

# **Theories of Change: Empowering All Social Groups in Generations For Peace's Accra Programme**

## **Executive Summary**

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## **Research Context and Aims**

This research report was created for the non-profit peace-building organisation Generations For Peace (GFP), which has implemented full programme cycles in Accra, Ghana, since 2014. The aim of the most recent community-based Sport For Peace Programme for Children (SPPC), which ran from September 2014 to May 2015, was to reduce bullying between students of different social backgrounds.

The research report has two main aims. First, it analyses whether the Theory of Change (ToC) selected for the programme at St Peter's Mission School in Accra was in fact applicable to the conflict context. The basic premise of a ToC is articulated through the following statement: "We believe that by doing X (action) successfully, we will produce Y (movement towards peace), because Z".<sup>1</sup> This approach is essential to GFP's programming. Second, the research deduces whether a single ToC can be successfully applied to a socially diverse environment, such as the one at St Peter's Mission School.

Furthermore, in analysing these two aspects of the ToC, this research makes recommendations for future GFP programmes. In order to do so, the report first builds on existing literature in order to provide insights into the conflict context. Moreover, the report provides practical insights by analysing the applicability of the ToC based on the perspectives of a variety of people and actors associated with the programme in Accra.

The findings of the research were gathered during fieldwork conducted in Ghana's economic and political capital Accra between 28 June and 12 July 2015. Accra was selected as the location for GFP programmes in the first place as it has faced rapid urbanisation over the past couple of decades, leading to unemployment, urban poverty, and an increasingly socially diverse population. These developments have increased the potential for conflicts between people of different social, religious, ethnic, and age groups. In turn, the dynamic context of Accra made it a suitable location for GFP programming and for this research.

## **Research Methodology and Approach**

Data was collected in three main ways for the purpose of this research. First, 34 Target Group members (children and youth participating in the programme) and 16 students of the Beneficiary Community (youth not directly participating at the programme) were surveyed. Doing so allowed for the collection of quantifiable information which could be analysed and compared between the different groups. These respondents were in turn sampled according to age, gender, and religious background in order to ensure a balanced sample.

Second, the same individuals that were surveyed also participated in focus group sessions in order to

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<sup>1</sup> CDA, *Reflecting on Peace Practice: Participant Training Manual* (Cambridge MA: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, 2013): 18.

gather additional qualitative data. Collecting qualitative data through focus groups helped create opportunities for follow-up questions as well as the possibility for the participants to build on the experiences of each other. Third, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 9 local GFP Pioneers and Delegates, 8 parents of Target Group members, and 7 Key Stakeholders supporting the programme. Using semi-structured interviews offered room for open-ended questions generating in-depth answers focusing on the conflict context and the ToC from the perspectives of these different groups of people.

In terms of analytical frameworks employed, the quantitative data collected through the surveys was analysed through the use of conventional statistical methods such as t-tests to allow for cross-group comparisons. The qualitative data from the interviews and focus groups were analysed using the “Scissor-and-Sort Technique” and coded according to relevant categories.<sup>2</sup>

## Findings

The research uncovered that conflict at St Peter’s is built on intersecting social identities that shape students’ experiences and perceptions of bullying. Moreover, the research also demonstrated a lack of shared understanding within and between GFP Pioneers and Delegates, Target Group members, Key Stakeholders, and the Beneficiary Community as to how these identities shape bullying behaviour.

Whilst they disagree on how these identities shape behaviour, GFP Pioneers and Delegates have a relatively uniform understanding of the ToC used by the Accra SPPC programme, with roughly 89% stating that the ToC was to reduce bullying at St Peter’s. Furthermore, the Pioneers and Delegates agreed that developing respect was at the core of the programme and the most vital tool for transforming conflict, which is in line with the designated ToC. However, unlike the Pioneers and Delegates, the Beneficiary Community parents and the Key Stakeholders revealed a more limited understanding of the ToC, with only 38% and 43% respectively referring to the reduction of bullying as an objective of the programme. Moreover, an impressive 57% of Key Stakeholders and 87.5% of Beneficiary Community parents made no mentioning of bullying as a problem at the school. This indicates that more information about the programme and the associated ToC needs to be distributed in order to ensure continuous and strong support from Key Stakeholders and Beneficiary Community.

When it comes to the type of bullying, verbal violence, such as insults and gossip, was uncovered as the most frequently occurring form at St Peter’s. Contrary to the understanding of the GFP Pioneers, Delegates, and Key Stakeholders, the Target Group and Beneficiary Community students at the school claimed that bullying is not primarily carried out by male students. Instead, this research shows that there is no significant difference between gender groups in terms of perpetrating or being personally affected by bullying.

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<sup>2</sup> Stewart and Shamdasani, *Focus Groups*, 116.

Moreover, the programme was shown to be less effective for female students in terms of whether students were better able to deal with conflict non-violently post-GFP intervention.

Among the variables analysed in this research, the two variables deemed to be most influential in terms of bullying, beyond gender, were religion and age. However, there is a discrepancy between fact that religious bullying came up in 50% of the focus group sessions, while only 22% of the GFP Pioneers and Delegates, and none of the Key Stakeholders, perceived religious bullying to be an issue at the school. In regard to age, or school year group, younger students often perceive themselves as being bullied by older students. This echoes the findings of previous academic research into bullying, arguing that intra-group bullying in terms of age tends to decrease with age while inter-group bullying increases.<sup>3</sup>

When it comes to the relevance of the ToC to the conflict context, this research demonstrates that the programme at St Peter's was successful in attaining the behavioural changes envisaged. For example, there was a near uniform understanding of the development of respect as being the most widespread change by the participants interviewed for the purpose of this research. However, it was also uncovered that the programme faced difficulties with developing respect among older students. This suggests that while a single ToC can be applicable to a socially diverse group, a different expression of that change could potentially be considered in order to better reach older students.

Furthermore, there is a consensus amongst GFP Pioneers and Delegates, Target Group members, and Beneficiary Community members that bullying has decreased as a result of the programme, reflecting again on the success of the ToC selection. The prevention of bullying is something that is being passed on to other students of the Beneficiary Community by the Target Group members, suggesting that the programme is successful in implementing change beyond the immediate Target Group.

These findings demonstrate that whilst the ToC used for this particular programme was successfully achieved, the programme also uncovered useful information that can inform the tailoring of future GFP programme aimed at reducing bullying at St Peter's.

## **Recommendations**

### Short-term

- Increasing the information provided to Beneficiary Community parents, teachers, and Key Stakeholders: Informing all these groups about the GFP programme and its ToC. Moreover, teachers and parents could also be included in the evaluation of the Target Group members before

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<sup>3</sup> M. Kang, "The Association Between Bullying and Psychological Health Among Senior High School Students in Ghana, West Africa," *Journal of School Health* 81, no. 5 (2011): 231-8

and after the programme by using surveys, interviews, or a participatory evaluation. Doing so would increase their awareness and make them feel more involved and included in the process.

- Focusing more deeply on engaging the older students in the Target Group: Since this was the most challenging group to affect through the programme, specific intra-group sessions can be crafted that would focus on building respect towards younger students.

### Long-term

- Undertaking further research on the effects and extent of bullying between students based on religion: This would be carried out in order to determine the extent of this type of bullying and how it could be tackled by a potential future peace-building programme.
- Maintaining a dynamic ToC that accounts for changes in the conflict context: This could include continuous reviewing of the ToC throughout the programme in order to ensure that it is still addressing the conflict context. Short surveys could be conducted with Target Group members at every stage of the monitoring and evaluation process in order to reflect the participatory evaluation process.

### **Conclusion**

This report has added to existing literature on both bullying and ToCs by analysing the application of a single ToC to a socially diverse conflict context in Accra, Ghana. Through this research, important insights have been gained about both ToCs in general, and about the relevance of this particular one to the conflict context. However, this research has also highlighted the potential for a more dynamic ToC in order to meet the needs of a more diverse Target Group, and thus informed future programming as well as research.

In analysing the applicability of the ToC to the conflict context, the research also uncovered insights about the nature of the conflicts present at St Peter's. It was discovered that variables, such as age and religion, influence patterns of bullying at the school. In accounting for the effects of these variables on bullying, important best practices regarding peace-building programmes involving children and youth in Ghana have also been unearthed.

These findings are thus important for future peace-building programmes in Ghana in general and Accra in particular. As Accra is undergoing continuous urbanisation, the lives and challenges of the people living in the local communities in this increasingly mixed city are important to acknowledge in order to maintain sustainable stability. This report argues that while progress is being made to reduce violence in local communities in Accra, it remains important to continue to empower grassroots actors to bring about change at the community level.

This research has demonstrated that using a single ToC when implementing a Sport For Peace Programme has led to behavioural change in at least one community in Accra. Perhaps in the future, the use of a more dynamic ToC will result in even more significant impact in terms of reducing violence between social groups in communities across Ghana.