

FEMINIST & GENDER SENSITIVE PRINCIPLES APPLIED TO VOLUNTEERING

“What volunteering would look like under a feminist social contract?”

These guiding principles are based on the insights, ideas, proposals and project examples shared by the global dialogue speakers as well as the focus group participants. The global dialogue took place on 2nd June 2021 and the Focus group on 4th June 2021. Cecilia Milesi facilitated both activities.

Principle 1¹: Power

- Volunteering initiatives that are designed using feminist principles need to ensure that unfair and unjust power structures and dynamics are dismantled, with the aim to give voice and promote the rights of the most marginalized peoples
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Volunteering initiatives need to:

1. **Identify power dynamics² in a given context/organization and assess who are the most excluded and marginalized groups/individuals** and create strategies that challenge and change unfair power-dynamics in the short and long term. They need to assess **how financial resources and rewards are distributed**, with the objective to promote a fair distribution of power and resources.
2. **Proactively including and empowering those marginalized**, create concrete opportunities for voice (participation), innovation, rebalance asymmetries and alter diverse inequalities
3. **Tackling the root causes of contextualized problems and ensure** that they do not reinforce power differences i.e. **“white”, “northern”, “city volunteers”³** are not unfairly rewarded because of their perceived “superior” background?

¹ As power analysis and design sensitive to addressing structural inequalities is a essential pillar of feminism, it's important to note that these principles apply to all this varies from context to context **and all type of projects, including deliberation, co-production of services, social innovation or any other**. They are “process” principles. In the same way, when feminist principled approach in apply to volunteering the focus is in all groups of marginalized and excluded peoples (not just women and other gender groups). This is the importance of the concept of “intersectionality” as the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage (see more in second principle)

² This includes, for example, considering who and why holds more power, how power is exercised at the institutional and relational levels, etc.

³ Those perceived as “superior” can vary from context to context, this is the information that a power-analysis will provide.

Principle 2: Intersectionality

- Volunteering initiatives designed with feminist lenses ensure women participation and empowerment while addressing the “intersection” of multiple interrelated issues that reinforce the oppression and marginalization of diverse groups.

Volunteering initiatives need to:

1. **Foster women’s inclusion and respect** by ensuring women are listened to, empowered and protected (Minimum standard)
2. Ensure marginalized groups including non-binary are included, respected, heard and protected (For example, trans, gay, lesbian, queer, other) and challenge masculinities in order to deconstruct oppressive systems that perpetrate violence or promote unjust situations
3. **Address intersectionalities** such as class, race, income inequality, religion that can reinforce exclusion and discrimination

Principle 3: Recognition and Rewards

- Volunteering initiatives designed using feminist principles “visibilise” those historically “invisibilised”, amplify the voices of those who are often unheard and reward those historically doing their work without any recognition.

Volunteering initiatives need to:

1. Reward volunteers –especially women and other marginalized peoples- either **financially or in kind** (from income support to the delivery of a certificate and/or public campaigns to recognize the economic and social value of volunteers’ work)⁴.
2. **Acknowledge and ensure visibility** and/or **creating spaces for marginalized peoples and volunteers to engage in**
3. Recognize and celebrate everyone’s agency and power, without reinforcing differences

Principle 4: Self-awareness and intercultural education

⁴ The forms of rewards can vary from context to context. During the sessions, we reflected upon in the importance of feminist movements in the struggle for women to get some financial support for work traditionally done without any paid. This could be apply to the volunteering sector, including in the struggle to get local volunteers’ some form of subsidy, allowance, support for transport costs (minimum) to the proposal of insuring “universal income for all” as a means to overcome exclusion and marginalization worldwide.

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- Volunteering initiatives designed considering feminist principles “facilitate processes and spaces so we all have the opportunity to dismantle our cultural biases and patriarchal behavior”
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Volunteering initiatives need to:

1. Create opportunities for volunteers, most marginalized peoples and power-holders to **reflect and critically assess their own biases, prejudices and (potentially) discriminatory/abusive behavior**, in order to promote the gradual unlearning of these
 2. Create opportunities for **intercultural dialogue** that connect people of different backgrounds, race, religion (or any other relevant social difference that might perpetuate division) with the view to recognize everyone’s power and rights.
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Principle 5: Self-care & Protection

- Volunteering initiatives designed using feminist principles “facilitate processes and spaces so we all have the opportunity to dismantle our cultural biases and patriarchal behavior⁵ sustaining violence and privileges”
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Volunteering initiatives need to:

1. Ensure the **safety and protection** of volunteers and most marginalized peoples
 2. Be sensitive and responsive to the work necessary to sustain **“civic space”** (freedom to participate, associate, protest, advocacy, etc.).
 3. **Advocate for policy change** and the transformation of institutions and practices that maintain oppression
 4. Support self- and **care for each other** and promote **rights education** by providing the information on tools and mechanism to ensure protection
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Principle 5: New Organizational Models & Innovations

- Volunteering initiatives designed using feminist principles need to promote the development of organizational models and innovations that can better reflect feminist perspectives
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⁵ **Patriarchy** is a social system in which men hold primary power and predominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege and control of property. Some **patriarchal** societies are also patrilineal, meaning that property and title are inherited by the male lineage.

Volunteering initiatives need to:

1. Deconstruct old models of social action (for example, hierarchical / control-based management models), ensure the **devolution of power, foster mutual accountability and transparency, representation (and recruitment) of marginalized peoples/groups.**
 2. Recognize **indigenous innovations** and ancestral knowledge and **use technology** to promote social change, support openness, horizontal learning and foster collaboration
 3. Ensure **local volunteers** are at the forefront of social action and **use participatory and action-research approaches to social change**, in which local citizens are at the forefront of data collection, unleashing the power of “collective intelligence”, demanding responsiveness and accountability⁶.
- ✓ **Create opportunities for long-term peer-to-peer support and other forms of horizontal learning** (non-formal and popular education)

⁶ For example, community data-collection to ensure the governments responds to the COVID-19 pandemic, groups of trans investigating themselves barriers to participation and legal frameworks, etc.

PANELISTS

Global Dialogue on Gender - June 2, 2021

NAME	ORGANIZATION	COUNTRY
Rosa Emilia Salamanca	Corporacion CIASE and Women, Peace and Security Network	Colombia
Geeta Pradha	Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO)	Nepal
Zoneziwoh Mbongdulo-Wondieh	Women for Change Cameroon	Cameroon
Nevine Evid	Independent Researcher	Egypt
Mwanahamisi Singano	African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET)	Kenya/Africa
Ignacio Lara	Asuntos del Sur	Argentina
Cecilia Milesi (Moderator)	Global Change Center	Global

Focus Group – June 4, 2021

NAME	ORGANIZATION	COUNTRY
Sowmyaa Bharadwaj - Director Capacity Building	Praxis	India/ Nepal
Georgia Rothe - Coordinator Feminist Programme	Asuntos del Sur	Venezuela
Anita Venanzi - SCI Gender Network - Hong Kong University	SCI partner	Hong Kong
Dan Simpson - Senior ME&L Adviser	Habitat for Humanity	USA
Mariela Ortiz Suarez – Director Youth Participation SES Foundation	Fundacion SES	Argentina/ Latam

Sol Coronel	Bromelia - Jóvenes Solidarios	Argentina
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Annex 2: WEBSITES THAT WERE SHARED BY PARTICIPANTS

Community data collection Project by Praxis: <https://www.communitycollect.info/>

Trans project by Asuntos del Sur: https://www.mujeresactivando.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/paraguay_interior_interactivoo.pdf

Billions from Germany to Namibia: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/28/germany-agrees-to-pay-namibia-11bn-over-historical-herero-nama-genocide>

Slavery reparations: <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=CkLz8iEQdtY>

New models of volunteering by Chris Millora: <https://www.unv.org/Success-stories/Exploring-volunteering-practices-21st-century>