

## World hero

**You will need: Hero stories (below) and images printed out, flipchart paper, markers or felt tips This activity introduces and builds upon the idea that each person has something to contribute to peace and justice in our communities and the world.**



### ICEBREAKER

Form a circle and going around each person, ask him or her to share: 'if I could have a superpower it would be \_\_\_\_\_.' Ask why they want that particular power and what they might do with it. As leader, you might want to highlight where people choose to use their power for good, or for the benefit of others.

Then ask them to think of someone who they think of as a hero, real not fictional! Ideas for questions to explore are:

- What makes that person a hero?
- How does what they do affect others?
- Was the skill they have something they were born with, something they developed, or both?

You can get them to share this with the person next to them.



### GROUP ACTIVITY

Explain that the group is going to look in some detail at what it takes to be a hero. Split the young people into five groups (or fewer, if you have a small number of participants). Say that they are now contestants on an imaginary programme called 'World Hero'.

Give the groups a picture each and the corresponding information for their hero. Ask them to come up with a two – minute presentation to convince viewers why their hero should win the title of 'Ultimate Hero'. Encourage creativity – they can use song, dance, drama or art to convey their message. The flip chart paper and pens can be used to make notes, or as visuals to support their presentation.

### Things to consider including in their presentation:

- An introduction to their hero
- A dramatic illustration of a story about that person's life
- Highlighting the key points of why the person is a hero and what their best qualities are

After the allotted time, a leader, acting as the show's main presenter, should hand over to each group for their presentation. Arrange a vote for the best hero – young people cannot vote for their own group! Finish with a debrief – you may wish to use

some of the following questions to help the young people reflect:

- Do any of the heroes have anything in common?
- What was their 'superpower'?
- Is it some thing that anyone can have? Do you have it?
- Was there anything in the stories that surprised or inspired you?
- What do you think motivated them to act as they did?
- How do you think the people around them reacted?

What does this say to you as someone who is preparing for Confirmation? (Depending on what's come up in the conversation and what you've already covered in your programme, you may be able to link this to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, vocation, taking action for justice, etc)



### CLOSING PRAYER

Beautiful Lord, may we say 'yes' to you so that the Spirit in our hearts will once again be set ablaze.

Spirit of Wisdom, guide our actions so they tell of God's love.

Spirit of Truth, open our eyes to see the world as it really is.

Spirit of Power, enthuse us to work for justice throughout the world.

Spirit of Love, inspire us to respect the dignity of each person.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful. Come, Holy Spirit, fill our hearts. Come, Holy Spirit, fill us.

Come, Holy Spirit. Come.

Stephen Davies/CAFOD

### LEADERS' NOTES

- The opening questions are merely to set the scene and should be kept to a minimum amount of time.
- You may need to give additional support to groups or individuals who find it difficult to use written material.
- Some young people may feel uncomfortable standing up and speaking in front of their peers – be sensitive to this and do not force anyone to do something they do not want to do. When explaining the task, encourage everybody to play a role in devising their group presentation, even if they will not be feeding back.
- One leader will need to act as the show's presenter. You will have to explain how the show is going to work and may have to remind the young people to pay attention to the presentations of the other groups, not to talk when others are presenting and start off the applause, etc

# World hero: Fr Henri in Brazil



## Who?

**Father Henri de Roziers is not your average priest – he’s also a lawyer. At the heart of the Amazon region is an altar where this lawyer celebrates Mass.**

## Why?

Brazil is the fifth largest and ninth-wealthiest country in the world, yet 54 million Brazilians live in poverty. This extreme gap between rich and poor sees the wealthiest 10 per cent enjoying more of the national income than the poorest 50 per cent.

The fight for land is a life and death struggle for poor people in many parts of rural Brazil. If they don’t have the rights to land on which to farm and grow food, people often end up with a status similar to that of slaves, working for large landowners for little or no pay.

Many of the people in the João Canuto encampment have experienced this first hand. One group of people was employed to clear farmland for months without pay or even decent food or shelter.

Gunmen guarded the farm exits and entrances where they worked. Finally, they escaped in a delivery van by telling the driver they had finished their work and needed a ride to town.

Others still bear scars from where they were shot or beaten. At the end of their contracts, one group’s employers tried to kill them to avoid paying their wages. They are fortunate to be alive.

## What?

Father Henri has been working in Pará state in north-east Brazil for 30 years, defending the rights of the landless people as part of the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT), a CAFOD partner.

CPT provides help and legal support for people who have been threatened with eviction and intimidation. It is an organisation standing shoulder to shoulder with the poor and oppressed.

The João Canuto encampment is named after an assassinated union leader. Father Henri says João Canuto is just one of 820 rural workers and union leaders killed since 1971. He himself has received many death threats and since 2005 has needed bodyguards wherever he goes. He notes:

**“Seventy per cent of cases have not been tried and few people are convicted or imprisoned. Many workers are afraid to report what has happened to them for fear of reprisal. Even when the landowners have to pay it’s difficult getting the money from them, so the victim can be left with nothing.”**

In a region where violence rules, the opportunity to farm your own small plot of land is a lifeline - which is why securing the legal right to the land is so crucial.

**And?**

Lots of people owe their livelihoods and homes to Father Henri's interventions. "Without him we wouldn't be here," says Aleque Alvis dos Santos, 48. "He helps us a lot in our legal battle for land. He has a

big heart and a good one. I think he was born for this work."

Maria, who lives in the encampment with husband Edinaldo and daughter Taisa, hopes one day to plant her own crops to sell - but can only do so once the land is officially hers.

Maria says: "I don't know how to describe how important or good it is to have Father Henri here; this solidarity, his presence, his humility in being with us, and the sense of justice."

# World hero: Kepha in Kenya



## Who?

**Peace activist Kepha Ngito is 25 and lives in Kibera, the largest slum in Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya.**

## Why?

Kenya is on the east African coast and shares borders with Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia and Somalia. Kenya has a population of approximately 39 million people, and in 2005, 46 per cent of the population lived below the poverty line of \$1 a day.

Five million people live in Nairobi, with more than half living in cramped slums. Around 70 per cent of people living in the slums in Nairobi are under 30 years old. Kepha lives in Kibera, where more than a million people live in an area the size of 10 football pitches. There is no proper housing. There is one toilet for every 200 people, open sewers, a lack of clean water and little electricity, education or healthcare. Almost 70 per cent of young people in Kibera will never be able to afford to go to secondary school.

With such extreme poverty and little opportunity for employment, many young people turn to crime and violence as a way to survive.

## What?

As one of the few young people able to go to secondary school, Kepha graduated top of the class and won a place at university. Unable to afford to take it up and frustrated by the lack of opportunities in the slums, he and his friends decided to set up the Kibera Community Youth Project with the aim of helping other young people.

CAFOD supports the 'Youth Building Bridges for Peace in Kibera' initiative, where Kepha works. It sets up village forums where people are encouraged to talk rather than fight. It raises awareness of positive alternatives to violence through 'edutainment' such as street theatre, where the audience come up with solutions to the real-life problems characters face. Ex-gang members, drug dealers and criminals are now being trained as Peace Ambassadors. Kepha says:

**"There's nobody better to put out the fire than the person who started it."**

## And?

During the violence after the general election at the end of 2007, Youth Building Bridges for Peace was one of the first groups to be able to respond. Despite two of Kepha's friends dying in the fighting which swept through the slums, the project trained young people in non-violent action, offered trauma counselling at a crisis centre, and brought people together for healing and reconciliation. Kepha says:

**"This is not a war between tribes. This is a war against poverty and marginalisation. We are all one tribe – the tribe of the poor."**



# World hero: Phalla in Cambodia



## Who?

**Phalla is 58, has five children of her own, and eight foster children. For many years, she worked for a charity called Maryknoll, which is supported by CAFOD.**

## Why?

Cambodia is in south-east Asia and shares borders with Thailand, Laos and Vietnam. Almost one in three Cambodians lives on less than half a US dollar per day, making Cambodia, with a population of just over 14 million, one of the poorest countries in Asia.

Services such as healthcare, education and housing still suffer from the effects of a civil war in the 1970s. In a country where 75,000 are HIV positive, this has a serious effect on people's lives. Getting access to the right medicines can mean that people can live full, healthy lives for many years, raising their children and being part of the community.

Maryknoll, the charity Phalla worked for, provides shelter, medical treatment, food, education and training for people affected by HIV and AIDS, providing many things the government simply can't. Phalla's response to the situation around her was to begin fostering children.

## What?

Like many Cambodians, many of Phalla's family were executed during the war and it may be this that led to her bringing her work home with her and fostering children. Traditionally, extended families would look after children that were orphaned. But HIV and AIDS, on top of the poverty people experience, means this is often impossible.

Phalla explains:

**"So many young people have nowhere to go when their parents die. Often the extended family cannot afford to take them in and they lack any kind of love or support. Maryknoll started to offer foster support when we realised that so many children would become homeless. As a foster parent, I get money to buy extra food, clothes, medicines and all the things that my foster children need. It is still a big commitment to make, but the extra money helps with the financial burden of such a large family."**

## And?

The children that Phalla and her husband have fostered will grow up with love, care and support. Although food prices continue to rise, they have enough to eat, and are away from some of the negative influences they might be subjected to as orphans. She is able to encourage other parents that she meets to get involved in fostering.

**"Having my family together like this makes everything worthwhile," says Phalla. "I have learned many hard lessons in my life and seen cruelty beyond words. But a positive aspect of this experience is my understanding of how people should be helped. Help starts from love. It's as simple as that."**

# World hero: Simon in Darfur, Sudan



## Who?

**Simon, 27, works for CAFOD partner ACT/Caritas to provide clean water in a camp for refugees in Kubum, South Darfur. Darfur is a region of Sudan, which shares borders with Egypt, Ethiopia and Kenya among others, in northern Africa.**

## Why?

Conflict broke out in Darfur in 2003, with its roots in years of tension between ethnic groups, often in competition over dwindling resources such as land for grazing animals or access to fresh water.

Two groups, the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) attacked government targets, attempting to gain support for greater investment in the region and a bigger say in the country's politics. Government-backed armed groups fought back against the SLA and JEM. There was widespread killing, looting, and destruction of crops and homes (especially in 2003). This led to an estimated 2.7 million people leaving their homes.

Years later, many of these people are still living in camps, such as the one where Simon works. There are thousands of people living here, because it is still not safe for them to return to their land.

## What?

Simon experienced war in his home country of Uganda and saw how it affected his family and friends, some of whom live in camps like Kubum. He decided that he wanted to come and help people in Darfur using what he had learned. The area is remote and Simon spends most of his time

working. He finds living in the camp hard at times:

**"I wouldn't say this was a pleasant place to live, but if you know why you have come and why you want to be in such a place, then you can stay. I live with the people I work with and take my work as part of my leisure time too."**

Simon coordinates the construction and maintenance of wells, water pumps and the removal of wastewater. People from the camp villages help him, so they are involved in the whole process and he tries to make it a positive and fun experience. Access to clean water is a crucial part of keeping people healthy, so it's a very important job in the camp. Simon also had to struggle speaking a foreign language. The people in Kubum speak Arabic, whereas he speaks English. He is trying to learn the language so that communication is easier.

## And?

Simon and others have been able to install more than seventy hand pumps, so many more people have access to safe water. Most of the schools also have water and sewage pipes. Simon feels this is one of the highlights of the work he has done. He is very pleased he has been able to raise people's standards of living.

**"It's very difficult to understand the crisis of Darfur, but it's very interesting to live here because the people here are very good, they are very nice people. You wonder at times why there is war in this place."**

# World Hero: Niccollette in Guyana



## Why?

Guyana has many issues affecting its development. Guyana's economy is dependant on sugar and rice production and mining a rock called bauxite. The falling prices for these things on global markets are hitting hard. There are high levels of unemployment and crime, particularly violent crime. The effects of climate change can be seen in Guyana, in the increased frequency and scale of flooding which is destroying crops and homes.

Although schooling is free, many schools are under-staffed and under-resourced. About 80 per cent of people who graduate from university leave Guyana to find work. Basic healthcare is also inadequate. With so many issues affecting people's everyday lives, racial tension can often arise. Guyana is sometimes known as the 'Country of Six Peoples'. The majority of people have Indian or African heritage, but there are a large number of people with mixed backgrounds, as well as European, Chinese and indigenous people (also known as Amerindians). A lack of cultural understanding combined with poverty can lead to tension between people.

## What?

Niccollette volunteers with a CAFOD partner called Rights of Children. It brings young people from different cultures together. She has learned about people of other religions and backgrounds and has

used this to become active in bringing people together to find common ground. Niccollette, along with other young people, targeted local businesses with the 'Race - Free Zone Pledge', asking them to sign declarations to challenge prejudice and discrimination. The 'Hands On Harmony' campaign encouraged the public to think about the positive aspects of living in a culturally diverse place. They asked people to put their handprint on a large banner as a sign of their personal commitment. They learned how to make films and produced videos which educate people about violence against women and climate change; common issues for Guyanese people.

## And?

Many people have taken part in Rights of Children campaigns, including the President of Guyana who contributed to the 'Mosaic of Peace' mural in the National Cultural Centre.

Their work has been featured on television and was shared with UK audiences when Niccollette and her friend Shirvanie visited the UK in 2008, telling young people about their work.

Niccollette has a message to the young people of the UK:

**"You have a voice. It's your world so you should make a difference. Don't live for yourself, live for everyone else, for people like us in Guyana."**