# INTRODUCTION TO CULTURE OF PEACE

Servei Civil
Internacional

MODULE 1.

# INTRODUCTION TO CULTURE OF PEACE

# Learning goals

With this material you will be provided a context on why the world's situation makes it so necessary to act for peace. You will also clarify the concepts of *peace*, *conflict* and *violence* and reflect on how they influence you. Finally, you will learn possible lines of work in favor of peace, which you will study in depth later on.

## KNOWLEDGE

— Get to know the concepts of *peace*, *violence* and *conflict*.

— Think about your own types of violence.

## ABILITIES

— Recognize your own peace abilities.

— Identify the peace abilities around you.

## ATTITUDES

— Be motivated to collaborate in peace initiatives all over (macrosocial).

— Commit to undertake peace actions in your immediate surroundings (microsocial).

# Culture of Peace: What are we talking about?

## THE WORLD SITUATION IS CRYING OUT FOR ACTION

The world's security has deteriorated strongly in the last decade (SIPRI, 2018); the number of armed conflicts has remained over 30, and their intensity has increased (see Module 2 on Armed Conflict and Forced Displacement). The current military spending is the highest in history: in 2018 it reached the amount of 1,822 billion dollars and it grew for the third consecutive year (SIPRI, 2019).

The consequences on the people caused by this increase in insecurity become visible in multiple dimensions. Some examples are the enormous growth of deaths related to armed conflicts (an increase of 216%, reaching a total of 130,000 deaths in 2017; IE&P, 2018); the
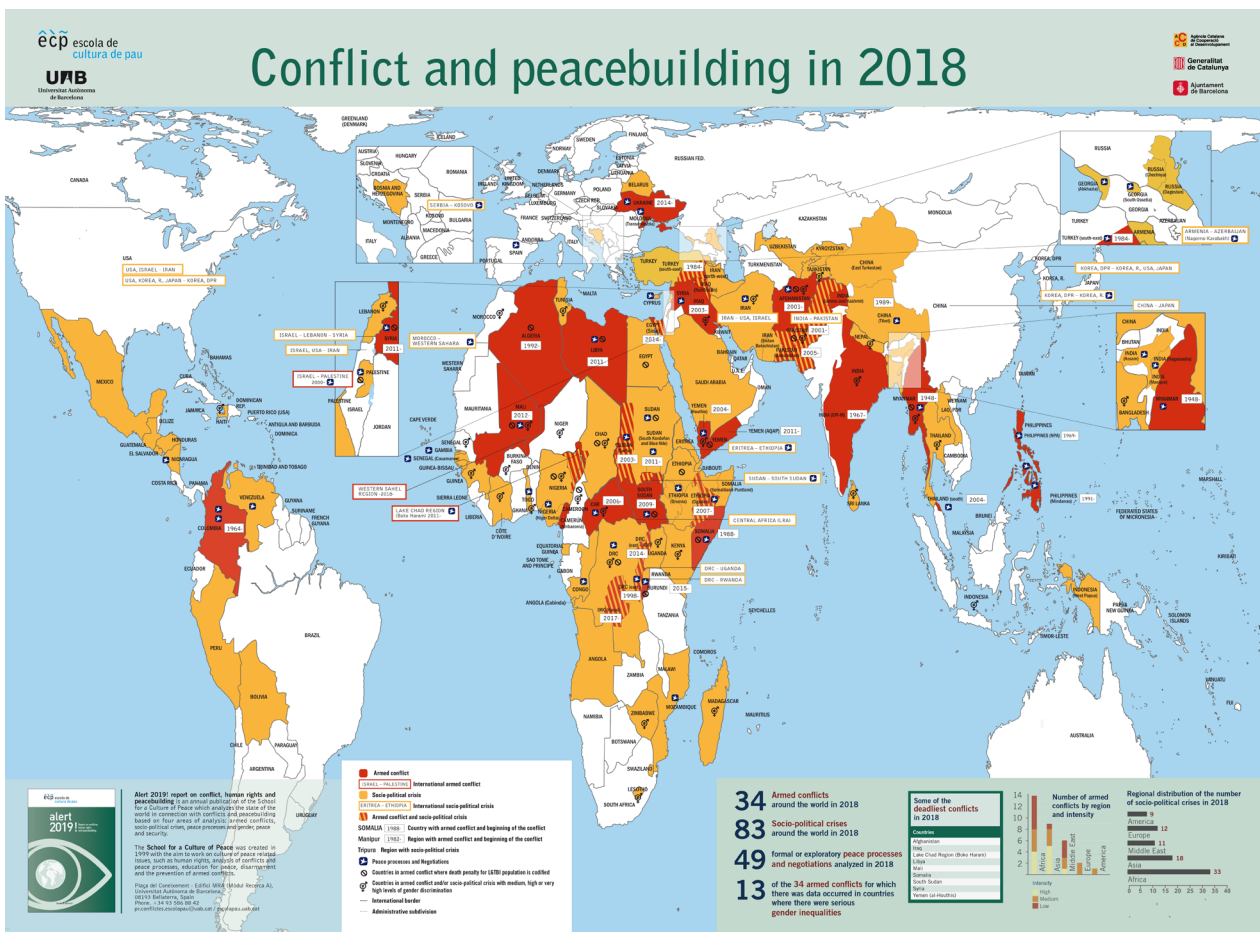


**Figure 1.1.** Overview map of armed conflicts and peace construction (2018)
Source: School for a Culture of Peace (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona), 2019.

number of forced displaced people in the world, which came to 68.5 million in 2018 (UNCHR, 2018); and the increase in urban violence which causes a bigger amount of homicides than wars do (around 464,000 people were homicide victims in 2017; UNODC, 2019). Direct violence is only the tip of the iceberg in a much deeper system of violences.

Violence affects people directly and **also indirectly by diminishing the resources for education and health, as well as other main subjects in people's lives**. According to the Global Peace Index (2019), the global economic impact of violence in 2018 was 11.2% of the global GDP ($1,853 per person). A country's average economic cost depends on the level at which violence impacts that region. In the ten most affected countries, the economic impact of violence was 35% of the GDP, whilst it being only 3.3% in the ten most pacific countries in the world.

Although the average of the Global Peace Index (GPI) in the countries of the world worsened by 3.8% from 2008 to 2018, last year a minimum improvement was detected (IE&P, 2019). Moreover, the global economic impact of violence was less severe for the first time since 2012, decreasing by 3.3% from 2017 to 2018. And despite the fact that global military spending keeps growing, 72 countries reduced their relative military expenditure (in % of GDP) during 2018.

These last figures, a bit more positive, let us assert that **it is possible to reverse situations of violence to benefit a culture of peace if civil society is able to promote policies and actions for peace**.
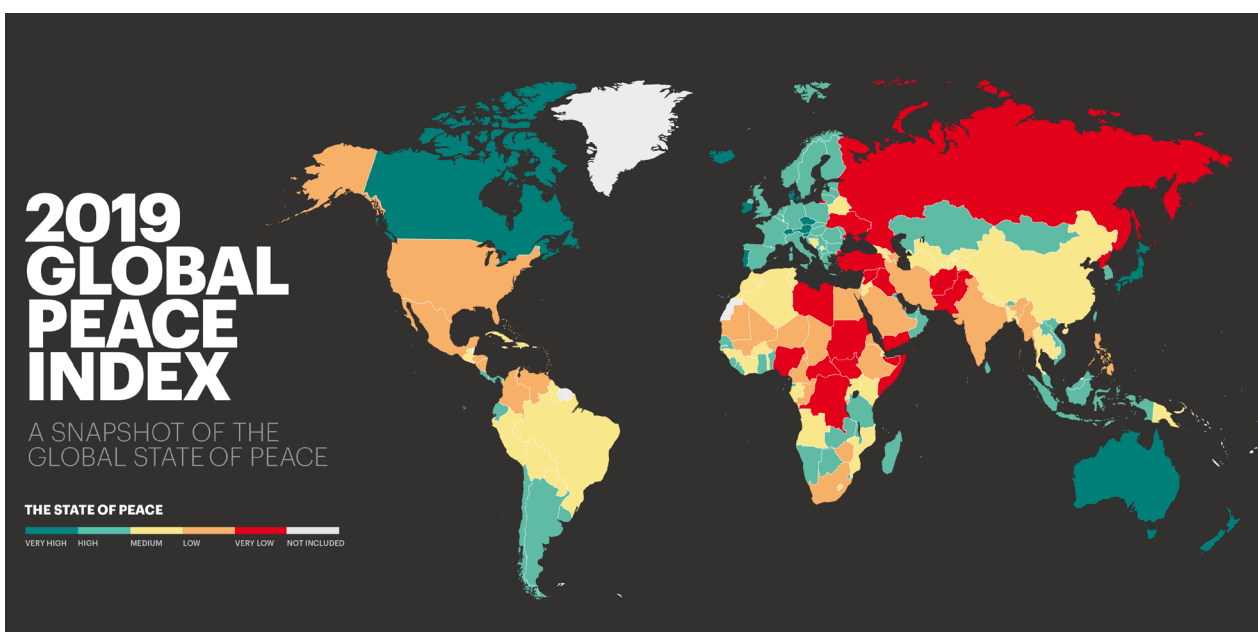


**Figure 1.2.** Peace or violence situation in each country (2018)
Source: Institute for Economics and Peace, 2019.

# THE NEED FOR QUALIFYING FOR PEACE: LET'S GET SOME CONCEPTS CLEAR

In order to achieve more pacific policies and societies it is necessary that we qualify for becoming peacebuilders, not only through developing our personal skills of relationship and living together, and by analyzing conflicts and complex situations, but also by taking political and social action. Therefore, the first step is to clarify the concept of *peace* because even though there is a wide consensus in favor of peace, it is often inconsistent with a reality where war or attacks in the name of peace are perpetuated. Together with the concept of *peace*, we will think about the concepts of *violence* and *conflict.*

## *Peace*

In the western world many people consider peace as the absence of war, conflict or physical violence. In research about peace, this view is known as *negative peace* and we see it too often in political approaches (for instance, "preventive" or "defensive" wars), and behavior between people (for example, application of repressive rules and humiliating punishments on behalf of "good" coexistence).

But the concept of peace has to go further if we want it to be useful for directing how to build peace conditions. This is what we call *positive peace.*

By **positive peace** we understand the horizon which we mark out, and at the same time the pathway along which we must walk day after day in order to achieve respectful and cooperative relationships between persons, and a social organization with just and fair structures. Let's go deeper into it:

"it is the horizon, and at the same time the pathway": it is important to imagine peace, to have a Utopia, a direction that shows us where to head. Likewise, to be able to make progress in our project for peace, it is essential that what we do, our behavior and practice, helps us materialize this Utopia so it is consistent with our project for peace.

"in order to achieve respectful and cooperative relationships": we put peace in the context of relationship building, both because of our need for relationships, and also in order to meet other basic needs while knowing that we are interdependent. We have to be able to build relationships with recognition, horizontality and mutual care, nonviolent communication, and the ability for cooperation.

"just and fair social structures": the way we organize collectively to do things together, distribute the resources fairly, or simply to live together in the spaces and time which we share, determines our lives in the broad sense. It is necessary that this organization is founded on a basis that allows us to take care of the basic needs of all people and to avoid any kind of violence.

**For a closer look...**

People around the world answer the question "What does peace mean for you?" by connecting it to their life experience in conflict countries or to their commitment against war and to build peace. Watch the Peace Modules by the International Catalan Institute for Peace. (Website in Catalan; most videos with English subtitles or in English)

In every historical and social context with specific social topics or problems there can exist different understandings of the concept of peace and the actions that must be prioritized in order to reach peace. Progress towards peace requires a constant dialogue about the issues that cause controversy in a particular setting, and calls for a good use of conflict as an opportunity for group and personal growth.

### *Violence*

Just as the conceptions of peace can emphasize one factor or another depending on context, violence can also be displayed by different expressions.

People can become victims of violence by easily identifiable causes or by deeply non-visible causes. According to Johan Galtung, "violence is present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations" (Galtung, 1975). In other words, violence appears when the context does not allow the person to develop all his/her potentialities. Peace requires overcoming any kind of violence, both visible and non-visible ones. Galtung distinguishes three types of violence:
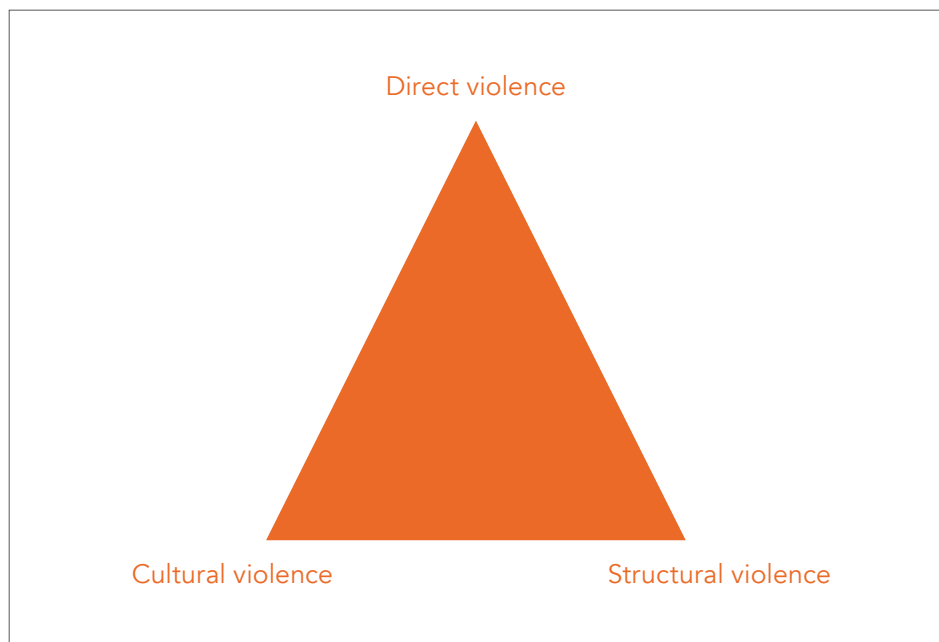


**Figure 1.3.**
Violence triangle,
by Johan Galtung
Source: Galtung, 2003.

> **Direct violence** is that which is directly practiced by one person against another, or by a group against another group, so that victims and victimizers can be identified. It is usually expressed as physical, verbal or psychological violence.

A gender-violence murder, the shooting of an enemy, a fight between youth gangs or between supporters of rival sport teams, and other types of physical or psychological mistreatment are examples of direct violence.

> **Structural violence** is the violence that is a part of the social structure. Victims are easily identified but not victimizers, since it does not originate in specific people but in how the functioning of social order has been established. Structural violence happens when the system conditions are unbalanced and benefit some to the detriment of others.

Structural violence is rooted in how the configuration of a social system is set up: the way that power is distributed, how spaces and time are organized, how resources are distributed, how decisions are made and which decisions are taken, and how the codes and rules of operation are established. Structural violence can happen in any social structure, from a small business, association or educational centre (depending on the criteria and rules used to guide and coordinate the organization), to an administration (depending on the policies and laws that the government decides to apply), or to the world (depending on the prevailing economic system, distribution of power, international relations, etc.).

> **Cultural violence** refers to the set of values, ideas and convictions that are used to justify or legitimize structural or direct violence: those arguments that get us to see situations of violence as "normal" (Galtung, 2003).

These discourses trivialize the resort to violence, or even justify learning abilities for practicing violence. As Vicenç Fisas writes, when this becomes a widespread reality, when that happens to most people, we can start to refer properly to a culture of violence (Fisas, 2002: 59). The models we learn, coming from prestigious people, stories and legends, textbooks, films, the news, etc., perpetuate violent models learned by other people. Generation after generation, we lack nonviolent references.

The worldview behind a certain cultural context is built up through trauma, myths and glory experienced over the course of many years. The interpretation made by this culture sets up the values and pervades the identity of that culture, which makes those values so difficult to

change: questioning them implies questioning one's own identity. This involves a profound crisis and explains why our own cultural violence is so difficult to identify, recognize and overcome.

In our culture, cultural violence lies in deeply rooted values, such as patriarchy, capitalism and competitiveness, colonialism, economism, individualism, and/or militarism. These values immensely influence the definition of social structures, though often implicitly and unconsciously.

### *The link between peace and violence*

The concepts of *peace* and *violence* can be regarded as antonyms. Though nowadays it can seem obvious, this statement would not have been the same in other historical moments; for centuries, the opposite of peace was considered to be *war*. Peace aims for empathic and cooperative relations between people and groups, and seeks to guarantee the conditions needed to respond to the basic needs of people and to preserve their dignity: *violence* appears when these conditions are impinged.

Thus, working on the principle of the violence triangle we can draw the peace triangle, which allows applying considerate peace policies. This triangle lets us identify which are those actions and events that create *direct peace*, that is to say which are the good practices that produce peace; which context we need to develop in order to build *structural peace*, meaning which peace policies are to be designed; and which are the values that need to pervade our imagery, our worldview, to guarantee a *cultural peace*. That is how a new triangle emerges, which could be used as a tool to overcome the abstract notion of peace and utilized to mold the best practices, policies and values that help us go deeply into the construction of peace.
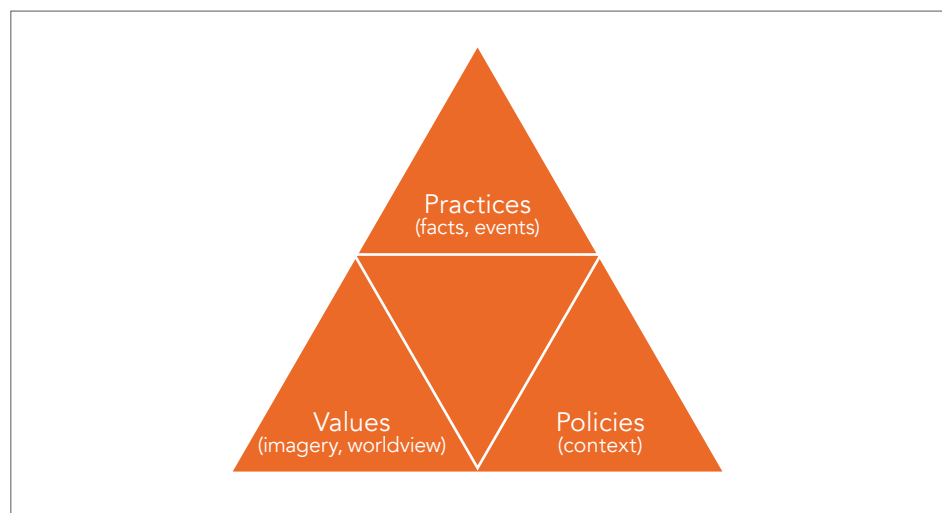
**Figure 1.4.**
Influencing peace practices,
values and policies.
Source: Adaptation of Index
for inclusion.

From these peace and violence triangles we can deduce that overcoming violence and building peace is a complex process, and the diversity of topics to work on is wide. Likewise, as previously stated, peace is a dynamic process. In every historical moment and in every community appear conflicts and specific controversial issues that need to be addressed. These situations become the challenges which, in that moment and place, offer opportunities to delve deeper into peace. This is how we have made progress throughout history.

Here is where the consequences of considering the value of peace from a positive or negative peace approach are clear. *Negative peace* – which just deals with direct violence – considers peace as the absence of conflict and carries a very negative perspective of this value. From this viewpoint, it is understood that conflicts can only be addressed with violence and thus confuses conflict and violence; that is why the main goal is to eliminate conflicts so as to avoid violence. This approach explains why the defense of the concept of *negative peace* strengthens the culture of violence.

On the contrary, the concept of *positive peace* understands conflict as an opportunity for change and evolution.

### *Conflict*

We understand **conflict** to be a dispute situation in which there is a clash of competing (and tangible) interests, needs or values (Cascón, 2000:8).

We regard that clash as a problem. Conflict is a process that origins with the confrontation of needs and ends in the moment that it has been transformed so that the sides do not recognize it as such. Together with the conflict, relations and structures are often transformed too. That is why we prefer to talk about *conflict transformation* (Lederach, 2003), because it puts us in an attitude of discovery and acceptance of crisis and change, both at the personal and structural levels. Paradoxically, the deeper a conflict is, the less possible it is to go back to the initial situation.

It is obvious that in groups, communities, and societies where diverse people live together with diverse needs, conflicts will inevitably happen – a lot of them and all in a very different manner. The transformative nature of conflict causes that, in the culture of peace, it is not considered as a problem, but an opportunity for change

and evolution as long as conflict is addressed without violence and it achieves convenient changes on both sides of the struggle. So the main challenge for the culture of peace isn't in avoiding conflict, but rather it lies in how to acquire individual and group abilities to deal with and to transform conflicts without violence.

In fact, the acceptance of conflict is a recognition of the fact that all people have legitimate needs. It is also a sign of a society that is interested in equity and mutual respect. To accept conflict as an inevitable, natural, and healthy fact is, therefore, a democratic exercise of respect for diversity.

### *Culture of peace*

**Culture of peace** has been defined as a "set of values, attitudes, modes of behavior and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation among individuals, groups, and nations." (UNGA, 1999)

We understand *culture of peace* as the articulation of the actions that:
— demilitarize the minds, appreciate diversity, engage in a dialogue and encourage openness to complex thought,
— build pacific groups and communities with abilities to address collectively, and nonviolently, the challenges that face them (personal and group abilities to establish nonviolent relations and build a good living together with diversity),
— allow progress toward global peace through political, social and economic action at a macrosocial level (start political mediation and negotiation, overcome militarism, build peace abilities in contexts of armed violence, repair damages and trauma after violence, take care of socio-economic fabric, etc.).

In this sense, the *peace point of view* provides tools to address conflicts without violence, both in the microsocial and macrosocial fields. Hence, culture of peace goes through every social topic and is proposed as a **point of view to transform difficulties into challenges, and to address them with the values of mutual care, social justice and respect**.

The contribution of the concept of *culture of peace*, in comparison to peace, is the recognition that peace has to be a part of *culture*; it has to pervade all aspects of life (education for peace and demilitarization of the minds, achievement of sustainable economic and social development,

respect for human rights, gender equity, esteem for diversity and solidarity, democratic participation, free flow of information, and international peace and security). It also refers to the idea that it has to be cultivated, that it requires daily practice, and that a persistent effort has to be made for it to flourish.

### SELF-STUDY ACTIVITY

**1.** Analyze your own violences. Make a note on the left diagram of the violences you feel you receive (of which you feel like a victim), both direct and structural or cultural. After that, note down on the right diagram the violences in which you feel you participate, or act as an accomplice. Once you have done this, observe the result and reflect on which relations exist between one and the others. What do you think you can do to reduce some of the identified violences?
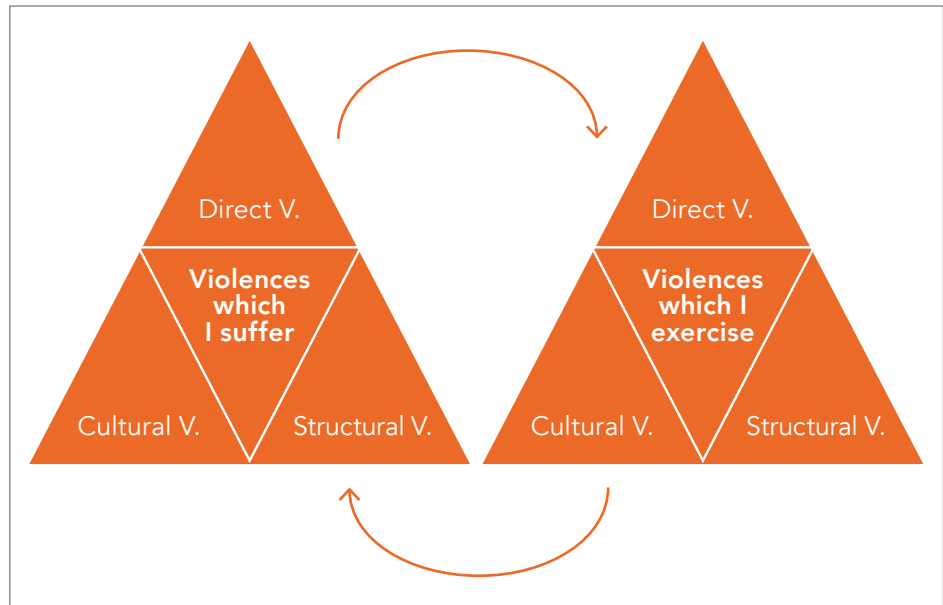


**Figure 1.5.**
Analysis on suffered and exercised violences. Source: School for a Culture of Peace.

**2.** Think about your peace abilities and fill in the following table:



**My** peace abilities
- How do I communicate and build relations?
- How do I get informed and analyse problems?
- How do I deal with uncertainty?

Peace abilities **in my group**
- How are we organized?
- How do we take decisions?
- How do we take care of each other and build relations?
- How do we address conflicts?

And **in my community**
- How are the prevailing codes of relation and communication?
- How are community conflicts responded?
- How are decisions on community issues taken? Who takes them? In which spaces?
- How are resources distributed?

**Figure 1.6.** Analysis on peace abilities. Source: School for a Culture of Peace.

**3.** Once you have identified the violences that you suffer from and exercise, and your own peace abilities, reflect on which exercised violences you could reduce in your life, and which abilities you could strengthen. Then, take the measures needed to make this a reality in the short- or midterm.

# WHAT CAN YOU DO ABOUT IT?

To act in favor of peace includes actions in countless fields:

### *Fight against militarism*

By acting to reduce those structural dynamics that reinforce militarism and therefore armed conflicts and violence. In this sense, there is a variety of possibilities:

— **Collaborate in campaigns for disarmament** by giving support to campaigns and mobilizations aimed at the local population, and often in synergy with global international campaigns. For example, campaigns for non-proliferation of arms treaties such as the Global Campaign on Military Spending, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, or the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots.

— **Consume ethically** by watching over your consumption so that it does not foster militarism. You can close your accounts with armed banks (the report Don't Bank on the Bomb denounces the role of the major banks in the arms financing), and you can ensure that the products you consume (coltan in technological products, petrol, drugs, etc.) do not fuel armed conflicts (see this article by the magazine Ethical Consumer, and this one by Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, and also the Spanish Conflict-free Technology campaign.

— **Be alert to prevent the naturalization of militarism in education**. The Countering the Militarisation of Youth Project denounces initiatives which promote education of militarism and encourage young people to accept the military values as normal. You can look for local initiatives and help organize protest activities in educational spaces where the armed forces are present to promote their activities.

### *Support peacebuilding initiatives*

For those people and communities living in territories which are suffering armed conflicts or severe violence situations, international support can be of great importance as long as it responds to local needs and demands, and it is done in coordination with prestigious organizations which have expertise in the respective topic. Hence, before deciding to participate in support actions, it is important to be aware of the desired and undesired impacts that these actions can create, and to acquire comprehensive information about the organization that promotes them – whether it befits the approaches

of global, fair, and de-colonial peace, and if its activities have positive impact on the territory. All over the world, there are multiple and varied initiatives promoted by civil society which you can support by becoming a member. Let's see some examples:

— **Participate in <u>Service Civil International</u>**, an international volunteering movement for peacebuilding with a centenarian network of 42 local branches. SCI works for the promotion of a culture of peace, global justice, and empowerment of civil society, and coaches on how to use these as tools for social transformation. This duty is made by each local branch from a grassroots point of view and in partnership with other local and international organizations.

You can get involved by participating in short- or long-term international volunteering projects, by coordinating a voluntary workcamp in your region, by creating a local activist group, or by attending the trainings, workshops and activities which SCI organizes throughout the year. <u>Here</u> you can find all the information and <u>look for your local branch</u>.

— **Contribute to cooperation for peace**, which aims to create durable peace conditions in contexts of violence, and includes: taking action to prevent the causes of wars, actions addressed to find mechanisms for a equitable exploitation of natural resources, looking after refugees and displaced people, and rebuilding what has been devastated by war (infrastructures and services) through cooperative projects for development in a tension or armed conflict context. (Some examples of organizations at the international level are <u>Peace Direct</u>, and <u>Search for Common Ground</u>, among others).

— **Give humanitarian aid** in emergency situations. Some prestigious organizations are <u>Médecins Sans Frontières</u> and <u>Open Arms</u>.

— **Protect human rights defenders**, a group which is often persecuted and threatened in a tension or armed conflict context. Some reference organizations are: <u>Peace Brigades</u>, <u>Nonviolent Peaceforce</u>, and International <u>Action for Peace</u>, among many other local initiatives for the protection of threatened people in a situation of violence. You can become a volunteer in these organizations to help threatened human right defenders.

*Build peace abilities in your immediate surroundings*

Another big impact we can contribute to a culture of peace is to transform our daily practice in our social and working context into a

peace practice. For this, we need to commit to going deep into learning and applying as many peace abilities as possible.

— **Take care of relations** between the people we have to live with. We can individually provide a safe environment for community relations through using tools of assertive and nonviolent communication (NVC), and we can join others who promote NVC at the Center for Nonviolent Communication. We can also promote the ethics of care and gender perspective in the groups, collectives and institutions in which we participate. Here you have some interesting toolkits that might help you:

*SAGE: Self-Assessment on Gender Equality*. For individuals, organizations and educational events such as international volunteering services (European Youth Centre of the Council of Europe & Alliance of European Voluntary Service Organizations)

*Gender Equality Toolkit for IPPF Member Associations: Gender Assessment Tool*. (International Planned Parenthood Federation)

*Sembrando cuidados. Perspectiva feminista y ética del cuidado: Guía de autodiagnosis para organizaciones sociales* (in Spanish). Self-assessment on gender and ethics of care for social organizations (Lafede.Cat – Organizations for Social Justice in Catalonia)

— **Acquire abilities for conflict analysis** by learning how to look for reliable information, by living together with a variety of perspectives, by focusing on the needs and not on the stances of others, and by not confusing the people with the problems that we might share.

— **Learn how to live together with diversity** in order to fight against discrimination and hate speech by making evident discrimination situations among those around you, or by joining anti-rumor campaigns in your region (see some examples included in the Intercultural Cities Programme by the Council of Europe.

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# OTHER RESOURCES OF INTEREST

**About the Decade for a Culture of Peace:**

UNESCO's website on Culture of Peace and Nonviolence

Practices of Culture of Peace and Evaluation of the Decade for a Culture of Peace

News about Culture of Peace

**Other peace organizations of reference:**

Amnesty international

Human Rights Watch

Oxfam International

Global Peace Foundation

Nonviolent Peaceforce

**Other Catalan and Spanish organizations and campaigns:**

Fundipau – Foundation for Peace

Study Centre for Peace J.M. Delàs

Lafede.cat – Organizations for Social Justice in Catalonia

Asociación para la Comunicación NoViolenta

Banca Armada Campaign by Delàs Center and SETEM Catalunya

Desmilitaritzem l'Educació Campaign

Estratègia BCN Antirumors by Barcelona City Council

BCN vs. Odi by Barcelona City Council