



Peace Education and Guidance & Counseling in Secondary Schools (*PEGC*)

Introduction

UMECS *Peace Education and Guidance & Counseling Program in Secondary Schools (PEGC)* is designed to build cultures of peace to prevent new wars, build peaceful schools and communities, provide psychosocial services, personally develop secondary school students and improve the quality of secondary school education.

In addition, PEGC integrates into local communities with community counseling, mediation of disputes, family counseling and trained secondary school students serving as peer educators and peer mentors for out-of-school youth.

Who We Are

UMECS –The Center for Peace, Education and Development, a Registered NGO with the Republic of Uganda National Board for Non-Governmental Organizations and its partner United Movement to End Child Soldiering, a U.S. 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit organization, anchored in the war zones of Northern Uganda in 2004. Since then, UMECS has scaled countrywide and continues to run transformative, cross-cutting education, community development, youth leadership, and school-based peace education and guidance & counseling programs.

UMECS leadership and staff are qualified educators, mediators, peacebuilders, social workers, counselors, administrators, finance managers, project managers, agriculturalists, published writers, youth mentors, and NGO managers.

Programme Rationale

There have been multiple wars in Uganda since Independence. Preventing new wars and recurring cycles of revenge can no longer be left to chance. Wars must be intentionally prevented because once wars start, they rage out of control like forest fires. To prevent new wars, communities and the entire society must build cultures of lasting peace in which people co-exist and want to co-exist in harmony. This requires *systemic* strategies and long term commitment.

Central to the ability of secondary school students to be successful academically, develop socially and emotionally, serve as leaders and catalysts for change and focus on higher education and career goals is their *personal development*. This program personally develops secondary school students by combining peace education study and activities with life skills, training and counseling.

Program Background

In 2009, in a highly competitive process, UMECS won a USAID/Uganda grant to pilot *Peace Education and Guidance and Counseling in Secondary School* in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Sports.

The project was piloted in 2010 in seven secondary schools in Amuru, Gulu, Kitgum and Pader districts in Northern Uganda with groundbreaking results, significant structural impact and transformative experiences. The program is now in Year 4. **The overarching goal:** to mainstream the program throughout Uganda's secondary school and teacher training systems.

In 2011, World Vision International selected UMECS as a Finalist in its Peacebuilding Prize, recognizing UMECS for its "outstanding achievements in the field of peacebuilding" for the impact of the PEGC program.

Program Goals

- Build cultures of peace to prevent new wars
- Build peaceful schools and communities
- Create nonviolent school environments
- Improve the quality of secondary school education
- Personally develop secondary school students as evidenced by
 - a. Social and emotional development (social skills, maturity)
 - b. Improved decision making and problem solving skills
 - c. Student leadership and initiative
 - d. Activation of empathy, Increased openness, self-awareness, self-assertiveness
 - e. Improved confidence and self-esteem
 - f. Improved communication skills
 - g. Improved academic performance
 - h. Developing career goals
 - i. Improved student-teacher and student peer relationships
- Improved academic performance on a school-wide basis
- Creation of serious-minded students focused on career, tertiary education, financial independence, achievement and community development
- Community integration through community counseling, mediations, peer education and peer mentorship

Implementing the Program

- Familiarization with district authorities and new secondary schools
- Selected teachers are certificate level trained in peace education and guidance & counseling by Makerere University School of Distance and Lifelong Learning
- Culturally contextual curricula developed in peace education and guidance & counseling
- Program designed and program components implemented at each school
- Ongoing coordination, facilitation, technical assistance, monitoring and evaluations

Program Components

1. Peace Education Classes (conflict resolution, conflict transformation, et al)
2. Student Peace Activities (peace drama, debates, music, songs and dance)
3. Guidance (life skills) courses (peer mediation, peer counseling, relationships, problem solving, decision making, academic enrichment, career guidance, et al)
4. Psychosocial Counseling – individual and group counseling and support groups
5. Peer Mediation, Peer Counseling and Youth Leadership Student Trainings
6. Inter and intra-school peace activity events
7. Student community integration: community youth trained as Peer Mediators & Peer Counselors by PEGC school-based peer educators
8. Community Mediations/Alternative Dispute Resolution

Results and Structural Impact

- Over 3,000 secondary school students participate in the program
- 94 teachers and school staff trained as peace educators and guidance counselors
- Students trained as peer mediators and peer counselors
- Eradication of bullying
- Activation of empathy
- Increased openness, self-awareness and assertiveness
- Improved confidence and self-esteem
- Student leadership development
- Greatly improved academic performance and significantly reduced student indiscipline
- Personal, social and emotional development of students
- Improved student self-discipline and determination
- Students become focused on careers, preparation for tertiary education and community development
- Transition from punitive to restorative justice systems at all seven schools
- Extensive healing of students from war and family-related trauma
- Significant improvement in student empathy, openness, self-awareness and confidence
- Creation of an ethos of non-violence at each school
- Creation of serious-minded learning environments
- Student mandate and responsibility to create cultures of peace at each school
- Teacher empowerment and ownership in helping to create and sustain these transformations
- Successful community mediations
- Successful family counseling
- Successful community member counseling components