

"IT TAKES A VILLAGE"

THE 6X1 FROM TWO PERSPECTIVES: SERVICE LEARNING AND UBUNTU







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Introduction

Our era is marked by a multitude of interconnected crises, among which the escalation of armed conflicts stands out, reaching its highest level since 1946. One in four people today live in war zones, further exacerbating the structural fragility of the planet. Contemporary challenges can no longer be addressed in a sectoral manner: politics, economics, social dynamics and ecology are intertwined in a complex network that requires a profound rethinking of models of development and coexistence. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

Development highlights four critical issues: the huge gap between the available technical and economic potential and the living conditions of the majority of humanity; the structural crisis of wage labour as the foundation of human identity and livelihood; the inadequacy of the anthropological model produced by late capitalism; the unsustainability of the economic paradigm based on unlimited growth and the indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources.

In response to this complexity, **Service Learning** offers an innovative and transformative educational approach that combines interdisciplinary learning with community service, generating a virtuous reciprocity between personal development and civic engagement. This is the perspective behind the simplified methodological proposal called **« 6x1: six steps to a goal »**, developed by the Young for Unity Movement with the aim of making this path accessible to young people and educational communities.

*The following educational kit is the result of a joint effort between AMU ETS and RpU and a team of trainers implemented as part of the "AFR.E.S.H. - Africa and Europe Same Horizon" project, funded by the European Commission, and the "Costruire Educando. Our supportive educational community", funded by Impresa Sociale per i Bambini.

These projects provided an opportunity to develop a training programme that combines Service Learning with the ethical-philosophical approach of Ubuntu.

Kit created with the contribution of:











This educational kit is aimed at the educational community, i.e. the group of people, organisations and institutions that, in different and complementary ways, contribute to the growth, learning and well-being of children and adolescents. This includes not only teachers and educators, but also parents, coaches, cultural and social workers, local administrators, volunteers and all those who, in various capacities, take part in building a caring, welcoming and responsible educational environment.





The role of the community

The **educational community** is fundamental because no educational process can be considered effective if confined to a single space or entrusted to a single actor. It is in the cohesive and responsible synergy between school, family, territory and society that the conditions for complete, inclusive and sustainable growth are created. This kit is intended to be a practical, shared tool for strengthening the bond between the various stakeholders, offering ideas, activities and reflections for building, together, a more cohesive and conscious educational ecosystem capable of responding to the challenges of today and tomorrow.

The educational community is a cohesive and co-responsible group of formal and informal actors who work in synergy to support the growth of children and adolescents. A shared space that grows together, allows itself to be transformed by young people and takes care of them. Recalling the African metaphor of the village - "It takes a village to raise a child" - it represents a shared space, based on networking, trust, inclusion and participation. It is the first place where the younger generation can experience active and global citizenship, developing a sense of belonging, care, respect and responsibility towards the challenges of the present and the future. In this way, the educational community becomes the first space where children and young people learn to be active and global citizens.





The Youth Protagonism⁴

The term "youth protagonism" refers to the active participation of children and young people in practical activities and initiatives in their neighbourhood, school and/or community. This is not simply a matter of involvement, but a process in which young people become true social actors, capable of influencing the reality around them. In many cases, young people are the "driving force" that inspires adults to transform themselves and organise around them shared projects.

The younger generations show particular sensitivity to crucial issues such as sustainability, inclusion, equality and social justice. On the one hand, they demand consistency and credibility from adults and institutions that should be serving the community and, on the other, they face anxiety and insecurity in the face of major global challenges in their daily lives.

For this reason, interaction with peer groups and adult role models becomes essential: it is through these relationships that young people can have meaningful experiences of citizenship, developing skills and awareness as active members of an increasingly interconnected and global society.

To encourage young people to take centre stage, we need to move away from superficial forms of involvement towards authentic experiences, where their voices are heard, they are consulted in decision-making and active participation in working and building together with adults is promoted. Only in this way will they be able to experience true active, global and responsible citizenship, becoming protagonists of the present and builders of the future.





Relational sustainability

The concept of relational sustainability emphasises the importance of lasting, intergenerational relationships as the foundation for collective well-being. In this context, Service Learning is an effective educational tool: it promotes experiential learning, active participation by young people and co-design with and for the community, fostering stable, reciprocal bonds between generations. The integration of Service Learning and relational sustainability reinforces a model of active and supportive citizenship based on social justice, shared responsibility and cooperation for the common good.





Two perspectives

The idea behind this kit is to promote active, global and responsible citizenship in light of new pedagogical perspectives that can be complementary and aimed at strengthening and enhancing the role of the educational community. Thus, we decided to address **Service Learning** and the **Ubuntu** philosophy and ethics.

1 Service learning "Learning serves and serving teaches"



«I am because you are»

The belief in a universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity

The pedagogical approach of **Service Learning** combines learning with service in a spirit of solidarity with the community. Young people, supported by adults in a relationship of intergenerational reciprocity, put the knowledge they have acquired into practice through concrete activities of solidarity, responding to the real needs of the local area. In this way, a comprehensive education is promoted, combining disciplinary skills, active and global citizenship, and social responsibility.

"Learning serves and serving teaches."

A Service Learning experience in Switzerland where young people put themselves at the service of the community. All students are involved in choosing the actions so that they can be true protagonists of the project in the most autonomous way possible.





«I am because you are»

the belief in a universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity

The ethical-philosophical approach of Ubuntu

rooted in the philosophy of sub-Saharan Africa, is based on loyalty and relationships between people. It focuses on the relational dimension of human beings, valuing empathy, interdependence and reciprocity. In education, Ubuntu promotes a climate of respect, listening and collaboration, contributing to the construction of inclusive and supportive communities.

«I am because you are»⁷

Ubuntu is an African philosophical approach based on the idea that individual identity is built through relationships with others: "I am because we are." It promotes values such as solidarity, interdependence, respect and mutual responsibility. In education, Ubuntu values a sense of community, listening and cooperation, fostering inclusive and welcoming environments. This approach emphasises that each person has value as an integral part of the group. Educating according to Ubuntu means growing together, in a network of bonds that gives meaning to learning and living.

"Who are you?" his teacher repeated.
"I am nothing without you," he replied. "I am nothing without them.
When I arrived, I was in their hands. They were there to welcome me.
When I leave, I will be in their hands.
They will be there to take me back".9



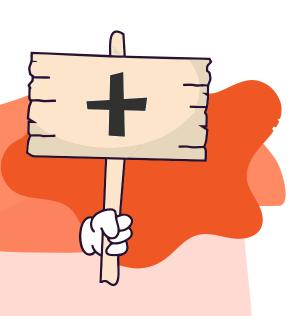
⁷ The text is by Prisca Maharavo, PhD in Political Science at the Sophia University Institute. She is currently rector of Don Bosco University in Moramanga, Madagascar. She teaches at various Catholic universities in Madagascar. She is Community Manager of the 'Together for a new Africa' project of New Humanity, an NGO.

⁸ A people of West Africa.

⁹ Mohamed Bedjaoui is an Algerian jurist, diplomat and politician. He was president of the Algerian Constitutional Council from 2002 to 2005. Dialogue taken from the speech he gave on 19 June 2003 in Ottawa to introduce the 3rd congress of the ACCPUF (Association of Francophone Constitutional Courts).



positive aspects



- Creates a united and supportive community.
- Promotes harmony and collaboration.
- Strengthens the identity and sense of belonging of community members.
- Promotes peace, forgiveness, reconciliation, respect for human dignity, mutual aid, and the pursuit of the common good.



negative aspects



- Risk of exploitation of the community: social parasitism of some community members and exploitation of the community and its members by political, economic, social and religious leaders...
- Limits individual initiative and individualism in general, which can slow down creativity, innovation and personal development.
- Difficult to apply in a competitive, profit-centred society and when not all members of the same community adhere to its principles.

Although based on different geo-cultural and different methodologies, both approaches (Service Learning and Ubuntu) aim to educate mindful persons, involved and responsible, capable of recognising themselves as an active part of an educational community, in which everyone has value and can contribute to the common good.



6x1 methodology



The 6X1 methodology (six steps to a goal) was developed in 2015 by the **Teens for Unity Movement**, designed to involve teenagers, young people and adults in active and participatory citizenship projects. This methodology is part of the Service Learning methodological approach, which combines learning and community service. It aims to respond to the requests of educators and trainers for a simple methodology that can be applied in different contexts.

Over time, 6X1 has established itself as a valuable tool for giving continuity to solidarity actions and promoting awareness of being active citizens who can improve their own communities.

The name "6x1" derives from the six stages that make up the project, all aimed at achieving a single goal: the common good. It is a method that promotes concrete action and shared reflection, encouraging the active participation of community members on an ongoing basis.

The six steps of the method

- Observe Analyse the local situation to identify needs and resources.
- **2 Choose** Evaluate together and decide where it is most urgent and important to take action.
- 🛜 3 Involve Encourage the participation of other groups, institutions and citizens.
- 🔂 4 Act Plan and implement the actions to be taken.
- **5 Evaluate** Verify the results obtained and the effectiveness of the actions.
- 6 **Celebrate** Recognise successes and share the experience with the community.

Motivation

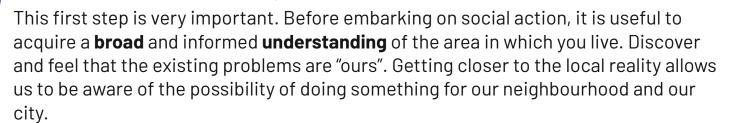
Those who embark on this project already have a desire to actively get involved in their community. This desire can derive from various sources:

- an urgent and/or dramatic need to be resolved (natural disasters, people in difficulty, etc.)
- an expressed desire to take action to improve a local issue (neighbourhood, school, city, etc.)
- a request from institutions, groups, families, or even individuals in need

This applies to both pedagogical approaches without distinction



Service learning



Often, we walk the same streets and fail to identify the "grey areas", i.e. places where there is suffering, poverty, exploitation, neglect and little respect for the environment.

In this first step, therefore, we invite you to "go out" alone or in a group to observe, listen, smell...

For example, you could prepare a **diary** where you write down what you see every day:

- Monday: "Dirt, too much rubbish on the street".
- Tuesday: "I see many elderly people alone in the square...".
- Wednesday: "There are no trees in the courtyard..."

Or you could make a map of the neighbourhood or city and go out in a group to write down what you observe.

NB. For younger children, you could suggest that they make drawings.

- Situations observed: unpleasant odours from stagnant water, noise from many lorries, roads in poor condition, unpaved and with potholes, many smokers, rubbish scattered in various places, abandoned dogs in the middle of the road, elderly people alone on the street, etc.
- Grey points identified: several rubbish dumps, roads in poor condition, elderly people on the street, stagnant water, smokers, stray dogs.









Ubuntu is a philosophy of coexistence, of family (which in Africa is understood to be "extended", both by blood and by choice) and community engagement are at the centre of every individual's life.

It is a philosophy that promotes empathy, compassion, reconciliation, recognition of human dignity, cooperation, solidarity, social responsibility, dialogue and consensus. Thus, each individual is closely connected to the other.

The community is at the centre of decisions and mutual support.

Observation proceeds almost in parallel with choice: when a need becomes clear, it is essential to address it together and reach a shared decision as soon as possible.

In this sense, the community meets periodically and therefore if there are any particular needs, these will be discussed at community level. The community meets in an open assembly, where all members can express their opinions and needs in order to assess urgent individual and community needs. "Dialogue" and "consensus" are the key words according to Ubuntu.

In October 2023, three members of the T4NA (Together for New Africa) project decided to visit the village of Cangoti (in the province of Huambo, in central Angola), where one of the participants, a primary school teacher, has been working for 14 years. Encouraged by the teacher, the three participants travelled to the village with the aim of getting to know the community and identifying the main issues on which they could offer their help and support. While walking around, they noticed the remains of a ruined primary school. They also noticed makeshift classrooms set up outdoors under trees. Talking to local people about the situation, they discovered that the children had been studying in these conditions for many years.







Service learning



The second step is about making choices. You can start by making a list of what you have observed. Each person individually indicates a maximum of five issues, or "grey areas", that they have identified. You can use the handout **(which you can find here)** or write them on a post-it note.

Next, share all the issues collected with the group and prioritise them, assessing their **Severity**, **Urgency** and **Trend**. To do this, you can use the S.U.T. method (Click here for the sheet)

In the downloadable form, you can write down the various issues identified as "grey areas". For each of these issues, you will assess the severity (10 - extremely severe, 8 - very severe, 6 - severe, 3 - quite severe, 1 - not serious), urgency (giving scores of 10/8/6/3/1 depending on the urgency of resolving the issue) and trend, i.e. whether it is getting worse or disappearing (again with scores of 10-8-6-3-1).

For each of the issues, a show of hands will be held and the most voted number will be entered in the table. Once the vote is complete, the numbers for each issue are multiplied. For example, if the identified problem is: "the streets are very dirty" and a score of 10 has been given for severity, 8 for urgency and 8 for trend, the calculation is as follows: 10x8x8 = 640. And so on with all the grey points identified. The one with the highest score will be the one on which action is decided.

For younger children, you can use the traffic light method (red, amber and green) to analyse the indicators that will help you choose the most urgent, most serious problem and the one that is likely to worsen the most.

Once the problem has been identified, **feasibility** must be taken into account.



"We reflected on these two issues: smokers and rubbish. We saw that solving the problem of smokers was very difficult, so we decided to tackle the problem of rubbish".



Every difficult situation will be the result of ideas and reflections shared by members of the community, who together decide how to deal with it, who to collaborate with, what actions to take and what goals to pursue. Only then will it be possible to evaluate each person's

contribution and celebrate together the success of the entire community.

In the community assembly, elders and leaders, as was the case with Desmond Tutu after apartheid in South Africa, guide the decision-making process and help assess priorities based on their experience and wisdom. The community assesses needs based on severity and urgency. For example, if a damaged roof compromises the safety and health of a family, immediate action may be considered a priority over other needs.

The community works together to solve problems and ensure the well-being of all its members, putting the common good first. Today, this support is much more concrete and present than that provided by the state or the international community, especially in remote villages.

This collective and inclusive decision-making process reflects the fundamental values of Ubuntu, promoting social cohesion, consensus, relationships and mutual support.

In this way, the decisions that emerge are not imposed from above, but are the result of a collective effort that strengthens the sense of belonging. Each member is recognised as having an active role in the operational phase: everyone contributes according to their own possibilities, resources and skills.

Concrete action thus becomes a shared responsibility, in which the value of the individual is fully realised within the community "we".



Ubuntu method of choice



As already mentioned, the urgency and seriousness of problems are assessed collectively by the community. Priorities are defined on the basis of the difficulties that have emerged, without a formal decision-making structure, but through a spontaneous and concrete process based on community dialogue.

Everyone has the right to speak and express their opinion. In general, priority is given to emergencies affecting the entire community or individual families, with the aim of ensuring shared sustainability and a fair quality of life for all.



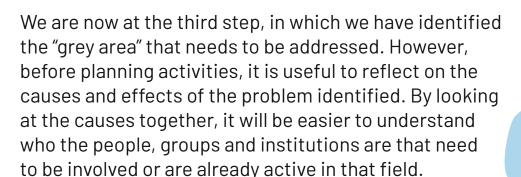
Given the urgency
and gravity of the school problem and
the need to provide students with a safe space to study
and learn, the three participants spoke out about this issue
and reflected extensively on how to proceed to resolve the
situation and receive support from the community

4WGOLA





Service learning





to access the Problem tree sheet

Problem (grey dot) we have selected:

Waste/rubbish

Causes and effects related to our problem:

- Causes: irresponsibility, lack of knowledge about proper waste and rubbish management, lack of commitment, lack of waste bins.
- **Effects:** pollution, unsightliness, disease, infestations, bad smells, blocked drains, dogs scattering rubbish.

Collaborators we have identified:

- The president of the municipal Action committee of the quarter
- The community in general
- The waste collection company
- The local council
- Nearby schools
- The Unidad Social Centre

-OLOMBIA



The involvement of the community is active, concrete and deeply participatory. People are not simply consulted or informed, but become an integral part of the decision-making process through community dynamics based on dialogue, sharing and co-responsibility. This involvement is not formal or bureaucratic, but is rooted in established cultural practices based on mutual listening and lived solidarity.

When a difficulty arises that affects the entire community – or even a single member – the response is not delegated to an external authority or a small group of experts; on the contrary, it is constructed collectively, through moments of open discussion, in which each person has the opportunity to express themselves and contribute.

This inclusive approach allows for a deep understanding of real needs and the identification of shared, sustainable and culturally meaningful solutions. Once the common goal has been achieved, the result is not attributed to individuals, but recognised as an expression of collective strength, a tangible sign of a community that acts together to take care of itself.

Keeping in mind the stages of the
6x1 methodology, the three participants
engaged community members by
organising several meetings with local
authorities, including community elders,
religious leaders, traditional leaders,
teachers, the school principal and
government representatives, with the aim
of identifying a solution based on local
resources.

4WGOLA





How can we plan activities that also involve the community?

Who is responsible for what? What needs to be done to achieve the objectives? When will the planned actions take place? How many and what stages are planned for the activities?

How much time will be devoted to each of them? Who, what and how much money is needed to carry out the proposed activities?



After observing and analysing the situation using the problem tree, the most important and urgent issue is chosen. The time has finally come to take action together with the people who have made themselves available in the community. In order to organise the work in the best possible way, the general objective and the specific objectives of the individual activities must be set.

The objectives must be concrete and measurable in the short, medium and long term, but also flexible, as unforeseen circumstances may arise. Then, responsibilities must be divided up.

"After speaking with the president of the Municipal Action Committee, it became clear that the initiative could only be carried out in one area of the neighbourhood where a lot of rubbish had accumulated. In order to purchase wire mesh for the fencing, a food sale was organised, to which each child contributed by bringing something they had prepared at home."

The aim of our project: " To raise awareness in the community in order to reduce the problem of waste, encouraging everyone to improve our neighbourhood".

Activities, dates and resources:

- Community surveys
- · Informative and motivational posters
- Letters of request to the waste collection company LIME
- Letters of request to the local council
- Community clean-up day

clear that the initiative

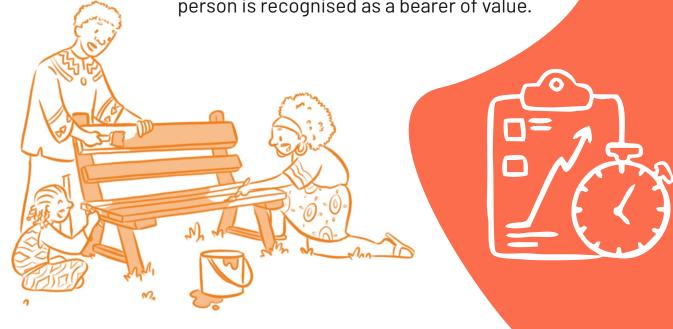
sheet for take action »

Download here



4WGOLA

Once a decision has been made, collective action is taken: each member contributes according to their means (time, labour, knowledge, materials, etc.). The goal is not only to solve the problem, but also to strengthen social bonds and cohesion. Every member of the community is valued, because each person's concrete contribution is important. Each person is recognised as a bearer of value.



As a result of discussions with local authorities, an action plan was drawn up collectively and specific responsibilities and tasks were assigned to the various parties involved.

Traditional leaders mobilised the community to provide locally sourced sand, stones and water. Participants in the T4NA project contributed US\$200 to the building plan of the new school.



How can we

assesswhether the problem has been solved? What areas need improvement and which ones need strengthening? Have any critical issues emerged within the group?



Service learning



It is time to evaluate the results. This is a cross-functional stage of the entire process, not just the final one. It is necessary to give the right value to the experience, analysing both the difficulties and the successes, evaluating the group and its dynamics, interpersonal relationships, motivation, cooperation, sense of responsibility and ability to overcome conflicts and difficulties.

At this stage, the project is also evaluated, i.e. its impact on the local area and on people, both quantitatively and qualitatively. It is important to document everything (data, testimonials, anecdotes, photographs, etc.) and disseminate the results obtained in order to give visibility to the work carried out (including ongoing work)

Results and indicators

How can we identify the results achieved?

Although evaluation is considered the penultimate (second-last) stage, it actually cuts across the entire process and is a crucial phase.

EVALUATING the project path through moments of reflection and appropriate tools - planned from the outset - means giving the right value to the experience, analysing both the difficulties and the successes.



It is very important to establish moments during the course of the activities to evaluate as we go along (ongoing work), to question ourselves, to check whether the actions taken are effective or whether it is necessary to modify some aspects, or even reformulate some objectives. Furthermore, by evaluating, we grow and improve on an individual level.



Evaluation is, therefore, a genuine process of improvement and search for solutions and alternative paths that takes place throughout the project and at the end of it.

As in all other phases of 6x1, the **active participation** of all those involved is essential in the evaluation. For this reason, the use of participatory methodologies is recommended. It is also important that there is a calm and relaxed atmosphere, so that everyone feels free to express themselves without feeling judged, reproached or hurt.



Positive points and areas for improvement during the implementation of our project: how did we ensure that the project maintained a climate of listening, teamwork, unity among participants and solidarity with beneficiaries?

Positive points:

- The teamwork and commitment of each person were very positive.
- There was always an atmosphere of listening among all participants.
- Everyone was motivated to continue working for the neighbourhood.

Areas for improvement:

· greater community involvement.



Some criteria are used to evaluate activities in this context:



ANGOLA

1- Did the activity contribute to collective well-being? Did it help strengthen bonds between community members? What impact did it have on the community and its members?

2- Did the activity involve all community members? Does it foster dialogue and cooperation among community members?

3- Is the activity conducted with respect for every community member? Does it promote equality and recognition of the dignity of every individual and community member?

4- Does the activity have a long-term positive impact on society and the environment?

5- Does the activity create opportunities for everyone to give and receive, without exclusion or individualistic advantages?

6- Does the activity consider the needs of others and seek to alleviate suffering or hardship?

Evaluating an activity with these criteria means going beyond profit or individual success, focusing on the common good and human relationships. It also means giving greater weight and priority to harmony, peace, social commitment, and moral sense.

Ubuntu evaluates community activities based on the qualitative criteria mentioned above. However, this complicates its application in modern society, which is more Cartesian, highly focused on measurable and quantitative results, especially in economic and social spheres.

During the process of engaging with government authorities at the district level, our Together for a New Africa participants encountered difficulties in obtaining approval for the school project from the District Administrator.

The District Administrator requested the presence of a senior member of Together for a New Africa to verify the project's authenticity. When the mentors learned of the difficulties the participants were having in convincing local authorities, they arranged two meetings: one with the District Administrator and one with the Municipal Administrator.







Service learning





The celebration represents the final phase of the journey and plays a fundamental role in highlighting the commitment, contributions, and results achieved by each individual and the entire community. It ensures public recognition not only for those who actively participated in the project, but also for those who did not, thus strengthening the sense of belonging and collective sharing. This is why, throughout the entire process, it's important to document what you're doing. This helps to have audiovisual, written, and photographic material... of every stage.

Through different forms of expressions, adapted to local cultural and social contexts, the celebration is a moment of recognition and gratitude, which becomes a community celebration. This symbolic moment provides motivation and impetus to generate new joint initiatives, helping to strengthen bonds and build shared future visions.

To celebrate,
a shared lunch was
organized, although not
everyone involved was able
to attend because of the
date; we shared a cake.

COLOMBIA

The school is still under construction. The community will celebrate once the project is completed. For the community, having had the opportunity to publicize the project outside of Africa has already represented a small token of appreciation for the progress made and still on going.



Conclusion

Throughout the educational kit, we sought to explore the **6x1 methodology** from two parallel, complementary perspectives: **Service Learning** and **Ubuntu**. This was possible thanks to the practical application of this methodology, which has been applied over time in different sociocultural contexts, adapting it to various local traditions.

Field testing demonstrated and fostered a deeper understanding of learning through service and community.



Acknowledgements



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Stay in touch with us:



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Now that we've shared the 6 steps to achieving a goal from both perspectives, we hope each of you can implement them in your own community.

Update us with your field experiences!





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