benefit from training on how to use *Learning to Live Together*, you can contact Arigatou International Geneva for potential trainers who could assist you.

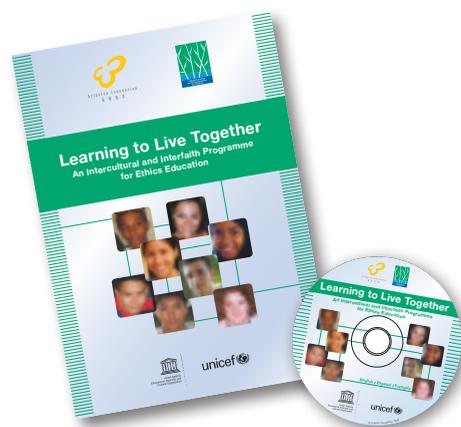
### Register with the virtual Campus

As a facilitator and/or trainer, you have access to the e-learning platform, a learning community where you can share experiences and learn from others working with *Learning to Live Together*.

### Promote the programme

Arigatou International Geneva is looking for long-term individual and institutional partners interested in promoting and implementing the *Learning to Live Together* programme within their institutions or networks.

**If you are interested in any of these activities or in getting a print copy or a CD-ROM of the manual and related materials, please contact the Arigatou International Geneva office.**









Arigatou International

## About us

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Arigatou International is an international faith-based NGO in special consultative status with ECOSOC that is committed to building a better world for children. An initiator and sustainer of partnership-based initiatives to secure child rights and foster children's well-being, Arigatou International seeks to maximize the potential of interfaith cooperation, and always strives to empower and involve children and youth.

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