A path to the exercise of responsibility
Methodological handbook on the use of
the Charter of Human Responsibilities in Colombia

Introduction

In the work of spreading the use of the Charter of Human Responsibilities in Colombia we have staked out the need to impart to different civil groups a sense of the social importance inherent in the concept of responsibility. This is done in a way that takes into account local processes and encourages civic development through the identification of the many ways of fostering a more just, diverse, participatory, and responsible citizenship.[1] This has been accomplished through spreading the use of the Charter of Human Responsibilities, the affirmation if its principles, promoting responsible citizenship, drafting regional charters of responsibilities or formulating citizens' agreements of responsibility. All this activity has allowed the development of a methodologically clear work plan for circulating the Charter and the advancing of a diverse, responsible and united citizenship.

The work of the Charter of Human Responsibilities initiative in Colombia encompasses multiple experiences within different social sectors belonging to diverse regions throughout the country. This is seen in the work brought forward by young people in the city of Barranquilla in the Atlantic coast, with citizens in the municipalities of Puerto Tejada and Villarrica, in the state of Cauca, with women in the city of Cali and with the Community Soup Kitchen Network in the locality of Rafael Uribe Uribe, in Bogotá. The above are all a result of the use of consistent methodology in creating Human Responsibilities Agreements, an action tool that connects the needs of different sectors with the exercising of active citizenship through responsibility.

This handbook is part of a set of pedagogical and methodological tools useful in working with the concept of human responsibility. Sharing our pedagogical, didactic, conceptual, and methodological experiences for building of a responsible citizenship presents a double opportunity. On the one hand, there is the presentation of successful indicators of encouraging and supporting local processes of responsible citizenship development to national and international communities. For example, we can present the workflow chart that we use in carrying out our work. On the other hand, we believe that using a set of pedagogical tools in the development of engaged and responsible citizens, when these tools are used in a daily environment and in varied contexts, can help disseminate the methodology and can broaden its application in Colombia and other countries and continents.

Designing a clear and easy to understand pedagogical product, one that takes on the concept of responsibility and its social utility in different geographic, political, economic and social contexts, is key. We believe that social organizations, governments, international organizations and citizens in general have the opportunity to approach the subject matter of responsibilities with appropriate and useful pedagogic tools in the many places where citizens assume their daily life (companies, academic organizations, territorial entities, public and private entities, etc.) where the notion of responsibility plays a major role.

This booklet is designed as a working tool to support the promotion of human responsibilities at the different levels of action, as a backbone of a new type of citizenship that is responsible, plural, united and participating, in both the local and global spheres, in today's world. We hope that this publication, which takes up the tradition of popular education, allows the interested reader or institutions to promote and stimulate processes of responsible citizenship geared towards solving queries and questions such as: Responsibilities for what? What are human responsibilities and how do they relate to education for citizenship? How can citizen agreements be used to advance responsible citizenship? Among and with whom should we launch processes of responsible citizenship?

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[1] Throughout the Handbook, the words 'citizen' and 'citizenship' refer to residents of communities, regions and nations and their role and responsibilities as active members of their communities, not to the legal status conferred by different states and governments.

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1. THE CHARTER OF HUMAN RESPONSIBILITIES: AN ONGOING PROCESS BUILT WITH YOUR PARTICIPATION

The Charter of Human Responsibilities is an effort geared to encourage human responsibility that is based on ethical action principles. This work as carried out in different parts of the world has focused on disseminating and encouraging reflection on the content and meaning of the Charter. The history of this global process is the foundation for a political and methodological exposition of this collective effort.

Three processes – each occurring in a different moment – mark the beginning of the Charter. First there was the need to act globally – being mindful of protecting culture through local practices – in developing civil participation that is more democratic, broad, and inclusive. This participation is recognized as an important agent in decision-making that is attuned to the search for more just, dignified, respectful, tolerant, well-balanced, ethical societies. A broad gathering was called – designated the Vézelay Group – to reflect and offer alternatives in light of these challenges. This team came up with what was tagged as "a launch for the Planet's General States", which consisted in developing a process for social action from the bottom up to take on differing points of view about the current and future state of the world. These differences in knowing and interpreting what was or was not possible were found between different sectors, regions, religions, economies, philosophies, and races as well as different development and educational models.

Recognizing diversity as an instrument in resolving local and global conflicts stemming from the current global economic and social models, plans for social action and mobilization were formed to gain an understanding of the multiple regions and sector-based experiences. This brings us to the second historical moment, which spans from 1993 to 1997. These years saw the consolidation of a common platform for a responsible and united world. This platform is based not so much on condemnation but on the possibility of talking about and sharing common values. The platform posits that it is possible to think in terms of a broad strategy in the midst of diversity, where the priority is offering alternatives that spring from a global civil society. With this base, power, instead of being taken, would be created. Thus became apparent the possibility of a diverse, responsible, and united alliance.

The alliance then became a global movement in which three routes for taking on the real world challenges converge. The first route is geocultural, in which, in order to achieve adequate resolution to these challenges, it is important to keep in mind the diversity of contexts and cultures. The second route is sectorial, which tries to include all social and professional strata, while the thematic route deals with the plurality of humankind's challenges. The march down these routes started with five mobilization programs that focused on the most pressing worries and problems of the regions and sectors of civil society at the end of the 20th century: water, energy, land and land possession, transforming regions with the most degradation, and changing the military industrial complex.

The third stage occurred between 1997 and 2001 and tried to identify regional, cultural, sectoral, and issue-based concerns located at four big thematic poles. The first of these is representational and concerns itself with values. The second concerns the economy and society: types of social organizations, means of production, population movement, goods and services, money, savings, financial markets, etc. The third, governance, calls for the creation of new local-to-global regulations, with the aim of structuring good government. Finally, there is the pole of human/biosphere relations, which contemplates the fundamental problems of water, energy, land, biodiversity, and education.

The point was not only to highlight problems but also to offer alternatives, resulting in the creation of methodological solutions: documentation tasked with delineating the desired objectives as well as the means to reach them. In addition, the process looked to clearly identify the concrete experiences that give meaning to the discussion and inform the development of alternatives. All these dynamic suggestions converged at the Citizens Global Assembly in Lille, in northern France in 2001.

The result was the Charter of Human Responsibilities, which identifies principles for ethical action and simultaneously encourages reflection and action vis-à-vis the social utility of responsibility as an element of power, mobilization, and participation by modern civil society. Since 2002 a set of initiatives has been implemented in fifteen countries from all regions of the planet, working toward building societies that are diverse, united and particularly accountable in constructing a fair balance that values equality, respect for diversity, plurality, justice, and the collective good over inequality, injustice, and the plundering of ecosystems. Let us look at the result of that process. It is not about formulas, but civic principles of action.

1.1. The principles of the Charter of Human Responsibilities constitute a set of articulated ethics for action, brought together with different fundamental aspects of the real world, such as cultural diversity, freedom, dignity, and non-material human aspirations. Also important are material needs, legitimacy in exercising power, the environment and natural resources, the market, scientific research, knowledge and know-how, and finally, the consequences of human decisions that have molded modern societies.

Here are the original ten principles of the Charter of Human Responsibilities, which invite reflection and call for responsible action in areas of our lives.

1.   To face the challenges of today and tomorrow, it is just as important to unite in action as to express cultural diversity.

2.   Every person's dignity demands that he or she contribute to the freedom and dignity of others.

3.   Lasting peace cannot be established without a justice which is respectful of human dignity and human rights.

4.   To ensure the full flowering of the human personality, its non-material aspirations as well as its materials needs must be addressed.

5.   The exercise of power can be legitimate only if it serves the common good, and if it is monitored by those over whom it is exercised.

6.   Consumption of natural resources to meet human needs must be integrated in a larger effort of active protection and careful management of the environment.

7.   The pursuit of prosperity cannot be separated from an equitable sharing of wealth.

8.   Freedom of scientific research implies accepting that this freedom is limited by ethical criteria.

9.   The full potential of knowledge and know-how is realized only through sharing them, and through using them in solidarity and in the culture of peace.

10.   In reaching decisions about short-term priorities, the precaution must be taking of evaluating long-term consequences with their risks and uncertainties.

NOTE: The Charter principles were revised in 2007after a process of international deliberation. The revised principles can be found here
http://www.charter-human-responsibilities.net/spip.php?article19

1.2.   Acknowledgement and discussion of principles of human responsibility

A Charter of Human Responsibilities is relevant if you keep in mind that, besides contributing ideas and practices in the midst of cultural, social, economic, and political difference, the Charter can be augmented through affirmation or revision.

The process of devising a Charter of principles has taken many years and counted on the participation of many people from different sectors of and places in the world. Nonetheless, this does not mean that these principles do not need to be augmented, revised, or adapted based on different people's experiences, or according to their needs, contexts, inquiries, cultures, problems, and realities. The goal is for these to be guiding principles in the exercise of responsibility in different parts of the world.

To facilitate reflection on the ten principles and to allow participation from anyone interested in deepening their grasp of the social utility of human responsibility based on their own experience, we suggest the following exercise.

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

1. Start by reading each principle and writing down some examples of each. Then ask the participants how they would articulate the practice of this principle. With each contribution, the principles start to be grounded in real life.
2. The group can be divided into smaller groups if it is too is large. Each group can then tackle one or two principles and if there is time, report back to the larger group
3. Another option is that the groups can represent their thoughts on the principles in a graphic or artistic way. Examples are drawings, skits, songs, poems, short writings, etc.
4. Critiques, observations, and suggestions can be used to broaden the Charter of Human Responsibilities. Use the chart below with people familiar with the process so that they can offer ideas about what is missing and what is extraneous in every principle. They can also offer topics that need to be included or excluded, backing up their suggestions with good arguments. The facilitator can take notes on the suggestions or each person can use the chart himself or herself.

CHARTER OF HUMAN RESPONSIBILITIES
PRINCIPLES REVIEW CHART

Please draw your attention to the following chart designed at the Citizen's World Assembly held in Lille, France in 2001. Its purpose is for you to participate in a review and affirmation process of the Charter of Human Responsibilities principles. [Note from editor: you may choose to replace these with the updates principles.]

| Principles | Agree? | | What would you delete from the text? | What would you add to this text? |
	Yes	No (why?)		
1 To face the challenges of today and tomorrow, it is just as important to unite in action as to express cultural diversity				
2. Every person's dignity demands that he or she contribute to the freedom and dignity of others.				
3. Lasting peace cannot be established without a justice that is respectful of human dignity and human rights.				
4. To ensure the full flowering of the human personality, its non-material aspirations as well as its materials needs must be addressed.				
5. The exercise of power can only be legitimate if it serves the common good, and if it is monitored by those over whom it is exercised.				
6. Consumption of natural resources to meet human needs must be integrated in a larger effort of active protection and careful management of the environment				
7. The pursuit of prosperity cannot be separated from an equitable sharing of wealth.				
8. Freedom of scientific research implies accepting that this freedom is limited by ethical criteria.				
9. The full potential ok knowledge and know-how is realized only through sharing them, and through using them in solidarity and in the culture of peace				
10. In reaching decisions about short-term priorities, the precaution must be taking of evaluating long-term consequences with their risks and uncertainties.				

Is there a fundamental principle that is missing for doing the work of human responsibilities?
What is the missing principle?_____

2. STARTING POINT FOR THINKING ABOUT HUMAN RESPONSIBILITIES

To begin with, the topic of human responsibility should be approached as a possibility in opening up and procuring perspectives on individual and collective social action with the goal of practically and creatively facing the current and future challenges we have as human beings. Secondly, it means we should respond to three fundamental questions with ethical actions and proposals:

1. There exists a **lack of balance between the recognition of rights** – which is urgently needed in the world – and the **scarce actions that encourage human responsibility** from the social sector or in the debate on the urgent themes of our lives. Recognizing responsibility, not

as a simple correlation to human rights but also as a recognition of civil society's power, must be made manifest. It is important not to forget that with great power comes great responsibility and that every person, however precarious their situation, has responsibility toward themselves and others, and that if they exercise that responsibility they utilize their power as citizens.

2. **Starting with setting appropriate criteria for social and ethical action** in social sectors and in government, education, economics, politics, religion, and culture, the most difficult issues afflicting both individuals and said social groups must be analyzed, discussed and disseminated. The goal of encouraging processes of reflection and action along with human responsibility is to point out ethical civic responses geared toward improving governance. In other words, that which has been labeled good local, regional, national, and global government is built through the daily individual and collective practices of these sectors. These practices are rooted in ethical criteria. They are constructed in the daily tasks of social groups and both imply and represent appropriate charters of responsibilities according to their contexts and needs. Indigenous groups, women's movements, and youth actions directed at building settings more favorable to their development as people exemplify this as do farm worker struggles for food security and against the use of genetically modified materials.

On the other hand, many times moral and ethical precepts are merely postulated ideals that remain in a state of formulation without the accompanying empirical factors. For our purposes, the discussion and the consolidation of a vision about the construction of responsibility posits that the commitments of civil networks can be successful because they are rooted in an understanding of their own limitations and capacity. In other words, it is a conviction that social problems are resolved through not only external forces but internal ones as well, and always through social practice.

3. **We should develop and consolidate a moral baseline for social action** because of the great indifference felt by a majority of people. This indifference is due to poverty, social conflict, war, abuse in all its incarnations, crime, the limited capacity for societal action in the face of the great challenges posed by anti-democratic practices in the exercise of power, lack of governance, corruption, and politicking. Today's world lacks real spaces for participation and decision-making.

This initiative sets out to consider the social utility of human responsibility. We encourage the establishment of a moral baseline that is urgently needed to achieve a society with more dignity, ethics and responsibility. This concern has been inherent in community practices throughout the world, as put forward by Scottish economist and philosopher Adam Smith in his treatise, dating back to the 18th century, on nature and the origins of the wealth of nations. In the sections where Smith expounds on the *theory of moral sentiments*, he expresses the moral baseline that the English were willing to accept with regards to a peasant. The people of his time – according to this author – utilized an easily understood image to represent their position on what was acceptable: *that of a peasant on a major road with mended but clean clothes, worn-out shoes sewed on all sides, carrying a basket with four eggs.* If it was perceived that the peasant could not acquire even those goods, this person was regarded as indigent and it would then be necessary to turn to the moral sentiments of the community to remedy that injustice. If the situation was not resolved, regional jurisdictional powers should be pressured to put an end to the injustice. With inequity imposed as a moral yardstick, such a situation was no longer taken on individually but collectively. In this way, the jurisdictional decision-making bodies could keep moral sentiments as an important part of the recognition of responsibility. It can be said that protecting the moral baseline represents every citizen's basic responsibility.

PRACTICAL EXERCISE
To understand more clearly the relationship between human responsibility, moral baselines, ethical actions and power, the following exercise can be used:

Answer the following questions individually and then as a group:
1. In your social context, what immoral behavior can you identify in your everyday life? Is it possible to change this behavior?
2. Do you have some level of power and how is it presented? If it is helpful, think about what type of responsibilities you have and how you carry them out.

3. In your social context, who should not have any type of responsibilities and why?
4. Do you believe that your community, region, or country has a moral baseline that represents the sensibilities of its members? Please give two examples to support your answer.
5. Create an image that represents the very least that your society should accept as just or fair. You can use a drawing, a story, a song, or just a phrase that captures what you are trying to express. Do not forget the Smith example offered earlier and, if you want, offer another.

3. BASIC IDEAS FOR UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF RESPONSIBILITY

It is not uncommon to be confronted with many doubts and questions when we think and talk about responsibility. These doubts and questions could be considered a good sign, as they indicate an interest in the concept of responsibilities. However, it is not easy to find materials on this topic.

Below we present some essential precepts that allow us to construct a more grounded understanding about responsibility, in order to facilitate our work around reflecting and acting on this topic.

**Is there a difference between duty and responsibility?**

Being accountable implies wanting to be so, having the **will** to act in a responsible manner. When actions are taken out of obligation or to conform to norms, this is not intrinsically responsible. So we should **differentiate between duty and responsibility.**

Duty implies fulfillment of a norm. There are legal norms and societal norms. Both types of norms have to be fulfilled under penalty of legal or social sanctions.

When a person goes beyond what is strictly required they are acting in an **ethical** manner, as their actions are based on their own **principles and ideals.**

Obligatory practices arise from norms, while **voluntary practices** are derived from **ethical principles in action**.

That is why to be able to act in a responsible manner, it is important that communities, organizations, societies, and individuals insist on identifying and constructing **principles of accountable action.**

Obligation

↓

Duty

↓

Norm

Voluntary Action

↓

Responsibility

↓

Ethical Principle
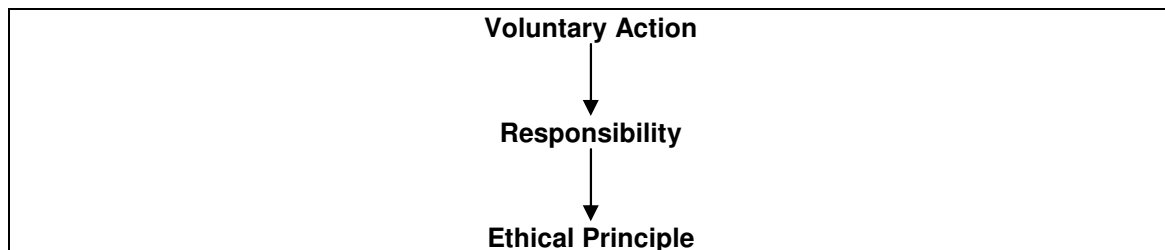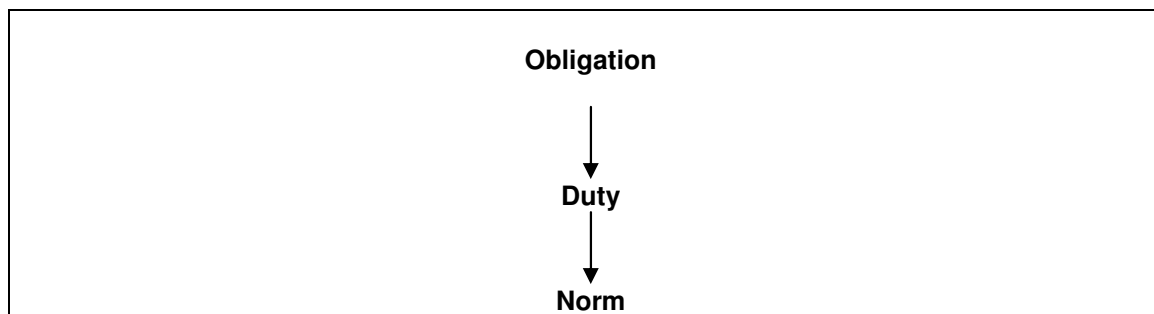
Does power have anything to do with responsibility?

Carrying out responsibility also implies an important point: recognizing that we have **power. We act responsibly when we recognize the power of our actions.** Not being accountable is a failure to recognize the power we have in building a better world.

Example: Mario recycles the trash in his home daily. He knows that this action has direct bearing on improving the environmental conditions in his city. In carrying out his responsibilities to recycle, Mario recognizes that it is his choice to participate in the improvement of the quality of life in a region inhabited by many other persons. He knows he has power.

That is why we say that **with great power comes great responsibilities,** but also that, as little power as we may think we have, it is only useful if we take ownership of our ability to take action. **Acting responsibly means recognizing our own power** and the act of carrying it out responsibly.

Example: the responsibility of a large business is greater than that of a smaller one, insofar as the actions of the former have a greater impact on society than the latter. However, as limited as the reach of a smaller business may be, acting responsibly recognizes its sphere of influence on its immediate surroundings and beyond.

What is social responsibility?

The concept of **social responsibility** is derived from the idea of intervention, based on the belief that something should be done on behalf of people to improve their conditions regardless of norms or duty. It means moving forward with joint actions that help to satisfy the social needs of the people involved in the action.

Carrying out this responsibility implies **instituting joint practices** based on ethical principles of action. We all have the capacity to institute these practices. **We all have the ability to be accountable.**

What is meant by individual responsibility?

Individual responsibility is at the core of carrying out responsibility. It is **a person's ability for action directed toward the common good in service to collective and not only individual ends.**

What is collective responsibility and why is it so important?

When a space for action is created **where it is necessary to work as a joint body** because **individual action will not suffice, collective responsibility** has been constructed.

Through collective responsibility, a society builds the future through which it faces its challenges. It is an endeavor accomplished with others, as there are many things that cannot be built by individual action and that require collective effort. Agreement and consensus, collaboration, integrated efforts, feedback, different opinions and ideas, etc all become indispensible.

For example, **environmental care, building and consolidating a moral baseline for social action, the practice of a political life,** etc., are fundamental elements of social life that require the carrying out of collective responsibility. Collective responsibility should function whenever individual responsibility does not suffice to face the problems or matters that interest or worry us.

Remember:
Responsibility has to do with:
- Power
- Ability to act
- Common good
- Individual and collective will
- Ethics
- Principles and values

4. RESPONSIBILITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

An intrinsic principle in the practice of responsibility is respect for human rights. Without this respect, any responsible practice is invalid. However, it should be noted that the systemic failure to assure human rights and the accompanying violation of human rights indicate the need to take on commitments that stress the responsibility of all persons, governments, entities, and institutions involved in ensuring or failing to secure these very rights.

Reflecting and talking about freedoms and rights is much more pleasant than doing the same on the topics of responsibility, commitment, and duty. This is evident because in the case of responsibility, action is usually framed in the first person, while in the case of human rights, action is framed in terms of others. This assumes a certain moral superiority of those who point out the problems of those who suffer them, without requiring them to take on commitments in the search for a type of responsibility that is composed of respect, rights, tolerance, diversity, as well as individual and collective commitments.

Because there exists a constant imbalance between the demand for rights and the practice of responsibility; it is not difficult to see that in reality people have the tendency to prefer exercising rights instead of responsibilities.

All spaces where human actions have an impact must be negotiated in a responsible manner. With regard to the expression of values, culture, art, science, technology, education, media, etc. tolerance, multiculturalism and respect towards others must predominate in order for us to truly recognize one another. Where the economic sphere intersects with society – socioeconomic structures, public space, and means of production – human responsibility should be framed around equity, justice, and access. In terms of governance (citizenship, rights, local and global governing, regionalism, transparency, etc) the guiding principles should be democracy, active participation, a public ethic, and the various mechanisms to exercise power in an accountable manner. The guiding principles of the relationship between humankind and the biosphere (ecosystems, air, climate, water, land, energy, etc) should be the preservation of the environment, of species, of geographical diversity in land preservation efforts, and of humankind.

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

The following exercise looks at the important relationship between people's responsibility and the human rights of the first, second, and third generation.
Objective: identify the responsibility – one's own and other's – associated with each right
In the box titled "My responsibilities in terms of this right" identify specific examples or actions that show the link between a person's **ability and will** to act in exercising the human right in question.

Responsibility and the rights of the first, second, and third generations

Responsibilities / Rights	My responsibilities in terms of this right	Other actors that have responsibilities in terms of this right	Other actors' responsibilities in terms of this right
To life			
To work and choosing an occupation			
To freedom and security			
To have a family			
To a healthy environment			
Social safety net			
To high quality goods and services			

CONCLUSION

As can be inferred from this exercise, identifying rights is a fundamental part of exercising them; yet they are even more effective with accompanying responsibilities. Demanding human rights is one step, but committing to respect and promote human rights means broadening our view beyond our immediate environment, which gives rise to full participation as citizens. When we specify the responsibility of other actors in terms of these rights, we are able not only to demand human rights but also to make them reality through concrete actions, in other words, via an active citizenship.

This means that responsibility and rights are made real by means of human actions that, when practiced fully, interdependently produce citizens committed to themselves, to others, to the region, and to humankind. Rights and responsibility are not just demanded and exercised, but are planned into everyday actions.

In identifying responsibilities and rights it becomes apparent that the meanings of values and principles needs to be clarified, as well as how they differ from norms, as we shall discuss next.

5. VALUES AND PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL ACTION

Part one: Identifying Social Values

In every social context, there are many ways to act out daily life. Even within this diversity there are always certain actions, tastes, and interests that are more prevalent and that are widely recognized as just in mainstream society. We call these social values.

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Problem: Often times we don't have a clear understanding of the values underlying our actions. Sometimes we take a particular series of values for granted that in practice are not reflected in the daily actions of other people. We often leave out the importance of recognizing, defending, and acting upon these values.

Objective: Carry out an exercise through which participants learn to identify the values they consider fundamental to the practice of their social lives.

Activity: The group is divided into 3 teams that will each read about a challenging situation, which we have called a **dilemma**. Each team will need to balance a series of conditions and arguments in order to make an important decision affecting a group of people. One important characteristic of these dilemmas is the difficulty of deciding what to do, because just about any path is possible.

Each group will take the position of one of the parties involved in the dilemma and will argue, by means of the values it represents, the reason why its solution to the dilemma should be chosen and why the other groups' solutions should not be chosen.

Based on the characteristics of the dilemmas, there will generally always be a debate; this is because the positions are difficult to reconcile with each other. This is part of the exercise and can help reveal the level of interest that participants have in the activity.

The facilitator should note each argument and prioritize the values each group relies on, based on which ones each group resorts to most often. The goal is to use a practical exercise to clarify fundamental values within the group.

After the debate is over, there should be a review of what has been said and an identification of the values that each group prioritizes. It is a good idea to write these values on a large piece of paper or chalkboard, or in some other way that makes them clearly visible.

This is a fun and dynamic exercise, and while the dilemma is not usually resolved, the goal of clarifying values is achieved.

It is important to discuss certain ideas that may be seen as values: for example, the desire for easy money, unconditional loyalty to a mob boss, the cult of artificial feminine beauty, etc.

Proposed Dilemma Text
(This should be adapted according to group and context)

Resolve the following dilemma
Three young people, two women and a man –all good friends -- are hanging out in a small city at 3pm on a Friday afternoon. The first young woman is named Molly, the second is named Betty, and the young man's name is Robert. None of the three has a paying job, but they all are part of the same youth organization. They're all known for being very outgoing and are used to making their own way in the world.

Because life is often this way, they are all faced with a dilemma: one of the three will be hired to coordinate a cultural events festival that will take place in the city. For this work, he or she will be paid fairly well and will get wide recognition as a cultural promoter. The challenge is that the group is responsible for deciding which of the three gets the job. Here is the situation:

1. Robert studies psychology in college and until now has received some financial support from his parents, but this assistance isn't enough and won't last much longer. People recognize his outgoing nature and willingness to take on projects that others come up with, but one issue with his personality is that he can be too explosive. However, he really needs the money to continue with his studies and besides, using his professional training would be a great way to support the other youth in his organization. Regardless of his slightly difficult personality, he likes to work with others and is known for his talent at encouraging free-thinking and the value that he places on it as part of working on a team.

2. Even though Betty is one of the youngest women in the organization, she already has 2 children. She doesn't have a high school diploma but, as is often the case, this doesn't stop her from being one of the best youth in the organization. She is known in the community for her hard work, and wherever she goes she demonstrates real political skill. She might be the kind of leader that will soon be nationally known, thanks to her high level of understanding of what is taking place on both local and national levels. She works hard in many ways to help people fully understand social problems, but she's fairly disorganized and doesn't always follow through on commitments. She lives with her partner and they own a small store, but they need money to improve their quality of life, which isn't all that good.

3. Molly studied theater and sometimes works with a theatrical company in the city, but it is not theater season right now and money is tight. She likes to work in groups, even though she is pretty shy and feels shaky when she has to interact with other people. She's well spoken and very respectful when she addresses others, and is known for her fair-mindedness. One of Molly's greatest passions is to support the needs of those who are highly impoverished, and for that reason she is involved in activities that she believes will help those in greatest need. She has to help her mother pay the bills, and they have just had their electricity shut off.

If you were the decision-makers, based on the values and principles of your group, which of the three young people would you choose to coordinate the cultural events festival and why? You should take the following into account: the charitable foundation that supports youth programs needs to have an answer right away so that it can make a large grant to this youth organization. It is important for the foundation to have a good relationship with the organization that is beneficial to all parties.

In order to solve this problem, you should:

a) choose a single candidate and argue with absolute clarity all of the values that make him or her stand out.
b) explain the reasons why the other two candidates were not chosen, also based on values.

Part Two: Creating principles for responsible social action

We have already seen how ethical principles are central to exercising our daily responsibilities. This is why one of our goals is to create social action principles that allow for direct application of human responsibility in a social context. In order to create such a principle, one must account for social values and norms. That is, it is necessary to set out a series of actions that make it possible to live out daily life consistent with one's values. The challenge is to relate two or more values with actions and real-life practices that can be undertaken within a social group.

For example, if we are identifying our responsibility in terms of economy, employment, or development, the **action principle** could be **to prioritize the most efficient way to generate income, based on values such as honesty, transparency, and solidarity.** One must find a way to act, motivate, promote, etc., but in a responsible way. One should take as a given not just the action in itself, but also must justify this effort from an ethical perspective. This perspective allows one to name a series of values along with the need to take action -- values which respect the minimum moral standards of a society and that promote better living conditions for all.

Generally, action principles go beyond specific actions and are more often based on general ways of thinking and acting. The second principle of the Charter of Human Responsibilities clearly reflects this, affirming: "The dignity of each individual implies that he or she contributes to the dignity and freedom of others." [Note from editor: This reference is to the old second principle. The revision reads: "Every person's dignity involves contributing to the freedom and dignity of others."] In this way, the nexus between that which is born out of values and the possibility of making those values visible (and later on, the ability to put them in practice in daily life) is the key to affirming that one is creating responsible social action principles.

The principles of responsible social action should be in response to problems and challenges within a society that takes on its own local challenges first. Later, citizens can propose action to involve other groups in the region that are in turn working in accord with their own action principles. In the end, there is no hope of solving global problems by only working locally; to be globally effective it is necessary to combine efforts.

PRACTICAL EXERCISE
To better understand the creation of action principles, one can do the following exercise:

In a small town named Flowerville, one of the greatest problems is the use and abuse of water resources. There is a river and a lake in the area, and even though they each contain a large amount of water, each is highly contaminated. If the locals keep misusing these bodies of water as they have been, in the near future they will no longer have them at all, resulting in permanent loss of quality of life.

Urgent action is necessary. There have been several community meetings to deal with the issue, and at these meetings the local residents have identified the following values that guide their concerns: responsibility, accountability, and solidarity. It's also clear that sustainability and environmental stewardship are other important concerns for the community. Now it is time to create at least two social action principles, geared toward not only saving local water resources but also, just as importantly, the future of those living in the region.

Solve the following issues:
1. In creating an action principle to benefit the lake and river of this region, what are the values that you would prioritize, knowing that short-term decisions must take long-term consequences into account? How does one create a social action principle that ties together all of the norms, principles, values, and precautions listed above?

2. Considering the values of solidarity and responsibility, how can you create a social action principle that will help save this region? Don't forget to think about specific as well as more general solutions when solving this problem.

3. Working in a group, create at least 3 responsible social action principles that would be useful in supporting you personally as well as the community you live in.

4. To conclude, reflect on the principles and values that you use in your daily life and how you share them with others.

As you can see, social action principles are highly important, more so when they must relate to each other in order to be useful. This is why it is important to understand the issue of interdependence and local or regional management, which will be taken up in the next chapter.

6. INTERDEPENDENCE AND REGIONAL MANAGEMENT

Creating responsible social action principles is better understood when this process is tied in with the interdependencies that come out of regional management. To break this down further: people act individually or collectively in their daily lives and always must depend on someone or something. They become interdependent when this dependence is reciprocal. This means that in order for a person, community, locale, nation, etc. to be a constructive and full member of a region, they must have a way for actions they take up (or that are taken up for them) to be done reciprocally.

As such, regional management can be thought of as a social contract that is created to look after and preserve the common interests of a region where one finds the confluence of many types of cultural, economic, social, political and material expressions. The inhabitants of a region identify either consciously or unconsciously with these expressions to achieve a quality of life that guarantees collective and individual development in a particular place and time.

Another important way to clarify the concepts of interdependence and regional management is the notion of governance– that is, the style of governing that makes lasting economic, social, and institutional development its primary objective. Governance attempts to strike a healthy balance between the state, civil society, and the market. This is how the different elements of dependence, reciprocity, responsible social action, territoriality, interconnectedness, interdependencies, management, and citizenship are all tied together within the broader notion of quality of life.

It is easier to understand this idea if we conceive of the reality of everyday life in all of its true complexity. In this sense the most important thing is to center on relationships: as it becomes more and more important to develop integrated responses to problems, relationships between human societies and a regional perspective become more important and a regional perspective becomes indispensable. This may appear abstract (ideas such as ecological footprint, associations, responsibility, and citizenship), but ends up as something concrete, tangible and palpable in the form of citizenship and its practices.

For this reason, it is important to stress that each region and every level of governance take the responsibility of providing specific responses to broader common challenges. Any serious policy must facilitate interactions among different levels of governance, and these efforts at cooperation become central in the creation and consolidation of good governments.

In current societies, and more specifically on a regional level, every level of governance has the responsibility of providing specific responses to common challenges while taking into account the three central aspects of subsidiarity:

a) Different levels of governance, the market, and civil society in a region share a common responsibility. What is important is not how each independently resolves the issues incumbent upon it, however; what is important is to know how these different entities contribute through

their own methods of management to guarantee a better quality of life. This applies from the local level all the way to the global level, and is governed by reciprocity and interdependence

b) Each region must develop specific responses that are most appropriate to commonly agreed-upon governing principles (values and principles of responsible social action).

c) No single community or entity has absolute sovereignty over a region.

REFLECTION
To better understand, work out the following reflection exercise in a group:

Stemming from the social role that you play or wish to have, define your particular role in creating general wellbeing in your town, city or region. Remember that in order to respond, you need to take into account the three central aspects of subsidiarity as well as the challenge of interdependencies. With the help of a facilitator, write your responses on a large piece of paper. If there is time, write a short skit that explains what you come up with.

One of the key elements of regional management is identity. Communities within a region, small as they may be, have their own identities, which also means that they each contain different levels of knowledge. Moreover, they are the intermediaries between individuals and the larger world. Their citizenship is based on a balance between the rights and responsibilities of each person with respect to their community.

Currently, market-based logic has people working *against*, as opposed to *with* one another. As such, another one of the key elements of regional management is identifying aspects of diversity. Nowadays one can often see a broader separation between people from different social sectors within the same region than one can see between people from different regions. This means that to create any kind of solution to broad regional problems, one must consider diversity as a decisive element in problem-solving. This is especially the case if one of the primary aims is promoting open dialog.

The more complicated a problem is, the more important it becomes to have a widely-acceptable solution. For this reason, it is important to design political actions that involve actors of different types, without forgetting that the goal of political action is to organize a collective process and plan for making public decisions. This helps us make the following two determinations:

1. Distinguishing between the power of proposal and the power of decision-making. It is possible to strike a balance between those who develop possible solutions and those who adopt them, if the process is designed to identify interdependencies and to come up with a way for them to operate in a particular setting.

2. To be successful in the above efforts, one must organize and promote healthy public debate that has clear terms and creates new types of relationships and alliances. One must not confuse the nature of a policy with the status of those who act it out. There is still often confusion about whether or not public objectives rely solely on public actors and private objectives rely on only on private ones.

PRACTICAL EXERCISE
Objective: to clearly understand what interdependence means and how one becomes interdependent with others. In order to do this:
   a. Identify how many types of social actors there are in your region. Once you have done this, come up with at least 2 qualities that define each of them. Try to see the connections between yourself and others.
   b. What type of dependencies can you come up with respect to the actors you listed?
   c. Are the relationships reciprocal, that is, is there an appropriate amount of interdependence? What is needed in order to have a healthy balance between the various actors in your region?
   d. Who proposes solutions within your community and who makes the decisions? What is needed in order to have a healthy balance in this regard?

e. Upon which problems would you base a public debate in your community, and which debate themes would you focus on?
f. What kinds of responsible relationships and alliances could be made in your area?
g. Do you fully identify with all of the social actors that are a part of your community? What social actors in other communities share problems and dilemmas with people living in your area?

The next chapter will go deeper into the topic of interdependence, and what we have termed the "Landscape of Hope" of which you can be a part.

7. THE LANDSCAPE OF HOPE

One of the central aspects of our lives is the place where we reside and carry out the majority of the activities of our existence. We have a special interest in what takes place there, and in many cases we are worried about the things that happen in that place. We may even think about what the future will bring, although sometimes we are not conscious that we create what is to come in what we do now.

PRACTICAL EXERCISE
Objective: Reflect on our own local situations and establish the idea that as citizens we play a part in determining our own future.

Modeling the Future*

The great majority of us feel uncomfortable with the current situation in the world and in our local area, and we desire a better country and better world for ourselves, our loved ones, and for all other human beings. You might think it is not too difficult to imagine that we all desire to better everyone's standard of living. Nevertheless, there isn't too much agreement with respect to the future we all foresee.

If we ask what future awaits us and if we're going to be the same, worse, or better off than today, we would hear a wide range of responses: the most pessimistic would think that the situation won't improve very soon and will actually worsen over time. There are others that think the situation won't improve but also will not get much worse. The somewhat optimistic think that the situation will improve slowly, even though certain problems will persist for some years. Finally, the optimists think that we'll escape from the current crisis in a short amount of time and in the medium term we will be able to overcome the most serious problems we currently face.

Although we may have different opinions, it is important to know which of the possible futures we are working towards and that we act out each day in our homes, in our place of work or school, in our neighborhood, in the mall, in our conversations and meetings with others, and also in our struggles and collaborative efforts. Whatever response we give is not unimportant if we consider that our future is partly in our own hands: we can help create a desirable future that is by and for everyone, and can set conditions to create specific changes and processes or stop others that we consider negative. To create this desired future means having a clear understanding of what is needed, how to achieve it, and what conditions make it viable. But above all one must act. We invite you begin this journey by way of the *Land of Hope* exercise.

Setting: We are part of a large community that inhabits a beautiful, extensive, and exuberant locale, boasting all the resources that nature can give and with a populace rich in diversity and creativity. This society, like any other human group, is facing a series of challenges as it tries to become a viable community that guarantees dignity to all its members.

Challenge: As a human community that wishes to last for the long-term, it must have the capacity to collectively resolve conflicts, challenges, and problems in the following minimal respects: survival, coexistence, land distribution and use, decision-making, self-protection, and security in the face of uncertainty and other risks.

> The manner in which these tasks are faced and resolved depends on how well this community develops into a stable society where people create a way of life in which all belong and all can enjoy the advantages that nature has offered them.
>
> The great challenge is to collectively create the Land of Hope, one in which there are not only inhabitants, but also citizens that work, coexist, and conscientiously enjoy the riches that nature has to offer. They would also be capable of overcoming challenges, dilemmas and conflicts related to coexistence and to the creation of a complete society, without forgetting that this community must guarantee the rights of personal development, equal opportunity, and general wellbeing to all.
>
> *Adaptation of the text "The future is not written," Primer on Reconstructing Country: Rule of Law, Citizens and Authorities. Constructing Citizenship Series. National Forum for Colombia Foundation. Bogotá, 2000.

In order to reflect on the Land of Hope we propose that the group reads the above text, and responds to the following questions. The group can then decide on a common stance taken from all of the responses.

1. What does the text "Modeling the Future" propose?
2. What would your Land of Hope look like? (You can express this through a painting, a story, a poem, a song, etc)
3. What kinds of obstacles must be overcome to guarantee dignity for all people in your community (neighborhood, city, country, school…) with respect to:
   o Survival (when adverse conditions exist) _____
      Creating opportunities to study and work in dignity
   o Coexistence _____
      Strengthening solidarity commitments between citizens
   o Land distribution and use _____
      Reclaiming public space as a cultural stage
   o Decision-making _____
      Creating more and better participatory spaces for locals
   o Self-protection and security _____
      Promoting spaces and mechanisms of reconciliation to reduce the root causes of insecurity.
4. Do you think it is possible to build a common agenda among the members of your community?
5. Is there any relationship between the practice of responsibility and the future challenges you have already identified?

In working out this exercise you have undoubtedly realized that many interconnected needs, responsibilities and actors have come up. We will see what this is all about as we go deeper into these themes.

8. NEEDS, ACTORS, AND RESPONSIBILITY

We have completed a series of practical exercises that play out different themes, all of which help us move forward in our reflection about responsibility as well as our own individual contexts and problems.

Additionally, the practice of responsibility can't be separated from the practical realities of the people who exercise it, because in order to commit oneself to any act of responsibility one needs to be motivated. What better motivation can we think of than that which rises out of our own needs, dreams, desires, goals, objectives, and plans?

PRACTICAL EXERCISE
Objective: Identify the needs of the working group and based on those, determine your own responsibilities and those of others, along with all the actors involved.

Part One: Identifying Our Needs

First: Identify and prioritize "What are our problems?" Divide into groups of no more than 5 people and think about what you struggle with in your area: the worst problems, difficulties, and challenges. In order to pick out at most 5 ideas from the entire group, prioritize them according to the importance they have in your area.

Second: To solve a problem it must first be turned into a need. Once problem situations have been identified, each group should rephrase each problem in the form of a need. For example: If the problem is the poor health of children, a need would be to improve children's health or improve medical care for children. Each group should create a list of necessities that go with each prioritized problem.

Examples of identified needs

Problem	Need
There is a lot of unemployment and underemployment in my city.	1. Create new jobs and improve the quality of those that currently exist.
Pollution and environmental decay is getting worse and worse.	2. Develop effective environmental stewardship policies.
Children and youth learn very little in school and are not always able to study.	3. Improve educational quality and access.
Many families suffer from hunger and leave home every day without eating breakfast.	4. Create a food pantry network to guarantee food security in the community.

Part Two: Identifying Actors and Responsibility

To identify who is accountable to whom, it is a good idea to establish clearly which actors should take on each form of responsibility. This is important to allow us to develop action ideas to address the problems we have identified in our area.

It can be difficult to define and create forms of responsibility once you sit down to do it. Do not forget the following:

- Responsibility must be based on ethical action principles. We recommend you take into account the principles that your group has already come up with (Chapter 4).

- It is easier to identify quickly the responsibility of other actors that are directly involved in a problem, such as governments, institutions, people, etc. For this reason, we recommend starting with the responsibility of others before determining your own.

- If you look at responsibility as a set of opportunities to try out different responses to needs, it is easier to deal with each individual need.

- Responsibility is connected to everyone's personal sphere of influence: it is not imposed from the outside, and does not come from external demands.

- Responsibility should be seen as actions that link ethical principles with individual actions, and in turn, individual acts with possible outside actors.

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

1. Take the list of needs and put them into a table like the one below. The goal now is to identify personal responsibility, the responsibility of others, and related actors.

2. You must identify institutions, people, organizations, etc. It is important to name everything that might be an actor, everything or everyone that is directly linked to the acts of responsibility associated with each need.
3. Finally, you must outline personal responsibility and that of other actors, keeping in mind to list only those commitments that you consider necessary and within the capacity of each actor.

To make the activity easier, it might be a good idea to ask each group to lay out the various components of just one need.

Here are some examples:

Needs	Related Actors	Responsibility of others	Personal Responsibility
1. Create more jobs and improve the quality of jobs that already exist.	-Entrepreneurs and business leaders -National and local governments, labor agencies and legislators -Labor unions	-Create good jobs -Guarantee laws that protect workers, including the unemployed -Create job training opportunities for workers and create initiatives that provide stability for those workers that don't have this training	-Take more interest in current events -Stay informed about new job opportunities -Be willing to develop your professional skills and abilities -Place the values of solidarity and justice ahead of that of competition
2. Develop effective environmental stewardship policies.	-Governments -Citizens -Environmental Advocacy Groups	-Develop standards that minimize the misuse of natural resources -Streamline groups that monitor compliance to environmental regulations -Use your own knowledge to make concrete steps in partnership with government institutions	-Participate in the broader dialogue over environmental issues -Vote responsibly, based on the environmental platform proposed by each candidate -Recycle in your home
3. Improve educational quality and access	-Governments and public institutions -Public and private educational institutions	-Create standards based on local needs -Develop equality programs to promote equal access	-Don't cheat on exams -Work from the idea that education is everyone's responsibility, not just that of teachers and institutions.

Results:
Generally, this exercise concludes with groups having come up with many examples of responsibility for other actors and few personal ones- it's often more difficult to identify responsibility in this second category. This tendency helps to remind us that, even though it is no easy task to be accountable in accordance with our ethical principles, it's absolutely necessary if we want to be ready for future challenges.

It is helpful to identify at least one example of a personal responsibility in order to understand that, as small as our individual ability to act may be, we must develop our own solutions to the problems we face.

Once you have completed the above exercise, the following text will help to draw some important conclusions.

Remember:

Responsibility should be understood as a set of conscious practices linked to ethical principles and based on minimum moral standards for social action. Exercising responsibility is a way to take an active role in addressing the needs we face.

And now, after identifying responsibility and actors, we've grounded our discussion of responsibility on concrete actions and the people who carry out these actions. With the willingness of everyone involved, this responsibility can now become a reality. Next we will take up responsibility agreements as practical instruments for putting this into practice.

9. FOUNDING ACTS: REESTABLISHING PRACTICES THAT STRENGTHEN THE SENSE OF PARTICPATION

When we mention founding actions, we are referring to the combination of efforts that locals achieve both individually and collectively toward the goal of strengthening the practice of responsible citizenship. They help found (or re-found) practices that strengthen the sense of participation and democracy. They affirm shared values that help us to recognize our rights and responsibilities in a given time and place. It is the ability that a community possesses to invent its own rules, its own constitution, and give a sense of renewal to the social contract that founded it and that connects it to other communities.

Common history and events that form the social basis of communities should be continually refreshed so that locals can see themselves as active and responsible parties in their own contexts. Locals create founding actions when they initiate and drive efforts to identify and resolve problems that come out of everyday life.

In order to achieve a founding action with a sense of responsibility one should take the following into account:

1. It should always respond directly to community problems and challenges. Whenever possible, it, should lay out main goals in an agenda that identifies problems and possible solutions that a community can accomplish in a given area.

2. A community should set up ways to draft (or re-draft) social action principles oriented toward the actions it wants to move forward. This will help the local community resolve the most pressing social problems in an accountable way.

3. Similarly, it is important to identify any interdependencies that develop within efforts to resolve community-wide problems. Don't forget that in acts of social renewal the mix of diverse populations and the interactions of differing information and people make diversity more and more of a general rule. This includes neighborhoods and cities.

4. Founding acts should be acts of unification and not disintegration. They should be established in a clear way and be understood by everyone living in an area. They should be symbolic, because they represent generally held thoughts and feelings. They should not discriminate, and be constructive and unifying.

A founding act can become a celebratory act in which a community celebrates a shared understanding of possible citizen-based action, where in spite of differences it is clear that people share the same beliefs, problems, actions, and solutions in their efforts to renew social conditions in their community. It can also be understood as a symbolic recognition of the abilities, rights, obligations, and responsibility that humans take on in the management of their own societies.

PRACTICAL EXERCISE:
Objective: To practice an example of a founding act.

What would be a symbolic act that builds community, respects diversity as well as relationships of interdependence? Maybe a public announcement, an op-ed piece, a neighborhood festival,

a potluck dinner or a community agreement? <u>In general, founding acts make sense insofar as they are useful. For this reason in the following chapter we will talk about responsibility agreements.</u>

10. RESPONSIBILITY AGREEMENTS

We have already said that in order to practice responsibility one must have the will to do so. Interestingly enough, an agreement of this type is a willing agreement between actors that represent a variety of postures, opinions, and interests in the face of the same issue or problem.

An agreement can be made between two or more equal parties or between unequal parties. In the latter case, each party contributes according to their own ability and level of responsibility. This also assumes that with greater power comes greater responsibility.

An agreement is based on common interest in improving a particular situation. It is a recognition made by all parties that demonstrates their commitment to improvement and the belief that they can achieve it.

A responsibility agreement centers on the guidance of those directly affected by the situation that the agreement must address. It is a mechanism for those actors to direct a process that will address a particular situation in a community.

Developing a human responsibility agreement can mean carrying out three stages: creation, management, and viability testing.

1. Creating an responsibility agreement

For an agreement to be clear, workable, and adequate to the intentions of those that sign it (as well as to the realities of the context where the process is developed), it is a good idea to write it out in a short document that both inspires and binds those who sign it. To address the problems identified by people a particular area; you must clearly identify the main issues affecting locals and group them in priority order. The ultimate goal is to create solutions to existing conflicts (see chapter 8).

It is a good idea for the document to have the following parts:

- **Those that endorse the agreement** must identify the central actors within it. Because of social problems that societies currently suffer, we must develop a notion of diversity with interdependence in mind. An agreement between equals may be interesting, but it is much better to have an agreement between those who differ. Because responsibility relates to power and to the solutions that are available to you, responsibilities and powers differ. You need multiple actors in order to identify commonly agreed-upon problems.

- **The name of the agreement** should refer to the main problem and not the fact that it is all about responsibility. Moreover, it could include the name of place where it is drawn up. It should express the importance of what you are attempting and should be memorable and interesting to people.

- **The agreement objectives** should indicate the consequence of participating in the agreement, not only for the benefit those who will endorse it, but also for anyone who reads it. The objectives should clearly lay out the challenges and problems that the agreement will attempt to resolve, which makes it easier to clarify which action best responds to the mutual commitment between various parties involved in the project.

- An agreement is useless if its guiding **social action principles** are not understood. In general, the understanding and practice of these principles are what guarantee the success of a responsibility agreement.

- It is necessary to specify **concrete actions** (let's call them strategies) that each party commits to carrying out.

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Objective: Observe how achieving a community agreement gets easier when you account for principles, themes, actors, and possible ways to move forward.

1. Based on the exercises from Chapter 5 regarding responsible social action principles and from Chapter 8 regarding responsibilities and actors, prioritize one central issue for which it would be useful to reach an agreement in your area.

2. Draw up a document that includes the components we mentioned earlier (actors, name, objectives and principles)

3. In order to formulate concrete actions identify one or two actions that each actor should carry out, based on action principles and on the responsibilities of each actor.

2. Managing a responsibility agreement

You will need to find allies and lay out concrete commitments to deal with the main issue addressed in the agreement. This helps create a shared commitment to inspire, motivate, and guarantee local participation. In general, this refers to outreach efforts, shared action plans, and locals exercising their power and responsibility. The idea is for each of the signatories to take responsibility for explaining the agreement and making others aware of any situation that will help toward its success.

3. Viability testing a responsibility agreement (carrying it out)

After disseminating the agreement and bringing in other connected situations, you should develop strategies that seek to include more and more sectors of society to be involved in the work. These strategies demand more local commitment to dealing with problems and more effective follow-up and local control for the people, organizations, and entities that are a part of the agreement.

The agreement, beyond being a commitment between many different parties, becomes a powerful tool that can be used to identify the most important objectives and solutions for dealing with social problems in a region. The agreement can be carried out in a way that accomplishes proposed strategies and achieves objectives in a principled way.

This concludes our presentation of methodological tools on reflection and the practice of human responsibility. Each of the components we explain suggests ways to approach the topic. It is important to enrich them with your creativity and in relation to your specific context. In this way we hope they can useful in your efforts to build strong and responsible community action.

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