



**Peace Education as a Peacebuilding Tool in the Western  
Sahara region**

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**In the Faculty of Management Sciences**

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## **Abstract**

Peacebuilding is a profound challenge in societies that experience decades-long protracted conflict. The Western Sahara Conflict is considered such a profound peacebuilding challenge. Located in the Maghreb region on the North-West coast of Africa, the Western Sahara is considered the *Most Inaccessible Place on Earth*, the *Least Economically Integrated Region on Earth*, and the *Last Colonised Place on Earth*. The conflict is known as *Africa's Longest Conflict*, *Africa's Forgotten Conflict*, and the *World's Oldest Conflict*, and Western Sahara as the *Most Heavily-Mined Place on Earth* which has produced the *Most Protracted Refugee Situation Worldwide*.

The Western Sahara has a long history of violent conflict. In 1991, Morocco and the Polisario agreed to a UN-brokered ceasefire for a future self-determination referendum, which has yet to take place. Morocco rejects a vote including independence as an option, considering Western Sahara integral to the kingdom. The ceasefire was broken in late 2020, resuming violent conflict. For 48 years, from 1975 to 2023, all peacebuilding efforts have failed. This protracted conflict has divided communities along a "berm," the second-largest man-made defensive barrier in history, leading to polarization, animosity, and negative attitudes between the groups.

This study employs an action research approach and peace education as a key tool to implement a peacebuilding intervention in Laayoune, Western Sahara. The interdisciplinary methodology seeks to understand the complexities of relationships between Moroccans and Sahrawis in the region. Research findings show that peace education workshops effectively promote reconciliation and peacebuilding by providing a safe space for dialogue, fostering mutual understanding and empathy among participants, and facilitating transformative changes in relationships, trust, and cooperation, while also contributing to personal growth and development among participants.

This study makes significant contributions to the field of peacebuilding by highlighting the often-overlooked effectiveness of peace education as an intervention in the Western Sahara Conflict and emphasizing the vital role of action research in ensuring the sustainability of peacebuilding efforts.

**Keywords:** *Peacebuilding, Peace Education, Workshops, Action Research, Western Sahara*

## **Declaration of Authorship**

I, Justin D. Bibee, student number 21959537, do hereby declare that this doctoral thesis is my own original research.

Signed:

August 2023

## **Dedication**

This doctoral thesis is dedicated to my wife and best friend, Yousra. I am in awe of and humbled by such love and friendship.

## **Acknowledgements**

Earning a Ph.D. requires considerable time and effort, and I feel a deep sense of gratitude toward the people who have given me the opportunity to reach this turning point in my life.

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Thank you all,

Justin

## **Abbreviations**

AR	Action Research
ART	Action Research Team
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DUT	Durban University of Technology
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
ICON	International Centre of Nonviolence
IOM	International Organization for Migration
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
MINURSO	United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara
PE	Peace Education
POLISARIO	Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Río de Oro
SADR	Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WHO	World Health Organization

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# **Chapter One**

## **Introduction**

### **1.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, the background of the study is explored and a synthesis of the research is presented. An overview of political violence and Sahrawi-Moroccan relationships in Western Sahara is provided, along with an explanation of the research problem, the type of inquiry, and the data collection methods used. Additionally, the chapter delves into the theory of peace education, its relevance in protracted-conflict settings, and its potential as a peacebuilding tool.

The motivation for carrying out the research is discussed in detail, highlighting my desire to contribute to the field of peacebuilding and promote the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. The aims of the research and the research design are also presented, with a focus on the use of action research and the workshop setting to implement the peace education programme. The research findings are briefly discussed in this chapter, highlighting the effectiveness of peace education as a tool for peacebuilding in the Western Sahara region. Finally, the chapter ends by providing an overview of the dissertation structure, outlining the purpose and content of each of the ten chapters.

### **1.2 Background of the Study**

The Western Sahara conflict has been ongoing for almost 48 years and is considered the longest conflict in Africa (United Nations Security Council, 2021; World Health Organization 2021). A ceasefire was declared in 1991, but a final resolution to the conflict has not been reached (United Nations Security Council 2021). Despite efforts to initiate a resolution to the conflict through negotiations, including the second phase of negotiations held in June 2020, the conflict remains unresolved (United Nations 2020). In November 2020, the ceasefire that had been in place for 31 years ended, and violent conflict resumed (Al Jazeera 2020).

The Western Sahara conflict has had significant humanitarian consequences, including the displacement of thousands of people (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2021;

World Health Organization 2021). It has also hindered development in the region and created significant economic challenges (World Bank 2019). The Western Sahara conflict is not only the longest-running in Africa, but also the world's oldest and most neglected conflict (International data analysis 2007). It has been ongoing for the past 48 years, and despite numerous attempts at finding a resolution, remains unsettled. The struggle stems from a territorial dispute between Morocco and the indigenous Sahrawi people over the Western Sahara territory (See Chapter 2 for detailed overview of the Western Sahara Conflict).

The Moroccan government has stationed tens of thousands of soldiers along a sand wall that is 30 feet high and curls for one-and-a-half thousand miles through the Sahara (UN News 2021; The Guardian 2020). This wall is the largest defensive fortification in use today and is a constant reminder of the ongoing conflict (The Guardian 2020). The region is also the most heavily-mined place on Earth, with an estimated nine million landmines still in situ, posing a grave danger to civilians and children (International Campaign to Ban Landmines 2021). The need to resolve the Western Sahara conflict cannot be overstated, as it has significant implications for regional and global peace and security. The conflict has generated tensions among neighbouring countries, and the international community, who have struggled to find a solution that is acceptable to all parties. In recent years, there have been renewed efforts to resolve the conflict, but progress has been slow due to entrenched positions, lack of trust, and the absence of innovative peacebuilding approaches.

One of the critical areas where innovation is needed is in engaging civil society in the peacebuilding process. Civil society actors, including women, youth, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), have been marginalised in the peace process, despite their crucial role in promoting social cohesion, reconciliation, and conflict transformation. Their participation is essential to building sustainable peace and ensuring that the voices of all stakeholders are heard.

To address the ongoing conflict in the Western Sahara region, peace education has been identified as an effective tool for promoting peace and nonviolence (Galtung 1990; UNICEF 1997). Peace education aims to promote peace and nonviolence by addressing the root causes of conflict and encouraging dialogue, understanding, and cooperation among individuals and communities (Ghali 2002). This study seeks to contribute to new knowledge in the field of peacebuilding and peace

education by exploring the potential of peace education as a transformative tool for building sustainable peace in the Western Sahara region. The study recognises that traditional approaches to peacebuilding have failed, and new, innovative approaches are needed. Peace education is an innovative approach to peacebuilding that focuses on promoting a culture of peace, nonviolence, and peacebuilding through education. It aims to empower individuals and communities to become agents of change by providing them with the skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed to resolve conflicts peacefully. This study will investigate how peace education can be used to promote peace, reconciliation, and social cohesion in the Western Sahara region.

The study's findings are expected to provide a new approach to the failed methodologies of the past and contribute to ending the Western Sahara conflict. By focusing on empowering civil society actors through peace education, the study seeks to build sustainable peace from the grassroots up. The study will also identify the challenges and opportunities of using peace education as a peacebuilding tool in the Western Sahara region and provide recommendations for policymakers, civil society actors, and other stakeholders.

### **1.3 Research Problem**

Although there has been extensive research on various approaches to resolving the Western Sahara Conflict, there has been limited qualitative research on reconciling the opposing groups, which is essential in establishing a culture of peace. In the context of Western Sahara, where violent relationships, structures, attitudes, and behaviours prevail, peace education can be a promising tool that complements the peacebuilding process.

Despite numerous attempts by external actors to establish peace and stability in Western Sahara, the conflict between the Moroccan government and the Polisario Front has continued for over four decades. The dominant top-down approach to peacebuilding, which prioritises negotiations and agreements between conflicting parties at the highest level, has been unsuccessful due to the lack of genuine participation of the local population (Paffenholz 2016). The exclusion of the Sahrawi people from the peace process has led to a sense of distrust and frustration among them (Brounéus 2011). The top-down approach has also been criticised for prioritising external actors' interests and

ignoring the needs and aspirations of local communities. However, in the context of Western Sahara, where violent relationships, structures, attitudes, and behaviours prevail, peace education can be a promising tool that complements the peacebuilding process (Salomon 2013). This raises the question of how peace education can be effectively integrated into the peacebuilding process in Western Sahara to empower the local population, promote dialogue and reconciliation, and address social and economic grievances to promote sustainable peace. This study aims to explore the potential of peace education as a tool for promoting sustainable peace in Western Sahara, focusing on the participation and agency of the local population in the peacebuilding process.

Although there is a considerable body of research on top-down approaches aimed at resolving the conflict between Moroccans and Sahrawis, little to no emphasis has been placed on implementing grassroots, bottom-up strategies to foster a peaceful culture and prevent future violence. The concept of "negative peace" resulting from political agreements, which only eliminate direct violence, has been proposed by Galtung (1964) in his seminal work on violence, peace, and peace research. This highlights the need for effective peacebuilding mechanisms to achieve lasting peace. Lederach (1997) also emphasises the importance of building sustainable reconciliation in divided societies, which requires more than just the absence of violence. Therefore, while political agreements can be a step towards peace, they are not sufficient on their own, and long-term peacebuilding efforts are necessary.

The top-down approach to peacebuilding refers to the dominant approach in which external actors, such as governments, international organisations, and NGOs, aim to establish peace and stability through negotiations and agreements between the conflicting parties at the highest level. However, the top-down approach to peacebuilding has not been successful in Western Sahara, as evidenced by the ongoing conflict between the Moroccan government and the Polisario Front, which has lasted for more than four decades (Beardsley 2011).

One of the reasons why this approach has failed in Western Sahara is the lack of genuine participation of the local population in the peace process (Beardsley 2011). The top-down approach has been criticised for prioritising the interests of external actors and ignoring the voices and needs of local communities. In the case of Western Sahara, the United Nations has been

leading the peace process, but the local population has been largely excluded from the negotiations. This has created a sense of distrust and frustration among the Sahrawi people, who feel that their interests have been ignored in the process (Beardsley 2011).

A grassroots approach to peacebuilding, on the other hand, emphasises the participation and agency of local communities in the peace process. Grassroots peacebuilding recognises that sustainable peace can only be achieved if it is rooted in the needs and aspirations of the local population. In the context of Western Sahara, a grassroots approach would involve engaging with and empowering the Sahrawi people in the peace process. This could include initiatives to promote dialogue and reconciliation between different communities, as well as efforts to address the social and economic grievances of the local population.

There is evidence to suggest that grassroots approaches to peacebuilding can be effective in promoting sustainable peace. For example, a study by Lisa Schirch and David Cortright (2004) found that grassroots peacebuilding initiatives were instrumental in the peace processes in El Salvador and South Africa. Similarly, a study by Marie-Joëlle Zahar and Tamara Coffman Wittes (2012) found that local actors played a key role in the peace process in Lebanon.

The top-down approach to peacebuilding has not been successful in Western Sahara due to the lack of genuine participation of the local population in the peace process. A grassroots approach that empowers local communities to play an active role in the peace process is more likely to be successful in promoting sustainable peace in Western Sahara. This study focuses on the peace education approach, a bottom-up model that seeks to cultivate mutual understanding and eliminate deep-seated animosity and hatred between opposing groups (Sadigbayli 2006). By transforming the conflict into positive peace, which involves the absence of indirect violence, a sustainable and long-lasting peace can be achieved.

The study asserts that negative attitudes and perceptions are key factors that perpetuate the conflict and hinder genuine peacebuilding efforts, particularly in the post-conflict phase. Therefore, special attention is given to analysing the factors that contribute to the persistence of negative attitudes and perceptions between Moroccans and the Sahwari people, which could impede the process of building a genuine and lasting peace.

## **1.4 Study Context**

Laayoune, located in the Western Sahara region, is a town that has been at the centre of a long-standing territorial dispute between Morocco and the Polisario Front, a national liberation movement representing the Sahrawi people. As the largest city in the region and the capital of the Moroccan administrative province of Laayoune, it is a significant location for understanding the ongoing conflict and its impact on the people living in the area.

Despite the conflict, Laayoune is home to a significant number of both Sahrawi and Moroccan residents. The coexistence of these two communities in Laayoune makes it an ideal site for exploring the potential of peace education in promoting peaceful coexistence and conflict resolution. Researchers interested in peace education can examine the strategies and practices that have been successful in promoting peaceful coexistence between the two communities.

Peace education is a process that involves the acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that enable individuals to understand and resolve conflicts peacefully. It can be implemented in various ways, including formal education, community-based programmes, and non-formal education initiatives. In the case of Laayoune, peace education could be an essential tool for promoting understanding and respect between the Sahrawi and Moroccan communities. By providing opportunities for dialogue, mediation, and peacebuilding training, peace education could foster the development of peaceful coexistence and reconciliation. Research conducted in Laayoune could explore the effectiveness of peace education initiatives in promoting peaceful coexistence and conflict resolution between the two communities. It could also identify the barriers to successful implementation and strategies to overcome them.

## **1.5 Aim of the Study**

The Western Sahara conflict is a protracted territorial dispute between the Moroccan government and the Polisario Front, a national liberation movement that represents the Sahrawi people. The conflict has led to political, social, and economic instability in the region, and has resulted in the displacement of many Sahrawi people. Given the complex and protracted nature of the conflict, there is a need for effective tools for peacebuilding and conflict transformation in the Western

Sahara region. One potential tool is peace education, which is a process of teaching individuals and communities about the values, attitudes, skills, and behaviours that promote peaceful coexistence and conflict resolution.

The aim of this study was to assess the impact of peace education on developing the skills and attitudes of participants to enable them to play a more active role in building a culture of peace. Additionally, the effectiveness of peace education as a tool for promoting peacebuilding and a viable strategy to transform protracted-conflict dynamics in the Western Sahara region was considered. The study was intended to contribute to the development of effective peace education programmes in the Western Sahara region and other conflict-affected areas. By demonstrating the potential impact of peace education on transforming protracted-conflict relationships, the study could provide evidence to support the implementation of similar programmes in other contexts.

The research was driven by a profound interest in contributing to scholarship and understanding of the field of peace education. In addition to its practical objectives, this research was conducted with a scholarly purpose, seeking to contribute valuable insights to the development of effective peace education programmes, not only in the Western Sahara region but also in other conflict-affected areas. By showcasing the potential impact of peace education in reshaping long-lasting conflict relationships, the study aimed to provide robust evidence to support the implementation of similar initiatives in diverse contexts. Emphasizing the academic significance of the research, the findings aimed to enrich the existing body of knowledge on peacebuilding strategies and contribute to the broader understanding of peacebuilding.

## **1.6 Objectives of the Research**

This research aimed to achieve the following specific objectives:

1. To explore the attitudes and perceptions held by both Moroccans and Sahrawis of the other.
2. To elucidate the peace education approach and its potential as a peacebuilding tool.
3. To conceptualise and implement an efficient peace education workshop model that could help facilitate reconciliation, followed by a preliminary evaluation of the model's short-term outcomes.



This study is significant as it has the potential to make a valuable contribution to the field of peacebuilding by investigating the use of peace education as a strategy for advancing peace. Through an examination of the practicality of peace education, this research can provide insight into how this method can be efficiently employed to facilitate peacebuilding in various contexts. This information could be instrumental in informing future efforts towards promoting peaceful coexistence and conflict resolution.

## **1.7 Division in Western Sahara**

Despite various peace efforts in the 1990s and early 2000s, the conflict in Western Sahara resurfaced in May 2005 as the "Independence Intifada." Moroccan-held parts of Western Sahara experienced a period of disturbances, demonstrations, and riots that continued until November of the same year. During the latter part of 2010, demonstrations broke out anew in the Gdeim Izik refugee camp in Western Sahara. While initially peaceful, these protests eventually escalated into violence, leading to multiple casualties on both sides as civilians clashed with security forces. On 26 February 2011, another wave of protests broke out following the police's inability to prevent anti-Sahrawi looting in Dakhla, Western Sahara. These protests rapidly spread throughout the region, with clashes reported in Dakhla, the second largest city of Western Sahara, on 25 February 2011. The unrest started late that night after the "Sea & Desert" Dakhla music festival concerts when, according to Sahrawi sources, "hundreds of Moroccan youths armed with sticks, swords, and Molotov cocktails attacked and looted Sahrawi houses, burning their cars" (Alfro News 2011). The next day, hundreds of Sahrawi protesters gathered in the city centre, protesting against police inaction the previous night. They attacked government buildings, banks and shops using stones and gas cylinders, without police intervention (Alfro News 2011).

The Western Sahara Conflict has resulted in sporadic demonstrations and violence that persist to this day. The prolonged conflict has caused deep-seated animosity, mistrust, and dislike between Moroccans and the Sahrawi people. These negative attitudes and perceptions have become a significant contributor to the continuing violence (Alfro News 2011). The Western Sahara conflict has also had a significant impact on the lives of civilians living in the region, particularly Sahrawi refugees who have been displaced from their homes for decades. The conflict has led to the

creation of a vast network of refugee camps in neighbouring Algeria, where Sahrawi refugees live in difficult conditions with limited access to resources and services (UNHCR 2020).

The conflict between the two parties has resulted in a vicious cycle of violence, which has led to an impasse in finding a peaceful resolution (Bar-Tal 2013; Kelman 2008). The opposing parties have become deeply entrenched in their positions, refusing to budge, and resorting to violence as a means of achieving their goals (Ramsbotham *et al.* 2016). This violence has only served to deepen the mistrust and misunderstanding between the two groups, creating an even greater rift and perpetuating the ongoing conflict.

The situation has become even more complicated due to the lack of trust and understanding between the two groups (Mitchell *et al.* 2013). As Fisher (2012) notes, effective peacebuilding requires each party to recognise the legitimacy of the other's concerns and work towards a solution that meets the needs of both sides. There is a fundamental disconnect between the parties, with each side holding vastly different views on the nature of the conflict and what a solution should look like. This lack of understanding has led to a breakdown in communication, making it difficult to engage in constructive dialogue and find a way forward.

As the conflict drags on, the sense of frustration and hopelessness among both parties has only grown. The cycle of violence has become self-reinforcing, with each act of aggression fueling further retaliation and making it even more difficult to find a way out of the impasse. Ultimately, the only way to break the cycle of violence is through a willingness to listen, empathise, and engage in genuine dialogue aimed at building trust and understanding between the parties involved (Lederach 2015; Ury 2015). Through such dialogue, it may be possible to identify areas of common ground and work towards a solution that meets the needs and concerns of both sides (Kriesberg 2013).

The ongoing violence and protests in Western Sahara underscore the pressing need to address the root causes of the conflict and to develop new strategies for building trust and cooperation between Moroccans and Sahrawis. It is essential to recognise that peacebuilding efforts must address not only the physical aspects of the conflict, such as the territorial dispute, but also the deep-seated animosity and mistrust between the two groups (Lunde 2016). Peace education initiatives can play

a critical role in addressing the negative attitudes and perceptions that have emerged as a result of the Western Sahara Conflict. Such approaches can help to build bridges between the two communities, promote mutual respect and understanding, and ultimately contribute to sustainable peace (Jost 2018).

The history of violent conflict in Western Sahara, including the Western Sahara War, the first and second Sahrawi Intifadas, the Gdeim Izik protests, and the Arab Spring uprisings, highlights the need for a new approach to peacebuilding in the region (United Nations Security Council 2021). The consequences of the conflict have been societal polarisation, tension, fear, and mistrust between Moroccans and Sahrawis that persist within and between communities in Western Sahara (World Health Organization 2021).

### **1.8 Moroccan and Sahrawi Civilian Division**

The Western Sahara conflict has resulted in significant tension and violence between Moroccan and Sahrawi civilians, with both sides passionately arguing for their respective positions, with Morocco asserting control over the entire territory and proposing Sahrawi autonomy under its sovereignty (Council on Foreign Relations 2021). In contrast, the Polisario Front, a Sahrawi independence movement, claims sovereignty over the Western Sahara and demands a referendum on self-determination for the Sahrawi people (United Nations n.d.). This has often led to violent clashes, creating a dangerous environment for both communities (Council on Foreign Relations 2021; United Nations n.d.).

One example of this occurred in November 2020 when Moroccan and Sahrawi civilians clashed in the Moroccan-controlled city of Dakhla, resulting in several injuries. According to local reports, the violence erupted when a group of Sahrawis held a demonstration in support of the Polisario Front, the Sahrawi independence movement, which was met with counter-protests by Moroccan civilians. The situation quickly escalated into violence, with both sides throwing stones and using other improvised weapons (Al Jazeera 2020).

In other regions of Western Sahara, similar confrontations have taken place, frequently instigated by strong emotions related to the ongoing conflict. According to a Sahrawi activist, the conflict is

a constant preoccupation, and avoiding disputes with Moroccan neighbours who endorse their government's stance is challenging. The activist expressed frustration, asserting that they all desire to live peacefully, but that the conflict has rendered this unattainable (BBC News 2016).

The divide between Moroccans and Sahrawis has also been perpetuated by the actions of both governments, who have at times used inflammatory language and actions to fuel nationalist sentiment. For example, in 2016, Morocco expelled 84 international staff members of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) after accusing the UN of bias towards the Polisario Front (BBC News 2016). The accusation made by Morocco against the MINURSO of being biased was rooted in the long-standing and complex Western Sahara conflict. Amidst this complex and protracted conflict, Morocco's accusation of bias towards the Polisario Front against MINURSO likely stems from perceptions that the United Nations was not being impartial in its mediation efforts. Morocco may have felt that MINURSO was overly sympathetic to the position of the Polisario Front, potentially affecting the mission's ability to facilitate a resolution that aligns with Morocco's interests. This move was met with anger from the Sahrawi community, who saw it as a further provocation from the Moroccan government. Clashes between the two communities have been fuelled by the emotional intensity of the conflict, as well as the actions of both administrations.

## **1.9 Peace Education**

For the purpose of this thesis, it is crucial to establish the definition of peace education as foundational knowledge. Rather than providing a broad overview of peace education theories, my focus will be on exploring the theoretical concepts that specifically relate to conflict transformation and how peace education contributes to the transformative process. According to the United Nations General Assembly's document titled "United Nations decade for a culture of peace and non-violence for the children of the world, 2001-2010: International decade for a culture of peace and non-violence for the children of the world" (UN General Assembly, 2002), peace education refers to a fundamental framework of both theoretical and practical knowledge that empowers individuals to choose values that reject violence, promote peaceful conflict resolution, and

cultivate a culture of peace. It is an approach that seeks to build the necessary skills, attitudes, and values that are essential for the development of peaceful and just societies.

One of the key strengths of peace education is its adaptability to different cultural and environmental settings. This assertion is supported by scholars such as Bajaj (2011), who notes that peace education can be customised to respond to the unique challenges and needs of different communities. This ability to tailor peace education workshops to meet specific community needs is critical for effective peacebuilding (Nordquist 2015). By promoting the development of peacebuilding skills and attitudes, peace education can help to reduce violence and transform negative peace (i.e., the absence of violence) into positive peace (i.e., the presence of social justice, equity, and harmony) (Galtung 1969).

The potential impact of peace education on peacebuilding efforts is significant. By helping individuals to develop the skills and attitudes necessary for peaceful conflict resolution, it can contribute to the creation of more peaceful and harmonious societies. This is particularly important in conflict settings, where violent conflict can have devastating consequences for individuals, communities, and entire nations. Overall, the potential of peace education to promote peacebuilding is significant, and this study's exploration of its applicability is an important contribution to the field. By providing insight into the potential use of peace education to promote peace in diverse settings, this study can help to inform and guide future peacebuilding efforts.

### **1.10 Workshop Method**

The workshop method has gained significant attention in peacebuilding initiatives due to its effectiveness in promoting active participation and collaboration between conflicting parties. Workshops create a safe space that enables open dialogue and communication, which can help build trust and understanding between adversaries (Mitchell 2019). The workshop approach provides a platform for participants to engage in a two-way conversation and express their views, which can contribute to resolving conflicts (Dziedzic and Brauer 2018). One of the key advantages of the workshop method is its ability to facilitate conflict analysis. Through group discussions and activities, participants can identify the root causes of a conflict, as well as the needs and wants of

the different parties involved. This understanding is critical in peacebuilding (Lederach 2015). According to Lederach, conflict analysis allows parties to understand their positions, interests, and needs, which are crucial to finding a sustainable solution.

Another benefit of the workshop method is that it allows for the exploration and sharing of different perspectives and experiences. This helps to break down stereotypes and prejudices, and promotes empathy and understanding between conflicting groups. By creating a safe and supportive environment, participants can feel more comfortable sharing their thoughts and feelings, which can lead to more meaningful and productive discussions (Bouckaert and Allan 2018). The sharing of diverse experiences and perspectives allows participants to broaden their understanding of the conflict and the underlying issues (Fujii 2018).

## **1.11 The Theoretical Framework**

This study investigated how protracted-conflict relationships can be transformed in Laayoune Province, Western Sahara. The study employed conflict transformation theory and peace education theory, both of which are essential components of peacebuilding.

Conflict transformation theory aims to address the root causes of divisions among conflicting parties. It is a framework that highlights the importance of addressing the underlying causes of conflict and transforming the way individuals perceive and engage with one another. It emphasises the significance of collaboration, inclusivity, and empowerment in resolving conflicts constructively. Peace education theory is an approach to education that emphasises the promotion of a culture of peace and nonviolence, by teaching values such as respect, tolerance, and empathy, and providing individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge to establish peaceful relationships and resolve conflicts peacefully.

The application of conflict transformation theory and peace education theory in resolving conflicts has been proven effective in various contexts. For instance, studies have shown that the use of conflict transformation theory has led to significant improvements in conflict resolution, reconciliation, and peacebuilding efforts in various conflict-affected regions (Lederach 2015; Galtung 2013). Similarly, peace education theory has been found to be effective in promoting

peaceful behaviours and reducing violence in schools, communities, and societies (Salomon and Nevo 2002; UNESCO 2015).

According to Galtung (1958: 36), conflict can be defined as a situation where actors pursue incompatible goals. Peace, on the other hand, can be defined as the absence of violence and the ability of individuals to achieve their full potential. To describe the different processes involved in conflict, the terms conflict resolution, conflict management, and conflict transformation have been established. For peace, terms such as peacemaking, peacebuilding, and peacekeeping have been coined to explain various experiences related to creating, developing, and maintaining peace. However, for this study, the most relevant terms are peacebuilding and conflict transformation.

According to Lederach (1997: 11), peacebuilding is a comprehensive concept that involves a wide range of activities necessary to transform conflict towards more sustainable and peaceful relationships. It encompasses all the processes, approaches, and stages needed to achieve this goal and includes both pre- and post-formal peace agreement activities. Rather than being viewed as a static condition, peace is considered a dynamic social construct.

The concept of peacebuilding emerged from the field of peace studies and was first introduced by Galtung (1975). His work emphasised the distinction between negative peace, which is the absence of violence, and positive peace, which is the absence of structural violence and the conditions that give rise to war. Galtung argued that peacebuilding is different from peacemaking and peacekeeping and involves addressing and eliminating the root causes of violence, including structural and cultural violence that contributes to direct violence (Smith *et al.* 2011). Ellison (2012) highlights education's role in peacebuilding in its contribution to social transformation. Education's impact can extend beyond the classroom to support broader transformation in the security, political, social, and economic sectors, resulting in a change from negative to positive in relationships and behaviours.

Conflict transformation is a relatively new concept that emerged from the earlier understanding of viewing conflict solely as a problem requiring resolution. Conflict resolution, as defined by Mitchell and Banks (1996), involves addressing the issues in a conflict to achieve a mutually acceptable solution that generates a new, positive relationship between the previously hostile

parties that is self-sustaining in the long term. However, as conflicts continued to persist even after formal peace agreements were signed, this definition was considered insufficient by some. As an alternative, conflict transformation was proposed as a more dynamic and sustainable approach to conflict within human relationships. According to Lederach (2003), conflict transformation is about envisioning and responding to the ebb and flow of social conflict as an opportunity for creating constructive change processes that reduce violence, increase justice in direct interactions and social structures, and address real-life problems in human relationships. Unlike conflict resolution, conflict transformation emphasises sustained action and ongoing attention to conflict, and peace education can help ensure this sustainability.

The conceptual thinking and understandings of peacebuilding and conflict transformation create a central pillar in the approach and emphasis on peace education. Intelligent peacebuilding initiatives include peace education, because of the need to anticipate, respond, resolve, and transform situations of conflict to pursue, achieve, and sustain peaceful relationships. Lederach (1995, 1997) highlighted that peacebuilding is a dynamic and social process. A key concept in his work is conflict transformation, which signifies an ongoing process of changing relationships, behaviour, attitudes, and structures from the negative to the positive. According to this rationale, peace education and peacebuilding work together. Lederach explains peacebuilding as a comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates, and sustains the full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform conflict toward more sustainable, peaceful relationships (1997).

According to Del Felice and Wisler (2007), the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission initially defined peacebuilding as actions carried out during the recovery period following a conflict. However, the definition has since been expanded by Fudo (2017) to include preventative measures. Del Felice and Wisler describe peacebuilding as a comprehensive process that involves various approaches, interventions, and processes required to transform violent relationships, structures, attitudes, and behaviours. This includes political and social processes aimed at finding solutions to the underlying causes of conflicts and changing violent attitudes and behaviour. Peacebuilding encompasses all activities aimed at reducing or eliminating direct, structural, and cultural violence. Del Felice and Wisler argue that successful peacebuilding and conflict



transformation require addressing diverse needs, interests, and expectations and engaging in sincere and forward-looking processes of healing and reconciliation.

### **1.12 Research Sample and Research Design**

This study focused on a sample of 30 participants, consisting of 15 Sahrawis and 15 Moroccans, who completed a questionnaire (see Appendix 2). Some of the participants also took part in interviews as key informants, providing additional insight into their experiences and perspectives. These individuals were selected from the larger group of 30 participants to form the study's action research team. To conduct this study, I used a qualitative action research design, which included three key phases: an exploratory phase, action research, and evaluation. During the exploratory phase, I gathered information about the participants' experiences and perspectives on peace and conflict resolution. The action research phase involved working collaboratively with the participants to develop and implement strategies to promote peace and resolve conflicts. Finally, during the evaluation phase, I assessed the effectiveness of the strategies implemented and reflected on the overall impact of the study. The study also offered participants the opportunity to reflect on and transform their relationships with one another. Through this process, participants were encouraged to examine their assumptions and biases, develop empathy and understanding for one another, and work towards building more peaceful relationships.

### **1.13 Inquiry and Data Collection**

The type of inquiry used in this study is the advocacy participation worldview. The research design is qualitative with exploratory, evaluative action research components (Creswell 2009: 5). This worldview recognises the importance of engaging stakeholders in the research process, empowering them to play an active role in developing solutions and strategies that address the issues affecting their lives. This approach emphasises the need for collaboration and partnership between researchers and participants, as both groups work together towards achieving the desired outcomes.

The exploratory and evaluative action research components of the design aim to generate new insights and knowledge about the effectiveness of peace education as a tool for transforming

protracted-conflict relationships. The methods used for collecting primary data in this study included interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observation. Interviews and focus group discussions provided opportunities for participants to share their experiences, perspectives, and perceptions of the peace education workshops. Participant observation allowed me to observe the participants' interactions and behaviours during the implementation of the peace education workshops.

The intended outcome of this study was to develop the participants' peacebuilding skills and knowledge, transforming their relationships, and ultimately creating a strong argument that peace education is indeed an effective peacebuilding tool, particularly in protracted-conflict settings. Through the use of action research, the study aimed to generate practical knowledge and solutions that can be applied in real-life situations. By empowering the participants to play an active role in the research process and by focusing on building their capacity for peaceful conflict resolution, the study sought to contribute to the development of effective peacebuilding strategies that can be replicated in other conflict-affected areas around the world.

### **1.14 Overview of the Research Methodology**

The research undertaken in this study was guided by an action research design and relied on qualitative methodology to gather and analyse data. The study utilised a combination of primary and secondary sources to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the research topic. In particular, the action research design involved a cyclic process of planning, taking action, reflecting, and then refining the approach based on the insights gained from the previous cycle. This iterative process allowed for a more flexible and adaptive approach to the research, enabling the researcher to respond to unexpected findings and adjust their methods accordingly.

The qualitative methodology utilised in this study allowed for a deeper exploration of the research topic, enabling the researcher to gain a more nuanced understanding of the experiences and perspectives of the participants. This approach was particularly useful for exploring complex and multifaceted issues, which are often difficult to capture through quantitative methods alone. To ensure the richness and depth of the data collected, the study drew on both primary and secondary

sources. Primary data was collected through the methods of interviews, focus groups, and observation, while secondary data was gathered through literature reviews and analysis of existing documents and records. By triangulating these sources of data, the study was able to validate and cross-check the findings, enhancing the credibility and reliability of the research outcomes.

The initial stage of the study involved utilising questionnaires and interviews to gain an in-depth understanding of the intricate conflict dynamics in Western Sahara, and specifically in Laayoune. The aim was to gather data that could inform the design and implementation of a peacebuilding intervention by the action research team. In the second phase of the research, a combination of primary and secondary data was used to reflect on the ongoing peacebuilding interventions in Western Sahara. This involved conducting interviews and focus group discussions to identify the needs of individuals and institutions involved in the peacebuilding efforts.

The findings from both the first and second phases of the research informed the third and final stage of the study. This phase involved a collaborative process between the local action research team and me to design a peacebuilding intervention in the form of workshops, implement the workshops, and conduct a preliminary evaluation of their effectiveness. The research utilised a comprehensive approach to gather and analyse data, incorporating both primary and secondary sources, as well as a collaborative process with the local action research team. This approach allowed for a more nuanced understanding of the conflict dynamics and the needs of individuals and institutions involved in the peacebuilding process, resulting in a more effective and informed intervention.

### **1.15 Motivation for Carrying out the Research**

The driving force behind my research lies in my fervent hope for a future where the people of Western Sahara can live together in peace. The ongoing conflict in the region has caused immense suffering, and I am deeply committed to finding ways to help promote stability and lasting peace there. Furthermore, I am motivated by the opportunity to contribute new knowledge to the field of peacebuilding. I recognise that building a robust body of knowledge is critical to developing effective peacebuilding practices and strategies. By doing so, we can better understand the

complex dynamics of conflict and develop informed solutions that can help promote sustainable peace.

In particular, I am inspired by the prospect of generating new insights and solutions that can contribute to the development of sustainable peace in conflict-affected regions. I believe that it is crucial to look beyond immediate solutions and work towards long-term solutions that can help prevent future conflicts. By gaining a deeper understanding of the root causes of conflict, we can identify effective strategies for promoting peace and stability in the region. I am also acutely aware of the importance of promoting peace education in conflict-affected regions. Peace education can provide individuals with valuable skills and knowledge to promote peaceful conflict resolution, intercultural understanding, and mutual respect. By developing such skills and knowledge, individuals can help prevent future conflicts and promote lasting peace.

As a United Nations advocate, my work is centred around advancing the objectives of the United Nations and its various initiatives. Implementing peace education workshops in Western Sahara can help achieve multiple United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), primarily SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). SDG 4 aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. By implementing peace education workshops, the quality of education in the region can be improved, and the youth can be provided with valuable skills and knowledge to contribute to building peaceful and inclusive societies. SDG 16, on the other hand, seeks to promote peaceful and inclusive societies, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels. The implementation of peace education workshops can help promote peace, justice, and strong institutions in the region. By promoting peaceful conflict resolution, intercultural understanding, and mutual respect, peace education can help prevent future conflicts and build lasting peace in the Western Sahara.

### **1.16 Positionality: The Researcher as a Peacebuilder**

As briefly discussed earlier, the current situation in Western Sahara is one that calls for urgent intervention. The conflict has been taking place for decades and has resulted in significant human

rights violations, displacement, and loss of life. The people of Western Sahara have been living in a state of insecurity and fear, with no end to the conflict in sight. Against this backdrop, I was motivated to carry out the research to explore the potential of peace education as an effective peacebuilding tool. I recognised that building sustainable peace in the Western Sahara required a comprehensive approach that goes beyond traditional conflict resolution methods. I was convinced that peace education, which aims to teach individuals the knowledge and skills needed to build peace and transform relationships, could be a critical component of any peacebuilding strategy.

To test this, I designed a peacebuilding intervention in a peace education workshop setting and implemented it in the Western Sahara region. The workshop setting was chosen for several reasons. First, it provided a safe and conducive space for dialogue, where participants could express their opinions and perspectives freely. Second, it allowed for a more interactive and participatory approach to learning, which is essential in peace education. Finally, the workshop setting was practical and could facilitate the development of skills and knowledge that could be applied in real-world situations.

### **1.17 Significance of the Study**

There is a lack of literature on the application of action research in Western Sahara to explore the efficacy of peace education as a means of peacebuilding. In fact, individuals and organisations are specifically and strictly prohibited from carrying out peacebuilding initiatives that bring Moroccans and Sahrawis together. As such, this research plays a pivotal role in transforming relationships and building a culture of peace in Western Sahara. This study contributes to the building of peace among Moroccans and Sahrawis living together in Western Sahara and provides the basis for an approach to peacebuilding in the region.

This study conducted an action research peacebuilding intervention that was designed specifically for the context of Western Sahara. This approach allowed for the intervention to be informed by the unique realities on the ground, including the history, culture, and beliefs of the Moroccans and Sahrawis involved. By addressing the polarisation, animosity, and negative attitudes and

perceptions between these two groups, the intervention was able to reduce tensions, fear, and mistrust that had persisted within the communities.

Action research is an inclusive, participatory, and iterative approach to problem-solving that emphasises collaboration and learning-by-doing. In the context of peacebuilding, it provides an alternative and strategic method for addressing conflicts and building sustainable peace. Unlike traditional research methods, action research involves active engagement with the affected communities and stakeholders, making it a more effective and context-specific approach. This study represents an important contribution to the field of peacebuilding, as there has been little research conducted on Western Sahara in this field. The insights gained from this study can help inform future peacebuilding efforts in the region, as well as contribute to the broader body of knowledge on effective peacebuilding interventions.

### **1.18 An Overview of Important Findings**

The findings of the study showed that the protracted Western Sahara Conflict has been the primary cause of division in the region. The conflict, which has been ongoing for decades, has resulted in significant human rights violations, displacement, and loss of life. The study revealed that the conflict has created deep-seated mistrust, animosity, and polarisation among the different groups in the region, making it challenging to build sustainable peace.

However, the study also demonstrated that peace education can play a critical role in transforming protracted-conflict relationships. The peace education workshops implemented in the study provided participants with the knowledge and skills needed to build peace and resolve conflicts peacefully. Through the workshops, participants learned about the causes and dynamics of the conflict, the principles of conflict transformation, and effective communication and negotiation skills.

The findings of the study showed that the peace education workshops had a positive impact on the participants, as they helped to break down the barriers of mistrust and polarisation that existed between them. The workshops created a safe space for dialogue, where participants could express their opinions and perspectives without fear of retribution. Through the workshops, participants

learned to listen actively to each other and to find common ground, which helped to build a foundation of trust and understanding.

The study's detailed discussion on the effectiveness of peace education as a peacebuilding tool is presented in Chapter 10, where I provide a comprehensive analysis of the data collected, outlining the key findings and their implications for the broader field of peacebuilding. The chapter also discusses the limitations of the study and provides recommendations for future research in this area. Overall, the study's findings demonstrate the potential of peace education as an effective tool for transforming protracted-conflict relationships and building sustainable peace.

## **1.19 Dissertation Structure**

This dissertation consists of ten chapters, described in detail below.

### **Chapter 1:**

In this chapter, the background of the study is explored and a synthesis of the research is presented. An overview of political violence and Sahrawi-Moroccan relationships in Western Sahara is provided, along with an explanation of the research problem, the type of inquiry, and the data collection methods used. Additionally, the chapter delves into the theory of peace education, its relevance in protracted-conflict settings, and its potential as a peacebuilding tool.

The motivation for carrying out the research is discussed in detail, highlighting my desire to contribute to the field of peacebuilding and promote the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal of promoting peace and justice. The aims of the research and the research design are also presented, with a focus on the use of action research and the workshop setting to implement the peace education workshops. The research findings are briefly discussed in this chapter, highlighting the effectiveness of peace education as a peacebuilding tool in the Western Sahara region. Finally, the chapter ends by providing an overview of the dissertation structure, outlining the purpose and content of each of the ten chapters.

### **Chapter 2:**

In this chapter, a detailed discussion is presented on the violent clashes over the territory of Western Sahara, which have plagued the region for many decades. The focus of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive overview of the background to the conflict, including its history, geography, politics, and human rights issues. The violent clashes in the Western Sahara region have a long and complex history, spanning from the late 1800s to the present day. As this research aims to understand the attitudes and perceptions held by both Moroccans and Sahrawis towards each other, as well as the use of peace education as an effective peacebuilding tool, it is important to provide a detailed discussion of the conflict's background, regions, politics, clashes, human rights issues, and peace processes.

This chapter will provide an introduction to the different epochs of Western Sahara's violent past, providing the reader with an understanding of the historical context in which the protracted conflict has developed. It will also discuss how these violent clashes have deepened emotions and widened the polarisation between Moroccan and Sahrawi community members. By the end of this chapter, the reader will have gained a comprehensive understanding of the complex history of the Western Sahara conflict, which serves as a crucial foundation for the subsequent chapters that focus on peace education and its effectiveness in transforming protracted-conflict relationships.

### **Chapter 3:**

This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive review of the existing literature relevant to the proposed research topic. The literature review will be focused on specific areas, which include the role of peace education in peacebuilding efforts, definitions of peacebuilding and conflict transformation, and their key characteristics in the context of the Western Sahara region. In exploring the role of peace education in peacebuilding, the chapter will delve into the various theoretical perspectives and practical approaches that have been employed in the field. It will also examine the relationship between peace education and peacebuilding, highlighting the ways in which peace education can equip individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to manage and resolve conflicts peacefully. The literature review will also analyse the causes and nature of protracted conflicts, with a focus on the Western Sahara conflict. The chapter will also explore the role of external actors, such as the United Nations, in attempts to resolve the conflict.



Finally, the chapter will provide an overview of the concept of conflict transformation, highlighting its key features and potential applications in the context of peacebuilding efforts in Western Sahara. It will analyse the relationship between conflict transformation and peace education, and explore how these two concepts can be integrated to promote sustainable peacebuilding in the region.

#### **Chapter 4:**

The purpose of this chapter is to achieve the third objective of the research, which is to investigate the potential of peace education as a means of peacebuilding and transforming relationships in conflict settings. To achieve this, the chapter provides a detailed and comprehensive review of the literature on the history and conceptualisation of peace education. Furthermore, the chapter evaluates the effectiveness of peace education workshops that have been implemented in various countries that have experienced violent conflicts. The review examines the key features of effective peace education workshops, including their goals, content, methodology, and evaluation. It also highlights the importance of cultural sensitivity and inclusivity in the design and implementation of such workshops.

Through this comprehensive literature review, the chapter seeks to provide a solid foundation for the subsequent analysis of the use of peace education in the Western Sahara region. The chapter also identifies gaps in the existing literature and makes recommendations for future research on the topic. Overall, this chapter serves as a crucial theoretical framework for understanding the potential of peace education as a tool for peacebuilding.

#### **Chapter 5:**

In this chapter, the methodology – the methods, techniques, and procedures used to collect and analyse data to achieve the research aim and objectives – is presented in detail. The research objective is to explore the potential of peace education as a peacebuilding tool for transforming relationships between polarised groups, and this requires an in-depth understanding of the perceptions, attitudes, thoughts, feelings, and experiences of community members in Laayoune, Western Sahara. To achieve this objective, the study adopts a qualitative research paradigm. This methodology allows for a detailed exploration of the experiences and attitudes of the community

members, through the use of techniques such as interviews, focus groups, and participant observation.

The chapter describes the population and sample selection for the study, as well as the sample size. In addition, it discusses the data analysis techniques used in the study, which involve the interpretation of qualitative data to uncover themes in the data. The chapter also addresses the issues of validity and reliability in qualitative research, explaining the measures taken to ensure that the data collected is trustworthy and accurate.

### **Chapter 6:**

In this chapter, I delve into the topics of action research and training in peacebuilding. The chapter will begin by providing definitions, goals, and the philosophical assumptions of action research. This chapter will also explain the stages of the action research cycle, which includes planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. There will then be a discussion of the concept of training in peacebuilding and its importance in promoting sustainable peace. The chapter will provide an overview of workshops as platforms for training in peacebuilding and their potential to promote understanding and cooperation between conflicting groups.

To illustrate the application of action research and training in peacebuilding, the chapter will end with case studies from different parts of Africa, highlighting the successes and challenges of using these methodologies in the field of peacebuilding. Through these case studies, readers will gain a deeper understanding of the practical applications of action research and training in peacebuilding, and the potential for these methodologies to contribute to lasting peace in conflict-affected regions.

### **Chapter 7:**

This chapter is the first of three devoted to presenting and analysing the findings from the data collection process. This particular chapter explores the essential considerations that the research team reflected upon while developing the peacebuilding intervention. To inform this process, the research team used a combination of data collection methods, including administering questionnaires and conducting individual interviews. Through these methods, the team gathered preliminary data that provided crucial insights for the intervention's development.

The chapter comprehensively details the process of identifying the training needs of the participants, conceptualising the peacebuilding intervention, and determining the philosophical and pedagogical assumptions that guided its development. This chapter sets the foundation for the subsequent chapters, which will probe more deeply into the peacebuilding intervention's implementation and evaluation.

### **Chapter 8:**

In this chapter, the peacebuilding intervention that was implemented by the action research team is discussed in detail. The primary goal of this intervention was to facilitate reconciliation between Moroccans and Sahrawis, and the data presented in this chapter is linked to the thematic analysis of the workshop themes and participants' responses. The chapter begins with an introduction to the key generative questions that guided the learning process of the research team. These questions served as a framework for the implementation of the peacebuilding intervention and helped the team stay focused on their goals. The intervention itself is presented in a step-by-step manner, with each section focusing on a specific aspect of the intervention. The first section discusses the planning and preparation that went into organising the workshops, including the selection of participants and the development of the workshop curriculum.

The next section outlines the methodology used to conduct the workshops, including the use of group discussions, role-plays, and other interactive activities. The data collected during the workshops is analysed thematically, and the themes that emerge from this analysis are presented in the subsequent section. The final section of the chapter provides an evaluation of the peacebuilding intervention and its effectiveness in achieving its goals. The action research team believes that the workshops have the potential to change the attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours of participants towards each other, and this section presents the evidence that supports this belief.

### **Chapter 9:**

This chapter is a reflection on the peacebuilding intervention conducted through peace education workshops in Laayoune province, which took place between 7 February and 29 May 2022. The aim of this chapter is to evaluate the short-term impact of the intervention and to explore its potential effect on peacebuilding. The chapter begins with a discussion of the emerging themes

that were obtained from the peacebuilding intervention. These themes include understanding the conflict, building empathy and understanding, developing communication and negotiation skills, and identifying shared values and goals. The themes are then discussed in detail, highlighting the activities and exercises that were conducted during the workshops to promote them.

Next, the chapter examines the impact of the peacebuilding intervention on the participants. The impact is evaluated in terms of the changes in attitudes, perceptions, and behaviour of the participants towards each other and the conflict. The chapter presents evidence from interviews with participants, observations during the workshops, and feedback from the action research team. Finally, the chapter explores the potential effect of peace education on peacebuilding. It discusses how the workshop activities and exercises can be replicated and scaled up to reach a larger audience, and how the intervention can be integrated into a broader peacebuilding effort in the Western Sahara. The chapter also highlights the importance of continuous evaluation and improvement of peacebuilding interventions to ensure their effectiveness.

#### **Chapter 10:**

The final chapter of this thesis serves as a comprehensive conclusion, encapsulating the study's aims, objectives, methodology, limitations, findings, implications, contributions, and recommendations. This chapter is critical in bringing together all the research efforts, culminating in a succinct and cohesive summary. The primary purpose of this chapter is to draw insightful and informative conclusions from the study's findings. The chapter starts by restating the research objectives, ensuring that the reader is aware of what the study sought to accomplish. Following the objectives' restatement, the chapter offers a detailed summary of the study's key findings. This summary gives an overview of the research and provides the foundation for the chapter's conclusions. The findings are presented in a logical and coherent manner, emphasising the significant discoveries and their relevance to the study's objectives.

After presenting the findings, the chapter discusses the implications of the study's outcomes. This section highlights the study's contributions to the field, providing insights into new knowledge, practical applications, and future research directions. The implications section also addresses the limitations of the study, recognising the potential constraints on the research and its findings.

Finally, the chapter concludes with a set of recommendations for future research, building on the study's contributions and addressing its limitations. These recommendations provide a roadmap for further exploration of the research topic, expanding on the study's findings.

## **1.20 Conclusion**

This opening chapter served as an introduction to the thesis, providing an overview of the study's context, research problem, aims, and objectives, and the methods used to achieve them. It began by setting the stage for the study and providing a background for the research, which explores the potential of peace education as a tool for peacebuilding and transforming relationships in conflict settings, specifically in the Western Sahara region. The chapter also highlighted the research problem, the type of inquiry used, and the data collection methods, which include a qualitative research paradigm.

Furthermore, the chapter outlined the theories that underpin the study, specifically the concepts of conflict transformation and peace education. The aim of the study is to understand the attitudes and perceptions held by Moroccans and Sahrawis of one another and how peace education can be used as an effective tool for peacebuilding. The chapter also highlighted the motivation for carrying out the research and provides a brief dissertation structure.

Overall, this opening chapter served as a roadmap for the study, providing readers with an understanding of the research problem, the study's objectives, and the methods used to address them. The following chapter will delve deeper into the literature related to the study.

## **Chapter Two**

### **The Western Sahara Conflict, “Africa’s Forgotten Conflict”**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, a detailed discussion is presented on the violent conflict over the territory of Western Sahara, which has plagued the region for many decades. The focus of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive overview of the conflict's background, including its history, geography, politics, and human rights issues. The violent clashes in the Western Sahara region have a long and complex history, spanning from the late 1800s to the present day. As this research aims to understand the attitudes and perceptions held by both Moroccans and Sahrawis towards each other, as well as the use of peace education as an effective peacebuilding tool, it is important to provide a detailed discussion of the conflict's background, regions, politics, battles, human rights issues, and peace processes.

This chapter will begin by providing a thorough examination of the ongoing violent conflicts in the Western Sahara region, introducing the different epochs of Western Sahara's violent clashes and providing the reader with an understanding of the historical context in which the protracted conflict has developed. It will also discuss how these clashes have deepened emotions and widened the polarisation between Moroccan and Sahrawi community members. The chapter also examines the failed peace processes that have attempted to resolve the conflict, such as UN resolutions, visiting missions, a UN referendum, an International Criminal Court Opinion, a Settlement Plan, the Houston Agreement, the Baker Plan, the Manhasset Negotiations, and the Autonomy Proposal. The violent clashes and peace processes will be discussed chronologically.

By the end of this chapter, the reader will have gained a comprehensive understanding of the complex history of the Western Sahara conflict, which serves as a crucial foundation for the subsequent chapters that focus on peace education and its effectiveness in transforming protracted-conflict relationships.

## **2.2 Background to the Western Sahara Conflict**

The history of the Western Sahara conflict and the ensuing violence and tension between Moroccans and Sahrawis have been well-documented in academic literature. Zoubir and Slane (2019) provide a comprehensive overview of the conflict's origins, tracing its roots back to the colonial era and the struggle for self-determination. Similarly, Hodges (2013) examines the complexities of the conflict, including the role of regional and international actors and the challenges of finding a lasting solution.

The various waves of violence and conflict in the Western Sahara have also been studied in detail by other scholars. Boukhars and Zoubir (2013) analyse the Gdeim Izik protests, arguing that they represent a new phase in the conflict, characterised by youth-led activism and a demand for social justice. Meanwhile, Joffé (2016) explores the impact of the Arab Spring on the Western Sahara conflict and the subsequent clashes in 2020. The Western Sahara conflict remains an ongoing and complex issue, with no easy solutions. As Chatty (2019) notes, resolving the conflict will require a concerted effort from regional and international actors, as well as a recognition of the human rights concerns of the Sahrawi people.

Despite numerous attempts at peace initiatives during the 1990s and early 2000s, the Western Sahara conflict resurfaced in 2005 as the "Independence Intifada", which involved a series of disturbances, demonstrations, and riots in the Moroccan-held parts of Western Sahara from May to November of that year (Zunes 2006). In 2010, protests broke out again in the Gdeim Izik refugee camp; these initially started as peaceful protests but later turned violent, resulting in casualties on both sides as civilians clashed with security forces. In February 2011, protests erupted in Dakhla, Western Sahara, triggered by the police's inability to prevent anti-Sahrawi looting, and quickly spread throughout the territory (Zunes 2006). These ongoing demonstrations will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

### **2.2.1 Cultural Aspects of the Western Sahara Conflict**

Culture plays a significant role in the Western Sahara conflict, as both Morocco and the Polisario Front have laid claim to the territory based on their respective cultural and historical ties to the

region. Historically, the Western Sahara was home to several indigenous groups, including the Sahrawi, who have a distinct culture and language. The Sahrawi have long been involved in trans-Saharan trade, which brought them into contact with Arab and Berber cultures, as well as sub-Saharan African cultures.

The Sahrawi people's distinct culture and language have been heavily influenced by their interactions with Arab and Berber cultures over centuries. As Zunes (2019) notes, the Sahrawi language, Hassaniya Arabic, is a dialect of Arabic that has been shaped by the interaction between Bedouin tribes and the Arab conquerors who came to the region in the 7th century. The Sahrawi culture has also been shaped by interactions with Berber tribes, who have lived in the region for centuries (Hodges 2014). The Sahrawi people's nomadic way of life has also played a significant role in shaping their culture and traditions. As Zunes (2019) notes, the nomadic Bedouin way of life has given rise to a unique set of cultural practices, including music, dance, and poetry. This heritage has also shaped the Sahrawi people's strong attachment to the land, which is central to their cultural identity, as noted by Hodges (2014), and reflected in their struggle for independence. The Western Sahara region is viewed as their ancestral homeland, and the Sahrawi people have a deep connection to the desert landscape. In the late 19th century, the region was colonised by Spain, which introduced Western culture and institutions (Hodges 2014).

As Hodges (2014) notes, the Western Sahara was once part of the Moroccan kingdom, and Morocco has long asserted its sovereignty over the region based on these ties. Morocco's culture and language have been heavily influenced by Arabic and Berber traditions, which it has sought to promote in the Western Sahara region. As Zunes (2019) states, Morocco's official language is Arabic, which is widely spoken in the Western Sahara region. The Moroccan government has also made efforts to promote the Berber language and culture, which have been historically marginalised in the region. Morocco's efforts to promote its culture and language in the Western Sahara region have been met with resistance from the Sahrawi people, who view this as an attempt to erode their distinct cultural identity. The Moroccan government's policies of cultural assimilation have been a major point of contention in the Western Sahara conflict. The Sahrawi people have accused Morocco of attempting to suppress their cultural heritage and traditions, while



Morocco has accused the Sahrawi independence movement of promoting a separatist agenda that threatens the country's unity and territorial integrity (Zunes 2019).

After Spain withdrew from the region in 1975, Morocco and Mauritania divided the territory between them, with Morocco asserting its cultural and religious ties to the Western Sahara as part of its historic kingdom. The Polisario Front, on the other hand, emphasised the Sahrawi culture and language and claimed that the Western Sahara was a distinct entity that had been occupied by Spain without the consent of the indigenous population (Zunes 2019). In recent years, cultural issues have continued to play a role in the conflict. Morocco has invested heavily in the development of the Western Sahara region and promoted its Arab-Berber identity through cultural programmes and events. The Polisario Front has accused Morocco of attempting to assimilate the Sahrawi into the Moroccan culture and language, and has emphasised the importance of preserving Sahrawi culture and identity (Hodges 2014). Additionally, human rights abuses in the Western Sahara have been linked to cultural suppression. The Polisario Front and human rights organisations have accused Morocco of restricting freedom of expression and association, and of using cultural and linguistic repression to undermine the Sahrawi identity (Amnesty International 2019).

### **2.2.2 Historical Background to the Western Sahara Conflict**

The history of Western Sahara is complex and filled with conflict. In 1884, Spain declared a protectorate over the coastal region of Western Sahara, which at the time was home to several nomadic tribes, including the Sahrawis. However, the Sahrawis resisted Spanish rule, and much of the Spanish-claimed territory remained beyond Spanish control.

In 1958, Spain regained control of the Western Sahara after a two-year war known as the Ifni War. The conflict was fought between Spain and Moroccan nationalists who sought to gain control of the Ifni province in southern Morocco and the Spanish-held territories in Western Sahara. The Ifni War erupted in 1956 when Moroccan nationalists launched a series of guerrilla attacks on Spanish forces in the Ifni province, which Spain considered part of its African empire (Naylor 2006). Spain responded with a heavy-handed military campaign, including the use of air power and chemical weapons, which killed an estimated 10,000 Moroccan civilians and fighters. Moroccan nationalists

also suffered heavy losses, with some estimates putting the number of dead at around 3,000 (Perrone 2016).

In 1967, a new Sahrawi nationalist movement emerged, called the Harakat Tahrir. The group challenged Spanish rule peacefully and called for the right to self-determination for the Sahrawi people. However, after the events of the Zemla Intifada in 1970, Sahrawi nationalism once again became militant. The Zemla Intifada was a series of demonstrations and riots in the Western Sahara against Spanish rule, sparked by a dispute over land ownership. In response to the growing resistance movement, Spain agreed in 1974 to hold a referendum on the future status of Western Sahara. However, the process was never carried out due to disagreements between Morocco and the Sahrawi independence movement, known as the Polisario Front.

In 1975, Spain agreed to transfer control of Western Sahara to Morocco and Mauritania in a secret agreement known as the Madrid Accords. This move was met with fierce opposition from the Polisario Front, which declared the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) and launched a guerrilla war against Moroccan and Mauritanian forces. Mauritania withdrew from Western Sahara in 1979 after signing a peace treaty with the Polisario Front. Morocco continued to occupy the region, however, and built a wall, called the Berm, that divides the territory, with Morocco controlling the western part and the Polisario Front controlling the eastern part. The conflict over Western Sahara remains unresolved to this day, with the Polisario Front seeking independence for the territory and Morocco insisting on its sovereignty over the region. The conflict has resulted in human rights abuses, displacement of populations, and a continuing humanitarian crisis.

### **2.2.3 Spanish Sahara 1884-1976**

Western Sahara was known as Spanish Sahara when it was occupied and ruled by Spain between 1884 and 1976. In 1884, Spanish forces were immediately challenged by resistance from the Sahrawi people. After gaining independence in 1957, Morocco claimed that Spanish Sahara was part of its historic pre-colonial territory. Morocco suppressed the resistance politically, forcing Sahrawis to settle in certain areas. In 1958, Spain united the territories of Saguia el Hamra and Río de Oro to form the overseas province of Spanish Sahara, while ceding the province of the Cape Juby Strip in the same year to Morocco. In the 1960s, Morocco continued to claim Spanish Sahara.

It gained agreement from the United Nations to add it to the list of territories to be decolonised. In 1969, Spain returned Ifni to Morocco, but continued to retain Spanish Sahara (Fouad 1975).

In 1967, Spanish rule was challenged by the Harakat Tahrir, a protest movement organised by Morocco (Fouad 1975). In 1973, the Polisario Front was formed by Sahrawi militant nationalists. The Polisario Front grew rapidly, and Spain lost control over the territory by 1975. In 1975, Spain was confronted with a campaign from Morocco with territorial demands. This campaign culminated in the Green March. In negotiating the Madrid Accords with Morocco and Mauritania, Spain withdrew from the territory (Sociedad Geográfica Española 2011).

#### **2.2.4 Greater Morocco**

According to Linnee (2020), the concept of "Greater Morocco" is rooted in the historical claims of Moroccan nationalist political leaders who sought to unite various territories under the banner of the Moroccan sultan. This label was used to protest against colonial powers, such as Spain, Portugal, Algeria, and France, who controlled parts of Morocco during the colonial era (Linnee 2020). In this context, "Greater Morocco" referred to a geographic area that included not only Morocco, but also territories historically associated with the Moroccan sultan, such as Western Sahara, parts of Algeria, and Mauritania.

In the case of the Western Sahara Conflict, the term "Greater Morocco" is often used by Moroccan nationalists to assert their claim over the disputed territory of Western Sahara. Morocco's stance on this issue has caused tension with the African Union, which recognises the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic as a sovereign state. This tension led to Morocco leaving the African Union in 1984 after the Polisario Front was awarded a seat, making it the first and only African country to do so (Linnee 2020). However, Morocco has since rejoined the African Union (in 2017), which could signal a shift in its stance on the Western Sahara issue.

The competing ideology to "Greater Morocco" is Sahrawi nationalism, which advocates for the self-determination of the Sahrawi people and the establishment of an independent state in Western Sahara. The Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, which is recognised by many countries, including the African Union, is the embodiment of this ideology. The protracted Western Sahara Conflict

between Morocco and the Sahrawi people is a manifestation of this ideological divide, with both sides claiming the right to govern the territory.

### **2.2.5 Moroccan Army of Liberation**

The Army of Liberation was a key player in the Moroccan independence movement against French and Spanish colonisation in the 1950s. It was founded in 1955, following the assassination of Farhat Hached, a Tunisian union leader, and the exile of Sultan Mohammed ben Youssef (Boukhari 2005). The army was composed of various armed militias from rural areas in Morocco, which joined together to fight for the liberation and independence of the country.

The Moroccan independence movement was motivated by a desire to end foreign occupation and gain political autonomy (Boukhari 2005). The Army of Liberation played a crucial role in this struggle, as it launched a series of successful guerrilla attacks against the French-Spanish coalition forces. These attacks helped to destabilise the colonial administration and paved the way for the eventual success of the independence movement (Boukhari 2005).

Despite being composed of various militias, the Army of Liberation was unified under the leadership of Sultan Mohammed V, who was exiled by the French in 1953. Following his return to Morocco in 1955, he quickly rallied support for the independence movement and became a key figure in negotiating the country's independence from France and Spain. In 1956, Morocco gained independence from France, and Spanish Morocco was also granted independence in 1958. The Army of Liberation played a crucial role in achieving this goal, and its legacy remains an important part of Moroccan national identity to this day.

### **2.2.6 The Liberation of Saguia el Hamra and Wadi el Dhahab Movement**

The Liberation Movement of Saguia el-Hamra and Wadi el Dhahab, also known as the Movement for the Liberation of the Sahara, was a Sahrawi movement founded in the late 1960s by Muhammad Bassiri, a journalist and Qur'anic teacher of Sahrawi origin. The group's primary objective was to achieve Western Sahara's self-determination through peaceful means. Initially, the movement operated covertly, but it gained prominence in 1970 when it staged a demonstration

in El-Ayun (Laayoune), calling for better treatment of and independence for Western Sahara (Espina Barrio 2003).

The demonstration was met with violence by the Spanish colonial forces, resulting in a massacre and subsequent disturbances. The event is commonly referred to as the Zemla Intifada or uprising, named after the location of the demonstration. The brutal response by the Spanish colonial authorities shattered the hopes of Sahrawi nationalists for a peaceful resolution to their struggle for independence. Consequently, in May 1973, the Polisario Front was formed under the leadership of El-Ouali, calling for an armed revolution against Spanish rule (Shelley 2018).

The Polisario Front would later engage in combat with Moroccan and Mauritanian forces, both of which claimed Western Sahara following Spain's departure from the region in 1975. The dispute over Western Sahara continues to this day, with the Sahrawi people struggling for self-determination and independence (Zunes and Mundy 2010). The Liberation Movement of Saguia el-Hamra and Wadi el Dhahab played a crucial role in the struggle for self-determination and the independence of Western Sahara. While their initial efforts were peaceful, the violent response by the Spanish colonial authorities led to the formation of the Polisario Front, which would eventually engage in armed combat with Moroccan and Mauritanian forces. The dispute over Western Sahara remains unresolved, with the Sahrawi people continuing to demand their right to self-determination and independence.

### **2.2.7 The Polisario Front**

The Polisario Front, a national liberation movement representing the Sahrawi people, was established in 1973 to fight for the independence of two regions, Saguia el-Hamra and Río de Oro, located in Western Sahara (Boulos 2018). The group's name is derived from the Spanish abbreviation for the Popular Front for the Liberation of those two regions. The Polisario Front has been engaged in a long-standing conflict with Morocco over the status of Western Sahara, which has yet to be resolved (Zoubir 2019).

The United Nations recognises the Polisario Front as the legitimate representative of the Sahrawi people, and upholds the Sahrawis' right to self-determination (UNGA 1979). In 1979, the UN passed a resolution calling for a referendum to be held in Western Sahara to determine the

territory's future status. However, the referendum has yet to take place due to disagreements between the Polisario Front and Morocco over voter eligibility criteria (Zoubir 2019).

Since Morocco's occupation of Western Sahara in 1975, the Polisario Front has been fighting for independence. The group has established the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) as a government-in-exile, headquartered in Tindouf, Algeria (Boulos 2018). However, only a few countries recognise the SADR, as most countries acknowledge Western Sahara as part of Morocco.

In areas of Western Sahara under Moroccan control, the Polisario Front is outlawed, and displaying the Sahrawi flag is illegal. This has led to ongoing human rights abuses against Sahrawi activists and protesters who demand their right to self-determination (Press TV 2010). Despite this, the Polisario Front continues to call for a peaceful resolution to the conflict, though tensions between the two sides remain high (Zoubir 2019).

#### **2.2.7.1 Structuring of the Sahrawi Armed Struggle**

The Polisario Front's current structure differs significantly from its early days when it operated as a small guerrilla force with just a few hundred members. Today, the Secretary General and a nine-member executive committee hold most of the power. The executive committee comprises elected members who have various military and political responsibilities, while a 21-person Congress provides oversight and links the movement to its affiliated mass organisations, including the Women's Organisation (UNMS), the Youth Organisation (UJSARIO), and the Workers' Organisation (UGTSARIO) (Alguero Cuervo 2006).

In 1991, a merger of different organisational patterns, including military organisation, refugee camps, and the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, occurred during the congress that overhauled and integrated both Polisario and SADR organisations into the camp structure, and separated them further from each other. This change came after protests called for more internal democracy, resulting in significant personnel shifts in the top tiers of both Polisario and SADR (Barbulo 2002). The Secretary General, who leads the Polisario Front, is elected by the General Popular Congress (GPC), which meets every four years and comprises delegates from the Popular Congresses of the refugee camps in Tindouf. Elections are held biannually in each camp, and delegates from the

UNMS, UJSARIO, UGTSARIO, and military delegates from the Sahrawi People's Liberation Army also attend (Barbulo 2002).

Residents of the camps participate in the administrative work through 11-person units, which form the smallest unit of refugee camp politics. Each unit oversees the distribution of food, water, and schooling in their area, and every camp resident has a vote in the Popular Congresses. There is no formal membership of Polisario; anyone who participates in its work or lives in the refugee camps is considered a member (Alguero Cuervo 2006). The National Secretariat (NS), headed by the Secretary General, is the highest decision-making body. Elected by the GPC, the NS comprises committees overseeing defence and diplomatic affairs. This change in policy allowed for the inclusion of displaced Sahrawis in political appointments, despite initial concerns about infiltration and communication difficulties with Sahrawis in Moroccan-controlled territories (Alguero Cuervo 2006). The move is believed to have strengthened the movement's underground network in Moroccan-controlled Western Sahara and linked it with rapidly growing Sahrawi civil rights activism (Alguero Cuervo 2006).

#### **2.2.7.2 Polisario Armed Forces**

The SADR's military is known as the Sahrawi People's Liberation Army (SPLA), which used to be the military arm of the Polisario. The SADR and the Polisario do not have naval or air forces. The SPLA is estimated to have around 6,000 to 7,000 active soldiers in its armed units. Due to the fact that both male and female Sahrawi refugees in the Tindouf refugee camps receive military training at the age of 18, the potential pool of SPLA soldiers is significantly larger than the active number.

At its inception, the Polisario Front had to acquire weapons individually and transport them via camel or foot. However, after forming an alliance with Algeria in 1975, they were able to expand their arsenal and military capabilities significantly. Presently, the SPLA mostly possesses outdated weapons manufactured by Russia, from a donation by Algeria. They have a diverse range of materials, including those seized from Spanish, Mauritanian, or Moroccan forces, such as Panhard AMLs, Eland Mk7s, Ratel IFVs, AMX-13s, and SK-105 Kürassiers (Air Scene 2021). The SPLA operates armoured units consisting of old tanks, like T-55s and T-62s, relatively modern armoured

vehicles such as EE-9 Cascavels and BRDM-2s, infantry fighting vehicles such as BMP-1s and BTR-60s, rocket launchers like BM-21s and BM-30s, and halftracks. Furthermore, they have successfully shot down several F-5 fighter jets using surface-to-air missiles (anti-aircraft missiles) like SA-6s, SA-7s, SA-8s, and SA-9s (Air Scene 2021).

The SPLA has historically employed ghazi tactics, which involve surprise motorised raids over long distances and are based on traditional Sahrawi camel-back war parties. However, the construction of the Moroccan berm forced the SPLA to switch to tactics that more closely resemble conventional warfare, focusing on artillery, snipers, and other long-range attacks. One of the most innovative tactics of the SPLA was its early and extensive use of Land Rovers and other civilian vehicles that were modified so that anti-aircraft machine guns, such as the ZPU-2 or ZU-23, or anti-tank missiles like the AT-3 Sagger, could be mounted (Batia 2001). In both phases of the war, the SPLA relied on their superior knowledge of the terrain and their ability to launch surprise attacks.

Land mines have been used extensively by both Morocco and the Polisario Front during the conflict. However, the Polisario Front committed itself to banning landmines by signing the Geneva Call on 03 November 2005, and has since begun destroying its landmine stockpiles. In contrast, Morocco did not sign the mine ban treaty. Following the ceasefire agreement, the United Nations has been responsible for carrying out mine-clearing operations.

### **2.2.8 Madrid Accords**

Signed on 14 November, 1975, the Madrid Accords was a treaty between Spain, Morocco, and Mauritania to end the Spanish presence in the territory of Spanish Sahara. The territory was then divided between Morocco and Mauritania, with no place for the Polisario Front or the Sahrawi people. The agreement was intensely opposed by the Polisario Front, which remained committed to independence.

As Morocco and Mauritania asserted their claim over the territory, armed resistance erupted between the two countries and the Polisario Front. The armed resistance turned into a 17-year-long war, from which Mauritania retreated in 1979, abandoning all claims to the region. The war ended in 1991 with a ceasefire agreement between Morocco and the Polisario Front. Today, the status of



the territory of Western Sahara, remains disputed (Stockholm Centre for International Law and Justice 2015). As a result of the conflict, many Sahrawis became refugees, and remain refugees to this day. Some 90,000 vulnerable Sahrawi refugees live in five camps around Tindouf. Some have been there for nearly half a century, victims of a protracted and often forgotten crisis that began more than 47 years ago in Western Sahara; a war that forced people to flee in search of safety (UNHCR 2022).

## **2.3 Western Sahara Clashes**

### **2.3.1 Ifni War**

The Ifni War, also called “the Forgotten War” in Spain, was a series of armed attacks into Spanish Sahara by Moroccan insurgents in October 1957, culminating in the siege of Sidi Ifni. The war, seen as part of the general movement of decolonisation, was conducted primarily by elements of the Moroccan Army of Liberation, which committed its resources to gaining independence from Spain (Clodfelter n.d.) Violent demonstrations against Spanish rule erupted in Ifni on 10 April 1957, followed by civil strife and widespread killings of those loyal to Spain. In October 1957, 1,500 Moroccan soldiers occupied two villages outside of Sidi Ifni, Goulimine and Bou Izarguen (Pelissier 1965).

Spain and Morocco signed the Treaty of Angra de Cintra on 2 April, 1958. As a result, Morocco obtained the region of Tarfaya (Cape Juby), excluding the colonies of Sidi Ifni and Spanish Sahara (Pelissier 1965). With pressure from the international community and the United Nations, Spain returned the territory of Ifni to Morocco in 1969. However, Spain kept control of Spanish Sahara until 1975, when the Green March (see section 2.3.3) prompted Spain to sign the Madrid Accords with Morocco and Mauritania. Spain then withdrew from the territory in 1976 and Western Sahara was split between Morocco and Mauritania (Gonzalez Campo 2007).

### **2.3.2 Zemla Intifada**

The Zemla Intifada is the name used to refer to the disturbances of 17 June 1970 (AllAfrica 2016), which culminated in a massacre by Spanish Legion forces in the Zemla district of El Aaiun, Spanish Sahara. Leaders of the previously-secret organisation Harakat Tahrir called for a

demonstration to read out a petition of goals in protest against the Spanish occupation of Western Sahara. On 17 June 1970, the petition was peacefully read to the Spanish governor-general, General José María Pérez de Lema y Tejero.

As the demonstration was being dispersed by order of Spain's governor-general, police moved in to arrest the Harakat Tahrir leaders. Demonstrators threw stones at the police. The Spanish Foreign Legion then opened fire on the demonstrators, killing at least eleven people. In the days following this incident, the Harakat Tahrir founder Muhammad Bassiri was arrested and then disappeared while in custody (Camacho 2008).

The Zemla demonstration ended Harakat Tahrir. Hundreds of its supporters were arrested, while other demonstrators were deported from Spanish Sahara (Western Sahara: A "Spy" Guide – Strategic Information and Developments 2013). The Zemla demonstration pushed the anti-colonial movement into embracing armed struggle. The militant nationalist organisation Polisario Front was formed three years later (Camacho 2008).

### **2.3.3 The Green March**

The Green March was a significant event that took place in November 1975 and was organised by the Moroccan government as a means of pressuring Spain into handing over the disputed territory of Spanish Sahara to Morocco (Abun-Nasr, 1987). The demonstration was a mass gathering of unarmed Moroccans who converged on the city of Tarfaya in southern Morocco. Approximately 350,000 people participated in the march, which was led by King Hassan II of Morocco. According to Zoubir and Benabdallah (2004), the Green March was also a response to the increasing international recognition of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), which had declared independence from Spain in 1975. The authors argue that Morocco saw the SADR's declaration as a threat to its territorial integrity and national sovereignty, and thus initiated the Green March as a means of reclaiming the territory.

According to Mundy (2006), the Green March began on November 6, 1975, when thousands of Moroccans marched from Tarfaya towards the region of Sakiya Lhmra, waving Moroccan flags and banners calling for the "return of the Moroccan Sahara". As Boukhari (2004) notes, the marchers also carried photographs of the king and copies of the Quran, while the colour green was

chosen as a symbol of Islam, as it is considered a sacred colour in the religion. Boukhari further argues that the symbolism of the Green March was crucial to its success, as the use of green helped to unite the marchers and reinforce their commitment to the cause, while the presence of religious symbols helped to legitimise the march in the eyes of the Moroccan public (Boukhari, 2004).

The Green March was a significant turning point in the history of the Western Sahara conflict, as it led to Morocco's eventual annexation of the territory and the establishment of a military presence in the region. As Zunes and Mundy (2010) note, the event was a successful strategy employed by the Moroccan government to pressure Spain into handing over the disputed territory. Following the Green March, Spain agreed to transfer control of the majority of the former Spanish Sahara to Morocco, marking a significant shift in the dynamics of the ongoing conflict. As Vilaró (2011) explains, Morocco subsequently implemented its own policies and laws in the region, further fuelling tensions between the Moroccan government and the Polisario Front. The legacy of the Green March continues to impact the political and social landscape of the Western Sahara, as the conflict over the status of the region remains unresolved.

As Zunes and Mundy (2010) note, the March is celebrated annually on November 6th and is viewed by many as a symbol of Moroccan national unity and strength. However, the legacy of the Green March is also highly contentious, as it is viewed by some as a violation of the rights of the Sahrawi people, who have been fighting for independence since the 1970s. As Kandell (1989) explains, the Green March led to the Moroccan annexation of Western Sahara and the subsequent establishment of a military presence in the region, which has fuelled ongoing tensions between Morocco and the Polisario Front. These tensions continue to impact the political and social landscape of the region and have been the subject of ongoing debate and international attention.

#### **2.3.4 The Western Sahara War**

From 1975 to 1991, the Western Sahara War was fought between Morocco and the indigenous Polisario Front, marking the most significant phase of the Western Sahara Conflict. The conflict arose after Spain's withdrawal from the Spanish Sahara, in accordance with the Madrid Accords, which transferred administrative control (but not sovereignty) of the territory to Morocco and Mauritania (Karam 2020). In response, the Moroccan government organised the Green March in

late 1975, leading to a long period of guerrilla warfare with Sahrawi nationalists. The Polisario Front continued to resist Morocco throughout the 1980s, with the conflict escalating in 1989-1991 as Morocco attempted to gain the upper hand. The war ended in 1991 with a ceasefire between the Polisario Front and Morocco, which was monitored by the United Nations, but not before nearly 20,000 people had been killed (Ekskluzivno Za Lupigu 2013).

The ceasefire was intended to lead to a referendum on independence the following year, but disputes over voter rights led to its postponement, and subsequent attempts to revive the process were unsuccessful. Today, most of Western Sahara is under Moroccan occupation, while the inland parts are governed by the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, led by the Polisario Front. Despite attempts to resolve the conflict, no territorial agreement has been reached; neither has a permanent solution been reached for Sahrawi refugees (Sola-Martin 2007). The focus of the conflict has shifted from military to civilian resistance.

### **2.3.5 First Sahrawi Intifada**

The First Sahrawi Intifada, which lasted from 1999 to 2004 (Zunes 2010), was followed by the Second Sahrawi Intifada in 2005. These uprisings were characterised by a series of protests and demonstrations. In early September 1999, Sahrawi students held a sit-in at al-Zamlah Square in al-'Ayun, the capital of Western Sahara, demanding scholarships and transportation subsidies to Moroccan universities located in northern Morocco (Zunes 2010). Many students sat in the square, which directly faced the Najir Hotel, where United Nations personnel stayed during their visits (Zunes 2010). The location of the sit-in was symbolic, because in 1970 the Spanish army had killed a group of Sahrawis agitating for independence in the square. The students were joined by Sahrawi political prisoners, Sahrawi mine workers, and Sahrawi members of the National Association of Unemployed University Graduates (Zunes 2010).

The demonstrators occupied al-Zamlah Square for 12 days before Moroccan police responded, violently dispersing protesters and arresting many. There are reports that Sahrawis were literally driven out into the desert and left there, resulting in some dying of thirst (Zunes 2010). Sahrawi activists organised another protest five days later, in which they demanded independence and a referendum. There were reports that, in response, Moroccan authorities authorised local thugs to

loot Sahrawi homes and businesses. Moroccan police forces arrested 150 protesters and continued to make many arrests in the following months. Sahrawi activists accused the police of torture and other maltreatment during detention (Zunes 2010).

In November 1999, Sahrawi activists formed the Truth and Justice Forum, which sought government compensation for human rights violations. A branch of this group was formed in Laayoune, Western Sahara, by Sahrawi activists in August of 2000. However, Moroccan courts created legislation to outlaw the organisation. Sahrawi protests continued from 2000 to 2004. In January 2004, Sahrawi activists created the Collective of Sahrawi Human Rights Defenders. The collective demanded the formation of an international commission of inquiry to investigate human rights injustices in the Western Sahara (Zunes 2010).

By 2005, discussions for a peace had reached a standstill. Due to this, a new wave of Sahrawi nonviolent protest erupted, in what is known as the Second Intifada. This nonviolent movement campaigned more openly on the issue of independence than had the First Intifada, which focused mostly on human rights (Bisgaard-Church 2011). The Second Intifada involved a range of nonviolent tactics, including sit-ins, hunger strikes, and demonstrations. However, the Moroccan authorities responded with a heavy-handed crackdown on the protestors, arresting and sometimes torturing them (Bisgaard-Church, 2011).

### **2.3.6 Second Sahrawi Intifada**

The Second Sahrawi Intifada of 2005 was a nonviolent protest movement that aimed to raise awareness of the plight of the Sahrawi people and their struggle for independence. The demonstrations began in Laayoune, the largest city in Western Sahara, and quickly spread to other towns in the region, as well as to Moroccan cities with significant Sahrawi populations. According to the Middle East Research and Information Project (2007), the protests were triggered by the violent dispersal of a group of Sahrawi protesters who were demonstrating against the transfer of a political prisoner to a prison in Agadir. The protests continued for several days and were met with a heavy-handed response from the Moroccan authorities, who arrested and detained hundreds of demonstrators.

The first fatality of the protest occurred on 30 October 2005, when a 31-year-old Sahrawi man died after alleged police brutality during his arrest. Moroccan authorities claimed that his death was accidental, but there were widespread reports of police violence against protesters (U.S. Department of State 2005). The Moroccan authorities responded to the protests with a harsh crackdown, arresting and detaining hundreds of Sahrawi demonstrators. In 2005, over a hundred Sahrawi protesters were reported to have been arrested, with some of them being subjected to torture and abuse while in detention. Fourteen protesters were sentenced to prison terms of between six months and three years by a Laayoune court on charges of disturbing public order, membership of illegal associations, incitement to unrest, damaging public property, and rioting (Western Sahara Human Rights 2017). Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch expressed concern over the trials and the treatment of the detainees, calling on the Moroccan authorities to respect the human rights of the Sahrawi people and release all prisoners of conscience (Reuters 2017).

### **2.3.7 Gdeim Izik Camp Protest**

The Gdeim Izik camp protest emerged as a powerful expression against the persistent issues of poverty, discrimination, and human rights abuses faced by the local citizens. Initially peaceful, these protests later erupted in clashes between Sahrawi civilians and Moroccan security forces. Some referred to the protests as the Third Sahrawi Intifada (Bisgaard-Church 2011), following the First and the Second Sahrawi Intifadas. The protest started on the night of 9 October 2010, when a group of Sahrawis established a camp south-east of El Aaiún, the administrative capital of the Moroccan-administered Southern Provinces in the disputed territory.

The number of protesters grew rapidly, from a few hundred to several thousand, with protesters coming from other towns in Western Sahara and southern Morocco. On 24 October, a vehicle full of Sahrawis was fired upon by Moroccan Army forces when they tried to enter the camp with food and water for the protesters. A 14-year-old was shot and killed (AllAfrica 2010). According to Moroccan authorities, a bullet was fired from the vehicle first; however, according to the Polisario Front, no weapons were found in the vehicle (Radio Netherlands Worldwide 2011). By the first week of November, the number of protesters was estimated at around 5,000 (JeuneAfrique 2018). In the early morning of 8 November, the protest camp was violently dismantled by Moroccan

police, while young protesters confronted them with stones, knives, and propane tanks, resulting in nearly 3,000 arrests (Mandraud 2010).

### **2.3.8 2011 Western Saharan Protests**

The Western Saharan protests of 2010 and 2011 were the result of long-standing political and social grievances of the Sahrawi people, who have been advocating for independence from Morocco since the 1970s (Bono 2015; Shelley 2016). The Gdeim Izik camp protest, which began in October 2010, was a significant event in this movement (Zoubir 2015). The protest was organised as a peaceful sit-in by Sahrawi activists who set up a makeshift camp on the outskirts of the city of Laayoune to protest against the Moroccan government's policies in the region (Kaplan 2016). However, the protest was met with a heavy-handed response from Moroccan security forces, and clashes between protesters and authorities soon erupted, leading to reports of violence and human rights abuses on both sides (Chatty 2017). The protest at Gdeim Izik camp was eventually dismantled by Moroccan security forces in November 2010, leading to further unrest and protests in the region, such as the protest in Dakhla in February 2011 (Hoffman 2016).

The protests were met with a forceful reaction from Moroccan security forces, with reports of arrests, torture, and human rights abuses (Rufin 2014). However, the protests continued, and the Polisario Front called for renewed peaceful protests in the face of the violence (Villalón 2017). The Western Saharan protests highlighted the ongoing political and social tensions in the region, as well as the importance of peaceful resistance in the pursuit of social and political change (Bøås 2018; Kadir 2017). Despite the challenges and dangers faced by Sahrawi protesters, their determination and persistence have continued to inspire others in the pursuit of justice and freedom (Othmani 2016).

### **2.3.9 The Dakhla Riots**

On 25 February 2011, violent clashes between Moroccans and Sahrawis were reported in Dakhla, the second largest city of Western Sahara. The unrest started late that night after a music festival. According to Sahrawi sources, “hundreds of Moroccan youths armed with sticks, swords, and Molotov cocktails attacked and looted Sahrawi houses, burning their cars” (Alfrol News 2011).

The next day, hundreds of protesters gathered in the city centre, protesting police inaction the previous night.

Violent clashes took place without police intervention (Radio France International 2011). The following night, riots erupted without a police presence. Police were later deployed in the streets to prevent new protests (Afrol News 2011). The official Moroccan press agency (MAP) reported that two civilians were intentionally run over by a four-wheel drive vehicle driven by protesters, and that 14 people were injured (Maghrebia 2011). According to Radio France International (2011), at least 100 people were injured, but many were afraid to go to the hospital for treatment.

According to Sahrawi sources, the Moroccan youths who instigated the violence were members of the Moroccan secret police and paramilitary forces, dressed in civilian clothes (Alfrol News 2011). The Sahrawi activists accused the Moroccan government of orchestrating the attacks to intimidate the local population and quell any dissent in the region. The clashes in Dakhla highlighted the deep-rooted tensions between the Moroccan government and the Sahrawi people over the status of Western Sahara.

The Moroccan government has maintained that Western Sahara is an integral part of the kingdom, while the Polisario Front demands a referendum on self-determination for the Sahrawi people. The conflict has been marked by human rights abuses, including torture, arbitrary arrests, and enforced disappearances, by both sides (Human Rights Watch 2021). The violence in Dakhla was not an isolated incident, as clashes between Moroccan security forces and Sahrawi activists have been reported in other parts of Western Sahara, including the capital city of Laayoune (Amnesty International 2011). The lack of progress in resolving the conflict has led to increased frustration and anger among the Sahrawi population, which has been exacerbated by economic marginalisation and discrimination.

### **2.3.10 The Laayoune Sit-Ins**

On 2 March 2011, a group of about 500 people, comprising workers of Bu Craa, local fishermen, graduate students, members of the dialogue committee of the Gdeim Izik refugee camp, and families of political prisoners, protested by organising a sit-in in front of the Mining and Energy Ministry in Laayoune, demanding the release of all political prisoners. According to the Polisario



Front (2011), at least 68 people were injured during a brutal intervention by Moroccan police when they dispersed the protesters.

In April, families of political prisoners held a new protest in the Moroccan-administered territory to draw attention to the poor treatment of Sahrawi detainees and to call for their immediate release. Peaceful protests became a thrice-weekly event in Laayoune, taking place on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. These protests were held simultaneously with an “indefinite” sit-in held by unemployed university graduate students outside the Moroccan Ministry of Labour. These protests quickly grew and stretched across several cities and towns in Western Sahara (OnTheNews 2011).

### **2.3.11 May Activism, 2019**

In May 2019, Moroccan security officers reportedly dispersed a sit-in protest at the home of a Sahrawi boy who was allegedly killed by Moroccan police. The dispersal resulted in injuries to 30 protesters, according to a report by Human Rights Watch in 2021. Following the dispersal of the sit-in protest, several activists and human rights defenders were arrested and detained by Moroccan authorities. They were charged with various offences, including disturbing public order, incitement, and unauthorised assembly. The incident was widely condemned by human rights organisations and international observers, who called for an independent investigation into the use of force by Moroccan security forces and the death of the Sahrawi boy. This incident highlights the ongoing tensions between Sahrawi activists and Moroccan authorities.

In another incident, a group of activists in Essmara began a sit-in and hunger strike to protest the suspension of their wages after visiting Polisario-administered refugee camps in the Algerian Sahara (Hennig 2011). The activists were protesting the lack of freedom of movement and expression faced by Sahrawis in Morocco, and their peaceful protest was met with punitive measures by the government. The activists believed that the government's suspension of their wages was a way of punishing them for drawing attention to the plight of the Sahrawi people. They decided to take peaceful action by staging a sit-in and hunger strike, hoping to draw attention to the issue and force the government to take action. However, their protest was met with retributive measures by the government. Security forces surrounded the area and prevented anyone from

entering or leaving the protest site. The activists were denied access to medical care and basic necessities like water and electricity. Some were even arrested and charged with inciting rebellion. The incident in Essmara highlights the ongoing human rights violations and political repression faced by Sahrawis in Morocco. It also shows the government's intolerance of peaceful protests and dissenting voices.

Reports also emerged of protests in Guelmim and Assa, two cities in southern Morocco, to protest the death and arrest of several Sahrawi youth activists in late April 2019. These protests highlight the ongoing struggle of Sahrawi youth to demand greater political representation and to hold those in power accountable for their actions. The protests were peaceful, but they were met with a heavy-handed response from the Moroccan authorities. Dozens of Sahrawi activists were arrested and subjected to harsh treatment, including beatings and torture. Many of these activists remain in prison to this day. These incidents underscore the ongoing challenges faced by Sahrawi activists and the continued need for peaceful protests and advocacy to address the human rights violations and political marginalisation of the Sahrawi people.

### **2.3.12 2020-2021 Western Sahara Conflict**

Tensions between Morocco and the Polisario Front deepened in mid-October 2020, when Saharawi peaceful protesters blocked a controversial road connecting Morocco to sub-Saharan Africa (the Moroccan border with Algeria is closed). Sahrawi protesters camped on the road near the village of Guerguerat, where it passes through a 5-kilometre-wide buffer strip monitored by the UN. The protest stranded approximately 200 Moroccan truck drivers on the Mauritanian side of the border (Agence France-Presse 2020). According to the Sahrawi authorities, the Moroccan forces deployed toward the area in November 2020 (Agence France-Presse 2020).

On 13 November, Morocco launched a military operation in the demilitarised zone of the berm to clear the protesters near Guerguerat and reopen the road. The Polisario Front urged the United Nations to intervene, noting that the Moroccan military operation violated the ceasefire agreements of the 1990s, and furthermore accused the Moroccan security forces of shooting at unarmed civilians in the buffer strip (Associated Press 2020). Morocco denied that there had been any armed clashes between the sides, stating that the truce remained in place (Al Jazeera 2020), while SADR

authorities declared the ceasefire over. Clashes spread that same day along the berm (Karam 2020) and SADR declared war on Morocco the next day (Axios 2020)

On 14 November, the war began. The Polisario Front stated that its forces had launched attacks on Moroccan military positions near Bagari, Al Mahbes, and Guerguerat. On 15 November, clashes were reported between SADR and Moroccan forces along the berm (The Wall Street Journal 2020), close to Al Mahbes, where Moroccan forces claimed to have destroyed an SPLA armoured vehicle (Arab News 2020). On 16 November, MINURSO reported continued clashes along the berm (Arab News 2020), and on 18 November, it reported gunfire at points along the berm (Kasraoui 2020).

On 23 January 2021, Polisario soldiers fired four missiles near a Moroccan-controlled border post at Guerguerat (Sahara Press Service 2020). On 3 February, for the 43rd consecutive day, the SADR claimed to have attacked Moroccan positions. The SADR Ministry of National Defence said they had carried out concentrated attacks against Moroccan positions in the Gararat Al-Firsik region, Mahbes sector, along with intense attacks in the Um Dagan region, Al-Bagari sector; Ajbeilat Lajdar region, Guelta sector; and Lagseibiyin region, Farsía Sector (Franceinfo 2020). On Tuesday, 9 February, the Polisario announced that it had killed three Moroccan soldiers the previous day in a specific attack in the Ouarkiz region of southern Morocco. On 8 April, a Polisario military commander and the head of the gendarmerie, Addah Al-Bendir, was killed by a reported drone strike while attempting a raid on Moroccan positions along the berm (Agence France-Presse 2020). The Sahrawi Ministry of Defence reported the military commander's "martyrdom," confirming his death.

### **2.3.13 Preventing and Resolving Conflicts through Peace Education**

Peace education, if implemented effectively, could have played a significant role in preventing these conflicts. Peace education aims to promote values such as mutual respect, empathy, understanding, and non-violent conflict resolution. It encourages critical thinking, communication, and problem-solving skills, and helps to develop positive attitudes towards diversity and cultural differences. By teaching these values and skills, peace education could have addressed the root causes of the conflicts, such as historical grievances, economic inequalities, and political

marginalisation. Moreover, peace education could have facilitated the resolution of disputes through peaceful means, such as mediation and arbitration, rather than resorting to violence and armed conflict. By teaching individuals about the value of peaceful coexistence, conflict prevention, and mediation, peace education can foster a culture of peace and tolerance.

In the case of the Ifni War, peace education could have helped prevent the conflict by promoting dialogue between the Spanish colonists and the local Moroccan population, instead of the use of force. Similarly, peace education could have fostered nonviolent resistance as a means of expressing grievances, which could have prevented the Zemla and Sahrawi Intifadas. In the case of the Green March, peace education could have promoted negotiation between Morocco and Spain to find a peaceful solution to the dispute over Western Sahara, instead of falling back on a show of force. In the case of the Western Sahara War, peace education could have encouraged the use of negotiation and peaceful conflict resolution, which could have avoided the conflict altogether. For the more recent conflicts, such as the Gdeim Izik camp protest, 2011 Western Saharan Protests, Dakhla Riots, and Laayoune Sit-Ins, peace education could have promoted nonviolent resistance and negotiation as means of expressing grievances and finding a peaceful solution.

Since these conflicts did occur, peace education can still play a role in helping to foster reconciliation, healing, and long-term peacebuilding in the region. It can provide a framework for addressing the underlying causes of the conflict, such as social and economic inequality, human rights abuses, and political instability. It can also help to build trust and understanding between different groups, and promote the development of inclusive and participatory governance structures that address the needs and aspirations of all communities. By teaching individuals about forgiveness, empathy, and conflict transformation, peace education can help to heal the wounds of the past and build bridges between conflicting parties. Additionally, by promoting intercultural dialogue and understanding, peace education can help to prevent future conflicts from arising.

## 2.4 Peace Processes

The Western Sahara conflict has been marked by a long and tumultuous history, characterised by clashes between different factions and attempts to resolve the conflict through peaceful means. In the previous section, we explored the various clashes that have taken place throughout the history of the conflict, from the initial Spanish colonisation to the subsequent involvement of Morocco and Mauritania, and the subsequent war with the Polisario Front. These clashes have left a lasting impact on the region and the people involved in the conflict. However, despite the ongoing conflict, there have been numerous attempts to achieve peace in the region.

This section of the thesis will focus on the various peace attempts that have been made throughout the history of the Western Sahara conflict. We will examine the different strategies and approaches taken by various actors, including the United Nations, regional organisations, and individual states. By analysing these attempts, I hope to provide a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities for achieving lasting peace in the Western Sahara. One study that supports the importance of analysing past attempts to achieve peace is by Zoubir and Bougherira (2017), who argue that understanding the challenges and missed opportunities of previous peace processes is crucial to developing effective strategies for resolving the Western Sahara conflict. The authors also emphasise the need for building on past progress and avoiding past mistakes to increase the likelihood of success.

Another study that highlights the significance of learning from past mistakes is by Lacher and Zoubir (2019), who examine the failures of the United Nations-led peace process in Western Sahara. The authors identify several factors that contributed to the failure of the process, including the lack of enforcement mechanisms and the failure to address the underlying issues of self-determination and territorial integrity. Learning from these mistakes can help policymakers to avoid similar pitfalls in future attempts at achieving peace. A study by Brubaker and Laitin (2018) stresses the importance of understanding the complex cultural and historical factors that underlie conflicts such as the Western Sahara conflict. The authors argue that ethnic and cultural differences are often central to such conflicts and that understanding these factors is crucial to developing effective strategies for peacebuilding.

### **2.4.1 United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara**

Established in 1991 through United Nations Security Council Resolution 690, the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) is a peacekeeping mission tasked with monitoring the ceasefire and conducting a referendum in Western Sahara (UNSC Resolution 690). This referendum would allow the Sahrawi people to decide whether they want to integrate with Morocco or achieve independence, thereby fulfilling their exercise in self-determination and completing the decolonisation process of Western Sahara (UNSC Resolution 690). The MINURSO's original mandate includes monitoring the ceasefire, verifying the reduction of Moroccan troops in the area, ensuring the confinement of Moroccan and Polisario Front troops to designated locations, freeing political prisoners or detainees, exchanging prisoners of war, repatriating refugees, registering qualified voters, organising a free and fair referendum, and reducing the threat of unexploded ordnances and mines (UNSC Resolution 690).

Originally scheduled for 1992, the independence referendum was stalled due to conflicts over voter eligibility, and the MINURSO mandate has been extended 47 times since then. Unfortunately, at the present there is no plan for holding the referendum, and the ceasefire was broken in 2020, with each side blaming the other for stalling the process (Al Jazeera 2020).

According to the United Nations (2015), MINURSO is unique among UN peacekeeping missions as it lacks the ability to monitor human rights. Despite the UN Security Council's recommendation in Resolution 1979 to establish such a capacity, it has yet to be implemented. The lack of a human rights programme has drawn increasing criticism of the UN Security Council, particularly in light of reports of numerous abuses. In 2010, the Polisario Front suspended contact with MINURSO due to the failure to conduct a self-determination referendum.

### **2.4.2 The Settlement Plan**

The Settlement Plan was a diplomatic initiative launched by the United Nations in 1991 to end the long-standing conflict between Morocco and the Polisario Front over the status of Western Sahara. The plan called for a ceasefire and the establishment of a United Nations peacekeeping mission, the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), to oversee the implementation of the plan and to organise a referendum on the future status of the territory. Under

the terms of the Settlement Plan, the referendum was supposed to give the people of Western Sahara the choice between independence and integration with Morocco. However, the process of determining who was eligible to vote in the referendum proved to be difficult and contentious, and the referendum never took place (Rubin 2015).

In the years following the establishment of MINURSO, there were some positive developments in the Western Sahara conflict. The ceasefire held for many years, and MINURSO was able to monitor the situation on the ground and facilitate negotiations between the parties. However, the lack of progress on the referendum issue and other disputes between Morocco and the Polisario Front led to tensions and occasional outbreaks of violence.

In 2020, the ceasefire that had been in place since 1991 was broken when Morocco launched a military operation in the buffer zone in Western Sahara. This raised concerns about a potential resumption of hostilities in the region and led to calls for renewed diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict. Despite the failure of the Settlement Plan to lead to a referendum and a final resolution of the Western Sahara conflict, the United Nations continues to support a peaceful and negotiated settlement to the dispute. MINURSO remains in place and continues to monitor the situation on the ground, while diplomatic efforts to find a lasting solution to the conflict are ongoing.

### **2.4.3 The Houston Agreement**

The Houston Agreement was a significant diplomatic initiative aimed at resolving the Western Sahara conflict between Morocco and the Polisario Front (The Washington Times 2006). Negotiations between the two parties took place in Houston, Texas in 1997, under the auspices of James Baker, the United Nations Special Envoy for Western Sahara (Miguel 2005). The agreement was based on the framework of the 1991 Settlement Plan, which called for a referendum on the future status of Western Sahara. The Houston Agreement aimed to address some of the outstanding issues that had prevented the implementation of the Settlement Plan, particularly the eligibility criteria for the referendum.

Under the terms of the Houston Agreement, the referendum was to be organised by the United Nations, and both Morocco and the Polisario Front were to accept the results. The agreement also called for the establishment of a transitional administration to oversee the referendum process, and

for measures to be put in place to ensure a free and fair vote (Miguel 2005). Despite initial optimism that the Houston Agreement would lead to a breakthrough in the Western Sahara conflict, the referendum was delayed repeatedly, and it ultimately never took place. There were various reasons for the failure of the agreement, including disagreements over the eligibility criteria for the referendum, the issue of voter identification, and concerns about the fairness of the vote (Miguel 2005).

The failure of the Houston Agreement to lead to a resolution of the Western Sahara conflict was a significant setback to efforts to find a peaceful and negotiated settlement to the dispute. However, the United Nations and other international actors continue to work towards finding a lasting solution to the conflict, and the issue remains a focus of diplomatic efforts in the region.

#### **2.4.4 The Baker Plan**

The Baker Plan, formally the Peace Plan for Self-Determination of the People of Western Sahara, and intended to replace the Settlement Plan of 1991, was a United Nations initiative to grant self-determination to Western Sahara. The first draft of the plan, called Baker I or the Framework Agreement, was circulated by UN special envoy, James Baker, in 2000, but never presented formally to the Security Council. It offered the people of Western Sahara autonomy within the Moroccan-controlled territory of Western Sahara. Except for defence and foreign policy, which would be controlled by Morocco, all other decisions would be the responsibility of the Sahrawi government. Morocco accepted the plan, but the Polisario Front rejected it (Mundy 2004).

The second version (informally known as Baker II) envisioned self-rule under an interim local government known as the Western Sahara Authority for a period of five years, with a referendum on independence to follow. In this referendum, the entire present-day population of Western Sahara would participate, something Polisario had thus far refused. In July 2003, the UN Security Council endorsed the plan that the interim local government (the Western Sahara Authority) would be elected only by a restricted voters' list (those identified as original inhabitants of the territory by MINURSO) and unanimously called for the parties to implement it. However, Morocco then rejected the plan, saying that it would no longer agree to any referendum that included independence as an option.



Following this rejection, James Baker resigned in protest – the second UN envoy to Western Sahara to do so. He indicated that given the irreconcilable positions of the parties, and the UN Security Council’s refusal to enforce a solution over the objections of either party, there no longer appeared to be a feasible way to implement the 1991 Settlement Plan or to reach another solution (Mundy 2004).

#### **2.4.5 Western Sahara Autonomy Proposal**

The Western Sahara Autonomy Proposal was an initiative proposed by Morocco in 2006 as a possible solution to the Western Sahara conflict. The Moroccan-backed Advisory Council on Western Sahara (CORCAS) submitted a proposal to the United Nations in April 2006 that would grant autonomy to the people of Western Sahara. According to the plan, the Saharawis would run their government under Moroccan sovereignty; however, Morocco would control defence and foreign affairs. The Moroccan authorities indicated that the failure of the proposal would increase Islamic fundamental ideas and terrorism in the Sahel region of Africa – a concern of the Polisario Front as well. A proposal by Polisario to the United Nations was published on 10 April 2007, a day before the Moroccan proposal. The UN Security Council unanimously voted for Resolution 1754 on 30 April 2007, calling for talks between the two parties – four UN sponsored peace talks – all of which were to be held in New York City (Gonzalez Campo 2004).

#### **2.4.6 Manhasset Negotiations**

The Manhasset rounds can be considered as the third attempt to reach a peaceful solution to the Western Sahara conflict. The Manhasset negotiations (also known as Manhasset I, II, III and IV) were a series of talks that took place in four rounds in 2007–2008 at Manhasset, New York between Morocco and the Polisario Front in an attempt to resolve the Western Sahara conflict. They were the first direct negotiations between the two parties in seven years (International Herald Tribune 2007). Also present at the negotiations were the neighbouring countries of Algeria and Mauritania.

The negotiations were a result of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1754 of 30 April 2007, which urged both parties to “enter into direct negotiations without preconditions and in good faith.” The resolution also extended MINURSO’s mission until 31 October 2007 (United Nations, 2007: 2). The first round of talks took place on 18-19 June 2007 (United Nations, 2007) during

which both parties agreed to resume talks on 10-11 August. The second round produced no results, but parties agreed to meet again for further negotiation. During the third round, which took place between 8 and 9 January 2008, parties agreed on “the need to move into a more intensive and substantive phase of negotiations”. A fourth round of talks was held from 18 March to 19 March 2008, during which Morocco made it known that it was readying a proposal for autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty (Alfro News n.d). Polisario agreed to place this on the referendum ballot as a third option, but refused to discuss any referendum that did not allow for the possibility of independence, arguing that such a referendum would not constitute self-determination.

#### **2.4.7 The Role of Peace Education in Supporting Peacebuilding Efforts in Western Sahara**

By instilling values and skills that are essential in resolving conflicts peacefully, peace education could have played a crucial role in the failed peace attempts in the region, and it can be useful in supporting new approaches to peacebuilding in the region. For instance, peace education could have helped to build support for the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara by promoting the value of self-determination and the importance of respecting international law. Since the mission was not successful, peace education can continue to promote these values and help build support for other peacebuilding efforts. Similarly, peace education could have helped to build support for the Settlement Plan, the Houston Agreement, the Baker Plan, the Western Sahara Autonomy Proposal, and the Manhasset Negotiations by promoting the values of cooperation, inclusivity, and dialogue skills. Since these initiatives failed to bring about a resolution, peace education can help to promote new approaches that prioritise these values.

### **2.5 Sahrawi Refugees**

The creation of Sahrawi refugees in Morocco can be traced back to the conflict over Western Sahara, which began in 1975 when Spain withdrew from the territory and Morocco claimed sovereignty over it (Shelly 2014). The Polisario Front, a Sahrawi nationalist movement, resisted this claim and declared the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) in 1976. Morocco then launched a military campaign to annex Western Sahara, leading to a protracted armed conflict with

the Polisario Front. As a result of the conflict, many Sahrawi people fled to neighbouring Algeria, where they have been living in refugee camps ever since (Zoubir 2019).

According to a report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2020), the largest influx of Sahrawi refugees occurred in 1975-1976, when an estimated 165,000 people fled the conflict. The report further states that as of 2020, there were over 170,000 Sahrawi refugees in the Tindouf camps, the majority of whom were born in the camps and have never known any other home.

The prolonged displacement of the Sahrawi refugees has had significant impacts on their lives and wellbeing. A study by the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health (2019) found that the refugees experience high levels of psychological distress and trauma, as well as limited access to basic services such as healthcare and education. Furthermore, the ongoing conflict over Western Sahara has meant that the refugees have been unable to return to their homes and communities, leading to a sense of uncertainty and dislocation. A report by Amnesty International (2021) highlights how the refugees' right to self-determination and freedom of movement has been restricted, with Moroccan authorities preventing family reunification and access to education and healthcare for those who remain in Western Sahara.

Today, the Sahrawi refugee camps in Tindouf are home to approximately 173,000 refugees, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The camps are spread across a remote and inhospitable desert area, and the living conditions are extremely challenging. The refugees face limited access to basic services such as clean water, healthcare, education, and employment, and they rely heavily on humanitarian aid for survival. Many refugees suffer from malnutrition and lack of proper medical care, and there are high rates of infant mortality (UNHCR, 2020). The lack of economic opportunities in the camps makes it difficult for them to become self-sufficient.

The situation of the Sahrawi refugees is considered to be one of the most protracted refugee crises in the world (Goldstein and Van Esveld 2008). The UNHCR and other international organisations have been working to provide support to the refugees and to find a lasting solution to the Western Sahara conflict. However, progress has been slow, and the refugees continue to live in difficult

conditions, with no clear prospects for a return to their homes in Western Sahara or for resettlement in other countries.

## **2.6 Western Sahara Berm**

The Western Sahara Berm is a 2,700 kilometre- (1,677 mi) long sand wall splitting Western Sahara. It separates the Moroccan areas, known as the “Southern Provinces”, to the west, from the Polisario-controlled areas, or “Free Zone”, in the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic to the east (Saddiki 2017). The main function of the berm is to keep back guerrilla fighters of the Polisario Front (Maclean 2018).

The berm lies in sparsely inhabited territory. It consists of sand and stone and is 3 metres (10 ft) in height, with bunkers, fences, and landmines throughout. The barrier mine-belt that runs along the structure is thought to be the longest continuous minefield in the world (McCoull 2020). Military bases, artillery posts and airfields dot the Moroccan-controlled side of the wall at regular intervals, and radar masts and other electronic surveillance equipment scan the area.

The berm has had a significant impact on the lives of the Sahrawi people, with its effects being particularly felt by those who were forced to flee their homes and become refugees in neighbouring Algeria. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (2020), the construction of the berm resulted in the forced displacement of thousands of Sahrawi people, who were left with no other option but to seek refuge in camps set up by the Algerian government. As noted by Bouzid (2019), the Sahrawi refugees have been in a state of limbo for years, with their hopes for a better life being tied to the resolution of the conflict over the status of Western Sahara.

According to Zunes and Mundy (2010), the presence of the berm wall has made it difficult for humanitarian aid to reach the Sahrawi refugees in the camps located in Algeria. The camps are situated on the eastern side of the wall, and as a result, they are cut off from the rest of the world. The Moroccan government has imposed restrictions on aid shipments, which has resulted in shortages of food, medicine, and other essential supplies. This has led to a humanitarian crisis, with the Sahrawi refugees living in extremely difficult conditions (Zubes and Mundy, 2010).

. The berm has also had a significant impact on the mental health and well-being of the Sahrawi refugees. The UNHCR (2020) highlights the fact that Sahrawi refugees have endured the psychological trauma of displacement. Studies have shown that long-term displacement can have a negative impact on mental health, with refugees experiencing high rates of depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Shrestha 2019). The Sahrawi refugees are no exception, and many of them have experienced trauma and loss as a result of their displacement and separation from their families and communities.

Furthermore, the construction of the berm has led to the separation of families and communities, with many refugees unable to return to their homes or reunite with their loved ones. The Sahrawi refugees living in the camps in Tindouf are unable to return to Western Sahara due to the presence of the berm and the ongoing conflict over the status of the territory (UNHCR 2020). The separation from their families and communities has had a profound impact on their sense of identity and belonging, further exacerbating the challenges they face as refugees.

Moreover, the berm has also contributed to the ongoing conflict over the status of Western Sahara and the political future of the Sahrawi people, perpetuating what is already one of the most protracted refugee situations in the world (Zunes and Mundy 2010). As Zunes and Mundy (2010) note, the berm has become a symbol of the occupation and division of Western Sahara and has perpetuated the conflict between Morocco and the Polisario Front. The berm has also served to hinder efforts to find a peaceful solution to the conflict.

### **2.6.1 The Thousand Column Demonstration**

Since 2008, an annual demonstration called "The Thousand Column" has taken place in the desert, organised by international human rights activists and Sahrawi refugees. The goal of the demonstration is to protest against the berm and the Moroccan occupation of the Western Sahara. In the 2008 demonstration, over 2,000 people formed a human chain to demand the demolition of the berm and an end to the Moroccan occupation of the territory (El Mundo 2008). In the 2009 demonstration, tragedy struck when a teenage Sahrawi refugee lost half of his right leg due to a landmine explosion near the berm (Film in Focus 2009). This incident, as reported by Film in

Focus in 2009, highlights the dangers faced by those who participate in peaceful demonstrations and the ongoing conflict in the Western Sahara.

The Thousand Column demonstration represents a peaceful way for activists to advocate for the self-determination of the Sahrawi people and to draw international attention to the ongoing human rights violations in the region. However, the incident in 2009 also highlights the risks and challenges associated with protesting against a well-armed and entrenched occupier. The annual demonstration remains an important event for Sahrawi activists and human rights defenders, and it continues to serve as a powerful reminder of the ongoing struggle for freedom and justice in the Western Sahara.

## **2.7 The Free Zone, the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic**

When discussing the Free Zone, it is important to consider its history and current situation. The Free Zone, also known as the Liberated Territories, is a region in Western Sahara that is controlled by the Polisario Front. This area is located to the east of the 2,700-kilometre (1,677 mi) berm, a sand wall that divides the Western Sahara territory into two parts. To the west of the berm lies the area controlled by Morocco, while to the east lies the Free Zone (UNHCR 2021).

The Polisario Front has been in control of the Free Zone since the early stages of the Western Sahara conflict. In 1976, the Polisario Front declared the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), a self-proclaimed state that is recognised by some countries and organisations as the legitimate representative of the Sahrawi people. Despite the Polisario Front's control of the Free Zone, it is not recognised as a state by the United Nations., (UNHCR, 2021).

The Free Zone is predominantly an uninhabited region marked by desolate deserts and rocky landscapes. Nonetheless, the Polisario Front has implemented a governance framework in the area that comprises a president, government, and parliament. In addition, the Polisario Front operates schools, health clinics, and other social services in the Free Zone (UNHCR 2021).

The Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) is the government established by the Polisario Front in the Free Zone. The SADR's government is based on a constitution that was adopted in 1976 and is modelled on democratic principles. The government is composed of executive,

legislative, and judicial branches, and the president serves as head of both the state and government. The Polisario Front is the only legal political party in the SADR's single-party system (Ghalib 2010).

The economy of the SADR relies heavily on agriculture, fishing, and mining, with phosphate reserves serving as a valuable natural resource. However, due to the ongoing conflict with Morocco and the SADR's limited recognition on the global stage, the economy has suffered setbacks. Despite receiving humanitarian aid from several nations and organisations, the SADR has faced political and economic sanctions imposed by Morocco and its supporters (Ghalib 2010).

## **2.8 Grassroots Efforts, Community-based Peacebuilding, and Participatory Peacebuilding in the Western Sahara**

While grassroots efforts, community-based peacebuilding, and participatory peacebuilding have been used in other contexts to address similar conflicts, their application to the Western Sahara conflict has been limited. One example of grassroots efforts in the Western Sahara conflict is the work of the Sahrawi human rights organisation, the Collective of Sahrawi Human Rights Defenders (CODESA). According to Zunes and Mundy (2010), CODESA has played a key role in documenting human rights abuses in Western Sahara and advocating for the rights of Sahrawi people. However, while CODESA's efforts have helped to raise awareness of the conflict and mobilise support for the Sahrawi cause, they have not been successful in bringing about a resolution to the conflict. This is due to a combination of factors, including the lack of political will among key actors to find a solution, the involvement of regional powers with conflicting interests, and the absence of effective mechanisms for peacebuilding.

Wurmser and Zunes (2011: 11) note that the Western Sahara conflict is also characterised by a "deep-seated mistrust" between the parties involved, which further complicates efforts to find a resolution. This highlights the importance of building trust and promoting dialogue as key elements of any peace education initiative aimed at resolving the conflict. According to Salomon and Nevo (2002), peace education can contribute to peacebuilding by promoting intergroup empathy, encouraging positive attitudes towards the other side, and building skills for constructive

communication and peacebuilding. These elements are crucial for establishing trust and promoting dialogue between conflicting parties, and can help to overcome the mistrust and deep-seated grievances that have contributed to the Western Sahara conflict.

While grassroots efforts like CODESA have not succeeded in resolving the Western Sahara conflict, there are lessons that can be learned for future peace education initiatives aimed at resolving similar conflicts. By focusing on building trust and promoting dialogue, peace education initiatives can contribute to peacebuilding and help to overcome the complex challenges that have hindered previous efforts to resolve the Western Sahara conflict.

Community-based peacebuilding has also been attempted in the Western Sahara conflict. In the early 1990s, the United Nations established a peacekeeping mission in Western Sahara (MINURSO) to oversee a referendum on self-determination for the people of Western Sahara. According to Zoubir and Benabdallah (2018), MINURSO worked with local communities to identify and resolve issues related to the referendum, and engaged in confidence-building measures to promote dialogue between Morocco and the Polisario Front. However, the referendum has yet to be held, and the conflict remains unresolved. The attempt to bring about sustainable peace through community-based peacebuilding in the Western Sahara conflict failed due to several factors. Firstly, the inability to hold the referendum on self-determination for the people of Western Sahara, which was the primary objective of the peacekeeping mission, undermined the entire peace process. Secondly, the lack of trust between the parties involved and the reluctance of the Moroccan government to accept the referendum's results have stalled progress towards resolving the conflict.

According to Kadir (2021), the lack of progress in resolving the Western Sahara conflict is due to the intransigence of the Moroccan government, which refuses to allow a free and fair referendum on self-determination. The author argues that Morocco has used its economic and political power to sway the international community to its side, preventing the UN from enforcing its resolutions and allowing the Moroccan government to maintain its control over the region.

Moreover, the mistrust between the parties involved in the conflict has also hindered the peace process. As stated by Zoubir and Benabdallah (2018), the Polisario Front, which represents the



Sahrawi people's aspirations for self-determination, has accused Morocco of attempting to manipulate the outcome of the referendum and failing to implement confidence-building measures. These accusations have further eroded trust between the parties, making it difficult to reach a lasting peace agreement.

Participatory peacebuilding has also been attempted in the Western Sahara conflict. In 2007, the United Nations Security Council called for a renewed effort to resolve the conflict through negotiations between Morocco and the Polisario Front. According to Zunes and Mundy (2010), the negotiations were based on a participatory approach, with both sides engaging in direct talks facilitated by the UN. However, the negotiations ultimately failed to produce a lasting resolution to the conflict, with both sides continuing to hold entrenched positions. Although the negotiations involved both sides directly, they can still be considered a top-down approach because the primary actors involved were the military, politicians, and diplomats. The process was not inclusive enough to involve a wider range of stakeholders, such as civil society organisations, community leaders, or affected populations, who could have provided a more comprehensive and nuanced perspective on the conflict.

According to Schneckener and Wolff (2007), a top-down approach to peacebuilding tends to rely on formal political and diplomatic processes that are driven by elites, such as military officials and politicians, without sufficient input from local actors and communities. This approach can overlook the perspectives and needs of those most affected by conflict, which can result in a failure to address the root causes of the conflict and achieve sustainable peace.

Similarly, as Lederach (1997) notes, peacebuilding efforts that exclude local actors and communities can result in a lack of ownership of the peacebuilding process and outcome, leading to a failure to achieve sustainable peace. The fact that the negotiations failed to produce a lasting resolution indicates that the top-down approach was not effective in addressing the underlying causes of the conflict or in achieving sustainable peace.

## **2.9 Religion's Role in the Western Sahara Conflict**

Although the Western Sahara Conflict is primarily rooted in territorial, economic, and political issues, religion has also played a role. One way in which religion has shaped the conflict is through the involvement of Islamic groups. The Western Sahara region has a significant Muslim population, and some Islamic groups have supported either Morocco or the Polisario Front, based on their interpretations of Islamic values. For instance, Zoubir (2000) notes that some Islamic groups have supported Morocco's claim to sovereignty over Western Sahara based on the historical role of the Alawite dynasty in the region and its ties to Sufi Islam. Others have supported the Polisario Front's claim to independence based on the Sahrawi people's right to self-determination.

Religion has also been used as a tool for political mobilisation and legitimacy by both sides in the conflict. For example, Morocco has emphasised its role as a leader of the Muslim world and protector of Islamic values in its claim to sovereignty over Western Sahara. According to Cullén and Olive (2017), Morocco has used religion to argue that Western Sahara is an integral part of its territory and that its control over the region is necessary to protect the Muslim population from secular and foreign influences. The Polisario Front, on the other hand, has highlighted the Sahrawi people's Muslim identity and their struggle for self-determination as a righteous cause. As Zoubir and Amirah-Fernández (2008) note, the Polisario Front has presented its struggle for independence as a religious duty and has used Islamic rhetoric to mobilise support among Muslim populations in the region and beyond.

### **2.9.1 The Potential of Religious Actors for Peacebuilding in the Western Sahara Conflict**

Religion has the potential to play a peacebuilding role in the Western Sahara conflict. While religion has been a source of tension and division, some religious actors have sought to promote peace and reconciliation in the region. One example of religious peacebuilding in the Western Sahara conflict is the role of Catholic and Protestant churches. They have played a significant role in promoting dialogue and reconciliation between the conflicting parties. For instance, the World Council of Churches has organised several meetings between representatives of Morocco and the Polisario Front, bringing together religious leaders and civil society actors to discuss ways to promote peace and justice in the region. In addition, some churches have provided humanitarian

assistance and support to refugees and internally displaced persons affected by the conflict (Dahlman 2015).

Another example of religious peacebuilding in the Western Sahara conflict is the role of Sufi Islam. Sufi brotherhoods have historically played an important role in Saharan society, and some scholars have argued that Sufism could serve as a basis for peacebuilding and conflict resolution in the region (Boukhars 2013). Sufi leaders have used their influence to promote dialogue and reconciliation between the conflicting parties, and have advocated for a peaceful resolution to the conflict based on principles of justice and respect for human rights.

### **2.9.2 The Western Sahara Conflict and Religious Extremism**

The Western Sahara conflict is contributing to religious extremism through the radicalisation of young people who have been exposed to violence and insecurity in the region. As Ould Mohamed Salem (2018) notes, many young people in the Western Sahara region have experienced the effects of the conflict first-hand, including displacement, poverty, and marginalisation. Some of these young people may become vulnerable to extremist ideologies that promise a sense of purpose and identity, and that offer a way to express their grievances and frustrations.

In addition, the conflict has created a context in which extremist groups can operate and recruit new members. As Boukhars (2014) argues, the Western Sahara conflict has created a power vacuum in which non-state actors, including extremist groups, can gain a foothold. These groups may seek to exploit grievances related to the conflict in order to advance their own agendas, and to promote extremist ideologies that seek to divide communities along religious lines.

#### **2.9.2.1 The Role of Peace Education in Countering Religious Extremism in the Western Sahara Conflict**

Peace education has the potential to complement and counteract the negative impact of religious extremism in the Western Sahara conflict (DeCarvalho 2017; Salomon 2017; Wisler *et al.* 2018). By promoting values such as empathy, tolerance, and respect for human rights, peace education can help to foster a culture of peace and nonviolence, and to reduce the appeal of extremist ideologies.

Peace education can complement efforts to counter religious extremism in the Western Sahara conflict by promoting interfaith dialogue and understanding (Abdeljalil 2021; Bhatia and Kumar 2020). By bringing together individuals from different religious backgrounds, peace education programmes can help to break down stereotypes and misconceptions, and to promote a sense of shared humanity and respect for diversity. This can help to reduce the likelihood of religious tensions and conflict, and to promote a more inclusive and peaceful society.

Peace education can play a crucial role in counteracting the detrimental effects of religious extremism by fostering critical thinking and analysis (García-Ramírez and Torres-Rivera 2020; Salazar 2021). It can empower individuals to question assumptions, consider diverse perspectives, and evaluate evidence, leading to a more sophisticated understanding of the conflict and its underlying drivers. This, in turn, can mitigate the attractiveness of the simplistic and polarising narratives frequently promoted by extremist groups.

## **2.10 A Peace Education Approach to Peacebuilding in the Western Sahara**

Academic scholars have highlighted the potential benefits of peace education programmes in promoting peace and reconciliation in the Western Sahara conflict. Herrera (2013) suggests that such programmes could help to promote cross-cultural understanding, empathy, and critical thinking skills among young people in both Morocco and the Western Sahara. By providing opportunities for dialogue and collaboration, peace education could help to build relationships and reduce tensions between the parties involved.

Lasheras and Peñas (2017) propose a specific approach to peace education that focuses on teacher training in conflict resolution skills and intercultural communication. The authors suggest that if peace education were integrated into the school curriculum, young people could learn about the conflict from a more nuanced perspective, develop critical thinking skills, and promote peaceful coexistence among the different communities involved in the conflict.

Toledo (2017) suggests that higher education institutions could play a vital role in promoting peace and reconciliation in the Western Sahara conflict. By providing opportunities for young people to engage in cross-cultural dialogue, develop critical thinking skills, and learn about conflict

resolution strategies, higher education institutions could contribute to the development of new ideas and approaches that could help to move the peace process forward.

However, while peace education programmes have the potential to contribute to peacebuilding efforts in the Western Sahara conflict, the deeply entrenched nature of the conflict, the lack of political will and support for peacebuilding, and the broader geopolitical context of the conflict can hinder the success of these efforts. Therefore, addressing the underlying causes of the conflict and engaging with the broader political and geopolitical context of the conflict is crucial for successful peacebuilding efforts. Peace education can address the underlying causes of the Western Sahara conflict by promoting cross-cultural understanding, empathy, and critical thinking skills among young people in both Morocco and the Western Sahara.

In my research, I aim to bring together Moroccans and Sahrawis to address the underlying causes of the Western Sahara conflict. While previous attempts have been made to resolve the conflict through political negotiations, the issue remains unresolved. One of the main reasons for this is the lack of trust and understanding between the two communities. By bringing together Moroccans and Sahrawis in a collaborative and participatory process, my research is contributing to new knowledge in the field of peace education. Furthermore, by evaluating the impact of the programme on the participants, I can contribute to the development of new approaches and strategies for peacebuilding in other conflict-affected regions.

## **2.11 Human Rights in Western Sahara**

The most serious accusations of human rights abuses by Morocco are the bombings, using napalm and white phosphorus, of the Sahrawi refugee camps in early 1976, which killed hundreds of civilians, as well as the fate of hundreds of “disappeared” Sahrawi civilians sequestered by Moroccan military or police forces, most of them during the Western Sahara War. Other accusations are that of torture and the imprisonment of Sahrawis who peacefully oppose Moroccan control, the expulsion from the territory of foreign journalists, teachers and NGO members, the discrimination against Sahrawis in the labour market and the destruction of the natural resources of the territory (Human Rights Watch 2020).

According to Human Rights Watch's 2021 World Report, Moroccan authorities systematically prevent gatherings in the Western Sahara supporting Sahrawi self-determination, obstruct the work of local human rights organisations – including by blocking their legal registration – and violently disperse activists and journalists on the streets. On 29 September 2020, in response to the creation of the “Sahrawi Organ against Moroccan Occupation,” a new pro-independence group, a prosecutor in Laayoune announced the opening of a judicial investigation into “activities harming the kingdom's territorial integrity”. The same day, police surrounded the house of five members of the new organisation. A member of the group told Human Rights Watch that Moroccan police cars had been following them whenever one of them left their home, and police had prevented guests from visiting their homes (Human Rights Watch 2020).

Walid El Batal, a pro-self-determination Sahrawi activist, remains in prison after an appeals court in El-Ayoun (Laayoune), Western Sahara's largest city, sentenced him to two years imprisonment in October 2019 for “rebellion” and insulting police officers (Human Rights Watch 2021; United Nations 2021). Despite widespread condemnation of the trial, his appeal was rejected in 2020, and he remains imprisoned to this day.

The detention of El Batal has been a cause for concern among human rights organisations, who have called for his immediate and unconditional release (Amnesty International 2021). The charges against him are believed to be politically motivated and aimed at suppressing the Sahrawi population's right to express their opinions freely. Moroccan authorities have come under fire for a video that surfaced online, showing police agents severely beating El Batal and one other person while arresting them. Human Rights Watch reported that the authorities claimed to have opened an investigation in response to the video (Human Rights Watch 2021). The continued detention of El Batal and the mistreatment he faced at the hands of the police are clear examples of the ongoing human rights abuses in Western Sahara.

According to a report by Human Rights Watch (2020), there were still 19 Sahrawi men who remained imprisoned due to convictions from unfair trials in 2013 and 2017. The charges were related to the killing of 11 security force members during clashes that occurred after the Moroccan authorities forcibly dismantled a protest encampment in Gdeim Izik in 2010. The trials were

deemed unfair as they were conducted in military courts, and the defendants reported torture and ill-treatment during their detention and interrogation. Several human rights organisations have called for their immediate release and a fair trial in civilian courts. The United Nations (2021) has also called for an end to the human rights violations and the resumption of negotiations between the parties involved to reach a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Amnesty International (2021) has also highlighted the plight of these prisoners of conscience who have been imprisoned for over a decade.

## **2.12 Recent Developments in Western Sahara**

The situation in Western Sahara has deteriorated significantly since 2019, with hostilities between Morocco and the Polisario Front resuming and the COVID-19 pandemic limiting the implementation of peacebuilding activities. According to the Report of the UN Secretary-General (2020) on Western Sahara, peaceful protests were held in October 2020 demanding a referendum and a means of finding a solution to the territory's status. The protesters also demanded the permanent closure of the road in the buffer strip at Guerguerat and the release of Sahrawi political prisoners from Moroccan jails. The protests dispersed peacefully on the same day without any security incidents (United Nations 2020).

On 21 October 2020, around 50 Sahrawi civilians, including women and a child, erected a roadblock in the buffer strip at Guerguerat, halting all traffic between the territory and Mauritania. In response, MINURSO implemented additional monitoring measures, communicated with both parties to urge them to maintain peace, and deployed a team to reduce tensions in the buffer strip (United Nations 2020). However, the demonstrators prevented MINURSO from conducting a comprehensive on-the-ground investigation of the area by blocking access beyond the roadblocks. The Polisario Front representative in New York denied their involvement in the demonstration in a written communication to the Special Representative, and the Secretary-General of Polisario claimed that the presence of Sahrawi civilians in the buffer strip at Guerguerat did not breach any military agreements (United Nations 2020).

On 29 October MINURSO aerial surveillance noticed that some, but not all, of the vehicles had been withdrawn. From October 26, MINURSO's helicopter surveillance spotted 16 Royal Moroccan Army vehicles transporting heavy-duty earth-moving machinery towards Guerguerat. MINURSO requested that the Royal Moroccan Army remove the equipment to reduce tensions, but no withdrawal was observed (United Nations 2020).

On 6 November MINURSO's helicopter surveillance spotted a Royal Moroccan Army military force with heavy weapons, and on 7 November, King Mohammed VI of Morocco rejected any attempts to disrupt traffic between Morocco and Mauritania. On 12 November the king sent a letter to the United Nations calling for increased efforts to end what he called "intolerable and destabilising provocations" by Polisario in the buffer strip at Guerguerat, reserving the right to take action as necessary to restore the zone's status (United Nations 2020).

On the morning of 13 November MINURSO witnessed the protesters and armed Polisario personnel leaving the buffer strip at Guerguerat, followed by an exchange of gunfire between Polisario positions and the Royal Moroccan Army from the berm (United Nations 2020).

### **2.13 Obstacles to Resolving the Protracted Western Sahara Conflict**

Resolving the Western Sahara conflict is challenging due to several factors, as noted by scholars. According to Zunes (2018), the competing claims to sovereignty over the territory are a significant obstacle to a peaceful resolution. Morocco's claim to sovereignty over Western Sahara is based on its historical and cultural ties to the territory, which it considers an integral part of its sovereign territory. On the other hand, the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), supported by Algeria, claims the right to self-determination and seeks independence from Morocco. An obstacle to the peacebuilding process is the lack of trust between the parties. According to Holvoet and Reychler (2017), there is a deep-seated mistrust between Morocco and the SADR, which has led to a lack of meaningful dialogue and progress towards a peaceful resolution.

The involvement of external actors is another factor that has complicated the peacebuilding process. As stated by Rutten (2019), the Western Sahara conflict has been the subject of international attention since its inception, with various external actors, including the United



Nations, the African Union, and regional powers such as Algeria and Morocco's allies, intervening in the conflict. The involvement of external actors has led to competing interests and agendas, making it difficult to reach consensus on the way forward. Another obstacle to resolving the Western Sahara conflict is the lack of peacebuilding skills and peace education. According to Hampson (2018), a lack of knowledge and understanding of peacebuilding processes, techniques, and strategies among parties to the conflict can impede progress towards peace. The author suggests that peace education can help build the necessary skills and knowledge needed for peacebuilding, including conflict resolution, negotiation, and dialogue.

Furthermore, the lack of involvement of civilian populations in the peacebuilding process is also an obstacle to resolving the Western Sahara conflict. According to Sabrina Stein (2020), the Western Sahara conflict has primarily been driven by the interests and actions of elites, with little input from the civilian population. The author suggests that greater engagement of civil society and marginalised groups in the peacebuilding process can help create more inclusive and sustainable peace. The lack of political will to resolve the conflict is another factor that has hindered the peacebuilding process. Zunes (2018) notes that both Morocco and the SADR have at times demonstrated a lack of political will to engage in meaningful dialogue and compromise towards a peaceful resolution. He suggests that building political will requires a willingness to engage in dialogue, compromise, and a shared commitment to peace.

## **2.14 International Calls for Peace in the Western Sahara**

In 1975, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued an advisory opinion stating that the people of Western Sahara had the right to self-determination and that Morocco's historical ties to the region did not constitute sovereignty. The ICJ recommended that a referendum be held to determine the wishes of the people of Western Sahara. (International Court of Justice 1975). The United Nations has been involved in efforts to resolve the conflict since 1991, when a ceasefire was brokered. The UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) was established to oversee a referendum on self-determination for the people of Western Sahara. However, the referendum has yet to take place, and the conflict remains unresolved. The United Nations Security Council has played a key role in addressing the Western Sahara conflict. The

Security Council has repeatedly called for a peaceful, just, and lasting solution based on the principles of self-determination, territorial integrity, and respect for human rights. These principles are enshrined in international law and are essential for the protection of the rights of all people. In its latest resolution on the Western Sahara conflict, Resolution 2494 (2019), the Security Council reiterated its call for the parties to engage in "realistic and credible" negotiations under the auspices of the UN. The resolution also called on the parties to demonstrate political will and work towards a solution that is acceptable to all. The Security Council has stressed the importance of respecting human rights in Western Sahara and has called on all parties to cooperate with the UN to ensure the protection of civilians and the promotion of human rights. The Security Council has also emphasised the need for MINURSO to have full and unrestricted access to all areas of Western Sahara to carry out its mandate effectively.

The United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) has been tasked with facilitating a referendum on self-determination for the people of Western Sahara. However, the referendum has yet to take place due to disagreements between the parties. MINURSO has recommended that the parties engage in negotiations to reach a mutually acceptable solution. (United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara n.d.). MINURSO has been working to create a conducive environment for the referendum by maintaining the ceasefire between the parties and monitoring human rights in the region. The mission has also recommended that the parties engage in negotiations to reach a mutually acceptable solution. The negotiations have been ongoing under the auspices of the United Nations and have involved Morocco, the Polisario Front, Algeria, and Mauritania. Despite these efforts, the parties have yet to reach a mutually acceptable solution, and the situation in Western Sahara remains unresolved. MINURSO remains committed to its mandate and continues to work towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Western Sahara.

Human Rights Watch has called on Morocco to respect the human rights of the Sahrawi people in the Western Sahara, including the rights to freedom of expression, assembly, and association. It has also called on the Polisario Front to respect the rights of people living in the refugee camps in Algeria. (Human Rights Watch 2021). The statement emphasised the importance of ensuring that all parties to the conflict uphold international human rights standards and work towards a peaceful

resolution that respects the rights of all involved. Overall, the statement from Human Rights Watch highlights the ongoing human rights concerns in the Western Sahara conflict and the need for all parties to prioritise the protection of human rights as they work towards a resolution (Human Rights Watch 2021).

The European Union (EU) has taken a clear stance on the Western Sahara conflict, advocating for a resolution that is just, lasting, and mutually acceptable to all parties involved. This position is based on the principles of international law and UN resolutions, which the EU views as crucial in ensuring a fair and equitable outcome for all concerned. The EU has also been actively supporting confidence-building measures aimed at reducing tensions and building trust between the parties to the conflict. Such measures include facilitating family visits between separated family members, as well as working to secure the exchange of prisoners. The EU is committed to working towards a peaceful and sustainable resolution to the Western Sahara conflict, one that reflects the principles of justice, respect for human rights, and the rule of law. The EU's efforts in this regard are based on a strong commitment to promoting peace and stability in the region, and to supporting the fundamental rights and dignity of all those affected by the conflict (European Union External Action 2021).

In 2021, the African Union (AU), which recognises the Polisario Front as the legitimate representative of the Sahrawi people, called for a referendum on self-determination for the people of Western Sahara. . The AU's call for a referendum and recognition of the Polisario Front as the representative of the Sahrawi people are seen as significant steps towards resolving the conflict and achieving a lasting peace in the region (African Union 2021). These recommendations from various sources highlight the importance of achieving a peaceful and just resolution to the Western Sahara conflict.

#### **2.14.1 The Role of Peace Education in Supporting International Calls for Peace**

Peace education can support the international calls for peace in the Western Sahara conflict by promoting the principles of self-determination, territorial integrity, and respect for human rights. Peace education can help raise awareness among individuals and communities about the ongoing conflict and its impact on the lives of people in the region. It can also help individuals understand

the importance of respecting human rights and upholding international law for protecting the rights of all people, regardless of their nationality or ethnicity.

Peace education can also support the efforts of the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) by promoting dialogue and negotiation as the best means of resolving the conflict. By teaching individuals conflict resolution and mediation skills, peace education can help promote peaceful and constructive dialogue between the parties involved. It can also help individuals understand the importance of mutual respect and trust-building in achieving a lasting and peaceful resolution.

Peace education can also support the efforts of human rights organisations like Human Rights Watch in calling for the protection of human rights in the Western Sahara conflict. By promoting the principles of human dignity, respect, and tolerance, peace education can help individuals understand the importance of protecting the human rights of all individuals involved in the conflict, regardless of their nationality or ethnicity. Finally, peace education can support the efforts of the EU and AU in advocating for a just and lasting resolution to the conflict. Peace education can also help individuals understand the importance of international cooperation and multilateralism in achieving a peaceful and sustainable resolution to the conflict.

## **2.15 Minority Moroccan Support for Sahrawi Self-Determination in the Western Sahara Conflict**

There are some Moroccans who agree with the Sahrawi stance on the Western Sahara conflict, although this is not a widely held view in Morocco. In her book *Sahara: The Life of a Desert*, author Marq de Villiers mentions that there is a small but vocal minority of Moroccans who advocate for Sahrawi self-determination. One example cited by de Villiers is the human rights activist Aminatou Haidar. Haidar was born in Western Sahara during the Spanish colonial rule, and she has been critical of Morocco's approach to the Western Sahara conflict (De Villiers 2011).

Haidar has called for a referendum on the future status of Western Sahara, arguing that it is the only way to achieve a just and lasting solution to the conflict. She has been vocal in advocating for the recognition of the Sahrawi people's right to self-determination and the need for a peaceful

resolution to the conflict (De Villiers 2011). Haidar has faced numerous challenges, including imprisonment and torture, for her activism on this issue. However, she has remained steadfast in her commitment to the cause and has continued to speak out against human rights violations in the Western Sahara (De Villiers 2011).

In her 2019 article for the *Middle East Eye*, journalist Aida Alami highlights the fact that a small number of Moroccan activists, primarily leftists and human rights advocates, have expressed their support for the Sahrawi cause. Alami's observation is consistent with the findings of political scientist Jihane Sfeir, who, in her 2017 article for *The Journal of North African Studies*, noted that there exists a minority of Moroccans who support the Sahrawi cause and call for the recognition of their rights to self-determination.

The Moroccan Association for Human Rights is one such group that has publicly advocated for a peaceful and just resolution to the Western Sahara conflict. The group has been active in promoting human rights in Morocco and advocating for the rights of marginalised groups, including the Sahrawi people. The Moroccan Association for Human Rights has been vocal in its support for the Sahrawi people's right to self-determination and has called for a just and lasting solution to the conflict that takes their rights into account.

The support for the Sahrawi cause by a small number of Moroccan activists, as noted by Alami and Sfeir, demonstrates that the Western Sahara conflict is a complex issue with various perspectives and interests at play. It highlights the need for dialogue and cooperation between all the parties involved to find a peaceful and just resolution to the conflict. The support of the Moroccan Association for Human Rights, a prominent human rights group in Morocco, underscores the importance of human rights in the region and the need to address the rights of all groups involved in the conflict.

Political scientist Jihane Sfeir, in a 2017 article published in *The Journal of North African Studies*, supports the idea that there is a minority of Moroccans who advocate for the recognition of Sahrawi self-determination in the Western Sahara conflict. This minority group demands the recognition of the Sahrawi people's rights to self-determination and supports their struggle for independence. The article examines the role of national identity in the conflict and the prospects for regional

stability in the area. Sfeir (2017) cites the Democratic Confederation of Labour (CDT), a Moroccan trade union, as an example of a group that has shown solidarity with the Sahrawi people. The CDT has called for the release of Sahrawi political prisoners and the protection of human rights in the Western Sahara region. They have also expressed their support for the Sahrawi people's right to self-determination and their struggle for independence.

This perspective presented by Sfeir aligns with the observations made by Marq de Villiers and Aida Alami. The three sources highlight the presence of a minority of Moroccans who support the Sahrawi cause and demand the recognition of their rights to self-determination. The groups mentioned, such as the Moroccan Association for Human Rights and the Democratic Confederation of Labour, advocate for a just and lasting solution to the Western Sahara conflict that considers the Sahrawi people's rights and aspirations. The minority Moroccan support for the Sahrawi self-determination sheds light on the complexities of the Western Sahara conflict. It shows that the issue is not as straightforward as a simple territorial dispute between Morocco and the Sahrawi people, but rather a multifaceted issue with various perspectives and interests at play.

## **2.16 Conclusion**

After examining the past conflicts and unsuccessful attempts at peace in Western Sahara, it is evident that traditional conflict resolution methods have been ineffective. Despite numerous efforts, the ongoing Western Sahara conflict has persisted, causing immense harm to the local populace. Recent developments, including the renewal of low-level hostilities and the worsening of diplomatic relations between Morocco and Algeria, highlight the urgent need for a new, innovative approach to achieving sustainable peace in the region. A potential solution might be peace education, which could address the root causes of the conflict and foster a culture of peace and understanding among the affected parties. By promoting empathy, critical thinking, and conflict resolution skills, peace education can help to prevent future conflicts and facilitate lasting peace in Western Sahara.

# **Chapter Three**

## **Theoretical Frameworks**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive review of the existing literature relevant to the proposed research topic. The literature review will be focused on specific areas, which include the role of peace education in peacebuilding efforts, definitions of peacebuilding and conflict transformation, and their key characteristics in the context of the Western Sahara region.

In exploring the role of peace education in peacebuilding, the chapter will explore the various theoretical perspectives and practical approaches that have been employed in the field. It will also examine the relationship between peace education and conflict resolution, highlighting the ways in which peace education can equip individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to manage and resolve conflicts peacefully. The literature review will also analyse the causes and nature of protracted conflicts, with a focus on the Western Sahara conflict. The chapter will also explore the role of external actors, such as the United Nations, in attempts to resolve the conflict.

Finally, the chapter will provide an overview of the concept of conflict transformation, highlighting its key features and potential applications in the context of peacebuilding efforts in Western Sahara. It will analyse the relationship between conflict transformation and peace education, and explore how these two concepts can be integrated to promote sustainable peacebuilding in the region.

### **3.2 Peace Education Theory**

Peace education is a concept that has gained increasing attention in recent years and aims at promoting peaceful coexistence among people of diverse backgrounds. However, the definition and scope of peace education theory are not always clear, and there is no one individual who has

proposed a definitive theory on the subject, unlike Lederach or Galtung who have made significant contributions to peacebuilding theory.

Peace education theory can be viewed as a collection of principles, ideas, and processes that aim to promote peace and prevent violence. This is a view that has been put forward by scholars such as H.B. Danesh in his work, "Towards an Integrative Theory of Peace Education", which was published in the *Journal of Peace Education* in 2006. Danesh argues that a comprehensive theory of peace education must integrate various perspectives, including cultural, social, psychological, and spiritual dimensions. He posits that peace education should not be limited to formal institutions like schools and universities, but should be integrated into every aspect of society, including families, communities, and the media.

Danesh contends that peace education should encompass both personal and collective transformation. Individuals must be empowered to become agents of peace, and society must undergo a cultural shift that prioritises nonviolence and peaceful coexistence. Danesh's theory emphasises the importance of creating a shared understanding of peace that goes beyond mere absence of conflict. Danesh's integrative theory of peace education is a useful framework for understanding the multifaceted nature of peace education. It acknowledges that peace education is not a one-size-fits-all concept and must be tailored to specific cultural and social contexts. Additionally, Danesh's theory emphasises the need for a holistic approach to peace education that includes both personal and societal transformation.

According to the UN General Assembly (2002), peace education provides individuals with the necessary theoretical and practical knowledge to select values that eschew violence, facilitate the peaceful resolution of conflicts, and promote a culture of peace. UNICEF has defined peace education as a process aimed at promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values necessary for bringing about behavioural changes that can prevent conflict and violence, resolve conflicts peacefully, and establish conditions conducive to peace at various levels, such as intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national, or international (Jones 2005). Additionally, peace education has been characterised as a process that involves acquiring skills such as listening, reflection, problem-solving, cooperation, and conflict resolution. The aim of peace education is to empower



individuals with the necessary skills, attitudes, and knowledge to create positive change and build relationships, while emphasising nonviolence and empathy (Jones 2005).

The cycles of violence, hatred, and mistrust – the negative attitudes and perceptions held by Moroccan and Sahrawis stemming from the Western Sahara Conflict – can be addressed by applying peace education theory (Harris 1996; Harris 2004). This theory argues that knowledge of peace processes is essential for the sustainability of peace and teaches communication skills, attitudes, and values that help prevent violence and promote peace. Peace education theory provides a framework for programmes for people (victims as well as participants) to heal themselves and their communities and to emerge as empowered peacebuilders. To rationalise the role of peace education in peacebuilding, Ellison (2012) writes that this education contributes to social transformation. It seeks to bring about a change in relationships and behaviours from the negative to the positive (Ellison 2012). This theory provides guidance and support to break down mutual distrust, and teaches knowledge and skills to build trust and understanding. Moreover, peace education openly promotes nonviolent methods to decrease adversarial interactions, with the ultimate goal of reducing and eventually eliminating violence. Its importance stems from the fact that it proves that violence in society can be reduced. It encourages participants to become aware of and understand the underlying causes of a conflict, and explore possible alternatives, while cultivating empathy for the victims of violence or those who hold different perspectives.

Several viewpoints on peace education are influenced by fundamental concepts in peace theory, as described by scholars such as Dewey (1922), Boulding (2010), and Galtung (1969). According to this theory, there are three primary means of achieving peace: peacekeeping, peace-making, and peacebuilding. Peacekeeping involves using strength to maintain peace, while peace-making involves using conflict resolution methods to help combatants resolve their disputes after violence has ceased. Peacebuilding, on the other hand, focuses on long-term goals such as altering attitudes and fostering an appreciation for differing perspectives (Harris 1999: 300).

### **3.3 The Conceptual Framework of Peace Education**

As stated above, peace education theory refers to the set of ideas, concepts, and principles that guide the design and implementation of peace education programmes (Bajaj 2018; Salomon & Nevo 2009). It provides a theoretical basis for understanding the role of education in promoting peaceful coexistence, preventing conflicts, and addressing root causes of violence. Peace education theory includes various perspectives and approaches, such as conflict resolution, human rights education, intercultural education, and global citizenship education.

On the other hand, the conceptual framework of peace education outlines the principles, concepts, and methods used in promoting peaceful coexistence among individuals, groups, and nations. The framework emphasises the importance of education in developing the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to build and sustain peaceful relationships (Bajaj 2018; UNESCO 2015). It includes key elements such as understanding the root causes of conflict, promoting human rights and dignity, fostering intercultural and interfaith understanding, encouraging dialogue and negotiation, developing conflict resolution and mediation skills, and creating a culture of nonviolence (Bajaj 2018; Salomon and Nevo 2009). It is a framework that seeks to develop a culture of peace and nonviolence through education (Bajaj 2018). The framework of peace education is built on the understanding that peace is not simply the absence of war or conflict, but a positive and dynamic concept that involves the creation of just and equitable societies.

Peace education has been applied to various approaches and social contexts, resulting in a broad range of definitions. According to UNICEF (2009: 3), peace education is defined as:

the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behaviour changes that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national or international level.

Salomon (2009) argues that the definition of peace education aims to be both specific and general so as to accommodate the various social and political contexts worldwide. However, this approach of categorising diverse programmes under one label has faced criticism, particularly from peace educators working in protracted conflicts. According to Salomon, the broad definition overlooks

the significant differences in the types of peace education and assumes that education on human dignity, human rights, democracy, and nonviolence will naturally lead to context-specific actions and behaviours. Scholars such as Galtung have criticised the United Nations for operating within a broad, universal framework that doesn't always consider local contexts and specific circumstances (Galtung *et al.* 1986). This critique is rooted in the idea that the UN's approach to conflict resolution tends to prioritise the interests and perspectives of powerful actors, such as state governments, at the expense of more marginalised groups. Galtung's specific criticism of the UN centres on what he calls its "stratocratic paradigm." Essentially, this refers to a hierarchical system of power and decision-making that is heavily influenced by those in positions of authority. According to Galtung, the UN's focus on maintaining a centralised structure can result in a lack of attention to the unique needs and concerns of individuals and communities affected by conflict. Critics of the UN's approach argue that a more contextually-specific and locally-appropriate model of conflict resolution is necessary to truly promote sustainable peace. This may involve greater engagement with local actors, a willingness to adapt strategies to the specific needs of different communities, and a more inclusive decision-making process that takes into account the perspectives of all affected parties.

Scholars have noted that the broad range of approaches and diverse social contexts that fall under the category of peace education have hindered the field's scholarly advancement in terms of theory, research, and programme evaluation. Tinker (2016) highlights this issue, but to promote academic progress in peace education, Salomon has proposed a solution. Salomon suggests that peace education programmes should be analysed and distinguished based on the socio-political context in which they occur. He identifies three such contexts. The first is regions in or emerging from protracted conflicts, such as Northern Ireland, Kosovo, Israel, Cyprus, and the Western Sahara. The second context is areas where nonviolent inter-ethnic tensions exist based on ethnocentrism, including immigrants in Belgium and African-American, Hispanic, and Indigenous people in the US. The third context is relatively peaceful areas, such as Sweden, Norway, and Switzerland.

Salomon's distinctions are based on the challenges that programmes face, their goals, and their approach to different sub-groups of participants. By analysing peace education programmes based on these distinctions, scholars can better understand the different factors that contribute to the

effectiveness of the programmes in different contexts. This analysis can help to overcome the challenges facing peace education and promote academic development in the field. Peace education programmes are being implemented in countries recovering from long-standing conflicts, which can cause extensive harm to humans, economies, governance systems, and development efforts (Dudouet 2006). These conflicts involve a combination of ideological, political, and resource-related issues, as well as communal and ethnic identities, and often target civilians based on their affiliation with certain groups. They can last for multiple generations, and the UN has developed various strategies to address them, including preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding. This paper focuses on peacebuilding, which aims to identify and support structures that can strengthen peace, promote confidence and well-being, and address the root causes of conflict (Boutros-Ghali 1992). Specifically, this paper examines peacebuilding efforts in the protracted Western Sahara Conflict.

Following the end of the Cold War, UN peacebuilding missions have become more intricate and ambitious, as noted by Tinker (2016). Initially, these operations were focused on reconstructing institutions and providing essential services such as security and the rule of law. During the period spanning from 1989 to 2005, education was not prioritised in peacebuilding operations. Save the Children Norway (2005) reports that only 11 out of 37 peace agreements during this period mentioned education. However, in the late 1990s, the international community began to change its priorities and incorporate education into its peacebuilding strategy. This shift was prompted by evidence suggesting that the content, structure, and delivery of education could be working against the peacebuilding efforts of organisations by reinforcing social divisions, which were the root cause of the conflict (Bush and Saltarelli 2000).

Countries such as Lebanon, Northern Ireland, Mozambique, and Bosnia and Herzegovina have historically used education to enforce cultural repression, manipulate history for political purposes, and reinforce segregation, inequality, and stereotyping. However, the international community now recognises the positive role that education can play in post-conflict countries. Peace education programmes are included in various education-related projects and initiatives to reduce the impact of conflicts and contribute to national reconciliation and peacebuilding. Peace education programmes are vital in connecting top-down and bottom-up approaches to peacebuilding. A

comprehensive approach to peace education is necessary to promote inclusive practices that encompass the global, social, political, moral, and personal aspects of peace. This approach also supports and complements the United Nations' efforts to foster a "culture of peace."

After the Second World War, peace education began to be actively practised in formal and informal education settings. The idea of "education for international understanding" was promoted by education reformers and peace advocates after the First World War. The belief was that education could prevent future wars by changing former attitudes and behaviours, that were more conducive to violence, to attitudes and behaviours that were more conducive to creating peace. Schools started incorporating international relations into their curricula, and the idea gained further attention and support through the newly established United Nations (UN).

The UN and its interagency, UNESCO, proposed developing intellectual and moral frameworks to unite people towards achieving sustainable positive peace. Peace education aims to promote a transformation in individuals' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values to mitigate violent conflicts. It fosters awareness and understanding of conflicts, develops concern, and challenges personal and social actions to create conditions for peace. This study aims to apply the concept of peace education to the Western Sahara conflict by conducting peace education workshops with Moroccans and Sahrawis. The goal is to identify perceptions and stereotypes that hinder peacebuilding and seek common ground to create a culture of peace. The next chapter will elaborate on the concept of peace education.

### **3.4 Concepts of Peace, Violence, and Conflict**

It is essential to define both peace and violence as background knowledge for this study. Over the last five decades, there has been a significant transformation in the understanding of the concept of peace. Previously, peace was limited to the absence of war (negative peace) (Groff 2001). However, contemporary peace theories incorporate multiple levels of analysis. One such theory emphasises the social-structural aspects of peace, with a focus on eliminating both physical and structural violence at both macro and micro levels. This approach introduced the concept of "positive peace," which initially referred to the absence of structural violence such as societal

inequalities that could potentially lead to violence. Galtung's (1975) core concepts include the distinction between negative peace (the absence of direct violence) and positive peace (the absence of structural [indirect] violence). Peace can be viewed simply as the absence of violence and people being able to achieve their full potential. Conflict can be seen as involving "actors in pursuit of incompatible goals" (Galtung 1958: 25).

From Lederach's (1999) perspective, conflict is an inherent and unavoidable aspect of human relationships. It arises when two or more interdependent parties have opposing goals, limited resources, and hinder each other in achieving their objectives. Each conflict is unique and must be contextualised to be fully understood. The Western Sahara Conflict, for instance, has its own distinct drivers and dynamics, which differ from those in other regions of the world. Therefore, it is crucial to develop approaches and strategies for resolving conflicts in this region that are based on a clear understanding of the local realities. Only by comprehending the context and drivers of the conflict can we develop effective solutions that meet the needs of all parties involved.

Lederach's viewpoint on conflict as a natural occurrence underscores the importance of contextualising conflicts and developing interventions that are tailored to the specific circumstances of each. For the Western Sahara Conflict, this means understanding the unique drivers of the conflict and utilising approaches that take into account the realities on the ground to achieve sustainable peace. In order to effectively address and transform a conflict, it is crucial to have a comprehensive understanding of the context in which it arises. As Lederach has pointed out, the actors involved in a conflict are capable of both constructing and deconstructing it, emphasising the importance of empowering the conflicting parties to take ownership of the transformation process.

Conflict is an inherent aspect of human relationships and can manifest in a variety of ways, ranging from subtle underlying tensions to open hostility. As Galtung (1996) observes, conflict can be categorised as latent or overt, and can stem from a wide range of sources, including political, relational, economic, social, and interest-based factors. Understanding the different types and sources of conflict can help to inform effective conflict resolution strategies. For instance, political conflicts may require different approaches from economic conflicts, and interest-based conflicts

may call for different solutions from relational conflicts. Developing a nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics underlying a conflict is essential for determining the most appropriate interventions to achieve lasting peace.

Galtung's contributions to the field of peace studies are widely recognised and have had a significant impact on how we understand violence and peace. In particular, his work on structural violence and positive and negative peace has been influential (Galtung 1969; 2003). Structural violence is a form of violence that is often overlooked but can have profound effects on people's lives. This type of violence is characterised by systems and institutions that prevent individuals from meeting their basic needs, such as access to healthcare, education, and employment. Examples of structural violence include poverty and discrimination based on gender, race, or class. Galtung argues that direct violence, which is more visible, is often interdependent with structural violence and both can result from cultural violence, which refers to aspects of culture that justify or legitimise violence.

According to Galtung, traditional education systems can perpetuate cycles of violence by continuing to teach the same values and attitudes that have led to conflict in the past. In contrast, peace education aims to counter these structural practices, not only to transform violent conflicts into peaceful ones but also to prevent their recurrence. This approach is derived from the concept of positive and negative peace, which is also attributed to Galtung. Negative peace refers to the absence of personal and institutional violence, while positive peace goes beyond the mere absence of conflict to include social justice, well-being, gender equity, and human rights.

The concept of positive peace is particularly relevant to peace education in conflict-affected regions such as Western Sahara. By addressing the root causes of conflict and promoting collaboration and support, peace education can foster positive peace and create a more sustainable and equitable society. In this paper, we will further explore these theoretical approaches and their application to peace education in the Western Sahara region.

To fully understand the assumptions that underlie peace education programmes, it is important to explore the various concepts of peace as this will aid in identifying the goals that such programmes should strive to achieve, especially in conflict-ridden areas. One concept of peace focuses on

social-structural dimensions and aims to eliminate both physical and structural violence at both macro and micro levels. This approach introduced the idea of "positive peace," which initially referred to the absence of structural violence, such as societal inequalities, that could potentially lead to violence. Later, the concept of structural violence expanded to include personal micro- and macro-level structures that harm or discriminate against individuals or groups (Groff 2001).

More recent peace concepts view peace as a holistic and complex system, based on the belief that diversity is a strength. These "intercultural" approaches to peace aim to establish peaceful coexistence between different groups. As such, recent multi-faceted theories not only focus on the causes of violence and conflicts, but also view peace positively, defining the conditions and factors that are necessary to create a peaceful world (Groff 2001). Johan Galtung advocates for peace programmes to aim for both negative and positive peace, as inequality and structural violence can lead to outbreaks of violence (Galtung 1969).

**Table 1. Peace Research and Practice**

<b>Understanding Peace</b>	<b>Negative Peace</b>	<b>Positive Peace</b>	<b>Negative and Positive Peace</b>
Perceptions of Solutions	No personal or direct violence.	No structural or indirect violence.	No personal or direct violence and no structural or indirect violence.
Assumptions	A world without violence would be peaceful.	When there is justice and no structural violence, the world will be peaceful.	Personal and structural violence may be linked. Pursuing dual goals could lead to a peaceful world without either type of violence. Dual goals won't harm, even if there's no direct causal relationship between the two types of violence.

Source: Hiroe Terada (2003). *Peace education: Theories and practices*

### **3.5 Conflict Transformation Theory**

This section delves into how conflict transformation provides a counterforce to violence, making it possible to prevent violent conflicts from escalating. In this study, the most compelling argument



presented is that changing people's mindsets is crucial to reducing violence. Conflict transformation offers theoretical frameworks and tools that can be employed to diminish violence resulting from protracted conflicts. In this thesis, I adopt Lederach's (2003) definition of conflict transformation, which posits that it is the continuous give and take of social conflict that presents opportunities for positive change, thereby reducing violence and promoting justice in direct interactions and social structures. Conflict transformation is also seen as a practical approach to addressing real-life issues that arise from human relations (Lederach 2003:14).

The existence of conflict is inevitable, whether it is social, interpersonal, or intergroup (Lederach 2003). However, conflict transformation offers a way to manage and transform conflicts in a nonviolent manner. It involves shifting the focus from merely resolving the conflict to changing the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours that gave rise to the conflict. By doing so, conflict transformation provides an opportunity to address the underlying issues that fuel violent conflicts, leading to a sustainable reduction in violence.

Education and mindset are intricately connected. Therefore, if individuals are not taught the knowledge and skills necessary to understand one another and resolve conflicts in a nonviolent manner, achieving reduced violence at the community level will be a difficult task. Brinkman, Attree, and Hezir (2013) as well as Ricigliano (2015) posit that there are various factors that drive conflict and peace. In this thesis, I would like to emphasise Ricigliano's (2015) argument that attitudes play a crucial role, particularly those that are associated with intergroup relations, the development of shared values, social grievances, and support for structures that enable full participation.

Ricigliano's argument underscores the importance of education in shaping attitudes and values that promote peace and prevent violence. Education can provide individuals with the tools to understand and appreciate different perspectives, as well as the skills to manage conflicts constructively (Ricigliano 2015). By promoting education that emphasises peacebuilding and conflict resolution, communities can create a culture of peace that supports the development of collective values, strengthens social cohesion, and empowers individuals to participate fully in decision-making processes. Therefore, investing in education that fosters peaceful attitudes and

values can have a profound impact on reducing violence and promoting sustainable peace in communities.

To sustain peace, conflict must be transformed and not just resolved. Conflict transformation is a comprehensive process that aims to transform relationships between parties involved in a conflict (Lederach 1999). The goal of conflict transformation theory is to address the root causes of divisions between parties in conflict. The theory acknowledges that conflict is a normal part of human relationships, but this does not necessarily mean that it has to be violent. As such, the approach for addressing violent conflicts is through the transformation of human relations (Collier 2000). By focusing on transforming relationships, conflict transformation theory recognises that conflicts can be resolved by changing the ways in which people interact with each other. Rather than attempting to eliminate conflict, the theory aims to create conditions that foster constructive and peaceful engagement among parties in conflict. This approach requires a fundamental shift in mindset, from one that views conflict as an inherent problem to one that sees conflict as an opportunity for growth and positive change.

Therefore, the conflict transformation theory offers a promising framework for addressing violent conflicts by transforming human relations. By promoting peaceful and constructive interactions, this approach can reduce the likelihood of violent conflict and promote sustainable peace. There is a need to support individuals and groups who, through their attitudes and actions, contribute to the creation of peaceful communities and interactions with their neighbours. These individuals and groups from the community help reduce and transform violence through their attitudes and actions (Haider 2009).

According to John Paul Lederach, conflict transformation involves moving beyond the initial stages of confrontation towards the development of dynamic, peaceful relationships (1999: 75). Unlike conflict resolution, which focuses primarily on resolving specific issues, conflict transformation involves a more comprehensive process of examining and addressing the underlying systems and structures that perpetuate conflict, including the perceptions and attitudes of individuals towards one another (Vriens 1999: 48; Galtung 2003).

In other words, conflict transformation seeks to create sustainable peace by challenging the deeper roots of conflict, rather than simply addressing its surface-level manifestations. This can involve confronting issues such as systemic inequality, prejudice, and discrimination, as well as addressing the psychological and emotional factors that contribute to conflict. By engaging in this more comprehensive approach to conflict transformation, individuals and communities can create lasting and positive change, breaking down barriers and building new relationships based on trust, respect, and mutual understanding. Through sustained effort and a commitment to transformative change, it may be possible to achieve a more peaceful and equitable future for all people impacted by conflict.

The concepts of conflict resolution and conflict transformation have been established to describe different processes involved in how we approach and view conflict. Conflict resolution refers to “an outcome and process in which the issues in an existing conflict are satisfactorily dealt with through a solution that is mutually acceptable to the parties, self-sustaining in the long run and productive of a new, positive relationship between the parties that were previously hostile adversaries” (Mitchell and Banks 1996: 33). Over time, this definition became insufficient for some because of continued grievances and negative attitudes, even after a formal peace agreement or ceasefire was signed.

One of the main types of peace education identified by Harris and Morrison (2003: 65- 75) is that of conflict resolution. Conflict resolution attempts to move parties from negative behaviours and attitudes to positive and productive behaviours and attitudes. The challenge in conflict resolution lies in the nurturing of new thinking and new interactions. Through a change in thinking and relationships, and a new perspective on entrenched positions, innovative resolutions can be found.

Conflict transformation argues not simply for seeing conflict as something needing resolution and having an endpoint, but as requiring sustained action and ongoing attention. Thus, conflict resolution is a component of peace education, and conflict transformation is the goal. Peacebuilding and conflict transformation create a central pillar in the approach to and emphasis on peace education. Peacebuilding initiatives are wise to include peace education, because of the need to respond, resolve, and transform situations of conflict to pursue, achieve, and sustain

peaceful relationships. Individual relationship patterns and conflicts are systemically embedded. Conflict transformation, therefore, uses a comprehensive method of transforming person-to-person interactions – complementing the peace education intervention of this study.

### **3.6 Peacebuilding**

Peacebuilding can be defined as the comprehensive processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform conflict toward peaceful relationships (Lederach 1997). It involves a wide range of activities that both precede and follow formal peace accords. The concept of peacebuilding originated in the field of peace studies in the work of Galtung (1975). Peacebuilding was defined by the United Nations as aiming to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities for conflict management at all levels, and to lay the foundation for sustainable peace and development. It is a complex, long-term process of creating the necessary conditions for sustainable peace (United Nations 2020). Fudo (2017) has expanded the definition of peacebuilding to include preventative measures. According to Del Felice and Wisler (n.d.), peacebuilding involves a comprehensive process that encompasses all activities aimed at transforming violent relationships, structures, attitudes, and behaviour. It aims to eliminate or mitigate direct, structural, and cultural violence. Del Felice and Wisler argue that peacebuilding and conflict transformation can only be successful if diverse needs are addressed and if the process of healing and reconciliation takes place. Peace education can play a crucial role in this process of healing and reconciliation.

John Paul Lederach's "pyramid of peacebuilding" is a model that outlines the different actors and approaches involved in peacebuilding efforts. The pyramid consists of three levels, each representing different types of actors and approaches.

## Types of Actors

## Approaches to Building Peace

### Level 1: Top Leadership

Military/political/religious leaders with high visibility

Focus on high-level negotiations  
Emphasizes cease-fire  
Led by highly visible, single mediator

### Level 2: Middle-Range Leadership

Leaders respected in sectors  
Ethnic/religious leaders  
Academics/intellectuals  
Humanitarian leaders (NGOs)

Problem-solving workshops  
Training in conflict resolution  
Peace commissions  
Insider-partial teams

### Level 3: Grassroots Leadership

Local leaders  
Leaders of indigenous NGOs  
Community developers  
Local health officials  
Refugee camp leaders

Local peace commissions  
Grassroots training  
Prejudice reduction  
Psychosocial work in postwar trauma

Affected Population

Derived from John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997), 39.

## Figure 1 Pyramid of Peacebuilding

At the top of the pyramid, there are the leadership actors, including political, military, and religious leaders. These individuals have the power and influence to make significant changes and are often involved in high-level negotiations and decision-making. The middle part of the pyramid includes academics, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), ethnic leaders, and other actors who have some level of influence but may not have the same level of power as the top-level actors. They can provide expertise and support to peacebuilding efforts, and often work on specific issues or areas. At the bottom of the pyramid, there are local leaders, including community developers and local health officials. These actors are often the ones who are directly impacted by conflicts and have a

deep understanding of the issues at the local level. They may also be the most trusted by their communities and can play a vital role in building trust and promoting dialogue.

Lederach's pyramid acknowledges that different actors and approaches are needed to effectively address conflicts and build sustainable peace. Depending on their position within the pyramid, actors may use different approaches, ranging from high-level negotiations to community-based initiatives. The pyramid also highlights the importance of involving local actors in peacebuilding efforts, as they can provide crucial insights into the root causes of conflicts and help to build sustainable solutions.

Overall, Lederach's "pyramid of peacebuilding" is a useful model for understanding the different actors and approaches involved in peacebuilding efforts, and how they can work together to achieve sustainable peace. Lederach (1995; 1997) highlighted that peacebuilding is a dynamic and social process. A key concept in his work is conflict transformation, which signifies an ongoing process of changing relationships, behaviour, attitudes, and structures from the negative to the positive. According to this rationale, peace education and peacebuilding complement each other.

### **3.7 Protracted Conflicts**

The Western Sahara Conflict is a protracted conflict known as “The Forgotten Conflict” (Azkue 2021). As one research participant stated:

...the conflict in the occupied parts of Western Sahara is still ongoing, with daily human rights abuses and violations, as well as over 200,000 people who are still displaced and living as refugees because we cannot return to our homeland while it's under a foreign military occupation by Morocco...

Protracted conflicts are conflicts that remain unresolved for long periods of time. They typically involve many parties and concern an intricate set of historical, religious, cultural, political, and economic issues (Coleman 2011). These matters are central to human coexistence and typically counter any attempts at resolution. In fact, parties often refuse to negotiate or compromise with respect to such issues. As a result, each side views the position of the other as a threat to its very existence. They may develop a mutual fear of each other and a profound desire to inflict as much

physical and psychological harm on each other as possible (Coleman 2011). This sense of threat and hostility often permeates the daily lives of the parties involved.

Disputes about land, money, or other resources may take on increased symbolic significance (Coleman 2003). Those on opposing sides come to view each other as enemies and may resort to highly destructive means. Eventually, the parties become unable to separate different issues and may see no way out of the conflict other than through total victory or defeat (Coleman 2003).

What is common to all protracted conflicts is that they involve interests or values that the disputants regard as critical to their survival. These underlying causes include parties' values, identities, and fundamental human needs. Because conflicts grounded in these issues involve different communities and cultures, they are usually not resolvable by negotiation or compromise. This is because the conflict cannot be resolved in a win-win way. If one value system is followed, another is threatened. If one nation controls a piece of land, another does not. If one group is dominant, another is subordinate (Maiese 2003). While sharing is possible in theory, opposing sides usually regard compromise as a loss.

Protracted conflicts are characterised by their long-lasting nature, and attempts to resolve them often prove futile, as parties involved tend to hold strong animosity, hatred, and prejudice towards each other. This is evident in the case of Western Sahara, where the conflict has persisted for over five decades, with failed attempts at resolution and recent outbreaks of violence. The protracted nature of the conflict further exacerbates long-standing grievances, fears, and collective victimhood, making it difficult to change the perceptions, beliefs, and behaviours of individuals and groups affected by the conflict. This perpetuates the conflict and makes it challenging to find a lasting solution and build a culture of peace. In the next chapter, I will explore peace education in greater detail within the context of protracted conflicts.

### **3.8 Causes of Protracted Conflicts**

One of the causes of protracted conflicts is the presence of deep-seated grievances among the conflicting parties. These grievances may arise from past injustices, such as discrimination or human rights abuses, or from a perception of marginalisation or exclusion from political power

(Gurr 1994). These grievances can be amplified by historical narratives that emphasise the suffering of the group and the culpability of the other side, creating a sense of victimhood and fuelling demands for retribution and revenge (Bar-Tal 2000).

Another cause of protracted conflicts is the lack of trust between the conflicting parties. Trust is essential for the resolution of conflicts, but it is difficult to build and easy to destroy. In protracted conflicts, mistrust can become deeply ingrained, with each side perceiving the other as untrustworthy and acting accordingly (Kriesberg 2007). This mistrust can be reinforced by the absence of communication channels and the presence of barriers to dialogue, such as language, culture, or geography (Lederach 2003).

A third cause of protracted conflicts is the presence of external actors who support one or both sides. External support can prolong conflicts by providing material, political, or diplomatic assistance, thereby increasing the relative power of the supported side and reducing the incentives for compromise (Mason 2011). External actors may have their own interests in the conflict, such as access to resources, strategic advantage, or ideological alignment, which can further complicate the resolution process (Zartman 2013).

A fourth cause of protracted conflicts is the absence of effective conflict resolution mechanisms. In the absence of such mechanisms, conflicts may escalate, leading to violence and destruction. The lack of effective mechanisms can be due to a variety of factors, including weak institutional capacity, lack of political will, or a belief that violence is a more effective means of achieving one's goals (Licklider 1995). The absence of effective mechanisms can also be due to a lack of understanding of the nature of the conflict and the appropriate tools for its resolution (Mitchell 2002).

### **3.9 Causes of the Protracted Western Sahara Conflict**

One of the main causes of the Western Sahara conflict is the competing claims to sovereignty over the territory. Morocco claims sovereignty over the Western Sahara based on historical, ethnic, and territorial arguments, while the Polisario Front argues for the right to self-determination of the Sahrawi people, who are the indigenous population of Western Sahara (Hodges 1983). These



competing claims to sovereignty have resulted in a prolonged and intractable conflict, with both sides unwilling to compromise on their positions.

Another cause of the Western Sahara conflict is the presence of natural resources in the region, particularly phosphate deposits and fisheries. The control and exploitation of these resources have been a key factor in the conflict, with both Morocco and the Polisario Front seeking to gain control over them (Zoubir and Dalton 2017). The economic benefits of these resources have made the conflict more intractable, with both sides unwilling to relinquish control.

A third cause of the Western Sahara conflict is the role of external actors in the conflict. External actors, particularly France and Spain, played a significant role in the colonisation of Western Sahara and the subsequent conflict (Zoubir and Dalton 2017). The United Nations has also been involved in the conflict since the 1990s, attempting to broker a solution through a series of peace plans and negotiations (Zunes 2017). However, the involvement of external actors has often exacerbated the conflict, with each side accusing the other of receiving support from such actors.

A fourth cause of the Western Sahara conflict is the human rights abuses committed by both sides. The conflict has resulted in a significant number of human rights violations, including arbitrary detention, torture, and forced disappearances (Human Rights Watch 2018). These human rights abuses have created a deep sense of mistrust and animosity between the conflicting parties, making the conflict more difficult to resolve.

### **3.10 Effects of Protracted Conflict**

One of the primary effects of protracted conflicts is the displacement of people from their homes and communities. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reports that in 2021, over 82 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide due to conflict and persecution (UNHCR 2021). Displaced persons often suffer from trauma, stress, and a loss of social networks, leading to physical and mental health problems (Miller and Rasmussen 2010). Furthermore, displacement can cause economic instability as people lose their homes, jobs, and assets, resulting in poverty and social inequality (Collier and Hoeffler 2004).

Protracted conflicts also have a significant impact on education. Schools and universities may be closed or destroyed, making it difficult or impossible for children and young adults to access education (Ager and Strang 2008). As a result, children and young adults may be denied opportunities for personal development and economic mobility, leading to long-term negative consequences for individuals and society (Kremer 2003).

Another effect of protracted conflicts is the breakdown of social cohesion and trust within communities (Putnam 2000). Long-standing conflicts between groups can lead to the formation of rigid and inflexible identities, hindering the ability to reconcile differences and build relationships based on shared values and beliefs (Lederach 2005). The lack of trust can also contribute to the perpetuation of violence and a culture of fear, making it difficult to find peaceful solutions to conflicts (Wood 2013).

### **3.11 Impacts of the Protracted Western Sahara Conflict**

One of the most profound impacts of the Western Sahara conflict has been the displacement of the Sahrawi people. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there are currently over 170,000 Sahrawi refugees living in camps in Algeria (UNHCR 2021). The camps are overcrowded, and refugees are heavily dependent on humanitarian aid, with limited access to education, healthcare, and job opportunities (Mundy 2013). The protracted nature of the conflict has made it difficult for refugees to return home or establish sustainable livelihoods, perpetuating their displacement and precarious living conditions.

The conflict has also had significant economic consequences for the region. Western Sahara is rich in natural resources, including phosphates and fisheries, which are of economic importance to both Morocco and the Sahrawi people (Zoubir 2011). However, the conflict has prevented the exploitation of these resources, leading to economic stagnation and poverty. The Moroccan government has invested heavily in the region's infrastructure and economic development, but the lack of recognition of the Sahrawi people's right to self-determination has limited the potential for sustainable economic growth (Amnesty International 2020).

The conflict has also had a significant impact on regional stability and security. The unresolved dispute has fuelled tensions between Morocco and neighbouring Algeria, which supports the Sahrawi independence movement. The presence of armed groups in the region has led to security concerns and has been used to justify the militarisation of the conflict (Zunes 2018). The prolonged conflict has also hindered regional cooperation and integration, with implications for trade and economic development.

In addition, the protracted nature of the conflict has had significant psychological effects on the Sahrawi people. Living in refugee camps for decades and experiencing ongoing violence and instability has led to high rates of depression, anxiety, and trauma (Mundy 2013). The lack of progress towards a resolution has led to a sense of hopelessness and despair among many Sahrawis, contributing to a sense of disenfranchisement and disengagement from political processes (Zunes 2018).

### **3.12 Protracted Conflict and Peace Education**

Protracted conflicts, such as the Western Sahara Conflict, can have a significant impact on civilians and their relationships with their neighbours. When individuals are divided along different sides of a conflict, it can create a sense of distrust and hostility, which can be difficult to overcome. Protracted conflicts can lead to a breakdown in relationships between neighbours and communities, as well as an increase in violence and social tensions (Galtung 2018). In particular, the Western Sahara Conflict has been known to cause tensions between Moroccans and Sahrawis living in the region, as they are often seen as being on opposing sides of the conflict. Peace education can play an important role in transforming these broken relationships during a protracted conflict. By providing individuals with the tools and knowledge necessary to communicate effectively and resolve conflicts peacefully, peace education can help to build trust and understanding.

According to a report by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), peace education contributes to the transformation of attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate violence and conflict, and promotes the values of respect, tolerance, and empathy

(UNESCO 2018). According to UNESCO (2018), there are several examples of peace education initiatives that have contributed to transforming attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate violence and conflict, and to promoting the values of respect, tolerance, and empathy.

One example is the Peace Education Programme (PEP), which was developed by the Prem Rawat Foundation and has been implemented in several countries worldwide. The PEP is a multimedia-based programme that aims to help individuals discover their inner resources for peace and to promote a culture of peace in their communities. The programme has been shown to reduce stress and increase feelings of well-being and personal empowerment among participants (Prem Rawat Foundation n.d.).

Another example is the Peace Education Initiative in Rwanda, which was launched in 1995 with the aim of promoting reconciliation and social cohesion in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide. The initiative includes a range of activities, including teacher training, community dialogues, and the development of peace clubs in schools. The initiative has been credited with helping to promote interethnic understanding and dialogue and has contributed to a reduction in violence and conflict in the country (Ministry of Education of Rwanda 2007).

In Colombia, the Escuela Nueva (New School) programme has integrated peace education into the national curriculum. The programme aims to promote a culture of peace in schools and communities through the development of values such as empathy, respect, and cooperation. The programme has been shown to improve academic performance, increase student engagement, and promote social cohesion and conflict resolution skills (Columbia University Teachers College n.d.). These examples demonstrate how peace education can contribute to transforming attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate violence and conflict, and promote the values of respect, tolerance, and empathy, as highlighted in the UNESCO report.

By promoting these values, peace education can help to bridge the divide between Moroccans and Sahrawis, and foster a sense of unity and cooperation. Peace education can also provide individuals with a safe space to discuss their experiences and perspectives on the conflict, which can be important for promoting mutual understanding and empathy. By providing individuals with a

platform to share their stories and perspectives, peace education can help to break down stereotypes.

The International Institute for Peace Education (IIPE) emphasises the importance of peace education in fostering positive attitudes towards peace and nonviolence. In their research, they found that peace education programmes can promote empathy and compassion, encourage critical thinking, and develop conflict resolution skills (IIPE 2019). A study by the European Wergeland Centre (EWC) found that peace education can contribute to the transformation of attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate violence and conflict by promoting democratic values and human rights, as well as encouraging active citizenship and participation (EWC 2018).

The Global Campaign for Peace Education (GCPE) highlights the role of peace education in promoting social and emotional learning (SEL). SEL is defined as "the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions" (GCPE 2021: 9). By promoting SEL through peace education, individuals can learn to manage conflicts, develop positive relationships, and promote empathy and respect for others.

While the Western Sahara Conflict has created a sense of division and hostility between Moroccans and Sahrawis, peace education can play an important role in transforming these broken relationships and helping people to live peacefully together. In the context of the Western Sahara Conflict, peace education can help Moroccans and Sahrawis to understand each other's perspectives and to work towards a common goal of achieving peace and stability in the region. Through peace education, individuals can learn to respect each other's rights and culture, and to find mutually acceptable solutions to the conflict. Peace education can help to break down the walls of division and hostility that have been built up between Moroccans and Sahrawis, and to create a more inclusive and peaceful society.

### **3.13 Grassroots Efforts, Community-based Peacebuilding, and Participatory Peacebuilding**

Grassroots efforts, community-based peacebuilding, and participatory peacebuilding are all approaches to achieving peace through the active participation of individuals and communities. Each of these approaches recognises that peace is not something that can be imposed from above, but must be built from the ground up by those most affected by conflict.

Grassroots efforts involve the actions of individuals and groups at the local level who work to effect change from the bottom up. According to Choudhury and Mukherjee (2021), grassroots efforts are characterised by their focus on community empowerment and mobilisation, and their ability to generate transformative change through collective action. Grassroots efforts often involve community organising, advocacy, and direct action to address the root causes of conflict.

Community-based peacebuilding, on the other hand, emphasises the importance of local communities in creating sustainable peace. According to Lederach (1997), community-based peacebuilding involves working with communities to identify and address the underlying causes of conflict, and to develop solutions that are culturally appropriate and context-specific. This approach recognises that sustainable peace can only be achieved when it is grounded in the local context and involves the active participation of those affected by conflict.

Participatory peacebuilding refers to the active involvement of all stakeholders in the peacebuilding process, including individuals, communities, civil society organisations, and government actors. According to Galtung (1996), participatory peacebuilding involves creating spaces for dialogue, negotiation, and consensus-building, where all stakeholders can come together to develop shared solutions to the challenges they face. This approach emphasises the importance of inclusivity, transparency, and accountability in the peacebuilding process.

Despite their differences, grassroots efforts, community-based peacebuilding, and participatory peacebuilding share a number of similarities. All three approaches recognise the importance of local ownership and participation in the peacebuilding process, and emphasise the need for context-specific solutions that address the underlying causes of conflict. Moreover, all three

approaches understand that peace is a process, not an outcome, and that sustained engagement is necessary to build lasting peace.

### **3.14 Knowledge Gap**

The current state of academic research on peacebuilding in Western Sahara is limited, with little attention given to the implementation of peace education initiatives in the region. Therefore, further investigation is necessary to explore the potential of peace education as a strategy for peacebuilding in the area. One of the main areas that require further exploration is the effectiveness and impact of peace education. While some research suggests that peace education can make a significant contribution to post-conflict peacebuilding efforts, there is a need for mixed-methods research to determine its efficacy in different contexts. Moreover, it is crucial to investigate how peace education can be sustained over time and its impact enhanced.

Given the longstanding conflict in Western Sahara, the need for research on the effectiveness of peace education as a tool for peacebuilding is critical. Insights gained from Sahrawi and Moroccan participants in the region can help to shed light on the potential of peace education in such complex and challenging conflict situations. It is essential to conduct further research on peace education as a means of promoting peacebuilding in Western Sahara. By doing so, we can gain a deeper understanding of the impact and effectiveness of peace education and determine how it can be used to transform relationships and build a culture of peace in the region.

### **3.15 Conclusion**

The review of literature has shown that peace education plays a crucial role in promoting peacebuilding efforts. By equipping individuals with the necessary knowledge and skills, peace education can enable them to transform their relationships and create a culture of peace. It has become apparent that peace education can have a significant impact on societies affected by conflict, such as Western Sahara, which has been embroiled in a long-standing conflict between Morocco and the Polisario Front.

However, while peace education has shown promise as a peacebuilding tool, there is still much work to be done in Western Sahara. The conflict has persisted for decades, and efforts to resolve it have been largely unsuccessful. As such, further research and action are needed to make progress in peacebuilding efforts in the region. To this end, the following chapters explore the use of action research as a means of transforming relationships between Moroccans and Sahrawis and building a culture of peace. Action research is a collaborative process that involves engaging with the community and developing solutions that are both practical and effective. By involving both Moroccans and Sahrawis in this process, the aim is to promote understanding and cooperation between the two groups.



## **Chapter Four**

# **Peace Education: Its Historical Background, Use, Effectiveness, and Challenges**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter will centre on an exploration of peace education's potential in facilitating peacebuilding and fostering positive relationships within conflict settings. The primary aim is to conduct an extensive review of literature on the history and conceptualisation of peace education. The focus will also be on assessing the success of peace education initiatives implemented in different countries that have experienced violent conflicts. In analysing effective peace education programmes, the chapter will scrutinise their objectives, subject matter, approach, and appraisal methods. Additionally, the significance of cultural awareness and inclusivity in the formulation and execution of peace education programmes will be emphasised. Ultimately, the chapter will delve into the application of peace education in the Western Sahara region.

Through this comprehensive literature review, the chapter seeks to provide a solid foundation for the subsequent analysis of the use of peace education in the Western Sahara region. The chapter also identifies gaps in the existing literature and makes recommendations for future research on the topic. Overall, this chapter serves as a crucial theoretical framework for understanding the potential of peace education as a tool for peacebuilding.

### **4.2 What is Peace Education?**

Peace education is a process of imparting knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that promote the understanding of peace and nonviolence as a way of life. According to the United Nations General Assembly (2002), peace education is a means of empowering individuals to renounce violence, resolve conflicts peacefully, and promote a culture of peace. The UN recognises peace education as a fundamental human right, based on the belief that peace is an inherent human right (Reardon

1987). The aim of peace education is to create a society in which peaceful conflict resolution is the norm and violence is no longer seen as a viable option.

Implementing peace education programmes can be challenging due to deeply ingrained beliefs and attitudes sustained over generations. Sadigbayli (2006) suggests that these attitudes and perceptions are difficult to change because they are shaped by contextual and situational factors that promote intergroup conflict. However, Navarro-Castro and Nario-Galace (2008) argue that peace education seeks to transform negative attitudes and perceptions by building awareness, developing concern, and challenging personal and social action. By doing so, people can live, relate, and create conditions and systems that actualise nonviolence and justice.

Peace education can be delivered at different levels of education, including primary, secondary, and tertiary education, as well as in non-formal and informal settings. It can also be incorporated into various subjects, including social studies, history, literature, and art, among others. The objective is to instil values of nonviolence, tolerance, respect, empathy, and understanding in individuals to enable them to contribute to building peaceful and just societies.

The benefits of peace education are well documented. Research has shown that peace education can lead to a reduction in violent behaviour, improved interpersonal relationships, and greater civic engagement (Christie and Tawil 2011; Enright and Coyle 1998; Mestre *et al.* 2011). Additionally, peace education has been found to promote conflict resolution skills, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities (Nussbaum 2013).

### **4.3 The Beginnings of the Field of Peace Education**

Previously, education was thought to have the potential to promote peace. However, during both World Wars, education was utilised to instil extreme nationalism and indoctrinate students. To counteract this trend, UNESCO introduced the concept of "education for world citizenship", arguing that "peace must be constructed in the minds of men" as "wars begin in the minds of men" (UNESCO 1945). UNESCO has since sought to advance international peace and the common good of humanity through education by developing international proposals on how to enhance curricula and teacher training. Initially, peace education focused on studying the causes of war and strategies

to reduce or eradicate direct violence (Tinker 2016). During the 1960s and 1970s, peace educators such as Johan Galtung expanded peace education to include not just direct violence, but also structural and cultural violence. Peace educators around the world have adapted and implemented peace education programmes to address violence in their specific social and political contexts. There are various examples of this adaptation, such as Japan's "a-bomb education" in response to fears following the atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and South America's "development education" in response to violence caused by power and underdevelopment. Northern Ireland initiated a peace education programme called "education for mutual understanding" in the late 1980s to reintegrate divided Catholic and Protestant communities, while the US and UK offered "nuclear education" in the 1980s to prevent a "nuclear holocaust" from occurring.

Peace education is a relatively recent addition to the field of peacebuilding, with its potential as a tool to foster sustainable peace gaining recognition only in recent years (Tinker 2016). The underlying premise is that peace education can provide succeeding generations with the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to handle conflicts non-violently and promote a culture of peace (United Nations 1998). As noted by Bajaj (2011), peace education has become an increasingly important aspect of educational programmes around the world, particularly in the context of conflict-affected regions. In fact, numerous studies have found that peace education can have positive effects on attitudes toward peace, conflict resolution skills, and non-violent behaviour (Bajaj 2011; Salomon and Cairns 2010).

The goals of peace education are multi-faceted, but they all centre around the idea of promoting a culture of peace. This includes teaching people about the root causes of conflict, providing them with the skills to resolve conflicts nonviolently, promoting respect for human rights, and fostering a sense of global citizenship and responsibility (United Nations 1998). According to the Berghof Foundation (2020), peace education programmes should also aim to promote critical thinking skills and encourage dialogue and collaboration among different groups.

Peace education can take many different forms, ranging from formal classroom-based education to community-based programmes and workshops. It can be targeted at all age groups, from young children to adults, and can be delivered through a range of mediums, including textbooks, online

resources, and interactive workshops (Bajaj 2011). As noted by Macnair-Semands and Raby (2017), peace education can also be integrated into broader education initiatives, such as education for sustainable development, to promote a more holistic approach to peacebuilding.

The potential of peace education to promote sustainable peace is increasingly being recognised, and it is now seen as an essential component of any effective peacebuilding strategy. By providing people with the skills, knowledge, and attitudes they need to build a culture of peace, peace education can help to create a more peaceful, just, and equitable world for all (United Nations 1998; Tinker 2016).

#### **4.4 Peace Education in Peacebuilding**

The meaning of peace education can differ depending on the approach and societal context in which it is applied. According to UNICEF, peace education involves promoting the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that facilitate behavioural changes, allowing individuals of all ages to prevent both overt and structural conflict and violence. The goal is to foster peaceful conflict resolution and create an environment that is conducive to peace, whether it be on an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national, or international level.

This definition is intended to be both specific and general, to address the many social and political contexts around the world (Salomon 2009). Attempts to categorise various peace education programmes under one umbrella term have been met with criticism from some peace educators, particularly those working in protracted conflict settings. Salomon argues that using a broad definition of peace education overlooks the significant differences between various types of peace education. Furthermore, it assumes that teaching concepts such as human rights, democracy, and nonviolence will automatically translate into specific behaviours and actions that are relevant to each context. Galtung and other scholars have criticised the UN for utilising a broad and unsuitable stratocratic paradigm that is not always contextually or locally applicable (Galtung *et al.* 1986 ). This broadness in semantics has hindered the field's scholarly progress in terms of theoretical development, research, and programme evaluation, according to experts in the field (Tinker 2016). To advance the field of peace education academically, Salomon proposes analysing and

categorising programmes based on the socio-political context in which they occur. Salomon identifies three categories: 1) areas experiencing or emerging from prolonged conflict (such as Northern Ireland, Kosovo, Israel, Cyprus, and Western Sahara); 2) regions with nonviolent inter-ethnic tensions based on ethnocentrism (such as immigrants in Belgium, and African-American, Hispanic, and Indigenous people in the US); and 3) relatively peaceful regions (such as Sweden, Norway, and Switzerland) (Tinker 2016). These categories are based on the difficulties programmes encounter, their objectives, and the approach taken regarding different participant subgroups (Salomon 2009).

In countries that have experienced prolonged conflicts, the development of peace education programmes remains an ongoing effort. These conflicts result in significant human suffering, economic ruin, political and governance breakdowns, and developmental setbacks, and often involve a combination of ideological, political, and resource-related issues intertwined with communal and ethnic identity concerns (Dudouet 2006). Unlike interstate wars, civilians are often the primary targets due to their community affiliations. Depending on the duration and intensity of violence, protracted conflicts can last multiple generations. The UN formulated various approaches in *An Agenda for Peace* to address the aftermath of recent disasters, which include "preventive diplomacy", "peacemaking", "peacekeeping", and "peacebuilding". This discussion focuses on peacebuilding, as it pertains to the protracted Western Sahara Conflict. The UN and private voluntary organisations define peacebuilding as a strategy that seeks to "identify and support structures that promote peace and instil a sense of confidence and well-being among individuals," while also addressing the root causes of conflict (Boutros-Ghali 1992).

Since the conclusion of the Cold War, UN peacebuilding operations have grown increasingly ambitious and intricate (Tinker 2016). In the initial stages, these operations were focused on reconstructing institutions and providing essential services such as security and the rule of law. During the earlier peacebuilding efforts, between 1989 and 2005, education was not considered a crucial priority, with only 11 of the 37 peace agreements specifically mentioning it (Save the Children Norway 2005). However, in the late 1990s, the global community began to change its priorities and incorporate education into its peacebuilding strategy. This shift was prompted by evidence indicating that the substance, structure, and delivery of education could be hampering

peacebuilding efforts by perpetuating the social divisions that triggered the conflict initially (Bush and Saltarelli 2000).

In countries such as Lebanon, Northern Ireland, Mozambique, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, education has been used as a tool for cultural repression, manipulating history for political gain, and reinforcing inequality, segregation, and stereotypes (Tawil and Harley 2004). Despite recognising the negative impacts of education in conflict, the international community has also come to acknowledge the positive and strategic role it can play in post-conflict societies. Currently, peace education programmes are included in various education-related projects and initiatives supported by the international community. By incorporating peace education programmes into both formal and informal education systems, the international community believes it can aid peacebuilding efforts by lessening the effects of conflicts (OHCHR 2018). Education is now widely acknowledged as a significant contributor to peace processes by promoting national reconciliation and peacebuilding (Bush and Saltarelli 2000). Peace education programmes are essential in bridging top-down and bottom-up approaches to peacebuilding (Azar 1990).

Peace educators argue that a comprehensive approach to peace education is necessary, one that promotes inclusive practices incorporating global, social, political, moral, and personal dimensions of peace (Salomon and Nevo 2002). This approach complements and supports the United Nations' efforts to encourage a "culture of peace."

#### **4.5 Distinctions between Various Peace Education Programmes**

Different concepts of peace have been proposed by scholars in the field of peace studies, leading to different goals and approaches for peace education programmes. According to Reardon (1988), there are three concepts of peace: negative peace, positive peace, and holistic peace. Negative peace refers to the absence of violence and conflict, while positive peace involves the creation of conditions that prevent violence and promote justice. Holistic peace emphasises the interconnectedness of different aspects of peace, such as social, economic, and environmental dimensions.

The concept of peace that a peace education programme adopts will shape its goals and approaches. For example, if the programme adopts the negative peace concept, it may focus on conflict resolution and the reduction of violence in a particular region. Conversely, if the programme adopts the positive peace concept, it may focus on addressing the root causes of violence, such as poverty, inequality, and discrimination.

Furthermore, the specific tasks assigned to peace education programmes also depend on the socio-political context of the region or country in which they are implemented. In some regions, peace education may aim to address the aftermath of violent conflicts, while in others, it may focus on preventing future conflicts. In addition, peace education can target different levels of society, including individuals, communities, and institutions (United Nations 1998).

According to Salomon and Cairns (2010), the goals of peace education programmes can be classified into three categories: cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioural. Cognitive goals aim to increase knowledge and understanding of peace, conflict, and violence. Attitudinal goals aim to change attitudes and beliefs about peace and violence, while behavioural goals aim to promote positive behaviours that contribute to peace. Salomon categorises peace education programmes into three broad categories, which are summarised in the table below.

**Table 2. Categories of Peace Education**

Types of Peace Education programmes	Peace Education in Regions of Protracted Conflicts	Peace Education in Regions of Interethnic Conflicts	Peace Education in Regions of Experienced Tranquillity
Context	Violent Conflicts	Interethnic or Racial Tension	Absence of inter-group violence
Goals	Negative Peace	Negative Peace	Positive Peace
Cases in Point	Western Sahara Conflict	United States of America	Norway

Salomon, G. (2002). The nature of peace education. In Salomon, G. and Nevo, B. (Eds.), *Peace education*, 6-8.

Salomon emphasises the significance of distinguishing between different peace education programmes, particularly in regions of protracted conflict where conflict resolution elements are often involved. The statement highlights the importance of developing peace education programmes that are tailored to the specific needs of groups involved in protracted conflicts. Such programmes should not be created using a "one size fits all" approach, but should rather consider

the unique dynamics of each conflict. Salomon is emphasising the need to differentiate between different types of peace education programmes. While some peace education programmes may be focused on building conflict resolution skills, others may be aimed at promoting peacebuilding or reconciliation. In regions of protracted conflict, where tensions are high, it is important to consider which type of programme is most appropriate for the context.

For example, peer mediation programmes may be effective in promoting conflict resolution in peaceful regions, but may not be as relevant in areas of ongoing conflict like the Western Sahara. In these areas, where the conflict is deeply rooted and has been ongoing for many years, a more comprehensive approach to peace education may be needed. Therefore, it is essential to be cautious when creating a peace education programme for groups in conflict. Merely adopting techniques and tools used in conflict resolution programmes or other forms of peace education implemented in peaceful regions, such as peer mediation in schools, without considering the specificities of each conflict, may be irrelevant in areas of ongoing conflict, like the Western Sahara.

A tailored approach to peace education in conflict-affected areas should consider the underlying causes of the conflict, the historical and cultural context of the region, and the perspectives and needs of the different groups involved. Such an approach would also recognise that conflict resolution is just one component of a larger peacebuilding process, and that other factors such as reconciliation, social and economic development, and political reform may also be necessary to address the root causes of the conflict.

#### **4.6 Developing Partnerships with Local Agencies**

Collaborating with local agencies is crucial for the success of peace education programmes. These agencies include governmental and non-governmental organisations, community groups, and other stakeholders involved in educational and peacebuilding efforts. However, creating and maintaining these collaborations can be challenging.

One challenge is that peace educators and practitioners must work to understand the cultural and political context of the local community, as well as the goals and priorities of local agencies. They must also ensure that their programme aligns with the values and needs of the community. This



requires ongoing dialogue and communication with local partners. Another challenge is that local agencies may have different levels of resources, experience, and expertise in peacebuilding and education. Educators and practitioners must work to develop strategies that can leverage the strengths of local agencies, while also addressing their limitations.

Despite these challenges, there are many potential benefits to collaborating with local agencies. Local agencies can provide access to resources, expertise, and networks that can enhance the quality and reach of peace education programmes. They can also help to increase community engagement and ownership of the programme, which can lead to greater sustainability over time.

To create and cultivate collaborations with local agencies, peace educators and practitioners must first identify potential partners and develop a shared understanding of the goals and objectives of the programme. They must also work to establish trust and build relationships with local partners, which requires open communication, respect for cultural differences, and a willingness to listen to and learn from others. Finally, they must work to develop strategies for shared decision-making, resource-sharing, and ongoing evaluation and feedback. By doing so, educators and practitioners can build strong and sustainable partnerships that can support the growth and success of peace education programmes in their community.

Peace education workshops also can complement the efforts of the United Nations in promoting peacebuilding and conflict resolution in the Western Sahara region. The United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) has been working towards a political solution to the conflict through negotiations between the parties involved, with the goal of conducting a referendum on self-determination for the people of Western Sahara (United Nations 2021). However, there are limitations to the UN's efforts, as the peace process has been stalled for several years due to disagreements between the parties and the lack of progress in implementing the terms of previous agreements (United Nations 2021).

Peace education workshops can fill in the gaps in the UN's efforts by providing a space for Moroccans and Sahrawis to engage in dialogue and build relationships based on empathy, understanding, and respect. By addressing the underlying causes of the conflict, such as identity, culture, and history, peace education can help to reduce tensions and build trust between the

parties, which can contribute to a more conducive environment for negotiations and peacebuilding efforts (Bajaj 2020).

Additionally, peace education workshops can empower individuals to take ownership of the peacebuilding process and become advocates for peace in their communities. By providing participants with knowledge and skills on conflict resolution, communication, and collaboration, peace education can help to build a grassroots movement for peace that can complement the efforts of the UN and other international actors (CABSA 2019).

#### **4.8 Peace Education Programmes in Regions of Protracted Conflict**

According to UNICEF (2021), peace education programmes are essential in regions of protracted conflict, where conflicts have been ongoing for an extended period, and peace seems elusive. Such conflicts often involve multiple rounds of violence, failed negotiations (such as the Western Sahara Conflict), and various attempts at conflict resolution. In such regions, peace education programmes can contribute to promoting peace and social justice, fostering social cohesion, and reducing the likelihood of further conflict (UNICEF 2021).

Peace education programmes involve various approaches, including formal education, non-formal education (workshops), and community-based approaches (UNICEF 2021). These programmes focus on providing individuals with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to become active agents of peace. Through these programmes, individuals learn how to understand and manage conflict and build relationships based on mutual respect and cooperation (UNICEF 2021).

There have been several successful examples of peace education programmes in regions of protracted conflict. For instance, in the Middle East, several peace education programmes have been implemented in Israel and Palestine, where the conflict has been ongoing for several decades. One such programme is the Peace Education Program (PEP) implemented by the Israeli-Palestinian Center for Research and Information (IPCRI) (IPCRI 2020). The PEP aims to promote peace and understanding by teaching conflict resolution skills, building relationships between Israelis and Palestinians, and promoting a culture of peace (IPCRI 2020).

Similarly, in Colombia, the implementation of peace education programmes played a crucial role in promoting reconciliation and rebuilding social cohesion following decades of conflict between the government and various rebel groups. One such programme is the Learning to Live Together programme implemented by UNICEF and the Colombian Ministry of Education. This programme aims to promote intercultural understanding and build peace by teaching conflict resolution skills, promoting respect for diversity, and building relationships based on mutual respect and cooperation (UNICEF 2021).

According to UNICEF (2021), peace education programmes in the context of protracted conflicts encompass a diverse array of practices, challenges, goals, and activities. For instance, these programmes may involve conflict resolution and promoting peaceful attitudes, but they may also face obstacles such as conflicting collective narratives, mutually exclusive historical memories, and deeply ingrained beliefs about the conflict and the opponent (UNICEF 2021). These programmes may aim to cultivate understanding, tolerance, empathy, and a peaceful outlook and seek to drive societal changes at various levels, including intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, and international. To achieve these goals, they may involve curriculum development, teacher retraining, addressing structural and policy changes, promoting community initiatives, and engaging in public awareness campaigns. The different conceptual frameworks underlying these programmes envision different routes to peace. However, peace education remains a complex and contested concept, with no agreed-upon definition or means of achieving it. Therefore, each programme tends to project its own vision of an ideal society and the means to achieve it.

The field of peace education was a result of peace advocacy and founding studies of nonviolent approaches to the resolution of conflict (Fitzduff 2006). The diversity of terms used to describe peace education, such as conflict resolution, coexistence education, human rights education, civic education, and multicultural education, signifies the broad scope and multiple dimensions encompassed within this field. Thus, there is a need to be clear and specific about the concept and meaning of peace education that would guide practice in the regions of protracted conflicts.

While it may seem obvious that such peacebuilding interventions should primarily focus on eradicating and preventing physical violence, the evolution of the concept of peace has shown that

the absence of war is a necessary prerequisite for any peace definition. Even though a formal truce or peace agreement may result in negative peace (i.e., the absence of direct physical violence), this alone is not sufficient to achieve sustainable peace.

To foster reconciliation, empathy, and mutual trust, which are essential goals of peace education in regions of protracted conflict, a broader approach is required. This involves creating an environment of positive peace, which goes beyond the mere absence of physical violence, to ensure peaceful coexistence among different ethnic and religious groups and prevent structural inequalities and injustices. (Groff 2001).

Salomon's categorisation of the objectives of peace education programmes yields several proposals. Due to the intricacies of protracted conflicts, it is necessary to view opposing parties as groups rather than isolated individuals. According to Salomon (2002), peace education initiatives in regions experiencing prolonged conflict focus on the socio-psychological components of the conflict, including the group's identity, history, and collective narrative. It is important to address these factors since the collective narratives of conflicting groups, influenced by their historical memories, play a role in perpetuating and sustaining conflicts (Salomon 2002). Conversely, these narratives can be utilised to foster positive attitudes and promote peaceful coexistence between groups.

Salomon (2002) also states that acknowledging the painful memories of the other group's collective narrative is necessary to overcome conflicts. This does not mean that one must abandon one's own narrative, but rather to accept and acknowledge the legitimacy of the other side's narrative as a first step toward acceptance and mutual legitimisation. Empathy plays an important role in reducing stereotypes of "others" and fostering acceptance of the other group's narrative. However, accepting the other side's narrative can be challenging because of the opposing groups' collective identities of "good Us" vs "evil Them" (Salomon 2002).

Ultimately, peace education aims to create an environment in which both sides can critically assess their wrongdoings and accept the other side's story, leading to a willingness to interact and coexist peacefully. To improve intergroup relations, it is necessary to develop empathy and trust towards another group. Prejudices contribute to maintaining negative attitudes toward other groups and

create a psychological distance between them. Fostering empathy can reduce this distance (Stephan and Finlay 1999).

Empathy can be divided into two types: cognitive empathy, which involves taking another person's perspective, and emotional empathy, which involves having an emotional response to another person (Salomon 2002). Empathy can have a positive influence on attitudes and behaviour, while a lack of empathy can contribute to negative attitudes and behaviour. Therefore, peace education programmes that increase empathy can have a positive impact on intergroup relations.

Salomon also highlights the significance of comprehending non-violent methods to attain objectives, which is essential for coexistence and reconciliation (Bar-Tal 2004). Therefore, peace education initiatives in areas of prolonged conflicts should educate people about the nature and root causes of violence and conflict (Fisher 2002). The idea is that by learning about the devastating impacts of violence and conflict, individuals will refrain from resorting to violent measures to solve problems (Harris and Morrison 2003).

#### **4.7 Peace Education Programmes Fostering Coexistence and Reconciliation between Opposing Groups**

Peace education programmes in areas experiencing prolonged conflict can serve as tools for peacebuilding and reconciliation, with the ultimate goal of transforming societies and maintaining fragile peace between nations or communities. These programmes aim to achieve "education for coexistence" by addressing the four key goals proposed by Salomon: understanding the socio-psychological aspects of conflict, accepting collective narratives, fostering empathy and trust, and understanding the use of non-violence to achieve goals. Through achieving these goals, peace education programmes can improve intergroup relations and lead to reconciliation between opposing groups, which is a necessary step for achieving coexistence.

Bar-Tal (2004) asserts that the goal of education for coexistence is to create a foundation for peaceful relations between groups by establishing a sense of recognition and resolving disagreements without resorting to violence. In his view, coexistence represents the minimum level of achievement necessary to establish harmonious inter-group relations. He suggests that even

though coexistence may be considered a modest goal, achieving it after years of conflict represents significant progress.

Peace education programmes aimed at improving intergroup attitudes and mutual perceptions in protracted conflicts often use analytical tools from social and peace psychology disciplines due to the significant role that psychological dynamics play in such conflicts, as argued by Bar-Tal (2004) and Pettigrew (1998). However, achieving coexistence in such conflicts is challenging due to the existence of deeply ingrained societal beliefs that are resistant to change, which impedes the implementation of peace education programmes aimed at promoting coexistence, as noted by Sadigbayli (2006). In light of this, educational processes that promote coexistence are necessary, as emphasised by Bar-Tal (2004) and Harris and Morrison (2003). The implementation of such programmes is further challenged by contextual and situational factors that contribute to intergroup conflict, as noted by Fitzduff (2006).

Bar-Tal (2004) proposes two different approaches to education for coexistence. The narrow approach aims to promote values, beliefs, attitudes, emotions, and behaviour patterns that would change attitudes and prepare the younger generation to live with new relational patterns in regard to their former adversaries through formal educational institutions such as schools. Using schools for teaching the values and skills of coexistence is advantageous because education in schools is compulsory for youth and assures the transmission of knowledge and ideas to the younger generation (Bar-Tal 2004). However, most peace education programmes target adolescents and youth aged 15-25, and there is a broad understanding that the dynamics of violence in regions of protracted conflict require immediate intervention and solutions, making it insufficient to design and implement peace education programmes solely in formal educational settings (Nevo and Brem 2002; Bar-Tal 2004). Although revising existing curricula and introducing new themes that promote a culture of peace and tolerance towards others can produce results in the long term and maintain the sustainability of acquired changes in future generations, peace education must provide immediate solutions to the threats at hand in protracted conflicts. Harris and Morrison point out that a major disadvantage of peace education is that it offers a long-term solution to immediate threats, and for peace education to be effective, it must transform ways of thinking that have been developed through generations (Harris and Morrison 2003: 28).

According to Bums (1996), peace education programmes in formal educational institutions have limited effects in reaching a wider audience outside certain age groups. As a result, adult education programmes in peace education have emerged in the past decades, emphasising the need for involving all levels of society (Harris and Morrison 2003). This need is even more crucial for peace education programmes in regions of protracted conflict, where grassroots groups can be reached more effectively through non-formal educational settings (Bums 1996). However, this does not mean that such programmes should not be implemented within the formal education system.

This study focuses on exploring the feasibility of implementing peace education programmes in non-formal educational settings, targeting young adults residing in Western Sahara, a disputed territory. The implementation and design of a peace education programme are influenced by the environment where the programme is introduced. The social, economic, and political conditions of the area will dictate the elements of the programme (Bar-Tal 2002: 30).

Bar-Tal (2002) states that societal agreement is crucial for peace education programmes to be successful. However, societal consensus may create challenges during implementation (Sadigbayli 2006). In democratic countries, government control over civil society organisations, such as NGOs, independent research institutions, and the media, is limited, making the adoption and implementation of policies for coexistence more complicated (Bar-Tal 2004).

According to Bar-Tal (2002), peace education programmes can be viewed as a challenge to certain communities, as they may threaten their power, social status, and privileges. This creates significant obstacles to implementing peace education programmes if they are perceived to go against traditional cultural values or social order (Bar-Tal 2002). As a result, it is essential to develop peace education programmes that are tailored to specific countries to address these challenges. Additionally, the existence of groups that resist changing their attitudes towards others highlights the need for societal-level strategies that can counter these efforts (Sadigbayli 2006).

#### **4.8 “Mainstreaming” Peace Education Programmes**

Peace education programmes aimed at mainstreaming have been initiated in various post-conflict environments, such as Afghanistan, Angola, Burundi, Cambodia, the Democratic Republic of

Congo, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Honduras, Lebanon, Liberia, Mozambique, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Northern Ireland, Pakistan, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Somalia, Sudan, and the former Yugoslavia (Smith and Robinson 1996). These programmes have been introduced and integrated by international actors like the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), the Hague Appeal for Peace, the Global Campaign for Peace Education (GCPE), the International Peace Research Association (IPRA), the Peace Education Centre at Columbia University Teachers College, UN agencies such as UNESCO, UNHCR, and UNICEF, donor agencies, and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) with governmental or private funding. Initially, organisations and UN agencies aimed to collaborate with national-level ministries of education and other governmental institutions to mainstream peace education in post-war education systems. UNICEF has also made efforts to introduce its peace education programmes globally. In the following section, four examples of peace education programmes are presented.

#### **4.8.1 Northern Ireland**

The Department of Education for Northern Ireland (DENI) introduced the Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU) programme in 1989 as a peace education initiative. EMU aims to instil in students the values of self-respect and respect for others, recognition of societal interdependence, understanding of cultural traditions (Protestant and Catholic), and conflict resolution through nonviolent means (Northern Ireland Curriculum Council 1990). To assess the effectiveness of EMU during its initial stages, several evaluations were conducted to identify areas for improvement (Smith and Robinson 1996). However, there is limited research on the programme's long-term impact on behavioural and attitudinal outcomes (Richardson 2011). Some have criticised EMU for not adequately addressing the root societal divisions in Irish society and for lacking universal support (Duffy 2000). Moreover, national priorities and budgetary constraints have raised concerns about the programme's sustainability. Nevertheless, EMU has been integrated into Northern Ireland's education system since 1992 (Tinker 2016).

#### **4.8.2 Sri Lanka**

The Education for Conflict Resolution (ECR) initiative in Sri Lanka was established to cultivate awareness of, and skills in, nonviolent conflict resolution, with the aim of promoting peaceful



coexistence in a society with a deep-rooted history of violence and conflict (Fountain 1999). The programme implemented various measures, such as teacher manuals and a national training college, to achieve its objectives.

Despite the initiative's noble intentions, it encountered significant challenges, including a lack of political will, insufficient teacher training, and difficulty integrating peace education into the existing curriculum. To overcome these challenges, it was necessary to adopt functional approaches to peace education programmes. These approaches involve partnering with existing institutions, designing teacher training programmes, and integrating conflict resolution skills into school curricula to create a lasting culture of peace and tolerance (Galtung 1996).

The Western Sahara conflict faces similar obstacles to the ECR initiative in Sri Lanka, such as inadequate teacher training, reluctance to implement peace education programmes, and difficulty incorporating them into the existing curriculum. Functional approaches to peace education programmes could be similarly applied to promote sustainable peace and coexistence in the Western Sahara conflict. By partnering with institutions such as schools and universities and designing teacher training programmes, an enabling environment for dialogue and coexistence could be created to facilitate conflict resolution.

International organisations and UN agencies play a crucial role in promoting and implementing functional approaches to peace education programmes in contexts like the Western Sahara conflict. Their involvement can provide technical expertise, resources, and assistance to ensure the effective implementation and sustainability of peace education programmes. Therefore, the challenges encountered by the ECR initiative in Sri Lanka are comparable to those encountered in the Western Sahara conflict, and functional approaches to peace education programmes could be similarly applied to promote sustainable peace and coexistence.

#### **4.8.3 Nepal**

The Nepal for Peace Education Project is a joint endeavour between local and international organisations aimed at establishing a programme for peace education. In 2006, the Ministry of Education and the Curriculum Development Centre partnered with UNICEF, UNESCO, and the Save the Children Foundation to create and test a four-year peace education initiative in Nepal,

which is a remarkable demonstration of successful collaboration and coordination in the education sector (Tinker 2016).

The peace education initiative has accomplished significant milestones since its inception, such as integrating peace, human rights, and civil education into the national school curricula (Thapa *et al.* 2010). The programme has also benefited around 55,000 children in Nepal, equipping them with knowledge and skills to promote peace and social harmony (Thapa *et al.* 2010). However, there has been no assessment of the programme's long-term impact and sustainability, and the evidence of its effectiveness is based solely on preliminary evaluations. Nonetheless, the "Nepal model" is being replicated in several other South Asian countries, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka (Thapa *et al.* 2010).

Numerous studies, written across various years, have emphasized the significance of peace education in promoting peaceful and inclusive societies. These studies encompass a range of research articles and papers, each contributing valuable insights into the field of peace education. For instance, in 2005, Gershon Ben-Arieh and Eileen Babbitt explored how peace education plays a crucial role in transforming conflicts in their work "Peace Education and Its Role in Peacebuilding and Conflict Transformation: A Review of the Literature." Similarly, in 1994, Carlos Alberto Torres delved into the concepts, challenges, and prospects of "Education for Peace and Conflict Resolution" in a paper published in *Comparative Education Review*. Moreover, Michalinos Zembylas's 2005 work, "Peace Education in Unpeaceful Societies: An Exploration of the Israeli–Palestinian Case," investigated the significance of peace education in regions grappling with protracted conflicts. In 2016, Mark Ginsburg, Zehavit Gross, and Andres Sandoval-Hernández discussed "The Contested Role of Education in Conflict and Fragility" in *Prospects*, shedding light on the role of education in conflict-affected environments. Ian M. Harris's article, "Building a Culture of Peace Through Education: Challenges, Strategies, and Opportunities," published in *Prospects* in 2001, examined the challenges and potential strategies in fostering a culture of peace through education. Additionally, in 2011, Uichol Juh and Julie Morton's study, "Peace Education: A Pathway to a Culture of Peace," featured in the *Journal of Peace Education*, delved into the transformative power of peace education in promoting a culture of peace. Lastly, Monisha Bajaj's 2014 work, "Peace Education and the Educational Ethos of the United Nations:

New Directions in Research," published in *The Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, explored the evolving role of peace education in the context of the United Nations. These collective studies, spanning different years, reinforce the importance of peace education in building understanding, cooperation, and conflict resolution within individuals and communities, contributing to the development of more peaceful and inclusive societies. UNESCO emphasises the role of education in preventing violence and conflict, fostering social cohesion, and promoting sustainable development (UNESCO 2017). Moreover, the Global Campaign for Peace Education states that peace education can contribute to creating a culture of peace by equipping learners with the knowledge, attitudes, and skills required to establish a more peaceful and just world (Global Campaign for Peace Education n.d.).

The Nepal for Peace Education Project is an outstanding illustration of how cooperation and coordination among local and international actors can encourage peace education initiatives. The project has achieved notable successes in integrating peace, human rights, and civil education into the national school curricula in Nepal. These successes can be utilised in the Western Sahara conflict to promote peacebuilding and social cohesion.

#### **4.8.4 Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Peace education programmes have been implemented in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) since 1995 by various international actors such as UN-based agencies, donor agencies, and international non-governmental organisations. These programmes have been successful in integrating peace into the country's educational system by providing courses and activities on various issues such as democracy, human rights, and peacebuilding. One of the most extensive programmes, Education for Peace (EFP), has been operating for 12 years and has reached millions of students, teachers, and school staff. EFP has been recognised and endorsed by participating school communities, the BiH Ministry of Foreign Affairs, all 13 Ministers of Education, and eight pedagogical institutes. Efforts have also been made to incorporate EFP into all eight public universities to ensure that future generations are trained in peace education, making it a permanent feature of the country's educational system.

Implementing peace education programmes in BiH has assisted in the reform and rebuilding of the country's educational system, fostering a culture of tolerance, peace, and healing. These programmes have been successful due to their integration into the existing curriculum and educational structures, positive feedback from participants, and their incorporation into the country's educational system. This success can provide a useful lesson for addressing the Western Sahara conflict. Multiple international actors have been involved in attempting to resolve the conflict, but it remains unresolved. One potential approach to address the conflict is through the implementation of peace education programmes that could promote a culture of peace, tolerance, and respect for human rights among the Sahrawi people and other parties to the conflict.

These programmes could teach conflict resolution skills, dialogue, and reconciliation, contributing to building trust and fostering a shared vision of a peaceful future. Similar to the Education for Peace programme in BiH, peace education programmes in Western Sahara could be implemented in schools, universities, and other educational institutions across the region. The programmes could be tailored to address the specific needs of the Sahrawi people and other stakeholders, involving the participation of local communities, civil society organisations, and traditional leaders to ensure their sustainability and relevance.

To promote peace education in divided and post-conflict societies, international organisations and UN agencies are emphasising collaboration with local actors and a grassroots level approach. This approach aims to create culturally relevant and innovative peace education programmes that address the unique needs and challenges of local communities. Such collaborations have been successful in developing effective and sustainable peace education programmes that foster long-term peacebuilding and promote social cohesion at the community level.

#### **4.9 Mainstreaming Peace Education in Morocco**

Morocco has made several attempts to integrate peace education into its educational system. In 2009, the Moroccan government adopted a new educational framework that emphasises the promotion of citizenship and human rights, social justice, and democratic values (Boumalk 2012).

This framework advocates for a participatory and inclusive educational system that fosters critical thinking, creativity, and communication skills, essential for conflict resolution and social cohesion.

In 2014, Morocco launched a National programme for Education and Training that aims to modernise the educational system and enhance its quality and relevance (El Hamdi 2015). This programme includes the promotion of values and principles of citizenship, social cohesion, and human rights as cross-cutting themes in all subjects and grade levels. Morocco has also initiated several projects and programmes to enhance peace education. For example, the Moroccan Association for Citizenship and Human Rights Education launched a project in 2010 to introduce citizenship education in schools (Boumalk 2012). The project aims to develop teaching resources, train teachers, and promote extracurricular activities that promote civic education, human rights, and democratic values.

Despite the efforts to mainstream peace education in Morocco, several challenges hinder its effective implementation. One of the significant challenges is the lack of political will and commitment to peace education. The government has not allocated adequate resources to promote peace education effectively (Boumalk 2012). The education system also faces challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, limited teacher training, and outdated curricula. Moreover, traditional cultural and religious practices may undermine the promotion of peace education. For instance, Moroccan society has a patriarchal culture that values masculinity, dominance, and control (Barouti 2020). This culture may encourage conflict rather than cooperation, which undermines the efforts to promote peace education.

Despite the challenges and failures, several possibilities exist for mainstreaming peace education in the Moroccan educational system. One possibility is the development of partnerships between the government, civil society, and international organisations to promote peace education (Barouti 2020). These partnerships can provide financial resources, expertise, and networks that can enhance the quality and relevance of peace education programmes. Another possibility is the use of technology to enhance peace education. Morocco has a high mobile phone penetration rate, and over 22 million Moroccans use the internet (Bloomberg 2020). These technologies can be

harnessed to provide accessible and interactive peace education content, such as online courses, podcasts, and social media campaigns.

The attempts to mainstream peace education in Morocco may have little impact on the Western Sahara conflict, primarily because the government still controls the narrative and does not discuss the issue. This government narrative is supported by the country's media, educational system, and other institutions, which present a one-sided view of the conflict, emphasising Morocco's sovereignty over the Western Sahara and ignoring the Polisario Front's perspective. Moreover, the Moroccan government restricts the discussion of the Western Sahara conflict in public discourse and suppresses any dissenting views, including those advocating for the Polisario Front's demands (Zoubir 2019). This situation undermines the potential impact of peace education initiatives in promoting dialogue, mutual understanding, and conflict resolution.

#### **4.10 Mainstreaming Peace Education in the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR)**

The Western Sahara Conflict has significantly affected the educational system of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), which is controlled by the Polisario Front, due to its dependence on external aid and limited resources to incorporate peace education into its curriculum. Nonetheless, various efforts have been made to integrate peace education into the SADR's educational system.

One of the main challenges facing the SADR is the lack of access to resources and funding to support the implementation of peace education programmes. As Alao and Oyewole (2018) note, the SADR's educational system is highly reliant on external aid, and this has created a situation where resources for peace education are limited. Moreover, the SADR's political instability and limited international recognition have also made it challenging to attract support for peace education initiatives.

Despite these challenges, there have been some successes in integrating peace education into the SADR educational system. For example, the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) has supported the development of a peace education curriculum in the Sahrawi

refugee camps (Abu-Ghararah & Reis, 2020). This curriculum is designed to promote peaceful coexistence and conflict resolution skills among the refugee children. Another potential opportunity for mainstreaming peace education in the SADR is through the country's cultural traditions. As Alao and Oyewole (2018) note, the Sahrawi people have a long history of oral traditions that emphasise peace and harmony. By incorporating these traditions into the educational system, the SADR could potentially promote peace education in a way that is culturally relevant and accessible.

However, there have also been some failures in mainstreaming peace education in the SADR. One of the main issues is the lack of political will among the country's leadership to prioritise peace education initiatives. As Abu-Ghararah and Reis (2020) note, the SADR government has not taken significant steps to integrate peace education into its curriculum, despite the potential benefits of doing so.

#### **4.11 Learning Styles and Peace Education**

Learning styles refer to the various ways individuals process and retain information. The three primary learning styles are visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. Visual learners process information best through visual aids such as diagrams, charts, and videos. They prefer to read instructions or see pictures rather than listen to someone explain a concept. Auditory learners, on the other hand, prefer to learn through hearing. They learn best by listening to lectures, discussions, or podcasts. Kinesthetic learners learn best through movement and physical activities. They prefer to touch, feel, and experience things to understand them better (Kumar and Kumar 2018; Muktar and Ayodele 2019).

Research has demonstrated that teaching methods aligned with students' learning styles improve learning outcomes (Felder and Brent 2005; Fleming and Mills 1992). Therefore, it is crucial for educators to consider students' learning styles when designing their teaching strategies. In the context of peace education, various teaching methods can support different learning styles. For example, visual learners may benefit from visual aids such as videos and infographics that illustrate concepts related to conflict resolution and peaceful coexistence. Auditory learners may benefit

from listening to podcasts, discussions, and debates that explore diverse perspectives on peace education topics. Kinesthetic learners may benefit from experiential learning activities, such as role-playing or simulations, that allow them to apply peacebuilding skills in real-world situations (Bajwa *et al.* 2021). Understanding students' learning styles is crucial for designing effective teaching strategies in peace education. By utilising teaching methods that align with different learning styles, educators can improve students' engagement and learning outcomes.

Participatory and experiential learning are teaching methods that are highly effective in promoting critical thinking, empathy, and collaborative problem-solving skills among learners. Participatory learning involves active engagement by the learners in the learning process, where they take part in activities that require critical thinking, analysis, and reflection. Experiential learning, on the other hand, is a process that involves learning through experience and reflection on that experience.

According to Mawla and Kawaguchi (2021), participatory learning is an effective approach in peace education as it provides opportunities for learners to engage in active and meaningful discussions and activities that promote peacebuilding skills. They argue that this approach fosters a sense of community and encourages learners to work together towards a common goal, which promotes peace and social justice. Similarly, Hinton and LaBelle (2015) argue that experiential learning is an effective approach to teaching peace and conflict resolution skills. They contend that experiential learning provides learners with the opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge in real-life situations, enhancing their understanding and appreciation of the complexities of conflict and peacebuilding. The benefits of participatory and experiential learning in promoting peace education have also been highlighted by Furco and Root (2010). They argue that these teaching methods promote civic engagement and social responsibility, encouraging learners to take an active role in their communities and work towards positive social change.

#### **4.12 Evaluation of Peace Education Programmes**

A study by Neve and Brem (2002) found that only a few evaluations have been carried out on peace education programmes in the context of protracted conflicts. The lack of a clear conceptual framework and empirical evaluative evidence has led many within the field to criticise and even



question the use of peace education as a post-conflict peacebuilding tool (Gur'Ze-ev 2001). Existing evaluations of peace education programmes have been mainly limited to project descriptions and subjective opinions, lacking the use of proper evaluation methodology. The underdevelopment of evaluation in the field can be attributed to the limited awareness of its significance and efficacy, as well as the absence of evaluation expertise, time and budget constraints, and a general reluctance to conduct evaluations (Neve and Berm 2002). Furthermore, the lack of useful analyses for resolving or managing protracted conflicts is a major concern in the field, but this inadequacy is due to the complexity of such conflicts (Steinburg 2004). While some evaluations show promising results, they are based on a limited number of case studies. So far, evaluations of peace education programmes have been limited to formative or summative assessments, which aim to improve the programme or measure the impact of peace education instruction on participants, respectively (Harris 2003). In the context of protracted conflicts, there have been only a handful of case studies that describe and evaluate peace education programmes, including those in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cyprus, Northern Ireland, Israel-Palestine, and South Africa.

Practitioners acknowledge the need for evaluation to identify best practices, improve programme quality, and determine the extent to which programmes contribute to reducing violence and promoting a culture of peace (Harris 2003). Several scholars have identified the need for more evaluation in the field of peace education. For example, Wessells (2007) notes that while there is growing interest in peace education, there has been little research on the effectiveness of these programmes. Similarly, Christie (2008) argues that the field of peace education needs to do more to demonstrate the impact of its programmes on participants. The absence of evaluation means that there is no accountability for measuring the impact of these programmes on participants or whether they are achieving their intended goals (Tinker 2016).

Despite these challenges, there are examples of successful evaluations of peace education programmes. For example, a study by DeBardeleben *et al.* (2019) evaluated the impact of a peace education programme in Nigeria and found that the programme had a positive impact on participants' attitudes towards violence and their willingness to engage in dialogue with members of other groups.

### **4.13 Safety and Security Concerns**

According to a study conducted by Laura Stachel and Amita Vyas (2019), peace education programmes in conflict-affected regions can result in emotional distress for participants. In their study on peace education in post-conflict settings, Johnson and Johnson (2015) emphasise the importance of considering the cultural context and potential risks for participants. They argue that peace education programmes should be tailored to the specific needs and sensitivities of the community, and that educators should be sensitive to the emotional and psychological impact of the programme on participants. In addition, according to a report by Amnesty International (2019), individuals who are perceived to be supporting one side or another in a conflict, such as in the case of Western Sahara, may be at risk of surveillance and harassment.

Participants in peace education programmes may experience a range of emotional reactions, including anxiety, anger, guilt, or shame, due to the discussion of sensitive and traumatic experiences related to the conflict (Stachel and Vyas 2019). Exposure to information that contradicts their beliefs and values can also result in cognitive dissonance (Johnson and Johnson 2015). Furthermore, the sensitive nature of the conflict in Western Sahara places participants at risk of surveillance and/or harassment, particularly for those who are perceived to be supporting one side or another (Amnesty International 2019).

To mitigate these risks, peace education practitioners and researchers must ensure the safety and well-being of participants by providing a safe and confidential space for sharing experiences, emphasising the right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence, and equipping educators with conflict management skills (Johnson and Johnson 2015; Stachel and Vyas 2019).

### **4.14 Effects of the Reviewed Literature on this Study**

Despite the wealth of literature on peace education programmes in various contexts, the application of peace education in protracted conflicts remains underexplored. Protracted conflicts, like the Western Sahara Conflict, are characterised by deep-rooted and long-standing issues that persist over time, often resulting in the normalisation of violence and animosity between conflicting

parties. This context presents unique challenges that require tailored approaches to peace education, yet there is a dearth of research on this subject.

By conducting this study on peace education in the Western Sahara Conflict, the author has contributed to filling this gap in the literature. The Western Sahara Conflict has received limited attention in the international community and in scholarly research, despite its devastating impacts on the Sahrawi people and the wider region. By examining the role of peace education in this context, this study brings attention to the need for further research on the Western Sahara Conflict and peace education's potential as a peacebuilding tool in the region. This study explores implementing peace education workshops in protracted conflicts and highlights the critical role peace education can play in transforming relationships.

This research fills a crucial gap in the literature by highlighting the potential role of peace education in reducing conflict and promoting a culture of peace in the Western Sahara Conflict. Additionally, it highlights the need for further research to identify and address the unique challenges that arise when implementing peace education programmes in similar contexts. By providing new insights and perspectives on this topic, this study makes a valuable contribution to the field of peacebuilding. While the field of peace education has made significant strides in recent years, there is still much to be explored in the context of protracted conflicts. This study on peace education in the Western Sahara Conflict represents an important step toward understanding the potential for peace education as a peacebuilding tool in the context of protracted conflict.

#### **4.15 Conclusion**

The literature review in this chapter provided an overview of peace education, examining its historical development and its effectiveness in promoting peace and conflict resolution. The chapter highlighted the challenges associated with implementing peace education programmes and explored the potential of peace education programmes to promote coexistence and reconciliation, particularly in regions experiencing prolonged conflict.

The chapter began by discussing the history of peace education, tracing its roots to the pacifist movements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It went on to examine the evolution of peace

education over the years, highlighting the changes in its approach, scope, and emphasis. The chapter also highlighted the various benefits of peace education, including its potential to promote positive attitudes and behaviours, develop conflict resolution skills, and foster critical thinking and problem-solving abilities.

However, the chapter also acknowledged the challenges associated with implementing peace education programmes, including resistance from various stakeholders, inadequate resources, and lack of political will. It highlighted the need for a holistic approach to peace education, which involves not only the education sector but also other sectors of society, including government, civil society, and the media. The chapter also explored the potential of peace education programmes to promote coexistence and reconciliation, particularly in regions experiencing prolonged conflict. It highlighted the importance of context-specific approaches to peace education and the need to engage local communities and stakeholders in the design and implementation of peace education programmes.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Research Methodology, Paradigm, and Data Collection**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, a detailed presentation is provided of the methodology, which encompasses the methods, techniques, and procedures used to collect and analyse data. The primary focus of the research was to explore the potential of peace education as a tool for peacebuilding, with the aim of transforming relationships between polarized groups. To achieve this, the study sought a comprehensive understanding of the perceptions, attitudes, thoughts, feelings, and experiences of community members in Laayoune, Western Sahara.

The study adopted a qualitative research paradigm. This methodology allowed for a detailed exploration of the experiences and attitudes of the community members, using techniques such as interviews, focus groups, and participant observation. The chapter described the population and sample selection for the study, as well as the sample size.

Additionally, the chapter discussed the data analysis techniques used in the study, involving the interpretation of qualitative data to uncover themes in the data. The chapter also addressed the issue of validity and reliability in qualitative research, explaining the measures taken to ensure that the data collected was trustworthy and accurate.

#### **5.2 The Research Process**

Research has purpose; it is a methodological process guided by philosophy. With research comes new knowledge. This new knowledge is valid and reliable. According to Grinnel, research is “structured inquiry that utilises scientific methodology to solve problems and create new knowledge” (1993: 4). Research methodology differs from research design as differentiated below.

**Table 3. Differences between Research Methodology and Research Design**

<b>Research Methodology</b>	<b>Research Design</b>
Focus is on the research process and tools to be used.	Focus is on product: what kind of study?
Point of departure: Tasks at hand (data sampling and collection).	Point of departure: Research problem/question.
Focus is on individual use of most objective, unbiased procedures.	Focus is on logic of research: kind of evidence required to address research questions.

Mouton, J. (2001). How to succeed in your master's and doctoral studies. Van Schaik Publishers, 56.

Research methodology and research design are both essential components of the research process, but they differ in their scope and purpose. Research methodology refers to the specific methods and techniques used by the researcher to collect, analyse, and interpret data (Babbie 2016). It involves making decisions about how to design and conduct the study, which data collection methods to use, how to sample participants, and how to analyse and interpret the data. The methodology also involves considering ethical and practical issues related to the research process.

Research design, on the other hand, is the overall plan or strategy for the research project. It encompasses the broad goals and objectives of the study, the research questions or hypotheses, and the overall framework for conducting the research (Creswell 2014). The research design includes decisions about the type of research to be conducted (e.g., experimental, observational, qualitative, quantitative), the sampling strategy, and the data collection and analysis techniques. The research design also considers the broader context of the study, including the theoretical framework, the research environment, and any relevant cultural or social factors.

Research methodology is concerned with the specific methods and techniques used to collect and analyse data, while research design refers to the overall plan or strategy for conducting the research project. Both are critical components of the research process and must be carefully considered to ensure that the research is conducted effectively and produces valid and reliable results (Fraenkel, Wallen and Hyun 2019; Neuman 2013; Sekaran and Bougie 2016; Yin 2018).

### **5.3 Overview of the Research Methodology**

The research methodology for this study was interdisciplinary, utilising three primary data collection methods alongside a desk-based review of secondary data (Creswell 2014). An action research design was employed, using qualitative methodology that incorporated both primary and secondary data sources (Reason and Bradbury 2008). The primary data collection methods included questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions. A range of interdisciplinary sources, such as newspapers, videos, studies, and articles, were also used for secondary research. The research approach was guided by phenomenology, which seeks to understand the meaning individuals derive from their experiences and how they communicate those experiences (Creswell 2014).

Using questionnaires and interviews, the first phase of the study was to gain an understanding of the intricate conflict dynamics in Western Sahara in general and in Laayoune specifically. Following the initial data collection, the findings were utilised to conceptualise an effective peacebuilding intervention designed and implemented by the action research team. The subsequent phase of the study involved a more comprehensive assessment of the peacebuilding interventions that were currently underway in Western Sahara, or lack thereof. This phase utilised both primary and secondary data sources, including interviews, to gain a deeper understanding of the needs at both individual and institutional levels. Drawing upon the findings from the first two phases of research, the final phase of the study involved a collaborative process with the local action research team to design a comprehensive peacebuilding intervention in the form of workshops. These workshops were then implemented and evaluated through a preliminary assessment process.

After conducting the focus group discussions and interviews, the collected data was systematically arranged, translated, and transcribed to facilitate its analysis. Using qualitative research methods, the data was then interpreted to extract its underlying meaning and draw conclusions relevant to the study's objectives. As the research utilised innovative techniques to explore how peace education workshops can promote sustainable peace and transform relationships in communities, the study's qualitative approach provided valuable insights into the topic (Creswell 2014; Reason and Bradbury 2008).

## 5.4 Qualitative vs Quantitative Research

Research can be qualitative or quantitative, or it can be a mixture of the two, called mixed methods. Below, Kumar (2005) highlights the differences between qualitative and quantitative research paradigms.

**Table 4. Differences Between Qualitative and Quantitative Research**

Differences	Qualitative Research	Quantitative Research
Philosophy	Empiricism: Humans acquire knowledge through reasoning.	Rationalism: Humans acquire knowledge through experience.
Approach	Structures, predetermined methodology.	Unstructured, flexible methodology.
Purpose of inquiry	Describe variations in phenomenon.	Quantify variations in phenomenon.
Measurement of variables	Emphasis on description.	Emphasis on measurement or classification.
Sample size	Smaller sample size.	Larger sample size.
Focus on inquiry	Wide focus with fewer respondents.	Narrow focus with larger number of respondents.
Dominant research value	Authenticity.	Reliability.
Dominant research topic	Explores experiences, perceptions, and feelings.	Explores prevalence and discovers irregularities and formulates theories.
Analysis of data	Responses, narratives, observations.	Variables to frequency, cross tabulations, or other statistical procedures.
Communication	Descriptive, narrative.	Analytic.

Source: Kumar, R. (2005). *Research methodology: a step-by-step guide for beginners*. Sage publications, 17.

Quantitative research emphasises numerical data to measure phenomena (Berg 2009: 3). This approach places meaning on statistical measurements of variables rather than on the social meaning of variables. Quantitative research relies on the collection and analysis of numerical data, while qualitative research is concerned with the collection and analysis of non-numerical data.



Qualitative research emphasises a non-numerical understanding of social phenomena (Arsenhault 1998: 118). It seeks to understand the meaning people construct – i.e., their narrative – and how they understand their world and their experiences in it (Merriam 2009: 13). In the context of studying people in conflict, qualitative research is often considered the better approach due to its ability to capture the nuances and complexities of human behaviour and emotions. Qualitative research allows researchers to gather data that can provide a deep understanding of the social context in which conflicts arise and the underlying reasons for these conflicts. Qualitative research methods, such as interviews, focus groups, and observation, allow researchers to collect rich and detailed data about participants' experiences and perspectives. This type of data can provide insights into the cultural, historical, and political factors that contribute to conflicts and inform the design of effective peacebuilding interventions (Boulanger 2019).

Moreover, qualitative research is particularly suited to studying people in conflict because it recognises the subjective experiences of individuals and their interpretation of events. By exploring the emotional and psychological impact of conflict on individuals, qualitative research can help to identify the underlying causes of conflicts and the factors that hinder or facilitate the peacebuilding process (Kumar and Jain 2020). Quantitative research, on the other hand, can provide valuable insights into the prevalence and frequency of conflict-related events, attitudes, and behaviours. However, this approach does not capture the complexities and nuances of human behaviour and may not provide an in-depth understanding of the reasons for conflicts and the experiences of those involved (Boulanger 2019).

## **5.5 Research Paradigms**

Be it qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods, research is at all times guided by a philosophy or a set of beliefs which informs action – this is known as a research paradigm. A research paradigm informs the study in four areas: axiology, epistemology, ontology, and methodology. The paradigms underlying this study are discussed below.

The study's exploration of Sahrawis' and Moroccans' real-life perceptions, attitudes, feelings, and experiences, as well as the politics, culture, and violence in Laayoune province, necessitated that

an interpretive paradigm underpin the study, which allows the researcher to view the world through the perceptions and experiences of the participants. It is important to understand that the researcher and the research participants may have different “worldviews” due to cultural differences. As posited by Anais Nin (1961: 11), “We don’t see things as they are; we see things as we are”. We view things not as they are, but rather in the context of our own personal preconceived notions and prejudices. In short, our previous experiences affect our expectations and perspectives.

It is my hope that research participants will gain the knowledge and skills needed to transform relationships and build sustainable peace in their communities through the conceptualisation, implementation, facilitation, and evaluation of peace education workshops as a strategic, innovative peacebuilding tool. To this end, another paradigm in which this study is framed is the transformative research paradigm. Transformative researchers make a conscious decision to work with both parties in a conflict. Researchers position themselves side-by-side with those in conflict in a joint effort to bring about social transformation and sustainable peace (Burke and Tully 2018; Nagda *et al.* 2009).

While research paradigms are important, it is more important to ensure a study is not limited by the bounds of the research paradigm itself. The interpretive research paradigm complements the transformative research paradigm as it is innovative, trying new ways to find solutions to challenges. Therefore, my research is informed by two complementary paradigms.

## **5.6 Exploratory Research**

Exploratory research is a vital component in understanding the nature of a problem or phenomenon. According to Creswell (2014), exploratory research is used to gain a preliminary understanding of a problem, define questions, and identify key concepts. In the context of peacebuilding, exploratory research can help researchers identify the root causes of conflict, the attitudes of conflicting parties, and the potential barriers to peace (Deutsch and Coleman, 2000).

In this study, exploratory research was used to gain a deeper understanding of broken relationships in Western Sahara. Through a combination of primary and secondary data sources, the study aimed to explore the attitudes and perceptions of Moroccans and Sahrawis towards each other, their

knowledge of the Western Sahara Conflict and peacebuilding, and the challenges of peacebuilding in Western Sahara. The primary data was collected through questionnaires, and interviews and focus groups with community members affected by the conflict. The secondary data was collected from academic literature, policy documents, and other relevant sources.

Exploratory research played a crucial role in informing the design and implementation of the peacebuilding intervention in this study. By understanding the root causes of broken relationships, the study was able to tailor the peacebuilding intervention to address the specific challenges faced by the conflicting parties in Western Sahara. According to Babbie (2016), exploratory research helps in formulating research questions, identifying gaps in existing knowledge, and shaping the research design. Further, it is an essential component in understanding the complexities of conflict and designing effective peacebuilding interventions. It provides a solid foundation for action research by identifying key research questions, defining concepts, and gathering preliminary data to inform the research design.

## **5.7 Inquiry and Data Collection**

This study adopts an advocacy participation worldview, which places importance on the participation and empowerment of research participants. To achieve this, the research design is qualitative and incorporates exploratory, evaluative, and action research components (Creswell 2009: 5). The aim is to develop the participants' peacebuilding skills and knowledge, transform their relationships, and create a culture of peace.

To collect primary data, a variety of methods was used, including interviews, focus group discussions, and observation. These methods allowed for a deep exploration of the experiences and perspectives of the participants, and provided rich data for analysis. The focus on action research also enabled the research team to work collaboratively with the participants to develop and implement peace education initiatives, thus increasing the potential for sustainable change.

The intended outcome of the study was to demonstrate the effectiveness of peace education as a peacebuilding tool, particularly in protracted-conflict settings such as Western Sahara. Through the development of the participants' peacebuilding skills and knowledge, the hope is to transform

their relationships and foster a culture of peace. The study seeks to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on the potential of peace education in peacebuilding efforts and to provide insights into the most effective ways of implementing peace education initiatives in conflict-affected regions.

## **5.8 Data Analysis**

Data analysis is an essential aspect of research, and it involves various methods that allow researchers to make sense of the data collected. An inductive approach, which aims to identify patterns and themes in the raw data without preconceived categories or hypotheses, is one of the commonly-used methods in qualitative data analysis. Recent academic references emphasise the importance of using inductive analysis to explore and understand complex phenomena (Braun and Clarke 2021; Thomas 2021). The qualitative design chosen for this study guided the approach to data analysis and presentation.

In qualitative data analysis, researchers focus on the meanings attached to words, actions, and feelings expressed by the participants. The analysis of these meanings is linked to the participants' existential realities, and it provides insights into their experiences and perspectives (Braun and Clarke 2021). Researchers use themes and codes to analyse the data and identify emerging issues. These themes and codes are based on the data rather than on preconceived notions, and they help to uncover new insights and perspectives (Thomas 2021).

Interpretive analysis and discourse analysis are two additional methods that researchers use to understand the dynamics of a particular context. For instance, in a study of peacebuilding in a local cultural context, researchers may use interpretive analysis and discourse analysis to examine the language and social practices that shape the dynamics of peacebuilding (Fairclough 2013). Framework Analysis is another method that involves several stages, and it provides a systematic approach to data analysis. Researchers can use Framework Analysis to capture important messages from interviews and focus group discussions and transform raw data into descriptive statements that are indexed and arranged for logical presentation (Gale *et al.* 2013).

This research employs a framework analysis for data analysis. The study addresses the significant challenge of peacebuilding in societies experiencing protracted conflicts, with a particular focus on the Western Sahara Conflict. To investigate the potential effectiveness of peace education as a peacebuilding tool, this action research study takes place in Laayoune, Western Sahara. Qualitative research methods are employed, and an interdisciplinary approach is adopted to gain a comprehensive understanding of the intricate relationships between Moroccans and Sahrawis in the region. The framework analysis ensures a structured and systematic approach to analysing the gathered data, enabling a thorough examination of the peacebuilding intervention's impact.

Qualitative research involves analysing and interpreting behaviour by using open-ended questions and discussions to gain insight into participants' attitudes, behaviours, and perceptions (Braun and Clarke 2019). Unlike quantitative research, which focuses on numerical data, qualitative research seeks to gather detailed information through observations and discussions (Creswell and Poth 2018). One of the advantages of qualitative research is its flexibility, which allows for a more natural and nuanced exploration of the research topic. This approach enables researchers to gain a deeper understanding of the context in which the research participants live, as well as the cultural and social factors that shape their perceptions and behaviours (Denzin and Lincoln 2017).

Qualitative research methods can include interviews, focus groups, ethnography, case studies, and content analysis. These methods are designed to elicit detailed and nuanced responses from research participants, which can then be analysed to identify themes and patterns that help researchers understand the underlying reasons for the behaviours and attitudes they are studying (Creswell and Poth 2018). Qualitative research is especially useful for exploring complex or sensitive topics, such as those related to conflict and peacebuilding, where quantitative methods may not provide enough depth or nuance (Patton 2015). The findings from qualitative research can also provide valuable insights for the development of peace education programmes that are tailored to the specific needs and experiences of the communities they aim to serve (Bryman and Bell 2019).

## **5.9 Significance of the Research**

Currently, there is a lack of literature or ongoing research on the application of action research in Western Sahara to explore the efficacy of peace education as a means of promoting peacebuilding. However, similar studies have been conducted in other conflict-affected regions. For instance, a study by Bajaj (2019) found that peace education can contribute to reducing violence and promoting human rights and social justice. Similarly, a study by Dubois (2018) in Colombia showed that peace education programmes can increase participants' empathy, social cohesion, and understanding of peacebuilding processes. In the absence of peacebuilding initiatives that bring Moroccans and Sahrawis together, this research plays a pivotal role in transforming relationships and building a culture of peace in Western Sahara. This study contributes to the building of peace among Moroccans and Sahrawis living together in Western Sahara and provides the basis for an alternative approach to peacebuilding in the region.

This study developed a context-specific intervention that was informed by realities on the ground in Western Sahara. It addressed the polarisation, animosity, and negative attitudes and perceptions between Moroccans and Sahrawis, thus reducing the tension, fear, and mistrust that remain within the communities in Western Sahara. Utilising an action research design provides a unique and effective approach to peacebuilding that is inclusive, strategic, and offers an alternative to traditional methods. This study is particularly noteworthy as there has not been a similar investigation conducted in Western Sahara, and, as such, it has the potential to offer valuable insights that can inform future peacebuilding efforts in the region.

By adopting an action research approach, the study promotes an active and collaborative role for all stakeholders involved in the peacebuilding process. This approach encourages the conflicting parties to take ownership of the process and actively participate in designing and implementing a sustainable intervention that addresses the root causes of the conflict. The findings of this study, therefore, have the potential to influence future peacebuilding efforts in Western Sahara and other conflict-affected regions, promoting a more inclusive and collaborative approach that empowers conflicting parties to take an active role in the transformation process. Ultimately, the action

research design utilised in this study can contribute to the development of more effective and sustainable peacebuilding interventions that are tailored to the unique context of each conflict.

### **5.10 Scope of Study and Delimitations**

The study conducted for this doctoral research project included a relatively small sample size of 30 participants from the Laayoune province in Western Sahara, consisting of 15 Sahrawis and 15 Moroccans. While efforts were made to ensure that the sample was diverse and representative, the findings may not be generalisable to the broader population of Western Sahara. Caution is needed when generalising findings to a broader population (Smith 2018).

Additionally, the research involved a peacebuilding intervention and evaluation over a period of seven months, which may not have been sufficient to capture the long-term impact of peace education programmes. Although a preliminary evaluation was conducted to assess the immediate effects of the intervention, a long-term impact evaluation is recommended to understand the sustainability and durability of peace education initiatives (Lopes 2020). It is important to note that the findings of this study cannot be used to make definitive conclusions about the effectiveness of peace education programmes in protracted conflicts. As suggested by Galtung (2019), it is crucial to conduct additional research to extend the findings of this study and enhance our comprehension of the function of peace education in fostering coexistence and reconciliation in regions undergoing prolonged conflict.

### **5.11 Sampling Procedure**

Random sampling is a technique used in research where each member of a population has an equal chance of being selected as part of a sample (Babbie 2016). This method is used to gather information that is representative of the larger population. In the case of this study, random sampling was used to ensure that a diverse range of people were included in the sample, with different experiences of living in Laayoune province.

However, given the sensitive nature of the Western Sahara Conflict, accessing the population in Western Sahara can be challenging. Therefore, the snowball technique was also used to recruit

participants for the study. This technique involves using the participants in the study to recruit other participants through their networks, creating a chain of referrals (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981). I worked with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) whose work is focused in Western Sahara to identify potential participants for the study. This allows for a more targeted approach to recruitment, as these organisations have existing relationships and networks in the field (Eckstein and Ernst 2015).

While random sampling is generally preferred in research, the snowball technique and collaboration with NGOs were necessary due to the challenges in accessing the population in Western Sahara. These methods allowed for the recruitment of a diverse sample of participants who were able to provide valuable insights into peace education in the context of the Western Sahara Conflict. Similar research has been conducted in other conflict-affected regions using alternative sampling methods. For example, a study by Labonté and colleagues (2018) on the health impacts of mining in the Democratic Republic of Congo used a combination of random sampling and purposive sampling. The researchers used random sampling to select households within mining-affected communities, and purposive sampling to select key informants with expertise on the health impacts of mining.

In another study, Jurgens and colleagues (2019) used a combination of snowball sampling and targeted sampling to recruit participants for a study on the experiences of sexual and gender-based violence survivors in South Sudan. The researchers used snowball sampling to recruit initial participants, and then used targeted sampling to recruit additional participants from specific populations, such as women living in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps.

These studies demonstrate the importance of using alternative sampling methods in conflict-affected regions, where access to the population of interest may be limited. By using a combination of different sampling methods, researchers can ensure that they obtain a diverse and representative sample, leading to more accurate and reliable findings.

### **5.11.1 Sample Size/Population**

Using a sample of a population is a common practice in research, as it allows for the collection of data that can provide insights into the entire population without having to study every single



individual. This is especially beneficial when the population is large or difficult to access, as it would be impractical, time-consuming, and costly to study every single individual. Sampling can be done using various techniques, such as random sampling, convenience sampling, snowball sampling, and purposive sampling. Random sampling is considered to be the most reliable and representative as it ensures that every member of the population has an equal chance of being selected (Babbie 2016).

Another advantage of using a sample is that it can reduce the margin of error in data collection. This means that the sample data is more accurate and representative of the entire population, allowing for more accurate conclusions to be drawn. Additionally, using a sample can be cost-effective and time-efficient, as it reduces the resources required for data collection and analysis.

It is important to note that using a sample also has its limitations. The sample may not be completely representative of the entire population, which can lead to bias and inaccurate conclusions. Therefore, it is important to ensure that the sample is selected carefully and that the sample size is sufficient for the research question being investigated. It is also important to consider the sampling technique used and how it may affect the results (Bryman 2016).

### **5.11.2 What does Population in the Study Refer to?**

Population and sample are two important concepts in research methodology. The population refers to the entire group of individuals or entities that the researcher wants to draw conclusions about. The sample, on the other hand, is a specific group of individuals or entities selected from the population to collect data from (Creswell 2014).

In qualitative research, the term "population" refers to the group of people, organisations, or other entities that are the focus of the study. This group is often selected based on specific characteristics such as age, gender, occupation, geographic location, or other relevant factors (Merriam 2009). Unlike quantitative research, where the population is usually defined in terms of numbers or statistics, in qualitative research, the population is defined in terms of the specific phenomenon being studied (Creswell 2014). It is important for qualitative researchers to carefully define and describe their study population to ensure the validity and reliability of their research findings. This

involves providing a detailed description of the selection criteria and the reasons for selecting the particular population (Merriam 2009).

### **5.11.3 The Population in the Study**

Laayoune is the largest city in Western Sahara and has a diverse population of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. According to the United Nations Census of 2020, the city had a population of 217,732 people. It is important to note that this is the most recent statistical record, and population dynamics can change over time. It is expected that the next population census will be conducted in 2024, which will provide updated population data.

In this study, 30 participants were selected from the population of Laayoune to participate in the peacebuilding intervention and evaluation. While 30 participants may seem like a small sample size compared to the entire population, it is important to note that qualitative research aims to gather in-depth insights and experiences of individuals, rather than generalising findings to the entire population. Random sampling was used in this study to ensure a diverse range of participants were selected. However, due to the sensitive nature of the Western Sahara conflict, accessing the population can be challenging, and the snowball sampling technique was also used to recruit participants via other participants.

### **5.11.4 The Sample Population**

The selection criteria for the sample population were based on the following inclusion criteria: age, gender, ethnicity, and residence in Laayoune, Western Sahara. The aim was to have an equal number of Saharawi and Moroccan participants, both males and females, who were eighteen years or older, and living in Laayoune. To ensure that participants represented a diverse range of backgrounds, the snowball sampling technique was used. The sampling procedure began by contacting local NGOs working in Western Sahara, and they put me in touch with their contacts in the field. These contacts then referred me to individuals who met the study's inclusion criteria. Participants who met the inclusion criteria were then invited to participate in the study.

The total study population of thirty participants included fifteen Saharawi and fifteen Moroccan participants. Of these thirty participants, twelve were male and eighteen were female. The age

range of the participants was from eighteen to forty-five years old, with an average age of twenty-four. The action research team consisted of eight participants selected from the total study population. These participants were chosen based on their willingness to engage in the peacebuilding intervention and their interest in contributing to the research process. The action research team consisted of four Sahrawis and four Moroccans, both males and females. The team met on a regular basis throughout the peacebuilding intervention to provide feedback and suggestions for the programme's development.

#### **5.11.5 Why the Sample Population was Used**

Working with young adults in the study had several advantages. First, young adults are often considered to be the future leaders of society, and it is important to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to be able to build peace and transform relationships in their communities (UNESCO 2018). By focusing on this age group, the study aimed to identify how peace education can be used to promote positive attitudes and behaviours towards peacebuilding among young people.

Secondly, young adults are often more open-minded and receptive to new ideas and perspectives, making them ideal participants for a peace education intervention (Bisht and Tiwari 2020). Their experiences and beliefs are still being formed, and they are more likely to be influenced by new ideas and concepts. Furthermore, as the conflict in Western Sahara has been ongoing for several decades, it is likely that many of the study participants have grown up in an environment of conflict and division (Weiner 2008). By focusing on young adults, the study aimed to identify how peace education can be used to challenge and transform these deeply entrenched attitudes and behaviours, and create a more positive and peaceful future for the region. Overall, the decision to work with young adults as the sample population for the study was a strategic choice, based on the belief that this group has the potential to serve as powerful agents of change in promoting peacebuilding and conflict resolution in the region (UNDP 2018).

#### **5.11.6 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria**

The decision to exclude people living outside of Western Sahara and those younger than 18 years old was made based on the research focus, which was to explore the impact of peace education on

individuals directly affected by the Western Sahara Conflict. Including participants from outside of Western Sahara might have resulted in a lack of focus and dilution of the study's results. Additionally, including minors in the study could have presented ethical issues as they are a vulnerable population, and obtaining informed consent might have been challenging (United Nations 2015).

The age range of 18 to 35 years old was chosen because this population is typically more receptive to change and may be more likely to serve as agents of peacebuilding within their communities. Moreover, this age range is commonly referred to as "youth," and young adults are often targeted for peacebuilding interventions as they represent a significant proportion of the population in conflict-affected areas (United Nations 2015).

## **5.12 Questionnaire**

Qualitative questionnaires are commonly used in research studies to gather information about individuals' experiences, beliefs, perceptions, and opinions. According to Silverman (2013), qualitative research is useful for exploring complex social phenomena and can provide rich and detailed data for analysis. These questionnaires typically consist of open-ended questions that allow participants to provide detailed responses in their own words. The advantage of using qualitative questionnaires is that they allow for in-depth exploration of individuals' thoughts and feelings, which can provide rich and detailed data for analysis (Braun and Clarke 2013).

In this study, the qualitative questionnaires were designed to elicit information about the participants' experiences of peace education, their perceptions of the effectiveness of the peacebuilding intervention, and their attitudes towards the Western Sahara Conflict. The questionnaires were administered in face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions, which allowed me to probe for more detailed responses and clarify any misunderstandings. This approach is consistent with the recommendation of Creswell (2013) that qualitative researchers should seek to establish a rapport with participants to encourage them to share their experiences.

In addition to the qualitative questions, the questionnaires also included a few quantitative questions to capture basic demographic information about the participants, such as their age,

gender, and nationality. This information is useful for identifying any patterns or trends in the data that may be related to demographic factors. As Patton (2015) notes, mixed methods research, which combines qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis, can provide a more comprehensive understanding of complex phenomena. Overall, the use of qualitative questionnaires in this study allowed for a detailed exploration of the participants' experiences and perceptions, which helped to provide a rich and nuanced understanding of the role of peace education in the Western Sahara Conflict.

### **5.12.1 Advantages of Questionnaires**

According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research can involve the use of questionnaires to collect data from participants through a set of standardised questions. While questionnaires may not be suitable for all research questions, they have several advantages over other qualitative data collection methods. For example, they can be used early in the research process to gain an initial understanding of the issues or experiences to be explored further in interviews or focus groups.

One of the biggest benefits of using questionnaires is the ability to collect data from a large number of participants. Unlike other qualitative methods, questionnaires can be distributed to a broad audience, which can lead to more robust and generalisable findings. Additionally, questionnaires are a cost-effective way of collecting data compared to other methods, making them an attractive option for researchers working with limited budgets (Guest, Namey, and Mitchell 2013).

Standardised questionnaires reduce the risk of measurement errors and ensure that all participants are asked the same questions in the same way (Marshall and Rossman 2014). This can improve the reliability and validity of the data collected. Questionnaires can be completed anonymously, which encourages more honest and accurate responses, especially when sensitive or personal information is being collected (Liamputtong 2013).

Silverman (2016) also highlights the flexibility of questionnaires, as questionnaires can be administered in various ways, including online, by mail, or in person. This allows researchers to reach a wider range of participants and makes it easier for participants to complete the questionnaire at their own convenience. The ability to amend questionnaires and the fact that they produce written responses can reduce transcription efforts by researchers.

While there are limitations to the use of questionnaires, such as limited depth and potential response bias, researchers take steps to mitigate these risks and ensure the validity and reliability of their findings (Silverman 2016). Overall, questionnaires are a valuable tool in qualitative research, offering a standardised, cost-effective, and flexible method of data collection that can reach a large sample size.

### **5.12.2 Disadvantages of Questionnaires**

Questionnaires are commonly used in qualitative research; however, they have several limitations that researchers must be aware of (Braun and Clarke 2013). Closed-ended questions, which are frequently used in questionnaires, may restrict the depth of information gathered and may not fully capture participants' experiences or viewpoints (Guest, Namey, and Mitchell 2013). Moreover, response bias can be a concern since individuals may not provide honest or accurate responses, especially to sensitive questions (Braun and Clarke 2013). Additionally, questionnaires lack the personal connection that researchers can establish with participants, which may limit the depth and richness of the data collected (Braun and Clarke 2013).

Furthermore, depending on how questionnaires are administered, they may not be accessible to all participants, such as those who lack technological skills or have low literacy levels. This can lead to response bias or a limited sample size (Guest, Namey, and Mitchell 2013). Developing effective questionnaire questions requires careful attention to wording, structure, and response options, as poorly designed questions can lead to confusion and inaccurate responses (Guest, Namey, and Mitchell 2013). To address these limitations, researchers should carefully design their questionnaires, take measures to mitigate response bias, and use questionnaires alongside other qualitative data collection methods to gain a more comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences and perspectives.

### **5.13 Interviews**

I strategically utilised interviews in this study to gain insight into the experiences, opinions, knowledge, and emotions of the participants. The interviews were conducted for approximately an hour and consisted mostly of open-ended questions, allowing for semi-structured responses and

elaboration upon answers. By conducting interviews in this manner, I was able to obtain detailed data as participants were given sufficient time to express their viewpoints and opinions confidentially.

As Nunan (2010) notes, interviews are commonly used in qualitative research as they allow researchers to "explore the perspectives and experiences of participants in their own words" (p. 157). This method can be highly effective in gaining an in-depth understanding of complex phenomena such as attitudes towards peacebuilding. Furthermore, the use of open-ended questions ensures that participants are not limited in their responses, thus generating more detailed and insightful data.

To collect data using interviews, I followed a chronological plan. First, I set up interviews with key informants, explaining the purpose of the study, why they were chosen for the interview, and the expected duration of the interview. Next, I sought informed consent from the informants in accordance with ethical guidelines and policies set by Durban University of Technology. As stated in the university's Research Ethics guidelines, "informed consent is the process by which a researcher discloses appropriate information to a potential participant so that the individual may make a voluntary decision about whether or not to participate in the study" (Durban University of Technology, n.d.). This step was crucial in protecting the participants' rights and ensuring that they were fully aware of the purpose and potential consequences of their participation in the study. Once consent was obtained, the interview was conducted. Following the interview, the data was summarised, verified, and analysed.

Through these interviews, a number of key findings were revealed. Firstly, there was a significant lack of peacebuilding activities in the region. Secondly, there was a general lack of knowledge about peacebuilding among the participants. Finally, negative attitudes and perceptions towards peacebuilding were also identified. These findings highlight the need for an innovative peacebuilding strategy, such as peace education workshops. Such workshops can provide an opportunity for individuals to learn about peacebuilding principles, develop skills for conflict resolution, and engage in constructive dialogue with others (Lederach 2015).

### **5.13.1 Advantages and Disadvantages of Interviews**

According to Kvale (2015), qualitative research often uses interviews as a primary data collection method, providing various benefits over other methods. Firstly, interviews allow researchers to gather detailed and in-depth information about participants' perspectives, experiences, and behaviours through open-ended questions. Secondly, interviews are adaptable and flexible, making them suitable for a range of research questions and participant characteristics. Additionally, interviews establish personal connections between researchers and participants, promoting honesty and accuracy in responses. Finally, interviews enable detailed follow-up questions, putting the participant in control of the conversation.

Despite the advantages, interviews also have some limitations. One of the significant limitations is the possibility of bias. Researchers' biases can influence the responses given by participants, which may affect the study's validity. Moreover, conducting, transcribing, and analysing the data can be time-consuming and resource-intensive (Bloor *et al.* 2016). The small sample size may not be representative of the entire population, reducing the generalisability of the study. Interviews are a valuable tool in qualitative research, providing detailed and rich data. Although they have some limitations, the advantages of using interviews often outweigh the disadvantages. To minimise the limitations, researchers should employ strategies to reduce bias, conduct proper planning, and use appropriate sampling techniques (Braun and Clarke 2019).

### **5.14 Using Both Questionnaires and Interviews with Open-Ended Questions**

According to Dillman, Smyth, and Christian (2014), combining both questionnaires and interviews with open-ended questions can provide a more comprehensive understanding of a particular research topic. Questionnaires are useful in collecting data from a large sample size and provide statistical analyses, while interviews allow for in-depth exploration of the research topic, and can provide valuable insights into participants' experiences and perspectives. To ensure a diverse and representative sample, I used random sampling for the questionnaires, as recommended by Kadam and Bhalerao (2017). Purposive sampling was used for the interviews to select participants who



had specific knowledge or experiences related to the research topic, as suggested by Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006).

Using open-ended questions in both the questionnaires and interviews can allow participants to express their views in their own words, providing rich and detailed data, as highlighted by Marshall and Rossman (2016). This can help to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic and enable the researcher to draw more meaningful conclusions, as stated by Creswell (2014). Using a combination of questionnaires and interviews with open-ended questions, along with appropriate sampling techniques, can provide a more holistic approach to research and enhance the validity and reliability of the research, as suggested by Denzin and Lincoln (2017).

## **5.15 Focus Group Discussions**

The interactive research technique known as Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) is commonly used to gather information through group interaction. According to Harrell and Bradley (2009), FGDs involve a group of individuals who engage in a guided discussion led by a facilitator on a specific topic of interest to the researcher. In this method, the researcher's focus provides the context for the discussion, while the group of participants provides the data.

To collect qualitative data and verify other sources of data, this study utilised four FGDs, with participants from both the Sahrawi and Moroccan communities. The discussions, which lasted approximately ninety minutes, were conducted at a venue identified by the action research team to provide a conducive and relaxed environment that allowed for full participation and concentration. Sensitive questions, such as those relating to the nature of the conflict and violence, were asked, but participants were given the option to decline to answer. Following the FGDs, the data was transcribed, translated, and organised for analysis. FGDs have been recognised as a valuable research tool for gathering insights from participants in various fields, including healthcare, education, and social sciences (Krueger and Casey 2000).

### **5.15.1 Characteristics of Focus Group Discussions**

The main characteristics of focus group discussion are group participation and group interaction. Participants interact through the influence of their answers and ideas during the discussion (Freitas

*et al.* 1998). Focus group discussions allow for the collection of in-depth information on beliefs, attitudes, experiences, and perceptions. FGDs also strengthen data reliability and validity (Stewart and Shamdasani 2015). Kvale (2007) recommends only six to ten participants take part in a focus group discussion. Others argue that as many as twelve participants can partake. It has been argued that fewer than six participants will dull the discussion, and lessen the quantity and quality of data collected, while any more than twelve participants means facilitating the discussion can become overwhelming. Moreover, having too many participants will likely result in some participating more than others.

### 5.15.2 Facilitating Focus Group Discussions

**Table 5. Advantages and Disadvantages of Focus Group Discussions**

<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
The natural setting allows participants to express themselves and their opinions.	After participation in an FGD, an individual's attitude may become more extreme
Hearing others' responses helps participants think of other points or clarify their opinions.	Only one topic at a time is discussed.
Participants feel empowered because they feel their opinions count.	Each participant has less time to talk.
Interaction among participants provides richness and depth.	Demands well-trained facilitators.

Source: Handiman (2019)

It is important to note that the above-mentioned advantages of focus group discussions justify their adoption as a data collection technique in this action research study.

### 5.16 Pretesting of Research Instruments

Before initiating the research study, pretesting was conducted to ensure the accuracy and appropriateness of the research instruments. Pretesting helps in identifying the flaws in the data collection process, improving the quality of data, and achieving the research objectives. Pretesting involves testing the survey questions, interview scripts, and focus group discussions on a small sample size of individuals who are not part of the research study. According to Wang and Lee (2010), pretesting improves the quality of data by ensuring the validity and reliability of research

instruments. Similarly, Drennan (2003) suggests that pretesting is an important step in ensuring the clarity and comprehensibility of questions, leading to accurate responses from participants.

The pretesting process also provides the opportunity to test the technology and equipment to be used in the research study, ensuring that they are functioning properly and free from errors. According to Creswell (2014), pretesting is important to assess the reliability and validity of the research instruments, and it helps to enhance the quality of data collected. Similarly, Zikmund and Babin (2013) suggest that pre-testing helps to identify the weaknesses and strengths of the research instruments and provides the researcher with the opportunity to improve the methodology and achieve the research objectives.

### **5.17 Limitations**

The research approach employed in this study had several limitations worth noting. Firstly, the small sample size of 30 participants out of a total population of 217,730 in Laayoune may have limited the study's external validity and generalisability (Krejcie and Morgan 1970; Rubin and Babbie 2017). A larger sample size enables researchers to draw more robust conclusions and make more confident generalisations about the population (Creswell and Creswell 2018). Another limitation observed in this study was related to the research method used, as the sensitive topic of the ongoing conflict in Western Sahara made some participants hesitant to share information (Babbie and Mouton 2021). This limitation is common in qualitative research, as participants may feel uncomfortable discussing sensitive or personal topics, leading to biased or incomplete data (Creswell and Creswell 2018). A further limitation of this study was that there was a limited needs assessment, as only residents of Laayoune were interviewed (Creswell and Creswell 2018). As a result, the study's findings may not reflect the attitudes and perceptions of residents in other cities, towns, and villages in Western Sahara.

Moreover, language barriers were a significant limitation in this study, as most participants spoke their native languages or Arabic, and very few were proficient in English (Patton 2015). This required the use of interpreters throughout the data collection and analysis processes, which may have introduced potential translation biases or misunderstandings (Babbie and Mouton 2021).

Although the study was heavily reliant on interpreters' translation of what a participant said, the action research team, which consisted of local community members and myself, helped to facilitate communication and interpretation (Patton 2015).

### **5.18 Research Setting**

The city of Laayoune in the Laayoune Province of Western Sahara was selected as the location for my research based on several considerations. Firstly, the city is home to both Sahrawis and Moroccans who live side by side, making it an ideal location to study the dynamics of their relationship. Secondly, the community is polarised due to the protracted conflict, resulting in deep-seated animosity, hatred, and mistrust between the two groups. Also, a study by Bush and Saltarelli (2000) revealed that peace education initiatives were effective in promoting understanding and building bridges between conflicting groups in various regions globally. These factors create an environment that is ripe for exploring the potential of peace education as a tool for transforming relationships and promoting peaceful coexistence.

The city of Laayoune is the largest urban area in Western Sahara and has been at the centre of the conflict between Morocco and the Polisario Front, which seeks to establish an independent state in the region. The city has been under Moroccan control since the 1970s, and the Sahrawi people who live there have faced discrimination and marginalisation. Despite this, the city remains a hub of activity, with a diverse population that includes both Sahrawis and Moroccans. The situation in Laayoune underscores the complexities of conflict and identity politics. The city's history and demographic makeup provide a unique lens through which to examine the dynamics of power, exclusion, and belonging. Indeed, scholars have argued that conflict can arise from the intersection of identity politics and territorial disputes (Kaufman 1996). The presence of a diverse population in Laayoune presents an opportunity for cross-cultural dialogue and reconciliation, which is crucial in post-conflict societies. Research has shown that intergroup contact can reduce prejudice and promote positive attitudes towards outgroups (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006).

The selection of Laayoune as the research site was intended to shed light on the complex dynamics of the conflict and the potential for peacebuilding efforts to succeed in such a challenging

environment. The decision allowed for an in-depth exploration of the potential of peace education to transform relationships and promote sustainable peace in a conflict-affected region. As highlighted by Bar-Tal and Bennink (2004), education can play a crucial role in promoting positive attitudes towards the "other" and facilitating the development of peaceful coexistence. Hence, studying the potential of peace education in a setting like Laayoune could help develop strategies for cultivating peace and mitigating the negative effects of conflict.

### **5.19 Laayoune Geographical Information**

Laayoune Province is a sparsely-populated province situated in Western Sahara, a region that has been the subject of a long-standing territorial dispute between Morocco and the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) since the latter's declaration of independence in 1976 (UNGA 1976). With a land area of approximately 139,480 square kilometres and a population of around 196,331 individuals as of 2020 (World Bank 2021), Laayoune Province is located in the western part of Western Sahara, bordered by the Atlantic Ocean to the west, Morocco to the north and east, and Mauritania to the south.

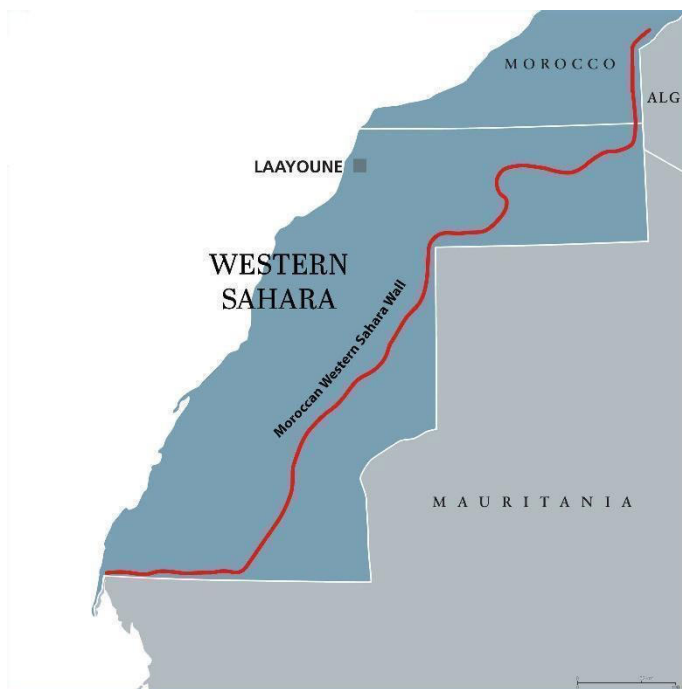
The province's terrain is characterised by mostly desert and semi-arid landscapes, with low mountain ranges located in the east and northeast. The region experiences a hot and arid climate, with average temperatures ranging from 20°C in January to 29°C in August (World Weather Online 2023). Laayoune Province is also home to a diverse range of wildlife, including the Dorcas gazelle, the fennec fox, and several bird species (BirdLife International 2022). Moreover, the coastal waters of the province boast a wealth of marine life, with fishing serving as a vital industry in the area.

In terms of its economy, Laayoune Province is renowned for its phosphate mining industry, which is the largest in the world (USGS 2022). Furthermore, the region is experiencing an upswing in its tourism sector, as many visitors are drawn to the area's distinct culture and natural beauty. Nevertheless, the political situation in the region remains complicated, with ongoing disputes over its sovereignty between Morocco and the SADR.

**Table 6. Geographical Information**

Latitude	27.1500° N
Longitude	13.1991° W
Continent	Africa
Time Zone	GMT (+1.00)
Continental Region	North Africa
Country Name	Disputed Territory
Country Province	Laayoune Province
City Name	Laayoune
Population	217,732 (as of 09/2020)

Source: United Nations (2020)



**Figure 2. Map of Moroccan Berm**

Source: United Nations (2020)

## 5.20 Ethical Considerations

As the principal researcher of this study, I ensured that ethical guidelines, upheld by the Durban University of Technology, were followed to ensure the protection, respect, and fulfilment of the

rights of the research participants. Durban University of Technology is committed to the promotion of responsible research practices that uphold the ethical principles of integrity, respect, and justice. DUT has established an institutional framework to ensure that research is conducted in an ethical and transparent manner that respects the rights of research participants (Durban University of Technology, n.d.). The ethical guidelines upheld by DUT include obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality and privacy, minimising risks to participants, and ensuring the ethical conduct of research involving human subjects (Durban University of Technology 2018). These ethical guidelines are critical in maintaining the integrity of research and protecting the rights of participants. Adhering to ethical principles is necessary to conduct research in a responsible manner, and it is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that these guidelines are followed (Flick 2018; Perales *et al.* 2020).

Peacebuilding studies often have political implications, and conducting research on highly sensitive political issues in a suspicious society can be challenging (Drew *et al.* 2016). The Western Sahara has been experiencing political turmoil for decades, making it a highly sensitive area for research. To address potential sensitivities, I approached the community with caution and announced my intention to conduct research while seeking permission from a gatekeeper. Gatekeepers are individuals or groups who control access to the community and can be instrumental in facilitating research activities (Drew *et al.* 2016). In my gatekeeper letter, I provided details of my research and contact information for myself as the principal researcher, my academic advisor, the department head, and the Ethics Committee at the Durban University of Technology.

In qualitative research, ethical considerations are of paramount importance in ensuring the protection and respect of the rights of research participants (Leung *et al.* 2018). In peacebuilding studies, where research may involve vulnerable populations in post-conflict settings, ethical considerations are particularly crucial (Bassiouni 2018). Qualitative research in peacebuilding studies is characterised by a range of ethical challenges, including power imbalances, the vulnerability of research participants, and the risk of harm (Chawla *et al.* 2018). In this context, researchers must carefully consider ethical considerations and take appropriate measures to ensure that research is conducted in a responsible and ethical manner (Chawla *et al.* 2018).

## **5.21 Anonymity and Confidentiality**

As a doctoral student at Durban University of Technology, I conducted a research study that required careful consideration of ethical considerations. To ensure that my research adhered to ethical guidelines, I followed the Research Ethics Policy and Guidelines of Durban University of Technology. This process involved obtaining clearance for my research proposal from both the Faculty Research Ethics Clearance and the Institutional Research Ethics Clearance, which are responsible for ensuring that research conducted at the university meets ethical standards.

The process of obtaining clearance involved submitting a comprehensive research proposal and ethical checklist. This ensured that my research was appropriately classified and assessed for potential risks. Given the nature of my study, it was classified as "Category 3", which is the highest risk category for its "possible risk to humans" and its "sensitive research area"

Throughout the study, I made sure to follow ethical guidelines to protect the rights of all participants. This involved obtaining informed consent from each participant, ensuring that they were provided with clear information about the research's purpose, objectives, methodology, and the identity of the research team and the university involved. I also assured participants that their names would not be used in the study and that they had the right to withdraw from the research process at any time without explanation or consequence.

## **5.22 Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the research methodology, design, paradigm, instruments, and ethical considerations. The first part of the study relied on exploratory research in order to understand the extent of the problem prior to action research. Exploring the nature of the problem and its consequences culminated in conceptualising, implementing, and evaluating a peacebuilding intervention. Action research requires joint effort by the researcher and the people affected by an existing social phenomenon to transform the situation. This is important as this study seeks to enhance the capacity for peacebuilding among community members. To realise this objective, I adopted a qualitative methodology to understand people's experiences, feelings, perceptions, opinions, and knowledge of peacebuilding. I also employed random and snowball sampling



techniques to find participants and collect primary data. The next chapter will discuss the definitions, goals, and philosophical assumptions of action research as well as the action research cycle and will elucidate its stages. The next chapter will also touch upon the concept of training in peacebuilding, as well as using workshops as platforms for training in peacebuilding.

## **Chapter Six**

### **Action Research and Training in Peacebuilding**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, I discuss the topics of action research and training in peacebuilding. The chapter will begin by providing definitions, goals, and the philosophical assumptions of action research. This chapter will also explain the stages of the action research cycle, which includes planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. Furthermore, this chapter will discuss the concept of training in peacebuilding and its importance in promoting sustainable peace. An overview of workshops as platforms for training in peacebuilding and their potential to promote understanding and cooperation between conflicting groups will be provided.

To illustrate the application of action research and training in peacebuilding, the chapter ends with case studies from different parts of Africa, highlighting the successes and challenges of using these methodologies in the field of peacebuilding. Through these case studies, readers will gain a deeper understanding of the practical applications of action research and training in peacebuilding, and the potential for these methodologies to contribute to lasting peace in conflict-affected regions.

#### **6.2 Definitions of Action Research**

Action research is a methodology that originated in the field of education and is designed to address practical issues through a process of continuous reflection, analysis, and action. Its aim is to promote transformative change by empowering stakeholders to identify and address the root causes of a particular issue. The process of action research involves a collaborative and iterative approach, where stakeholders work together to identify the problem, gather and analyse data, and develop and implement solutions. This process encourages active participation and engagement from all stakeholders, including those who are directly affected by the issue. While action research has its origins in the field of education, it has been applied across a wide range of disciplines and

contexts, including healthcare, community development, and organisational management. In each of these settings, the methodology has been utilised to promote transformative change, empower participants, and improve outcomes.

In the context of peacebuilding, action research has emerged as a powerful and effective tool for promoting sustainable peace. By engaging all stakeholders in the process of designing and implementing peacebuilding interventions, action research promotes a sense of ownership and responsibility, leading to more effective and sustainable outcomes. According to Denscombe (2014:122), research must be purposeful and seek to transform the situation, rather than simply offering recommendations for change. Another essential aspect of action research is its emphasis on the research process as a cycle, with a focus on continuous improvement. The overarching goal of action research is for communities to address critical social concerns in a manner that is practical. There are numerous definitions of action research. Below I refer to the most relevant and clear definitions.

According to Mertler (2006: 10), the term "action research" refers to:

Any systematic inquiry conducted...with vested interest in the teaching and learning process...for the purpose of gathering information about how [a] particular community operates.

Reason and Bradbury (2008: 1) define action research as:

...seeking to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people and to the flourishing of individuals and their communities.

Elliot (1991: 69) defines action research as:

...the study of a social situation with a view of improving the quality of action within it. It aims to feed practical judgement in concrete situations, and the validity of the 'theories' or hypotheses it generates depends not so much on 'scientific' tests of truth, [but rather] on their usefulness in helping people to act more intelligently and skillfully. In action research, 'theories' are not validated independently and then applied to practice; they're validated through practice.

A synthesis of the above definitions shows that action research places significant emphasis on collaboration throughout the research process. The sustainability of peacebuilding interventions

rests mainly on collaboration with locals and local ownership. Thus, action research is an appropriate approach to peacebuilding. There are several characteristics that are fundamental to action research, which I discuss below.

### **6.3 Themes and Characteristics of Action Research**

Denscombe (2014) summarises action research by providing the following themes: action research is *practical in nature*, i.e., addressing real life issues in various settings; *change-oriented*, i.e., transformation of these issues is essential in the study; *a cycle*, i.e., using findings from the research to prompt transformation, which is implemented together with the participants and evaluated to foster further research; and *participatory*, i.e., significant participation of stakeholders is key.

Coghlan and Brannick (2014) identify the following three characteristics that define action research: action research is research *in* action, rather than *about* action; action research is a collaborative, democratic partnership; action research is a sequence of events and an approach to problem-solving. The above-mentioned themes and characteristics of action research provide the framework of this study. Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) list seven characteristics of action research which I discuss in detail below.

#### **6.3.1 Action Research is Practical and Collaborative**

Action research allows people-of-concern, and concerned people, the opportunity to have a say and participate in how best to transform conflict and sustain peace. It also allows for collective decision-making and collective action, fostering equity among community members. Mertens (2010) further explains that action research emphasises the use of methods that allow the voices of those most oppressed to be heard. Thus, such research might take the form of community meetings and events that allow the oppressed people to tell their own stories, reflect on their communities, and generate ideas for change – centring on identification of needs, evaluation of services, and/or design of peacebuilding intervention.

### **6.3.2 Action Research is Critical**

The Action Research Team seeks to critically analyse and address the problems they are facing. When people become aware of their situation, they become empowered to act. Action research goes beyond the teaching of knowledge and skills that affect one's attitude and behaviour; action research allows people to influence their realities. The action research process allows people – even those marginalised and oppressed by unjust systems – the means to think through a course of action, then act, reflect, adjust, and act again accordingly.

### **6.3.3 Action Research is a Social Process**

Action research is a methodology that is based on the principles of collaboration and participation. It is an approach that requires people to work together in a cooperative and participatory manner to address and solve issues. In the context of this study, the aim is to promote trust, cooperation, and collective action among the residents of Western Sahara. Given this goal, I deemed action research as an appropriate approach to the study.

The participatory nature of action research allows for the involvement of all relevant stakeholders, including community members, in the research process. This involvement can contribute to a better understanding of the conflict dynamics and the development of more effective and sustainable solutions. By working together, stakeholders can collectively identify the issues that need to be addressed, and develop strategies to address them. The collaborative nature of action research also fosters the development of trust among stakeholders. Trust is a critical element in any conflict resolution process. By involving all relevant stakeholders in the research process, action research can help to build trust and create a more conducive environment for conflict resolution.

Furthermore, the participatory nature of action research can help to create a sense of ownership and empowerment among stakeholders. By involving stakeholders in the research process, they are given a voice and an opportunity to shape the research and its outcomes. This can contribute to a sense of ownership and empowerment, which can help to sustain the conflict resolution efforts beyond the research project.

### 6.3.4 Action Research is Participatory

There are four ways one can participate in action research: that is, contractual, consultative, collaborative, and collegiate participation. I describe each of the four methods of participation in the table below.

**Table 7. Four Methods of Action Research**

Method of Participation	Description
Contractual	Participants take part in research through contractual agreements.
Consultative	Participants give opinions through consultation.
Collaborative	Participants work with researcher(s) on projects conceptualised and implemented by the researcher.
Collegiate	Participants work alongside the researcher(s).

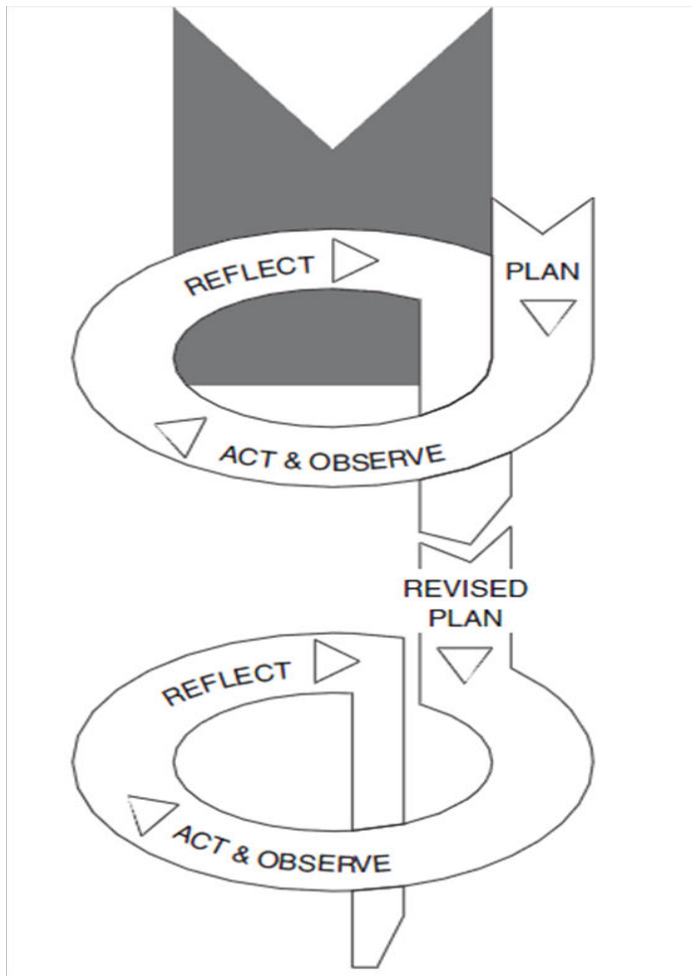
Source: Bangoli, A., & Clark, T. (2010). *Qualitative research in accounting and management*. Sage Publications. 102.

### 6.3.5 Action Research is Emancipatory

Action research empowers the voiceless. Martens (2010) states that researchers can engage voices that have traditionally been ignored. Action research is both relevant and advantageous to communities in Western Sahara as the people are given an opportunity to be heard and the opportunity to influence their future. Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) state that action research helps people release themselves from the constraints of unjust social structures that limit their self-development and self-determination.

### 6.3.6 Action Research is Reflexive

Action research is an ongoing conceptualisation of thought and implementation of decisions. Illustrated in the figure below, Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) explain the action research steps as plan, act and observe, reflect, revise plan, act and observe, reflect, and so on.



**Figure 3. Action Research Steps**

Source: Kemmis, S., & McTaggart, R. (2010). Participatory action research: Communicative action and the public sphere. In Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research*. Sage Publications, 275-292.

### **6.3.7 Action Research Aims to Transform Theory and Practice**

Action research, indeed, transforms theory and practice. It integrates theoretical insights in the development and implementation of studies which address the challenges of the day (Esau 2015). This study adds to the scholarship of action research. The new knowledge presented in this study

was obtained from the innovative peacebuilding intervention implemented. This study provides an in-depth analysis and understanding of an action research study carried out in Western Sahara.

## **6.4 Foundations of Action Research**

The pioneering work of action research can be attributed to Kurt Lewin, who developed the key concepts of action research. Below are the key concepts of Lewin, as summarised by Argyis et al. (1985), cited in Coghlan and Branck (2014).

Action research:

- Involves sustainable, transformative change experiments on problems in social systems.
- Involves iterative cycles of identifying a problem, planning, acting, and evaluating.
- Involves re-education.
- Challenges the status-quo from a participatory perspective, a prerequisite for effective re-education.
- Contributes simultaneously to basic knowledge in social science and social action of everyday life.

The key concepts of action research are what make it a unique and highly beneficial approach to studying social phenomena. In this study, Moroccans and Sahrawis collaboratively sought to understand the attitudes and perceptions of themselves and of each other, reflect on current practices to address these attitudes and perceptions, and design and implement an innovative peacebuilding intervention. This process was cyclic and required constant evaluation. In the following section, I explain the process of action research in greater detail.

## **6.5 The Process of Action Research**

Mertler (2013) defines action research as an ongoing process that involves four basic steps: identifying an area of focus, collecting data, analysing and interpreting data, and developing a plan of action. However, Mertler and Charles (2011) provide a more comprehensive four-stage framework for action research that includes planning, acting, developing, and reflecting stages. The planning stage comprises three steps: identifying and limiting the research topic, reviewing



related literature, and developing a research plan. The acting stage involves collecting and analysing data, while the developing stage focuses on coming up with an action plan for future activities. The reflection stage includes sharing and communicating results and reflecting on the research process.

To ensure the ongoing improvement of the research, Mertler (2013) emphasises that the researcher must constantly repeat the implementation and evaluation phases. Similarly, Parsons and Brown (2002:8) describe the action research process as one of observing, doing, observing, adjusting, and doing. Unlike other research methodologies, action research involves engaging the community in data collection. Grundy and Kemmi (1988) emphasise that people affected by the research should be partners in the research process. Action research also includes practical activities, such as workshops, where researchers and participants can exchange ideas and discuss the research findings. In this study, the workshop strategy was adopted, and the reasons for this adoption will be discussed later in this chapter.

## **6.6 Goals of Action Research**

Action research aims towards specific goals, and it delivers specific outcomes. Action research makes an immediate impact on a current practice and contributes to the field of peacebuilding. This fitted well into the overall objective of this study as I engaged community members living in Western Sahara to participate in peacebuilding workshops to gain peacebuilding skills and knowledge to prove that peace education is an effective tool for peacebuilding. The focus of this study was to teach community members living in the disputed territory of Western Sahara the skills and knowledge to address the deep-rooted negative attitudes and perceptions that remain from the protracted Western Sahara conflict. However, action research must follow certain philosophical assumptions to meet the expectations of the researcher(s) and stakeholder(s).

## **6.7 Philosophical Assumptions of Action Research**

Action research, like all research, needs to be grounded in a philosophical orientation. As defined by Riordan (1995: 33), the philosophy of action research is:

An approach to studying social reality, distinguishing fact from value but not separating the two. It requires the practitioner to not only be an engaged participant, but a participant that incorporates the perspective of a critical and analytical observer, not as a validating tool, but as an integral part of practice.

Action research needs to be grounded from both ontological and epistemological perspectives. The philosophical viewpoint used in this study is the interpretive approach. Interpretive researchers believe that social reality is constructed through human actions and interactions. Guba and Lincoln (1994) describe this as the main ontological assumption of interpretive research. They further frame the ontological question as "what is the nature of reality and what can be known about it?" Social reality is based on people's definition of it, as clarified by Neuman (1997). In action research, the researcher is engaged in a programme to develop new solutions that alter existing practice and test the feasibility and properties of the innovation (Kaplan 1998: 89). Therefore, as an action researcher, it is crucial to have a clear understanding of the research environment's reality to ensure the research process's clarity and validity.

According to Schwandt (1994), the interpretive approach enables a comprehensive understanding of the intricate realm of human experience, as perceived by those who have lived it. Similarly, Nordentoft (2013) emphasises that action researchers prioritise participatory approaches that entail working closely with participants, with a focus on jointly generating knowledge and comprehension. This stands in contrast to a more positivist perspective, which assumes that the researcher holds the knowledge and expertise, while participants are merely sources of data to be examined.

An understanding of epistemological assumptions is essential in any research study. The epistemological assumption underlying this study is the collaborative nature of knowledge acquisition (McNiff and Whitehead 2011). According to Taylor *et al.* (2009), it is important to address questions related to epistemology because the researcher's goal is to comprehend the reality of a situation. Epistemological assumptions encompass what we know, what constitutes knowledge, where knowledge comes from, and what can be known and understood (Wellington *et al.* 2006). Additionally, Wellington *et al.* (2006) argue that the purpose of research is to acquire

knowledge that informs and improves policy and practice, which influenced the formulation of my research questions.

Coghlan and Brannick (2014) identify four key epistemological assumptions in action research, which I paraphrase below:

- Experiential knowing – knowledge arising as we encounter the realities around us.
- Presentational knowing – knowledge expressed through language, music, painting, etc.
- Propositional knowing – knowledge distilling our experiential and propositional knowing into theories and statements.
- Practical knowing – knowledge that brings the three previous forms of knowing (experiential, presentational, and propositional) to fruition by becoming skilful and competent.

People view, experience, and relate to conflict differently and view conflict through different lenses. Thus, the above epistemological assumptions were instrumental when identifying the study sample. I was consciously aware of these assumptions when seeking to understand the Western Sahara Conflict and when collecting qualitative data through questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions.

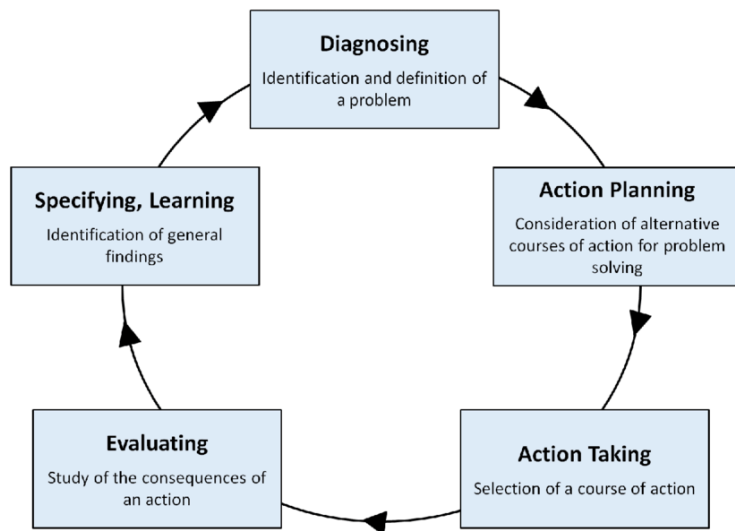
Reason (2006), as cited in Coughlan and Brannick (2014), offers another epistemological dimension to action research by arguing that action research should be judged by a criterion of its own. I paraphrase below the five key questions he identifies to ensure quality in action research:

- Is the research clear on promoting interpersonal participation? Can the researcher's collaboration with participants be assessed?
- Does the research prioritise practical outcomes and involve continuous reflection?
- Is the research diverse in its approach and methodology, incorporating experiential, presentational, propositional, and practical knowing?
- Is the research meaningful and significant?
- Does the research deliver sustainable transformation and innovative policies and practices?

The abovementioned epistemological assumptions strongly informed the data collection process of my research. Through my questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions, I allowed the experiences of the participants to lead the direction of the study.

The very fact that the Western Sahara Conflict is considered Africa's longest conflict is sufficient to implement innovative research methods and peacebuilding initiatives. This extraordinary fact is critical and evident. Action research positions the researcher at the heart of the study. It is a particularly advantageous research design because it allows for the testing of theories in natural settings while directly addressing local needs and further allowing in-depth reflection on those needs being addressed. Scott (2010), as cited in McNiff and Whitehead (2011: 10), states that action research is "people taking action to improve their personal and social situations".

Participation produces local ownership, which is a prerequisite for sustainability. Sustainable peace in Western Sahara, as well as across Africa, centres on individual community members themselves gaining the knowledge and skills to resolve conflict nonviolently. Action research is key to this endeavour.



**Figure 4. Stages of Action Research**

Source: Susan, M. A., and Evered, R. D. (1978). Environmental scanning: the state of the art. *Long Range Planning*, 11(1), 4-16.

## 6.8 Elucidating the Stages of Action Research

To understand the Western Sahara Conflict, I carefully studied the broad socio-political environment in Western Sahara, and in Laayoune Province specifically. I sought to understand the past and present peacebuilding initiatives in Western Sahara, or lack thereof. I deemed it necessary to implement a questionnaire and conduct interview and focus group discussions within the community to gain a better understanding of attitudes and perceptions, and to gain an understanding of their knowledge of peacebuilding. I used a combination of primary and secondary data to gather this information. Primary data collection methods included questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions. Secondary data collection methods included desk-based reviews of newspapers, studies, and articles.

### **6.8.1 Diagnosing: Identification and Definition of a Problem**

The effectiveness of research is dependent on the ability to identify the problem and its subcomponents. This initial stage of the research process plays a pivotal role in determining the overall effectiveness of the study. As Johnson (2002) points out, a research project can only be considered truly successful if it has the potential to accurately identify and address a genuine obstacle. With this in mind, it becomes clear that the identification and definition of the problem is a critical step towards achieving the research objectives. By properly defining the problem, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the various factors that are contributing to the issue at hand. This understanding, in turn, can help to guide the research towards the most effective methods for addressing the problem.

By collaborating with community members, researchers can gain valuable insights into the real-world implications of the problem and the specific training needs that exist within the community. This type of collaboration helps to ensure that the research is grounded in the needs of the community, and that it has the potential to make a meaningful difference in the lives of those who are impacted by the problem. In one particular case, I collaborated with community members in Western Sahara to identify their training needs. This collaboration allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges that the community was facing and the specific areas in which additional training can help to address these challenges.

### **6.8.2 Action Planning: Consideration of Alternative Course of Action for Problem**

#### **Solving**

After identifying and defining the problem, I worked closely with my action research team, which is composed entirely of Moroccan and Sahrawi community members, to intellectualise and design a course of action. As this action research study is designed for community members to develop peacebuilding knowledge and skills, I targeted civilians. These civilians were community members living in Western Sahara. Working together, we were able to develop a comprehensive action plan that involved a range of different approaches to developing peacebuilding knowledge and skills. These included training workshops, community dialogues, and peer-to-peer learning sessions. Through these activities, the community members were able to gain a deeper understanding of the

issues surrounding conflict and violence in their community, and to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to help address these issues in a constructive and positive manner.

### **6.8.3 Action Taking: Selection of a Course of Action**

This was the peacebuilding intervention phase of my action research cycle, where my research team and I collaborated with community members to develop specific peace education workshops that catered to their identified needs. After identifying the areas of training needed, we designed and conducted workshops. The content was tailored to the context and culturally relevant, ensuring its effectiveness. Additionally, I took on the task of translating and transcribing materials and information from English to Arabic and vice versa to ensure a clear understanding among all participants.

### **6.8.4 Evaluating: Study of the Consequences of an Action**

Evaluating is an essential component of any action research cycle. It involves studying the consequences of the chosen course of action to determine whether it was effective in addressing the identified problem or issue. Evaluation must reflect on the process and identify challenges and successes. This study evaluated the workshops immediately following the training through discussion and an evaluation questionnaire. This study also conducted a short-term impact evaluation of the workshop training, which was completed three months following the final workshop. The evaluation process allowed the research team to determine the success of the peace education workshops in addressing the peacebuilding challenges faced by the community. It also highlighted areas where improvements could be made in the design and delivery of the workshops.

### **6.8.5 Specifying, Learning: Identification of General Findings**

It is of utmost importance to ensure that the outcomes of action research build upon theory and contribute new knowledge by attempting to fill in the gaps in research that have been identified by scholars. This is an important factor when furthering the scholarship of action research and peacebuilding. I will continue to synthesise and analyse the outcomes of this action research with the aim of publishing articles and presenting my findings at conferences. The outcomes of the

action research should build upon existing theories and contribute new knowledge to further the scholarship of action research and peacebuilding. By doing so, this research can help to fill gaps in research that have been identified by scholars and contribute to the overall understanding of the factors that influence conflict transformation and sustainable peace. Ultimately, the hope is that the outcomes of the action research will contribute to the achievement of sustainable peace in Western Sahara.

## **6.9 Justification for Action Research**

Action research is a type of research design that emphasises the active involvement of participants in the research process. It allows for an in-depth exploration of participants' daily experiences, attitudes, perceptions, opinions, and behaviours by engaging them in a collaborative process of inquiry, reflection, and action. In this study, the action research design was found to be suitable as it involved studying the feelings and actions of Moroccans and Sahrawis living in Western Sahara.

The action research design allows for the community members living in Western Sahara to actively participate in the process of transforming the conflict and building sustainable peace. By involving the community members in the research process, the study creates an opportunity for them to reflect on their experiences, perceptions, and behaviours and collaborate with the researchers to identify practical solutions that can lead to sustainable peace. Through the action research process, the study seeks to create a safe space for dialogue and interaction between the conflicting parties, facilitating the building of trust and mutual understanding.

## **6.10 Why Training in Peacebuilding?**

According to Lederach (1997), "the skills and competencies required for peacebuilding are not innate, but must be learned through training, education and experience". Therefore, training is crucial in developing the capacity for peacebuilding. As Kriesberg (2003) argues, "education and training are critical elements in promoting and sustaining peaceful societies". This training can help individuals develop the skills necessary to identify and address the root causes of conflict, and to work towards solutions that address the needs and concerns of all parties involved.



Abu-Nimer (1998) emphasises the importance of fostering tolerance among adversaries as the ultimate goal of peacebuilding. He states that "the objective of peacebuilding is to promote reconciliation, healing and the rebuilding of relationships between adversaries," which requires training in peacebuilding. Such training can be achieved through peace education, which can help individuals learn how to address conflict in a nonviolent and constructive manner.

The protracted conflict in Western Sahara has created a complex situation that is exacerbated by negative attitudes and divisions among Moroccans and Sahrawis. As Bennis and Drissi (2019) argue, "peacebuilding in Western Sahara requires addressing the root causes of the conflict, as well as promoting mutual understanding and respect between the different groups". This can be achieved through peacebuilding training, which can help individuals develop the skills necessary to identify and address the underlying issues that contribute to conflict, and to work towards solutions that promote peace.

## **6.11 Local Ownership in Peacebuilding**

The role of culture in peacebuilding interventions is of utmost importance, as it impacts how such interventions are conceptualised and carried out. Richmond (2013) emphasises that peacebuilding interventions must be based on local choices, cultural context, and contextual needs. Stroschein (2013) adds that the local setting for peacebuilding work is a complex environment with hidden yet significant dynamics that need to be understood. Stroschein (2013) likens peacebuilding interventions to altering a machine that is already in motion without understanding all of its moving parts. To minimise harm and enhance effectiveness and sustainability, it is therefore crucial that researchers and peacebuilders comprehend the local dynamics. By using action research, researchers and local participants can gain essential knowledge and ensure the best possibility for transformation and sustainability.

According to McNiff (2016), action research provides an opportunity for people to learn about themselves and their situations, rather than learning how to conduct research. Kemmis and McTaggart (2015) also share this view, stating that participants become researchers in action research. McNiff (2016) argues that action research fosters increased community cohesion and

empathetic relationships between practitioners and participants. The goal of action research is to increase participants' awareness and capabilities, empowering them to take control of issues that affect them. Zuber-Skerrit (1996) suggests that the primary researcher's main goal is to foster involvement among the participants. Action research emphasises individual improvement and transformation, and both the primary researcher and participant are actively involved in the integrated process, according to Somekh (1995). McNiff (2016) agrees, stating that action research enhances learning to promote action. Although macro-level change is not expected in action research, the change is still viewed as significant in terms of improving knowledge. Action research focuses on self-development, encouraging individuals to reflect on and improve themselves.

The Action Research Team was essential in the conceptualisation, design, and implementation of the peacebuilding intervention. Data for this study was gathered through the utilisation of questionnaires, observations, interviews, and focus group discussions. In addition, peace education workshops were implemented, which enabled adversaries to learn and collaborate together. Furthermore, an initial assessment of the peacebuilding intervention was conducted.

## **6.12 Workshops: A Platform for Peacebuilding**

The workshop method is widely used in peacebuilding initiatives due to its potential to create a collaborative environment for conflict transformation. Fisher (1997) highlights the interactive nature of workshops as a key feature that makes them effective in conflict resolution. In the context of peacebuilding, Francis (2002) identifies three primary types of workshops, namely: problem-solving workshops, capacity-building workshops, and dialogue workshops. Problem-solving workshops enable adversaries to come together and discuss their differences with the aim of finding workable solutions. Capacity-building workshops focus on the development of relevant skills that are necessary for conflict transformation. Dialogue workshops aim to explore options for addressing a conflict by providing a platform for open communication and understanding.

In this study, all three forms of workshops were utilised, reflecting the need to address the complexity of the conflict in Western Sahara. The workshop method provided a means to analyse

the conflict and map the needs and wants of the adversaries. According to Kelman (1972), understanding and addressing these needs and wants is crucial for providing sustainable solutions.

The workshop method has numerous advantages in peacebuilding, including the ability to facilitate dialogue and collaboration between conflicting parties, promote a sense of ownership and participation, and empower participants by providing them with relevant skills and knowledge. Additionally, the workshop method allows for the identification of key stakeholders, the development of trust, and the generation of new ideas and perspectives. These advantages make the workshop method an essential component of any successful peacebuilding intervention.

The workshop method was chosen to deliver peace education content because it provides an interactive and participatory learning experience. Workshops allow participants to engage in dialogue and reflection, share experiences and perspectives, and collaborate on action towards building peaceful relationships. They can also create a safe space for dialogue and the exploration of sensitive topics.

The advantages of workshops as a method of delivering peace education have been noted by researchers and practitioners. For instance, workshops can promote critical thinking and enhance communication skills, help build empathy and mutual respect, and encourage participants to take ownership of the peacebuilding process. Workshops can also build trust and understanding between conflicting parties, as well as empower individuals to become advocates for peace in their communities (Danko 2019; Diaz 2018; Hamdan and Dib 2019; van Tongeren 2019).

However, there are also some limitations to using workshops as a method of delivering peace education. For instance, workshops can be time-consuming, and it may be difficult to reach large numbers of participants. Workshops may also not be appropriate for all audiences, particularly those who are not comfortable with group discussions or who may be hesitant to engage in dialogue with individuals from opposing sides of a conflict. Finally, workshops may require significant resources, such as funding, facilitators, and materials, which may limit their accessibility (Danko 2019; Diaz 2018; Hamdan and Dib 2019; van Tongeren 2019).

The action research team concluded that the workshop method would be suitable for delivering peace education. Despite the above-mentioned limitations, the workshop method is an excellent

choice for delivering peace education content, particularly when it comes to conflicts with opposing sides, such as the Western Sahara conflict. The participatory and interactive nature of workshops allows for the building of trust and understanding between conflicting parties, while the focus on dialogue and reflection encourages critical thinking and empathy-building. By empowering individuals to take ownership of the peacebuilding process and become advocates for peace, workshops can complement the efforts of international organisations, such as the United Nations, and contribute to building sustainable peace on the ground.

#### **6.14 Case Studies in Peacebuilding using Action Research**

The information in this section has been taken from Makwerere's 2017 publication, which focuses on the use of action research in peacebuilding. Makwerere discusses the growing literature in this area and presents a synthesis of previous action research studies and their findings. The aim of this section is to highlight the variety of peacebuilding initiatives that have used action research methodology and to showcase the range of successful outcomes that can be achieved through this approach.

In 2001, Lockett, Ngubane, and Memela conducted a study in the KwaZulu-Natal Province of South Africa with the aim of enhancing the effectiveness of an organisation. The study utilised focus group discussions, workshops, feedback sessions, and collaboration with the decision-making core group. While the initiative was successful, the researchers noted the importance of conducting a more comprehensive evaluation of the intervention over a longer duration to determine the effectiveness of the changes. The study also highlighted the significance of systemic action research, as it allows participants to develop solutions that are tailored to their local context. Overall, the study emphasised the importance of involving participants in the research process to ensure that the interventions are meaningful and effective in improving organisational effectiveness.

In 2006, Lundy and McGovern conducted a study in Northern Ireland with the aim of examining the ethical implications of truth-telling initiatives and identifying potential challenges while proposing solutions to overcome them. The study focused on the Ardoyne Commemoration Project

and utilised a combination of individual interviews and group feedback to collect data. The study found that community-based truth-telling initiatives can facilitate the healing process within communities. The researchers emphasised the importance of conducting such initiatives in an ethical way, taking into account the potential risks and challenges involved. The study provides insights into the complexities of truth-telling processes and highlights the need for careful consideration of ethical issues in designing and implementing such initiatives.

In 2014, Adebayo conducted a study in Nigeria aimed at building capacity for conflict-sensitive journalism among Nigerian journalists. The study focused on providing training to 36 journalists in the principles and practice of peace journalism. Following the workshop, the researchers evaluated the effectiveness of the training programme and found that the journalists demonstrated a positive response towards the concept of peace journalism, incorporating it into their reporting. The study concluded that the training programme was a success in promoting conflict-sensitive journalism and highlighted the importance of equipping journalists with the necessary skills to report on conflicts in a sensitive and constructive manner.

In 2014, Ngwenya conducted a study in Matabeleland North, Zimbabwe, with the aim of promoting healing among survivors of the Gukurahundi conflict. The Gukurahundi was a period of civil unrest that occurred in the early 1980s and resulted in the deaths of an estimated 20,000 civilians, mostly from the Ndebele ethnic group, due to the government's heavy-handed tactics. The study utilised a participatory action research approach, incorporating activities such as storytelling, drama, group-based healing workshops, and psychosocial interventions to create safer spaces for truth-telling. The study concluded that such initiatives can empower individuals and communities to heal themselves, even in the absence of an official government apology. The study highlights the importance of addressing the psychosocial challenges faced by survivors of conflict and promoting healing through participatory and inclusive approaches.

In 2016, Muchemwa conducted a study at Solusi University in Matabeleland South Province, Zimbabwe, with the aim of fostering friendships between the Ndebele and Shona ethnic groups. The study utilised action research and involved a control group of 24 university students who participated in interviews and dialogue sessions. Following the intervention, the participants

planted trees together as a symbol of unity and peace. The study drew on Lederach's conflict transformation theory and the "transcend dialogue" concept of Johan Galtung, and found that dialogue was effective in transforming relationships. However, the study also uncovered deep-seated animosities and historical tensions between the two groups, particularly among younger generations who had been exposed to misinformation and misconceptions. Despite this, the study concluded that through friendship-building and dialogue, it was still possible to promote understanding and sustainable relationships between the two groups, emphasising the importance of creating a conducive environment for such initiatives.

## **6.15 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I delved into the fascinating world of action research and its significant role in peacebuilding. I began by examining the definitions, goals, and philosophical assumptions of action research, highlighting its relevance in contemporary society. Additionally, I explored the action research cycle in detail, elucidating the different stages involved in this process. Furthermore, I discussed the importance of training in peacebuilding and how workshops can serve as a valuable platform for delivering such training. I explored various pedagogical approaches to training, and the critical role they play in shaping the success of peacebuilding efforts. I also highlighted the key challenges and opportunities that exist in the realm of training for peacebuilding.

Towards the end of the chapter, I examined several case studies of action research in peacebuilding across Africa, showcasing the various ways in which this methodology has been implemented and the impact it has had on communities. Moving forward, the next chapter will explore more deeply the action team's process of determining the training needs for the workshop method. I will deal with the various factors that influence the selection of appropriate pedagogical approaches and discuss the steps involved in designing an effective peacebuilding intervention.

# **Chapter Seven**

## **Pre-Intervention Outlook, Determining Training Needs and Approach**

### **7.1 Introduction**

This chapter is the first of three devoted to presenting and analysing the findings from the data collection process. This chapter delves into the essential considerations that the research team reflected upon while developing the peacebuilding intervention. To inform this process, the research team used a combination of data collection methods, including administering questionnaires and conducting individual interviews. Through these methods, the team gathered preliminary data that provided crucial insights for the intervention's development.

The chapter details the process of identifying the training needs of the participants, conceptualising the peacebuilding intervention, and determining the philosophical and pedagogical assumptions that guided its development. This chapter sets the foundation for the subsequent chapters, which will delve deeper into the peacebuilding intervention's implementation and evaluation.

### **7.2 The Research, Action, Reflection Processes of the Study**

This study went through three major processes. Each process had the same three steps: research, action, reflection. The study began by asking the questions: *What is the nature of the conflict in Western Sahara? What is the nature of the peacebuilding environment in Western Sahara?* (i.e., research). It then collected data to obtain perspectives from various community members (i.e., action) and disseminated the preliminary findings (i.e., reflection).

The study then had other questions: *What existing peacebuilding skills do community members have? What new skills do they require to build sustainable peace?* (i.e., research). It then gathered qualitative data to identify strengths and capacity gaps (i.e., action) and determined and clarified training needs based on these identified strengths and capacity gaps (i.e., reflection).

The third and final process asked the question: *How do we address the capacity gaps in a way that is conducive to building peace and sustaining peace?* (i.e., research). Action was taken one last time in the form of designing and implementing a peacebuilding intervention (i.e., action) and the process ended with a short-term evaluation and recommendations (i.e., reflection).

**Table 8. Overview of Fieldwork and Data Collection Procedures**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Steps Taken</b>	<b>Data Collection Tool(s) / Method</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
July 2020 to October 2021	Literature Review	Scholarly articles, books, conference proceedings, reports, and other relevant materials.	Identify gaps in the literature; Establish the context for the research; Identify key concepts and themes; Identify methodological approaches; Provide evidence to support the research
October 2021 to December 2021	Baseline survey	Questionnaire	Gather information about the characteristics, behaviours, and attitudes of the participants; Establish the study sample; Measure the initial levels of study variables; Identify potential confounding variables; Assess the feasibility of the study
November 2021 to December 2021	Baseline survey	Interviews and Focus Group Discussions	Gather insights into participants' perspectives, experiences, and attitudes on the research topic; Identify common themes, patterns, and perspectives among the participants; Identify potential Action Research Team members
December 2021	Identify initial members of Action Research Team	Questionnaire and Interviews	Local knowledge and expertise; Community engagement and participation; Collaborative learning and capacity building; Ownership and sustainability
February 2022	Travel to Morocco; Meet with Action Research Team	Collaborative session/Team meeting	Present findings from data collection; Map capacity needs; Plan peacebuilding intervention; Secure and visit venue
27 February 2022	Workshop # 1	Observation; Workshop	Icebreaker; Introductions; Review of workshop schedule.
12-13 March 2022	Workshop # 2	Observation; Workshop	Conflict Analysis
26-27 March 2022	Workshop #3	Observation; Workshop	Dialogue



8-9 April 2022	Workshop # 4	Observation; Workshop	Social Healing, Reconciliation, Forgiveness
23-24 April 2022	Workshop # 5	Observation; Workshop	Preparing Peacebuilders
30 April - 1 May 2022	Travel to Morocco; Workshop # 6	Observation; Workshop	Group presentations; Peace Pledge signing; ad-hoc Peace Committee formation
May 2022	Workshop evaluation	Questionnaire	Collect feedback from participants; Evaluate participant satisfaction; Assess learning outcomes; Identify strengths and weaknesses
29 May 2022	Meet with Action Research Team; Post-intervention focus group discussions and interviews; Short- term evaluation of the peacebuilding intervention	Questionnaire, Interviews, and Focus Group Discussions	Provide feedback on effectiveness of intervention and identify areas for improvement; Assess the relevance of the intervention; Measure the effectiveness of the intervention (i.e., change in attitudes/behaviours); Identify areas for improvement; Measure contribution of new knowledge to perspective field

### 7.3 The Action Research Team (ART)

**Table 9. Action Research Team's Coding and Demographic Data**

<b>Participant ID</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Nationality</b>
ART1	Male	34	American
ART2	Male	25	Moroccan
ART3	Male	26	Sahrawi
ART4	Female	22	Moroccan
ART5	Female	27	Sahrawi
ART6	Female	20	Moroccan
ART7	Female	24	Sahrawi

Source: Own data

The table contains information about the seven participants in the Action Research Team (ART) who supported and participated in the study. The ART team members play a crucial role in the research process by helping to design, implement, and analyse the study. The table includes the participant ID, gender, age, and nationality of each participant. The participants were evenly split between male and female, and their ages ranged from 20 to 34 years old. The table shows that the participants in the ART team were evenly split between male and female, which is a positive indicator of gender diversity.

The participants were of three different nationalities, with four participants being Moroccan, two participants being Sahrawi, and one participant, myself, being American. This diverse group of participants brought a range of perspectives and experiences to the study, which helped to enrich the research and improve its overall quality. This is a promising indicator of diversity in terms of nationality, which is important for research studies to avoid any cultural biases or limitations. As mentioned above, the varied backgrounds and experiences of the participants brought diverse perspectives to the study, which helped to enhance the research findings and led to more accurate conclusions. It is also worth noting that the small size of the ART team helped facilitate effective collaboration and communication between team members, enabling them to work together efficiently to achieve the study's goals.

## 7.4 Questionnaire

**Table 10 Questionnaire Participants' Gender**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>	<b>Percentage of Participants</b>
<b>Male</b>	23	57.5 %
<b>Female</b>	17	42.5 %
<b>Total</b>	40	100 %

Source: Own data

**Table 11 Questionnaire Participants' Bio-Data**

Age	Number of Participants	Percentage of Participants
18-24	19	47.5 %
25-34	15	37.5 %
35-45	4	10 %
46-60	2	5 %
<b>Total</b>	40	100 %

Source: Own data

The statistics provided in the table indicate the gender and age distribution of the participants in the questionnaire. The questionnaire had a total of 40 participants, with 23 of them being male (57.5%) and 17 being female (42.5%). In terms of age, the largest age group was 18-24 years, with 19 participants (47.5%), followed by the 25-34 age group with 15 participants (37.5%), while the remaining two age groups (35-45 and 46-60) had only 4 and 2 participants respectively. These statistics represent a relatively diverse sample of participants, with a near-equal representation of both genders. Additionally, the age distribution shows a good mix of younger and older participants, which can help to ensure a balanced perspective in the survey responses. This diversity can lead to more accurate and representative findings, as well as a broader range of insights and perspectives. Furthermore, having a larger percentage of younger participants (47.5% in the 18-24 age group) could indicate a higher level of engagement and interest among the youth, which can be a positive sign for the future

#### **7.4.1 Emerging Themes from Questionnaire**

The questionnaire aimed to gather information about the identities, perceptions, and experiences of Sahrawis and Moroccans. It included questions about the participants' identities, their views on the conflict, their experiences with violence or discrimination, and their perceptions of the relationship between Sahrawis and Moroccans. The information obtained from the questionnaire was important to understand the participants' perspectives and to identify potential barriers and opportunities for the peacebuilding intervention. The questionnaire also sought to identify

potential strategies for building better relations between Sahrawis and Moroccans, as well as to understand the obstacles that needed to be overcome in order to achieve peace. Based on the data gathered from the questionnaire, several key themes emerged that can inform efforts to improve relations between Sahrawis and Moroccans in Western Sahara. These themes include perceptions, experiences, Sahrawi and Moroccan relations, and improving relations.

Firstly, perceptions play a significant role in shaping attitudes towards others. Participants shared stories they had heard about Sahrawis and Moroccans, with some stories portraying the two groups as enemies. These perceptions can be influenced by factors such as media coverage, education, and personal experiences. Therefore, peace education efforts could aim to challenge negative stereotypes and promote understanding and empathy between the two groups. Secondly, experiences living with Sahrawis and Moroccans vary widely among participants. Some described positive experiences of living with others from different backgrounds, while others shared stories of violence or discrimination they or others had experienced. Addressing the root causes of these negative experiences and promoting respect for diversity can help create a more peaceful community.

The data also highlights the need for improved Sahrawi and Moroccan relations. While some participants believed that the two groups dislike each other, others were more hopeful about the possibility of peaceful coexistence. Bridging this gap will require dialogue and efforts to address the underlying issues that have contributed to tensions in the region. Lastly, improving relations between Sahrawis and Moroccans will require concrete actions. Participants identified various obstacles to building good relations, including political, economic, and social factors. Participants also proposed several potential solutions, such as increasing opportunities for dialogue and education about each other's cultures and histories. Peace education can play an important role in building trust, promoting intercultural dialogue, and fostering understanding between different groups.

The data gathered revealed common themes and patterns that emerged beyond those previously mentioned. Participants perceived the Western Sahara conflict as a complex issue that has been ongoing for many years, with some expressing the need for more education to help people

understand the root causes of the conflict. Discrimination was also a significant issue highlighted in the data, with several participants sharing personal stories of discrimination faced due to their identity or background. To combat this problem, participants believed that more education and awareness is necessary.

Additionally, the data revealed a desire among participants to build better relationships between Sahrawis and Moroccans. Education and awareness-raising initiatives were suggested as a way to foster understanding and empathy between the two groups. Overall, the data highlights the complexity of the Western Sahara conflict and the need for increased education and awareness around the issue. It underscores the importance of addressing discrimination and building positive relationships between Sahrawis and Moroccans. Peace education has a crucial role to play in addressing these issues and fostering a more peaceful and inclusive society.

#### **7.4.2 Reinforcing Existing Narratives and Stereotypes**

The stories shared by participants demonstrate the complexity of the protracted Western Sahara conflict. On one hand, there are stories of bravery and resilience that highlight the strength and resourcefulness of both Sahrawis and Moroccans. On the other hand, there are stories of personal experiences of violence and discrimination that underscore the deep-seated tensions and animosities that have fueled the conflict. These stories contribute to the protracted Western Sahara conflict by reinforcing existing narratives and stereotypes about Sahrawis and Moroccans. When people hear stories that confirm their existing beliefs, they are more likely to cling to those beliefs and become more entrenched in their positions. This can make it difficult to find common ground and negotiate a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

Peace education can support peacebuilding by providing opportunities for participants to share their own stories and hear the stories of others. By listening to each other's stories, participants can gain a deeper understanding of the experiences and perspectives of those on the other side of the conflict. This can help to break down barriers and build empathy, which are essential components of any peacebuilding effort. In our workshops, we address this issue by creating a safe and supportive environment for participants to share their stories. We use a variety of techniques, including storytelling, role-playing, and group discussions, to encourage participants to listen to

each other's stories and reflect on their own experiences. By creating opportunities for dialogue and mutual understanding, we hope to contribute to a more peaceful and just society.

### **7.4.3 Exploring Varied Views on Sahrawi-Moroccan Relations in Western Sahara: Insights from Participants**

During the questionnaire, participants were asked about their views on the relations between Sahrawis and Moroccans in Western Sahara. The responses were varied, with some noting that there were tensions and conflicts between the two groups, while others emphasised the need for unity and cooperation. One participant highlighted the mistrust and animosity that exists between Sahrawis and Moroccans, which is understandable given the historical context. However, they also believed that better relations could be built based on mutual respect and understanding. This sentiment was echoed by another participant who emphasised the shared history and culture between the two groups and the potential for learning from each other.

The following quotes illustrate the range of views expressed by participants:

"There is a lot of mistrust and animosity between Sahrawis and Moroccans in Western Sahara, which is understandable given the historical context. However, I believe that we can work towards building better relations based on mutual respect and understanding."

"I believe that Sahrawis and Moroccans have a lot in common and can learn from each other. We share a common history and culture, and can work together towards a better future for all."

The protracted Western Sahara conflict has been fueled by various factors, including historical grievances, territorial disputes, economic interests, and political power struggles. The complex nature of the conflict makes it challenging to resolve, and peacebuilding efforts must address the underlying causes of the conflict while promoting reconciliation and mutual understanding.

Peace education can play a vital role in supporting peacebuilding efforts by fostering critical thinking, empathy, and dialogue. In our workshops, we address the issues raised in Question 5 by providing a safe and inclusive space for participants to share their perspectives and experiences. We encourage participants to engage in respectful and constructive dialogue and to explore ways to build better relations between Sahrawis and Moroccans in Western Sahara. By promoting

mutual understanding and empathy, we aim to contribute to the long-term goal of sustainable peace in the region.

#### **7.4.4 Exploring Perceptions of Sahrawis/Moroccans and the Western Sahara Conflict: Insights from Participants' Immediate Thoughts and Feelings**

Participants were asked to share their immediate thoughts and feelings about Sahrawis/Moroccans and the Western Sahara Conflict. The responses revealed a mix of positive and negative associations, reflecting the complexity of the issues at hand. Some common themes that emerged included culture, history, identity, and conflict.

One participant shared,

"The first word that comes to my mind when I hear Western Sahara Conflict is oppression, and the suffering of the people who live there."

Additionally, participants were asked to share their initial thoughts about the Western Sahara Conflict. The responses were overwhelmingly negative, with many using words like oppression, injustice, and war to describe the situation. However, some participants expressed hope for a resolution and a willingness to compromise. As one participant stated, "I think the Western Sahara Conflict is a tragedy, but I believe that with dialogue and compromise, there is a possibility for a peaceful resolution." Overall, the responses to these questions highlighted the importance of understanding the complexities of the Western Sahara Conflict and the need for peace education initiatives to support dialogue, understanding, and reconciliation between the different groups involved.

#### **7.4.5 Violence and Discrimination in the Western Sahara Conflict: Participants Share Their Experiences and Observations**

Participants were also asked about their experiences and observations of violence and discrimination in the Western Sahara conflict. Some participants shared personal experiences of violence and discrimination, while others reported witnessing such incidents. Responses varied widely in terms of frequency and type of incidents. Participants also shared the impact that these experiences had on them, with some feeling motivated to work towards positive change and others

feeling discouraged. One participant described their experience of discrimination, saying, "I have been discriminated against because of my Sahrawi identity. People have made assumptions about me and treated me unfairly because of where I come from." Another participant shared their observation of violence, saying, "I have seen instances of physical violence between Sahrawis and Moroccans, which is a reflection of the deep-rooted conflict between the two groups."

#### **7.4.6 Participants' views on the possibility of peaceful coexistence between Sahrawis and Moroccans, and the obstacles to achieving it**

The participants had varying views on whether Sahrawis and Moroccans dislike each other. Some believed that there was a general dislike between the two groups, while others felt that it was based on specific individual or political circumstances. Historical conflicts, political tensions, cultural differences, and lack of understanding were some of the reasons given. However, the majority of participants believed that peaceful and happy coexistence was possible between Sahrawis and Moroccans with mutual respect and understanding. They suggested improved education and awareness, increased cultural exchange programs, greater political dialogue, and mutual respect and understanding as ways to build relations between the two groups.

When asked about the biggest obstacle to building good relations between Sahrawis and Moroccans, participants identified political tensions, lack of understanding and awareness, historical conflicts, and cultural differences. As one participant put it, "I think there is a lot of misunderstanding between Sahrawis and Moroccans, which leads to distrust and conflict. But if we can learn more about each other's cultures and histories, we can start to build bridges and work towards a better future together." Another participant said, "We need more dialogue and understanding between the two groups. We have more in common than we think, and if we can focus on that, we can overcome the obstacles that divide us."

To overcome these obstacles, peace education workshops can be an effective tool. These workshops provide a safe and inclusive space for Moroccans and Sahrawis to engage in constructive dialogue, learn about each other's cultures, and develop conflict resolution skills. Studies have shown that peace education interventions can lead to positive changes in intergroup attitudes and behaviours (Bar-Tal, 2007; Zembylas & Bekerman, 2013). Peace education



workshops can promote cultural exchange and mutual understanding between the two groups. Participants can learn about each other's cultures, traditions, and histories, and identify areas of commonality and difference. This can foster respect, tolerance, and appreciation for diversity. Research has shown that intercultural education programs can lead to increased intercultural sensitivity and reduced prejudice (Chen & Starosta, 1997; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006).

Peace education workshops can also provide education on conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Participants can learn about the root causes of conflicts and different approaches to resolving them. They can develop skills in communication, negotiation, and problem-solving, and learn the importance of peaceful coexistence. Studies have shown that peace education interventions can lead to reduced violence and improved conflict resolution skills (Christie & Worchel, 1984; Wessells & Monteiro, 2006). Finally, peace education workshops can foster social connections and positive relationships between Moroccans and Sahrawis. By spending time together, participants can break down barriers and build trust and friendships. Studies have shown that intergroup contact can lead to improved intergroup relations and reduced prejudice (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Paolini et al., 2010). Peace education workshops can be a valuable tool in promoting understanding, dialogue, and cooperation between Moroccans and Sahrawis. By addressing the obstacles to building good relations identified by participants in the study, these workshops can contribute to a more peaceful future for both groups.

## **7.5 Interviews**

The participants who were interviewed played a crucial role in providing valuable insights and perspectives on the Western Sahara conflict and its impact on the Laayoune community. The ten participants were strategically selected based on their direct or indirect involvement in the conflict, including members of civil society, political parties, and those with first-hand knowledge of the political environment and the conflict's impact on their daily lives and relationships.

During the interviews, participants shared their views on the causes and effects of conflicts and divisions in Western Sahara. They provided details on the various forms of violence and their frequency, reasons for this violence, and its consequences in the community. This information

helped me to gain a better understanding of the complex dynamics of the conflict and the community's experiences. In addition to exploring the causes and consequences of violence, I also inquired whether the participants would support education and training initiatives for community members aimed at reducing violence. This provided further insight into potential solutions and interventions that could help alleviate the impact of violence on the community. The table below provides a summary of the informant categories and the number of participants involved in this study:

**Table 12. Interview Participants' Coding and Demographic Data**

<b>Participant ID</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Nationality</b>
I1	Male	20	Sahrawi
I2	Female	22	Moroccan
I3	Female	30	Sahrawi
I4	Female	41	Sahrawi
I5	Male	44	Moroccan
I6	Male	24	Moroccan
I7	Male	22	Sahrawi
I8	Male	21	Moroccan
I9	Female	29	Moroccan
I10	Female	30	Moroccan

Source: Own data

The table provides detailed demographic information on the ten participants, including their gender, age, and nationality. Among the participants, there were five males and five females, with ages ranging from 20 to 44. The participants came from two different nationalities, Sahrawi and Moroccan, with six Moroccans and four Sahrawis. The demographic information provided in the table helps to analyse the data and identify any patterns or trends based on gender, age, or nationality.

The demographic data is also beneficial for participation in the peace education workshop for several reasons. The data shows that there were equal numbers of male and female participants. This is an important aspect of the workshop because it promotes gender equality and ensures that all participants can have their voices heard. It also allows for a diverse range of perspectives and experiences to be shared during the workshop. The age range of the participants is also important. Having participants of different ages provides an opportunity for participants to learn from one another and develop a deeper understanding of different generational perspectives. Finally, the participants are Sahrawi and Moroccan. This is an important aspect of the workshop because it is designed to bring together people from different backgrounds and cultures to promote peacebuilding. By having participants from both groups, the workshop can facilitate a deeper understanding and appreciation of each other's perspectives and experiences. This can help to reduce tensions and promote greater understanding and cooperation between different groups.

Overall, the demographic information provided in the table helped to ensure that the workshop was inclusive, diverse, and promoted peacebuilding by bringing together participants from different genders, ages, and nationalities. It also enabled analysing any patterns or trends based on these demographic factors to enhance the learning experience for participants. The combination of these demographic factors provided a rich and diverse learning environment which is essential for promoting peacebuilding and understanding between different groups.

## **7.6 Focus Groups Discussion**

The table below provides valuable demographic information for the eight participants who took part in a focus group discussion (FGD). It is clear that the participants represent a diverse range of ages, genders, and nationalities, which provided valuable insights into the questions being explored in the FGD. In terms of gender, the participants were evenly split between male and female, indicating that the FGD sought to capture the perspectives of both genders. The fact that the FGD included equal representation of men and women was important, as it ensured that the insights and opinions of both genders were captured, and that no one perspective dominated the discussion. The participants' ages also varied widely, ranging from 19 to 31, with a median age of 24.5. This age range suggests that the participants may have represented different life stages and may have

had different life experiences, which can contribute to a rich and diverse discussion. The participants also represented two different nationalities, with four participants being Moroccan and four being Sahrawi. This balance ensured that the discussion considered the perspectives of both groups and avoided being biased towards one particular nationality. This is particularly important when exploring issues related to conflict and relations between the two groups, as a balanced representation of both perspectives is necessary for an open and constructive discussion.

**Table 13. Focus Group Discussion Participants’ Coding and Demographic Data**

Participant ID	Gender	Age	Nationality
FGD1	Male	30	Moroccan
FGD2	Male	22	Moroccan
FGD3	Female	24	Sahrawi
FGD4	Male	23	Moroccan
FGD5	Female	26	Sahrawi
FGD6	Female	31	Sahrawi
FGD7	Male	19	Sahrawi
FGD8	Female	22	Moroccan

Source: Own data

## 7.7 Research Participants’ Existing Competencies

Having a profound comprehension of the conflict environment and differentiating genuine from perceived threats is critical for adequately planning a peacebuilding intervention. This understanding allows peacebuilders to address the root causes of the conflict and design interventions that effectively promote peace (Paffenholz 2020).

According to Lederach's peacebuilding pyramid, a grassroots approach is important in building sustainable peace (Lederach 1997). This approach emphasises the importance of involving local communities and empowering them to take ownership of the peacebuilding process. Hamidi (2018) also emphasises the importance of grassroots peacebuilding, stating that it cultivates a more

inclusive and sustainable approach to building peace. To properly design a peacebuilding intervention, it is important to identify the competencies of local participants and determine what new knowledge and skills they require to build sustainable peace. This can be done through qualitative data collection methods, such as informal interviews and discussions. Through these methods, the action research team in Western Sahara was able to identify a need for increasing participants' peacebuilding knowledge and skills (Ramalingam *et al.* 2020).

The information gathered from the preliminary data collection was useful in revealing that research participants had not received any form of peacebuilding training in the past. This underscores the importance of providing peacebuilding training and education to local communities as part of grassroots peacebuilding efforts (O'Neill and Popovic 2021). Understanding the conflict environment, adopting a grassroots approach, and identifying the competencies of local participants are crucial steps in designing effective peacebuilding interventions. Providing peacebuilding training and education to local communities is essential for building sustainable peace.

## **7.8 Securing the Venue, Action Research Team, and Research Participants**

The training hall provided by the gatekeeper was spacious, with chairs, tables and a whiteboard. The gatekeeper had previously introduced me to the first two members of my action research team who were connected to the gatekeeper organisation. These initial team members had worked with the gatekeeper on previous projects. They were knowledgeable and experienced, and had valuable insights to share. They helped me understand the political and peacebuilding landscape.

Assisted by the two original team members, we were able to circulate the questionnaire and subsequently enlist five additional team members who provided their responses. The team was composed of individuals of varied ages, gender, and experience, but they all shared a passion for promoting peace. After the initial distribution of the questionnaire, we carefully analysed the responses provided by those who had participated. We used this information to identify key themes and potential areas of further exploration for the study. With this data in hand, we approached

individuals whom we believed could bring additional insight and perspective to the research project.

We leveraged the existing connections of our team members to reach out to their networks and identify potential candidates for the study. The individuals we approached were eager to participate, having been impressed by the thoughtfulness and depth of the questionnaire. Through this approach, we were able to secure a diverse and dynamic group of participants who enriched the study with their varied perspectives and experiences.

## **7.9 Linguistic Inclusivity**

Recognising the importance of inclusivity and effective communication, my team and I decided to conduct the workshops in both Darija and Hassaniya Arabic, given that both Moroccans and Sahrawis were participating in the research project. This decision was not without its challenges, as conducting the workshops in multiple languages would require additional time and resources. However, I believed that it was imperative to ensure that all participants would be able to engage fully in the research process, regardless of their linguistic background.

This approach aligns with recent academic research, which highlights the importance of taking a culturally responsive approach to research, particularly when conducting studies in multilingual contexts (Graham and Fitzgerald 2016). Research has shown that language can act as a barrier to effective communication, and that conducting research in a language that is not familiar to participants can lead to feelings of exclusion and disengagement (Li *et al.* 2019). By offering the workshops in both Darija and Hassaniya Arabic, I hoped to mitigate these concerns and create a more inclusive research environment.

## **7.10 Determining the Training Needs**

Assessing training needs involves examining the current knowledge, skills, and abilities of research participants to determine what type of training is necessary to achieve the study's objectives. This evaluation was conducted deliberately to avoid the common error that researchers and trainers make, which is to assume they already know the training needs of participants based

solely on their own experiences. This misstep can result in training programmes that are ineffective because they fail to meet the needs, expectations, and goals of the participants.

To ensure the training was effective, a thorough assessment of the participants' knowledge, skills, and abilities was conducted. This allowed for a tailored approach to the training, ensuring that the participants received training in areas where they needed improvement. By doing so, the training programme was able to address specific gaps in knowledge and skill sets, leading to a more effective and efficient training experience.

Various techniques were employed to conduct the assessment of training needs, such as questionnaires and interviews with the participants. This approach yielded valuable information directly from the participants, which provided insights into their unique training requirements. Moreover, involving the participants in the planning and execution of the programme enabled a more collaborative approach to training. The assessment of training needs played a crucial role in customising the training programme to meet the participants' needs. By gathering information directly from the participants, the training was able to address specific knowledge and skill gaps, resulting in a more productive and streamlined training experience.

### **7.11 The Conflict as seen by Participants**

During the interviews and focus group discussion, I posed questions specifically related to the participants' perceptions of conflict and division in their community. A vast majority disclosed that they had either witnessed or been involved in acts of violence in their community, whether as a perpetrator or a victim, directly or indirectly. Based on this, it is my belief that every research participant in this study had been exposed to violence or its effects, with some remaining reticent or unaware of what structural violence entails. As the principal researcher, I aspire to ensure that every participant becomes aware of, concerned about, and empowered to combat violence in their community by the end of the peacebuilding intervention. The recurring nature of violence in the community is causing division and suffering among its members. Studies on long-standing conflicts demonstrate that violence harms relationships, and victims of violence are less likely to coexist peacefully with their perpetrators in the same community.

## 7.12 Fear and Oppression

The Western Sahara conflict has had a devastating impact on the indigenous Sahrawi people, leading to widespread fear and oppression in the region. According to numerous academic sources, the conflict has created a culture of fear among the Sahrawi people, with many afraid to speak out or express their views for fear of retribution.

One study by the International Organization for Migration (2018) found that many Sahrawi refugees in Algeria experienced high levels of psychological distress due to the conflict, including fear and anxiety. In particular, the study found that "many Sahrawis in the camps have lived in fear of being identified as Polisario supporters by Moroccan forces or civilians, and of reprisals against themselves or their families" (International Organization for Migration 2018: 23). Moreover, the Moroccan authorities have engaged in widespread human rights abuses against the Sahrawi people who remain in the Western Sahara region, creating a culture of oppression. According to a report by Amnesty International (2021), "people who peacefully express their opinions on the Western Sahara conflict or on other sensitive issues face a real risk of harassment, intimidation, or arrest by the Moroccan authorities" (Amnesty International 2021: 2). The report also highlights how the Moroccan authorities have engaged in arbitrary detention, torture, and other forms of ill-treatment of Sahrawi people who express support for independence or criticise Moroccan government policies in the region.

The impact of the conflict on the Sahrawi people's mental health has also been significant, with many experiencing ongoing trauma and anxiety due to the fear and oppression they face. As one Sahrawi activist stated, "The oppression we face has left us living in a constant state of fear, where we are unable to express ourselves freely without facing the threat of violence or arrest" (Amnesty International 2021: 2). During the research interviews, a participant stated that they live in a constant state of fear, and oppression is an inescapable reality of their daily life. The participant highlighted that this oppression manifests itself in both direct and indirect ways.

They said,

Oppression is a reality of my life. Police officers violently disperse us during peaceful protests. Institutions discriminate and exclude certain individuals. [I2]



Other participants in the study corroborated these sentiments, adding that police officers regularly harass, intimidate, and put people in the community under surveillance.

One participant shared,

Police officers are always following us. They come to our neighbourhoods, they come to our homes, and they even follow us when we are walking down the street. [17]

These accounts demonstrate the pervasive nature of oppression and harassment in the community, which poses a significant obstacle to peaceful coexistence. It is imperative to address these issues to promote a more equitable and just society. Peace education can play a crucial role in addressing the fear and oppression experienced by the Sahrawi people in the Western Sahara conflict. According to numerous academic sources, peace education can help to create a culture of understanding, respect, and dialogue that can ultimately lead to a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

One study by Aggad-Clerx and others (2019) found that peace education initiatives that focused on promoting intercultural dialogue and understanding were particularly effective in promoting peaceful coexistence between different groups in the Western Sahara conflict. The study highlighted how such initiatives could help to break down stereotypes, build trust, and create a shared sense of identity that transcends traditional boundaries.

Bringing together conflicting groups in dialogue and negotiation processes can also be an effective way to reduce fear and oppression. According to another study by De Melo and Tostes (2018: 34), "dialogue between conflicting parties is a fundamental element in the process of conflict resolution" and can help to build trust, reduce tension, and ultimately lead to a peaceful resolution of the conflict. The study also emphasised the importance of including marginalised groups, such as the Sahrawi people, in such dialogues to ensure that their voices are heard and their needs are considered.

### **7.13 Violence is Institutionalised**

The Western Sahara conflict has led to institutionalised violence in the region. The violence is perpetuated by the Moroccan government and military, which have engaged in human rights

violations against the Sahrawi people. According to Amnesty International (2019), the Moroccan government and military have used excessive force against peaceful protesters advocating for the independence of Western Sahara. The organisation reported that security forces have beaten, arbitrarily arrested, and tortured activists, journalists, and human rights defenders. In addition, the Moroccan government has limited freedom of expression and association by suppressing dissenting voices and banning independent media outlets (Freedom House 2021).

Moreover, the Moroccan government has established a system of institutionalised discrimination against the Sahrawi people, which includes restricting their access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. According to Human Rights Watch (2021), the Moroccan authorities have also forcibly displaced Sahrawi families and destroyed their homes, villages, and cultural heritage sites. The institutionalisation of violence in Western Sahara is not only a violation of international human rights law, but also undermines the prospects for a peaceful resolution of the conflict. The United Nations has repeatedly called for a referendum to allow the Sahrawi people to exercise their right to self-determination, but Morocco has rejected this proposal and instead proposed a plan for autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty.

The forms of violence identified by the participants included abductions, harassment, and intimidation, all of which are prevalent in Western Sahara due to the surveillance and violent dispersal carried out by Moroccan authorities. The study found that the abuse and suffering experienced by the communities over many years have left them living in fear, which has a negative impact on their development and well-being.

Individuals who experience traumatic events may undergo significant psychosocial alterations in their conduct, such as experiencing emotions of shame, guilt, victimisation, anger, revenge, and loss of trust. Therefore, it is critical to provide assistance to those who have suffered from trauma, particularly in the context of peacebuilding.

## **7.14 Effects of Violence on Community Members**

In recent years, our understanding of violence has expanded beyond its traditional conception as physical harm. It is now understood that violence encompasses a range of forms, including

emotional, psychological, and structural violence. As a result, we have come to appreciate that violence affects not just the direct victims but also those who witness or live with its consequences. The impact of violence is profound and can cause both short- and long-term harm to one's physical, mental, and spiritual well-being.

Living in a society plagued by violence or the threat of violence is antithetical to the conditions necessary for sustainable peace. The consequences of violence are far-reaching, and its effects can linger for years after the initial act. Therefore, it is essential to address the root causes of violence and to equip individuals and communities with the necessary tools and resources to build and maintain peaceful societies. Only by working together to promote non-violent conflict resolution strategies and cultivate a culture of peace can we hope to break the cycle of violence and create a more peaceful and just world for all.

#### **7.14.1 Unhealed Trauma**

Several studies have documented the psychological impact of the conflict on the Sahrawi people. A study by Fadil and Aziz (2014) found that Sahrawi refugees living in Algeria experienced high levels of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety. The study also found that the participants reported a sense of helplessness and hopelessness due to their uncertain future. Similarly, a study by Kagee and Kolia (2017) found that Sahrawi refugees living in Western Sahara also reported high levels of PTSD and depression.

The trauma experienced by Sahrawi people is not limited to refugees living outside Western Sahara. A study by Belarbi and Salhi (2015) found that Sahrawi people living in the Moroccan-controlled territory also experienced high levels of psychological distress, including PTSD, anxiety, and depression. The study also found that participants reported a fear of expressing their political opinions and a sense of isolation due to the conflict.

The trauma experienced by Sahrawi people has also been documented by human rights organisations. Amnesty International (2021) reports that the Moroccan authorities have committed numerous human rights violations, including arbitrary arrests, torture, and enforced disappearances, against Sahrawi activists and civilians. The report also notes that the Moroccan government has restricted freedom of expression and association for Sahrawi people.

During the research interviews and focus group discussions, participants raised the issue of unhealed trauma as a significant obstacle to peace and reconciliation in the community. One participant shared, *"Many families are still divided, living on different sides of the berm or in refugee camps."* [I3] This division has caused long-lasting trauma and pain for those affected, hindering the ability to heal and move forward as a community.

Another participant shared their personal experience with violence, saying, *"I still have scars from being violently beaten by the police while peacefully protesting."* [I1] This physical violence has had an enduring impact on the individual, causing trauma that has yet to be addressed fully. Additionally, a participant emphasised the enduring pain of losing loved ones to violence, stating, *"We still remember the days we lost our family members."* [I2] This loss has resulted in unhealed trauma that affects the community's ability to reconcile and move forward.

These quotes illustrate the deep-seated and lasting trauma caused by violence and oppression, which continues to impact the community's well-being. Addressing this trauma and working towards reconciliation is crucial for creating a culture of peace. Peace education can help individuals and communities with unhealed trauma by providing opportunities for healing and building resilience. According to Harris and Morrison (2017), peace education can help individuals develop skills to manage trauma and build resilience through activities such as conflict resolution, mediation, and communication skills training. These skills can empower individuals to cope with the effects of trauma and become more active participants in their communities.

#### **7.14.2 Feelings of Insecurity**

The protracted Western Sahara conflict has resulted in a great deal of insecurity for the people living in the region. According to Zunes (2011), the conflict has created a sense of instability, making it difficult for the people to plan for their future. This insecurity is not only limited to the people living in Western Sahara, but also affects the wider Sahel region.

One of the major causes of insecurity in the region is the presence of landmines. The conflict has left the region littered with landmines, making it dangerous for people to move around. According to the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), the Western Sahara conflict has resulted in the placement of over 9 million landmines in the region (UNMAS 2017). These have caused

numerous injuries and deaths, and have made it difficult for people to engage in economic activities such as farming and herding.

The conflict has also led to the displacement of thousands of people, with many being forced to flee their homes due to the violence. This has created a sense of uncertainty for those who have been displaced, as they are unsure of when they will be able to return home. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there are over 170,000 Sahrawi refugees living in camps in Algeria (UNHCR 2021). These refugees have been living in the camps for decades, and many of them have never known any other life. One participant stated that reconciliation is difficult to realise in view of the ongoing conflict, stating, “*This is not ‘post-conflict’ peacebuilding. The conflict is still ongoing with no end in sight!*” [17]

The quote highlights the feelings of insecurity and uncertainty that arise from being caught in a conflict that seems to have no end. This quote captures the sense of despair and frustration that people feel when they are unable to escape the cycle of violence. Feelings of insecurity are common in situations of conflict, where people are often forced to confront the harsh realities of violence, displacement, and loss. These experiences can erode a person's sense of safety, leading to feelings of anxiety and uncertainty. In many cases, people may also feel powerless to change their situation, which can compound their feelings of insecurity.

The quote highlights the challenges of peacebuilding in situations where conflict is ongoing. Peacebuilding is a complex process that requires the active participation of all parties involved, and it can be difficult to achieve in situations where violence and distrust continue. The quote also emphasises the importance of acknowledging and addressing feelings of insecurity in situations of ongoing conflict. It highlights the need for a more nuanced approach to peacebuilding that considers the complex realities on the ground and the emotions and experiences of those affected by conflict. Ultimately, it serves as a reminder that achieving sustainable peace requires not only political will and strategic planning, but also empathy and understanding.

By providing people with the tools to resolve conflicts non-violently, peace education can help to reduce the insecurity and uncertainty experienced by people living in regions affected by conflicts. One of the keyways that peace education can help is by promoting dialogue and understanding

between different groups. By teaching people to listen to and respect the perspectives of others, peace education can help to reduce the tensions and mistrust that often contribute to conflict (Salomon 2012). This can be especially important in the case of the Western Sahara conflict, where there are deep-seated differences in perspectives and values between the different parties involved.

Peace education can also help to empower people to act to address the root causes of the conflict. By providing people with the skills to engage in constructive dialogue and advocacy, peace education can help to create a sense of agency and ownership over the conflict resolution process (Paffenholz and Spurk 2006). This can be particularly important for women and marginalised groups, who historically may have been excluded from peacebuilding processes.

Furthermore, peace education can help to promote sustainable peace by addressing the structural and systemic factors that contribute to conflict. According to Galtung (1996), true peace involves not only the absence of violence, but also the presence of justice, equity, and human rights. By promoting critical thinking and analysis of social, economic, and political issues, peace education can help to develop a deeper understanding of the root causes of conflict and empower people to work towards systemic change.

#### **7.14.3 Feelings of Vengeance**

Throughout the research interviews and review of literature, participants expressed feelings of vengeance towards those they perceived as responsible for their suffering. According to the United Nations, people have the right to self-determination, which is enshrined in international law, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (United Nations n.d.). However, the Moroccan government has denied the Sahrawi people their right to self-determination by occupying Western Sahara and suppressing their movement for independence (Korso and Ennaji 2021).

The denial of the Sahrawi people's right to self-determination has led to feelings of vengeance among them. According to a study by Karima Korso and Moha Ennaji (2021), the Western Sahara conflict has created a sense of injustice among the Sahrawi people, who feel that their human rights are being violated by the occupying Moroccan government. The study also notes that the Sahrawi people feel that they are being discriminated against based on their ethnicity and that the Moroccan

government is attempting to erase their cultural identity. As a result, the Sahrawi people have developed feelings of resentment and anger towards the Moroccan government, which they see as their oppressor.

Another source of a desire for vengeance in the Western Sahara conflict is the various human rights violations committed by the Moroccan government against the Sahrawi people. These violations include forced displacement, torture, and disappearances. According to a report by Human Rights Watch (2020), the Moroccan government has forcibly displaced thousands of Sahrawi people from their homes and moved them to other parts of the territory. The report also notes that the Moroccan government has used torture to extract confessions from Sahrawi activists and has been involved in the disappearance of Sahrawi people.

These human rights violations have contributed to the Sahrawi people's desire for vengeance towards the Moroccan government. As Korso and Ennaji (2021) note, the Sahrawi people see these violations as evidence of the Moroccan government's disregard for their human rights and their dignity as a people. They also see the violations as an attempt to intimidate and silence them, which has only strengthened their resolve to fight for their independence.

One participant shared, *"Our people have been forced to choose between the horrors of occupation or the hardship of being a refugee."* [14] This sentiment reflects the deep-seated resentment felt by many towards those they perceive as oppressors. The experience of being forced to choose between two equally difficult options has left lasting scars on the community. In addition, during the literature review, one interviewee expressed their anger towards a specific entity, stating, *"Fuck Morocco!"* [17] This strong language conveys the depth of the interviewee's emotions and the extent to which they feel wronged by the perceived oppressor.

These quotes highlight the persistent feelings of vengeance that have emerged as a result of the conflict. Such emotions can pose significant obstacles to peacebuilding. It is important to acknowledge and address these emotions in a constructive manner. Peace education can help address the feelings of a desire for vengeance. In the context of the Western Sahara conflict, peace education can help address the root causes of a longing for retribution by promoting a better understanding of the history, culture, and aspirations of the Sahrawi people. It can also help

promote respect for human rights, including the right to self-determination, and encourage peaceful and nonviolent means of conflict resolution (Batista and Henshaw 2019).

#### **7.14.4 The Community and People are Divided**

As indicated from participants' responses, the Western Sahara Conflict has had a profound impact on the people who live in the region, causing divisions and trauma that continue to impact their lives today. One of the most significant effects is the forced displacement of families, resulting in the separation of loved ones and the loss of a sense of community. According to a report by Amnesty International, thousands of Sahrawis who were forcibly displaced in the 1970s and 1980s have yet to be reunited with their families, causing long-lasting emotional distress and trauma (Amnesty International 2020).

The Western Sahara Conflict has caused deep divisions, not only between Moroccans and Sahrawis as a whole, but also within families. Many Moroccans are sent to the berm, a fortified sand wall that separates Western Sahara into two parts, to stand guard and patrol the area. This means that they are often away from their families for long periods of time, causing emotional strain and psychological distress. Additionally, the berm has created physical barriers that have divided thousands of Sahrawi families. Family members have been separated, with some living on one side of the berm and others on the other side. This separation has led to significant emotional trauma and a sense of loss, as families are unable to connect with each other on a regular basis.

The berm has also had an impact on the daily lives of those who live near it. It has disrupted trade and transportation routes, making it difficult for people to access basic goods and services. It has also impacted access to healthcare and education, making it more difficult for people to get the resources they need to lead healthy and productive lives.

The conflict has also caused a breakdown in social cohesion and trust, leading to divisions and tensions within communities. For instance, the Moroccan government's policies have created a rift between Sahrawis who support autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty and those who demand independence for Western Sahara. These tensions have led to political and social exclusion, as well as acts of violence and human rights abuses against Sahrawis by Moroccan authorities (Human Rights Watch 2022).



Moreover, the conflict has negatively impacted economic development and livelihoods in the region. According to the World Bank, Western Sahara has one of the highest poverty rates in the world, with around 40% of the population living below the poverty line (World Bank 2022). The conflict has hindered economic growth and development, causing a lack of job opportunities and limited access to basic services such as healthcare and education.

#### **7.14.5 Suspicion and Lack of Trust in Laayoune Province, Western Sahara**

The protracted Western Sahara conflict has led to suspicion and a lack of trust among the parties involved, hindering the resolution of the conflict. According to Zoubir and Benabdallah (2019), the conflict has created a culture of mistrust and suspicion between Morocco and the Polisario Front, making it difficult to reach a negotiated settlement. The authors argue that the lack of trust between the parties has resulted in a failure to implement agreements, leading to a vicious cycle of broken promises and further mistrust.

The distrust and suspicion have extended to the international community's involvement in the conflict. Zunes (2016) notes that the Moroccan government has accused the United Nations of bias in favour of the Polisario Front, while the Polisario Front has accused France and other Western powers of supporting Morocco's claim to the territory. These accusations have further deepened the mistrust and suspicion among the parties involved. The suspicion and lack of trust has also had implications for the security situation in the region. According to Boukhars (2018), the prolonged conflict has created a security vacuum in the region, allowing for the growth of extremist groups and organised crime. The author argues that the lack of trust and cooperation between the parties has prevented the establishment of effective security mechanisms, leaving the region vulnerable to these threats.

During the initial data collection phase, in which I utilised a questionnaire to explore the attitudes and perceptions of Moroccans and Sahrawis towards each other, elements of tension among community members were reflected. A research participant explained:

There is suspicion and tension throughout the community. I don't know who I can trust with what I say or want to say, all fuelled by the [Western Sahara] Conflict.

The distrust and suspicion that exist between Moroccans and Sahrawis are not uncommon in societies that have experienced prolonged conflict and violence. It is not uncommon for individuals to develop negative stereotypes, prejudices and attitudes towards members of the opposing group. This is often a result of the propaganda and misinformation that is spread by both sides, which only serves to reinforce existing divisions and mistrust.

Furthermore, the strained relationships between the Moroccans and Sahrawis have created a difficult situation for families on both sides. Many Sahrawi families have been separated from their loved ones on the Moroccan side of the berm, while Moroccan families are often deployed to the berm, which makes it difficult for them to maintain close ties with their Sahrawi relatives. In light of these challenges, it is clear that there is a pressing need for community members to develop the knowledge and skills gained through peace education as a guide to transform their relationships. This type of education is essential to equip individuals with the necessary tools to recognise and challenge the harmful attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate the cycle of violence.

The situation in Laayoune Province before the peacebuilding intervention was characterised by a sense of tension and unease. Research participants reported experiencing violence and intimidation, which created a pervasive sense of insecurity and fear. The intervention was crucial in providing individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary to transform their relationships and create a more peaceful environment. By engaging in dialogue and collaborative problem-solving, community members were able to build trust and reduce the level of tension that had previously existed.

### **7.15 The Necessity of Peacebuilding Skills in the Western Sahara Region**

The Western Sahara Conflict has had far-reaching consequences on the mental, emotional, and physical well-being of the people in the region. Many have experienced trauma, violence, and displacement, leading to a great need for psychosocial support. Peacebuilding skills, therefore, are crucial in helping individuals and communities move away from violence towards a peaceful society. In addition to the immediate consequences of the conflict, the ongoing instability in the region has created a culture of violence and mistrust, making it difficult for communities to work

together towards a peaceful resolution. This is where peacebuilding skills become essential. By promoting dialogue, empathy, and understanding, peacebuilding efforts can help individuals and communities move away from violence towards a more peaceful society.

To address this need, my action research team tailored the contents of the peace education workshops to the realities on the ground in the Western Sahara region. The workshops aimed to build the capacity of those affected by the conflict, providing them with the skills and knowledge necessary to contribute to peaceful relationships within their communities. To make the peace education workshops more effective, the action research team tailored the content to the realities on the ground in the Western Sahara region. This approach involved understanding the context of the region, the people, and the conflict. The team considered the cultural, social, economic, and political factors that could impact the effectiveness of the workshops. By tailoring the contents of the workshops, the team hoped to make them more relevant and engaging to the participants. The primary goal of the workshops was to build the capacity of those affected by the conflict. This objective involved providing them with the skills and knowledge necessary to contribute to peaceful relationships within their communities. The workshops aimed to equip the participants with the tools needed to resolve conflicts, promote tolerance, and prevent violence. By empowering the participants, the team hoped to create a ripple effect that would help promote peaceful relationships within the larger community.

Through the workshops, participants were introduced to and enhanced their individual listening, communication, and peacebuilding skills. These skills were developed to help them in their everyday interactions with community members, especially when tensions are high. The workshops were a practical way to equip participants with the necessary skills to navigate and transform strained relationships resulting from the conflict. The practical nature of the workshops ensured that participants were equipped with the necessary tools and techniques to navigate strained relationships resulting from conflict. Through role-playing exercises, group discussions, and real-life examples, participants learned how to identify and address underlying issues, manage emotions, and negotiate mutually-beneficial outcomes. This enabled them to work towards peaceful resolutions to conflicts, rather than allowing them to escalate further. The enhanced skills gained through the workshops were not only useful in resolving conflicts, but also in everyday

interactions with community members. Participants learned how to listen actively, express themselves clearly, and understand the perspectives of others, even in situations where there might be disagreement or tension. By applying these skills in their daily lives, participants were able to build stronger, more positive relationships with others in their community.

## **7.16 The Importance of Dialogue in Peacebuilding**

Dialogue has long been recognised as an essential component of peacebuilding, and numerous scholars have written about its importance in resolving conflicts, building relationships, and promoting mutual understanding (Reisberg 2016). One of the most prominent authors in this field is John Paul Lederach, whose work has significantly contributed to our understanding of the role of dialogue in peacebuilding.

In his book *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, Lederach argues that dialogue is critical for creating sustainable peace and reconciliation in divided societies (Lederach 1997). He emphasises the need for creating safe spaces for dialogue where participants can express their concerns and fears without fear of retaliation. Lederach's approach to dialogue is grounded in the belief that all parties involved in a conflict have a stake in finding a peaceful resolution. Through dialogue, participants can develop a shared understanding of the issues at stake and work together to find common ground. Lederach's work highlights the limitations of traditional conflict resolution approaches that often focus solely on negotiation and mediation and do not address the underlying causes of conflict (Lederach 2005). By contrast, dialogue can help to address the root causes of conflict and promote lasting reconciliation.

According to Saunders (1981), traditional diplomatic efforts, which often involve negotiations between governments, are not always effective in resolving conflicts because they fail to address the underlying issues that fuel the conflict. Saunders believes that non-governmental actors, such as civil society organisations, can play a crucial role in facilitating dialogue and promoting peacebuilding. Saunders argues that Track Two Diplomacy involves the use of non-official channels of communication to foster dialogue and build relationships between conflicting parties. These channels can include academic conferences, workshops, and other forms of unofficial

dialogue. Saunders suggests that Track Two Diplomacy can complement traditional diplomatic efforts and help to create an environment that is conducive to peaceful conflict resolution.

In his book *A Public Peace Process: Sustained Dialogue to Transform Racial and Ethnic Conflicts* (1999), Harold Saunders outlines the benefits of sustained dialogue in promoting peaceful resolution of conflicts. According to Saunders, sustained dialogue involves a structured process of communication between conflicting parties that takes place over an extended period of time. This process is designed to build trust, deepen understanding, and create a shared vision for the future. Saunders argues that sustained dialogue is an effective tool for promoting peacebuilding because it allows conflicting parties to explore their differences in a safe and structured environment. Through sustained dialogue, parties can build relationships, develop trust, and identify areas of common ground. Saunders suggests that sustained dialogue can be used to address a wide range of conflicts, including racial and ethnic conflicts, political conflicts, and even international conflicts.

Adam Kahane's contributions to the field of dialogue in peacebuilding are widely recognised. In his book *Solving Tough Problems: An Open Way of Talking, Listening, and Creating New Realities*, (2010) Kahane presents an innovative approach to solving complex problems that require dialogue, collaboration, and creativity. The central concept in Kahane's approach is called "stretching," which involves exploring new possibilities for resolution and requires a willingness to engage in dialogue and a commitment to finding common ground. According to Kahane, stretching involves challenging ourselves to go beyond our current perspectives and positions to explore new possibilities. He argues that the key to building lasting peace lies in our ability to stretch beyond our preconceived ideas and engage in honest and open dialogue with others. This requires us to be willing to listen to other perspectives, ask questions, and actively seek out new ways of thinking and problem-solving. Kahane emphasises the importance of building relationships and creating a safe space for dialogue in order to effectively stretch beyond our current positions. He believes that this process requires a deep level of trust, respect, and empathy, and that it is essential to approach difficult conversations with an open mind and a willingness to learn from others (Kahane 2010).

Dialogue between Moroccans and Sahrawis can play a crucial role in resolving the Western Sahara Conflict. According to a report by the United Nations Secretary-General, dialogue is essential for creating a conducive environment for the negotiation of a mutually-acceptable solution to the conflict (UN Security Council 2018). The report emphasises the importance of addressing the legitimate concerns and aspirations of both parties to the conflict through a process of dialogue and negotiation. Moreover, dialogue can help build trust and foster a sense of shared identity between Moroccans and Sahrawis. According to a study by the Institute for Security Studies, dialogue can help build confidence between the parties and promote a sense of shared identity and common purpose (Ghali 2014). This, in turn, can help reduce tensions and increase the chances of a successful resolution of the conflict.

Furthermore, dialogue can help address the root causes of the conflict. According to a report by the International Crisis Group, the conflict is rooted in a complex mix of historical, political, and economic factors (International Crisis Group 2021). Addressing these factors through dialogue can help create a more stable and peaceful future for the region. The significance of dialogue is paramount. Dialogue can promote mutual understanding and respect among the various parties involved in the conflict, as well as address the root socio-economic causes of the conflict, such as poverty, unemployment, and inadequate access to education and health care (Hill *et al.* 2015). Political dialogue is essential to achieving a peaceful and long-term solution to the conflict. It can facilitate negotiations between the parties involved, bridge differences, and identify areas of common interest while creating solutions that address the legitimate concerns of all parties (United Nations 2020).

Peace education can significantly contribute to supporting dialogue and resolving the Western Sahara conflict by promoting a culture of peace, tolerance, and mutual respect while teaching individuals conflict resolution, non-violent communication, and cooperation. It can also help build the capacity of individuals and communities to address the root socio-economic issues that have fuelled the conflict, such as poverty, unemployment, and a lack of access to education and health care (United Nations 2015).

## **7.17 Planning of the Peacebuilding Intervention**

I carried out a series of consultative and logistical meetings before the action research team reached a decision on the peacebuilding intervention to be implemented. My action research team and I met on 7 February 2022 to present and discuss the findings from baseline data collected from October 2021 to January 2022. We then planned the peacebuilding intervention and its implementation. We discussed a venue, schedule, and topics to be covered. We discussed the need to meet on weekends as all participants were young adults and many worked and had other responsibilities during the week. We settled on a venue and sought permission, which was granted. Due to the time constraints of my doctoral degree, we chose a workshop approach. Having studied peacebuilding and conflict transformation as a graduate student, I discussed the benefits of peace education and what it encompasses. After a long explanation to my action research team, we settled on adopting peace education topics to review, discuss, and train in (see Chapter 9). The initial meeting was attended by all members of the action research team. Below I justify our choice in using peace education and the workshop approach.

## **7.18 Why Peace Education?**

Peace education is important because it provides individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to develop peaceful relationships, resolve conflicts non-violently, and promote social justice. It aims to empower individuals to recognise and address the root causes of violence, as well as to promote positive social change. By learning about the different types of violence and the ways in which they can be addressed, individuals can become more active participants in building peaceful and just societies. In contexts of conflict or trauma, peace education can also help individuals and communities to heal and recover from the effects of violence and to work towards building more peaceful futures.

Peace education is particularly relevant in the context of the Western Sahara Conflict because of the protracted nature of the conflict and its damaging impact on the people and communities in the region. The conflict has resulted in a high level of mistrust and division between Moroccans and Sahrawis, as well as within families and communities themselves. The resulting fear and trauma

can have long-lasting effects on individuals' mental and physical health, as well as on their ability to engage in productive and peaceful relationships with others.

### **7.19 Targeted Outcomes of Peace Education**

Salomon (2002) identifies four primary goals of peace education programmes in regions of protracted conflict, which are extensively discussed in Chapter 4. These objectives include recognising and accepting the opposing party's perspective as valid and legitimate, analysing one's own group's actions towards the other, embracing non-violent modes of behaviour, and being open to exhibiting empathy and trust towards the other group. Based on Salomon's classification of the goals of peace education programmes, it is evident that these conflicts are intricate and necessitate a group approach, rather than an individual approach, when dealing with opposing parties.

Salomon (2004) emphasises that peace education programmes in regions of protracted conflict focus on the socio-psychological aspects of the conflict, which include the groups' identities, histories, and collective narratives. It is essential to address these aspects because collective narratives, rooted in historical memories, are believed to play a crucial role in fuelling and sustaining conflicts between groups. However, these narratives can also be used to promote coexistence and reverse negative attitudes. Therefore, peace education programmes need to address collective narratives to bring about positive change in regions of protracted conflict.

The Western Sahara Conflict is a subject that elicits strong opinions and views from both sides. Given this situation, an understanding of collective narrative is crucial for any attempt to bring the opposing groups together, learn from each other, and grow together. "Collective narrative" refers to the shared beliefs, history, aspirations, explanations, and justifications of a group's behaviour and attitude towards out-groups, transmitted from one generation to the next. According to Salomon, the importance of addressing collective narratives lies in their ability to foster negative attitudes towards other groups, and thus, recognising and acknowledging the painful memories of the other side can be a way to resolve conflicts.

According to Salomon (2004), accepting the narrative of the opposing group in a conflict does not imply enjoying it or abandoning one's own narrative. Rather, peace education aims to view the



narrative of the adversary group as the first step toward accepting their legitimacy. This approach ultimately seeks to foster mutual recognition of the opposing group's collective narrative, which can lead to opportunities for intergroup interactions. Empathy-building programmes can facilitate acceptance of the opposing group's narrative by reducing stereotyping and promoting conflict resolution. Harris (2004) argues that such programmes can help eliminate intergroup conflict by promoting empathy. However, this process is challenging, because opposing groups' collective identity, i.e., the "Us vs Them" mentality, often justifies attitudes and behaviours towards the out-group.

Salomon (2004) argues that accepting the other group's collective narrative is associated with a willingness to acknowledge the other side's story and to critically evaluate one's own group's wrongdoing towards the other group. However, this is a challenging task as the opposing groups' collective identity, which is based on the dichotomy of good "Us" versus evil "Them," reinforces negative attitudes and behaviours toward the out-group. Therefore, there is a crucial need to cultivate empathy and trust towards the other group, as prejudices create a psychological distance that impedes understanding and communication between the two sides (Stephan and Finlay 1999).

There exist two fundamental forms of empathy: cognitive empathy, where an individual adopts another person's perspective, and emotional empathy, where a person experiences an emotional response to another. Empathy has the capacity to generate favourable attitudes and behaviours, while the lack of it can preserve negative attitudes and behaviours (Stephan and Finlay 1999). As a result, enhancing empathy through peace education initiatives can advance intergroup relations. Additionally, it is critical to comprehend the significance of non-violence in accomplishing goals, which is a prerequisite for coexistence and reconciliation (Bar-Tal 2004).

Peace education programmes in areas with long-standing conflicts should aim to create awareness about the nature and causes of violence and conflict (Firer 2002). The underlying belief is that educating people about the destructive outcomes and pain that arise from violence and conflict will discourage them from pursuing violent means to address their issues (Harris and Morrison 2003).

## **7.20 My Facilitation Approach to Peace Education Workshops**

It is essential to create a safe and effective learning environment by establishing a comfortable physical space and a positive emotional tone. The design and management of the physical space are crucial for an effective workshop (Schwartz 2018). To create an intimate and inclusive space, participants should sit in a circle close enough to hear each other and feel a sense of interpersonal connection (Cain 2013). However, it is important to consider potential risks when seating participants next to people they do not know, especially if they come from different or conflicting communities (Hughes *et al.* 2019).

Hanging charts of group norms and new vocabulary can support learning and create a sense of comfort among participants (Lindsay 2016). Creating a unique space that caters to the participants' needs fosters a shared atmosphere that is both comfortable and focused (Bock 2017). Additionally, working collaboratively with participants to develop a set of group behavioural norms can ensure a secure and respectful learning environment. Guiding questions such as "What steps should we take to establish a welcoming and secure space?" and "How can we ensure respectful communication?" can help facilitate this process (Kegan and Lahey 2016). Timing of the workshops is also an important factor to consider. Participants may experience various levels of fatigue throughout the day (Croskerry 2017). Allowing participants to stand, stretch, and take breaks, as well as having scheduled breaks and lunch, can help to maintain their focus and engagement throughout the day (Berger 2017).

It is important to choose the topics that will be discussed carefully. Relevant topics must be selected, while considering the appropriate level of risk that the group is ready to handle in expressing and exploring these. According to research, selecting appropriate and relevant topics can help participants acquire new knowledge, attitudes and values that promote peace and reduce violence in their communities (Nordstrom 2016). One must also be aware of potential dangers that may arise from discussing sensitive topics. Personal and political history of the participants should be considered to prevent triggering any personal trauma. For instance, in a workshop with individuals from traumatised societies where armed conflict has occurred, a facilitator must

exercise sensitivity to ensure that meaningful discussions are conducted without triggering any personal trauma (Lederach 2005).

One important aspect of facilitation is checking in with participants. This helps to shift the focus from casual conversation to more authentic personal sharing. A "one-word check-in" can be used to help participants share how they are feeling at that moment using just one word. This technique can be helpful in meeting the needs of participants and creating a safe space for sharing (McAdam 2018). Similarly, check-out is also essential as it serves as a closing to the workshop. Participants can share their thoughts on how the workshop went or answer a focused question to help summarise the key takeaways. This feedback can help the facilitator improve their approach and adjust for future workshops (Lerch, 2018). As a workshop facilitator, it is essential for me to be aware of my role and responsibilities. I follow the advice of Dymoke and Harrison (2008) and create a safe environment that encourages participants to share their ideas and experiences freely. During the workshop, I speak as little as possible and actively listen to participants, asking open-ended questions and observing nonverbal cues to ensure that everyone feels heard and respected. Additionally, I encourage equal participation and redirect questions or comments to the group rather than myself to create an inclusive environment (Owen 2008).

Before each workshop, I prepare thoroughly to ensure the smooth running of the session. This includes reviewing the facilitation strategy and agenda, gathering all necessary materials, and confirming the roles and tasks of team members (Rogers 2004). During the workshop, I welcome participants and create opportunities for interaction and discussion. I guide group discussions, summarise important issues raised, and encourage feedback from participants (Brown and Isaacs 2005). Additionally, I am flexible and responsive to the needs of the group, allowing for modifications to the agenda if necessary. After the workshop, I reflect on the session and gather feedback from both participants and team members. I take notes of statements, questions, and other items that stood out, for personal reflection or further exploration, and send a reminder text to participants about the date, time, and topic of the next workshop to help ensure attendance (Owen 2008).

## **7.21 The Peacebuilding Facilitator**

Learning the art of peacebuilding is an ongoing process that requires a deep level of commitment and dedication. Working with individuals and communities who are grappling with conflict and violence can be a challenging task that requires a high level of empathy and humility. A peacebuilder must be willing to listen carefully to the stories and experiences of others and to approach each situation with an open mind and heart.

Designing peacebuilding interventions also calls for creativity and adaptability. Each conflict situation is unique, and there is no one-size-fits-all approach to resolving conflict. A peacebuilder must be willing to think outside the box and develop customised solutions that address the root causes of the conflict while also considering the unique cultural, social, and political contexts in which the conflict is taking place. Being aware of one's own biases is critical to the peacebuilding profession. It is essential to recognise that everyone has their own learned attitudes and assumptions that may influence how they perceive and respond to conflict situations. A peacebuilder must be willing to reflect on their own biases and work to overcome them to be fully present with others as they deal with their own learned attitudes and assumptions.

A commitment to non-violent methods for resolving conflict is essential to the peacebuilding profession. This commitment involves not only a rejection of physical violence but also a rejection of all forms of violence, including verbal and psychological violence. A peacebuilder must be willing to embrace non-violent methods such as dialogue, mediation, and negotiation to build lasting peace and stability in conflict-affected communities.

## **7.22 The Principal Researcher's Peacebuilding Intervention Philosophy**

My approach to design is interactive and participatory, and for these peacebuilding workshops, I created a framework based on careful listening to the needs of my action research team and the research participants. I am intentional and structured in my peace education workshops, prioritising participant safety and creating an environment where trust and understanding can grow over time. I firmly believe that to build a secure future, it is necessary to thoroughly explore the legacy of war and to engage in honest reflection on the past. Denying or erasing the past is not a

viable solution. Instead, I have seen how cycles of revenge can be replaced with tolerance and how individuals and communities can heal and move forward.

In my workshops, I challenge participants to confront the stereotypes that underlie inter-communal violence and to speak openly about their experiences. I encourage them to examine the complexity of their relationships with one another and to share their emotions as they work together. To facilitate constructive dialogue, I structure conversations with the full group, and also create smaller group and pair settings where participants can explore difficult feelings like grief, anger, or disagreement. My aim is not to force reconciliation, but to promote incremental progress in acknowledging, recognising, and taking responsibility for one's own actions. I believe that peacebuilding is a gradual process that develops over time, requiring a continuous testing of trust and understanding. As a facilitator of these workshops, I have tried my best to be loyal to the truth and to acknowledge the suffering caused by the Western Sahara Conflict. I know that each individual and each community has a different experience of truth, and that many people face divided loyalties that are very painful.

## **7.23 Conclusion**

The political environment in the Western Sahara region is a complex situation, marked by violence, insecurity, and division. The ongoing conflict has led to a great deal of mistrust, animosity, and a sense of division between the Moroccans and the Sahrawis. People on both sides have experienced violence and trauma, and there is a sense of fear and insecurity that permeates the region.

In light of the complex situation, it was necessary to develop a peacebuilding intervention that considered the specific context of the Western Sahara region. The action research team involved in the project recognised the importance of understanding the attitudes and perceptions held by both Moroccans and Sahrawis towards each other. Based on this research, the action research team agreed on the implementation of peace education workshops. These workshops were designed to develop context-specific content that would address the specific needs and concerns of the people in the Western Sahara region.

The workshops were grounded in a set of philosophical and pedagogical principles that emphasised the importance of active participation, critical reflection, and empathy-building. The aim of the peace education workshops was to provide a safe and inclusive space where people from different backgrounds could come together to learn about each other, develop a sense of empathy and understanding, and build relationships based on trust and mutual respect. By doing so, the hope was that people would be better equipped to navigate the complex and volatile political environment in the Western Sahara region.

The next chapter of the thesis provides a detailed narrative of the peace education workshops, outlining the specific activities, learning outcomes, and feedback from participants. Through this narrative, the reader will gain a deeper understanding of the practical implementation of the peacebuilding intervention and the impact it had on the people involved.

## **Chapter Eight**

### **The Peacebuilding Intervention: Peace Education Workshops**

#### **8.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, the peacebuilding intervention that was implemented by the action research team is discussed in detail. The primary goal of this intervention was to facilitate reconciliation between Moroccans and Sahrawis, and the data presented in this chapter is linked to the thematic analysis of the workshop themes and participants' responses. The chapter begins with an introduction to the key generative questions that guided the learning process of the research team. These questions served as a framework for the implementation of the peacebuilding intervention and helped the team stay focused on their goals. The intervention itself is presented in a step-by-step manner, with each section focusing on a specific aspect of the intervention.

The first section discusses the planning and preparation that went into organising the workshops, including the selection of participants and the development of the workshop curriculum. The next section outlines the methodology used to conduct the workshops, including the use of group discussions, role-plays, and other interactive activities. The data collected during the workshops is analysed thematically, and the themes that emerge from this analysis are presented in the subsequent section. The final section of the chapter provides an evaluation of the peacebuilding intervention and its effectiveness in achieving its goals. The action research team believes that the workshops have the potential to change the attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours of participants towards each other, and this section presents the evidence that supports this claim.

#### **8.2 Peacebuilding Workshops: Location and Context**

The Laayoune Province in Western Sahara has been subject to a significant amount of violence, both direct and indirect. The Western Sahara Conflict has resulted in numerous incidents of human

rights violations, including beatings, arrests, unlawful detentions, torture, and murder. These violations have had a profound impact on the lives of many individuals in the region, leading to feelings of fear and insecurity. Despite the challenging environment, I chose to carry out the intervention in Laayoune Province because of the high percentage of Moroccans and Sahrawis living together in the same community. This situation provides a unique opportunity to promote dialogue and understanding between these two groups, who have historically been in conflict.

However, the conflict has left its mark on the community, with many individuals having themselves experienced or knowing someone who has experienced violence related to the conflict. This trauma has created a deep sense of mistrust and division within the community, making it challenging to foster open communication and cooperation. Furthermore, the political environment in the Western Sahara region is highly charged and often marked by violence, insecurity, and forced silence. The conflict has created an environment in which individuals may fear retaliation for speaking out or expressing their opinions, making it challenging to address the root causes of the conflict.

Despite these challenges, the intervention aimed to promote dialogue and understanding between Moroccans and Sahrawis in the Laayoune Province. By creating a safe space for open communication and providing individuals with tools to engage in constructive dialogue, the intervention sought to address the underlying causes of the conflict and promote long-term peace and stability in the region.

In February 2022, I had the opportunity to be on the ground with my action research team to conduct research and observe my surroundings. It was an incredible experience that allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the issues at hand and the cultural context in which they were occurring. I presented my findings to my team, and we worked together to determine the training needs for the community. Throughout the month, I worked closely with my team to collect more data, analyse it, and draw conclusions from it.

One of the most valuable aspects of being on the ground was the opportunity to observe the atmosphere first-hand. I spent time walking around the communities where we were conducting research, talking with locals, and getting a sense of the general mood and sentiment. During my



time in Laayoune, I observed a range of different moods and sentiments, depending on who I spoke to and where I was in the city. Some people were cautiously optimistic about the future, and believed that there was potential for positive change and progress in the region. Others were more resigned to the situation, and felt that the conflict would continue to drag on for the foreseeable future. There were also people who were deeply frustrated and angry about the situation. Many people in Laayoune have been directly affected by the conflict, either through displacement or other forms of hardship, and this has created a deep sense of resentment towards the Moroccan government and other actors involved in the conflict. This helped me to better understand the challenges facing the community and the ways in which our work could make a difference.

In addition to observing my surroundings, I also spent a significant amount of time conducting research. Having already collected data through questionnaires before my arrival, I was able to conduct more informal interviews and analyse the results to identify key themes and areas of focus. This data helped to inform our future work and provided a foundation for the training needs assessment that we conducted later in the month.

We also held our first workshop, which was a success. It was important for me to be there for the beginning of the workshop to introduce myself and ensure that everything went smoothly. I felt that my presence helped to build trust and establish a foundation. After the first workshop, I had to leave the country and return home. However, I made sure to return for the last two weeks of April to attend the final two workshops. I knew that it was important to be present for these workshops as well, even though I was unable to stay for the entire duration of my studies.

Fortunately, however, we were able to find a workaround for this issue. Some participants in the workshops had access to computers and the training hall was equipped with video conferencing technology, which meant that I was able to participate remotely via video. While it wasn't the same as being there in person, participating in the workshops via video was still a valuable experience. I was able to see and hear what was happening in the training hall, and to participate in the discussions and activities that were taking place.

In some cases, remote participation was even an advantage. I was able to observe the workshops from a different perspective, which allowed me to see things that I might not have noticed if I had

been there in person. I was also able to communicate with the other participants more easily, as we could use the chat function on the video conferencing software to share information and ask questions.

### 8.3 The Workshops

Workshops were organised for 1-3 days, depending on the topic, emerging themes, and conversation. Each workshop lasted no more than six hours, with two 15-minute breaks and a one-hour lunch.

**Table 14. Steps Taken in Peacebuilding Intervention (workshops)**

Dates	Activity	Number of Participants	Purpose
7 February 2022	Meet with action research team to present summary of findings from data collection	8	Discuss and plan what will be discussed and when for each workshop
27 February 2022	Workshop #1	23	Icebreaker, Introductions, Review of Peacebuilding Workshops
12-13 March 2022	Workshop #2	23	Conflict Analysis
26-27 March 2022	Workshop #3	23	Intercommunal Dialogue
8-9 April 2022	Workshop #4	22	Social Healing, Reconciliation, Forgiveness
23-24 April 2022	Workshop #5	23	Preparing Peacebuilders
30 April - 1 May 2022	Workshop #6	22	Group presentations; Committee Signing
29 May 2022	Meet with action team, post-intervention FGD and interviews	30 (7 ART, 23 participants)	Outcome evaluation; Determining participants' knowledge gained

Source: Own data

The table outlines the steps taken in a peacebuilding intervention that involved six workshops, along with additional meetings for planning and evaluation. The first meeting took place on 7 February 2022, where the action research team presented their findings from data collection and

discussed what would be covered in each workshop. The subsequent six workshops were held on 27 February, 12-13 March, 26-27 March, 8-9 April, 23-24 April, and 30 April - 1 May 2022. The workshops covered various topics such as conflict analysis, intercommunal dialogue, social healing, reconciliation, forgiveness, and preparing peacebuilders. The number of participants varied between 22 and 23 for each workshop. Finally, on 29 May 2022, the action team held a meeting with 30 participants to conduct a post-intervention FGD and interviews to evaluate the outcomes and determine knowledge gained by participants.

**Table 15. Workshop Participants' Gender**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>	<b>Percentage of Participants</b>
<b>Male</b>	9	39.13 %
<b>Female</b>	14	60.87 %
<b>Total</b>	23	100 %

Source: Own data

**Table 16. Workshop Participants' Bio-Data**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>	<b>Percentage of Participants</b>
<b>18-24</b>	7	30.4 %
<b>25-34</b>	10	43.5 %
<b>35-45</b>	6	26.1 %
<b>Total</b>	23	100 %

Source: Own data

The data presented in Tables 13 and 14 reflect a diverse group of participants in the peace education workshops, which can positively contribute to the overall goal of peacebuilding. With 60.87% female participants and 39.13% male participants, the workshops show a gender-inclusive environment, which can encourage open and diverse perspectives. The age range of the participants also reflects a wide range of experiences and perspectives, with 30.4% of participants falling in the age range of 18-24, 43.5% in the age range of 25-34, and 26.1% in the age range of

35-45. This age diversity can help to bring a variety of insights and approaches to peacebuilding discussions and activities.

Having diverse participation in peace education workshops can contribute positively to peacebuilding efforts by promoting inclusive and participatory approaches to peacebuilding. Participants with diverse backgrounds and experiences can bring unique insights and solutions to peacebuilding activities, leading to more effective and sustainable peace efforts. The data presented in Tables 13 and 14 reflect a promising start towards achieving a diverse and inclusive environment in the peace education workshops, which can ultimately contribute to building a more peaceful and just society.

### **8.3.1 Workshop 1: Icebreaker, Introductions, Review of Peacebuilding Intervention (Workshops)**

This was the first of six peacebuilding workshops held from 26 February to 1 May 2022. This first workshop took place on 26 February. It was meant as an introductory meeting – getting to know each other and what to expect from the workshops. Being the first session, my action research team and I participated in the icebreakers.

Icebreakers can be an effective tool for fostering social integration and connection within a group setting. By promoting active listening and collaboration, they can help create a positive atmosphere for learning and discussion. During the first day of my workshop, I chose the "Interview" icebreaker activity as a way for participants to get to know one another. The group was divided into pairs, with a Moroccan and Sahrawi paired together. They were instructed to interview one another and discover three interesting facts about their partner. Once the interviews were complete, each participant presented the three facts they had learned about their partner to the rest of the group, facilitating greater familiarity between group members. Additionally, the activity allowed participants to discover shared interests or experiences, such as the number of siblings or a favourite sport or subject.

Next, the group established "workshop norms" to create a secure space for learning and discussion on sensitive topics. These norms ensured accountability for participants' behaviour and promoted trust and development. The norms included listening respectfully, speaking clearly, avoiding

discrimination, and refraining from threats or violence. I emphasised that the norms would be visible throughout the workshop and could be added to if agreed upon by the group. I also ensured that participants understood the commitment and schedule, providing them with a copy of the schedule in their language, and we agreed to meet again in two weeks.

### **8.3.1.1 Significance of the Icebreaker, Introductions, Review of Peacebuilding Intervention (Workshops) Workshop**

The first workshop in a series of peacebuilding workshops is significant in setting the tone for the rest of the sessions. It provides an opportunity to create a positive and safe learning environment, which is essential in promoting active participation and open communication. The use of icebreakers is a useful tool in fostering social integration and connection within a group, allowing participants to get to know each other better and create a sense of community.

The establishment of workshop norms is also essential in promoting accountability and trust among participants. It sets clear expectations for behaviour and ensures that sensitive topics are discussed respectfully and without discrimination. This helps create a safe space where participants feel comfortable expressing their opinions and engaging in constructive dialogue. In terms of its significance to peace education and peacebuilding, the first workshop provided a foundation for the rest of the sessions. If a positive learning environment and clear expectations for behaviour are established, participants are more likely to engage in meaningful dialogue and take the lessons learned from the workshops into their daily lives. Additionally, the use of icebreakers and workshop norms can help participants develop skills such as active listening, collaboration, and conflict resolution, which are essential in promoting peacebuilding efforts.

### **8.3.2 Workshop 2: Conflict Analysis**

This workshop took place 12-13 March 2022.

Below are essential questions for the conflict analysis workshop:

- How can we help participants understand the complex factors that contribute to violent conflicts?

- What factors can trigger a conflict to escalate into violence, such as psychological, political, economic, and environmental factors?
- Why is it important to consider the perspectives and motivations of all parties involved?
- Who are the key actors in escalating or preventing conflict?
- How do personal actions and organisations impact conflict analysis?
- How can we maintain hope in the face of overwhelming conflicts?

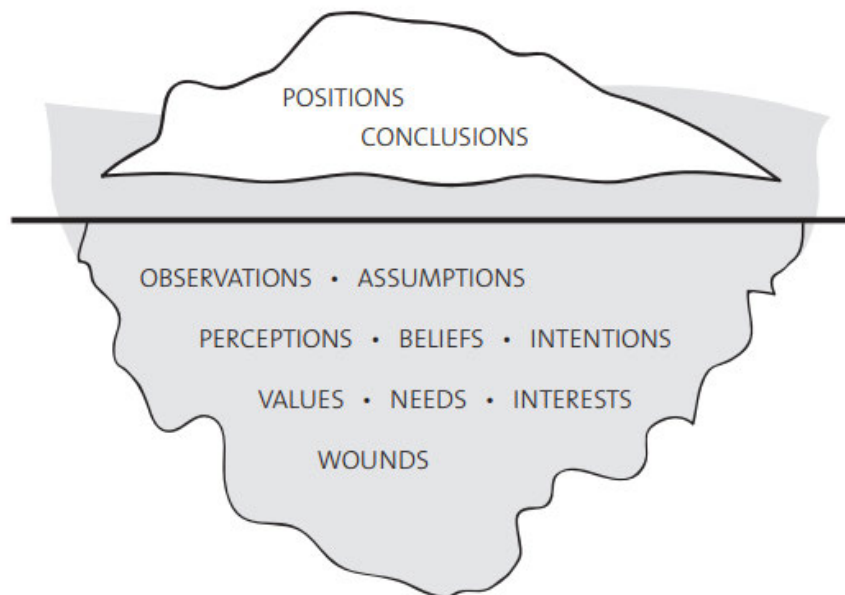
Conflict is a natural part of human life and can have positive outcomes, such as expanding options, diversity of thought, and challenging outdated traditions. However, when conflict becomes violent and threatens human life or quality of life, it becomes problematic. Violence can be direct or indirect and can manifest through unjust political, cultural, or economic structures, or through physical, verbal, psychological, or sexual abuse. In societies where government and societal institutions repress, subjugate, and deny people's just aspirations, leading to further harm and secondary forms of violence, structural violence is present.

Violent conflict often arises from unmet needs, unequal access to resources and power, and competing values and desires, fuelled by manipulation, greed, historical narratives, oppression, exploitation, deprivation, opportunism, and other factors. Identity groups may view the "other" as inherently inferior or untrustworthy, often reinforced by propaganda spread by biased media and self-serving leaders. Analysing conflict is crucial for understanding the complex systemic issues that have led to mass violence and developing effective peacebuilding strategies. An analysis of conflict must consider the systemic connections and underlying patterns between various root causes and conditions that generate violent conflict.

Entrenched conflict usually has multiple and nuanced causes, requiring a study of the conflict's history from multiple perspectives. Conflict analysis involves identifying all visible and unseen actors and structures contributing to the conflict and determining which parties might undermine conflict cessation and transformation. It's important to consider the problems and interests of all parties and analyse the case broadly and deeply to discern patterns and possible interventions that could positively alter the present context. A nuanced analysis is essential for developing interventions that address root causes and contribute to sustainable peace.

The two-day training aimed to foster relationships and trust among conflicting groups, engage in shared conflict analysis, and collaboratively solve problems that could lead to potential peacebuilding interventions within participants' communities. Essentially, the workshop focused on conflict analysis and community-building. The first day of the workshop included introductions, a review of the objectives, and a discussion of the "class norms". The Iceberg Model: Causes of Conflict tool was introduced, which helps participants understand the multiple, interconnected, and often-hidden origins of conflict. The participants were then divided into small groups to identify what they believed to be the underlying causes of the Western Sahara Conflict. The training included small breaks and a one-hour lunch, which split each day.

**Figure 5 Iceberg Model**



**Figure 5 Iceberg Model**

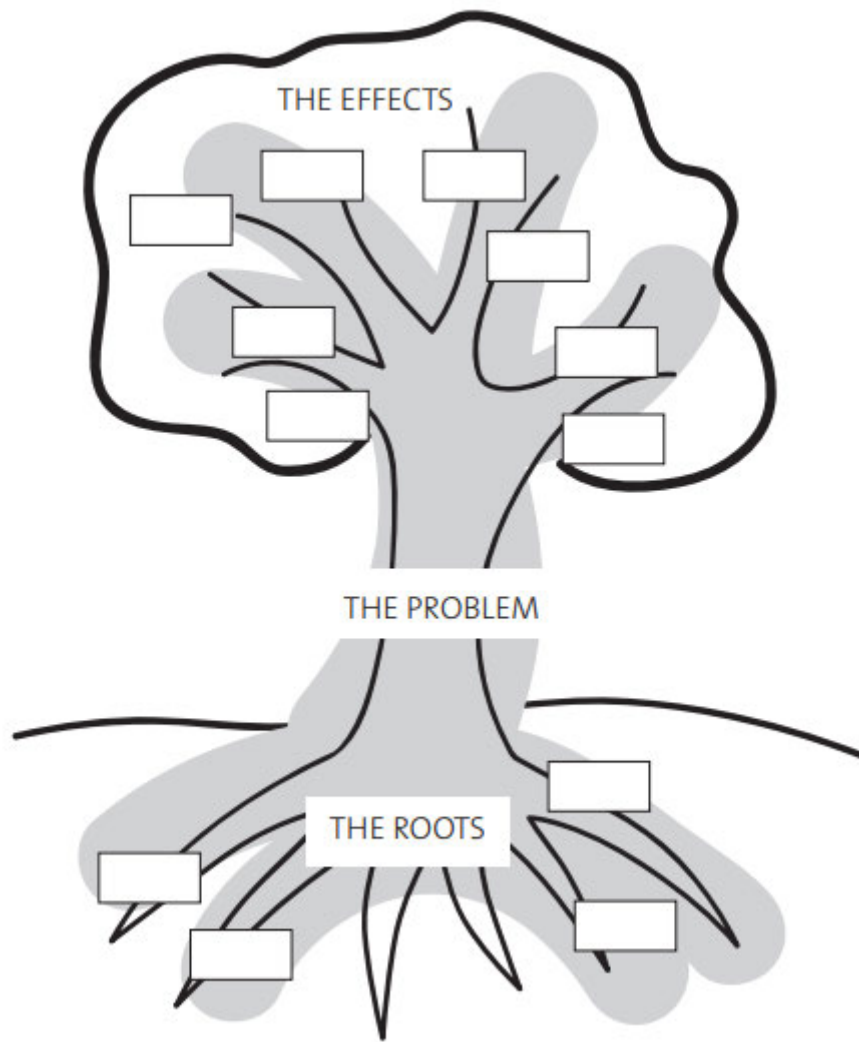
Source: Green, P. (2012). Peacebuilding in Divided Communities: Karuna Center's Approach to Training. *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 7(2), 68-79.

To depict the reasons for conflict, I utilised the iceberg analogy, which highlights how surface-level issues and conclusions only represent a small portion of the problem, whereas deep-seated

values, assumptions, and emotional traumas remain hidden below the surface, much like an iceberg's majority remains unseen. Through this approach, I have discovered that the most significant and potentially damaging causes of conflict may go unnoticed. Utilising this tool during my work has proven to be effective in helping participants grasp the visible, covert, and interconnected causes of conflict that impact their relationships.

On the initial day of the two-day workshop, I drew an empty iceberg on a flip chart and explained why conflict can be likened to an iceberg. Following that, I asked participants to suggest both visible and concealed causes of the Western Sahara Conflict, which I then noted on the iceberg. We then examined the relationships between these causes and the implications of the iceberg diagram for different approaches to resolving the conflict, which concluded the first day of the workshop. On the following day, I presented two additional conflict analysis tools: the Tree Model and the Pillars Model. In the morning, we reviewed the Tree Model, which helps participants investigate the root causes of the conflict (roots of the tree), the issue itself (trunk of tree), and its effects (branches of the tree).



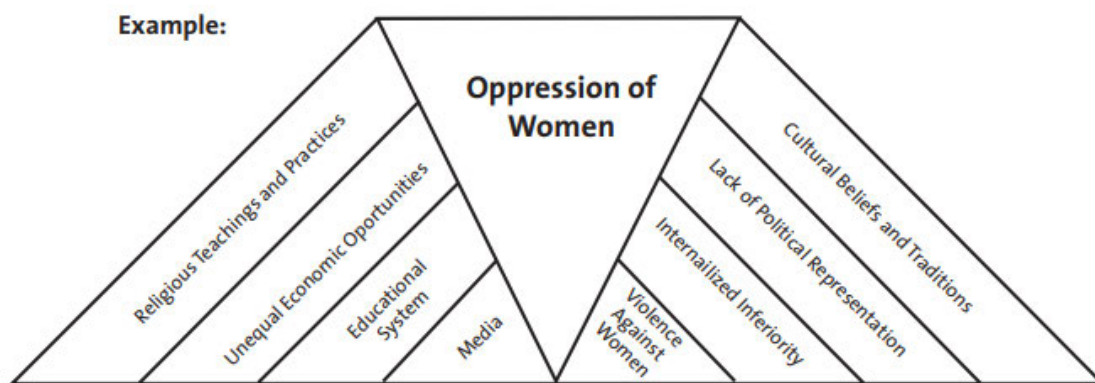
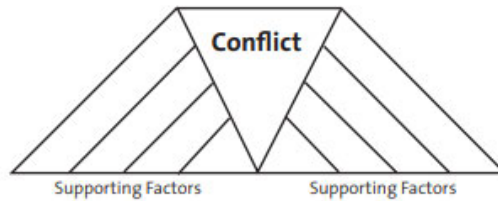


**Figure 6 Tree Model**

Source: Fisher, S., Ury, W., & Patton, B. (2000). *Getting to yes: Negotiating agreement without giving in*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

The participants were once again divided into small groups to identify the root causes of the Western Sahara Conflict, with the problem itself represented as the trunk of a tree. The groups then examined the resulting effects and recorded them on the branches, with additional exploration encouraged through the figure of twigs and leaves. The cyclical nature of conflict was explained by demonstrating how the leaves of the tree fall to the ground and feed the roots. In the afternoon of day two, the "Pillars Model: Factors that Sustain Conflict" was introduced as a tool to examine

the factors that support the continuation of violence. The instructor explained that a situation of injustice cannot stand by itself and requires pillars of systems, institutions, and habituated beliefs to prop it up. Removing enough pillars that prop up injustice can create space for conflict transformation and peacebuilding. The instructor used the example of the oppression of women to demonstrate how to utilise this tool.

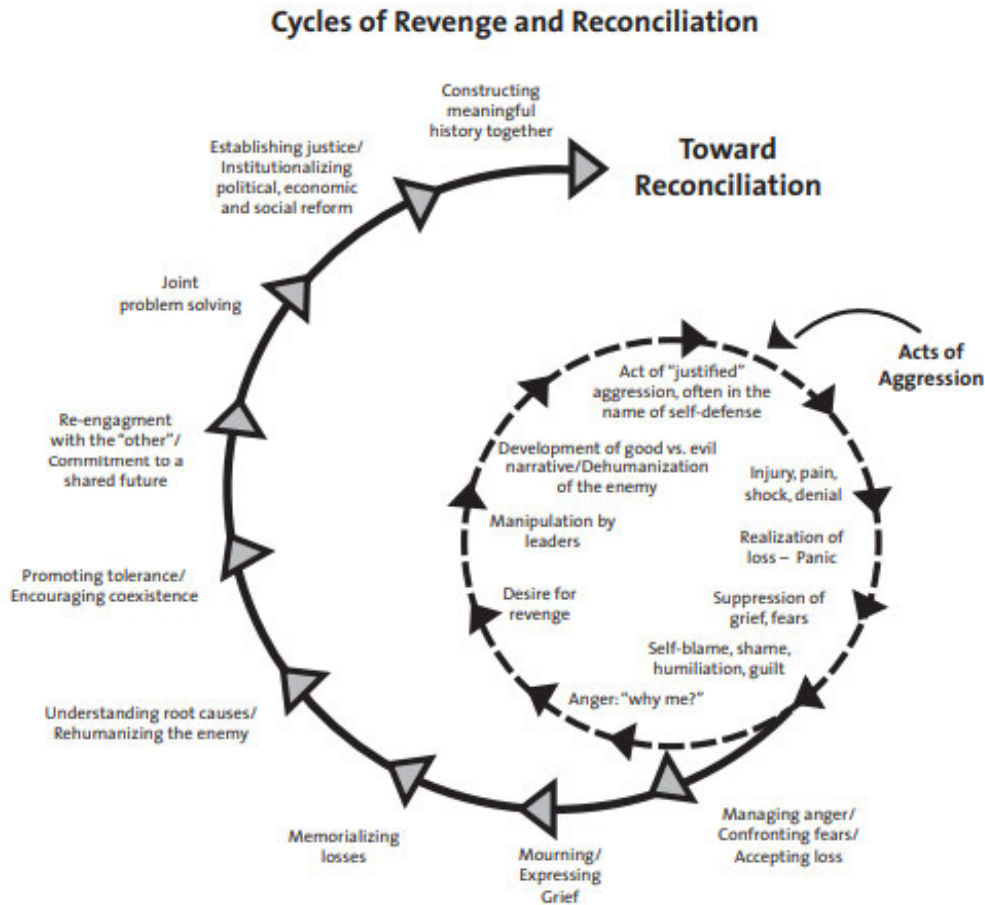


**Figure 7. Pillars Model: Factors that Sustain Conflict**

Source: Goss-Mayr, H. & Goss-Mayr, J. (1990). *The Gospel and the Struggle for Justice and Peace*. Alkmaar,: The International Fellowship of Reconciliation, 14. Available at: [www.ifor.org](http://www.ifor.org).

Once the participants had identified the pillars of the Western Sahara Conflict using the Pillars Model, I asked them to focus on a specific problem and place it in the centre of an inverted triangle. Their task was to consider what societal factors were propping up this issue and brainstorm ways to weaken or dismantle a specific pillar. To conclude the workshop, we discussed the topic of cycles of violence, using the conflict analysis tool "Cycles of Revenge and Reconciliation." My

goal was to help participants understand how conflicting groups get stuck in cycles of revenge and how to take necessary steps towards breaking this cycle and moving towards reconciliation.



**Figure 8. Cycles of Revenge and Reconciliation**

Source: Botcharova, O. (2001). Implementation of track two diplomacy: developing a model of forgiveness. In Helmick, R, (Ed.) *Forgiveness and reconciliation religion, public policy and conflict transformation*. Radnor, PA: Templeton Foundation Press.

During the workshop, I explained the inner and outer cycle stages, which respectively represent the cyclical nature of conflict and emotional factors that sustain it, and offer interventions to break the cycle and achieve lasting peace. Afterwards, the participants were divided into small groups to

apply these stages to their own situation, with sufficient time given to encourage reflection on their own experiences and emotions. I also prompted them to explain their reasoning for selecting a particular stage on either cycle. Later, we applied the cycle to the Western Sahara Conflict, identifying stages of violence and discussing paths to reconciliation as a group. At the end of the day, we reflected and evaluated the second workshop session, with participants writing down one thing they enjoyed or learned and one thing they would like to change for the next session. We reviewed the schedule and collected feedback forms.

One research participant stated,

The different tools made learning about a conflict, and analysing it to understand it, a lot easier. I had no idea a conflict could be so complex.

### **8.3.2.1 Significance of the Conflict Analysis Workshop**

The conflict analysis workshop described in the given scenario holds great significance for the field of peacebuilding and contributes to new knowledge in the peacebuilding field in various ways. The workshop aimed to help participants understand the complex factors that contribute to violent conflicts and provided them with tools to analyse conflicts deeply and comprehensively. Through the use of various conflict analysis tools, the workshop aimed to equip participants with the necessary skills to deeply and comprehensively analyse conflicts, identify underlying causes and actors, and develop effective peacebuilding strategies.

By focusing on the Western Sahara Conflict as a case study, the workshop provided participants with a concrete example to apply their newfound knowledge and skills to. This approach can help develop effective peacebuilding strategies by identifying visible and unseen actors and structures contributing to the conflict and determining which parties might undermine conflict cessation and transformation. The workshop encouraged participants to consider the perspectives and motivations of all parties involved, including the root causes of the conflict, and explore possible interventions that could positively alter the present context. This hands-on approach enabled participants to work collaboratively towards peacebuilding interventions and develop a deeper understanding of conflict transformation.

Moreover, the workshop provided a safe and intentional community for participants to connect with like-minded individuals committed to conflict transformation. The workshop provided a safe and intentional community built by a group committed to conflict transformation, which can provide hope for support and solidarity on the journey toward change. The workshop focused on the Western Sahara Conflict as a case study and encouraged participants to collaboratively solve problems that could lead to potential peacebuilding interventions within their communities. This community can provide a valuable source of support, solidarity, and hope on the journey towards change.

The use of conflict analysis tools such as the Iceberg Model, the Tree Model, and the Pillars Model not only helps participants analyse specific conflicts, but also contributes to new knowledge in the field of conflict resolution. These tools can be applied to various conflicts, enabling conflict resolution practitioners to develop a deeper understanding of the underlying patterns and systemic connections between various root causes and conditions that generate violent conflict. These tools can also be applied to other conflicts, contributing to new knowledge in the field of peacebuilding.

### **8.3.3 Workshop 3: Dialogue**

This two-day workshop took place 26-27 March 2022.

Below are essential questions for the dialogue workshop.

- When is dialogue appropriate?
- Why do people in violent conflict seek dialogue with the opposing side?
- How can opposing groups engage in effective dialogue?
- What skills should dialogue facilitators have?
- What are the risks of engaging in dialogue?
- How can dialogue lead to long-term peace and structural changes?

As a human rights advocate and a peacebuilding scholar, I have witnessed first-hand the transformative power of dialogue in replacing cycles of revenge with tolerance, enabling individuals and communities to heal and move forward. To facilitate productive dialogues, I

employ a deliberate and structured approach that prioritises participant safety and encourages the slow and steady development of trust and understanding. During dialogue sessions, participants are urged to confront the myths, stereotypes, and prejudices that fuel intergroup violence and to express their experiences candidly. I also encourage exploration of the complex nature of their relationships with each other and the emotional challenges inherent in dialogue participation.

The topics for dialogue are carefully selected based on the experiences and realities of the participants, with questions designed to foster personal responses, mutual understanding, and avoid blame. For example, in the second workshop session, I asked participants what motivated them to participate and how their experiences as members of their ethnic or religious group shaped their perception of the other. By avoiding blame and encouraging personal sharing, I have observed that productive dialogue can lead to greater empathy and a pathway towards a peaceful future.

On the first morning of the workshop, we started with an introductory go-round where each participant shared their reasons or hopes for participating in the dialogue. After this, we moved on to an ice-breaker activity called “Milling and Mingling: An ‘Ice-Breaker’ Exercise.” The purpose of this activity was to encourage participants to meet new people, particularly those they might not have interacted with previously, and to energise them for the day. I asked participants to stand up and move around the room, speaking briefly to as many different participants as possible. I encouraged them to find five people they did not know well and to find something they had in common with each person. This activity lasted about ten minutes, and afterward, we came back together as a large group, and participants shared what they had discovered they had in common. Everyone found they had something in common with someone else.

Next, I introduced the principles, goals, and practices of dialogue, explaining that it is a new way of having a conversation. I emphasised that dialogue avoids predictable debates, polarising and hardening of fixed positions, and premature solutions, while inviting genuine inquiry, expanding tolerance, and the possibility of being changed by the process. Dialogue also develops deeper relationships, new insights, and understanding through tolerating difference, and new and unexpected responses to complex problems. By going through the process, participants gained a deeper appreciation for the value of dialogue and felt more confident in engaging in it.

I then reviewed the concepts of “Active Listening” and “Authentic Speaking”, emphasising that dialogue requires practising a new way of speaking and listening. Active listening involves hearing and understanding the truth of others' experiences, giving them your full and undivided attention, listening to learn rather than verify existing assumptions or expectations, listening with empathy to see the problem from their point of view, and asking questions to clarify or expand understanding, not to challenge or engage in debate.

After explaining the concepts of active listening and authentic speaking, I proceeded to lead an activity that allowed the participants to practise active listening. The participants paired up and sat back-to-back. One person identified an object in the room and described its shape without explicitly stating what it was. The other person had to draw the object based on the description and try to guess what it was. This activity was enjoyable for the participants and resulted in many laughs, as many of them did not correctly guess the object. Following the activity, we reviewed the differences between debate and dialogue. Below is what we reviewed together as a group.

**Table 15. Debate vs. Dialogue**

<b>Debate</b>	<b>Dialogue</b>
• Goal is to win	• Goal is to discover common ground
• Involves listening to find the opponent's weak points	• Involves listening to understand
• Involves criticizing other points of view	• Involves openly considering all points of view
• Assumes one right answer to a question or problem	• Assumes that many different ideas can contribute to a fuller solution
• Comes from a position which one defends	• Expresses feelings, concerns, fears, and uncertainties
• Exposes faults in the positions of others	• Demonstrates strengths on all sides of an issue
• Looks to strengthen a predetermined position	• Uncovers brand new possibilities and opportunities
• Further polarizes antagonistic positions	• Builds bridges of understanding
• Promotes competition	• Promotes collaboration

Source: Green, P. (2012). Peacebuilding in Divided Communities: Karuna Center's Approach to Training. *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 7(2), 68-79.

To conclude the introduction to dialogue principles, goals, and practices, I went over the ground rules for dialogue. These rules are similar to the ones we established for the workshop norms, and they create the conditions for freedom of expression. I encouraged participants to suggest possible rules, reminding them that the whole group had to agree on a rule before it was added to the list. We kept the list of rules short and posted them in a visible spot in the room.

The group came up with a list of ground rules for dialogue that would foster a safe and respectful environment for everyone to share their thoughts and experiences. These rules included honouring confidentiality, respecting differences, speaking from one's own perspective by using "I" statements, describing personal experiences instead of opinions, refraining from arguing with others' statements, not interrupting when someone else was speaking, and making sure everyone had the opportunity to share. These rules were agreed upon by the group and were posted in a visible spot in the room to remind participants throughout the workshop.

After lunch, we conducted the "History Timeline" activity, where the Moroccans and Sahrawis worked separately to create a timeline of their people's history. They were given the freedom to go as far back in history as they wished, and major events were written on a scroll of paper with dates. Each group then presented their timeline to the other. The second day of the workshop was focused on reflection and discussion among the participants. We started the day with a group dialogue question: "What would you like people in this workshop to know about you? What do you want to know about them?" Participants had a relaxed discussion, and many shared interesting facts about themselves. Later, we conducted a series of dyads with different partners, where they answered questions such as "How is this experience impacting you?" and "What are you learning about yourself? About the 'other side?'" The partners were then asked to discuss the challenges they face when sharing their experiences with family or friends. We concluded the day with a closing round of appreciations and reflections.

One research participant stated,

“Just being here – in the same room, for the same reason – I am developing empathy.”

Another participant stated,



“I am developing friendships that would not have been possible without dialogue. This is good as I would not have listened before, and I am happy I listened now.”

### **8.3.3.1 Significance of the Dialogue Workshop**

This two-day workshop aimed to provide a structured approach to dialogue. The workshop sought to contribute to new knowledge in the field by addressing essential questions such as when dialogue is appropriate, why people in violent conflict seek dialogue, how opposing groups can engage in effective dialogue, what skills dialogue facilitators should have, the risks of engaging in dialogue, and how dialogue can lead to long-term peace and structural changes.

The workshop employed a deliberate and structured approach to facilitate productive dialogues that prioritised participant safety and encouraged the slow and steady development of trust and understanding. Through dialogue sessions, participants were urged to confront the myths, stereotypes, and prejudices that fuel intergroup violence and to express their experiences candidly. The topics for dialogue were carefully selected based on the experiences and realities of the participants, with questions designed to foster personal responses, mutual understanding, and avoid blame. The workshop introduced the principles, goals, and practices of dialogue and reviewed the concepts of active listening and authentic speaking. Participants engaged in various activities, such as the "Milling and Mingling" ice-breaker exercise and the "History Timeline" activity, which allowed the Moroccans and Sahrawis to create a timeline of their people's history and present it to each other.

The workshop concluded with a group dialogue question: "What would you like people in this workshop to take away from the experience?" The participants' responses highlighted the importance of understanding each other's perspectives, breaking down stereotypes and myths, and working towards a peaceful future. The workshop contributed to new knowledge in the field by providing a structured approach to dialogue and addressing essential questions related to conflict resolution. It also contributed to resolving the Western Sahara conflict by fostering mutual understanding and empathy among the participants and providing a pathway towards a peaceful future.

### **8.3.4 Workshop 4: Social Healing, Reconciliation, Forgiveness**

This three-day workshop took place 7-9 April 2022.

Below are essential questions that were addressed during the workshop:

- When is dialogue suitable?
- Why do conflicting parties seek dialogue despite violence?
- How can opposing groups engage in productive dialogue?
- What are essential skills for dialogue facilitators?
- What are the risks associated with engaging in dialogue?
- How can dialogue contribute to lasting peace and structural change?

The concept of "social healing" is emerging as a way to rebuild communal relations after mass violence. While less familiar than the phrases "reconciliation and forgiveness," it is broader and more appropriate for the immediate aftermath of war. Reconciliation and forgiveness can take years and can be too demanding for victims early on in the process, making social healing a more realistic and effective approach. Social healing involves restoring relations so that communities can coexist, make decisions together, and rebuild their destroyed communities. It can be a prelude to reconciliation and forgiveness, achieved through initiatives that rebuild trust, humanise broken relations, normalise daily life, and restore hope. Third-party interventions from peacebuilding organisations like DUT's International Centre of Nonviolence can help antagonistic communities join in common reconstruction tasks that serve as the building blocks of social healing.

Reconciliation is fundamentally about rebuilding relationships in divided societies. It restores harmony where violent conflict has set people against each other, requiring intentionality and perhaps even generosity. However, it can be the most challenging step in peacebuilding, as it requires people to let go of generations of hatred, abandon chosen narratives, and re-establish relations destroyed by mistrust and brutality. Forgiveness is frequently an inward decision made by a victim to let go of the burden of pain and hate, not in order to forget, but to release heart-constricting grief and loss. Like reconciliation, forgiveness requires courage, commitment, and

compassion. Each step in the passage entails deliberation and reflection, and cannot be rushed or demanded by others.

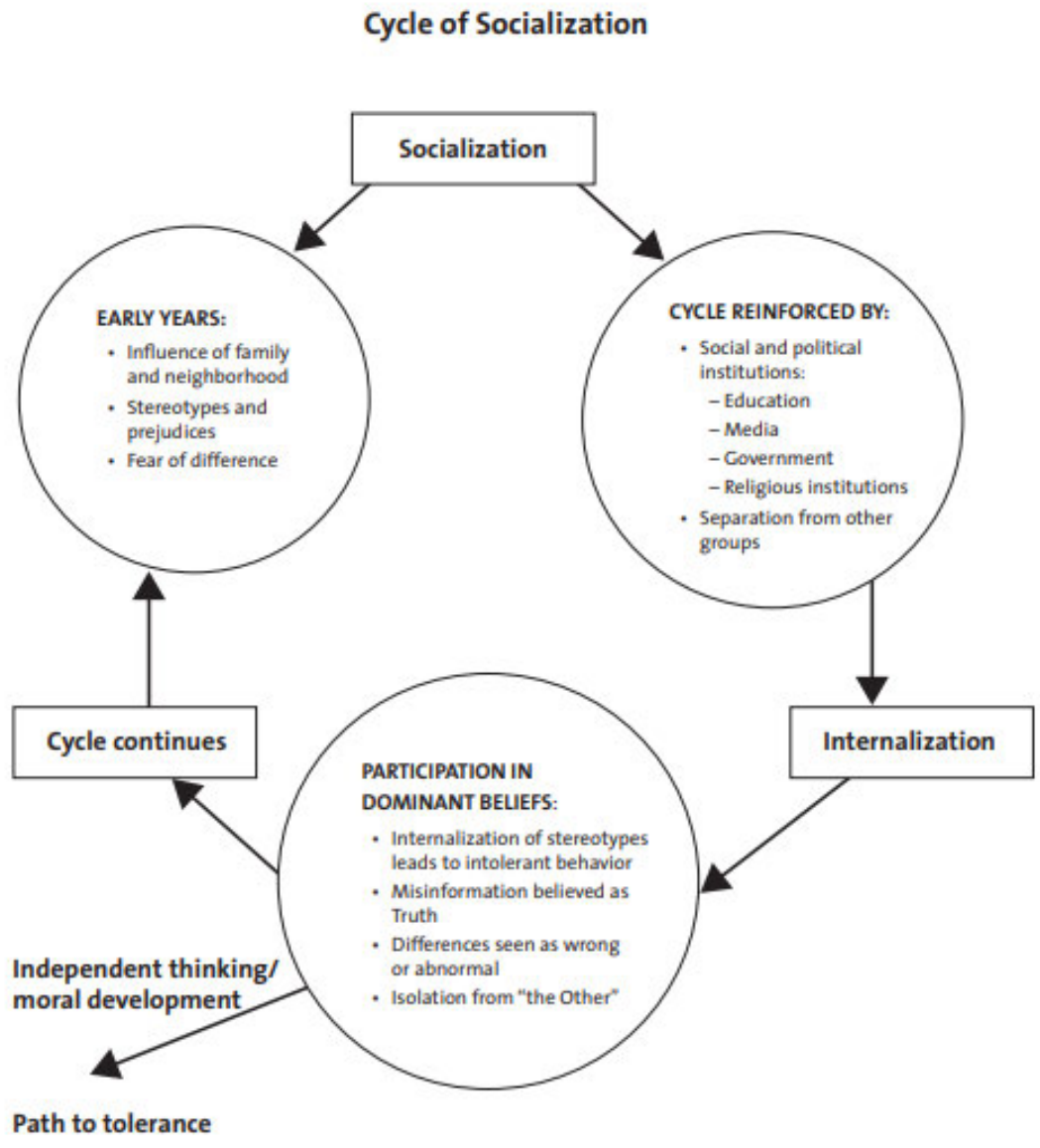
Because of the sensitive nature of this process, I am respectful in my approach to reconciliation and forgiveness. Readiness to reconcile with those who have caused harm, or to offer forgiveness, occurs in its own time from ripeness in the individual heart. The impetus for these brave acts sometimes arises through public truth commissions and related structures, and at other times by dialogue groups and positive exposure to the other side. We have witnessed deep healing between former enemy participants, and consider each such moment an act of grace and a gift to the violator, victim, and their communities.

Social healing workshops should include time for attending to the fragile relational and trust issues between participants. In the designing of this session of workshops, I allowed space for participants to express their hopes and fears, to explore common ground, and discover the barriers to tolerance in themselves and their communities, and to plan for a peaceful future together. In workshops with strong emotional content, such as this session, it is important to build slowly and not rush, and to understand that certain agenda items may need to be skipped or delved into more deeply for the sake of honouring the concerns arising in the group.

We started the morning by discussing hopes and fears for this specific workshop. We then reviewed the “workshop norms” and “ground rules for dialogue” before moving into our next exercise. The exercise is called “Journey of My Life” and entailed each participant drawing a timeline that included highlights of their life, which, considering the reason for these workshops, would likely include painful war memories. As a peacebuilding practitioner and workshop facilitator, it is important to know if you are able to handle the emotions of the group in such potentially emotional exercises. For participants’ emotional safety, I asked that they discuss their timelines in pairs before we discussed highlights from the exercise as a group.

Following lunch, we embarked on intergroup relations learning, where I presented on the “Cycle of Socialisation,” which focuses on how we learn intolerance early in our lives. The aim of this activity was to assist participants in comprehending that intolerance and discrimination are acquired mindsets that are conveyed through socialisation establishments, and that these attitudes

can be transformed through ethical growth. Presented below is a chart showing the cycle of socialisation that I reviewed with the workshop participants.



**Figure 9. Cycle of Socialisation**

Source: Green, P. (2012). Peacebuilding in Divided Communities: Karuna Center's Approach to Training. *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 7(2), 68-79.

After the presentation, we held a small-group discussion on how each participant was socialised to form attitudes about the "other." We then ended the day reflecting as a group on what we had learned.

The second day of the workshop began with a discussion on stereotypes and prejudice. We conducted an exercise on discrimination, adapted for the Western Sahara context to raise awareness of one's behaviour and that of others.

Participants found a partner to discuss the following questions:

- Have you discriminated against someone based on their ethnicity, religion, gender, or sexual preference? If not, have you witnessed such behaviour?
- Have you experienced discrimination based on your identity?

As a facilitator, I believe that the concept of identity grouping can be effectively communicated through simulation. To this end, I implemented the "Where Do We Belong?" simulation, which aims to convey that people often reside in neighbourhoods organised around particular identities, evoke the feeling of being accepted or rejected, and emphasise the strengths and dangers of identity groups. I had previously participated in this simulation during my involvement in the Conflict Transformation Across Cultures (CONTACT) peacebuilding programme in Brattleboro, Vermont in 2013, and it had a profound effect on me as it allowed me to experience, albeit fractionally, what it feels like to be excluded.

To initiate the simulation, I briefed the group that they were representing two distinct groups, as is the case in actuality. I then instructed the participants to shut their eyes while we attached blue or green stickers on their foreheads. A black sticker was added to the forehead of one participant. The group was then asked to open their eyes and notice that two corners of the room were allocated to different colours, representing the two distinct identities. Without speaking, they had to find where they belonged and assist others in finding where they belonged. The participant with the black sticker had no home. Once everyone had found their place, and the groups had dealt with how to treat the participant with the black sticker, I asked the participants to return to their seats to discuss the exercise.

Next, I encouraged the group to talk about their experience, providing some questions to help guide the conversation:

- How did uncertainty about belonging affect you?
- How did you determine your sense of belonging?
- Did anyone assist you in this process?
- How did the person with the black sticker feel when they didn't belong anywhere?
- Were they excluded or welcomed in the other corners?
- How did this experience affect them?
- Why do people tend to form groups based on identity?
- Is belonging to these groups essential for our well-being?
- What causes us to exclude those from other groups?

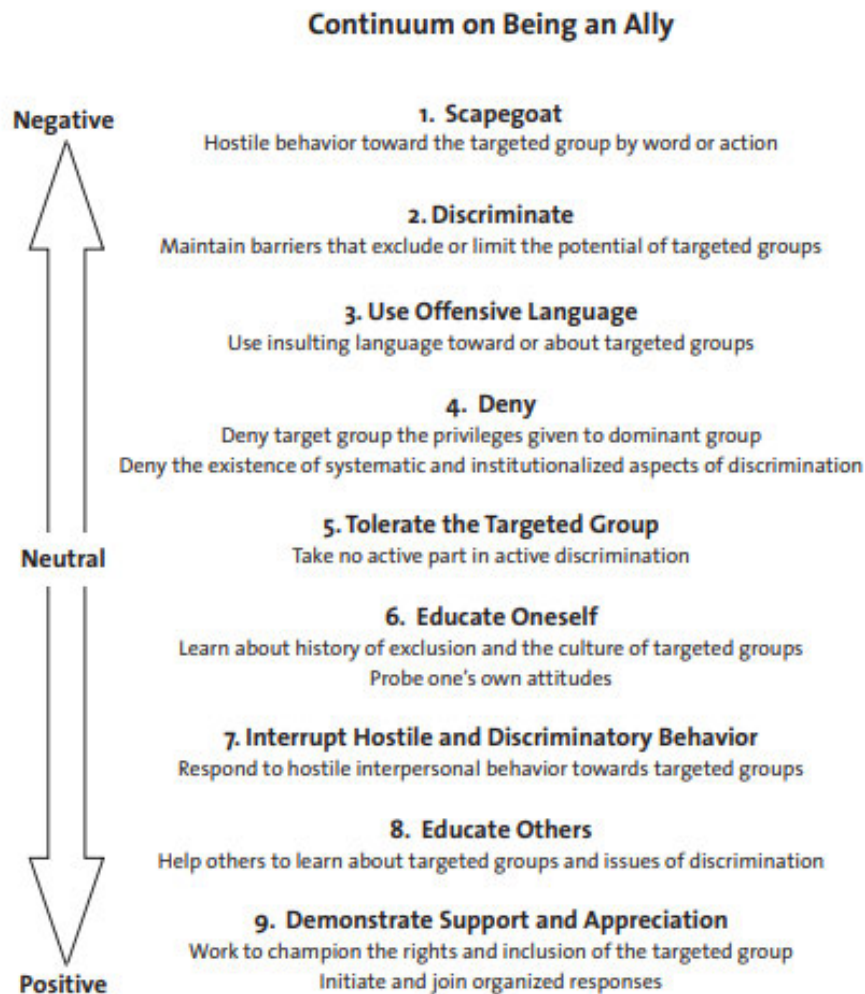
I followed this exercise by teaching the group the definitions of stereotypes, prejudice, and oppression, along with reflections on the Western Sahara conflict and how these concepts lead to conflict. I deemed this exercise appropriate because the group had established some trust and had shown that they could calmly discuss sensitive topics. Clarifying these definitions and applying them to the participants' personal experiences can reinforce the danger of identity judgments and the peril of acting upon those judgments. The objective of this exercise was to demonstrate how perceptions of the "other" arise, gain currency, and are used in painful, destructive ways.

The following are the definitions that I have provided. A stereotype is a widely held perception of a group that represents an oversimplified opinion, generalisation, or judgement. On the other hand, prejudice refers to a discriminatory attitude against members of a particular group. Oppression is the combination of power and prejudice. It can occur at an individual, cultural, or institutional level when one group has more power than another and can act on prejudice. Some examples of oppression include racism, sexism, nationalism, and religious oppression.

I proceeded to instruct the participants to divide themselves into their respective ethnic groups. Then, I asked each group to identify eight or more stereotypes that they believed others held of them and note them down on paper. I had included a similar question in my questionnaire, asking participants to provide examples of stereotypes they had heard of the other groups. Subsequently,

I prompted each group to discuss the stereotypes that were particularly hurtful, inaccurate, or understandable. We reconvened as a larger group, and I requested that each group present their list of stereotypes and discuss which ones were the most painful, inaccurate, or understandable. We further discussed as a whole group the possible origins of these stereotypes and ways that communities could address stereotyping, prejudice, and oppression.

After the lunch break, I facilitated two additional activities named "Continuum of Being an Ally" and "Ladder of Tolerance." The Continuum of Being an Ally aimed to demonstrate a range of behaviours, ranging from mistreatment of targeted groups to embracing them, and identifying opportunities for intervention by individuals who wish to proactively support those affected by discrimination and oppression.



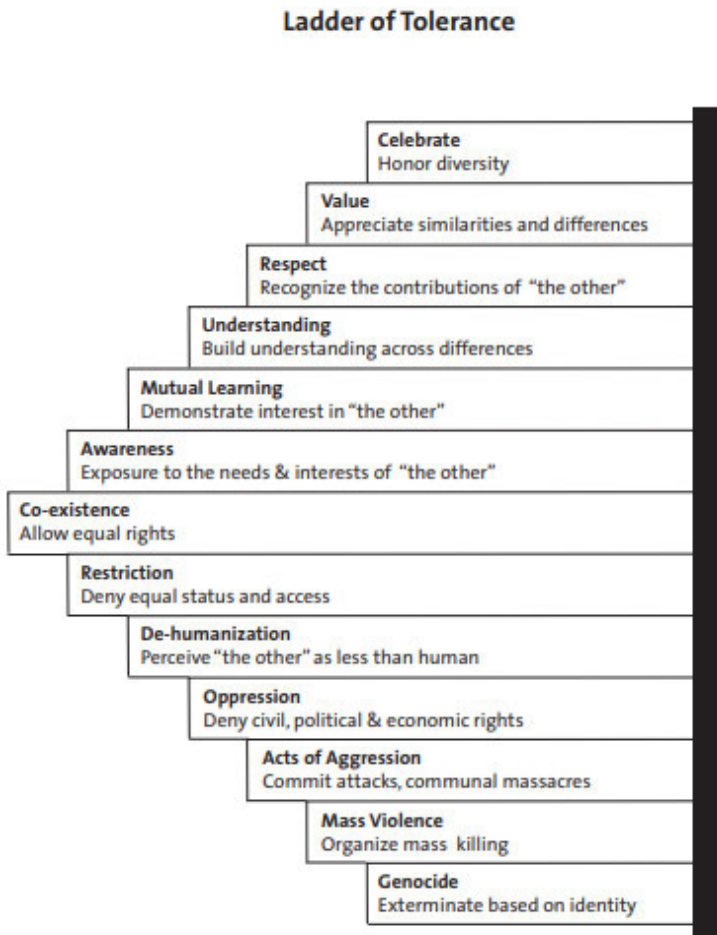
**Figure 10. Continuum on Being an Ally**

Source: Adams, M., Blumenfeld, W. J., Castaneda, C., Hackman, H. W., Peters, M. L., & Zuniga, X. (Eds.). (2000). *Readings for diversity and social justice*. New York: Routledge.

I posted each of the nine different stages of being an ally on pieces of paper to create the continuum around the room. I asked each participant to stand where they thought they belonged in terms of their history as an ally. I followed this with a discussion focused on increasing ally behaviour within and beyond these workshops. Next, we proceeded with the concluding activity of the day, which was the Ladder of Tolerance exercise. The purpose of this activity was to illustrate how intolerance and the deprivation of rights can result in widespread violence and to discuss what actions are necessary to establish a genuinely tolerant society. We placed Western Saharan society



on the ladder and planned for the development of tolerance education in the future. I shared the Ladder of Tolerance diagram with the participants and asked them to contemplate where they think their society is placed on the ladder of tolerance and what measures could be taken to advance it.



**Figure 11. Ladder of Tolerance**

Source: Green, P. (2012). Peacebuilding in Divided Communities: Karuna Center's Approach to Training. *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 7(2), 68-79.

We then concluded the day with reflections and insights before parting ways.

On day three of the workshop session, we discussed the grief process, the mourning process, social healing, and reconciliation. We began the morning by reviewing the grief and mourning processes.

I began with an activity on the grieving process. The objective of this activity was to visually illustrate the predictable stages of grief that affect people who have experienced violence, and the central role played by fear in each of these stages. I used the model below to provide a context for understanding people’s progressive responses to violent conflict. I encouraged participants to reflect on the model with respect to their own experiences and those of the people in their communities impacted by the Western Sahara Conflict.



**Figure 12 The Grieving Process**

Source: Kubler-Ross, E. (1969). *On Death and Dying*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc.

During our review, we went over the various stages of grief. The first stage (shock, denial, and numbness) is marked by a sense of disbelief and an inability to accept that the loss has occurred. The second stage, realisation, is characterised by intense feelings of loss and longing, often resulting in deep sadness that can last for years. The third stage, anger, may manifest in different ways, such as anger towards those who caused the death, those who didn't do enough, God for allowing it to happen, the deceased for leaving them, or towards oneself, with feelings of guilt. The fourth stage, guilt and remorse, may lead to thoughts of "if only" and regrets over missed opportunities or things that could have been done differently. The fifth stage, anxiety, may result in an inability to cope emotionally and physically with reactions such as fatigue, exhaustion, poor concentration, and sickness. The sixth stage, apathy and hopelessness, may lead to a pessimistic attitude and outlook on the future, along with a lack of motivation. The final stage, acceptance and readjustment, involves finding inner strength, sometimes with the help of friends or prayer, and beginning to take small steps towards living life again. After reviewing the stages of grief, I instructed participants to share their personal experiences of stages of grief in their own lives and in their communities in small groups. We then came back together as one large group to reflect on grieving within the community.

Following lunch, we explored the long journey towards reconciliation. I wanted to demonstrate that reconciliation is not a single act, but rather a long process which evolves over time and includes many stages, opportunities, and challenges. The stages of the long journey towards reconciliation that I reviewed consisted of eight steps. The first step is the acknowledgment of guilt and responsibility, which involves speaking honestly and openly about the harm caused to others by oneself or in one's name. The second step is to offer a sincere apology for the harm inflicted and the losses suffered. The third step is atonement, which involves expressing remorse and making a commitment to non-violence in the future. The fourth step is reparations, which involves being willing to provide compensation for damages and offering support to victims and communities. The fifth step is social and structural justice, which involves making a commitment to address injustices and ensuring fair community structures. The sixth step is acceptance, which involves letting go of anger and hatred resulting from the conflict. The seventh step is forgiveness,

which involves recognising the humanity of the other. The final step is reconciliation, which involves rebuilding relationships based on mutual understanding.

I instructed participants to explore their own experience and growth in these stages, first independently, allowing time for silent writing, then with a partner or small group. During our discussion on reconciliation, I emphasised the significance of four critical elements that are vital for a lasting reconciliation process: truth, justice, mercy, and peace. To begin with, truth requires acknowledging the reality of the situation and being transparent about it. Secondly, justice entails ensuring equality and promoting right relationships, while also making restitution. Thirdly, mercy involves accepting, forgiving, and providing support, compassion, and healing to those who have been affected. Lastly, peace is achieved by promoting unity, well-being, security, and respect among all parties involved. These four elements work together to create a sustainable and effective reconciliation process.

I then divided the participants into four groups and assigned one of the four critical elements to each group. I instructed each group to prepare and present why their element is necessary for reconciliation. This encouraged each group to think more deeply about each element and then to share and learn from each other.

A participant stated,

I was able to transform my anger and hate into understanding.

#### **8.3.4.1 Significance of social healing, reconciliation, and forgiveness workshop**

The workshop on social healing, reconciliation, and forgiveness offers a unique approach to resolving this conflict by focusing on the underlying social and emotional factors that contribute to the conflict. By addressing these factors, the workshop offers a more comprehensive and sustainable solution to the conflict.

One of the primary ways in which the workshop contributes to resolving the Western Sahara conflict is by building trust and restoring relationships between opposing parties. The conflict has created deep divisions between different groups, and mistrust is a significant barrier to finding solutions. The process of social healing involves creating a safe and supportive environment where

individuals can begin to rebuild trust and relationships. By doing so, participants can work together to find solutions to issues that were previously too difficult to solve. Another way in which the workshop contributes to resolving the conflict is by promoting dialogue. Dialogue is essential in resolving conflicts, as it allows opposing parties to better understand each other's perspectives and find common ground. By providing a safe space for productive dialogue, the workshop enables participants to engage in constructive discussions and work towards a shared vision for the future.

The workshop also encourages forgiveness, which is a critical component of the social healing process. Forgiveness enables individuals to let go of pain and hate and move towards healing. By offering forgiveness, individuals can begin to rebuild relationships and move towards reconciliation. This is particularly important in the Western Sahara conflict, where there has been significant violence and trauma.

Addressing prejudice and stereotyping is another way in which the workshop contributes to resolving the conflict. Prejudice and stereotyping are often underlying factors in conflicts, as they contribute to the creation of "us vs them" mentalities. By raising awareness and addressing these issues, the workshop helps participants recognise how their attitudes towards others contribute to the conflict. This increased awareness can help individuals challenge their biases and work towards a more inclusive society.

The workshop also provides emotional support for individuals who may have experienced trauma or loss as a result of the conflict. By creating a safe and supportive environment, participants can begin to process their emotions and find ways to heal. This emotional support is critical in helping individuals move towards reconciliation and building a more peaceful society. Finally, the workshop provides essential skills for dialogue facilitators and peacebuilders, who can then go on to lead similar initiatives in their own communities. These skills are critical in building sustainable peace and resolving conflicts in the long term.

### **8.3.5 Workshop: Preparing Peacebuilders**

The dates for the two-day workshop were 23-24 April 2022. The workshop was organised based on the participants' request to share their knowledge and skills gained from their peacebuilding

intervention with individuals of varying levels of knowledge and skill in both formal and informal settings.

The Preparing Peacebuilders workshop posed several critical questions, such as the purpose of training peacebuilders, the necessary skills and knowledge required to lead peacebuilding initiatives effectively, the essential qualities of group leadership, and whether a facilitator can successfully be a member of one of the conflicting parties. It also explored how peacebuilding facilitators manage emotions such as anger or grief and how to handle challenging behaviours like resistance, dominance, threats, or challenges to the trainer. The objectives of the training were to teach models of community-building by exemplifying community-building, enhancing dialogue skills as participants and facilitators, and exploring leadership and facilitation. Other training events addressed issues of reconciliation and healing, conflict analysis, and interventions, all aimed at training peacebuilding facilitators.

I strongly encouraged participants to practise intergroup co-facilitation in order to ensure checks and balances in perceptions, to model intergroup collaboration, and to make the training as safe as possible for participants from marginalised or oppressed groups. For this workshop, I touched upon the following areas of training: community building and reflection on the peace process; dialogue training; dialogue experience; and leadership in peacebuilding.

I began the workshop by describing one aspect of my peacebuilding work that I hoped had had an impact on the peace process in Western Sahara. I started by explaining that I believed it was already making a difference and how that was evident in seeing the participants of the workshop sitting together peacefully, working together on deep, emotional issues, and even laughing together. I finished by explaining how my doctoral thesis would have multiple recommendations to support peacebuilding efforts in Western Sahara, and that I hoped my recommendations would be taken seriously and implemented, and that I would work my hardest to ensure they were. I then reviewed my motivation for and expectations of the workshop, as well as the agenda.

To explore the participants' feelings about the peace process, I designed a spectrum activity. The purpose was to demonstrate the range of opinions within the group and highlight the learning opportunities that come from such diversity. The activity also served as an icebreaker and involved

dividing the room into three sections labelled "Agree," "Neither agree nor disagree," and "Disagree" using tape or papers. Participants were presented with statements, such as "violence does not result in peace," and were asked to move to the side of the room that aligned with their position on the spectrum.

As a facilitator, I encouraged participants to observe where others were standing and to share their reasons for their choices. The activity allowed participants to gain insights into the various perspectives within the group and better understand each other's viewpoints. Following this activity, we discussed the peace process in mixed groups. I asked participants to discuss their feelings about Western Sahara's and Morocco's future and the perceptions from their communities. After lunch, we revisited the "Debate versus Dialogue" tool from the dialogue workshop and asked participants to reflect on how a peacebuilding facilitator's active presence can steer groups towards dialogue instead of debate. We also reviewed the process of crafting dialogue questions. I emphasised that the core of dialogue lies in the question and how it is phrased. A well-crafted question can profoundly influence the direction and tone of the dialogue, leading to a shared understanding. We discussed the characteristics of a "good" question, including being open-ended, going beyond surface-level opinions or positions, and encouraging participants to explore their experiences and thoughts in a new way.

I then divided the participants into small groups and invited each group to develop questions for a given dialogue topic. I allowed the groups to choose their own topics with one caveat – it had to relate to real-life experiences in their own communities. After giving sufficient time for each group to develop questions, we came back together as a large group. Each group presented their questions, and the other groups reviewed and evaluated their questions based on what makes a "good" dialogue question. During the second day of the workshop, we focused on personal experiences and their impact on peacebuilding efforts. Participants were asked to reflect on their experiences as Moroccan or Sahrawi peacebuilders, and how these experiences influenced their relationships with others in the workshop.

To facilitate this discussion, we used the Fishbowl activity, also known as the inner/outer circle method. Moroccans sat in the inner circle while Sahrawis sat in the outer circle, allowing

Moroccans to share their experiences while the outer circle listened without interrupting. The two circles then swapped positions, allowing Sahrawis to share their experiences while Moroccans listened without interrupting. As a facilitator, I emphasised the importance of listening and managing the time process during the activity.

After the Fishbowl exercise, we reviewed the Process-Content Iceberg tool, which is a crucial tool for managing both the content and process in a dialogue session. I explained to the participants that the process involves the underlying aspects of communication, such as relationships, emotions, body language, group dynamics, and flow. Content refers to the shared experiences and discussions that arise from the process. As facilitators, we need to manage both content and process to ensure a productive and meaningful dialogue.

In the afternoon session, we dedicated time to discussing leadership in peacebuilding. The participants were grouped into small clusters to exchange their thoughts on various leadership styles they had witnessed in the past. We then delved into the concept of "Three Types of Power" and "Leadership". We explored the three types of power: vertical, horizontal, and internal. Vertical power involves using coercion, punishment, and manipulation to exercise power over others. In contrast, horizontal power is about collaboration, cooperation, and influence to make collective decisions and take actions. Lastly, internal power emanates from within and is about recognising one's power and having the courage to act upon it.

We then briefly touched upon the different attitudes, methods, and styles of leadership, which can range from self-promoting to supporting others. I explained some of the approaches and methods that could be employed in leadership, including exercising power, using one's status, being authoritative, achieving objectives, taking care of people, or empowering others. Leadership can be attained through political manoeuvres, taking advantage of relationships, setting examples, persuading others, or sharing power. Afterward, participants divided into smaller groups to explore the various concepts of leadership and to offer feedback on the effectiveness of each style of leadership.

At the end of the day, we concluded our session by examining "collaborative leadership". We discussed what it is, its benefits and drawbacks, when it is appropriate, and how to put it into



practice. Collaborative leadership focuses on leading a process, rather than managing individuals. It emphasises cooperative problem-solving and is open-ended. The benefits of this leadership style include building trust, eliminating turf issues, gaining access to more diverse ideas and information, creating opportunities for concrete results, and empowering new leaders. However, collaborative leadership can be time-consuming, require confronting conflicts head-on, and involve overcoming resistance and egos. It is suitable when problems are complex and serious, there are numerous stakeholders involved, previous problem-solving approaches have failed, or the issue affects the entire community.

To conclude our workshops, I assigned homework to the groups. Each group was tasked with adapting one of the training activities or models that we discussed during the workshop and applying it to the Western Sahara Conflict. I reminded them that they had access to handouts of the various exercises and tools we had used during our sessions, and to choose one for their assignment.

#### **8.3.5.1 Significance of Preparing Peacebuilders Workshop**

The Preparing Peacebuilders workshop provided new knowledge in several ways. Firstly, the workshop posed critical questions regarding the purpose of training peacebuilders, the necessary skills and knowledge required to lead peacebuilding initiatives effectively, and the essential qualities of group leadership by teaching models of community-building, enhancing dialogue skills, exploring leadership and facilitation, and addressing issues of reconciliation and healing, conflict analysis, and interventions, all aimed at training peacebuilding facilitators. These questions led to new insights and perspectives on peacebuilding and offered participants a deeper understanding of how to approach and manage peacebuilding initiatives.

Secondly, the workshop provided training in community-building, dialogue skills, conflict analysis, and interventions, all aimed at training peacebuilding facilitators. This training likely introduced participants to new concepts and techniques that they may not have been familiar with before, expanding their knowledge and skills in the field of peacebuilding. Thirdly, the workshop emphasised the importance of intergroup co-facilitation to ensure checks and balances in perceptions, model intergroup collaboration, and make the training as safe as possible for

participants from marginalised or oppressed groups. This approach introduced participants to a new way of thinking about peacebuilding facilitation and encouraged them to consider the perspectives and experiences of those from different backgrounds.

In terms of resolving the Western Sahara conflict, the workshop contributes by providing participants with skills and knowledge to lead peacebuilding initiatives effectively. The workshop also facilitated discussions on the peace process and encouraged participants to share their feelings and perceptions from their communities, which can help to build trust and understanding between different groups. Additionally, the workshop focused on personal experiences and their impact on peacebuilding efforts, which can help participants to develop empathy and find common ground. Finally, the workshop explored the concept of leadership in peacebuilding and different types of power, which can help participants to become more effective peacebuilding facilitators. Overall, the workshop provided a platform for participants to learn, share, and develop skills and knowledge that can contribute to resolving the Western Sahara conflict.

### **8.3.6 Workshop 6: Group Presentations, Pledge Signing**

At the beginning of the first day, I checked in with the participants to gauge their enthusiasm for adapting an exercise tool to address an issue related to the Western Sahara Conflict, and was pleased to see their eagerness and excitement to work on this assignment. I then went over the schedule for the upcoming two days, which included analysing the components of effective training design and the most effective techniques for leading training sessions. Participants would then work in their groups for the remainder of the morning and all afternoon to adapt a tool for the Western Sahara Conflict. They were free to find a quiet place in the building to collaborate, and I made myself available for any questions or assistance they might require. The second day would be dedicated to group presentations and the workshop would conclude with the symbolic signing of a Peace Pledge.

Due to time constraints, I was unable to provide a full Training of Trainers review to the participants as it was not the primary objective of the workshop. Nonetheless, I wanted them to have resources that would help them in developing a good training. Therefore, I distributed two handouts, "Elements of Good Training Design" and "Best Practices for Facilitating Training",

which were translated into Arabic. We went over the handouts together briefly. The "Elements of Good Training Design" emphasised starting with a clear definition of specific workshop goals, incorporating an experiential approach to learning, including many exercises and opportunities for group discussion and interaction, and tailoring the workshop to meet the particular goals, community needs, and skill levels of the participants.

During the training session, I presented the second handout, which contained the Best Practices for Facilitating Training. These best practices are essential for ensuring that training sessions are effective. Some of the best practices that I discussed include attending to introductions, sharing the agenda, developing ground rules, preparing the group for experiential learning, varying methodology, format, and group discussion techniques, keeping flexible and re-designing to accommodate changing group needs, overseeing logistics for smooth functioning, maintaining neutrality, modelling respectful behaviour, managing time, managing dominating behaviour, and encouraging equal participation from everyone. Ensuring no one had any questions arising from the two handouts, I allowed the participants to get into their groups and continue working on their presentations for the following morning. I walked around, visiting each group a couple of times, to check progress and answer any questions they might have. I also reminded each group of the time remaining for the day.

On the second day of the last workshop, some groups stated that they needed more time to prepare their presentations. I allowed the participants to continue to work on their presentations for two more hours that morning. Before the presentations, I handed out an evaluation form where participants were able to evaluate each presentation and provide constructive feedback about the presentation. Two groups presented before lunch, and three presented after lunch. The groups presented a variety of the tools, which was very nice to see. Some groups analysed the conflict using different tools – the Iceberg Model, the Tree Model, etc. Another group demonstrated an active listening exercise using the Western Sahara Conflict as context. A further group used the Cycles of Revenge and Reconciliation tool to show how the two parties are stuck in the cycle, and provided examples of how they might exit the cycle. Following the group presentations, we then took a break before moving onto the ceremonial, symbolic signing of the Peace Pledge.

When we regrouped, and before the input and signing of the pledge, I asked the group what a pledge is. “An agreement.” “A commitment.” “A statement.” “A promise.” These were some of the examples that participants stated. We agreed with all the comments that were given. I explained to them that the research team and I had come up with the preliminary pledge, but that we wanted everyone's input to build the pledge. The participants were on board and excited to sign. Together we reviewed the pledge.

My Pledge for Peace

*I am a peacebuilder through my actions, my words and my thoughts.*

*I believe that we can, and must, build understanding, respect and peace in the world around us every day.*

*I believe that through better listening we will have better understanding.*

*I reject violence and I will work to build peaceful solutions in my community.*

*I reject discrimination, and stand in support of anyone being discriminated against.*

*I understand that non-violence is a principle and practice and that it is not just the absence of violence.*

*I believe we must see and respect each other as brothers and sisters despite our different views, cultures, faiths or traditions.*

*I commit to treating others with the same respect that I deserve.*

*I commit, every day, to do my best to be a peacebuilder in my community.*

عهدي من أجل السلام

وأفكاري وكلماتي أنا صانع سلام من خلال أفعالي

أعتقد أنه يمكننا ، ويجب علينا ، بناء التفاهم والاحترام والسلام في العالم من حولنا كل يوم

أعتقد أنه من خلال الاستماع الأفضل سيكون لدينا فهم أفضل

أرفض العنف وسأعمل على بناء حلول سلمية في مجتمعي

أرفض التمييز وأؤيد أي شخص يتعرض للتمييز

أفهم أن اللاعنف مبدأ وممارسة وأنه ليس مجرد غياب للعنف

ومعتقداتنا وتقاليدنا أعتقد أننا يجب أن نرى ونحترم بعضنا البعض كأخوة وأخوات على الرغم من وجهات نظرنا وثقافاتنا المختلفة

بمعاملة الآخرين بنفس الاحترام الذي أستحقه ألتزم

ألتزم ، كل يوم ، ببذل قصارى جهدي لأكون صانع سلام في مجتمعي

*eahdi min 'ajli al alsalam*

*'ana sanie salam min khilal 'afeali wakalimati wa'afkari.*

*'aetaqid 'anah yumkinuna, wayajib alayna, bina' al tafahum waliahtiram walsalam fi alealam min hawlina kula yawmin.*

*'aetaqid 'anah min khilal alaistimae al'afdal sayakun ladayna fahum 'afdala.*

*'Arfud aleunf wasa'aemal ealaa bina' hulul silmiat fi mujtamiei.*

*'arfud altamyiz wa'uayid 'aya shakhs yataearad liltamyiazi.*

*'afham 'ana allaeunf mabda wamumarasat wa'anah lays mujarad ghiab lileunfu.*

*'aetaqid 'anana yajib 'an naraa wanahtarim baedana albaed ka'ukhuat wa'akhawat ealaa alraghm min wujuhat nazarina wathaqafatina wamuetaqadatina wataqalidina almukhtalifati.*

*'altazim bimueamalat al akharin binafs aliahtiram alladi 'astahiquhu.*

*'altazim, kula yawm, bibadhl qusaraa juhdi li'akun saniAa al salam fi mujtamiei.*

Each participant signed the Peace Pledge. The symbolic signing of the Peace Pledge can contribute to peacebuilding by promoting a shared commitment to peace and nonviolence. The act of signing a pledge can help individuals to reflect on their own values and beliefs and to publicly affirm their commitment to peacebuilding. It can also help to create a sense of community and solidarity among individuals who share this commitment. To produce tangible results, I encouraged participants to use the Peace Pledge as a tool to mobilise individuals and communities to take concrete actions

towards peacebuilding. For example, signatories of the pledge could be encouraged to participate in peace education workshops, advocate for peace in their communities, and support each other in their efforts towards building peace.

### **8.3.6.1 Significance of the Group Presentations and Peace Pledge workshop**

Individuals can make a significant impact in promoting peace and nonviolence through their personal efforts, including committing to a peace pledge. The symbolic act of signing the Peace Pledge can have significant implications for peacebuilding efforts in the Western Sahara conflict. The act of signing can help to create a shared commitment to peace and nonviolence among the participants, and can serve as a catalyst for promoting peaceful solutions to the conflict. By signing the Peace Pledge, individuals are publicly affirming their commitment to peacebuilding and nonviolent conflict resolution. This can help to create a sense of community and solidarity among participants, and can help to foster a shared vision for a peaceful future in the Western Sahara region. Moreover, the act of signing the pledge can also serve as a tool for mobilising individuals and communities to take concrete actions towards peacebuilding. Signatories of the pledge can be encouraged to participate in peace education workshops, advocate for peace in their communities, and support each other in their efforts towards building peace. The Peace Pledge can contribute significantly to peacebuilding efforts in the Western Sahara conflict by promoting a shared commitment to peace and nonviolence and encouraging individuals and communities to take concrete actions towards building peace.

Civilians have signed numerous peace pledges throughout history to advocate for the end of conflicts and promote nonviolence. The People's Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, launched by the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, was signed by thousands of individuals worldwide in 2017, calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons. Survivors of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, along with supporters of nuclear disarmament, signed the Hiroshima and Nagasaki Appeals in 1996, advocating for the abolition of nuclear weapons. Women from around the world signed the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom's Peace Pledge during World War I, calling for an end to the war and a permanent peace based on justice and equality. The Nonviolent Peaceforce's Pledge advocates for the use of

nonviolent means to promote peace and protect civilians in conflict zones, while the International Peace Bureau's Pledge, dating back to 1891, calls for disarmament, nonviolence, and international cooperation to prevent war and promote peace. These pledges serve as a powerful tool for promoting peacebuilding efforts and fostering a culture of nonviolence, providing hope for a more peaceful world.

#### **8.4 The Ad-hoc Peace Committee**

During the peace education workshops, participants engaged in discussions and shared ideas about starting specific peacebuilding initiatives, advocating for peace, and supporting each other. To ensure ongoing communication and collaboration, the participants decided to create a WhatsApp group called the Ad-hoc Peace Committee. The goal of this group is to provide a platform for participants to stay connected, share resources, and plan future peacebuilding projects.

Since the establishment of the Ad-hoc Peace Committee, discussions have been ongoing about developing a "Peacebuilding Project" to implement similar peace education workshops in the region. To facilitate this initiative, positions such as Regional Leaders (RLs) and Sub-Regional Leaders (SRLs) are being formed from among the research participants. These leaders will work together to continue implementing peace education workshops in their communities and surrounding areas. They will also encourage participants of those workshops to join their movement, with the Peacebuilding Project providing ongoing guidance, resources, and support. By creating the Ad-hoc Peace Committee and forming Regional and Sub-Regional Leaders, the participants are creating a network of individuals who are committed to promoting peace in their communities. This is building a network of peace advocates. This network can serve as a source of support, information, and guidance for those who are interested in joining the peacebuilding movement.

In addition to these efforts, the ad-hoc Peace Committee is also advocating for peace education to be incorporated into the mainstream educational system on both sides of the conflict. By doing so, they are working to create a culture of peace and promote understanding and cooperation between communities in the region. This can help to promote understanding, empathy, and cooperation

between different communities, and may contribute to reducing tensions and conflicts in the long term.

This grassroots peacebuilding initiative is a powerful example of how peace education can contribute to transforming broken relationships during protracted conflicts. It provides a platform for individuals and communities to come together, share ideas, and collaborate on peacebuilding projects. The success of this initiative is not unique, as peace education has been shown to have a positive impact in numerous conflicts around the world, including in Northern Ireland, Rwanda, and Colombia (Girard and Gielen 2020; Bar-Tal 2019). By providing a platform for individuals and communities to come together and collaborate on peacebuilding projects, the initiative is empowering people to take action and make a positive difference in their communities. This can contribute to building a sense of agency and self-efficacy among those involved, and may help to reduce feelings of helplessness and despair that can fuel conflict. By engaging in discussions, sharing ideas, and collaborating on projects, the participants are taking concrete steps to promote understanding, cooperation, and empathy between different communities, and are creating a network of advocates who can continue this work into the future.

The grassroots peacebuilding initiative described in the previous paragraphs is significant in the context of resolving the Western Sahara conflict because it represents a bottom-up approach to peacebuilding. In the Western Sahara conflict, most of the peacebuilding efforts have been driven by external actors and top-down approaches, such as UN-led peace negotiations and diplomatic efforts. However, the grassroots movement described here represents a shift towards a more inclusive and locally-driven peacebuilding process.

The peace education workshops and Ad-hoc Peace Committee provide a platform for individuals and communities to engage in discussions, share ideas, and collaborate on peacebuilding projects. By involving local communities in the peacebuilding process, the initiative can help to build trust and foster a sense of ownership over the peacebuilding process. This can in turn lead to more sustainable and long-lasting peace. The initiative's focus on advocating for peace education to be integrated into the mainstream educational system is an important step towards promoting a culture of peace and understanding between communities. Overall, the grassroots peacebuilding initiative



described represents a promising step towards resolving the Western Sahara conflict through a more inclusive and locally-driven approach to peacebuilding.

#### **8.4.1 Significance of the Ad-hoc Peace Committee**

The creation of the Ad-hoc Peace Committee contributes to new knowledge in the peacebuilding and peace education fields by demonstrating the potential of grassroots, community-led initiatives to promote understanding, cooperation, and empathy between different communities. By creating a platform for individuals and communities to come together, share ideas, and collaborate on peacebuilding projects, the initiative is empowering people to take action and make a positive difference in their communities. This can contribute to building a sense of agency and self-efficacy among those involved, which is an important factor in promoting sustainable peace. Moreover, the creation of the Ad-hoc Peace Committee is significant in the peacebuilding and peace education fields because it represents a shift towards a bottom-up approach to peacebuilding. Traditionally, peacebuilding efforts have been driven by external actors and top-down approaches, such as UN-led peace negotiations and diplomatic efforts. However, the ad-hoc Peace Committee represents a more inclusive and locally-driven peacebuilding process that empowers individuals and communities to take ownership of the peacebuilding process.

By creating a platform for individuals and communities to come together and collaborate on peacebuilding projects, the Ad-hoc Peace Committee is facilitating knowledge sharing and learning within the peacebuilding and peace education fields. Participants can exchange ideas and strategies for promoting peace, as well as share best practices and lessons learned from their experiences. This can contribute to the development of new knowledge and innovative approaches to peacebuilding that can be applied in other contexts. Furthermore, as mentioned above, the initiative is promoting a sense of agency and self-efficacy among those involved. By taking action and making a positive difference in their communities, participants can build confidence and a sense of empowerment that can help to sustain their peacebuilding efforts over the long term. This can also contribute to building a culture of peace within communities, where individuals feel empowered to promote peace and resolve conflicts peacefully.

In the context of resolving the Western Sahara conflict, the Ad-hoc Peace Committee represents a significant shift towards a more inclusive and locally-driven approach to peacebuilding. By involving local communities in the peacebuilding process and advocating for peace education to be integrated into the mainstream educational system, the initiative is working to build trust and foster a sense of ownership over the peacebuilding process. This can help to create a culture of peace and understanding between communities, which may contribute to reducing tensions and conflicts in the long term. Overall, the Ad-hoc Peace Committee and the peace education workshops represent a valuable contribution to the peacebuilding and peace education fields, and their efforts to promote sustainable peace in the Western Sahara conflict are a promising example of the potential of grassroots, community-led initiatives to make a positive difference in protracted conflicts.

## **8.5 Conclusion**

The participants in this study have undertaken a peacebuilding intervention to address the protracted conflict in which they are involved. The peace education workshops they conducted are based on theories of conflict transformation and peace education. Although the study does not aim to transform national policy, it does provide recommendations at the national level. Rather, the focus is on transforming individuals' capacity to foster peaceful relationships, which is essential in addressing the root causes of the conflict.

National policy plays a vital role in addressing the Western Sahara conflict. The United Nations has been actively involved in efforts to resolve the conflict, including the implementation of several policies, such as the Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) and the appointment of a Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara. These policies aim to find a peaceful and mutually-acceptable solution to the conflict by promoting dialogue, cooperation, and conflict resolution. However, national policy alone cannot address the root causes of the Western Sahara conflict. Deep-seated prejudices, stereotypes, and negative attitudes towards others have fuelled the conflict and perpetuated violence against marginalised groups. To promote peace and prevent further escalation of the conflict, it is essential to address individual behaviour

and attitudes. The process of reconciliation is crucial in fostering trust and promoting dialogue between conflicting parties.

The Western Sahara conflict highlights the importance of individual behaviour in addressing conflict. The conflict has resulted in significant human rights violations, including forced displacement, arbitrary detention, and torture. The Polisario Front and Moroccan authorities have been accused of committing these human rights abuses against each other's citizens. While national policy has attempted to address these human rights violations, changing individual behaviour and attitudes towards the "other" is essential to creating a culture of peace and respect for human rights. While national policy plays a vital role in resolving the Western Sahara conflict, it alone cannot address the deep-seated prejudices and negative attitudes towards marginalised groups that fuel the conflict. Individual behaviour and attitudes must also be addressed through the process of reconciliation to promote trust and dialogue between conflicting parties.

This study highlights the importance of addressing individual behaviour and attitudes in promoting peace and preventing further escalation of the conflict. Although the number of research participants is small compared to the regional population, the peace education workshops they conducted served as a powerful example of the potential of peace education to contribute to peacebuilding efforts in a protracted conflict setting. The peace education workshops provided a safe platform for conflicting groups to analyse and discuss the impact of the conflict on their relationships, offering a creative alternative to state-based peacebuilding efforts. The preliminary evaluation conducted after the peacebuilding intervention measures short-term outcomes, which are presented and discussed in the following chapter.

## **Chapter Nine**

### **Short-term Outcome Evaluation of the Peacebuilding Intervention**

#### **9.1 Introduction**

This chapter is a reflection on the peacebuilding intervention conducted through peace education workshops in Laayoune province, which took place between 7 February and 29 May 2022. The aim of this chapter is to evaluate the short-term impact of the intervention and to explore its potential effect on peacebuilding. The chapter begins with a discussion of the emerging themes that were obtained from the peacebuilding intervention. These themes include understanding the conflict, building empathy and understanding, developing communication and negotiation skills, and identifying shared values and goals. The themes are then discussed in detail, highlighting the activities and exercises that were conducted during the workshops to promote them. Next, the chapter examines the impact of the peacebuilding intervention on the participants. The impact is evaluated in terms of the changes in attitudes, perceptions, and behaviour of the participants towards each other and the conflict. The chapter presents evidence from interviews with participants, observations during the workshops, and feedback from the action research team. Finally, the chapter explores the potential effect of peace education on peacebuilding. It discusses how the workshop activities and exercises can be replicated and scaled up to reach a larger audience, and how the intervention can be integrated into a broader peacebuilding effort in the Western Sahara. The chapter also highlights the importance of continuous evaluation and improvement of peacebuilding interventions to ensure their effectiveness.

## **9.2 The Concept of Evaluation in Peacebuilding**

Action research involves an evaluation component, and evaluating a peacebuilding intervention is no easy task. Using evidence-based data, the researcher is able to measure outcomes. Evaluation is used to determine whether the intervention achieved the aim and objectives of the study, and to document and share that knowledge, contributing to the scholarly field of peacebuilding. There are several approaches to short-term evaluations. Below I briefly outline evaluation approaches relevant to this study. I then discuss how I carried out my chosen evaluation approach.

Evaluation provides the opportunity to improve the quality of a peacebuilding intervention. Evaluation can be either quantitative, qualitative, or both i.e., mixed methods. Evaluation can also be short-term, long-term, or both. The United States Institute of Peace (2014) states, “Effective evaluation of peacebuilding programmes is essential if the [peacebuilding] field is to learn what constitutes effective and ineffective practice”. Taylor *et al.* (2005) define evaluation as a process of assessing the effectiveness of a piece of work, a project, or a programme. According to Blanchard and Thacker (2007: 337), evaluation is “measuring the degree to which objectives are achieved”.

This study used qualitative evaluation, strategically chosen for the fact that qualitative methods in evaluation capture successes and communicate challenges of a study. Evaluation is strongly linked to the objectives of the peacebuilding intervention, specifically to which degree the objectives were achieved. Evaluation allows for measuring the attitudes and behaviour of research participants. There are two types of evaluation design. The first is formative, which refers to the process of identifying strengths and weaknesses of a programme. The second is summative, which focuses on outcome research, with the aim of addressing questions such as “Does the programme work?” and “What are its effects?” (Sarantakos 2005). Short-term evaluations are unlikely to identify impacts; however, they can identify outcomes.

## **9.3 Participants’ Overall Reflections on the Peace Education Workshops**

During the peace education workshops, participants were given the opportunity to learn about and discuss various topics related to peacebuilding and nonviolence. The workshops were designed to

create a safe space for participants to share their experiences, thoughts, and feelings related to conflict and violence.

As the workshops came to a close, all participants expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to participate. They recognised the value of the skills and knowledge they had gained and the impact that these skills could have on their lives and their communities.

Participants expressed their gratitude for the safe and supportive environment created during the workshops, which allowed them to share their experiences and learn from others without fear of judgement or reprisal. They also appreciated the interactive and participatory nature of the workshops, which encouraged them to engage in active learning. Participants also spoke about the positive impact that the workshops had on their personal relationships, as they gained new insights into how to communicate more effectively and peacefully with others. They also recognised the potential of the skills they had learned to help them navigate difficult situations in their personal and professional lives.

The participants' expressions of appreciation for the peace education workshops demonstrated the significant impact that these workshops can have on individuals and communities affected by conflict and violence. By providing individuals with peacebuilding tools and skills, these workshops can contribute to sustainable peace.

### **9.3.1 Educating**

One of the attendees shared their feedback about the peace education workshops, highlighting how informative and enlightening they found the experience to be. They explained that they had gained a lot of valuable knowledge and insights, indicating that the content of the workshop was relevant and useful. The participant stated, *“It was very informative. I learned a lot.”*

Another participant emphasised the importance of bringing different parties together for such initiatives, including young people in the process, stating, *“It is good that both parties come together, and the younger people.”* They recognised the value of collaboration and how it can lead to positive outcomes, particularly when it comes to promoting peace and harmony.

A third attendee noted the importance of organising more peace education workshops like the ones they had just attended, stating, “*We need more workshops like these for everyone to join.*” They emphasised the need for more opportunities for people to participate in such events, promoting the sharing of knowledge and experiences among different individuals and communities. This could lead to increased awareness and understanding, helping to build more peaceful and inclusive societies.

### **9.3.2 Understanding**

The workshops proved to be a valuable experience for the majority of participants, as they reported gaining a deeper understanding and appreciation of one another. Many participants noted that they had never before engaged in such an activity, and were grateful for the opportunity to do so. Several participants highlighted that despite interacting with each other regularly, they had never discussed the Western Sahara Conflict between them as Moroccans and Sahrawis. Through the workshops, they were able to have open and honest conversations about this sensitive topic, which helped to foster mutual understanding and respect.

One participant explained how the experience of sharing their personal experiences related to the conflict had helped them to realise that everyone involved had been impacted in some way. They noted that this understanding had helped to create a sense of empathy and connection among the participants. The participant stated, “*Sharing experiences made me realise that we have all been affected by the conflict.*” Another participant commented on how the workshops had helped them to recognise the importance of dialogue and understanding. They noted that the experience had been eye-opening and had challenged their preconceived notions about the conflict and those on the opposing side. The workshops were a powerful tool for bringing people together and promoting understanding and empathy. Through open and honest dialogue, participants were able to gain new insights and perspectives, and forge new connections with one another.

### **9.3.3 Unity**

Throughout the peace education workshops, participants were encouraged to work together. From the first workshop to the last, participants engaged in group discussions, role plays, and other activities that fostered collaboration and mutual understanding. As the workshops progressed,

participants began to develop a sense of unity and solidarity with one another. They recognised that despite their individual backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives, they shared a common goal of promoting peace and nonviolence in their communities.

One of the defining moments of the workshops was the signing of the Peace Pledge. The Peace Pledge was a commitment that each participant made to work towards building peace and nonviolence in their communities. The act of signing the Peace Pledge together instilled a sense of unity among the participants, as they realised that they were all working towards the same goal. Participants acknowledged that signing the Peace Pledge together was a powerful and symbolic act that reinforced their commitment to peacebuilding. It was a tangible reminder of the connections that they had formed with one another during the workshops and the shared responsibility they had to work towards building a more peaceful and just society.

Moreover, the signing of the Peace Pledge was not the end of the journey for the participants. It was a starting point for them to continue working together to promote peace and nonviolence in their communities through the Ad-hoc Peace Committee. They recognised that their efforts would require ongoing collaboration and that they would need to support each other in their individual and collective efforts.

#### **9.4 The Workshop Process Evaluation**

Workshop process evaluation is an important aspect of any successful workshop, as it provides insight into the effectiveness of the workshop and areas for improvement. Throughout the peace education workshops, process evaluation was ongoing, with regular interaction, self-reflection, and feedback.

The evaluation process included a range of factors, including the degree to which workshop objectives were achieved, as well as feedback and reflection on facilitation style, presentation, delivery, agenda, venue, and timing. By monitoring these factors throughout the workshops, facilitators are able to adjust and refine their approach to better meet the needs and expectations of the participants. The evaluation was guided by a post-workshop evaluation questionnaire (see Appendix 7), which was designed to measure the appropriateness of content, design, facilitator



competency, and meeting individual needs. The questionnaire consisted of ten questions, each of which had a scale of responses ranging from “strongly agree” to “disagree”.

The findings of the workshop process evaluation were highly positive. The vast majority of participants responded positively to each of the questions, indicating that they found the workshop content to be appropriate, the design and delivery to be effective, the facilitator to be competent, and the workshops to be successful. In addition, the participants agreed that the workshop materials were helpful and easy to understand. The participants also appreciated the safe and supportive learning environment created during the workshops, which enabled them to share their experiences and ideas freely. The positive responses from the participants suggest that the workshops were effective in achieving their objectives and in providing participants with the knowledge and skills they needed to contribute to peacebuilding efforts in their communities. Below are the findings from the workshop process evaluation.

#### **9.4.1 Workshop Objective Achieved**

The peace education workshops were designed to help participants develop knowledge and skills in peacebuilding, with the aim of creating a more peaceful community. The participants who took part in the peace education workshops gained various skills that are essential to peacebuilding. They developed conflict analysis skills, which allowed them to examine and understand the underlying societal and structural factors that contribute to tensions and violence. Additionally, they gained communication skills that enabled them to communicate effectively with individuals and groups from diverse backgrounds and perspectives. The participants also developed active listening skills, which enabled them to hear and understand the needs, concerns, and perspectives of others and respond empathetically.

The workshops provided the participants with negotiation skills, which allowed them to resolve conflicts and differences of opinion and reach mutually-beneficial agreements. They also developed mediation skills that enabled them to facilitate communication and negotiation between conflicting parties and assist them in finding common ground and resolving disputes. The participants gained empathy, which allowed them to understand and appreciate the experiences, feelings, and perspectives of others, and respond with compassion and care.

The workshops also provided the participants with critical thinking skills, which enabled them to analyse complex situations and identify creative and effective solutions to problems and conflicts. They also developed cultural competence, which allowed them to appreciate and navigate cultural differences and engage respectfully with individuals and groups from diverse cultural backgrounds. Overall, the peace education workshops provided the participants with the necessary skills and knowledge to promote peaceful coexistence and prevent conflicts, and they continued to refine their skills to become more effective in their roles as peacebuilders. Throughout the workshops, participants were exposed to a range of topics and activities, including conflict resolution techniques and communication skills. The facilitator used a variety of methods to engage participants, such as group discussions, role-playing, and experiential activities, to ensure that participants were able to apply the knowledge and skills they learned.

At the end of the workshops, all 30 participants indicated on the post-workshop questionnaire that the objective of the workshops had been achieved. This is a significant achievement, as it suggests that participants felt that they had gained valuable knowledge and skills that they could apply in their daily lives to promote peace in their communities. Overall, the success of the peace education workshops in achieving their objective is a significant step towards building a more peaceful community.

#### **9.4.2 Workshop Content**

All individuals who took part in the workshops concurred that the subjects and information presented were appropriate for their cultural background and context. This conclusion was likely due to the inclusion of an action research element in the study, which placed a group of Moroccans and Sahrawis at the centre of the peacebuilding intervention design, including the determination of the topics to be discussed and their contents. This process involved the use of reflection, research, and action, all of which were undertaken in partnership with my action research team. During our first meeting, I presented the workshop themes and content in detail, allowing time for queries and concerns, which the participants acknowledged and agreed to.

By utilising the action research approach, the study not only incorporated the perspectives of those most affected by the conflict but also empowered them to contribute to the development of the

intervention. As a result, the workshop's topics and content were well-aligned with the cultural and contextual considerations of the participants, leading to a more meaningful and effective intervention. The process of collaboration with the action research team and the clear communication of workshop themes and content during the initial meeting played a significant role in ensuring the participants' understanding and acceptance of the intervention's design.

#### **9.4.3 Workshop Objective**

Workshop participants strongly agreed that the workshop objective was clear. This was in large part due to the collaborative efforts of the action research team, who worked together to determine the workshop objective and ensure that it was effectively communicated to the participants. At the outset of the workshop, I clearly explained the objective to the participants and ensured that they fully understood its purpose and significance. The objective was the result of a process of reflection and feedback, with the aim of developing individual peacebuilding knowledge and skills that participants could apply in their daily lives. The objective was deliberately kept clear and simple, with a focus on fostering a culture of peace in the community. This objective was designed to be achievable and actionable, with the aim of empowering participants to take an active role in promoting peacebuilding in their own lives and communities.

#### **9.4.4 Delivery of Content**

Feedback from all the participants was positive regarding the delivery of the content during the workshops. They noted that the information was well-organised and presented in a manner that was easy to follow and understand. This success can be attributed to the efforts of the action research team, who worked closely together to design and develop the workshop content. The team ensured that the content was tailored to meet the needs of the community members who participated in the workshop.

By considering the participants' needs and expectations, the team was able to create a workshop that was engaging, informative, and relevant. The workshop activities were designed to encourage participation and interaction, promoting active learning and engagement among the participants. As a result of this collaborative approach, the content was well-received by the participants, who

found it to be informative, interesting, and thought-provoking. They appreciated the efforts of the action research team in creating a workshop that was tailored to their needs and interests.

#### **9.4.5 Learning Materials**

All participants expressed their agreement that the learning materials provided during the workshop were beneficial to their learning experience. The creation of these materials was influenced by my personal participation in the School for International Training's Conflict Transformation Across Cultures (CONTACT) peacebuilding programme. Drawing from the knowledge, skills, and resources gained during my time in the programme, I adapted many of its learning materials and approaches for use in the workshops.

The action research methodology and experiential learning model adopted in the workshops offered participants an opportunity to engage actively in the learning process. Through this approach, the participants became not only recipients of knowledge but also contributors to the learning experience. This approach empowered the participants to take ownership of their learning and apply the new knowledge and skills acquired in practical ways.

The use of adapted materials, coupled with the action research and experiential learning model, ensured that the learning process was dynamic, interactive, and contextually relevant. By participating in the learning process and contributing to the creation of knowledge, the participants were more engaged and motivated to apply their newly acquired skills and knowledge in their daily lives. The success of the learning materials can be attributed to the utilisation of an action research approach that incorporates an experiential learning model, which facilitated the participants' active engagement in the learning process. Furthermore, the adaptation of the learning materials from a reputable peacebuilding programme ensured the materials' effectiveness and applicability to the participants' cultural context.

#### **9.4.6 The Facilitator was Competent**

The main focus of inquiry in this particular instance was centred on the competency of the workshop facilitator, who is also the principal researcher. As they had conducted a detailed analysis of the Western Sahara Conflict and the prevailing peacebuilding environment (or lack

thereof) in the region, it was generally agreed upon by all participants that the facilitator possessed the requisite skills and knowledge to effectively facilitate the workshops.

One of the key factors contributing to this level of confidence in the facilitator's competence was their scholarship in the field of peacebuilding, which was evident in their ability to provide insightful and relevant contributions to the discussions held during the workshop. In addition, the facilitator's practical experience living and working in Morocco, as well as their involvement in other peacebuilding initiatives, helped to further establish their credibility and expertise in the subject matter at hand. Overall, the participants' high level of confidence in the facilitator's competence was a direct result of their impressive track record of academic and practical accomplishments, which served to reinforce the facilitator's credibility and enhance the overall effectiveness of the workshop.

#### **9.4.7 Participation and Interaction Encouraged**

According to the feedback received from all 30 participants who attended the workshops, they felt encouraged to actively participate in the activities and interact with their fellow participants. This positive response indicates that the workshop design and facilitation were successful in creating an environment that fostered engagement, collaboration, and experiential learning.

During the initial meeting with the workshop attendees, I emphasised the importance of participation and interaction, highlighting that this was an experiential learning environment. To ensure that the participants fully understood the workshops' objective and expectations, I explicitly encouraged them to engage in the activities and interact with their peers. I explained that the workshop method was chosen specifically to enable meaningful interactions and discussions among the participants, as these interactions often lead to the creation of new ideas and perspectives that can enrich the learning experience.

By emphasising the value of participation and interaction from the outset, the participants were more likely to feel comfortable engaging with the workshop content and with each other. As a result, they were able to fully immerse themselves in the experiential learning process, gain new insights, and develop their skills in a collaborative environment. The feedback from the

participants further confirms that the workshops were successful in achieving their objectives, and that the participants felt engaged, supported, and encouraged throughout the learning process.

#### **9.4.8 Sufficient Time Allocated**

Based on the feedback received from the participants, most of them believed that the time allocated for each peacebuilding exercise was sufficient. However, a few participants expressed their desire for more time during the Preparing Peacebuilders workshop.

While it is important to consider all feedback received from the participants, it is also essential to evaluate the feedback against the workshop's objectives. In this case, the primary goal of the workshop was to provide the participants with an opportunity to develop their personal peacebuilding knowledge and skills, rather than to train them to become peacebuilding instructors. Therefore, considering the workshop's primary objective, I am satisfied with the feedback received, and do not believe that the concern regarding insufficient time for the Preparing Peacebuilders exercise is significant. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the workshop's design included specific timeframes for each activity, which were based on careful consideration of the content and objectives of the exercises. While it is not always possible to meet the needs and preferences of all participants, it is essential to prioritise the achievement of the workshop's overall goals and objectives.

#### **9.4.9 Workshops were Personally Useful**

Feedback from all 30 participants indicated that they found the peace education workshops to be personally valuable. The participants expressed unanimous agreement that the workshops significantly enhanced their peacebuilding knowledge and skills. Specifically, the workshops helped the participants develop a deeper understanding of the Western Sahara Conflict, as well as gain the necessary tools to analyse other conflicts.

By providing the participants with a comprehensive understanding of the Western Sahara Conflict, as well as valuable tools for analysing and addressing conflicts, the workshops effectively equipped them with the skills and knowledge necessary to contribute positively to the promotion

of peace. The workshops' emphasis on empathy and nonviolent action is particularly noteworthy, as these skills are essential for resolving conflicts peacefully.

The participants also reported that the peace education workshops helped them cultivate empathy towards the "other". This is a crucial aspect of peacebuilding, as it encourages individuals to understand and appreciate differing perspectives and opinions. The workshops also provided the participants with nonviolent action skills, enabling them to respond to conflict situations constructively.

#### **9.4.10 Venue**

According to the feedback received from all 30 participants, the venue for the peace education workshops was comfortable, with everyone either agreeing or strongly agreeing with this assessment. The venue provided ample space to accommodate all participants in a single room. Additionally, the facilitators were able to utilise other rooms and an outdoor courtyard, allowing for additional space during group activities.

As mentioned earlier, creating a comfortable learning environment is essential to facilitate effective learning, and the feedback received from the participants indicates that the facilitators were successful in achieving this. The ample space provided by the venue allowed for the participants to move freely and engage in group activities. The feedback received from the participants regarding the venue for the peace education workshops is overwhelmingly positive, with everyone agreeing that it was comfortable. The facilitators' ability to use additional spaces during the workshops further enhanced the participants' comfort, promoting a more relaxed and conducive learning environment.

### **9.5 Behavioural Change as a Result of the Workshop**

The discussion that follows presents well-articulated responses from the participants to the following questions:

- Have you noticed any changes in yourself as a result of the workshops? If yes, please explain what changes you have observed and reflect on why you think you have changed.

- In what ways has peace education helped you to alter your approach to conflict?
- Do you plan to apply the lessons learned from the workshops to promote peace and reconciliation?

### 9.5.1 Changes

Following the workshops, I conducted a focus group discussion to assess the impact of the workshops on the participants. One of the key questions I asked was whether they had observed any personal changes as a result of the workshop, and if so, what changes they had noticed and what reflections they could offer on the reasons for these transformations.

The feedback from the participants highlighted the profound impact that the peace education workshops had on their personal growth and development. For instance, one participant reported that before the workshop, they had not been aware of the violence in their community and had taken it as a simple issue. However, after hearing the experiences of community members in the workshop, they became more conscious and careful in their interactions with others.

Before the workshop, I was not aware of the violence that was taking place. I took the violence in my community as a very simple issue and something that was not important. My views changed when I heard experiences from my community members in the peace education workshop. I have become more conscious and careful how I treat others. [FGD8]

Another participant shared how the workshops had opened their mind to new ways of thinking, especially in regard to understanding where other people are coming from and the importance of promoting peace education. They noted that the workshop reminded them of the conflicts in their community and the importance of being a positive contributor to peace.

Peace education opened a new way of thinking in my life. During the exercises in the workshops, I was reminded of conflict in my community and the people protesting for their rights. These situations touched me because I have not been doing the same. People always speak of role models and I asked myself what I am doing to make a difference. The workshops opened my vision and thinking that we need to understand where other people are coming from, and we should teach people about peace education. [FGD2]



Many participants also spoke of the positive changes in their personal behaviour, such as being able to control their anger and temper, listening to others, and developing empathy towards others. Some participants also noted that they had developed confidence and were more active in their communities, thanks to the workshops.

There are big changes that have taken place in me and the way I now react to people. I used to be very confrontational, but now I am open to communication. [FGD3]

I had a great experience. I am a changed person. I had my weaknesses and now I have changed them for the better. [FGD6]

To this day I am socially and morally a different person. I am now a positive contributor to peace. [FGD4]

Yes, there are changes. I am now able to control my anger and temper. After the peace education workshops, I can think and understand before I react. [FGD2]

The participants also reflected on the reasons for these personal changes, with many citing the interactive nature of the sessions and the practical tools and techniques they had learned as key factors. They noted that the workshops had helped them recognise and appreciate diverse viewpoints, understand the impact of conflict, and develop the skills necessary to resolve conflicts and promote peace.

These peace education workshops gave me a chance to let out all that was troubling me and I am now free. I also now know the importance of listening to others. I also now have the skills to listen to others. Before these workshops I honestly would not have cared. [FGD5]

These workshops made a huge difference in my life and I was surprised by the power it had on me. [FGD1]

“Peace education awakened my inner advocate that was dormant.” [FGD7]

Overall, the feedback from the participants demonstrated the power of peace education in transforming personal behaviour and attitudes. The aforementioned quotes demonstrate how peace education has positively impacted and increased the confidence of the participants. The workshops have helped the participants recognise the impact of conflict, appreciate diverse viewpoints, and

develop the skills necessary to resolve conflicts and promote peace. The personal changes observed by the participants, such as being more conscious and careful in their interactions with others, controlling anger and temper, and developing empathy towards others, are all important qualities for peacebuilding.

These personal changes contribute to the peace education and peacebuilding fields by showing that peace education can be an effective means of promoting personal growth and development. By developing the skills necessary for conflict resolution and promoting peace, individuals can become positive contributors to their communities and help to build more peaceful societies. The feedback also suggests that peace education can help to create a more compassionate and understanding society, where individuals are able to appreciate diverse perspectives and work towards common goals.

The personal changes and growth experienced by the participants through peace education workshops can contribute to resolving conflicts in several ways. Firstly, the development of empathy and understanding towards others can lead to a reduction in violent and confrontational behaviour. When individuals are able to see things from another person's perspective and communicate effectively, they are more likely to find common ground and resolve conflicts peacefully. Secondly, the practical tools and techniques learned in peace education workshops can help individuals manage conflicts effectively. Conflict resolution skills such as active listening, problem-solving, and negotiation can be invaluable in resolving disputes peacefully. Thirdly, the positive changes in personal behaviour and attitudes can inspire others to follow suit, leading to a more peaceful and harmonious community. This can lead to a ripple effect, where positive changes in individual behaviour and attitudes can spread throughout the community, contributing to a more peaceful society.

### **9.5.2 Approach to conflict**

The peace education workshops created a safe space for the participants to share intimate experiences and communicate openly with one another, and this played a significant role in the success of the study and the workshops. The participants appreciated this safe space and reported positive changes in their lives following the sessions. It is essential to establish an environment

where participants feel comfortable enough to share intimate experiences and communicate openly with one another to ensure effective peace education. The learning of nonviolent conflict resolution strategies was a valuable alternative for resolving conflicts, and the participants expressed this outcome in various ways.

One participant mentioned that peace education helped them deal with their anger issues. They used to get very angry and became violent, but after attending the workshops, they learned that getting angry does not help in resolving conflicts, and they have changed. They are now more composed and nonviolent.

Peace education has helped me a lot. It has helped me to deal with anger. I was someone who used to get very angry. The result of anger is violence. The workshops helped me a lot. It does not help to get angry and become violent and I have changed. [FGD5]

Another participant mentioned that they are now able to forgive and are open to dialogue. They used to keep to themselves, but peace education helped them understand that communication is essential in resolving conflicts. They are now advising other community members on how to build peace.

I am now able to forgive. I am also very open to dialogue. I used to keep to myself but peace education helped me to understand. I have now become an advisor to other community members who want to build peace. [FGD6]

Listening skills were another critical learning outcome of the participants. They learned to listen to others' viewpoints during discussions and not just take sides, as one participant mentioned. Another participant shared that they now uphold the truth, even if it hurts their own friends or family or country, during arguments about the ongoing Western Sahara Conflict.

Yes, I would get angry with people when we had an argument. The listening skills I have learned in the workshop have helped me to be a changed person. [FGD4]

I used to take sides during arguments about the ongoing Western Sahara Conflict. Now, I have learned that it's always good to uphold the truth even if it hurts your own friends or family or country. [FGD1]

I have been very careless about the conflict in my region because I thought my country was right, but peace education has given me a whole new perspective about conflict. Thank you for giving us this training in peace education. [FGD2]

Participants learned to solve problems non-violently and handle situations calmly by understanding the other person's situation or point of view before reacting. They are now more willing to try to understand others' perspectives and work towards resolving conflicts collaboratively.

I am now able to solve problems non-violently. I am now listening to my colleagues' viewpoints when we are having a discussion, because I used to not care about other people's opinions or points of view. [FGD4]

I am able to handle a situation non-violently. I learned skills to listen to others and that I should try to understand their situation, or why they think the way they think, before I act. [FGD7]

These observations demonstrate that peace education has the potential to change an individual's mindset from a violent to a nonviolent one. The shift from negative attitudes and perceptions to understanding serves as compelling evidence that peace education can act as a vital catalyst in this transformation. The above feedback also highlights the positive impact of peace education workshops in fostering a safe space for participants to share their experiences and learn nonviolent conflict resolution strategies. This is crucial in the fields of peace education and peacebuilding as it demonstrates the effectiveness of such workshops in promoting peaceful attitudes, behaviours, and actions.

The participants' feedback also highlights how peace education can contribute to resolving conflicts such as the Western Sahara Conflict. For instance, one participant mentioned learning to uphold the truth during arguments about the Western Sahara Conflict, even if it hurt their own friends, family, or country. This indicates that the participant has gained a new perspective on the conflict, which could help them engage in constructive dialogue with others who hold different opinions. Moreover, participants learned to listen to others' viewpoints during discussions and not just take sides, demonstrating the importance of empathy and understanding in resolving conflicts peacefully. They also learned problem-solving skills that enable them to handle situations calmly

and non-violently by understanding the other person's situation or point of view before reacting. These skills are crucial in promoting collaborative conflict resolution, which is essential in resolving complex conflicts such as the Western Sahara Conflict.

### **9.5.3 Application of Peace Education**

The participants who attended the peace education workshops expressed a deep appreciation for the transformative impact that the workshops had on their lives. They shared numerous practical applications of what they learned, including the ability to talk through issues while respecting each other, understanding someone's situation before taking action, and avoiding violence.

One participant mentioned how they used to argue a lot but now they have learned to communicate through dialogue, which has helped them build healthier relationships. Another participant shared that they have applied the concepts they learned in the workshops and have even shared them with others. They expressed joy in being able to teach others about peace education and their positive experience in the workshops.

Peace education helped me many times. I used to argue a lot but now I can talk issues through, while respecting each other – something I learned through dialogue. I also learned that you have to understand somebody's situation before taking action.  
[FGD1]

So far I have applied some of the things I learned in the workshops and I have shared these good concepts with others. It is so nice to teach others about peace education and my experience in the workshops. [FGD6]

The participants also recognised the ability of peace education to change intense and harmful attitudes or relationships into more constructive, healthy, nonviolent ones. They noted that this ability exists within each of us and can help people come together and reconcile, even in the midst of a protracted conflict.

Peace education works to change intense and harmful attitudes or relationships into more constructive, healthy, nonviolent ones. This ability is possible in each of us.  
[FGD3]

Peace education helps people to avoid violence. [FGD6]

The workshops provided a vital tool for participants to live peacefully and deal with conflict in a nonviolent way. They created a safe space for people to discuss their issues openly, which can often be difficult to find in their communities. This lack of opportunity to articulate views can lead to violence during times of conflict. Participants expressed gratitude for having peace education in their community and the positive impact it has had on their lives and relationships.

Peace education helps people through dealing with conflict in a non-violent way. People in most communities do not have the chance and platform to speak about the conflict affecting us all. Peace education workshops come as a tool to help people have a safe space where they can discuss their issues openly. In our communities, people are denied opportunities to articulate their views and this causes violence when there is conflict. I am grateful to have peace education in our community. [FGD1]

Peace education can help people to come together and reconcile. Workshops are a vital tool and with peace education workshops, we can actually live peacefully during a protracted conflict. [FGD8]

I learned a lot of things; those who I've perceived as enemies are now friends, or at least not my enemy. This was only possible through what I learned in peace education. [FGD3]

The positive feedback from the participants highlights the importance and effectiveness of peace education in promoting peaceful and constructive communication and relationships, and the potential it has to create positive change in individuals and communities. The feedback from the participants in the peace education workshops provides valuable insights into the practical applications of peace education in promoting constructive communication, resolving conflicts, and building peaceful relationships. These insights contribute to the existing knowledge in the fields of peace education and peacebuilding by highlighting the effectiveness of peace education in transforming attitudes, promoting dialogue, and preventing violence. The participants' recognition of the potential of peace education to change harmful attitudes and relationships and create positive change in individuals and communities can inform the development of more effective peace education workshops. Peace education can help individuals and communities in the region understand each other's perspectives, foster dialogue, and promote nonviolent conflict resolution. By creating safe spaces for people to discuss their issues openly, peace education can help to

prevent violence during times of conflict and contribute to building a sustainable peace in the region.

## **9.6 Life in Laayoune Province, Western Sahara**

Laayoune Province is a region with a complex history, characterised by political tensions, insecurity, and violence. Daily life in this province is marked by a deep sense of division, mistrust, and fear. People are divided, and there is a general lack of communication and understanding between Moroccans and Sahrawis.

The region has been marred by incidents of violence, including beatings, arrests, unlawful detentions, torture, and murder related to the Western Sahara Conflict. Many people in the community have experienced or know someone who has experienced such violence, which contributes to an overall sense of fear and insecurity. One participant shared, *"I used to think violence was the only way to solve problems, but now I realise that communication is the key"*[15]. Another participant stated, *"I feel more connected to my community and have a better understanding of their perspective after attending these workshops."*[17] In this context, the introduction of peace education workshops as a peacebuilding intervention was a significant step towards creating a culture of peace. The workshops provided a safe and supportive space where people could come together to learn, communicate, and try to understand. As one participant summarised, *"The workshops provided a safe space where we could learn and communicate with each other. They have helped us move towards a culture of peace in Laayoune Province."*[16]

The data gathered during the short-term outcome evaluation of the intervention indicated that the workshops were successful in achieving their objectives. Participants reported that they felt more confident in their ability to resolve personal conflicts peacefully, and that they had gained a greater understanding of the importance of communication. The information presented in this section highlights change in participants and Laayoune Province following the introduction of peace education workshops.

### **9.6.1 How Peace Education Workshops affect Community Lives**

The impact of peace education on community members who participated in the study and on Laayoune Province as a whole is a critical area of focus in this study. The peace education workshops aimed to equip individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to promote peace in their communities, which can have a significant impact on society as a whole. One of the preliminary impacts of peace education on the community members who participated in the study was an increased understanding of the importance of communication, empathy, and conflict resolution techniques. Participants reported feeling more confident in their ability to resolve conflicts peacefully and build stronger relationships, as individuals became better equipped to handle conflicts.

Peace education can also have a significant impact on the mental health and well-being of individuals and communities affected by conflict, by providing a safe and supportive space for individuals to express their emotions and experiences. Many people who have experienced conflict suffer from trauma, anxiety, and depression. Peace education can provide a safe and supportive space for individuals to express their emotions and experiences, and to learn healthy ways to cope with their feelings. This can help to reduce the negative impacts of conflict on mental health and well-being. The preliminary impact of peace education on the participants and the community underscores the importance of investing in peace education. Studies have shown that peace education can lead to positive changes in attitudes, behaviours, and social norms. It can also help to build trust and understanding among individuals and communities. These changes can have a ripple effect, leading to a more peaceful and just society overall.

Another primary benefit of peace education is that it helps to address the root causes of conflicts. By focusing on issues such as inequality, poverty, and social exclusion, peace education can help individuals and communities to understand the underlying factors that contribute to conflict. This understanding can lead to the development of more effective and sustainable solutions to conflicts. Peace education has the potential to promote positive social change and transform the social fabric of a community.



### **9.6.2 A Meeting Platform for Community Members**

In the course of my focus group discussion with the participants, I asked them to share their thoughts on the impact of the peace education workshops on their lives. Their responses made clear a significant positive outcome: participants were motivated to interact with community members from the opposing side of the conflict. This is a significant development to highlight, as prior to the workshops, such interactions were rare. As one of the participants put it, *"The workshops helped us realise that there are people on the other side who also want peace"*[FGD7]. This sentiment encapsulates the essence of the workshops - creating a platform for dialogue and understanding among individuals from opposite sides of a conflict.

Agreeing to meet and talk is often the first major step towards building peace, and the peace education workshops achieved this successfully by bringing together individuals from opposing sides of the conflict in Western Sahara. This was an important step towards building a more peaceful and stable future for the region. The workshops provided a safe and supportive space for community members to discuss sensitive topics that had previously been avoided or approached with hostility. As another participant remarked, *"The workshops allowed us to speak openly and respectfully about our differences. It was a relief to know that we could express our opinions without fear of judgement or retribution."*[FGD5]

### **9.6.3 Promotion of Dialogue between Moroccans and Sahrawis**

The importance of peace education workshops, particularly in the Western Sahara, cannot be overstated. According to research participants, these workshops provided a unique platform for dialogue, where they could safely and openly discuss the conflict and its consequences. The ability to engage in such conversations is essential in the process of building lasting peace in protracted-conflict relationships.

As one participant stated, *"The peace education workshops provided us a safe space to meet and talk together."*[FGD7] This quote highlights the significance of the workshops in creating a space for dialogue, where people could come together and share their experiences. This opportunity for open communication and understanding is crucial in breaking down barriers. By providing a platform for dialogue, the peace education workshops enabled participants to engage in

constructive conversations and find common ground. The workshops emphasised the importance of active listening, allowing participants to learn from one another and gain a deeper understanding of different perspectives. Through this process, participants were able to transform protracted-conflict relationships and build a foundation for lasting peace.

The participant's quote above highlights the significant role that peace education workshops play in resolving the Western Sahara conflict. By creating a safe space for dialogue, people from different backgrounds can come together and share their experiences, which breaks down barriers and fosters understanding. With increased trust and cooperation, peace education can contribute to resolving the conflict peacefully, making it an important tool in the peacebuilding process.

#### **9.6.4 A Debating Platform for Peace**

Peace education workshops can serve as a platform for debate and dialogue around peace. Through open and honest communication, participants can express their views, share experiences, and learn from each other. The workshops provided a space where individuals engaged in meaningful conversation about peace, including its definition, how it can be achieved, and what role each person can play in promoting peaceful coexistence.

One of the key components of peace education workshops is the emphasis on listening and understanding the perspectives of others. Participants were encouraged to actively listen to one another. Through this process, individuals could develop empathy and understanding for different viewpoints, which could help reduce tensions and increase cooperation. The workshops also provided a safe space for individuals to express their emotions and feelings related to conflict and violence. By being allowed to share their experiences and emotions, individuals could begin to heal from past traumas and move forward in a positive way.

Peace education workshops can help participants to critically examine their own assumptions and biases. Participants are encouraged to reflect on their own beliefs and values. This can help individuals to challenge their own preconceived notions. Overall, peace education workshops serve as a valuable platform for debate and dialogue around peace. Through open communication, active listening, empathy, and critical reflection, participants develop an understanding of peace and their role in it within their communities.

### **9.6.5 Rebuilding of Community Relationships**

According to the feedback provided by the research participants, the peace education workshops had a positive impact on their confidence levels, helping them to overcome their fears and suspicions of others. The workshops also played a significant role in promoting mutual respect and understanding among the participants, which was not evident before. In the post-workshop evaluations, several participants expressed their gratitude for the workshops and emphasised the importance of such initiatives. The participants' feedback indicated that through interactive activities and group discussions, participants learned how to communicate more effectively, listen actively, and empathise with others. They also learned how to identify and challenge their own biases and assumptions.

As a result of the peace education workshops, the participants reported a significant increase in their confidence levels and a reduction in their feelings of fear and suspicion towards others. They also expressed a greater sense of empathy and respect for others and a desire to continue working towards promoting peace in their community. Overall, the participants acknowledged the significant role that peace education workshops can play in fostering mutual understanding and respect.

The following remarks are quotes from peace education workshop participants and acknowledge the importance placed on workshops:

It would be beneficial to arrange these workshops on a more frequent basis.

These workshops will be of great advantage to others.

The workshops' success in improving communication skills, active listening skills, and empathy towards others can contribute to peacebuilding and resolving the Western Sahara conflict in several ways. Firstly, communication is a critical component of conflict resolution, and effective communication can help parties in a conflict to better understand each other's perspectives, needs, and interests. By improving their communication skills, the participants in the workshops will be better equipped to engage in constructive dialogue and negotiation with those on the other side of the conflict. Secondly, active listening skills can help participants to hear and understand the

concerns of others, and to respond in ways that show respect and empathy. This is particularly important in conflicts where there are deeply-held grievances and mistrust between parties. By demonstrating active listening skills, participants are able to build trust and establish a more positive rapport with those on the other side of the conflict. Also, by challenging their own biases and assumptions, participants in the workshops are able to approach the conflict with greater objectivity and impartiality. By becoming more self-aware and recognising their own biases, participants may be better able to find common ground and work towards mutually-acceptable solutions.

#### **9.6.6 The Removal of Barriers of Hatred**

Participants noted that peace education makes meaningful strides in removing barriers of hatred among people in conflict. There were many examples of violence between Moroccans and Sahrawis before this study, especially during protests or on significant anniversary dates. However, when the peacebuilding intervention was conceptualised and implemented in the form of peace education workshops, nonviolence was practised by those who had participated in the workshops.

Peace education is a powerful tool that removes the barriers of hatred and promotes understanding among individuals and communities. Through peace education, people learn about the causes and consequences of conflicts and the strategies for resolving them. One of the main goals of peace education is to foster a culture of peace and nonviolence. This is achieved by providing individuals with the knowledge and skills they need to create peaceful and inclusive societies. By teaching conflict resolution techniques and communication skills, peace education can help break down the barriers that often lead to hatred and violence.

Participants noted that peace education had taught them ways of dealing with community conflicts nonviolently. Some participants explained how the knowledge and skills they gained in the peace education workshops helped them in understanding why some people may act the way they do, and hold the position or view of the conflict the way they do.

One participant stated:

Peace education helps me to be able to debate well with others by improving my listening skills and helps me control my temper by practising empathy. [FGD8]

In the case of the Western Sahara conflict, where there are deep-rooted political and territorial disputes, peace education can play a vital role in helping individuals understand each other's perspectives and motivations. Through peace education, individuals can learn to listen to each other's concerns, empathise with each other's experiences, and communicate constructively to find common ground. The participant's statement highlights how peace education can help individuals develop essential skills such as active listening, empathy, and self-control. These skills are particularly relevant in the context of the Western Sahara conflict, where emotions can run high, and discussions can easily escalate into violence.

### **9.6.7 Preparing Peacebuilders**

Research participants appreciated the fact that they were trained as trainers in the Preparing Peacebuilders peace education workshop. Peace education can play a critical role in preparing individuals to become effective peacebuilders. By providing individuals with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for peacebuilding, peace education can equip them to build sustainable peace.

One of the key objectives of peace education is to promote a culture of peace, which involves cultivating values such as tolerance, empathy, respect, and cooperation. These values are essential for building peaceful societies, and they form the foundation for the skills and knowledge that peacebuilders need to effectively address conflicts. Peace education can also provide individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary for effective conflict resolution. This can involve learning about different conflict resolution techniques, such as mediation, negotiation, and dialogue, as well as developing skills in communication, problem-solving, and critical thinking. By mastering these skills, peacebuilders can help to transform conflicts in ways that promote positive outcomes and prevent violence.

Another important aspect of peace education is understanding the root causes of conflicts, which can include issues related to identity, resources, power, and politics. By understanding these

underlying factors, peacebuilders can develop strategies that address the root causes of conflicts and promote sustainable peace. Peace education can also prepare peacebuilders to work effectively in diverse and complex environments. This can involve developing cultural competence and understanding the role that different actors, such as governments, civil society organisations, and international organisations, play in peacebuilding efforts. The peace education workshops acted as an agent of change among community members, helping them develop the knowledge and skills to cultivate empathy and forgiveness towards those whom they might have perceived as enemies or untrustworthy before the peacebuilding initiative. While peace education workshops improved peacebuilding skills in the community, they also fulfilled the overall aim of the study, to transform protracted-conflict relationships and build peace.

## **9.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter, the focus was on the preliminary evaluation of the peace education workshops that were conducted in Laayoune, Western Sahara. The purpose of the evaluation was to identify the emerging issues in peace education and to understand the impact of the workshops on the development of individual knowledge and skills in peacebuilding. The emerging issues were discussed thematically, with a focus on several key areas. These areas included the importance of building trust and fostering dialogue, the need to address power imbalances, the role of emotions and empathy in peacebuilding, and the challenges of sustaining peacebuilding efforts over time.

The chapter provided detailed insights into each of these themes, drawing on the experiences of the workshop participants and the perspectives of the trainers. Overall, the chapter provides a rich and nuanced understanding of the emerging issues in peace education in the context of Laayoune, Western Sahara. It highlights the complex and multifaceted nature of peacebuilding, and the importance of taking a holistic approach that addresses both individual and structural factors. In the subsequent chapter, the author will provide a summary of the key findings of the study, draw conclusions based on these findings, and make recommendations based on the findings of the study.

# **Chapter Ten**

## **Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations**

### **10.1 Introduction**

The final chapter of this thesis serves as a comprehensive conclusion, encapsulating the study's aims, objectives, methodology, limitations, findings, implications, contributions, and recommendations. This chapter is critical in bringing together all the research efforts, culminating in a succinct and cohesive summary. The primary purpose of this chapter is to draw insightful and informative conclusions from the study's findings. The chapter starts by recapitulating the research objectives, ensuring that the reader is aware of what the study sought to accomplish.

Following the objectives' recapitulation, the chapter provides a detailed summary of the study's key findings. This summary provides an overview of the research and serves as the foundation for the chapter's conclusions. The findings are presented in a logical and coherent manner, emphasising the significant discoveries and their relevance to the study's objectives. After presenting the findings, the chapter discusses the implications of the study's outcomes. This section highlights the study's contributions to the field, providing insights into new knowledge, practical applications, and future research directions. The implications section also addresses the limitations of the study, recognising the potential constraints on the research and its findings. Finally, the chapter concludes with a set of recommendations for future research, building on the study's contributions and addressing its limitations. These recommendations provide a roadmap for further exploration of the research topic, expanding on the study's findings.

### **10.2 Recapitulation of the Research Objectives**

The specific research objectives were as follows:

1. To explore the attitudes and perceptions held by both Moroccans and Sahrawis of the other.
2. To elucidate the peace education approach and its potential as a peacebuilding tool.

3. To conceptualise and implement an efficient peace education workshop model that could help facilitate reconciliation, followed by a preliminary evaluation of the model's short-term outcomes.

### **10.3 Framework of Analysis**

The study was motivated by the overarching paradigm of peacebuilding, and aimed to address deep-rooted negative feelings of animosity, mistrust, and hatred between Moroccans and Sahrawis in the Western Sahara region. In order to design a relevant framework for the study and analyse its findings, three questions were formulated: What peacebuilding intervention is needed in Western Sahara? How can this intervention be implemented effectively? And who would participate in the intervention?

Through careful consideration and analysis, the study's action research team and I conceptualised peace education as a potentially transformative and sustainable tool for improving broken relationships in the Western Sahara region. This conceptualisation resulted in the choice of two theories, conflict transformation theory and peace education theory, which guided the design and implementation of the peacebuilding intervention. In order to understand the complexity of peacebuilding, the study focused on using peace education as a guide to develop participants' capacity to transform their relationships. Peace education was identified as an important peacebuilding tool that could be used to transform relationships by fostering empathy, promoting a culture of peace, and empowering individuals with conflict resolution skills.

This study used workshop sessions as a platform for peace education. These sessions provided participants with the opportunity to engage in dialogue, develop a deeper understanding of the impact of violent conflict on their community, and learn skills for resolving conflicts peacefully. The conflict transformation and peace education theories were consistent with the objective of peacebuilding and aimed to transform relationships in a sustainable manner.

This study highlights the importance of peace education as a peacebuilding tool for promoting sustainable peace and reconciliation in conflict-prone regions such as the Western Sahara. By using a framework that is guided by conflict transformation and peace education theories, the study



provides valuable insights into how peacebuilding interventions can be designed and implemented effectively to transform broken relationships into more peaceful and resilient communities.

#### **10.4 Summary of Research Methodology**

This study followed an action research design and used qualitative methodology that made use of both primary and secondary data. My approach included a review of literature, questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions. Numerous interdisciplinary sources such as newspapers, videos, studies, and articles were included as secondary research. The research focus was conducted with phenomenology in mind, in which the research seeks to understand the meaning of individuals' experiences and how they articulate these experiences.

The initial phase of the study involved the use of questionnaires and interviews to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the complex conflict dynamics present in Western Sahara, with a particular focus on Laayoune Province. These findings were then utilised to inform the design of the peacebuilding intervention implemented by the action research team. In the second phase of the study, a combination of primary and secondary data was used to reflect on the implemented peacebuilding intervention. This involved conducting interviews and focus group discussions, which helped to identify the needs of individuals and institutions at various levels.

The results obtained from both phases of the study informed the third and final phase, which involved a collaborative process with the local action research team to design, implement, and conduct a preliminary evaluation of the peacebuilding intervention. Following completion of the intervention, the data obtained was organised, translated, and transcribed to facilitate ease of analysis. The information was then interpreted to derive meaning and draw conclusions for the study.

The utilisation of questionnaires and interviews during the initial phase of the study helped to provide a deeper understanding of the conflict dynamics in the region. By reflecting on the peacebuilding intervention design implemented by the action research team, the second phase of the study identified needs at both the individual and institutional levels. The collaborative approach

taken in the third phase of the study ensured that the intervention was designed to meet the identified needs while taking into account the cultural context of the region.

The use of a combination of primary and secondary data in the second phase of the study helped to validate the findings obtained in the first phase. By collaborating with the local action research team, the third phase of the study facilitated the implementation of a peacebuilding intervention that was contextually relevant and met the identified needs of individuals and institutions. The data obtained from all three phases of the study was organised, translated, and transcribed to facilitate ease of analysis. The results were then interpreted to derive meaning and draw conclusions for the study.

### **10.5 Limitations of the Study**

The research approach utilised in this study was subject to several limitations which it is important to consider. Firstly, the sample size of 30 out of the 217,730 residents residing in Laayoune is not statistically significant. As a result, the findings of this study cannot be generalised to the entire population of Laayoune or Western Sahara.

Secondly, the sensitivity of the ongoing conflict in Western Sahara posed a challenge in conducting the research. Participants were hesitant to share information due to the sensitive nature of the topic, which made it difficult to gather reliable and accurate data. This was a limitation of the research method used. Thirdly, there was a limited needs assessment as I only spoke with residents living in Laayoune. There is a need to expand the scope of the research to other cities, towns, and villages in Western Sahara to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the attitudes to and perceptions of the conflict.

Another limitation of the research was the language barrier. Most participants spoke their native languages or Arabic, which made it challenging to communicate effectively. The use of interpreters was necessary throughout the data collection and analysis processes, which introduced the possibility of errors in translation. However, the presence of the action research team, which consisted of local community members as well as me, helped to mitigate this limitation to some extent. Lastly, the highly sensitive nature of the Western Sahara Conflict posed a significant barrier

to conducting this research. The polarised environment made it challenging to establish a neutral and safe space for data collection and analysis. This constraint made it difficult to establish trust and rapport with participants, which may have affected the quality and accuracy of the data collected.

Despite these limitations, this study was still able to provide valuable insights into the peacebuilding environment in Laayoune and the effectiveness of peace education in promoting positive change in conflict-affected regions. It is essential to recognise and address the limitations of this study and to take them into account when interpreting the findings. Moving forward, it is necessary to consider these limitations and implement strategies to address them in future research in this area.

## **10.6 Study Summary**

In this study, I undertook an exploration of the concept of peace education, examining its definitions, use, effectiveness, and challenges in peacebuilding across different contexts. I specifically examined the application of peace education in the context of the Western Sahara Conflict. Additionally, I delved into the transformation of protracted-conflict relationships in Laayoune Province, Western Sahara, utilising the conflict transformation theory and peace education theory, both of which fall under the umbrella of peacebuilding.

Through the lens of peacebuilding, governments, CSOs, and NGOs can adopt peace education practices that promote attitudinal changes towards rejecting historically deliberately hostile practices and encourage adapting instead to more peaceful means. By emphasising peace education, there is a greater likelihood of ensuring a future that breaks cycles of recurring violence and promotes nonviolence. The conflict transformation theory served as a framework for analysing the complexities of the Western Sahara Conflict, while the peace education theory provided insights on how to approach the conflict transformation process. Together, these theories supported the study's focus on peacebuilding and highlighted the importance of adopting a multi-dimensional approach in promoting peace.

By exploring the effectiveness of peace education in peacebuilding and applying it in the context of the Western Sahara Conflict, this study sought to contribute to the body of knowledge on the use of peace education in promoting sustainable peace. It is hoped that the findings of this study can inform future peacebuilding initiatives in other contexts and promote the use of peace education as a means of promoting positive change in conflict-affected regions.

#### **10.6.1 Objective One: To Explore the Attitudes and Perceptions held by both Moroccans and Sahrawis of Each Other.**

The study aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the attitudes and perceptions held by both Moroccans and Sahrawis of each other in the context of the Western Sahara Conflict. To achieve this, the research utilised various methods, including interviews and focus group discussions, to collect data from both communities. The study also sought to identify the types of violence occurring in Western Sahara, specifically between Moroccan and Sahrawi civilians.

The findings of the study revealed a deep-rooted sense of insecurity, mistrust, fear, and anger among the Moroccan and Sahrawi communities. Both communities hold negative stereotypes and perceptions of the other, which have been reinforced over time due to the protracted nature of the conflict. The ongoing conflict has resulted in the erosion of relationships between the two communities, with many experiencing broken relationships and unhealed trauma. The consequences of violence have been severe, resulting in both physical and psychological injuries for many individuals. The mistrust, fear, anger, and uncertainty have contributed to the breakdown of social cohesion, with many individuals feeling disconnected from their communities. Furthermore, the conflict has impacted the socio-economic development of the region, with many communities struggling to access basic services such as healthcare and education.

These findings highlight the urgent need for peacebuilding efforts in the region to address the underlying causes of the conflict and to promote healing and reconciliation between the Moroccan and Sahrawi communities. The study demonstrates the critical link between conflict and broken relationships and the need for peacebuilding interventions that prioritise relationship-building and community-led initiatives. By promoting dialogue, trust-building, and reconciliation efforts,

peacebuilding can help to break down negative stereotypes and perceptions, build social cohesion, and promote a more peaceful and secure environment for all individuals in Western Sahara.

### **10.6.2 Objective Two: To Elucidate the Peace Education Approach and its Potential as a Peacebuilding Tool.**

Chapter 4 of the study was devoted to exploring the second objective, which aimed to elucidate the peace education approach and its potential as a peacebuilding tool in the Western Sahara region. In order to explore this topic, the study included a series of peace education workshops, which allowed for an immersive and first-hand experience of the use and challenges of peace education. Through active participation and observation of the peace education workshops, the study was able to conclude that peace education is an effective tool for promoting peacebuilding. By fostering a culture of peace and equipping individuals with conflict resolution skills, peace education can contribute to preventing violent conflict and building a culture of peace.

The findings of the study reveal that peace education is particularly effective when implemented within the context of protracted conflict regions such as the Western Sahara. By promoting understanding and empathy, peace education helps to address the underlying causes of conflict and facilitate peaceful dialogue between opposing groups. Overall, the study concludes that peace education is a valuable tool for peacebuilding, and can contribute significantly to building peaceful and resilient communities. However, in order to maximise its effectiveness, peace education must be tailored to the specific cultural, social, and political context in which it is being applied.

### **10.6.3 Objective Three: To Conceptualise and Implement an Efficient Peace Education Workshop Model that could help Facilitate Reconciliation, followed by a Preliminary Evaluation of the Model's Short-term Outcomes.**

Objective 3 of the study was to conceptualise and implement an efficient peace education workshop model that could help facilitate reconciliation, followed by a preliminary evaluation of the model's short-term outcomes. Chapters 8 and 9 were dedicated to addressing this objective.

Chapter 8 provides an in-depth description of the process of developing and implementing the peacebuilding intervention. The action research team worked collaboratively to design peace

education workshops that would be effective in transforming relationships in the Western Sahara region. In Chapter 9, the study examines the short-term outcomes of the peace education workshops that were implemented as part of the peacebuilding intervention. The preliminary evaluation suggests that the workshops were successful in promoting positive change and fostering a sense of understanding and empathy among participants. Participants reported an increased awareness of the impact of violent conflict on their community, as well as a greater sense of agency and empowerment in their ability to contribute to building a more peaceful future.

The study found that the peace education workshops were an effective tool for promoting reconciliation and peacebuilding in the Western Sahara region. By providing a space for dialogue and fostering understanding and empathy among participants, the workshops helped to transform relationships and build a sense of trust and cooperation among participants. However, sustainability and long-term impact were identified as key concerns, and it was recognised that more work needs to be done in order to ensure that the positive outcomes of the workshops are maintained over time. Overall, the study demonstrates the potential of peace education workshops as an effective tool for transforming relationships and building a culture of peace in protracted conflict regions such as the Western Sahara.

## **10.7 Generation of Knowledge and Implications of the Study**

Peace education holds significant potential for transforming relationships and making significant contributions towards peacebuilding efforts. Peace education workshops are versatile and can be applied at the community, national, and international levels, adapting to any culture or context. Peace education has the ability to eliminate stereotypes that fuel conflict and perpetuate cycles of violence. The new knowledge acquired from this study should be utilised in designing peacebuilding initiatives, especially those that aim to promote peaceful coexistence and social cohesion among community members, while transforming relationships.

This study makes scholarly contributions in the field of peacebuilding in two distinct and important ways. Firstly, in the neglected intervention of peace education as a peacebuilding tool in Western Sahara: this study proves that such an intervention is effective. Secondly, it uses an action research

approach in the implementation of peacebuilding interventions, which in this study has been discussed and analysed as imperative in the sustainability of peace.

This study also contributes to the field of peacebuilding through the identification, implementation, and evaluation of the causes and effects of conflict in Western Sahara, as well as through the identification, development, implementation, and evaluation of peace education as a peacebuilding intervention in Western Sahara in response to the identified causes and effects of conflict in the region. Inasmuch as there is a scarcity of published studies in areas of peacebuilding in Western Sahara and of action research in peacebuilding, this study provides a strong foundation for future research in peacebuilding and action research.

The introduction of peace education workshops in Laayoune Province and the positive outcomes reported by participants contribute to new knowledge about the effectiveness of peacebuilding interventions in contexts of political tension, insecurity, and violence. The success of the workshops in promoting communication, understanding, and conflict resolution skills among participants demonstrates the potential for similar interventions to contribute to building a culture of peace in other regions and contexts facing similar challenges.

While the peace education workshops may not directly contribute to resolving the Western Sahara Conflict, they can indirectly contribute to building a culture of peace and fostering communication and understanding between Moroccans and Sahrawis. This can create a foundation for future peacebuilding efforts and potentially contribute to creating a conducive environment for peaceful negotiations and conflict resolution. Moreover, the workshops can also contribute to reducing violence and promoting human rights, which are crucial aspects of addressing the underlying causes of the conflict.

The results of the study indicated that peace education can be a valuable tool in promoting sustainable peace in the Western Sahara Conflict and that its effectiveness is influenced by a variety of factors, including the local context, the resources available, and the level of support from key stakeholders. The study also identified several challenges to implementing peace education in the Western Sahara Conflict, including limited resources, political tensions, and a lack of awareness and understanding of the importance of peace education among key stakeholders. Based

on these findings, the study recommends that future peacebuilding initiatives in the Western Sahara Conflict and other conflict-affected regions prioritise the implementation of peace education workshops, while also taking steps to address the challenges and limitations of this approach.

### **10.7.1 Personal Transformations: The Impact of Peace Education Workshops on Participants' Attitudes and Behaviours**

The evaluation of the peace education workshops revealed that the workshop had a profound impact on the personal growth and development of the participants. One participant reported that before attending the workshop, they were not aware of the violence in their community, and had taken it as a simple issue. However, after hearing the experiences of community members in the workshop, they became more conscious and careful in their interactions with others. This is a clear indication of how peace education can help individuals become more aware of their surroundings and be more mindful of their interactions with others.

Another participant shared how the workshops had opened their mind to new ways of thinking, particularly in regard to understanding where other people are coming from and the importance of promoting peace education. They noted that the workshop reminded them of the conflicts in their community and the importance of being a positive contributor to peace. This highlights how peace education can help individuals gain a deeper understanding of conflicts and become more actively engaged in promoting peace.

Many participants also spoke of the positive changes in their personal behaviour, such as being able to control their anger and temper, listening to others, and developing empathy towards others. Some participants also noted that they had developed confidence and were more active in their communities, thanks to the workshops. This highlights how peace education can help individuals develop skills that promote positive behaviour and build self-confidence. The participants also reflected on the reasons for these personal changes, with many citing the interactive nature of the sessions, and the practical tools and techniques they had learned, as key factors. They noted that the workshops had helped them recognise and appreciate diverse viewpoints, understand the impact of conflict, and develop the skills necessary to resolve conflicts and promote peace. This



demonstrates the importance of a practical, interactive approach to peace education that empowers individuals to be active contributors to peace.

Overall, the feedback from the participants demonstrated the power of peace education in transforming personal behaviour and attitudes. As one participant put it, "Peace education awakened my inner advocate that was dormant." This highlights how peace education can help individuals tap into their inner resources and become active advocates for peace in their communities.

### **10.7.2 Transforming Mindsets: The Impact of Peace Education Workshops on Conflict Resolution Strategies**

Participants reported positive changes in their lives following the sessions. The learning of nonviolent conflict resolution strategies was seen as a valuable alternative for resolving conflicts. Participants reported improved anger management, increased willingness to forgive and engage in dialogue, enhanced listening skills, and a better understanding of others' perspectives. These observations demonstrate that peace education has the potential to transform an individual's mindset from a violent to a nonviolent one. The shift from negative attitudes and perceptions to understanding serves as compelling evidence that peace education can act as a vital catalyst in this transformation.

One of the key factors highlighted by the participants was the importance of a safe environment for effective peace education. They emphasised that a safe space was necessary to allow for open and honest discussions about their thoughts and experiences. The safe environment helped them to build trust and respect, which facilitated a better learning experience. The participants also stressed the value of nonviolent conflict resolution strategies in promoting understanding and cooperation between individuals. They found that learning these strategies provided a valuable means of resolving conflicts peacefully rather than resorting to violence. They felt that this shift towards nonviolent conflict resolution strategies could transform an individual's mindset from a violent to a nonviolent one.

The observations made by the participants suggest that peace education has the potential to transform an individual's attitude and perception from negative to positive. The participants

reported a significant shift in their attitudes towards understanding and acceptance of others. Peace education sessions helped them to see things from different perspectives, which enhanced their empathy and compassion towards others. Overall, peace education can have a positive impact on individuals' lives by teaching nonviolent conflict resolution strategies and promoting understanding and cooperation between individuals. Creating a safe and supportive environment is crucial for effective peace education, where participants can openly discuss their thoughts and experiences.

### **10.7.3 The Transformative Impact of Peace Education: Insights from Participant Feedback**

The feedback from participants in peace education workshops revealed the transformative impact of the workshops on their lives. They shared numerous practical applications of what they had learned, such as the ability to communicate through dialogue, respect each other, and avoid violence. Participants recognised the ability of peace education to change intense and harmful attitudes or relationships into more constructive, healthy, nonviolent ones. The workshops provided a safe space for people to discuss their issues openly, which can often be difficult to find in their communities. This lack of opportunity to articulate views can lead to violence during times of conflict. The positive feedback from the participants highlights the importance and effectiveness of peace education in promoting peaceful and constructive communication and relationships, and the potential it has to create positive change in individuals and communities. This result contributes to new knowledge in the peace education field by providing evidence of the practical benefits of peace education and its potential to transform individuals and communities towards a more peaceful and harmonious existence. This highlights the contribution of peace education workshops to resolving the Western Sahara conflict by promoting constructive communication, respect, and nonviolence among participants. Peace education can be an effective tool to transform attitudes and relationships from being intense and harmful to more constructive and peaceful.

### **10.7.4 Promoting Interactions and Safe Dialogue: The Impact of Peace Education in Western Sahara**

This study contributes new knowledge to the field of peace education and peacebuilding by highlighting the significant positive impact of peace education workshops on motivating

individuals from opposing sides of a conflict to interact with each other. Prior to the workshops, such interactions were rare. This study shows that peace education workshops create a safe and supportive space for community members to discuss sensitive topics and express their opinions openly and respectfully. By bringing together individuals from conflicting sides, peace education workshops can be an important first step towards building a more peaceful and stable future for regions experiencing conflict. By emphasising the importance of dialogue and creating safe spaces for communication, peace education workshops could help build bridges between the different groups involved in the conflict. This could contribute to the development of a shared vision for the future of the region and ultimately support efforts to bring about a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

#### **10.7.5 Exploring the Impact of Peace Education Workshops on Rebuilding Community Relationships**

The feedback from participants in peace education workshops highlights the positive impact of these workshops in promoting mutual respect and understanding among participants, reducing feelings of fear and suspicion towards others, and increasing empathy and respect for others. The feedback also emphasises the importance of continuing such initiatives and arranging them more frequently. This contributes to new knowledge in the field of peace education, specifically in the area of rebuilding community relationships. This knowledge can inform future peace education initiatives and interventions aimed at fostering mutual respect and understanding.

Exploring the impact of peace education workshops on rebuilding community relationships contributes to new knowledge in the field of peace education. By gathering feedback from participants in these workshops, this research provides insight into the effectiveness of this type of intervention in promoting mutual respect, reducing fear and suspicion, and increasing empathy among community members. This new knowledge can inform future peace education initiatives and interventions aimed at fostering positive community relationships and peaceful coexistence.

#### **10.7.6 Peace Education: Removing Barriers of Hatred and Promoting Nonviolence**

The study found that peace education is effective in removing barriers of hatred among people in conflict. Prior to the implementation of peace education workshops, violence was prevalent

between Moroccans and Sahrawis, particularly during protests and significant events. However, the workshops successfully promoted nonviolence among participants. Peace education is a powerful tool that promotes understanding and fosters a culture of peace and nonviolence. By teaching conflict resolution techniques and communication skills, peace education helps individuals break down the barriers that often lead to hatred and violence. Participants reported that peace education taught them ways to deal with community conflicts nonviolently and helped them understand why some people hold certain views or positions on the conflict. One participant shared that peace education improved their listening skills and empathy, allowing them to debate effectively and control their temper. These findings contribute to the field of peacebuilding and conflict resolution, highlighting the importance of promoting a culture of peace and providing individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to create peaceful and inclusive societies.

This contributes to new knowledge in the field of peacebuilding and conflict resolution by providing evidence that peace education can effectively remove barriers of hatred among individuals and communities in conflict. It highlights the importance of promoting a culture of peace and nonviolence through education and training, and the positive impact that peace education can have in fostering understanding, empathy, and nonviolence. Additionally, the study provides insights into the effectiveness of peacebuilding interventions, particularly peace education workshops, in promoting nonviolent behaviour among participants.

#### **10.7.7 Empowering Peacebuilders: The Critical Role of Peace Education in Building Sustainable Peace**

These interventions in this study cultivated values such as tolerance, empathy, respect, and cooperation, which are crucial for building peaceful societies. Additionally, peace education provides individuals with the skills and knowledge required for effective conflict resolution, including various techniques such as mediation, negotiation, and dialogue, as well as communication, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills. Understanding the root causes of conflicts is another key component of peace education, enabling peacebuilders to develop strategies that address underlying issues and promote sustainable peace. Cultural competence and an understanding of the different actors involved in peacebuilding efforts are also important for

effective peacebuilding in diverse and complex environments. Overall, the peace education workshops facilitated positive change among community members, helping them develop empathy and forgiveness towards perceived enemies and ultimately contributing to transforming protracted-conflict relationships and building peace.

This contributes to new knowledge in the field of peace education and peacebuilding. It highlights the importance of peace education in equipping individuals with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for effective peacebuilding. It also emphasises the role of peace education in promoting a culture of peace, understanding the root causes of conflicts, and developing strategies for sustainable peace. The discussion on cultural competence and the involvement of different actors in peacebuilding efforts provides insights into the complexities of peacebuilding in diverse environments. Therefore, this study provides new knowledge in the field of peace education and peacebuilding, which can inform future research and practice in these fields.

## **10.8 Preliminary Evaluation**

The peace education workshops proved to be an effective tool for promoting peaceful relationships and conflict resolution in the Western Sahara region. A key benefit of these workshops was providing a safe space for Moroccan and Sahrawi community members to engage in dialogue and express their thoughts and feelings about the conflict. Through these interactions, participants were able to gain a better understanding of each other's perspectives and develop a more empathetic outlook towards the other side.

Additionally, the workshops served as a platform for developing peacebuilding skills and attitudes, such as active listening, open communication, and empathy. Participants were able to learn about conflict resolution strategies and engage in practical exercises that helped them to apply these skills in real-life situations. The evaluation also highlighted the importance of involving local community members in the peacebuilding process. The action research team, which included local members from both sides of the conflict, played a critical role in ensuring the success and sustainability of the peace education workshops. They were able to provide invaluable insight into

the cultural and social dynamics of the region, and helped to build trust and credibility with the participants.

The preliminary evaluation of the peace education workshops confirmed their effectiveness in promoting peaceful relationships and conflict resolution in the Western Sahara region. By providing a safe space for dialogue and skills-building, the workshops helped to bridge the divide between Moroccan and Sahrawi community members, and demonstrated the importance of involving local community members in the peacebuilding process.

## **10.9 Concluding the Peace Education Workshops**

The Peace Education Workshops were a critical component of the study's peacebuilding intervention design, and their success was evaluated based on the objectives of the study. These workshops aimed to provide a platform for Moroccan and Sahrawi community members to come together and discuss the conflict, in a safe and respectful environment. The workshops were designed to help community members develop peacebuilding skills and attitudes, including communication, conflict resolution, and empathy.

The workshops were held over a period of several weeks, and the participants engaged in various activities such as group discussions, role-playing exercises, and activities that were designed to promote peace and understanding. These activities were designed to be interactive, and participants were encouraged to share their experiences and perspectives on the conflict. At the end of the workshops, all participants were asked to sign a Peace Pledge, committing themselves to working towards peace in the Western Sahara region. The pledge was a symbolic gesture that demonstrated the participants' commitment to peacebuilding and their willingness to work together towards a peaceful future.

The preliminary evaluation of the workshops revealed that they were successful in achieving their objectives. Participants reported feeling more connected to one another, and many said they had developed a better understanding of the conflict and the perspectives of those on the other side. The workshops provided a safe space for participants to engage in dialogue, which helped to build trust and fostered positive relationships.

The action research team, composed of local community members and myself, recognised the importance of these workshops and made a commitment to continue advocating for their implementation. We also committed to implementing peace education workshops when possible, to continue the work of peacebuilding in the region. This commitment is crucial to the sustainability of peacebuilding initiatives, as it ensures that the work will continue beyond the scope of the study.

### **10.10 Sustainability**

According to Brown and Avruch (2018), peace education initiatives have the potential to shift attitudes and beliefs towards peace, create a sense of shared identity among conflicting parties, and foster cooperation and empathy. Similarly, Rios and Brewer (2020) argue that peace education can create a culture of peace by developing critical thinking skills, conflict resolution skills, and cross-cultural understanding.

This action research study conducted on the potential of peace education in Western Sahara aligns with these findings. The study demonstrated that peace education workshops were successful in bringing Moroccans and Sahrawis together to engage in dialogue and reflection, ultimately leading to the development of empathy, trust, and respect for each other. The study found that participants gained a deeper understanding of each other's perspectives, cultures, and experiences, which facilitated the development of peaceful relationships (Mellouki *et al.* 2021).

The Ad-hoc Peace Committee that emerged from the workshops has the potential to build on this success and contribute to peacebuilding efforts in the region. The committee's discussion of a "Peacebuilding Project" to implement similar peace education workshops in the region demonstrates a commitment to building a network of regional and sub-regional leaders who can continue the work of building peaceful relationships in their communities. This grassroots movement has the potential in resolving the Western Sahara conflict by transforming relationships on the ground.

If politicians and policymakers were to participate in a peace education workshop organised by the Ad-hoc Peace Committee, they might gain a deeper understanding of the perspectives and

experiences of Moroccans and Sahrawis, and be more inclined to engage in dialogue and negotiation towards resolving the conflict. As Avruch and Mitchell (2020) note, peace education initiatives can be a catalyst for political change, by creating a demand for peaceful solutions to conflict. The success of the Ad-hoc Peace Committee in building peace and contributing to the resolution of the Western Sahara conflict will depend on the continued engagement and commitment of its members, as well as the broader support and participation of the community.

Peace education workshops can complement the efforts of the United Nations in promoting peacebuilding and conflict resolution in the Western Sahara region. The United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) has been working towards a political solution to the conflict through negotiations between the parties involved, with the goal of conducting a referendum on self-determination for the people of Western Sahara (United Nations 2021). However, there are limitations to the UN's efforts, as the peace process has been stalled for several years due to disagreements between the parties and the lack of progress in implementing the terms of previous agreements (United Nations 2021). Peace education workshops can fill in the gaps in the UN's efforts by providing a space for Moroccans and Sahrawis to engage in dialogue and build relationships based on empathy, understanding, and respect. By addressing the underlying causes of the conflict, such as identity, culture, and history, peace education can help to reduce tensions and build trust between the parties, which can contribute to a more conducive environment for negotiations and peacebuilding efforts (Bajaj 2020).

Additionally, peace education workshops can empower individuals to take ownership of the peacebuilding process and become advocates for peace in their communities. By providing participants with knowledge of and skills in conflict resolution, communication, and collaboration, peace education can help to build a grassroots movement for peace that can complement the efforts of the UN and other international actors (CABSA 2019). Furthermore, the Ad-hoc Peace Committee that emerged from the peace education workshops in Western Sahara can serve as a valuable partner for the UN and other international actors in promoting peacebuilding and conflict resolution in the region. The committee can provide a local perspective on and understanding of the needs and challenges faced by the communities affected by the conflict, and can work



collaboratively with the UN to implement peacebuilding initiatives at the grassroots level (Bajaj 2020).

### **10.11 Recommendations**

After decades of conflict, the Western Sahara region remains severely divided. In order to achieve sustainable solutions to this conflict, a multidisciplinary and action research approach must be implemented to ensure local needs are met. Reconciliation between conflicting identities within Western Sahara can only succeed if the community members themselves feel both invested and involved in these efforts. For this reason, peacebuilding initiatives should focus upon helping both individuals and communities to heal emotionally from the traumas experienced due to conflict. To address these emotional needs, peacebuilding initiatives should seek to provide culturally-appropriate initiatives for rebuilding interpersonal skills and connections within communities.

Based on research and best practices, the development of a comprehensive and inclusive national peace education strategy that engages all relevant stakeholders, including government agencies, civil society organisations, educators, and community leaders is recommended. This strategy should be developed through a participatory process and serve as a framework for implementing peace education programmes at the national, regional, and local levels. It is also recommended that embedding peace education in the national curriculum at all levels of education, from primary to tertiary, be prioritised. This requires active involvement from all stakeholders to ensure that the curriculum addresses the specific needs and concerns of the country and promotes values such as respect, tolerance, empathy, and conflict resolution skills. To ensure the effective implementation of peace education, the provision of comprehensive and ongoing training for teachers and educators is recommended. This training should be designed to equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills to deliver effective peace education. Workshops, mentorship, and professional development opportunities should be made available to teachers. Monitoring and evaluation are critical for understanding the effectiveness of peace education programmes. Therefore, a monitoring and evaluation framework should be developed to assess the impact of peace education programmes. This can help to identify best practices and areas for improvement.

In addition to the recommendations mentioned above, a range of approaches must be implemented to bring about an end to the Western Sahara conflict. One of the most important aspects of such an approach is engaging both the Moroccan and Sahrawi communities, including civil society organisations, in peacebuilding initiatives. Civil society organisations have significant expertise in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. Partnerships should be built with these organisations to develop and implement effective peace education programmes. This can help to leverage resources, expertise, and networks to support the implementation of peace education programmes and would help create a conducive environment for dialogue and the development of relationships that can help build trust between conflicting groups. Another critical aspect of ending the conflict is addressing the underlying issues that have led to the conflict, such as the need for self-determination and respect for human rights.

To support the sustainability of peacebuilding initiatives, it is also essential to invest in capacity-building and training programmes that provide local actors with the skills, knowledge, and resources they need to lead and implement peacebuilding initiatives in their communities. It is necessary to implement more peace education workshops in the Western Sahara region, and beyond. The workshops should be culturally sensitive and designed to address the specific needs and challenges faced by local communities. The workshops should also aim to provide individuals with the tools and skills needed to promote non-violent conflict resolution, critical thinking, and effective communication.

## **10.12 Areas for Further Research**

Based on the findings of this study, there are several areas for further research to advance peacebuilding in the Western Sahara region. By exploring these key areas, researchers can better understand the challenges facing the region and develop effective strategies for promoting lasting peace and stability.

Firstly, it is recommended that future research explores the potential of linking peace education with broader peacebuilding efforts in the region. The study found that peace education workshops were an effective tool in developing peacebuilding skills and attitudes, but it is important to

investigate how these efforts can be scaled up and integrated into larger peacebuilding initiatives. This may involve examining the various ways in which peace education can be integrated into the broader context of peacebuilding efforts, such as through the development of educational programmes, community-based initiatives, and policy advocacy. It may also involve exploring the potential for collaboration and partnership between various stakeholders, including educators, policymakers, civil society organisations, and grassroots peacebuilding initiatives. Moreover, it is important to consider the potential challenges and barriers that may arise in the implementation of such initiatives. These may include issues related to funding, political will, cultural and linguistic barriers, and resistance from various stakeholders. Therefore, further research is necessary to explore how these challenges can be overcome and how best to ensure the success and sustainability of peace education and broader peacebuilding efforts in the region.

Secondly, a paradigm shift in traditional leadership roles in peacebuilding in the Western Sahara region is necessary. The study found that the involvement of local community members as part of the action research team was critical in the success of the peace education workshops. To elaborate, the current leadership roles in peacebuilding initiatives primarily involve external actors, such as international organisations and foreign governments. These external actors often hold a dominant position in the decision-making process and implementation of peacebuilding initiatives. However, this approach has been criticised for being ineffective in achieving long-term sustainable peace, as it neglects the local community's voice and needs. Thus, a paradigm shift is necessary, where the leadership roles in peacebuilding efforts should be redefined to include local community members in decision-making and implementation. By involving the local community members, the peacebuilding efforts can be more responsive to the local context, needs, and priorities. Moreover, the local community members are likely to have a better understanding of the cultural and social dynamics, which is essential for building trust and sustainable peace. Therefore, further research should explore how traditional leadership roles can be transformed to allow greater involvement and leadership of local community members in peacebuilding efforts.

Thirdly, implementation of peace education into the Sahrawi and Moroccan education systems is recommended. This study found that peace education is an effective tool in promoting peacebuilding, and thus, it is important to examine how peace education can be integrated into the

education systems of the region to promote peace and prevent future conflict. By integrating peace education into the education system, students can learn the skills and values necessary to build peaceful communities, promote human rights, and prevent violence. In the Sahrawi and Moroccan regions, there have been conflicts and tensions between the two communities. The implementation of peace education in the education systems can help address the underlying causes of conflict and promote peaceful coexistence. This can be achieved by teaching students about the values of tolerance, mutual respect, and diversity, as well as providing them with the necessary skills to resolve conflicts peacefully. Furthermore, integrating peace education into the education system can also help build a culture of peace in the region. By promoting the values of peace and nonviolence, students can develop a sense of responsibility for creating peaceful societies. They can also learn about the importance of human rights, democracy, and social justice, which can contribute to the development of a peaceful and just society.

Lastly, it is recommended that future studies be carried out with the research participants from this particular study to conduct a long-term evaluation of peace education as a peacebuilding tool. This would help to provide a better understanding of the long-term impact of peace education workshops and to assess the sustainability of peacebuilding efforts in the region. By following up with the research participants over time, it would be possible to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the extent to which peace education has helped in achieving peacebuilding outcomes. This could include examining whether participants have continued to apply the knowledge and skills gained from the peace education workshops and whether they have been successful in spreading those teachings to others in their communities. The suggested long-term evaluation could also provide insight into the effectiveness of peace education as a sustainable peacebuilding tool. It would allow for an assessment of whether the effects of peace education workshops are sustained over time, or if additional interventions are required to maintain peacebuilding efforts.

### **10.13 Conclusion**

In this chapter, a comprehensive overview of the study was presented, including a restatement of the objectives. The preliminary evaluation of the peace education workshops was discussed, along

with the valuable new insights that were obtained, which have significant implications for the field of peacebuilding, suggesting that peace education workshops can have a positive impact on building peaceful societies. The limitations of the study, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the research methods used were considered. Additionally, the chapter highlighted the implications of the findings, providing a critical analysis of how the results can be applied in practice to promote peacebuilding. The chapter also provided reflective commentary on the research process and the implications of the findings, as well as recommendations for future research, such as the impact of peace education workshops on specific populations or in different contexts. Finally, the chapter identified potential improvements to the research methods used, such as the inclusion of more diverse participants.

The findings of this study have greatly improved our understanding of how peace education can be utilised as a vital tool for fostering peacebuilding initiatives in the Western Sahara region. Through the preliminary evaluation, it has been observed that peace education workshops play a critical role in creating secure and conducive spaces that encourage people from diverse communities to interact, exchange views, and establish connections based on mutual understanding and respect. The effectiveness of peace education in promoting social cohesion and peaceful coexistence among individuals and communities in the Western Sahara region cannot be overstated. This study highlights the potential of peace education workshops to inspire transformative changes in attitudes, behaviours, and beliefs, leading to greater empathy, acceptance, and tolerance of others. The study highlights how peace education provides a platform for the exchange of ideas and knowledge, promoting a culture of dialogue, inclusivity, and collaboration. It underscores the value of creating spaces where individuals from different backgrounds can come together to share their unique perspectives, experiences, and insights.

The findings highlight the potential of peace education for transforming relationships and contributing to sustainable peacebuilding initiatives. The involvement of an action research team composed of local community members has also demonstrated the importance of community engagement and ownership in peacebuilding efforts. The insights gained from this research can inform future peacebuilding initiatives and contribute to the development of effective strategies for promoting peace and reconciliation in conflict-affected regions. The success of these

workshops highlights the crucial role of peace education and the need for its integration into wider peacebuilding initiatives.

The study highlights the importance of a bottom-up approach to peacebuilding, which involves the active participation of local communities in designing and implementing peace education programmes. This approach can help to ensure that peacebuilding efforts are grounded in local contexts and address the root causes of conflict. Moreover, the research findings demonstrate that peace education can foster a culture of peace and promote dialogue, tolerance, and understanding among individuals and communities. This can lead to a reduction in violence and contribute to sustainable peacebuilding initiatives. Overall, the success of the peace education workshops, and the involvement of the action research team, underscore the importance of community engagement, ownership, and a bottom-up approach to peacebuilding. The insights gained from this research can be used to inform future peacebuilding initiatives and contribute to the development of effective strategies for building peace in conflict-affected regions.

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# Appendix 1



## Consent Form

### Statement of Agreement for Participation in the Research Study

- I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher about the nature, conduct, benefits, and risks of this study.
- I have also received, read, and understand the above written information (Participant Letter of Information) regarding this study.
- I am aware that my personal information will be kept confidential.
- In view of the requirements of the research, I agree that the data collected during the study can be processed in a computerised system by the researcher.
- I may, at any stage of the research, and without prejudice, withdraw my consent of participation from the study.
- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and, of my own freewill, declare myself prepared to take part in the study.
- I understand that significant new findings developed during the research which may relate to my participation will be made available to me upon request.

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Participant Print name

Signature

Date

I, **Justin Bibee**, hereby confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature, conduct, and risks of the above study.

_____	_____	_____
Researcher Print name	Signature	Date

_____	_____	_____
Witness Print name	Signature	Date

(If applicable)

## 1 فهرس



لجنة الاخلاقيات

استمارة الموافقة

أسئلة للمشاركين

:الاتفاق بالمشاركة في هذه الدراسة البحثية افادة

.اشهد انه تم ابلاغي بطبيعة البحث، سلوك، فوائد و مخاطر هذه الدراسة -

.لقد استلمت نموذج لهذه الوثيقة و فهمت المعلومات المكتوبة أعلاه -

.انا على علم ان معلوماتي الشخصية ستبقى سرية -

.في ضوء متطلبات البحث، اوافق على ان البيانات التي تم جمعها أثناء الدراسة يمكن للباحث معالجتها في نظام حاسوبي -

.يجوز لي، في أي مرحلة من مراحل البحث، و دون تحيز، ان اسحب موافقتي على المشاركة من الدراسة -

.لقد اتحت لي الفرصة الكافية لطرح أي أسئلة، و اصرح بإرادتي الحرة انني مستعد للمشاركة في الدراسة -

.افهم ان النتائج المهمة الجديدة التي تم اكتشافها خلال البحث و التي قد تتعلق بمشاركتي سيتم إتاحتها لي عند الطلب -

اسم المشارك مطبوعا \_\_\_\_\_ توقيع المشارك \_\_\_\_\_ التاريخ \_\_\_\_\_

.اشهد ان المشارك أعلاه تم اطلاقه بالكامل على طبيعة الدراسة المذكورة أعلاه و سلوكها و مخاطرها ،انا جاستن بيبي

اسم الباحث مطبوعا \_\_\_\_\_ توقيع الباحث \_\_\_\_\_ التاريخ \_\_\_\_\_

اسم الشاهد مطبوعا \_\_\_\_\_ توقيع الشاهد \_\_\_\_\_ تاريخ \_\_\_\_\_

(إذا كان قابلا للتطبيق)

## Appendix 2



### Questionnaire for Participants

(Note: this is an open-ended questionnaire for the 40 selected participants).

#### Questions on Identity

1) Do you identify as living in... (Circle one)

- Morocco
- Western Sahara
- Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic
- Other (please explain below)

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2) Why do you identify that way?

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#### Questions on Perceptions

3) Can you tell me any stories of Sahrawis/Moroccans that you have heard?

4) Who told you this story? (Collective narrative / generation pass down)

5) What is your view of the relations between Sahrawis/Moroccans in Western Sahara?

6) What is the first word that comes to mind when I say Sahrawis/Moroccans?

7) What are some adjectives you would use to describe Sahrawis/Moroccans?

8) What is the first word that comes to your mind when I say the Western Sahara Conflict?

#### Questions on Experiences

9) Describe your experience(s) living with Sahrawis/Moroccans.

10) Do you know someone who has been a victim of violence or discrimination?

a) If so, do you mind briefly describing the type of violence or discrimination?

b) How often have you witnessed such incidents?

11) Have you yourself been a victim of violence or discrimination?

a) If so, do you mind briefly describing the type or violence or discrimination?

b) How often has this happened to you?

c) What effect has this had on you?

#### Questions on Sahrawi and Moroccan relations

12) Do you think that Sahrawis and Moroccans dislike each other?

a) What makes you think that?

13) Do you believe it is possible for Sahrawis and Moroccans to live, not only peacefully, but happily together?

#### Questions on Improving Relations

14) What do you believe could be done to build relations between Sahrawis and Moroccans?

15) What do you believe is the biggest obstacle to building good relations between Sahrawis and Moroccans?

أسئلة للمشاركين

أسئلة حول الهوية

1) (هل تعرف نفسك كشخص يعيش في ... (ضع دائرة حول خيارك 1)

المغرب -

الصحراء الغربية -

الجمهورية العربية الصحراوية الديمقراطية -

:(غير ذلك) (يرجى التوضيح أدناه -

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2) لماذا تعرف نفسك بهذه الطريقة

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أسئلة حول الانطباعات

3) المغاربة / هل يمكن أن تخبرني عن أي قصص سمعت عنها تتعلق بالصحراويين

4) (من أخبرك بهذه القصة؟ (حكى جماعي / مررت عبر الأجيال

5) ما رأيك في العلاقات بين الصحراويين والمغاربة في الصحراء الغربية

6) ما هي الكلمة الأولى التي تتبادر إلى ذهنك عندما أقول صحراويين / مغاربة

- 7) لوصف الصحراويين / المغاربة ما هي بعض الصفات التي ستستخدمها
- 8) ما هي الكلمة الأولى التي تتبادر إلى ذهنك عندما أقول نزاع الصحراء الغربية

أسئلة حول تجارب شخصية

9) صف تجربتك (تجاربك) في العيش مع الصحراويين / المغاربة

10) كان ضحية العنف أو التمييز هل تعرف شخصا

11) (أ) إذا كان الأمر كذلك ، فهل تمنع باختصار في وصف نوع العنف أو التمييز

(ب) كم مرة شاهدت مثل هذه الحوادث

12) هل وقعت ضحية للعنف أو التمييز

(أ) إذا كان الأمر كذلك ، فهل تمنع باختصار في وصف النوع أو العنف أو التمييز

(ب) كم مرة حدث لك ذلك

(ج) كيف أثر ذلك عليك

أسئلة حول العلاقات الصحراوية والمغربية

13) هل تعتقد أن الصحراويين والمغاربة يكرهون بعضهم البعض

(أ) ما الذي يجعلك تعتقد ذلك

14) هل تعتقد أنه من الممكن أن يعيش الصحراويون والمغاربة ليس فقط بسلام ولكن بسعادة

أسئلة حول تحسين العلاقات

15) ما الذي تعتقد أنه يمكن القيام به لبناء العلاقات بين الصحراويين والمغاربة

16) برأيك ، ما هو العائق الأكبر أمام بناء علاقات جيدة بين الصحراويين والمغاربة

## Appendix 3



### Interview Questions

These questions will be asked to both Moroccan and Sahrawi participants

#### Pre-intervention

1. What are the forms of violence in your community?
2. How often does this violence occur - Daily? Weekly?
3. What do you believe are the reasons for this violence?
4. What do you believe are the main causes of division in your community?
5. What do you believe are the consequences of the violence and division in your community?
6. Would you support education and training of community members to develop the skills and attitudes that will decrease violence in your community?

These questions will be asked to the same Moroccan and Sahrawi participants



اسئلة المقابلة

1. ما هي أشكال العنف في مجتمعك .
2. كم مرة يحدث هذا العنف -يوميا؟ أسبوعيا .
3. في رأيك ما هي أسباب هذا العنف .
4. في رأيك ما هي الأسباب الرئيسية للانقسام في مجتمعك .
5. في رأيك ما هي عواقب العنف والانقسام في مجتمعك .
6. هل ستدعم تعليم وتدريب أفراد المجتمع لتطوير المهارات والمواقف التي من شأنها تقليل العنف في مجتمعك .

## Appendix 4



DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY  
INYUVESI YASETHEKWINI YEZOBUCHWEPHESHE

### Focus Group Discussion Questions

These questions will be asked to both Moroccan and Sahrawi participants.

#### Post-intervention

1. Has there been a change in general interactions between Moroccans/Sahrawis?
2. How have the peace education models changed your approach towards conflict and relations with Moroccans/Sahrawis?
3. Do you believe that peace education can reduce violence? Why or why not?
4. If implemented on a larger scale, do you believe peace education will be effective as a tool for peace building? Why or why not?

هل حدث تغيير في التفاعلات العامة بين المغاربة والصحراويين .1

كيف غيرت نماذج تعليم السلام طريقة تفاعلك اتجاه الصراع والعلاقات مع المغاربة / الصحراويين .2

هل تعتقد أن تعليم السلام يمكن أن يقلل العنف؟ لماذا أو لماذا لا .3

إذا نفذت على نطاق أوسع ، هل تعتقد أن تعليم السلام سيكون فعالاً كأداة لبناء السلام؟ لماذا أو لماذا لا .4

## Appendix 5



### INFORMATION LETTER FOR PARTICIPANTS

**Title of Research Study:** Peace Education as a Peacebuilding Tool: The Context of the Western Sahara Conflict

**Principal Researcher:** Justin D. Bibee, PhD student (present qualification M.A.)

**Supervisor:** Dr. Sylvia Kaye, PhD

**Brief Introduction and Purpose of Study:** The purpose of this study is to examine the effectiveness of peace education as a tool for developing the skills and attitudes necessary to become actively involved in decreasing violence and creating conditions for peaceful coexistence in the Laayoune province of Western Sahara.

The exploratory phase of the research participants will be asked to provide information on the causes of violence in Laayoune province, its consequences, and its impact, as well as their attitudes and perceptions of the “other” (i.e. attitudes and perceptions held by Sahrawis of Moroccans and attitudes and perceptions held by Moroccans of Sahrawis). In the second phase participants will be asked to participate in trainings and/or interventions designed by the action research team that teach the skills and attitudes necessary for peacebuilding. The third phase will be to evaluate the training and/or interventions implemented.

The action research team will deliberate and determine culturally appropriate, conflict-specific training and/or interventions to be implemented, known as a “model.” Each model will last one week. There will be five models total (totaling five weeks), each being a different skill set needed to build the skills and attitudes that are conducive to peaceful coexistence.

The outcomes expected of the peace education training/intervention are as follows:

- Accepting the “other’s” narrative as legitimate
- Willingness to examine one’s own side’s actions toward the “other”
- Willingness to experience and show empathy and trust toward the “other”
- Disposition to engage in non-violent activities

**Risks or Discomforts to the Participant:** Given the sensitive nature of the ongoing conflict, participants may experience discomforts such as anxiety, anger, guilt, and/or become retraumatized. Risks may include surveillance and/or harassment. However, given the strict confidentiality measurements taken throughout this study to protect the identity of all participants, and the right of participants to withdraw from the study at any time without reason or consequence, this study is considered to be low-risk.

**Benefits:** Participants will benefit by gaining the skills and attitudes necessary for peaceful coexistence in their communities. The researcher will benefit from papers produced and published in research journals as well as presented at conferences.

**Withdrawing from Study:** You have the right to withdraw from the research at any time without explanation and without consequences.

**Remuneration:** Your participation in this research study is voluntary. There will be no financial payment for participation. Light refreshments may be available during interviews and focus group discussions depending on the circumstances at the time.

**Costs of the Study:** Participants will be expected to find their own transportation to and from the chosen venue. However, financial assistance may be provided for transportation on a case by case basis. Please contact the principal researcher, Justin D. Bibee, for financial assistance (contact information below).

**Confidentiality:** Confidentiality will be maintained in the questionnaires, individual interviews, and focus group discussions. The questionnaires will be numbered with no record of your name. In the interviews and focus group discussions you may choose not to use your real name. I appeal to all participants to respect the confidentiality of others. Records will be kept safe and archived

in the researcher's office according to the stated period of DUT and afterwards shredded and discarded.

**Research-related injury:** Injuries are not likely to occur given the safe nature of the research activities. However, in the event of an injury, the principal researcher will take charge of the necessary arrangements required.

Persons to Contact for Questions and/or Concerns:

Name	Title	Phone	E-mail
Justin D. Bibee	Principal Researcher	+18025024030	justinbibee@mail.sit.edu
Dr. Sylvia Kaye	Academic Advisor	+27313736860	sylviak@dut.ac.za
Research and Postgraduate Support	Director	+27313732326	N/A



رسالة معلومات للمشاركين

تعليم السلام كأداة لبناء السلام: سياق نزاع الصحراء الغربية: عنوان الدراسة البحثية

(جاستن د. بيبي ، طالب دكتوراه (المؤهل الحالي ماجستير): الباحث الرئيسي

د. سيلفا كاي ، دكتوراه: المشرف

الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو ا كشاف فعالية تعليم السلام كأداة لتطوير المهارات : مقدمة مختصرة والغرض من الدراسة والعتادات اللازمة لتقليل العنف وخلق ظروف للتعايش السلمي في إقليم العيون بالصحراء الغربي

والعتادات اللازمة للمشاركة بحماس في الحد الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو ا كشاف فعالية تعليم السلام كأداة لتطوير المهارات من العنف وخلق ظروف للتعايش السلمي في إقليم العيون بالصحراء الغربي

في المرحلة الاستكشافية للبحث س يُطلب من المشاركين تقديم معلومات عن أسباب العنف في إقليم العيون، عواقبه ، تأثيره وكذلك مواقفهم وتصوراتهم لـ "الأخر" (أي المواقف والتصورات التي يحملها الصحراويون ضد المغاربة والمواقف والتصورات التي يحتفظ بها المغاربة ضد الصحراويين). في المرحلة الثانية ، س يُطلب من المشاركين المشاركة في التدريبات و / أو التدخلات التي صممها فريق البحث لتعليم المهارات والمواقف اللازمة لبناء السلام. المرحلة الثالثة هي تقييم التدريبات و / أو التدخلات التي تم استعمالها

سيقوم فريق البحث الإجرائي بمناقشة وتحديد التدريبات و / أو التدخلات الملائمة ثقافياً والمحددة للنزاع، والمعروفة باسم أسبوع واحد "النموذج". كل نموذج سيستمر

سيكون هناك خمسة نماذج إجمالاً (يبلغ مجموعها خمسة أسابيع) ، كل منها عبارة عن مجموعة مهارات مختلفة مطلوبة لبناء المهارات والمواقف التي تؤدي إلى التعايش السلمي

:النتائج المتوقعة من هذه التدريبات و / أو التدخلات لتعليم السلام هي كما يلي

قبول وجهة نظر "الأخر" للقصة على أنها حقيقية •

"الأخر" اتجاه القدرة على تقييم أخطائك •

• "الأخر" القدرة على قبول وإظهار التعاطف والثقة اتجاه •

• الميل إلى الانخراط في الأنشطة اللاعنفية •

نظرا للطبيعة الحساسة لهذا الصراع المستمر ، قد يعاني المشاركون من صعوبات مثل القلق والغضب :المخاطر للمشاركة والذنب و / أو إعادة الصدمة . قد تشمل المخاطر المراقبة و/ أو المضايقة. ولكن نظراً للقياسات السرية الصارمة المتخذة طوال هذه الدراسة لحماية هوية جميع المشاركين ، وحق المشاركين في الانسحاب من الدراسة في أي وقت دون سبب أو عواقب يجعل هذه الدراسة منخفضة المخاطر

الباحث من اللازمة للتعايش السلمي في مجتمعاتهم. سيستفيد سيستفيد المشاركون من اكتساب المهارات والعادات :فوائد المنشورات التي يتم إنتاجها ونشرها في المجلات البحثية وتقديمها في المؤتمرات

يحق لك الانسحاب من البحث في أي وقت دون تفسير وبدون عواقب :الانسحاب من الدراسة

مشاركتك في هذه الدراسة البحثية طوعية. لن تكون هناك تكلفة مالية مطلوبة للمشاركة. قد تكون هناك مرطبات :تعويض خفيفة متاحة أثناء المقابلات والمناقشات الجماعية المركزة اعتماداً على الظروف في ذلك الوقت

يتوقع من المشاركين أن يجود وسائل النقل الخاصة بهم من وإلى مكان الدعوى. ولكن يمكن تقديم المساعدة :تكاليف الدراسة المالية للنقل على أساس كل حالة على حدة. يرجى الاتصال بالباحث الرئيسي جاستن د. بيبى للحصول على مساعدة مالية ((معلومات الاتصال أدناه

مجموعة التركيز. سيتم ترقيم سيتم الحفاظ على الخصوصية في الاستبيانات والمقابلات الفردية ومناقشات :الخصوصية الاستبيانات دون تسجيل اسمك. في المقابلات والمناقشات الجماعية المركزة ، يمكنك اختيار عدم استخدام اسمك الحقيقي. أطلب من جميع المشاركين احترام سرية الآخرين. سيتم الاحتفاظ بالسجلات بأمان وتخزينها في مكتب الباحث وفقاً للفترة وبعد ذلك تمزيقها والتخلص منها DUT المحددة من

من غير المحتمل حدوث أي إصابات نظرا إلى الطبيعة الآمنة لهذه الأنشطة البحثية. ولكن في حالة :الحوادث المتعلقة بالبحث حدوث إصابة ، سيتولى الباحث الرئيسي مسؤولية الترتيبات اللازمة

:الأشخاص الذين يجب الاتصال بهم إذا كانت لديك أي أسئلة و / أو مخاوف

اسم	لقب	رقم الهاتف	البريد الإلكتروني
جاستن . بيبى	الباحث الرئيسي	+18025024030	justin.bibee@mail.sit.edu
د. سيلفا كاي	المرشد الأكاديمي	+27313736860	sylvia@dut.ac.za
دعم البحوث والدراسات العليا	مدير	+27313732326	N/A لا ينطبق

## Appendix 6



Researcher's Letter to Royal Advisory Council for Saharan Affairs

Khalihenna Ould Errachid, President

Royal Advisory Council for Saharan Affairs

9, Bani Walid Street - Ain Khalouiya, 10000 Souissi, Rabat, Morocco

Request for Permission to Conduct Research

Dear Mr. Ould Errachid

My name is Justin Bibee. I am an American PhD student at the Durban University of Technology in Durban, South Africa. The research I wish to conduct for my doctoral thesis is titled "Peace Education as a Peacebuilding Tool: The Context of the Western Sahara Conflict".

I am respectfully requesting permission to conduct research in Laayoune province, Western Sahara. The overall aim of my study is to explore the effectiveness of peace education as a peacebuilding tool. My research objectives are as follows:

- To explore the attitudes and perceptions held by both Moroccans and Sahrawis of the other.
- To elucidate the peace education approach and its potential as a peacebuilding tool.
- To conceptualise and implement an efficient peace education workshop model that could help facilitate reconciliation, followed by a preliminary evaluation of the model's short-term outcomes.



The data will be collected through questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions. It is my hope to have forty (40) participants in total - 20 Moroccans and 20 Sahrawis. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the research.

Included with this letter are my research proposal and approval letter from the Institutional Research Ethics Committee. Your consent to undertake the research will be greatly appreciated. If you need any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at +1 802 502 4030, or by email: [justinbibee@mail.sit.edu](mailto:justinbibee@mail.sit.edu). Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Respectfully,

Justin D. Bibee, MA

PhD student - Durban University of Technology

رسالة الباحث إلى المجلس الاستشاري الملكي للشؤون الصحراوية

خليهن ولد الرشيد

رئيس المجلس الملكي الاستشاري للشؤون الصحراوية

الوليد ، رقم 9. السويسي 10000 ، الرباط ، المغرب زنقة ابن ، عين خلوية

طلب تصريح لإجراء البحث

،حضرة السيد ولد الرشيد

اسمي جاستن بيبى. أنا طالب دكتوراه أمريكي في جامعة ديربان للتكنولوجيا في ديربان ، جنوب أفريقيا. البحث الذي أود  
".إجراؤه في أطروحة الدكتوراه بعنوان "تعليم السلام كأداة لبناء السلام: سياق نزاع الصحراء الغربية

العيون ، الصحراء الغربية . الهدف العام من دراستي هو اكتشاف فعالية تعليم إقليم أطلب بكل احترام الإذن لإجراء بحثي في  
السلام كأداة لبناء السلام. أهداف بحثي هي كما يلي

العيون، تأثيره وعواقبه اكتشاف الأسباب الكامنة وراء العنف في إقليم -

اكتشاف المواقف وجهات النظر التي يتبناها كل من المغاربة والصحراويين على بعضهم البعض -

شرح نهج تعليم السلام وإمكاناته في أن يصبح كأداة لبناء السلام -

قصيرة تطوير وتنفيذ نموذج (نماذج) فعالة مع فريق البحث الخاص بي كوسيلة لتسهيل المصالحة وإجراء تقييم أولي للنتائج -  
(المدى لهذا النموذج (النماذج)

سيتم جمع البيانات من خلال الاستبيانات والمقابلات ومناقشات مجموعات التركيز. أتمنى أن يكون لدي مجموع أربعون (40)  
مشاركًا - 20 مغربي و 20 صحراوي. سيتم الحفاظ على خصوصية المشاركين طوال البحث

تضمن هذه الرسالة مقترح بحثي وخطاب الموافقة من لجنة أخلاقيات البحث المؤسسي. أقدر موافقتك على إجراء هذا البحث  
أكبر تقدير. أو بالبريد الإلكتروني: +1 802 502 4030 إذا كنت بحاجة إلى مزيد من المعلومات ، فلا تتردد في الاتصال  
بي على

ولكم جزيل الشكر والاحترام [justinbibee@mail.sit.edu](mailto:justinbibee@mail.sit.edu)

مع أطيب التحيات

جاستن بيبي

## Appendix 7

### Post-Workshop Evaluation Guide

Kindly rate the following aspects of the workshops on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 represents "Strongly Agree," 2 "Agree," 3 "Neutral," 4 "Disagree," and 5 denotes "Strongly Disagree".

1. The objectives of the workshops were clearly stated and easy to understand.
2. The objectives of the workshops were accomplished.
3. The topics covered were appropriate and relevant to the subject matter.
4. The content was presented in an easy-to-follow manner.
5. The learning materials were useful and informative.
6. The researcher demonstrated extensive knowledge and was well-prepared.
7. Participation and interaction were encouraged and fostered.
8. The time allotted for each topic was sufficient to comprehend the material effectively.
9. The training was relevant to your specific situation.
10. The venue was comfortable and conducive to learning.
  
11. What did you like most about the workshops?
  
12. What aspect of the workshops can be improved?
  
13. How do you hope to change your actions as a result of the workshops?

## 7 الملحق

### دليل التقييم بعد ورشة العمل

يرجى تقييم الجوانب التالية من ورش العمل على مقياس من 1 إلى 5 ، حيث يمثل 1 "أوافق بشدة" و 2 "أوافق" و 3 "محايد" و 4 "لا أوافق" و 5 يشير إلى "لا أوافق بشدة".

تم تحديد أهداف ورش العمل بوضوح ويسهل فهمها

تم تحقيق أهداف ورش العمل

كانت الموضوعات التي تم تناولها مناسبة وذات صلة بالموضوع

تم تقديم المحتوى بطريقة سهلة المتابعة

كانت المواد التعليمية مفيدة وغنية بالمعلومات

أظهر الباحث معرفة واسعة وكان مستعداً جيداً

تم تشجيع وتعزيز المشاركة والتفاعل

كان الوقت المخصص لكل موضوع كافياً لفهم المادة بشكل فعال

كان التدريب وثيق الصلة بموقفك المحدد

كان المكان مريحاً ومفيداً للتعلم

ما أكثر شيء أعجبك في ورش العمل

ما هو الجانب من ورش العمل التي يمكن تحسينها

كيف تأمل في تغيير أفعالك نتيجة ورش العمل