

UPPER Good Practice	
<b>Code</b>	ESHA – GP11a
<b>Name (title) of the good practice:</b>	Hope Flowers School
<b>Country/region</b>	Bethlehem, Palestine
<b>UPPER Scope: Fields affected (more than one field may be indicated)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Policy Making <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Teachers Competence Development</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Self-Assessment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Concrete School Practice</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Community Building <input type="checkbox"/> Mainstreaming
<b>Full Description</b>	<p><i>Short Description:</i>            A school working for peace-building, trauma reduction, democratic development, community and the furthering of human rights.            It serves refugee and disadvantaged children in Palestine, and those traumatized by conflict or experiencing hardship-related learning difficulties.            It is based in Bethlehem, Palestine, a small city well-known as a holy place.            Nowadays it is severely affected by the world's longest-lasting conflict.</p> <p><i>Initiator, Partners, Target Groups, Stakeholders involved:</i>            Ibrahim Issa – initiator and principal</p> <p><i>Content and Methodology:</i>            Towards responsible world citizenship</p> <p><i>Stage of development</i>            The school has been open for more than 30 years.</p> <p><i>Longitudinal analysis:</i>            The school started 30 years ago as a very small independent private school, gradually expanding to a school of now .... Students. The school always aimed for diversity, as much as possible in the complex circumstances. In the beginning also Jewish kids attended the school, which is no longer possible due to Israeli politics. However the Palestine kids who attend are from diverse religious backgrounds (Muslim as well as Christian). Also the school has broadened its scope to initiate community activities in order to work with parents as well. Over the years the school has developed more and more expertise in specific trauma-approach, which not only has influenced other Palestine schools, but also attracted attention in countries like Germany and here in the Netherlands. Meanwhile, at the same time, the school has had to operate under increasing pressure, because the</p>

	<p>accessibility of the school has been limited by geographic isolation of the building (the erection of the wall, and the road blocks and body inspections of students wanting to attend). See annex 1</p> <p><i>Availability and link to evaluation results</i> There are several reports and presentations available regarding evaluations in general and on specific projects.</p> <p><i>Synthesis of evaluation</i> The importance of trauma-healing regards not only the learning abilities, but is essential for a non-violent behaviour</p>
<b>Why is the case interesting?</b>	<p><i>Specific description of innovative value in relation to UPPER:</i> The school is an example of peace education in the midst of a conflict. Hope Flowers school has for over 30 years been a pioneer in constructive peace education for children in conflict areas. The school is focusing on children aged 5 to 14 who have been traumatised by conflict and who are exposed to poverty, malnutrition and lack of perspective. Eighty percent of the pupils is from Deheishe and other refugee camps in the area. The team at Hope Flowers School uses its unique educational approach to face up to the difficult circumstances in Palestine as a direct result of the continuing conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. Teachers integrate pedagogical insights and techniques of peace building into the curriculum, such as: handling difficult situations and frustration; expressing emotions and thoughts; discussing and deciding together in group conversations; cooperation; and active listening.</p> <p><i>Good Practice specific characteristics:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Transformative</b></li> <li><b>2. Observable results (see annex 2)</b></li> <li><b>3. Methodologically structured</b></li> <li><b>4. Potential for re-contextualisation</b></li> <li><b>5. Beneficiaries consider it a GP</b></li> </ul>
<b>Coordinating institution</b>	This is a private initiative, non-institution involved school
<b>Strategies (more than one strategy may be indicated)</b> Please rank the different strategies in order of importance: 4 max, 1 min)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1 Avoiding segregation (4)</b></li> <li><b>2 Leadership/governance (4)</b></li> <li><b>3 Information on diversity (4)</b></li> <li><b>4 Teacher education on diversity (4)</b></li> <li><b>5 Diversity in teaching workforce (2)</b></li> <li><b>6 Curriculum and pedagogies (4)</b></li> <li>7 Multilingual education</li> <li><b>8 Interactive, culturally relevant methods (2)</b></li> <li><b>9 School-Society relationship (2)</b></li> <li>10 Socially responsible ICT</li> <li>11 Involving NGOs and Youth organisation</li> <li>12 Incentives and reward for GP</li> <li><b>13 Social integration (4)</b></li> </ul>

	<b>14 Awareness of injustice (4)</b> <b>15 Promotion of Peace Value (4+)</b> 16 Other (please specify)																																																
<b>Accessibility of data and persons by upPER Team</b>	I have contact with the principal of the school as well as the supportive organisation.																																																
<b>Impact</b>	<b>Short, medium and long term school's impact</b> <i>"None of our former students has been involved in violence."</i> <i>Ibrahim Issa, school director, in an interview published on the school website.</i>																																																
<b>Brief description of the context in which the practice was applied</b>	<p>The Hope Flowers School is located in Bethlehem, Palestine, a small city well-known as a holy place. Nowadays it is severely affected by the world's longest-lasting conflict.</p> <p>The school's mission becomes extra meaningful when you look at the immediate surroundings. Because the school is located in the occupied Westbank, pupils are regularly confronted with the consequences of occupation: the separation wall that runs through Bethlehem, military checkpoints, aggression, road blocks, soldiers in the streets. Many pupils have some form of trauma in various degrees of depth, that influences their behaviour and academic results. Many children also are affected by poverty, malnutrition and lack of perspective.</p>																																																
<b>Re-contextualisation potential (How the following elements of the GP appear to be suitable to be adopted and adapted to other contexts)</b>	<p>To be discussed.</p> <p>This a great example of peace education.</p>																																																
<b>Matrix</b>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>1</th> <th>2</th> <th>3</th> <th>4</th> <th>5</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Partnership structure</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>X</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Methodology</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>X</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Content of training</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>X</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Stakeholders involvement</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>X</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Evaluation approach</td> <td></td> <td>X</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Training to practitioners</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>X</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other (please specify)</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		1	2	3	4	5	Partnership structure			X			Methodology					X	Content of training				X		Stakeholders involvement				X		Evaluation approach		X				Training to practitioners				X		Other (please specify)					
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<b>Critical aspects in the application of the practice</b>	Very specific situation country depended in the Middle East.																																																

<b>Sustainability elements and recommended use in UPPER</b>	Hope Flowers School offers children education and support in a safe environment, and has been doing so for over 30 years. The school's mission is explicitly humanitarian, and is realised via the curriculum and care for the children. The approach is holistic, it's a mix of education, physical care, psycho-social support, and a building that is also accessible for handicapped children. The fact that this approach has been taken for over 30 years is a clear sign of continuity. And now sustainability is coming into the picture with plans for water recycling and solar energy, even as these developments are not obvious in the context of Westbank economic restrictions imposed by occupation. For Hope Flowers School, sustainability is linked to self-sufficiency, thus enhancing independence.
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<b>Web link(s)</b>	<a href="http://www.hopeflowersschool.org">www.hopeflowersschool.org</a> (website is under construction at the moment) <a href="http://www.vriendenvanhopeflowers.nl">www.vriendenvanhopeflowers.nl</a> (text in English as well)
<b>Filled by [name and partner institution]:</b>	European School Heads Association – Monique Westland (see added description below)

## Annex 1

### Hope Flowers School

The central square of Bethlehem has the Nativity church on one side and the mosque at the other. Nowadays both Muslims and Christians live in Bethlehem, and the city is surrounded by Jewish settlements. The infamous wall, meant to keep Israel and the Palestinian Territory separated, is running right next to neighbourhoods of Bethlehem. Fences and watch towers are not far away from the city centre. Bethlehem is also a city of refugee camps, that came into existence after the Israeli invasion of 1948. Many Palestinians were forced to leave their homes and lands. The camps with simple shelters have by now grown into boroughs where several generations are living together. Deheishe is the largest and most well-known of Palestinian refugee camps. In the neighborhood of Al Khader (Arabic for Saint George, who slayed the dragon) the **Hope Flowers School** is located, close to the separation wall and on the very edge of the West Bank.

*'Poignant is the location of the school right by the separation wall, on the boundary of the West Bank – a wall between the distinct worlds that are Palestine and Israel. The contrast in social atmosphere is stark: geographically they are close and adjacent, squeezed into such a small land, but psycho-socially they could be on opposite sides of the planet.'*\*

### Pioneer in peace education

Hope Flowers school has for over 30 years been a pioneer in constructive peace education for children in conflict areas. The school is focusing on children aged 5 to 14 who have been traumatised by conflict and who are exposed to poverty, malnutrition and lack of perspective. Eighty percent of the pupils is from Deheishe and other refugee camps in the area.

The team at Hope Flowers School uses its unique educational approach to face up to the difficult circumstances in Palestine as a direct result of the continuing conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. Teachers integrate pedagogical insights and techniques of peace building into the curriculum, such as: handling difficult situations and frustration; expressing emotions and thoughts; discussing and deciding together in group conversations; cooperation; and active listening.

*These were not theoretical lessons to peace studies: peace building and democratic practices were incorporated into school activities to train children personally for real life – it concerned their current*

*situation. Language lessons taught real communication skills. Art involved drawing and painting traumatic situations, to help kids work out their feelings and transform their memories. Mathematics involved calculating quantities for reconstruction of buildings. Nature studies concerned actually growing food crops, and science involved learning how to fix the electrics or work out the volume of a water-cistern.'*

A fine example of this special education in the curriculum is the 'compassionate listening' programme. It is for the pupils, but also for their parents and other family members.

*'The children are taught Compassionate Listening – sitting in a circle and lending complete attention to each other's experience. It gives them ways of stretching their experience and understanding themselves beyond the framework of their own little worlds. Compassion isn't about feeling sorry or even agreeing with others – it's simply the art of witnessing, seeing what life looks like from the other side.'*

## For children and their families

Hope Flowers School has been expanded with the Hope Flowers Community Development Centre in 2004. The Community Centre has programmes for youngsters and adults. There are courses for computer skills and for small enterprise skills. There are training sessions for teachers from other schools who want to learn about peace education. And it is the place where family therapy sessions and empowerment trainings are held.

A psychologist is employed by the school, and she works for both the children and the teachers. Pupils with behavioural problems are coached by her. Often, the pupils will engage in exercises and training together with their parents. Teachers learn how to handle pupils with severe disorders. When needed, other specialists are engaged.

*'Hope Flowers respects the inner sensitivities and subjectivities of children and it draws in parents and the wider community on a personal, friendship basis. Its aim is to remove the causes of violence from children and families living in a country where hardship levels are high, where tough stuff happens for many years now.'*

Hope Flowers School engages in exchange programmes with Israeli schools and lets the children get in touch with other religions and cultures. In the early years there were joint lessons with Jewish, Christian

and Muslim children, but sadly now the Israeli authorities no longer allowed Jewish children to come to the West Bank.

## Annex 2

### Relevance and impact

Hope Flowers School offers these children education and support in a safe environment, and has been doing so for over 30 years. The school's mission is explicitly humanitarian, and is realised via the curriculum and care for the children. The approach is holistic, it's a mix of education, physical care, psycho-social support, and a building that is also accessible for handicapped children. The fact that this approach has been taken for over 30 years is a clear sign of continuity. And now sustainability is coming into the picture with plans for water recycling and solar energy, even as these developments are not obvious in the context of Westbank economic restrictions imposed by occupation. For Hope Flowers School, sustainability is linked to self sufficiency, thus enhancing independence.

### What makes the school special

#### ▪ Modern educational vision

Hope Flowers has been a pioneer in peace education, human rights, justice and equality, and the school creates special facilities (both educational and material) to provide access for all children to a safe environment and quality education. That is not obvious in the occupied Westbank, due to lacking budgets, violence in the streets that prevents children to leave their homes etc. The mission of the school is indicated on a plaque near the entrance: "we are educating for the well-being of humanity". Education at Hope Flowers is of good quality, and the curriculum and educational materials are regularly reviewed and updated.

The school has an eminent reputation, going well beyond the immediate surroundings of Bethlehem. Alumni all testify that the school has taught them an 'open mind' attitude, another thing that is not obvious when growing up in the context of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict.

Pupils and their parents have inspiring stories to tell about what the school means to them. Read the testimonials here: <http://www.vriendenvanhopeflowers.nl/wordpress/?cat=46> and view them here: <http://www.vriendenvanhopeflowers.nl/wordpress/?cat=43>

#### ▪ Resilience against all oppression

The school founder, Hussein Issa, was convinced that "every act of violence comes from an unhealed wound" – and he acted accordingly. His son Ibrahim Issa, the current school director, runs the school along the very same lines. The school is special in many aspects, but especially inspiring are the

perseverance and resilience that the school shows in finding new ways time and again to express its philosophy, in reply to the many tensions and escalations in the direct surroundings.

- **Link to the Community Center**

The school has an important example role and leadership role in the community, through its respect for different religions and the focus on peace, human values, and equal and civil rights.

The Community Center that is linked to the school, supports parents and others in the community with courses and training focused on civic and economic competencies like household budgeting, hygiene and health, women empowerment, and small business skills.

- **Scalable impact**

The school has developed an approach to trauma handling that has received much recognition in the region, and that is being adapted by other schools in a wide area around Bethlehem. The Community Center provides training to teachers from those other schools, using the “train the trainer” approach. The German Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been supporting this trauma handling programme for a few years already.

- **Independent**

The school has been a private school since its inception in 1984, meaning that it is financed in part from tuitions that parents pay, and in part by supporting organisations (foundations, private donors, and agencies). Because of the difficult economic situation in the Palestinian territories, many parents cannot afford the tuition fee. Supporting organisations therefore play an important role. Because of the private funding, the school can operate totally independently. The PA has granted the school the required educational license.

- **International network**

There are supporting organisations in The Netherlands, Great Britain, the United States and Switzerland, and there are some private donors that regularly donate to the school. Over the years, many volunteers have visited the school and have dedicated their skills and energies in supporting the school in a very active way.

- **Open attitude**

Before the separation wall was built, there were pupils from three religious backgrounds in the school: muslim, christian and jewish (but since 2002 the Israeli government doesn't allow Israeli citizens anymore to go to the Palestinian territories – except the settlements). There are some 350

pupils these days, aged 5 to 14 years, and about 50/50 boys and girls. The school explicitly wants to be open to ALL children, and therefore there are also special facilities for handicapped children.

- **Broad care for children**

The ongoing conflict impacts children in Bethlehem and surroundings, and the school notices an clear increase in pupils with mental and learning disorders, often caused by traumatic experiences. Also the number of pupils with physical disabilities is increasing, in part as a consequence of poor health care conditions. Access to good medical facilities is a problem, and malnutrition is increasing at an alarming rate due to the deteriorating economic situation in the OPT. The school has therefore started the “child protection programme” which is a combination of providing physical and mental care: hot meals and psycho-social care are both part of the programme. The school does more than provide education, showing in the special facilities for disabled children and also the way that parents are involved in what goes on in the school.

- **Impact in the region**

The “child protection programme” caters to such important needs, that some 100 children from other schools in and around Bethlehem are being referred to Hope Flowers School for remedial teaching, psycho-social support, and hot meals. One component in the “child protection programme” is offering special educational instruments – both for children with physical disabilities as well as with mental disorders leading to learning and behaviour problems. Children with trauma often develop some form of autism dysfunction. Hope Flowers School has developed a special expertise in trauma handling, and is also training teachers from other schools in this area.

- **Extra facilities**

The school has a dedicated computer room, a lab for doing physics and chemistry instruction, a separate room for remedial teaching and a classroom with materials that fit with the Montessori approach of ‘haptic’ instruction. Next to the main building there is a vegetable garden that is maintained with the help of parents and that also plays a role in biology and gardening instruction. The crop yields from this garden are used in preparing the hot meals that are part of the “child protection programme”. One floor of the main building is equipped with dorm rooms and showers, providing a ‘boarding’ option to children that live further remote from the school. Hope Flowers also has its own small school bus for transporting pupils between their home and the school.

## The school’s impact

**"None of our former students has been involved in violence."**

*Ibrahim Issa, school director, in an interview published on the school website.*