

VOLUNTEER CONTRIBUTIONS TO BUILDING MORE PEACEFUL, INCLUSIVE, JUST AND ACCOUNTABLE SOCIETIES

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ABSTRACT

Today more than ever,¹ voluntary actions that contribute to more peaceful, inclusive, just and accountable societies – whether led by the communities, non-governmental organizations or governments at national and global level – need to be better understood, valued and celebrated. Five years into Agenda 2030, it is time to move from the recognition that peace entails much more than the absence of war or violent conflict, towards understanding the contributions that millions of volunteers and activists make worldwide to sustaining peace – often risking their own lives. These initiatives should be duly recognized and integrated into formal, informal and parallel Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) reporting mechanisms.

This paper presents an adaptive framework that non-governmental and government-led volunteering programmes, and most importantly, volunteers and local communities worldwide can use to identify, value, recognize, and celebrate their contributions to building more peaceful, inclusive, just and accountable societies. The adaptive framework integrates principles of the United Nations (UN) Sustaining Peace Agenda, the SDG 16 Plus (SDG16+) targets and indicators, and conceptual elements from Johan Galtung’s “violence triangle” and his framing of “positive peace”². These elements are interwoven by a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach that places citizens at the centre of creating a vision and plan of action for change. The paper also presents evidence and examples of volunteer initiatives helping to build more peaceful, accountable and just societies in relation to the components of the adaptive framework. We situate our proposal within the global political momentum around volunteerism and peace, and the debates around the politics behind generating evidence of impact.

1. THE IMPORTANCE OF VALUING VOLUNTEER CONTRIBUTIONS TO BUILDING MORE PEACEFUL, JUST AND ACCOUNTABLE SOCIETIES

1.1 THE CURRENT POLITICAL MOMENTUM IS RIGHT FOR RECOGNIZING THE VALUE OF VOLUNTEERISM IN SUSTAINING PEACE

The global consensus from which Agenda 2030 emerged marked a turning point in the global development policy framework. The Agenda’s preamble clearly states that “there can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development”, portraying both as intrinsically interrelated global priorities. Despite difficulties building consensus around the idea of one of the goals being focused on peace, the approval of SDG 16 means that all member states have committed to take action to:

¹ Five years into Agenda 2030, the world is far from achieving SDG 16. A recent study recorded 52 armed conflicts worldwide by 2018, whilst an average of 82,000 lives per year were lost, and 70.8 million people have been displaced over the past decade: record figures since 1946 (IEP 2019). Moreover, several governments have taken advantage and framed the coronavirus crisis as “warfare”, exploiting the situation to further restrict civil society space, thereby bringing multiple challenges to peacebuilders who fear it will be impossible to reclaim their space afterwards (see report published by influential peace organisations: [COVID-19 and the impact on local peacebuilding](#), April 2020). Numerous [analysts](#) have been quick to note that the COVID-19 crisis will also deepen growing inequalities and poverty. We think this will inevitably exacerbate the chances for violence and criminal activities to take hold.

² Johan Galtung is one of the founders of Peace Studies. At least two of his most recognized published works form an integral part of the theoretical and conceptual framework considered for the design of this adaptive framework. (Galtung, 1969 and 1990).

“promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”³.

However, several countries, especially from the Global South, challenged the assumption that “good governance” alone can bring about peace. The proposal to expand SDG16 to the so-called SDG16+, which integrates targets from seven other SDGs, acknowledges that peace is not just about better institutions and governance structures. Peace involves overcoming poverty, inequality, discrimination against women and other groups (including Global South countries in the multilateral arena), as well as promoting fiscal justice, access to education and employment, and other issues enabling peaceful societies.⁴ Furthermore, the United Nations Sustaining Peace agenda⁵ demonstrates progress made in putting conflict prevention and transformation at the centre of multilateral actions, including a more process-orientated and holistic understanding of conflict and crisis prevention (see Section 3).

Two UN documents published in 2015 are seminal for understanding the growing importance of volunteerism in sustaining peace. First, the Secretary-General’s report *Integrating volunteering in the next decade* acknowledges volunteer contributions to security and peace, environment, gender and social inclusion. It also urges governments, UN agencies and volunteers alike to deepen the integration of volunteering into peace and development policies and programmes, outlining a plan of action for doing so (see Box 1).⁶ Secondly, the UN General Assembly’s resolution *Integrating volunteering into peace and development*⁷ commends the importance of integrating volunteering into peacebuilding and conflict-prevention activities, as appropriate, to build social cohesion and solidarity; and exhorts actors to put in place resources and institutional arrangements for volunteer contributions to be sustained and expanded. Similarly, United Nations Volunteers (UNV) recognizes that:

“...ongoing peace requires long-term institutional and regulatory changes that find concrete expression in people’s perceptions and actions. Civic engagement, particularly volunteerism, is an important complementary mechanism in this regard.”⁸

³ All information regarding SDG 16 can be found online: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg16>.

⁴ Institute of Economics and Peace, 2019

⁵ The “Sustaining Peace” UN General Assembly twin resolutions can be downloaded here: [https://undocs.org/S/RES/2282\(2016\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2282(2016)). A blog published by the Institute of Peace Institute (IPI), analysing the impact of the resolution in the UN ways of working can be accessed here: <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2018/04/sustaining-peace-can-new-approach-change-un/>

⁶ Integrating volunteering into peace and development: the plan of action for the next decade and beyond: <https://www.unv.org/sites/default/files/POA%20INFONOTE%20V7pdf.pdf>.

⁷ Resolution 70/129 adopted by the General Assembly on 17 December 2015 [on the report of the Third Committee (A/70/481)] *Integrating volunteering into peace and development: the plan of action for the next decade and beyond*.

⁸ UNV, 2014.

Finally, further recognition was given to volunteer groups within Agenda 2030 by making them a key stakeholder in the High-level Political Forum (HLPF),⁹ with the authority to contribute to the annual SDG progress reviews in an official capacity.¹⁰

BOX 1: The Plan of Action for the next decade and beyond (2016–2030)

Three main aims for integrating volunteering into peace and development policies and programmes are:

1. strengthen people's ownership of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda through enhanced civic engagement and enabling environments for citizen action;
2. integrate volunteerism into national and global implementation strategies for the post-2015 development agenda; and
3. measure volunteerism to gain a holistic understanding of people's engagement and well-being, as part of monitoring the SDGs.

Source: <https://www.unv.org/sites/default/files/POA%20INFONOTE%20V7.pdf>

This global political momentum described should empower volunteers, peacebuilders, activists and their organizations to showcase their contribution to sustaining peace.

1.2 VOLUNTEERS AND ACTIVISTS REMAIN IN THE BACKSEAT

On paper, the multilateral context presented above provides fertile ground for efforts to understand, value and celebrate how volunteers are helping peace to blossom. In practice:

“... neither Member States nor the HLPF articulated concrete steps to translate the recognition of the role of volunteers and activists in achieving the SDGs. This is noticeable in the lack of mention of volunteers among the proposed indicators for measurement of the SDGs.”¹¹

Volunteers therefore remain in the backseat when it comes to decision-making on points 2 and 3 in the plan of action for volunteerism over the next decade and beyond (Box 1).

Given this context, UNV's invitation to co-create innovative models for examining vital volunteer contributions to Agenda 2030 is not simply a technical exercise that helps with accountability to donors and taxpayers. Above all, it is a political imperative to recognize the millions who often risk their lives to sustain peace and ensure that communities remain resilient despite all

⁹ The HLPF is now the official UN body that follows up and reviews implementation of the post-2015 development agenda and SDGs. Stakeholders mentioned in HLPF Res 67/290: i) private philanthropic organizations/foundations; ii) educational and academic entities; iii) persons with disabilities; iv) volunteer groups. Accessed on 23-04-20: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252TOR_FINAL_approved_1_March_2018.pdf.

¹⁰ Haddock and Devereux, 2015.

¹¹ Haddock and Devereux, 2015.

odds. The appreciation of their collective power is also crucial in the current global pandemic confronting humanity.¹² Despite rarely being at peace negotiations or other decision-making tables, volunteers (and particularly community volunteers) are present in the aftermath of conflicts, supporting recovery and reconstruction efforts, creatively mediating local tensions, and rebuilding values of solidarity and trust (see examples in Section 3).¹³

Our adaptive framework proposes an alternative, putting volunteers and communities at the centre of co-creating, implementing, identifying and learning from their contribution to sustaining peace. It aims to innovate by recognizing everyday expressions of volunteerism through local perspectives and languages,¹⁴ based on the principles of Participatory Action Research (PAR) as the underlying methodological approach (see Section 2), and connecting this to the relevant SDG16+ targets and the positive peace dimensions. The adaptive nature of the framework means enabling the iterative adjustment of volunteering initiatives, while always considering the specific context; this speaks to the universality of Agenda 2030 and the evidence that linear, top-down peacebuilding and crisis management efforts are likely to fail.¹⁵ The adaptive framework offers ideas for how to facilitate volunteering initiatives in an inclusive and conflict-sensitive way, considering multiple community voices.

The paper is structured into five sections. After this introduction, Section 2 presents definitions of volunteerism, peace and our political stance on evidence generation.¹⁶ Section 3 describes each component of the adaptive framework, relating it to evidence on the role of volunteerism in sustaining peace. Section 4 presents the three stages for enabling participatory use of the adaptive framework and provides some key, guiding questions, and Section 5 presents final reflections. Annex 1 contains the full adaptive framework, Annex 2 maps volunteerism initiatives against the framework components, and Annex 3 presents the methodology.

¹² We harvested a few articles on volunteerism and the COVID-19, however, they are mainly being published by international (Global North) organizations with emphasis on how this will change international voluntary service or climate change and human rights activism. There will be need to track emerging fast changes for the sector. For initial reference a DEVEX blog can be accessed here: "The future of volunteerism in the coronavirus era: <https://www.devex.com/news/opinion-the-future-of-volunteering-in-the-coronavirus-era-97194>

¹³ Vernon, 2019.

¹⁴ There have been several efforts to conduct participatory impact evaluations and develop indicators for volunteerism. In relation to peacebuilding, the recent work of Firchow (2018) seems promising but it does not explicitly relate to volunteerism. Our innovation is therefore in connecting different key dimensions to sustaining peace, using a PAR methodological approach towards attaining the SDG 16+ targets and indicators.

¹⁵ For more on the differences between linear, systemic and context-relevant peacebuilding, see: Milesi, 2014.

¹⁶ For debates on knowledge in the development studies field see: Standing and Taylor, 2007. For a perspective on researching South-South development cooperation, see: Mawdsely, Fourie and Nauta, 2019.

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF VOLUNTEERS IDENTIFYING THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO PEACE

Academics and practitioners alike have noted that generating evidence is not a neutral exercise: there are power dynamics and politics at every step of the process.¹⁷ This is accentuated when there is a colonial past and a neo-colonial present between those in charge and those ‘objects’ of knowledge generation.¹⁸ For that reason, before presenting the adaptive framework, it is essential to present our political stance on three questions:

- What is volunteerism (and who defines it)?
- What is peace (and who defines it)?
- What is relevant evidence (and who defines it)?

By critically questioning these ideas, our proposal moves away from rigid definitions of volunteerism, the interpretation of peace merely as containment of violence, and top-down linear approaches to evidence generation and measurement. On the contrary, it proposes the co-creation of knowledge and evidence as an inclusive, political and transformative process that can itself be an opportunity for volunteers to take steps towards peace.

2.1 WHAT IS VOLUNTEERISM (AND WHO DEFINES IT)?

As a starting point, it is vital to present the definition of volunteerism that we endorse. For the purposes of this paper, volunteers, voluntary action and volunteerism “(...) refer to a wide range of activities (...) undertaken of free will, for the public good and where monetary reward is not the principal motivating factor.”¹⁹

We agree with Naidoo’s proposition²⁰ – amplified by the 2015 UNV *State of the world’s volunteerism report* (SWVR) – which makes the case for converging volunteerism and social activism by recognizing that, although not all activists are volunteers, many of them are, just as many volunteers are activists. This paper therefore also covers social activism fostered by volunteers.

International and national organizations face challenges when it comes to counting and identifying community volunteers involved in their programmes. Despite their key role in improving or rebuilding communities, community volunteers are rarely meaningfully included in programming,

¹⁷ Eyben et.al., 2013; Chambers, 2017.

¹⁸ Adriansen (2017) explores these dynamics and their relationship to Agenda 2030 in this blog, accessed on 23 April 2020: <https://theconversation.com/the-power-and-politics-of-knowledge-what-african-universities-need-to-do-84233>.

¹⁹ UNGA, 2002 (A/RES/56/38).

²⁰ Naidoo, 2007.

research and evaluation, and they have limited protection when taking risks. Some have recognized this lack of inclusion:

“Informal volunteering and community-based volunteering both require additional investigation. Research should also move beyond the narrow conceptualization of volunteering as ‘service delivery’. One way it can do so is by focusing on volunteers’ roles in advocacy and activism.”²¹

We therefore emphasize the importance of acknowledging what is sometimes called “informal volunteering”, meaning voluntary action that happens outside of formally recognized institutions and funded programmes, as an expression of citizenship.²² We also advocate that volunteerism and activism are central to creating peaceful, inclusive, just and accountable societies. With that, we invite readers to consider **using this adaptive framework, focusing on all types of (unpaid) civic engagement** and thinking more broadly about daily voluntary actions taken by people of all ages and identities.

2.2 WHAT IS PEACE (AND WHO DEFINES IT)?

The idea of peace is a historically contested concept, and this paper does not allow a detailed presentation of the complex politics behind its definition. However, two ideas have framed our presentation of the adaptive framework: on the one hand, peace can be understood as the containment of violence and criminal behaviour, which puts the focus on securitizing social life (policing, militarization, punitive frameworks, etc.); on the other, peace can be understood as the transformation of the root causes of violent conflict and insecurity to create sustainable conditions for peaceful societies. The first concept relates to what peace studies calls “negative peace” (top-down containment), and the second to “positive peace” (transformation of the root causes of conflict). The second definition endorses a more holistic perspective focused on tackling the drivers of tensions, insecurity and violence by addressing issues such as exclusion, injustice, discrimination, poverty and inequality. Arguably, when the UN member states declared the SDGs to be indivisible, they were, in fact, endorsing the concept of “positive peace”: only if the world can overcome the complex global challenges that span all of the goals will we achieve sustainable peace and development for all.²³ Our

²¹ Lough, Allum, Devereux and Tiessen, 2018.

²² For the purposes of this paper, we subscribe to the notion of inclusive citizenship (Kabeer, 2005), as people’s understanding of what it means to be a citizen goes to the heart of the various meanings of personal and national identity, political and electoral participation, and rights.

²³ This shift in the way peace is conceptualized has translated into certain shifts in UN peacebuilding support. For example, between 2015 and 2018, the Peacebuilding Fund contributed 83 per cent of its total budget to the SDGs. Investment went beyond SDG 16 and covered different aspects of peaceful, just and inclusive societies that are included across several SDGs,

adaptive framework therefore upholds a positive understanding of peace, in line with the Agenda 2030 vision and the UN Sustaining Peace agenda.

2.3 WHAT IS RELEVANT EVIDENCE (AND WHO DEFINES IT)?

Agenda 2030 brought with it the promise of a data revolution, with some calling for evidence around implementation of the SDGs to go beyond quantitative targets by also measuring qualitative dimensions related to inclusion, equity, quality and participation.²⁴ For Agenda 2030, “Volunteerism is seen both as a measure of participation and a resource for gathering enhanced, disaggregated data to track progress and ensure that no one is left behind.”²⁵

This statement is problematic for two reasons. First, because the existence of volunteerism should not be considered just as a measure: **volunteerism can itself be the process for generating change and sustaining peace**. Second, there is a risk that volunteers, especially informal ones, are seen by the development sector merely as data collectors, rather than as actors capable of identifying root causes of issues and co-creating actions to address them.

Moreover, because informal volunteerism is yet to prove its economic value, and because it is conceptually ambiguous, it is largely missing from most national and many international statistical systems.²⁶ Put simply, the contribution that citizens make to social change, mostly on a voluntary basis, only enters decision-making spaces and becomes legitimized once it becomes part of large-scale research and impact evaluations often led by Global North institutions.²⁷ This reflects the complex and even unfair politics of evidence generation around volunteerism and the SDGs, with a lack of recognition of different kinds of knowledge and a failure to build evidence together with both informal and formal volunteers. This constitutes epistemic injustice.²⁸

The drive to generate evidence in this unjust way has snowballed since the OECD DAC Aid-Effectiveness Agenda was adopted in 1992, generating questionable practices for proving impact and value for money. For years, academics and practitioners, and key actors in South-South Cooperation,

showing that this investment is complementary and furthers other development efforts (UN, 2019): <https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/1907427-e-pbf-investments-in-sdgs-web.pdf>.

²⁴ Howard et.al., 2017.

²⁵ UN SG, 2015.

²⁶ Haddock et.al., 2018.

²⁷ Burns et.al., 2015; Thiessen et.al, 2018; Howard et.al. 2016; Lough and UNV, 2018.

²⁸ Fricker (2007) coined this term, stating that epistemic injustice happens when someone is wronged specifically in their capacity as a knower and, therefore, in a capacity that is essential to human value.

called for changes to these dynamics and a more participatory approach to impact and evaluation.²⁹ However, the OECD DAC published a review in 2019, integrating two new principles that should underpin all impact evaluations. First, evaluations should be contextualized; and second, they cannot be applied mechanically. These principles open the way to more inclusive and participatory approaches to generating evidence for impact, with greater awareness of the complexities.³⁰

In this context, different methods have been proposed to measure the contribution of volunteerism to the SDGs systematically, mainly with international organizations in mind. However, recently, there has been growing recognition that “any tool for measurement must be broadly appealing to a variety of organizations, including domestic-oriented, and small and local organizations, and include informal volunteering outside the context of an organization.”³¹ A study proposing a new theoretical lens to consider the agency, voices and experiences of Southern partners in volunteer programmes more fully also recognized the need for deeper analysis, and for critical reflection on the epistemological and methodological approaches that facilitate knowledge generation with and by Southern voices.³² Other initiatives also propose new methodological approaches to measuring peace in more inclusive ways.³³

From our perspective, co-creation opens a door to generating richer evidence that truly rounds out the understanding of complex problems such as violent conflict. At the same time, it paves the way for those who have been silenced to have their voices articulated and meaningfully taken into account.³⁴ PAR is a democratic and participative approach to knowledge and evidence creation. It brings together action and reflection, and theory and practice, in the pursuit of practical solutions to pressing issues. As such, it involves co-creating knowledge with – rather than about – people.³⁵ The adaptive framework is therefore aligned with the vision of the Latin American school of PAR³⁶ and its principles (see Box 2). PAR emphasizes that the politics of generating evidence are linked to liberation from oppression, as people identify the structural issues that have kept them excluded and marginalized, becoming conscious of their own power to change them.³⁷

²⁹ Chambers, 1997; Estrella and Gaventa, 1998; Eyben et al., 2013; Besharati, 2019; and BRICS Policy Center and Articulacio Sul, 2017

³⁰ Onyango, 2018; Goodier and Apgar, 2018.

³¹ Haddock and Devereux 2015.

³² Tiessen et al., 2018.

³³ Firchow, 2018.

³⁴ Cortez Ruiz, 2014.

³⁵ Bradbury, 2015.

³⁶ Freire, 1970; Fals Borda, 1979.

³⁷ Apgar et al., 2016.

BOX 2. Principles of Participatory Action Research (PAR)

Epistemological:

- Breaking the duality of subjects and objects of research, as participants become capable actors who are central to decision-making in social change and research processes.
- Everyone's viewpoints and opinions (knowledge) counts but the views of those most affected by the problem are at the centre, as they have a deeper understanding of the context.

Political

- The ultimate purpose of the research is to transform reality in a way that benefits those citizens who are most affected by a problem.
- Ownership of the research process allows civic engagement and democracy to be strengthened.

Methodological

- Based on methods that allow for meaningful participation and take the understanding and questioning of power structures as a starting point.

Source: by authors using information from Sirvent and Regal (2012)

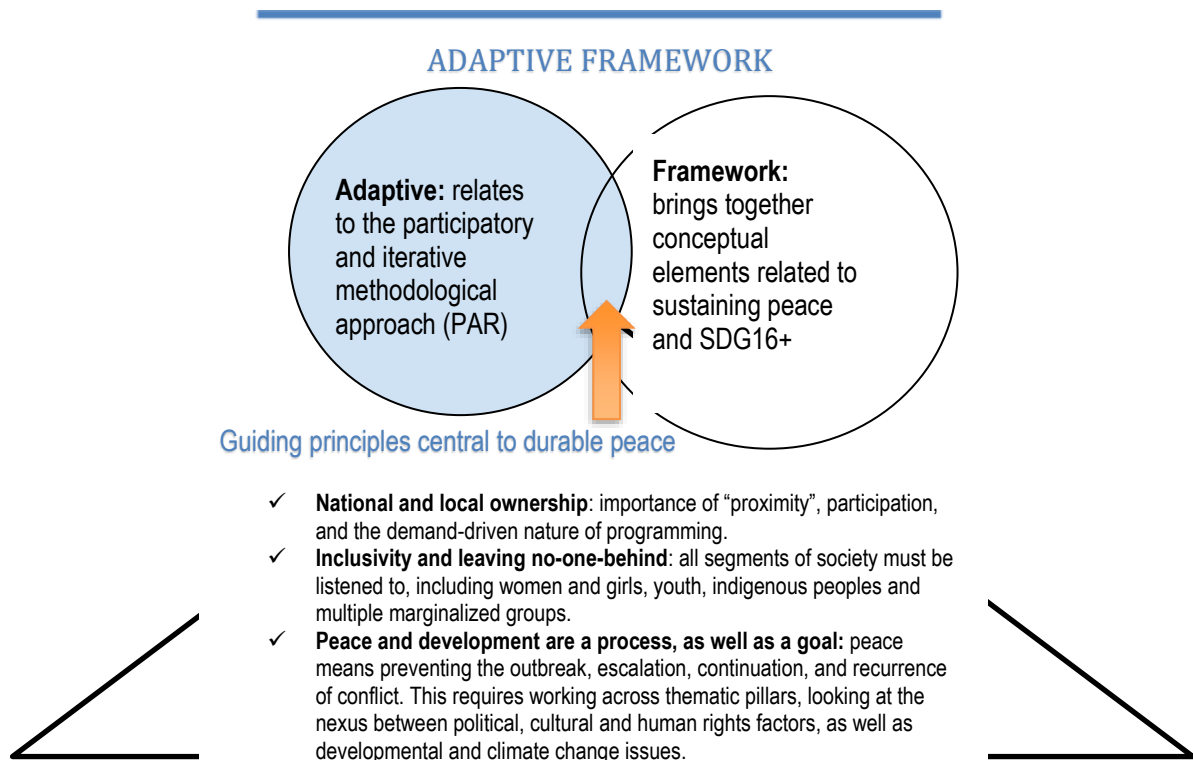
Ultimately, knowledge and data generated through participatory approaches can give depth to the vast array of data already gathered through surveys and growing digital data repositories.³⁸ Together, these different forms of evidence production can inform context-appropriate, legitimate and robust reporting mechanisms to inform the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) and other global, regional and national results frameworks linked to the SDGs.

3. AN ADAPTIVE FRAMEWORK FOR VALUING VOLUNTEER CONTRIBUTIONS TO SUSTAINING PEACE

This section presents the adaptive framework as an original model to support organizations to value and identify volunteer contributions to sustaining peace, considering the policy and methodological debates discussed above. The framework therefore presents an avenue for generating evidence that empowers volunteers and activists by raising their awareness on the root causes of conflict, while generating citizen-led initiatives that are central to sustaining peace. It has three main components: an adaptive approach to planning, gathering evidence and learning; a framework that brings together peace and development concepts; and SDG16+ targets and indicators. At the intersection is a set of common guiding principles that are central to promoting durable peace. Figure 1 provides a visual representation of this and the three components are explained in Section 3.1.

³⁸ Howard et.al., 2017.

Figure 1. COMPONENTS OF THE ADAPTIVE FRAMEWORK



Using the adaptive framework

Governmental and non-governmental volunteering organizations, and self-organized volunteering initiatives, could opt to use the adaptive framework in full or in part. Ideally, the overall adaptive proposal should be implemented from the outset of any volunteering endeavor, covering all three stages of planning, implementation, and reflection and learning, as presented in Section 4. Given that this is not always feasible, we offer some practical tips and guidance for using just part of the adaptive framework.

3.1 DEFINING THE FRAMEWORK COMPONENTS

A) ADAPTIVENESS

Our proposal lays-out an adaptable process that allows volunteering initiatives to adjust their actions to specific context challenges and dynamics, while always listening to the perspectives of citizens directly affected by violence. As mentioned, the adaptive framework proposes using PAR) as the main methodological approach. PAR allows people and organizations to formulate an in-depth understanding of the social and political dynamics within a specific context in an iterative manner. This

is reflected in a cycle (Figure 2) that involves a continuous process of joint observation, planning, action and reflection. PAR has been proven³⁹ as an effective way to build participatory learning into organizations that support solidarity among participants, as well as impactful collective action, while enabling evidence-based contributions to policy development.

Importantly, a principled use of this adaptive framework could facilitate something of great relevance in conflict and crisis contexts: as people share their stories, perspectives and ideas, it might support healing and a restoration of trust, increasing the chances of social cohesion by embracing a common history of pain, suffering and fear. In this sense, the adaptiveness of the framework can facilitate storytelling, empathetic listening and collective analysis and action, making victims the “authors” of new stories of change,⁴⁰ and promoting the invisible but vital act of nurturing “a new political we”.⁴¹ As such, the adaptive framework is best used in multiple local languages, rather than being “rolled-out” by outsiders who are unable to form a bond of mutual trust and solidarity. A properly facilitated process of participatory evidence-gathering and collective analysis can also integrate the unknown and fast-changing factors that are typically present in conflict and crisis situations, while remaining relevant to the SDGs’ aspiration of inclusivity, mutual accountability and participation. The adaptive framework proposes PAR as the methodological approach interweaving three different stages for using the framework (presented in Section 4).

Figure 2. The Action Research Cycle and stages



³⁹ Burns and Worsley, 2015.

⁴⁰ Anjarwati 2014; and Wheeler et.al., 2018.

⁴¹ See the concept of “new political we” in Arendt, 1998.

B) PRINCIPLED APPROACH

The principles sustaining the framework are common to the PAR approach and to the principles set in the Agenda 2030 and the UN Sustaining Peace twin resolutions, both concerned with inclusive development and durable peace. Volunteering initiatives espousing these guiding principles might trigger a process of change that can be inclusive, democratic and highly political, rather than only aimed at efficiency and better performance. Our adaptive framework therefore calls for any voluntary action to be rooted in citizen-led analysis of the drivers of conflicts, and to be iteratively checked and adapted for relevance, which enables local ownership. Furthermore, taking a principled approach to designing, evaluating and learning from volunteering initiatives allows us to ensure “conflict sensitivity”,⁴² which is essential for conflict prevention and sound crisis management. In brief, conflict sensitivity calls for:

- constant assessment of the unique contextual “power and political” dynamics that explain violent conflict, in order for initiatives not to reinforce any perceived unfair dynamics or grievances that drive that conflict; and
- careful consideration of the structural and historical asymmetries that need to be addressed to resolve ingrained grievances that drive violent conflict.

Using a principled approach allows volunteering initiatives to be alert to conflict and peace dynamics based on the realities of those most affected in the ground, rather than being top-down.⁴³ This bottom-up understanding of learning to value volunteers’ and activists’ contribution to peace and development encompasses the individual, the organization, the community and the wider context. If done with time and in depth, it can open the door to change at all levels.

C) THE FRAMEWORK

Our framework is a structure that volunteering initiatives can use to identify and reflect on how their work contributes to sustaining peace. It covers three types of violence and the corresponding positive peace dimensions of change, as conceptualized by Galtung, as well as being interlinked with SDG16+ targets and indicators. It therefore helps to connect learning from the

⁴² See Wheeler (2012) for sensitivity to conflict dynamics when conducting participatory action research in highly unstable spaces and blog with info and resources for conflict sensitive programming at: <https://conflictsensitivity.org/conflict-sensitivity/what-is-conflict-sensitivity/>

⁴³ Ropers and Giessman, 2011.

smallest volunteering initiative with formal national, global and parallel civil society-led reporting on SDG progress. This section presents the framework and evidence⁴⁴ of existing volunteering programmes promoting change at these levels.

The framework’s structure is composed of six interlinked elements, as summarized in Table 1 and fully presented in Annex 1.

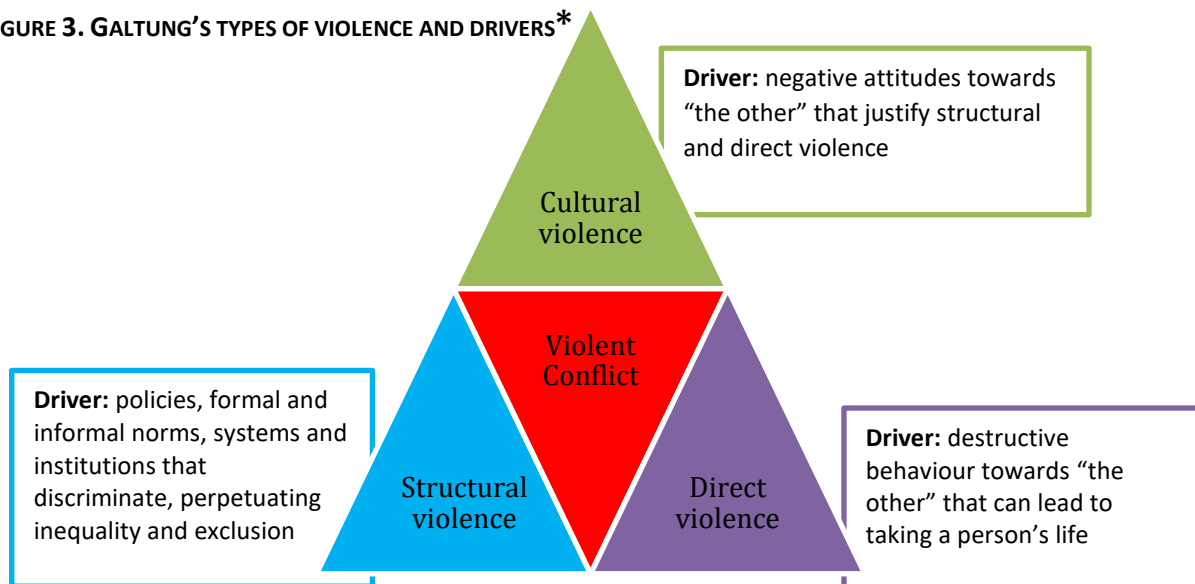
Table 1. Elements of the framework

Column A	Column B	Column C	Column D	Column E	Column F
TYPES OF VIOLENCE	DRIVERS OF VIOLENCE	DIMENSIONS OF CHANGE	ISSUES	INDICATORS	SDG16+ Targets

- **Types of violence, drivers and the positive peace dimensions of change (columns A, B and C)**

These elements integrate the well-known **ABC triangle of the root causes of conflict**. Figure 3 synthesizes Galtung’s seminal studies on peace and violence, in which he presents **three interrelated types of violence with key drivers that could lead to violent conflict**.

FIGURE 3. GALTUNG’S TYPES OF VIOLENCE AND DRIVERS*

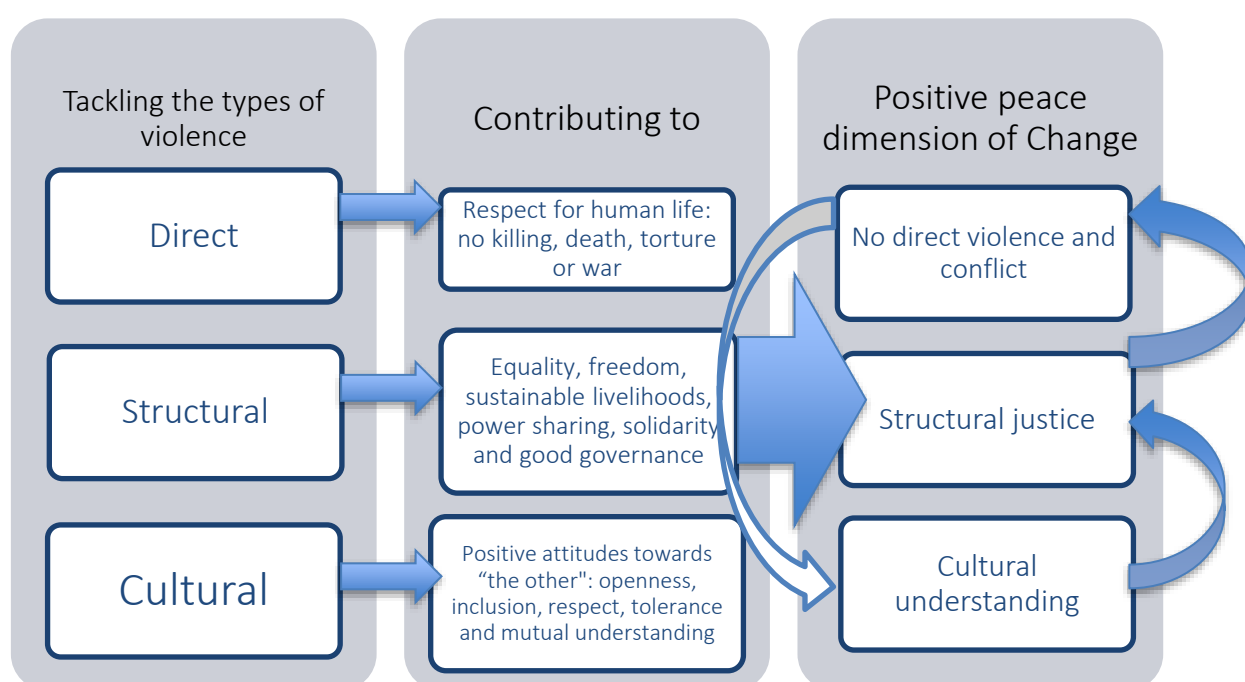


*Cultural violence: “attitudes” refers to a person's mindset, in terms of the way they think or feel about someone or something. Direct violence: “behaviour” implies the actions, conduct or functions of an individual or group towards other people.

⁴⁴ The purpose of this paper was not to conduct an extensive literature review on this evidence, but to set out the adaptive framework. As such, we recognize that the evidence presented is limited, presenting only a sample.

According to Galtung, these drivers of violence must be positively transformed if an initiative or policy is to prevent the outbreak, escalation, and perpetuation of conflict. In brief, **positive peace would come about by facilitating change processes oriented to transform these types of violence** by tackling the drivers behind them. Ultimately, for peace to be sustained over time, work needs to be done across all types of violence (as presented in Figure 4) to reinforce change across the different dimensions.

FIGURE 4. MOVING FROM TYPES OF VIOLENCE TO DIMENSIONS OF CHANGE



- **Connecting positive peace dimensions of change with SDG16+ targets and indicators (columns D, E and F)**

The aim of the adaptive framework is to support volunteering organizations to identify how their current or future initiatives are relevant to the targets set out in Agenda 2030. The next elements of the framework therefore map out the SDG16+ targets and indicators (columns E and F), connecting them with the positive peace dimensions of change (column C), while considering the issues (column D) that volunteering initiatives might be tackling when working around SDG16+ targets and more broadly in sustaining peace.

As mentioned briefly in the introduction, there was intense debate in global policy spaces over including “peace” as a global target: SDG 16 was integrated, but not without tensions between Global North and Global South member states. For some, focusing on issues such as service performance,

access to justice or transparent institutions alone was not the only pre-condition to peace. Particularly, Southern actors argued that other key factors such as poverty, inequality, discrimination and systemic exclusion are drivers of war, crime and instability.⁴⁵ In this context, a group of UN Member States, civil society organizations and academics⁴⁶ pushed to integrate elements from seven other SDGs' targets to create a more comprehensive assessment of peace, resulting in what is now known as SDG16+.

The adaptive framework integrates the SDG16+ targets and indicators, as opposed to solely those for SDG 16. As presented in Figure 5, SDG16+ reflects a more comprehensive understanding of the “peace and development nexus”. In a similar tone, the UN Sustaining Peace agenda called for a more integral way of working across the developmental, human rights and peacebuilding UN pillars, putting conflict prevention at the heart of programming efforts. The SDG16+ and Sustaining Peace agenda therefore provide the policy frameworks for working with an inclusive understanding of rights, but also a fair understanding of responsibilities, paving the way to working with a truly global,⁴⁷ multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral approach: “The SDGs contain a shared results framework that spans the development, governance and peacebuilding nexus, which can be utilized to underpin the sustaining peace approach and align it with the more comprehensive SDG agenda.”⁴⁸

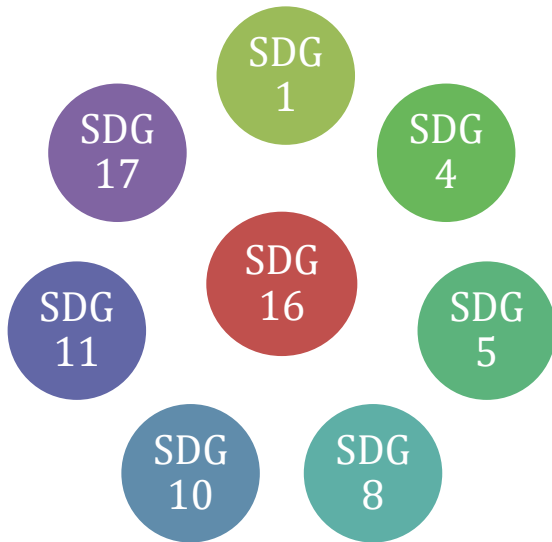
⁴⁵De Siqueira, 2019.

⁴⁶ Most notably, the Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies, a group of 33 UN Member States, international organizations, global partnerships, civil society and the private sector. The group of g7Plus of conflict affected countries (see <http://g7plus.org/>), leading the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States is also an active member. For more information see: <https://www.sdg16.plus/>.

⁴⁷ For a deeper understanding of this idea, see: *For a truly global peace agenda in a multipolar world*, Cecilia Milesi, Asia Global Institute Online Journal, October 2019: <http://bit.ly/32sm37o>.

⁴⁸ For an interesting reflection on the potential of the Sustaining Peace agenda, see the blog *Sustaining Peace: Can a New Approach Change the UN?*, by Cedric de Coning: <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2018/04/sustaining-peace-can-new-approach-change-un/>.

FIGURE 5. SDG16+ TARGETS

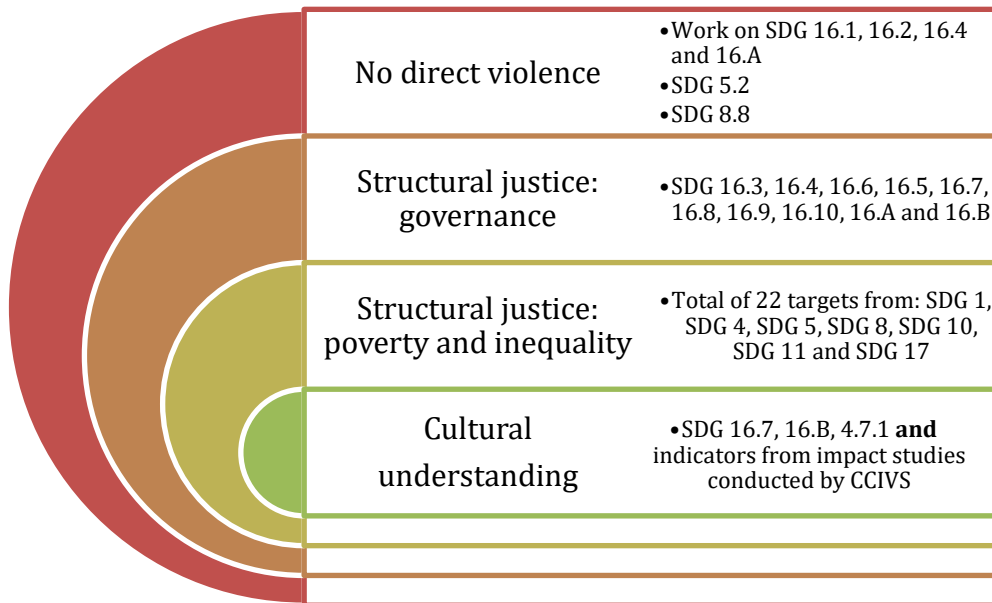


SDG16+ integrates the following targets:

- SDG 16: Peace, justice and accountability
- SDG 1: End poverty
- SDG 4: Inclusive and equitable education
- SDG 5: Gender equality
- SDG 8: Economic growth
- SDG 10: Reduce inequality
- SDG 11: Safe and sustainable cities
- SDG 17: Global partnerships

The framework associates the SDG16+ targets and indicators with the three dimensions of change for positive peace, as summarized in Figure 6 (for details see Annex 1).

FIGURE 6. CONNECTING THE POSITIVE PEACE DIMENSIONS OF CHANGE TO SDG16+



The adaptive framework (Annex 1) helps interested actors to map out intended or unintended volunteering contributions to sustaining peace by linking their practices with multilateral efforts to measure progress on Agenda 2030. Section 4 below provides initial guidance on how to use this adaptive framework.

3.2 VOLUNTEERISM AND THE ADAPTIVE FRAMEWORK

In the voluntary sector, the discussion on the “peace and development nexus” is slowly gathering force. Prominent scholars in the field⁴⁹ recently made a call to enhance efforts to understand volunteer contributions to Agenda 2030 as a whole, and to consider issues and actors that are particularly relevant to volunteering. We recognize that efforts and investments have been made to produce new evidence on volunteer contributions to sustainable development.⁵⁰ However, most of this work remains siloed in specific themes: it is often project-oriented, and largely focused on international volunteerism. We expect that this adaptive framework will provide an avenue for volunteering initiatives to look at complementarities between the peace and development nexus and SDG16+. The following paragraphs provide a glimpse to the existing evidence on how volunteering initiatives are working in relation to the three dimensions of change presented in Figure 6.

➤ VOLUNTEERISM AND CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

As we laid out our adaptive framework, the first element that stood out from the evidence reviewed and that of our own professional experience is that several volunteering programmes aim to transform cultural violence, understood as: “any aspect of a culture that can be used to legitimize violence in its direct or structural form. Symbolic violence built into a culture does not kill or cause direct violence, but it legitimizes violence in its direct or structural form.”⁵¹

As such, transforming the negative and discriminatory attitudes, beliefs and social norms behind cultural violence seems essential to sustaining peace, and working from the dimension of cultural understanding addresses the personal, interpersonal and community issues that might fuel violence. For years, volunteering programmes have worked on intangible aspects such as tackling individual beliefs, ideas and social norms that justify the discrimination, marginalization and even killing of “the other”. From human rights activism to solidarity exchanges, many volunteering initiatives aim to promote cultural understanding. For example, a mixed-method study by the global network the Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service (see Case example 1)⁵² shows how volunteering exchanges promote the enhancement of what is sometimes defined as the “**power within**”, “**power to**” and “**power with**”,⁵³ which are all essential for achieving sustainable peace and

⁴⁹ Lough et.al., 2018.

⁵⁰ Burns et.al. 2015; Haddock and Devereux, 2015; Hacker et.al., 2017.

⁵¹ Galtung, 1990.

⁵² The selection of case examples presented in this section is not fortuitous. We the authors have been professionally engaged with the programmes or the organisations in different capacities as researchers, evaluators, consultants, expert advisors or allies. This has allowed us to recognize these efforts, although not without acknowledging that no volunteering initiative is faultless.

⁵³ VeneKlasen and Miller (2002) outlined several ways of looking at power as a positive rather than a negative force. These positive expressions of power can be recognized and supported significantly by grassroots movements and activism:

development. The research, demonstrates how volunteering builds inner strength and confidence among volunteers and community members to identify, analyze and discuss issues that affect them, and to engage with others to address these on the basis of mutual respect.

<p>Case example 1: International workcamps (South-South, South-North, North-South⁵⁴)</p>
<p>Organization: CCIVS⁵⁵, the Global Coordinating Body of International Voluntary Service Organizations</p>
<p>CCIVS together with its 181 members working across the globe, conducted comparative ex-ante and ex-post surveys to measure how volunteering experiences through international workcamps promote a positive transformation of preconceptions and negative ideas about other cultures and social groups, while enhancing skills towards improving personal, interpersonal and community dimensions. CCIVS impact studies have measured the following indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal level: self-awareness, confidence, autonomy, motivation • Interpersonal skills: communication, problem-solving, teamwork, adaptation, conflict management • Community dimension: intercultural awareness, social inclusion and integration, and active participation. <p>Example research findings: The recent Raising Peace workcamps impact evaluation post-test analysis highlighted a steady increase in the percentage of participants looking at problems as opportunities to improve their life (+15%), but also of volunteers feeling more able to communicate with people from different countries and cultures (+11.3%), more confident in taking part in debates and discussions (+9.8%), enjoying taking initiative (+8.9%).</p>

Other pieces of research highlight the importance of the relational aspects of volunteering experiences. For example, *Valuing volunteering*⁵⁶ distinguishes that, depending on each context, different types of volunteers can build relationships of trust, brokering conversations with multiple actors and creating opportunities to access information and institutional spaces to monitor and advocate (for example, for better public services), or mediate to overcome community challenges. Furthermore, in some contexts, the relational way in which volunteers work makes them better able to interact with the groups that are hardest to reach,⁵⁷ contributing to “leaving no one behind.” Lough and Matthew’s research identified that “international volunteering can help change informal norms and attitudes that determine how people perceive and act on governing institutions, as well as inspire direct participation in political processes that determine formal rules and laws.”⁵⁸

-
- **Power within:** a sense of confidence, dignity and self-esteem that comes from gaining awareness of your situation and the possibility of doing something about it.
 - **Power to:** is about being able to act. It begins with awareness and can grow into taking action, developing skills and capacities, and realizing that you can effect change.
 - **Power with:** describes collective action; including both the psychological and political power that comes from being united.

⁵⁴ CCIVS and many of its member organizations have International Solidarity Funds and mechanisms to balance the flows of volunteers and support the reciprocity of the exchanges, also promoting voluntary South-South and South-North exchanges.

⁵⁵ Information about the Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service can be found in its website: www.ccivs.org. The impact evaluation can be found here: <https://ccivs.org/research/raising-peace-impact-summary/>.

⁵⁶ Burns et al., 2015.

⁵⁷ Burns and Howard, 2015.

⁵⁸ Lough and Matthew, 2014.

The conceptual model presented in this paper, includes “informal institutional contributions” to good governance, such as motivation, cultural exchange, bridging social capital and other factors that are sometimes “invisible”. In *Volunteering for peace in East Africa*,⁵⁹ the authors argue that social identity and intergroup contact theory evidences that greater exposure to an “out-group” widens the chances of greater understanding and acceptance, thereby making volunteering a potential enabler of peacebuilding. However, they also point out that merely bringing people together without proper infrastructure and facilitation is not a pre-condition for mutual understanding. Ultimately, it seems that volunteering exchanges, connecting international, national and community volunteers can promote intangible personal and intercultural dividends that are relevant to transforming regressive beliefs and discriminatory attitudes, behaviours and social norms.

Unfortunately, when analyzing the SDG16+ indicators, it stands out that almost none of them are about the intangible elements that make up the dimension of cultural understanding, which is essential to sustaining peace. As seen in Annex 1/Column F, we have therefore integrated CCIVS indicators⁶⁰ and SDG targets 16.7, 16.B and 4.7 as proxies. Considering the abovementioned evidence, the adaptive framework invites volunteering organizations to reflect on how those indicators can be used to identify and celebrate the personal, interpersonal and relational aspects that enable understanding and cooperation between multiple “others”.

➤ VOLUNTEERISM AND STRUCTURAL JUSTICE

The adaptive framework presents two components of structural justice:

1. its relationship to governance and accountability; and
2. its relationship to ending poverty and multiple inequalities, and discriminatory policies and practices.

This is the dimension of change to which the contribution of most volunteerism initiatives are seemingly linked. With regard to the first, in 2015, the *State of the world's volunteerism report*

⁵⁹ *Volunteering for peace in East Africa* by Benjamin J. Lough, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Center for Social Development, and Jacob Mwathi Mati, Volunteer and Service Enquiry Southern Africa (VOSESA), University of Witwatersrand.

⁶⁰ CCIVS studies were built with and by the member organizations based on a common need to understand, improve and valorize the network's impact and practices. Several key members such as Solidarités Jeunesses (France) and IWO (Korea), played an important role catalyzing the participatory research process, undertaken with the support of universities such as the University of Illinois and John Hopkins University (USA), the University of Salzburg (Austria), UKM University (Malaysia) and Myongji University (Korea). CCIVS recognizes that the indicators integrated here are also based on several recognized standards and categories developed in several other studies valuing attitudinal and behaviour change. We cannot present references to all these important research efforts in this paper. For now, we thank the CCIVS for granting direct access to preliminary research findings, demonstrating changes at personal and interpersonal levels and taking into account volunteer participation in workcamps and mid- and long-term volunteering experiences. We expect to continue exploring these important matters with a global perspective.

(SWVR)⁶¹ gathered global evidence and found that volunteerism contributes to enhancing voice and participation, accountability, and responsiveness from a range of governance actors and institutions at all levels. The report also acknowledged that volunteerism has its own power dynamics and hierarchies: volunteer spaces are gendered, and different volunteer groups have different access to funding and support, as well as access to people in power. Today, academics and practitioners alike⁶² continue to search for ways to document the multiple ways that volunteers and activists can make a difference in improving service provision, creating more participation in decision-making at multiple levels (see Case example 2), and holding the powerful to account.

Case example 2: Integration of social accountability into volunteerism programming
Organization: Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO)⁶³ and Youth task forces in Kenya
VSO has integrated social accountability, alongside gender, inclusion and resilience, as a core approach to all volunteering programmes. This is central to achieving sustained change in all of the dimensions laid out in its Volunteer for Development strategy: individual, family/community, policy and structural. In Kenya, youth task forces in several counties have used social accountability tools, such as community scorecards and forum theatre, to hold those responsible for poor service provision accountable. The actions of these volunteers have gone further by unveiling corrupt dynamics, but also by inspiring other young people to join their efforts. VSO staff, and national and international volunteers, have helped build youth capacity to analyze power, campaign, use the tools in a context-appropriate and inclusive way, analyze and mitigate risks, etc. The partnership between VSO and the youth task forces is thereby building strong foundations and local capacities, in order to move from a context of structural violence – in which young people are discriminated against, criminalized and ignored – to one of structural justice.

Multiple volunteerism initiatives claim to have an impact on the reduction of poverty and inequalities. However, we must be cautious, as not all of those that claim this are working to address the structural causes behind these issues.⁶⁴ In fact, volunteerism (not just in North-South volunteering programmes but also in community volunteering) might be contributing to deepening inequalities. The 2018 SWVR⁶⁵ identified the power that informal volunteerism can have in fostering community resilience, particularly by enabling collective strategies for managing risk in a self-organized way, and by forming connections with others. However, the report highlights that it is important not to idealize

⁶¹ Wallace, 2015.

⁶² Soomro and Shukui, 2016. *Volunteerism as co-production in public service management: application to public safety in California*, Juliet A. Musso, Matthew M. Young and Michael Thom, *Public Management Review*, 21:4, 473-494 (2019). *Innovation Case Studies in Social Accountability*, Ethicore and World Vision UK (no year): https://assets.worldvision.org.uk/files/4014/9865/4701/Case_Studies_of_Innovative_Social_Accountability_programmes_WVUK_Feb.2017.pdf. Milesi, Howard and Lopez Franco (2020, unpublished) *Scoping study on the role of volunteers in social accountability*, IDS and VSO, UK.

⁶³ For more about VSO's core approaches to its Volunteering for Development programme, see: <https://www.vsointernational.org/our-work/volunteering-for-development-programme>.

⁶⁴ Simpson, 2004.

⁶⁵ Lough, 2018.

local voluntary action as it is not inevitably inclusive or egalitarian; people under stress and crisis tend to focus on helping those within their own circles. The burden of volunteering can disproportionately affect more vulnerable groups, stretching their already limited time, capacity and resources to breaking point. In addition, the way in which external actors (such as donors, international volunteering organizations and government agencies) engage with informal volunteerism is also important, as they shape these actions significantly.

Moving away from “assistencialist” and charitable approaches, volunteers in social movements from grassroots to global levels have taken the approach of demanding an end to structural discrimination and poverty by tackling multiple inequalities. These contributions are now being increasingly studied⁶⁶ and, as seen in Case example 3, the ways in which some volunteering initiatives are building structural justice addresses the personal, social and economic factors keeping people at the margins.

Case example 3: Global volunteer corps fighting extreme poverty alongside people living in poverty
Organization: International Movement All Together in Dignity (ATD Fourth World) ⁶⁷
<p>ATD Fourth World is a global movement that prioritizes the poorest people, both in the Global North and South. It brings together members of an international volunteer corps, activists with first-hand experience of poverty, and multiple allies to develop initiatives that promote family life, advocacy and skills for professional development.</p> <p>The movement’s approach to structural change starts at the individual level, but connects to multiple spheres of action to attain structural change, including at global scale. Through People’s University sessions, street libraries and its participatory research approach Merging of Knowledge©, volunteers support the progressive growth of people’s sense of self-worth and dignity, and their capacity to join others to drive change. Volunteers also promote alternative work experiences that develop strong ties and solidarity, in addition to generating income for those in extreme poverty. Recently, in the Central African Republic, a cohort of young people participated in a 12-month training programme on social and cultural mediation, each making a commitment to offer gestures of peace in their community to counter the violence their country has experienced. Finally, the movement has opened doors for activists with first-hand experience of poverty to address global policy spaces directly, including the UN-HLPF, UNHRC sessions and COP 25. Actions to promote gender equality are taken across all of these initiatives.</p>

Taking the abovementioned evidence into consideration, the adaptive framework invites volunteering initiatives to reflect on how to learn how their emerging outcomes map out against the SDG16+ targets included in the framework, with regard to structural justice. This would allow volunteering initiatives to make explicit linkages with the multiple thematic areas agreed

⁶⁶ Tiessen et.al, 2018; Tiessen and Delaney, 2018.

⁶⁷ Van Breen, Tardieu and Letellier, 2020.

multilaterally.

➤ **Volunteerism working to end direct violence**

Our initial scoping exercise of volunteering initiatives shows that, except for UNV stabilization and peacekeeping operations, there are few volunteerism initiatives tackling direct violence. Given the limitations of this paper, we can only highlight how volunteers and activists have made some achievements in ending direct violence, particularly through campaigning (see Case example 4). This might seem a slow route to take, but it represents a long-term vision for sustainable peace.

Furthermore, the adaptive framework invites volunteering initiatives to reflect on how their long-term impact (intended or otherwise) might be somehow associated with preventing and ending direct violence. This depends very much on the dynamics and objectives of each endeavour. The inclusion of this dimension with its associated SDG16+ targets and indicators provide the initial basis for this analysis.

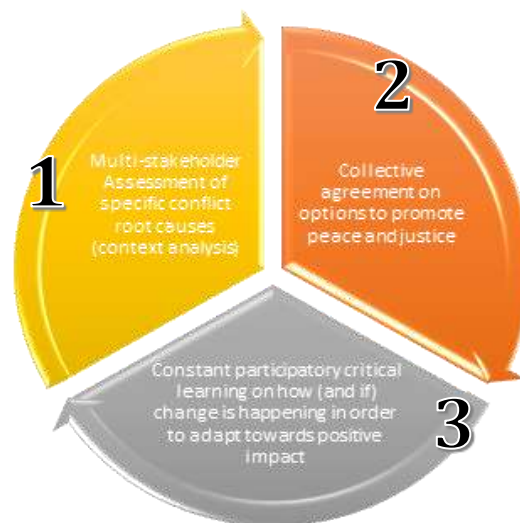
Case example 4: Global campaign and volunteerism on the abolition of the death penalty
Organization: Amnesty International
<p>For 40 years, Amnesty has been campaigning to abolish the death penalty around the world through monitoring data, publishing annual reports, strengthening national and international standards against its use, and applying pressure in cases of imminent execution. Amnesty’s work on this issue is bolstered by its incredible activists, who take it upon themselves to campaign against the death penalty in their own countries. A notable example is that of Souleymane Sow, who has been volunteering with Amnesty International since he was a student in France. Inspired to make a difference, he returned to his country of origin, Guinea, and set up a local group of Amnesty International volunteers with the aim of promoting the importance of human rights, educating people on these issues, and abolishing the death penalty. With the help of other NGOs, they finally achieved their goal in 2019.</p> <p>Albeit slow, the outcomes of this campaign combining global and local pressure have been significant: when Amnesty started its work in 1977, only 16 countries had totally abolished the death penalty. Today, that number has risen to 106 – more than half the world's countries.</p>

Having introduced the three components of the adaptive framework, together with case examples of pertinent volunteerism initiatives, the next section provides a stage-by-stage process for using the adaptive framework, considering key guiding questions for collective analysis.

4. USING THE ADAPTIVE FRAMEWORK

To facilitate use of the framework, this section presents guidance and details to enable volunteering initiatives to lead locally owned joint-analysis processes, in order to design and learn about intended (or unintended) impacts, while being conflict-sensitive. The process is split into three stages, each with some initial guiding questions and insights to prompt reflection by those involved in volunteering actions.

FIGURE 7. STAGES FOR USING THE ADAPTIVE FRAMEWORK



This “*how-to*” is about supporting a dynamic process for reflecting and documenting perspectives on a number of key guiding questions. Volunteering initiatives can use these questions to prompt collective, empowering analysis with the aim of fully understanding whether and how volunteers and activists are creating more peaceful, just and accountable societies. The guiding questions are linked to the adaptive framework presented above, including the SDG 16+ targets.

STAGE 1. MULTI-STAKEHOLDER ASSESSMENT OF THE ROOT CAUSES OF CONFLICT

This first stage is about **facilitating multi-stakeholder spaces to discuss, identify and understand the complex and interrelated root causes of tensions, instability, and structural and direct violence**, while assessing what different groups and powerholders are doing (or not) in order to sustain peace and justice.

We propose considering **two types of guiding questions** during Stage 1:

- 1. Process guiding questions:** to assess the extent to which volunteering initiatives are, in fact, inclusive and accountable endeavours that deliberately promote peace in their own working standards from the outset.
- 2. Issue questions:** to support an in-depth, collective examination of the drivers of conflict, relating them to the framework SDG16+ issues and targets matrix.

➤ PROCESS GUIDING QUESTIONS

These guiding questions will support volunteering initiatives to assess how volunteering initiatives are set up and how they operate. This is as important as assessing the effectiveness of initiatives because peace is both a journey and a destination. They are built on the understanding that a few SDG16+ targets could also work well as **process indicators**.⁶⁸ The table below presents the guiding questions associated with a few selected key actors⁶⁹ involved in volunteering initiatives.

SDG16+ Targets	Key actors	Guiding questions	Insights for reflection
SDG 16.7 By 2030, ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels	Partnerships ⁷⁰ (including governments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Are volunteering initiatives' partners responding to citizens' rights and demands? ▪ Are volunteering initiatives' partners involved in violent conflict or endorsing violence directly or indirectly? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Volunteering initiatives that ensure they respond to citizens' demands rather than acting on externally pre-identified issues⁷¹ are better at delivering the Agenda 2030 vision. ▪ What are the consequences of volunteering initiatives partnering with abusive authorities or institutions? How might partners play a role in escalating or de-escalating violent conflict?⁷²
	Volunteers (including community/ informal volunteers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Are all volunteers involved in co-creating volunteering initiatives? Are they involved in mapping out conflict dynamics? ▪ Are volunteering initiatives responsive when volunteers witness or suffer abuse or other types of violence? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In inclusive and transformative endeavours, volunteers are not merely actors performing tasks: they actively provide useful feedback and ideas to ensure impact. ▪ In the voluntary sector, there is growing concern about safeguarding volunteers and activists. It is important to assess how volunteers can be protected and provided with channels to ensure internal accountability,⁷³ in line with the SDG16 aspiration.

⁶⁸ Process indicators describe the important processes that contribute to the achievement of outcomes.

⁶⁹ We recognize that partners, volunteers and citizens are not the only three main actors typically involved in volunteering initiatives. However, we have simplified this for the purposes of this paper.

⁷⁰ Recent papers (Devereux and Learmonth, 2017; and Peace Direct, 2019) have raised the centrality of partnerships in volunteerism outcomes.

⁷¹ *Valuing volunteering* (Burns et al., 2015) identified that one big barrier for volunteering initiatives to achieve development outcomes is that they tend to focus a lot on what type of local organization can host a (national/international) volunteer, rather than on their capacity to understand and respond to community demands and real challenges.

⁷² A number of initiatives are exploring and acting on the worldwide emergency of "closing civic space", a phenomenon that is taking place in more and more countries every day, especially over the last decade. See [Here is what we know about closing civic space](#) on Oxfam's From Poverty to Power blog, and Hossain et al. (2019). Taking this into consideration, making a critical assessment the human rights record of volunteering initiatives' partners seems key, as these initiatives are not operating in neutral and apolitical environments.

⁷³ See, for example, the recently published *Global standard for volunteering for development* (Forum) with concrete considerations and guidance for safeguarding, protection, duty of care and due diligence in partnerships: <https://bettercarenetwork.org/sites/default/files/2019-10/The-Global-Standard-for-Volunteering-for-Development.pdf>. See

	Citizens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are volunteering initiatives proactively listening to citizens in order to understand local challenges and establish priorities with them? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active participation and locally owned programming enable sustainable peace and development.
SDG 16.8 By 2030, broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance	Global South partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do Global South volunteering initiatives have space and resources to shape the global volunteerism agenda? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is an increasing debate within the volunteerism space on the concentration of power, resources and opportunities on Northern volunteers and institutions. These two guiding questions aim to stimulate reflection on this apparent imbalance, ensuring active assessment of how to rebalance this asymmetry for peace and development.⁷⁴
	Global South volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are Global South volunteers actively participating in volunteering endeavours and what is the significance of that? 	
SDG 5.1 By 2030, end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere	Women and girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are women and girls actively involved in voicing their challenges and ideas when volunteering initiatives are designed, implemented and adapted? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Similarly, SDG16+ targets clearly integrate the idea that peace is not achievable without including women and girls in peacebuilding and broader policymaking. It is therefore also vital to assess whether and how volunteering initiatives are creating the institutional conditions to promote women’s participation despite challenges.⁷⁵
SDG 10.2 By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, economic or other status	People of every age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are volunteering initiatives proactively listening to citizens of every age, gender, ability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion and economic status in order to understand local challenges, and to establish priorities with them? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This SDG16+ target highlights the global call to ensure inclusive governance. This aligns well with substantive evidence on the importance of ensuring inclusivity and conflict sensitivity in peace processes and volatile contexts.⁷⁶ For example, undertaking a voluntary project in a community divided by ethnic or religious tensions and only engaging with one of those groups could have negative consequences, despite good intentions.

also the National Council for Voluntary Organisations’ safeguarding guidance at: <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/practical-support/information/safeguarding>.

⁷⁴ For some interesting material on South-South volunteerism see: *Resourcing Youth-Led groups a movements, a reflective playbook for donors and youth organizers*, CIVICUS – Recreer International; *Story VII: Building a South-to-South network of peacebuilders*, Peacemaker 360, Democratic Republic of Congo; and *South-to-South volunteering: from one developing country to another*, an article by Jenny Lei Ravelo, which can be accessed here: <https://www.devex.com/news/south-south-volunteering-from-one-developing-country-to-another-84320>. Organizations such Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), Oxfam, CIVICUS and United Nations Volunteers (UNV) initiated the long road to promoting and documenting better cooperation on volunteering among developing countries. The scope of this paper cannot include emerging evidence on the relevance of this type of cooperation, but there seems to be a need for a research effort to meet the Agenda 2030 aspiration for more and better Global South inclusion.

⁷⁵ For a good repository of research, policy, historical information and calls to action on women and conflict issues, please refer to *The Beijing Platform for Action* on the UN Women website: <https://beijing20.unwomen.org/en/in-focus/armed-conflict>.

⁷⁶ See for example Raush, 2019 and this blog published by the United States Institute for Peace, “Inclusive Peace Processes are key to ending conflict”: <https://www.usip.org/publications/2017/05/inclusive-peace-processes-are-key-ending-violent-conflict>

NOTE: Volunteerism initiatives that do not use the adaptive framework from the start, can use the above guiding questions to review their current practices and promote organizational learning, with the aim of adapting their activities in ways that are more connected to sustaining peace.

➤ **GUIDING QUESTIONS: ISSUES**

In each context, the drivers of violent conflict will vary. If voluntary organizations work with the transformative lens proposed by this paper, then it is key to look at the diversity of issues playing a part at the cultural, structural and direct violence levels. To support volunteering initiatives undertaking Stage 1, the adaptive framework (Annex I, Column D) pre-identifies the list of issues or problems that can be associated with the SDG16+ targets and indicators. This list is not exhaustive or faultless, but rather an initial description that might be helpful when assessing and reflecting on local challenges. For example, we recognize that many other problems that are currently sparking conflict are not integrated into the SDG16+ framework, including climate change. We therefore invite organizations to go beyond the SDG16+ targets and undertake an honest, in-depth reflection to unveil how challenges related to multiple SDGs are, in fact, generating violence.

SDG16+ targets	Key issues (See details Annex I)	Guiding questions	Insights for reflection (general)
<p>Cultural violence – beliefs and social norms issues:</p>	<p>Lack of knowledge, appreciation and respect for other cultures and social groups; lack of conflict-management skills; individualism and selfishness; fear or lack of confidence, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Are there challenges at the cultural level generating tensions and violence? How do they reinforce each other? ▪ Is the volunteering initiative going to try to tackle these issues? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If the adaptive framework matrix is used, it seems that there are many potential entry points for voluntary initiatives aiming to evaluate how they interlink with SDG16+. Volunteering initiatives could be working on diverse issues, from education to human rights education, from governance to tax justice, etc.
<p>Structural violence – governance issues:</p>	<p>Corruption; lack of transparency in budget-setting; lack of opportunities to participate in policymaking; lack of respect for fundamental freedoms, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Are there issues linked to oppressive governance structures that are causing tensions and violence? How exactly? Is the volunteering initiative going to focus on one or more of these issues? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Volunteering initiatives could aim to assess how they work at various levels in a holistic way. For example, by reflecting on how they are enabling cultural understanding in initiatives in which the main purpose might be, for example, promoting good governance and accountability.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Are there issues linked to oppressive 	

<p>Structural violence – socioeconomic issues:</p>	<p>Little public spending on social policies; no access to education; poverty; workers’ rights not respected; unemployment; discrimination against women, etc.</p>	<p>socioeconomic structures that are causing tensions and violence? How exactly? Is the volunteering initiative going to focus in one or more of these issues?</p>	
<p>Direct violence</p>	<p>Sexual violence; killings; harassment; human trafficking; terrorism, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Are there problems related to current expressions of direct violence that are escalating and need an urgent response to prevent a wider outbreak of violence? Is the volunteering initiative going to be able to work at this level? 	
<p>Interrelated issues and actors</p>	<p>Dynamic factors and issues</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How are the different issues interlinked, causing tensions, insecurity and violence? ▪ How are various actors and policy processes negatively or positively reinforcing conflict dynamics? How is the volunteering initiative going to engage with them? ▪ How are volunteers perceived and how could their identities/roles generate tension or promote constructive engagement? 	

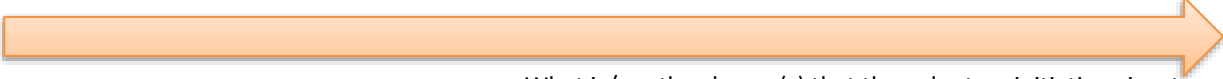
STAGE 2. COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT ON THE OPTIONS FOR PROMOTING PEACE AND JUSTICE

This second stage is about enabling locally grounded, collective agreements on options and alternatives for action, taking specific context challenges and conflict drivers into consideration. For volunteering initiatives this means deciding how voluntary efforts will be galvanized in order to tackle one or several drivers of conflict in order to create lasting peace.

At this point, based on the mapping of the root causes of violent conflict and insecurity (issues), and having analyzed various factors and actors that sustain violence (or otherwise), facilitators of volunteerism initiatives will aim to prioritize a set of strategic objectives on which to focus their actions. That prioritization will depend on multiple factors, including citizens’ demands but

also organizational capabilities, resources and opportunities for entry points to help sustain peace. The top-level guiding questions to respond to during this phase, could be as follows:

➤ **GUIDING QUESTIONS: TARGETS AND INDICATORS**



Issues Drivers of conflict and insecurity	SDG16+ targets and indicators (see full list of targets and indicators in Annex I)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What is/are the change(s) that the voluntary initiative aims to achieve (expected outcomes)? ▪ How do these expected outcomes relate to the SDG16+ targets and indicators (matrix)? ▪ Are there existing ways to observe "stories of change" in relation to selected targets and indicators? ▪ How do volunteering initiatives facilitate collective learning and understanding of future volunteering impacts?
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The framework matrix clearly shows that the programmatic focus of voluntary initiatives promoting the achievement of SDG 16 + could vary hugely. For example, initiatives focusing on peace education, as well as others supporting women and people with disabilities to access formal education, could be promoting conflict prevention and transformation if both have set this as an outcome. The idea is to use these guiding questions to develop a theory of change and action, mapping out what outcomes each volunteerism initiative is or will be working towards.

Annex 1 provides guidance for mapping out collective decisions against the globally agreed SDG16+ targets and indicators. Ideally, this exercise of mapping out voluntary initiatives' outcomes against the framework could be done at the design stage, helping to prepare for sound monitoring, evaluation and learning. However, we recognize this might not always be possible, so it could be done once implementation has started. As a brief example of this, Annex 2 presents an initial mapping of voluntary programmes across all components of the adaptive framework.

STAGE 3. ITERATIVE REFLECTION ON WHETHER (AND HOW) CHANGE IS HAPPENING

This stage is about facilitating the **collective identification of emerging positive change, as well as failures and setbacks, from implementation in order to adapt to context dynamics quickly**, with the aim of increasing the chances of voluntary action contributing to positive peace.

This stage aims to support mutual learning and accountability. It also ensures rapid adaptation based on early signs of what is working or not, so integrating learning and reflection is encouraged throughout implementation and not just at the end. The process guiding questions presented in Stage 1, remain relevant for Stage 3. Similarly, it is vital to put the right structures and incentives in place to allow for open reflection, constructive criticism and flexibility to change direction if need be. Otherwise, there is a risk that these will become tokenistic exercises.

➤ GUIDING QUESTIONS: LEARNING

For reasons of brevity, we will only summarize here the type of questions it is relevant to share when conducting learning and reflection with various stakeholders.

SDG16+ targets	Guiding questions	Insights for reflection
<p>SDG 16.7 SDG 16.8 SDG 5.1 SDG 10.2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Are voluntary initiatives learning from practice by listening to stories of change from women, girls, citizens, local partners, volunteers, Global South partners/volunteers, and people of every gender, race and economic background, etc.? ▪ Are voluntary initiatives enabling empowering story-telling spaces to reflect critically and collectively? ▪ Are voluntary organizations supporting participatory data-collection (both quantitative and qualitative, using offline and online tools)? ▪ Are voluntary initiatives sharing results and findings with communities, the general public and national policymakers in order to ensure mutual accountability and promote better policymaking? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What is the experience of voluntary initiatives in documenting stories of change (online and offline)? ▪ Achieving inclusivity in learning and research processes means empowering Southern academic institutions and professionals too. It would be interesting to assess how voluntary organizations are promoting “doing development differently”⁷⁷ by engaging in research efforts with local professionals and institutions. ▪ Participatory learning exercises are not only about qualitative methods; they can be used to ensure quantitative data is collected too. The challenge is how, not what.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ For insights on “adaptive development” by the Overseas Development Institute, see: <https://www.odi.org/our-work/adaptive-development>, and the “*Doing development differently*” manifesto: <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/events-documents/5149.pdf>.

⁷⁸ Oosterhoff et.al., 2019.

This three-stage process invites all actors engaged in voluntary projects, programmes and movements to critically assess whether and how they are promoting a culture of peace and inclusive development by responding to citizens' demands, needs and contextual challenges, while also ensuring demand-driven, adaptive programming based on real-time feedback from volunteers and activists, as well as grounded knowledge. In doing so, these initiatives will be achieving the Agenda 2030 vision in practice, across the three stages, including the "leave no-one behind" principle, throughout the design, implementation, and learning and evaluation of volunteering initiatives.

CELEBRATE!

Finally, our experiences of supporting volunteering and activist initiatives worldwide confirms that: "volunteering and volunteer opportunities are unlikely to inspire or sustain an active citizenship unless people see that volunteering has an impact."⁷⁹ We have observed in all regions and countries what people of all ages, socioeconomic backgrounds and cultures can achieve when they join together in a common purpose and feel empowered by seeing real and concrete results from their hard work. Particularly for a young person, volunteering can be a transformational life experience, enabling them to develop a professional and personal path in which the common good is no longer perceived as an "externality" to be managed by someone else.

Valuing and understanding volunteers' achievements, and learning from their failures, is therefore also an opportunity to celebrate with the objective of nurturing active citizens, who are responsible and conscious of how their actions, omissions and decisions have an impact on someone else in the world, as well as on our planet. With our adaptive framework, we invite volunteering organizations to share learning and documentation from their actions, not only for accountability purposes, but also to celebrate and reinforce the vision of a more dignified citizenship.

⁷⁹ Burns et.al., 2015

5. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

This paper presented an adaptive framework to identify, value and celebrate the contribution of volunteerism in achieving more peaceful, just and accountable societies. The first two sections provided important background on the global policy debates in relation to volunteerism, peace and the politics of generating evidence. We then went on to describe all components of the framework and the importance of a principled approach, presented evidence on the connections between volunteerism and the framework, and proposed how the adaptive framework should be used.

This is an original piece of work devised as part of the UNV Innovation Challenge following a reflective and analytical process, and taking into account some very useful feedback from the UNV team and our peer-reviewers (see Annex 3: Methodology). However, this adaptive framework has not been piloted or tested in an in-depth, consultative way involving diverse volunteers, activists and voluntary organizations. As such, this paper is just the first step in a process that will, hopefully, involve dialogue with movements, governmental and non-governmental organizations, multilaterals, and UN agencies that are willing to explore how best to apply a principled participatory approach to research, with the aim of thoroughly and systematically evaluating the contribution that volunteers make to peace and development. The time is right to recognize volunteerism and activism as powerful enablers of Agenda 2030 and SDG16+ in particular, and our team expects to begin a process of dialogue and joint work with key stakeholders to achieve that. A key part of that process will be mobilizing and connecting knowledge, especially from and between Southern actors, as well as all those who, like us, believe that volunteerism is much more than performing technical tasks and donating time.

REFERENCES
TO BE ADDED

ANNEXES

- Annex 1: Full adaptive framework in Excel
- Annex 2: Mapping of case examples against framework components
- Annex 3: Methodology